Need to engage youth more critical than ever

Pierre Cooke Jr

“...if our region’s leaders are thinking strategically about “building back better”, they should be visualising a sustainable society for the future...”

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Dr Robert Godwin, a local health economist, recently published an analysis of the potential outcomes of the 2020-2021 pandemic. He concluded that COVID-19 has had a profound impact on mental health in the region, particularly among youth. "The stress that young people are experiencing is unprecedented in our history, and this is leading to significant mental health challenges," said Godwin.

The impact of COVID-19 on mental health has been severe, with symptoms of anxiety, depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on the rise. In response, some countries have implemented measures to address these issues, such as providing mental health services and increasing access to medication. However, these measures have not been sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the region.

The lack of resources for mental health services in the region has led to a significant increase in the number of young people seeking help. According to the World Health Organization, the pandemic has increased the risk of suicide among young people, with a rise in the number of cases reported in several countries.

In addition to the mental health challenges, the pandemic has also had a significant impact on the economy. Many businesses have been forced to close, leading to job losses and increased poverty. This has led to a significant increase in the number of young people who are struggling to make ends meet.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that many young people in the region are still living in poverty. According to a recent report by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), more than half of all children and young people in the region live in poverty, with many struggling to access basic essentials such as food and shelter.

In order to address these issues, it is essential that policymakers and leaders take a strategic approach to planning for the future. This involves creating sustainable systems to ensure that young people are not left behind.

One key strategy is to invest in education. This includes providing access to quality education and ensuring that young people have the skills they need to succeed in today’s economy. In addition, it is important to support young people who are struggling to access basic essentials such as food and shelter.

Another key strategy is to promote social inclusion. This involves ensuring that young people have access to opportunities to participate in society and have their voices heard. This includes supporting young people who are living with NCDs to manage their conditions and achieve their goals.

Finally, it is essential to promote mental health and well-being. This involves providing access to mental health services and ensuring that young people have the support they need to manage the challenges they are facing.

In conclusion, the pandemic has had a profound impact on mental health in the region, particularly among youth. It is essential that policymakers and leaders take a strategic approach to planning for the future, ensuring that young people are not left behind.

References: