



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
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la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
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вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the International Youth Day, 12 August 2014

Youth is a period of dramatic change, and the journey from childhood to adulthood can be complex, raising a host of mental health issues.

The theme of this International Youth Day is “Youth and Mental Health,” under the motto Mental Health Matters. This is an opportunity to raise awareness about the difficulties facing young women and men, including from stigma and discrimination, and to support them so that they can fully achieve their aspirations.

Guided by an Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021), UNESCO focuses on the needs of marginalized young women and men to promote their full integration into society. We work to support school health programmes, as well as informal and non-formal learning, and by mobilizing the power of information and communication technologies. At the wider level, we are committed to promoting inclusive integrated policies on youth, in which all youth voices are meaningfully consulted and engaged. In all this, we seek to provide opportunities for young people to develop the skills and competences necessary to transition to adulthood and to make the most of all opportunities offered by societies that are increasingly diverse and undergoing transformation.

This requires seeing young women and men not as objects of policy but as agents of change. It calls for action to promote intergenerational understanding and partnership, to strengthen solidarity and to ensure the full integration of all young women and men in society and the economy. In crafting new policies, we need to draw upon lessons learnt and listen to the needs of young people so as to help them overcome the challenges they face.

The mental health of young women and men is important for the health of society as a whole. They are a wellspring of ideas for innovation and leaders for positive change. We need to support them in every way in order to build with them inclusive, just -- and healthy -- societies.

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