

Youth
Bridges



**BRAZIL·UNITED KINGDOM·THE GAMBIA·NAMIBIA
·SIERRA LEONE·CAMEROON·TANZANIA**

The Youth Bridges virtual project began during the worldwide pandemic of 2020 to connect young people across borders at a time of heightened anxiety and isolation.

Led by Odiri Ighamre from KORI Youth Charity in London, Dr Ornette Clennon from the MEaP Academy Education Centre in Manchester, and Professor Claudia Sampaio from the Federal University of the Amazonas (UFAM) in Brazil.

First steps...

The first three exciting conversations set a format that invited young people to send a short profile, pic and a question for other participants before the session.

The shared questions enabled deep discussions about participant's countries and their individual experiences of COVID-19.



Participants Questions...

- “What challenges are you currently dealing with?”
- “How is COVID-19 affecting you personally and your country/city?”
- “What is / was your experience of University?”
- “What do you think your life will be like in 5 years time?”
- “What do you think your life will be like in five years’ time?.”
- “What advice would you have for younger people regarding education?”

Participants...



Forming a team...

From the fourth conversation onwards a team of eight young people volunteered to plan together and host the project. They built a structure of shared planning and created interactive activities to boost and enliven the next conversations. They then extended an invitation to young people from The Gambia.

"It was great to hear what other young people had to share. It was inspiring and I wanted to hear more about their experiences. From the presentation of the groups, I could see that many problems are common realities such as an impasse between generations, for example.' We are not alone. I felt more empowered and hopeful, knowing that despite the difficulties, I am not alone."

Hosts...



Guilherme, Brazil



Jermima, United Kingdom



NorDania, Uk



Samuel, Brazil



Paola, Brazil



Joy, United Kingdom



Adria, Brazil



Samuel, Brazil

Leading the process

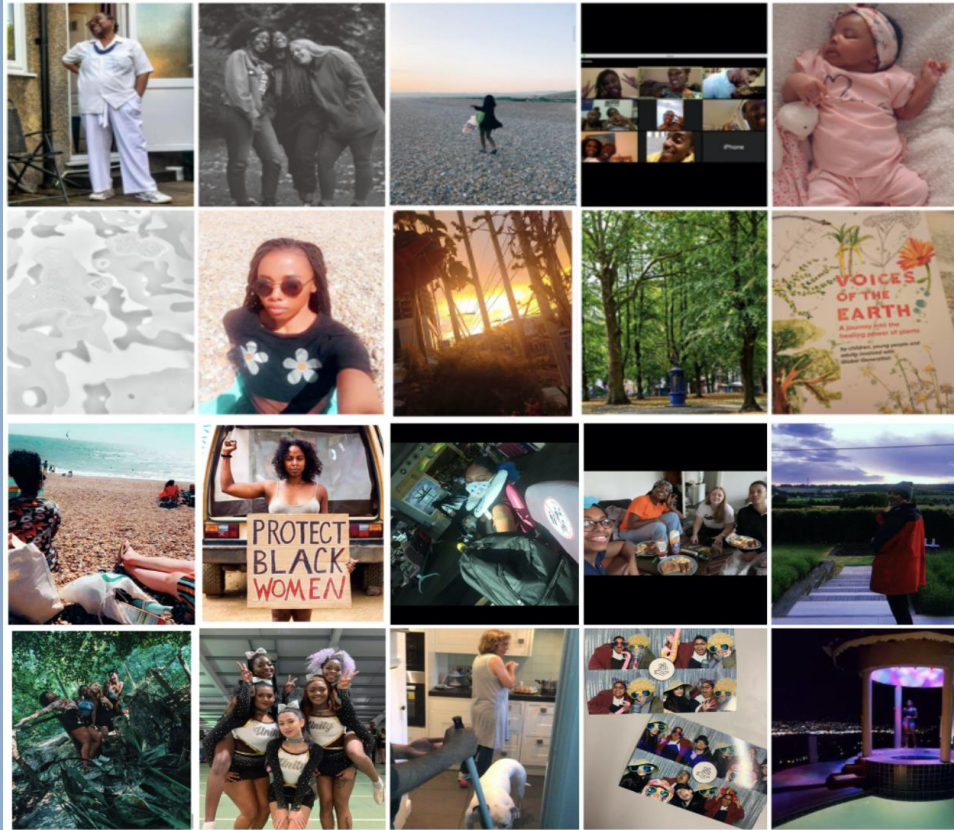
The project made another leap for its 5th conversation, when 28 young people from the UK, Brazil and The Gambia came together. Before the session all sent in a visual that summed up 2020, this provided a special lens into their range of experiences.

The hosting format included the participants questions for each other; breakout room discussions, a shared viewing of a recorded performance and a profound reflective moment exploring hopes for the future.

Participants Questions...

- “Can you share an experience/situation in your life when you felt empowered?”
- “What is your source of strength? (things, people, anything you rely on) that helps you to cope with problems/and challenges)”
- “What is the most challenging thing about being a young person in your society?”
- “How do you feel young people are being affected by using drugs in your communities?”
- “What do you think your life will be like in five years’ time?”

I hope we...



- I hope for a day we can all be kind to each other, regardless of our differences.
- I hope we can work together to rebuild the systems that have failed us and continue to act with compassion.
- I hope we remain humble despite the adversities we face and show humility.
- I hope we can have compassionate, intelligent leadership, to gather us together and guide us to a positive life.
- I hope we can use this time to remember how important community is, look out for others and continue to support collective healing.
- I hope we have the courage to listen to our inner voices and say no to what doesn't serve us.

After successfully involving young people from The Gambia the hosts decided to invite more young Africans for the 6th conversation.

Young people attended from Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Namibia and The Gambia. The session experienced all the challenges of young people struggling to understand the Zoom platform, weak broadband and difficulty with finding access to suitable spaces. This was all overcome however, and the two-hour session was exceptional, rebound with gratitude and excitement from hearing each others international voices.

African Youth Connect...



Participants Questions...

- “How do you feel young people are being affected by using drugs in your communities?”
- “What can modern day man do to positively impact themselves, the people around them and their environment.”
- “How do you think that we young African’s will be able to cope with this pandemic which slows down not only our development but also our activities?”
- “My question is what measures or strategies are we going to take to support the youth?”
- “As we are the ones to lead the younger generation, how will we intervene and empower ourselves and be able to have local scientist especially in Africa?”
- “How do we surmount some of the challenges victims face in accessing justice?”

Feedback...

- “I appreciated the idea of bringing young Africans together to discuss the different ways in which we face difficulties in our respective countries.”
- “The real difficulty that young people face here in Cameroon have is that of obtaining a job. After studies, specialised training, young people find themselves still at home with all this knowledge in their pockets.”
- “What I really want us to discuss is how to empower the youth and how to tackle youth un-employment.”
- “The funny thing to realise is that our youth can be wasted if the governments and systems in place are dysfunctional and corrupt.”

After six successful conversations The Youth Bridges Project team have spent time reflecting and exploring the way forward. After a meeting with the seven African Youth Leaders who put forward the young people for the conversations from their networks, the decision is to continue to build meaningful conversations between young people of Africa and the African Diaspora.



African Youth from the continent and the diaspora having conversations that foster learning and appreciation of their common challenges and shared aspirations.