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Thank you very much. First I want to thank all of you for the opportunity to be here with International Youth and leaders of all ages working on really creating change. The idea I bring to you today is Teaching for Empowerment. Now the idea of empowerment I am talking about today is having youth confidence building and ability to get engaged in social issues, be they communal or global. And the reason for this, having had the opportunity to grow up across three continents, I noticed one commonality between education systems is that they are often focused on rote learning. That means you memorise, you memorise, you memorise and you spit the information back out. But you are not getting a holistic education, you are not learning “How can I become a leader?”, “How can I get involved?” and “How can I make change?”. Which as we said today, 50 per cent of the global population, greater than that, is youth. So we need to harness youth empowerment and engagement in community issues. And that is why my partner and I developed the “Empowerment Handbook”. This is a copy. And it is a handbook that does work; it is a curriculum that does work on building the power of one, the power of team, effective communication and action planning.

What we have done is we have taken this eight-course curriculum and we have implemented it across the span of five, nearly six years now at schools in India, the Philippines, South Africa Cambodia, Mainland China and a yearlong program in Hong Kong. The reason we are doing this is that we are seeing that when youth have the opportunities to get engaged in local issues, they are running with it. For example, the first year we ran it, four students from my school in Hong Kong ran it with students from Missionary schools of the Untouchable Caste outside of Chennai in India. After that year, working with 20 local students, they went brickyard by brickyard bringing their classmates back to school from working in the kilns as child labourers.

Now when you see this sort of change being incited on a local level, you realise how much telling a child that they can do something, that they have a responsibility to be doing something, what that can incite in them and the power that that can bring about.

So the goal of this curriculum now is that we want to expand it, an eight-session curriculum this size is not enough and it is not reaching enough students internationally. That is why I am here, because I propose that the UN, an international governing body, help develop and increase a curriculum like this, that it can provide multilingually around the world, that national governments, that education systems can bring on in addition to the education they already have. It is amazing to see studies that have been taken that show the impacts of leadership, to give substantiating data to the importance of including this in addition to math, and science and reading and language. Because that is what boosts long-term development. One such study was done by the University of Minnesota and I highly recommend that you all go and look at it.

And so the reason we want to do this is that, if you provide an education by an international governing body, you make sure that you include parts of cross-cultural nuances. For instance, right now we are building into the program, we realise the students in India, the boys and girls, cannot work in the same groups, a lot of time, for physical activity, just because of the cultural divide, whereas in the Philippines it is very easy for boys and girls to be physical together. So what we need to do is we need a body of international educators that can help say what can we build into this curriculum, then you give a framework and that is what you deliver to national governments. Because when they have a framework, when they have most of the information written out and put together for them in a nice booklet, that is when it is more likely to actually be carried out.

And so that is why it is important that we develop tools like this, through the UN, through other international bodies that we can develop. And so the significance of this program is not that it is going to solve issues on its own, but it is going to incite other youth to do what we are doing here today. We have all been blessed to have been given voices, to have been given opportunities and to be here with ideas that we want to carry forward. So why should we not be spreading that wealth and that empowerment to other youth around the world? So that is why I believe it is essential that we take these ideas and skills we have today and we find a way that we can harness them and do them in a basic education system, building on tools that we have already developed and that I why we need to publish the Empowerment Curriculum and not every student is going to jump on board with it, but it is going to greatly increase the number of students who have the opportunity, the ability and the need and the want to get involved, like we are so fortunate to be able to do today.

So thank you for listening and if you have any questions please come find me. Thank you.