

From Drug Use Prevention to  
Social Integration

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Thematic Discussion

# Summary

**This report summarises the interventions of the speakers at the Thematic Discussion on Youth Engagement that took place on 30 June 2025, part of the series of thematic discussions from Drug Use Prevention to Social Integration. The event was organised by the World Federation Against Drugs (WFAD) and Association Proyecto Hombre.**

Most of the speakers stated the importance of capacity building to engage the youth in drug use prevention. There was a shared sense on how it could be done through investing time, actively listening to the youth, establishing spaces for them to speak, and starting training programs.

Some other speakers mentioned the importance of availability and access to resources. Openly inviting them to negotiations, having youth-led sessions, listening to them as advisors, establishing youth advisory boards, and supporting the youth financially to help them implement their ideas and actions were mentioned as possible actions. On the other hand, some speakers said it was essential to demonstrate accessible treatment and rehabilitation for the youth, starting telephone lines for easier and faster access, from leadership workshops and life skill sessions.

Implementing gender-responsive approaches to address substance use challenges for all genders was also raised as a significant point. Insights from the Global Youth Declaration survey by WFAD suggests that women under 23 experience distinct vulnerabilities and face different challenges, such as peer pressure and mental health, compared to their male counterparts. At the same time, men report increased social and economic challenges at later stages in their lives.

A few speakers added that tailored prevention programs for different age groups are essential to address their specific needs and experiences. In the survey, it's clear that as age increases, so does risk perception.

There was consensus among the speakers about the significance of involving youth in policy making, working with the government via their community, and actively participating in leadership. Speakers advocate for youth to become more visible, effectively amplifying their voices. The further insights from the youth survey showed that active involvement of all three actors (government, community, and youth) build an supportive and trusting environment in which youth are more likely to seek help and engage.

Generally, speakers support an intergenerational approach to strengthen the communication and the bond between generations. They pointed out that working together and learning from the past and present is essential to inform actions in the future.

Another aspect was the enhancements of research and the modernization of risk awareness campaigns. Speakers mentioned the need to conduct comprehensive, youth-focused research and translate findings to ensure that campaigns, initiatives, and programs are up-to-date and evidence-based. Some speakers highlighted the importance of social media's role and power in community outreach. When used correctly, social media and digital platforms could effectively complement traditional media to tackle stigma, raise awareness, and advocate for whole society-level changes.

A few speakers talked about the role of international organisations and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in supporting and collaborating with civil society organisations to engage youth across programs. There was an emphasis on the importance of peer support and multistakeholder, multilateral collaborations.

In conclusion, speakers emphasized the importance of engaging young people by saving them seats at every table, providing training, and creating opportunities for them to express themselves and be leaders. Supporting youth requires investments in time, capacity strengthening, and funding. Training programs and youth-led projects are essential to make services across the continuum of care more accessible and tailored to the experiences and needs of young people. Harnessing the power of youth and collaborating across sectors, fields, generations, societal levels, and organisations was highlighted as the key to successfully addressing drug-related issues worldwide.

# Agenda

**Monday, June 30, 2025 (14.00-14.14 CEST, Vienna time)**

*Moderating*

**Sonja Phutachad Neef**, Association Proyecto Hombre, Spain

*On the recent Global Youth Declaration*

**Cressida de Witte**, World Federation Against Drugs, Sweden

**Fuhaira Sana**, Pakistan Youth Organisation, Pakistan

*Discussion*

**Mukhtar Aliyu Usman**, African Youth Forum, Nigeria

**Emily Hill**, Scott County Public Health, United States

**Drusilla Reinhard-Blinker**, SDG Youth Ambassador, Suriname

**M. Husni**, IMPACT VOICES - The Social Innovation Intermediary, Sri Lanka

*Closing remarks*

**Kirsty Rancier**, Youth Focal Point, UNODC, Austria

*Interpretation from English to Spanish*

**Laura González**

*Report written by*

**Kardelen Atakul**, Youth leader and advocate (Türkiye)

More information of please contact Oriol Esculies at [oesculies@proyectohombre.es](mailto:oesculies@proyectohombre.es)