

UNICEF Junior 8 Summit

ENTRY FORM

Team name: VERIX

School: Richmond Secondary School

Team Members: Stephanie Liou, Khalil Kassam, Wilson Lau, Alex Goncharov

Sponsor Teacher: Mr. Remi Vicente, International Baccalaureate Program Coordinator

Team Website: <http://www.verixj8.com>

1) Introduction to your entry

- Describe why you, a team of young people in a G8 nation, are interested in global citizenship issues.
- Explain why your team decided to take part in the UNICEF Junior 8 Summit. (Maximum 150 words.)

As grade 11 students in the International Baccalaureate Diploma program, all of our team members have studied and discussed global issues extensively in an academic setting. Our individual community involvement and diverse cultural backgrounds have also given us unique views regarding the world today. It's easy to become cynical, to become apathetic when we cannot vote, to despair when it seems like the challenges are too great. But despite the severity of global issues today, and the understanding that sweeping changes are unrealistic and difficult to accomplish, no amount of burdensome knowledge has been able to rid us of the pure idealism that simply comes with being young. It is because of such idealism that we have entered this competition, to seize our chance to speak out and be heard. We believe that we can represent Canada in the J8 Summit. We believe our ideas can make a difference.

2) G8 Summit agenda issues

Focusing on selected G8 agenda topics, describe two ways you would recommend to G8 leaders to solve each problem. Please write up to **300 words** to describe two ideas for **each** topic below.

(ideas have been separated into pages for easy reading)

1. The Environment and Climate Change

Describe two ideas how G8 countries can achieve sustainable and efficient energy supply, energy consumption reduction and other measures to curb global warming and better protect the integrity of the environment. (Maximum 300 words.)

Research from the IPCC shows that global temperatures may rise up to 4°C within this century. Already, heat waves in Europe have caused over 20,000 deaths. Climate change is a reality, and if the current trends are to be reversed, we must reduce GHG emissions and move towards sustainable and non-polluting sources of energy.

GREEN INDICES FOR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

An international organization must be established to evaluate products based on “Green Indices” such as fuel and energy efficiency, waste management, packaging, and product composition. This would be an expansion upon the ISO's (International Organization for Standardization) existing regulatory standards. Such a scheme has proved effective on a small scale – after Greenpeace released “Greener Electronics Ratings”, many companies improved their operational methods for a higher score. Companies can submit products for evaluation to earn “Green Seals”. Retail taxation will be scaled so that uninspected products will incur higher taxes, while “Green” products can enjoy reduced taxation to become more competitive price-wise. The labelling scheme will promote public awareness, and sliding scale taxation can encourage consumers to make eco-friendly choices. In this way, the free-market nature of G8 nations can be harnessed to facilitate positive progress

G8 GOVERNMENTS LEAD THE WAY

Government-operated businesses and organizations in G8 nations must lead the way in fighting climate change. Aggressive timelines must be drafted to build environmentally-friendly public transportation systems. Clean energy sources, such as wind and solar options, and carbon-capture techniques such as sequestration, must be investigated and implemented as permitted by local geographical conditions. Within the healthcare and educational systems, conservation of resources and energy should be encouraged: for instance, schools can increase digital curriculum in order to minimize paper usage.

Gradual changes on personal, corporate, and national levels will have cumulatively significant effects – during this generation, and for those to come.

2. The Global Economy

Describe two ideas to address how emerging and low-income economies can participate in and benefit from the global economy with positive impacts on the health and security of their citizens. (Maximum 300 words.)

Although global trade currently amounts to over 60 trillion dollars every year, the majority of profits are being enjoyed by already wealthy nations, and economic opportunities in developing nations are severely limited. The health and security of currently employed workers also need to be improved upon.

DEFENDING WORKERS' RIGHTS

Millions of workers worldwide have discovered the benefits of unions and representative groups over this past century of economic development. In Canada, unionized workers make approximately \$3.00 more per hour than non-unionized workers. Sectoral worker coalitions in low-income nations would have favourable results in terms of guaranteeing wages and wellbeing. Basic healthcare must be employer-provided; job training and skills would be taught in a uniform manner. Consequently, working conditions will be raised to an internationally acceptable level, providing increased opportunities for workers and guaranteed standards for investor confidence.

ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

To quote Dan Isenberg, Senior Lecturer at Harvard Business School, "Entrepreneurship itself creates, enables, and facilitates economic development". Aspiring entrepreneurs from foreign nations, such as business students, must be encouraged to join or form microfinanced start-ups in developing nations. Funds would be provided by international corporations interested in investing in these promising markets. Local entrepreneurs could also apply for the use of these funds, as an extension of existing programs such as the United Nations Capital Development Fund. Yang Jie of China, among thousands of other visionary entrepreneurs, moved to Malawi to begin an Ice Cream company – now the largest in the nation. With a mere \$100 loan, Afghani mother Shakila Sarajuddin was able to build a successful tailoring business. Truly, the key to developing nations is developing opportunities.

By carrying out these steps to involve everyone from factory workers to corporate executives, G8 nations can assist emerging and low-income economies with participating in and benefiting from the global economy.

3. Development

Discuss why the regions of Africa and Asia face high poverty rates, and what that means for children in these regions and for other citizens around the world. Present two ideas describing what the G8 leaders can do to reduce poverty in Africa and Asia. (Maximum 300 words.)

A lack of economic diversity, education, and local business opportunities, coupled with poor regulatory abilities and problematic governments, has led to alarmingly high levels of poverty in many African and Asian nations. The United Nations Development Programme reports that 36.2% of Africa currently lives on less than \$1 USD a day; clean water and adequate food remains inaccessible to many. Such dire conditions cause the deaths of over 10 million children yearly.

IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE

Lack of well-designed infrastructure is one cause of these problems. G8 nations must work with the governments of impoverished nations to ensure that buildings, roads, and communication systems are improved and constructed according to international safety standards. For example, an early warning system for the Indian Ocean area has an estimated cost of \$20 million; reconstruction costs following the Asian Tsunami disaster totaled approximately \$7.5 billion. Better infrastructure would help save lives, time, and money, as well as facilitate safe travel and trade on a daily basis.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURAL EFFICIENCY

60% of the African economy is based in agriculture. G8 nations must assist with developing farming equipment and regionally suitable high-yield crop types, as well as cooperate with local workers to build water systems with irrigation, drainage, and reservoir capabilities. Increased crop production allows developing countries to meet export targets and become competitive internationally, while retaining enough to reduce local hunger. Reservoirs will alleviate famines due to droughts and flooding.

As Newsweek Magazine states, "Africa is not sitting still waiting for the West to help." By improving infrastructure and agricultural industries, G8 nations will achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals by providing Less Economically Developed Countries with a working foundation upon which to flourish. Citizens in LEDC's will be able to explore diversified economic options and abate poverty, without having to sacrifice local traditions.

4. Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases such as HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are a major burden on the health and productivity of people – particularly children - in many low-income countries. Describe two measures to help curb one or more diseases that can be undertaken by G8 leaders. (Maximum 300 words.)

More than 11 million children have been orphaned by AIDS, and almost 15% of AIDS fatalities involve children. Other diseases including Malaria, Tuberculosis, infectious diarrhea, and respiratory tract infections are highly prevalent in many low-income nations. These diseases have devastating effects on education rates, life expectancy, cultural development, employment, and economic productivity.

COOPERATION FOR EDUCATION

Education is one major frontier in which the battle against infectious diseases must undeniably be fought -- through spreading awareness among average citizens and enhancing the skills of medical practitioners. Community health experts from G8 nations can assist in providing knowledge about disease prevention in schools and among women. In addition, medical students and professionals from G8 nations should teleconference with healthcare workers in developing nations to provide regular support, and, upon request, personally spend time to train personnel in disease-ridden nations.

