

# Vatican Youth Symposium 2016

## Youth and the SDGs – Challenges and Opportunities

A few months on we have asked some of the delegates who participated to reflect on the Symposium and share how they were enriched by this experience.

*What did you take home from the Vatican Youth Symposium 2016?*



**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

### Clayton Louis Ferrana

“My journey to the Vatican Youth Assembly was life changing. Even though traveling to Rome and Casina Pio IV was very special, the best part of the journey was the wonderful people I met there.

Young people under 35 have an extraordinary opportunity to solve the most pressing tragedies facing humanity because our generation has the technology and compassion to accomplish extraordinary things never before possible.

It was inspiring meeting people who have faced hardship, conflict, poverty, and great difficulty in their lives but still demonstrated bravery and fortitude to make the world a better place. Passion is contagious and though social media, many of these supportive leaders will remain my friends for the rest of my life. With patience, passion, and persistence, young leaders will leave the world a better place than how we found it.”



### Darshatha Gamage



“The Vatican Youth Symposium was an unique experience for me. It provided the opportunity to meet young change makers from all parts of the world. I was inspired by their solutions and was enlightened of the possibilities of impact in my own community. The learning was immense as the speakers as well as specialists shared their knowledge and experience on the projects. To answer, what did I take home from

the Symposium, it will be the network of amazing people that I met at the Vatican.”

## *Obinna Nnewuike*



“There are events that shape the course of your life indefinitely and undeniably! The Vatican Youth Symposium is one of them. In 3 days, I came to meet an outstanding community of young people doing amazing work to improve the world. I met people whose grit, determination and moral standing challenged me to seek a life beyond mundane personal desires; to live a life that always seeks out ways to serve and

help others. I met young people who were not content with the status quo and who questioned why things couldn't be done better. These colleagues caused me to re-evaluate what it meant to lead in the face of obvious challenges and to seek out solutions when others merely resort to complaining. I remain grateful for this rich network of global change makers I've been privileged to join, and perhaps most importantly, the joy of meeting the Pope Francis!”

## *Peggy Tse*

“The 2016 UN SDSN Youth Symposium was an important milestone to my career in development finance, global health and gender equality. The conference joined by Dr Jeffrey Sachs, Dr Betsee Parker and other renowned speakers, has illuminated a new perspective for young social innovators that human trafficking is not a one-dimensional problem. Instead it is multi-dimensional, complex and inextricably linked to many other global concerns such as refugee, poverty and inequality.



The 2016 cohort of Youth Symposium delegates are equally impressive. I feel empowered after I make friends from all across the globe who share the same beliefs towards a fairer world. They are creative, dedicated and bright souls who commit their energy and talents to change our world for good. Another critical component of the Symposium is the support and encouragement from the UN SDSN Youth team. Without their help, the three-day event at Vatican would not be that impactful. I truly look forward to the day when our paths cross again.”

### *Brittany Fried*



“Participating in the 2016 Vatican Youth Symposium was an unbelievable experience. First and foremost, I joined an outstanding network of youth dedicated to actively pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). From my peers I was inspired and received fantastic support and resources for furthering my project. I moreover obtained feedback from esteemed experts in the field regarding how I can deepen the impact of

my work, and learned of potential partners I can collaborate with. Finally, the Symposium was held on some of the most hallowed grounds of faith and positive international influence, making the opportunity ever more impactful. I could not be more thankful to have participated in this Symposium.”

### *Joannes Paulus Yimbessalu*

“This was my very first trip to Rome and I was really excited for this opportunity to listen and network with the other amazing young people developing new ideas to help tackle the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The guest speakers had great insights into the future for young people which included; the need for young people to preserve and protect the planet so that those that come after



us can enjoy the beauty of our planet, the need for us youths to work together as a team as unity is strength. I took home with me the dangers and adverse effects of child and sex trafficking in Italy and around the world. The stories that were shared by our fellow mates at the symposium shed a light on what we must do to empower victims of trafficking because after all is said and done our shared values, interest, ambitions and dreams must try to bring us together as one community.”

### *Jordan Imahoni*



“One of the strengths of the Vatican Youth Symposium was that it brought youth from across the world – and their respective plethora of perspectives and experiences – into a forum in which we could have a frank and critical discussion on how to go about implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The Symposium had us listening to and engaging with each other’s own takes on development, ranging from

a project that seeks to improve access to sanitation at schools as a means of increasing attendance, to a low-cost neonatal incubator that might revolutionize neonatal intensive care across the developing world. At its core, though, the different approaches shared one thing in common – a strong desire to bring about positive change across the world. This allowed us to push past our initial reluctance and talk about both our successes but more importantly our failures and the roadblocks we’ve faced along the way. We were able to learn from each other’s experiences and apply their insights to our own respective projects. I left the symposium with a refreshed take on the challenges of development, but also with network of individuals, each of whom trying to improve the world in one area or another, and each possessing their own area of expertise. These connections are perhaps the greatest resource of all.”

### *Vanessa Tullo*



“The Symposium has been a great opportunity to get inspiration from many brilliant young people coming from diverse contexts and to create important connections among us. Working there all together has created an amazing energy that motivates us in trying to eradicate inequalities and sufferance every day all over the world.”

## *Malav Sanghavi*

“Two days for Youth Symposium were the one of the most inspiring and motivational days for me. Looking at the way people work in different fields to change the world for good, and creating an impact, made me more determined towards achieving our goals as LifeCradle and the SDGs. It changed my perspective towards the world and has made me more aware about the problems faced by our



society and to works harder, faster and more efficiently towards achieving the SDGs. It also brought LifeCradle in front of global audience. The symposium is the perfect global platform to access one of the world’s biggest networks, make your voice heard and to meet the most amazing people. LifeCradle got a lot of recognition and was able to connect to many important people who are currently helping us progress to our next step.”

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