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YOUTHS AS CHANGE AGENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CYBER CRIME AND COUNTEERING EXTREMISM.

Youths are the most important and dynamic proportion of the population in any country. It is believed by many authors that developing countries with large youth population could see a tremendous growth, provided they invest in young people’s education, health, protect and guarantee their rights. I can undoubtedly say that youths of today are tomorrows innovator, creators, builders, change agents and leaders.

In many parts of the world, youths are becoming increasingly vulnerable to violent extremism and cyber crime. Globally, violent environments profoundly affects the lives of children and young people and this, has resulted in the death of an estimated 1.28 million people in 2013, serving as a sporadic increase from that recorded in 1990 which was reported to be 1.13 million (United Nations Development Program, 2016).

Similarly, in the 2017 official annual report on cyber crime sponsored by Herjavec group, a leading Global Information Security Advising Forum (GISAF) and Managed Security Services Provider (MSSP), it is estimated that cyber crime will cost $6 trillion annually by 2021. In 2015, that figure was $3 trillion. This means that cyber criminals adapts at a fast pace and are constantly devising new technologies to target victims.

However, the journey of youths as change agents in the fight against cyber crimes and countering extremism starts from the primary, secondary and tertiary level of educations, which are niches populated by youths (young individuals of age 15-29). This is where the passion and hunger for achieving a better world is found. In these young individuals, these goal of eradicating cyber crime, countering violent extremism and promoting peace, in the bid to make the world better will be driven to achievement. Thus, young individuals across these level of education should be properly trained and enlightened more about the negative implications of this menaces.

Furthermore, challenges such as unemployment, poverty, low standard of living, abysmal health care, poor educational standard, inequality etc. that is been faced by countries in different part of the world has contributed vividly to the involvement of young people in series of social vices such as drug abuse, terrorism, cyber crime etc.

However, it is of no doubt that all these challenges experienced in different part of the world is under the umbrella of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and can be collectively tackled through successful implementation of the Global goals in every part of the world. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a phenomenal model of development that must e maintained and supported. It is a long term holistic vision agreed by the different countries in the United Nations (UN) to tackled the problems faced by different countries in the world in the bid to make the world more sustainable for the betterment of humanity by 2030.

As an individual with great zeal towards academic excellence and social impact services, I believe the challenges facing the world can be addressed provided the SDGs is fully implemented to the grassroots level. However, creating awareness about the SDGs is pivotal to its actualization. More so, I believe implementation of the global goals at a small scale level will inevitably have a positive multiplier effect towards achieving agenda 2030 at a global level. Therefore, implementing the goals in a small community such as Elementary Schools, High Schools and Tertiary Institutions will increase the chances of successful implementation of the agenda in each state/region of a federation. Also, the successful implementation of the goals in each state will enhance their implementation in the country. Then, the challenges of poverty, health care, education and inequality etc which are the major cause of several social vices can be addressed.

Consequently, as an undergraduate student, who is passionate about working with people of like minds to end poverty, promoting good health & quality education - as well as reducing inequality, in a bid to bring about positive change and impact the country, through a colleague and I an SDGs team in 2017 on our University campus tagged “Sustainable Development Goals Awareness Campaign Tour Lagos State University (SDGs LASU)”. This is a platform to create awareness and implement the SDGs on our campus, making our University the first higher institution to commence the creation of awareness & implementation of the SDGs in Nigerian Universities. So far in the organization, over 5,000 students have been made aware of the SDGs through a series of conferences, symposiums, capacity building programs etc, in the realization of some SDGs. We have also been able to inspire other civic leaders and assisted them in creating SDGs movement in their respective universities. However, we are currently planning to train more young leaders to help localize the SDGs in Elementary and High Schools to reorient these young individuals on the need to work towards a better world anchored on the SDGs.

Conclusively, the role of youths in fighting cyber criminals and countering extreme violent acts is very crucial. Youths can be easily influenced either positively or negatively. Thus, they have to be trained and enlightened to see things differently and take actions against issues affecting the survival of humanity in their community. Quoting the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General; Antonio Guterres, at a program held on the 12th of April, 2018 in New York, USA, tagged: “Investing in Youth to Counter Terrorism.” He said- “Young men and women are assets to be nurtured, cherished and listened to. They represent hope and promise. Hence, young individuals have a huge amount to offer the world and should be a top priority in birthing a better world.”