SUPPORT THROUGH SUPPLIES

Companies producing pharmaceuticals and health products must be encouraged to donate necessary medical supplies in low-income countries, with tax credits funded by Tobacco taxes in G8 nations. Vaccinations, medication, prophylactics, diagnostic equipment, and even simple items such as soap are desperately needed; when made available, their effects are prodigious. Although there is currently great controversy and standstill due to patents and compulsory licenses, long-term rental or interest-based schemes, such as the Health Impact Fund from Yale University, can help protect the rights of both patients and pharmaceutical developers. Donated vaccinations have reduced Measles deaths in Africa by over 90% within the past seven years. Since antiretroviral drugs were offered for free by the government, AIDS-related deaths in Brazil have decreased by over 80%.

As new forms of treatment such as food-based vaccines are developed, plans for implementation in resource-poor countries must be drafted. For G8 nations, saving one life at a time should be an unequivocally constant goal.

3) References

Cite all of the references you used in a bibliographic list (include the Web sites, newspaper articles, magazine articles, letters, presentations, books, etc. that informed your research). (Maximum 300 words.)

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CORRESPONDENCE

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4) Social commitment

What activities has your team led or participated in this school year that demonstrate your commitment to global issues, social justice and the community around you? (Maximum 300 words.)

Each of our team members is active in many areas of our community. Organizations with which we are involved include the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation, The Royal Canadian Air Cadets, Soccer for Smiles, and the Aga Khan Development Network. We have participated in events such as the Terry Fox Run for Cancer Research, Hoops for Hope to support childrens' programs in Africa, the Zenith Leadership Conference, and many others. On a regular basis, Khalil and Alex volunteer at local hospitals and seniors' homes. Wilson is a leader-in-training with Scouts Canada, and Stephanie edits a major youth magazine (Youthink) and reads with ESL and developmentally challenged children. Through World Vision, we have also been able to sponsor a child currently living in Tibet.

During the process of entering the J8 Competition, our team has tried to involve people from all levels of our school, local, regional, national, and even global communities. It was our goal to refine our own ideas while gathering input from and spreading awareness about international issues to as many people as possible. Thus, we would be able to best reflect the viewpoints of not only youth in Western Canada, but citizens of all ages across the world. To do this, we have held presentations and led activities at many local elementary schools – both learning from and educating the next generation of socially responsible Canadians at the same time. Thousands of our peers across the world have been polled in person and through the utilization of fabulous internet platforms such as Facebook. In addition, teachers in our school as well as hundreds of professors from numerous Canadian universities have been consulted for their professional opinions. We are incredibly proud of what we have accomplished as an individual team, and grateful for all the support we have received.

5) Mobilizing others

How would you collect the views of other young Canadians on G8 agenda issues before the Junior 8 Summit? If you were able to attend the Summit, how would you then inspire other young people to become involved in global issues in your community? (Maximum 300 words.)

The project website that we have set up for the J8 Competition is a perfect way to continue collecting ideas from other young Canadians before the actual summit, as there is a feedback form on the website to encourage visitor feedback. In addition, since our ideas are available on the site in both English and French, we hope to be able to break the traditional language barrier between Canadian youth. The online poll regarding our ideas and J8 Agenda issues can also be accessed through our website, and has been immensely helpful in collecting opinions from youth all across the nation and around the world. Social networking websites such as Facebook can still be used to reach an even wider audience on a friendly, familiar level.

Our informational video and experience with speaking in front of large groups of students can also enable us to personally share our ideas and passion among more youth in Canada. We would be prepared to continue educating others about global issues and leading activities to facilitate involvement. Our selection as the team to officially represent Canada in the J8 Summit would also give us greater credibility when presenting, and serve as inspiration for other students as a real life example of how youth can actually make a difference in today's world.

6) Diversity

How does the composition of your team include diversity? This may include linguistic, ethnic, gender or other forms of diversity. (Maximum 100 words.)

Canada is renowned for and extremely proud of being a highly diverse nation, and the composition of our team is a certainly perfect reflection of this unique characteristic. Our members have roots in all corners of the world, including Taiwan, Belarus, the United States, Tanzania, Hong Kong, Guyana, India, Macau, Portugal, Holland, and China. Each team member is also of a different religious persuasion: Wilson is Catholic, Khalil is Muslim, Alex is Christian, and Stephanie has yet to find a religion. Linguistically, our abilities encompass the English, French, Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Russian, Belorussian, Ukrainian, and Polish languages.