

## CAMPUS REPORT

# IASAS Student Leaders Global Summit in Rome: Actioning the SDGs

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The 5th IASAS Student Leader Global Summit (SLGS) was held in Rome, Italy from July 13 to 15. Forty selected students from twenty countries attended and participated in educational sessions and working groups. Ailish Smith, a student from Ireland commented, “Being in Rome for the IASAS SLGS when Rome was experiencing record temperatures showed me that we are past the point of urgency to achieve sustainability, we are in an emergency.” It is global issues that bring us together for one purpose.

Educational sessions at the SLGS ranged from universities as change agents, digital citizenship, and service learning. Students were put into small groups that selected one of UNESCOs Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals (SDG). They were tasked with creating a micro-campaign focusing on one SDG within a community of their choice in which at least one student has a personal connection. Connecting other elements within the system, they created a system map and an accompanying stakeholder map to ensure complete understanding of their selected issue and community. After establishing feedback loops and polarity of connections, they identified two to three leverage points that the group would be able to plan an intervention, but only an intervention in which the students would be able to access. Therefore, the eight micro-campaigns completed at the SLGS would be actionable and possibly replicable in communities around the world by university students.

The groups addressed SDGs 2 (zero hunger), 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action), and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). Students identified communities in South Africa, Ukraine, the United States, Norway, and Zimbabwe. Many of the campaigns directly involved institutions of higher education, student organisations, and surrounding communities to make sustainable change. Samuel Kaimenyi, secretary general from KCA university in Kenya discussed his experience working on SDG 5, gender equality. “I am now motivated to implement a project aimed at providing affordable recyclable sanitary products to women and girls from my informal settlements area back home. This issue is particularly close to my heart as I have seen firsthand the challenges that women in these marginalized communities face when it comes to accessing menstrual hygiene products.”

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Overall, knowledge and content only get us so far in this world. It often is the relationships we build with one another that truly changes our mindsets and our ability to see past our own life experience. The students had an opportunity to build their own relationships. Alessandro Marsh, a student from South Africa stated, “Initially I thought the friendship at the summit was a welcome by-product of our project. Instead I realized that that it was its lifeblood.” This is a testament to the quality of students blended with topics of the global summit to create this context for student growth and development in Rome.

Bhavika Vohra, a student from the United Arab Emirates reflected that “Through thought-provoking discussions, immersive workshops, and valuable connections with like-minded individuals, we were brought together to advocate for responsible practices aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. United by our shared vision and determination, we were inspired to build a future where responsible and sustainable practices become the norm, leaving a lasting impact on our planet and paving the way for a better world for generations to come.” The student leader global summit will continue to challenge students in the future to confront current global concerns and address issues of society that impact us all. University students are both the leaders and active followers that future generations will depend on to change the world.

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