

# First conference FICE-Kenya 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2015

## Speech of Davis Ochieng, a young person from Kenya

The rising conflict between the youth & even children is as a result of various factors some of which are ignored yet are very fundamental. Health of the youth & children has been a major concern in the society. Diseases such as malaria & cholera have raised eyebrows due to their alarming rate of claiming innocent lives especially during the rainy season, polio & typhoid notwithstanding. The youth have not been left out in matters health, with boys being encouraged to partake in the crucial VMMC (Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision). This is in a bid to curb the rising levels of HIV/AIDS among the youth, which according to the KAIS report 2007, claimed over 66.67% of the youth.

Abuse of hard drugs has become a major concern in regard to the health of youths. It won't be news anymore to learn of the death of a 15 year old boy who is lynched by a mob as he tries to rob a business premise because he wants quick money for drugs. Finding a 16 year old girl engaging in immoral acts of prostitution will be as ordinary as breathing oxygen. All these in a way or the other have detrimental effect on the health of our youths.

But why are all these happening when youths are badly needed to salvage the dwindling glory of their various communities? Traditionally it was necessary for a young girl to be taken through various lessons of moral & social responsibility such that when the same girls grow up one day then they can be able to have a stable lifestyle and keep their purity. Young boys as well were not left behind since they were also taught the power of being a uniting factor in a family by either their fathers or grandfathers as they went about their business of herding cattle.

In the recent past and even still to date, we learn of how unfortunate the rights of the youth & children are violated by the very people they look up to safeguard and uphold these same rights. In Kenya alone for example, some communities still expose young girls to traumatising early marriages. Female Genital Mutilation is still a major concern in certain communities in our country.

In the year 2012 our media houses reported the unfortunate incidence of a man sexually abusing his 2 daughters aged 12 & 15 respectively thereafter killing them in cold blood & burying them in the middle of their sitting room. We all learnt and saw how the police harassed and mishandled pupils of Lang'ata primary during a protest that left scores injured.

Each individual has a right that ought to be respected, children & youths being no exception. It is therefore with utmost humility that we ask the government to tighten up laws that protect the youths & children. Parents are also urged to take full responsibility into moulding their children into the people they wish them to become. The youth among themselves are urged to create awareness among their peers on matters health.

My great appreciation and gratitude goes out to all non-governmental organizations that work hand in hand with the government for a better society. Words can't be enough to express the extent of my gratitude. Let's all join hands, let's all make a change in the lives of youths and children. Remember, change starts from the person you see when you look at yourself in the mirror. Thank you.

*Davis Ochieng*



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