

Human Rights of Youth: Working with and for youth in vulnerable situations including conflict, violence and insecurity

Youth Consultations | Uzbekistan Report

Dates: The consultation was launched with an online questionnaire to participants on 20 May, followed by two in-person sessions, held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on 26 and 27 May.

Participants: The consultation brought together a total of 20 participants from different regions of Uzbekistan, including 12 women, and eight men with disabilities. The event was facilitated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) – Regional Office for Central Asia.

Working languages: Uzbek, Russian and sign language

Human rights barriers and obstacles for youth and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Right to education and cultural rights

- Restriction of access to formal education due to the transfer of schools, colleges and universities to online learning. The low quality of the Internet, coupled with its high cost, led to the exclusion of some young people from the formal education process
- The lack of technical equipment necessary for online learning (computer, telephone, Internet), especially in the regions of the country, has had a negative impact on young people's access to education
- As a result of the pandemic, most of the language and other courses in the country have been closed and only a small part has been transferred online.
- The closure of borders has resulted in the restriction of the right of young people to receive education outside of Uzbekistan. Many young people were forced to return.
- The transition to online has led to a shortage of teaching staff, as not all teachers were willing and/or able to use technology to work online. As a result, students felt a shortage of staff and a decline in the quality of education.
- Young people faced restrictions on cultural rights - there was no opportunity to attend concerts, performances, and this area in Uzbekistan was practically not represented online
- Restriction of access to sports training and sports

Labor rights

- Loss of a job or reduction of working hours and, as a result, a reduction in wages and a decrease in the quality of life
- Problems with employment of young professionals who have no work experience and have recently graduated from the university
- Due to job loss, an increase in the number of young people involved in shadow economy (illegal income)
- An increase in the number of fraudulent schemes for earning money and the involvement of young people
- Tax burden - despite the crisis and the pandemic, young entrepreneurs have not been exempted from taxes

Recommendations and solutions to promote human rights for youth

Right to education and cultural rights

- Increase computer/digital literacy of both teachers and young people for their willingness to work and learn online
- Provide additional measures so that students can fill the gaps in education that have arisen due to the transition to online (organization of free additional lessons, courses)
- Higher education institutions should revise the curriculum in order to pay more attention to the professional practice of students
- Improve the quality of the Internet and reduce its cost
- Develop and implement online educational platforms that are accessible, among other things, to people with various forms of disability
- Develop and implement programs for online sports training
- Develop and implement a program for online lessons so that teachers have ready-made, high-quality and affordable teaching materials
- Forced vaccination has required some societal groups, including young people, to give up work (especially true for civil servants)
- Increase in cases of depression due to the pandemic and restrictions that have affected the ability to work

Labor rights

- Provide for the practice of reducing the tax burden for young entrepreneurs
- Provide additional jobs for young professionals
- Carry out information work with young people in order to prevent their involvement in illegal labor spheres and shadow business
- Consider the possibility of providing young people with psychological support in case of depression, including due to the pandemic
- Provide flexible benefit systems for young people who are unemployed or unable to get a job for the first time
- Implement an effective internship program for young professionals
- It is necessary to develop a mechanism at the level of the UN system to protect the rights of young people
- Work to address stereotypes and discrimination in society
- The state should financially support the projects of young people
- School curricula should include human rights topics with a focus on labor rights

Good practice examples of youth rights advocacy

- Conference on the rights of young people and discussion of the idea of developing and adopting the UN Convention on the Rights of Young People; presentation of reports
- Organization of a series of youth inclusive theater performances that promote the rights of people with disabilities and the participation of young people
- School for Independent Living for Young Girls with Disabilities
- Action aimed at highlighting the problems of young people through a photo exhibition
- Organization of the theater of miniatures and gestures for young actors with hearing disabilities

Challenges for youth rights advocacy

- Stereotypes and discrimination against young people in society lead to the fact that young people and their opportunities and needs are left out

- Decisions for young people and about young people are made by the authorities and society without the participation of young people
- Initiatives that are presented as youth initiatives are actually top-down and young people do not participate in their development
- The state most often does not have funds to support the initiatives of young people
- Young people are poorly informed about human rights and the right to participation in particular, leading to passivity of youth
- Early marriages lead to the fact that young girls are not involved in the active part of society
- Relationship barriers and stereotypes in families deprive young people of the support of even the closest people
- Religious influence affects young people's ability to be active and express themselves
- Non-profit organizations do not have the opportunity to obtain registration (refusal on formal grounds), which violates the right to association. This is especially true for young people

The present report summarizes key discussion points and topics raised by participants; it does not reflect the official positions of OHCHR, Education Above All or Silatech.