

Mr. John Casas, SIDS4 Interactive Dialogue 5

International WeLoveU Foundation, USA

30 May, 11AM – 1PM, Interactive Dialogues Room

Thank you for the opportunity to meet today. It's an honor to discuss with leaders who are dedicated to helping their countries to achieve resilience and drive long-term positive change.

Problem

A significant challenge facing today's youth is the lack of necessary skills for the workforce. Nearly 75% of young people aged 15 to 24 are off-track in acquiring essential skills for employment. This skills gap contributes to high youth unemployment rates and leads to many young people leaving their home countries in search of better opportunities, often not returning. Additionally, mental health challenges are increasingly prevalent among the youth, with one 1 in 5 young people experiencing mental health issues, often exacerbated by the lack of opportunities and support systems.

Solution

To address these pressing issues, the WeLoveU Foundation has a comprehensive approach that combines education, skill-building, and long-term sustainability.

1. **Scholarships for Students in Environmental Sustainability and Stewardship:** Providing financial support for students to pursue studies, empowering them to become leaders in addressing environmental challenges.
2. **Creating Opportunities for Youth to Build Skills While Volunteering:** Establishing programs that allow youth to gain practical experience and develop skills through volunteer work, particularly in community-based environmental projects.
3. **Building Social Responsibility and National Pride:** Encouraging youth to take pride in rebuilding their own countries through involvement in meaningful projects, fostering a sense of responsibility and community ownership.
4. **Vocational Training:** Hands on volunteerism offering opportunities to learn skills such as carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work to provide youth with practical and employable skills.

5. **Soft Skills Training:** Creating volunteer opportunities for essential skills like communication, teamwork, and leadership to prepare youth for various professional and personal challenges.

By integrating these elements, we aim to create a generation of youth who are not only skilled and employable but also socially responsible and mentally resilient and independent.

Establishing regional and national forums for skills development is key. This approach can be replicated globally by forming partnerships between governments, educational institutions, non-profits, and the private sector.

1. **Establishing Local Partnerships:** Collaborate with local stakeholders from both the government and private sectors to understand community needs and tailor programs accordingly.
2. **Creating Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of skill development and environmental stewardship among youth.

Thank you