

Bridging The Gap: Hult Prize As A Means To Halt Suicide.

#SEPTEMBER

#SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

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Background to the Project – Hult Prize

The Hult Prize competition is an annual yearlong entrepreneurial competition which crowd-sources ideas from students studying for their undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications, challenging them to present solutions to a challenge. It is organized in over 121 countries in the world with over 300,000 student participation. The challenge centres around issues or topics at the forefront of global discussion such as Education, Climate Change, Food Security, Energy, Health and Water Access.

Today, the Hult Prize foundation is the world's biggest engine for the launch of for-good, for-profit start-ups emerging from Universities and Colleges with over 2500 staffs and volunteers around the world. Training over one million youth in impact entrepreneurship over the past decade, the movement has deployed more than US\$ 60 million dollars of capital into the sector and mobilized and empowered millions of young people to re-think the future of business as it continues to breed disruptive innovations on Universities and colleges campuses across 100 plus countries. The Hult Prize Foundation donates US\$1 million in seed capital to help the winning team make their dreams a reality by launching their social enterprise, helping an entire generation and stimulating economic benefits for individuals and countries.

The competition revolves around 3 phases, which is the **On-Campus program** held at various universities around the world. When a participating team wins their On-Campus challenge, they automatically qualify to compete at the **Regional Finals** held in over 10 cities around the world. Winners of Regionals then advance to the **Global Accelerator** hosted at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, competing for US\$1 million dollars.

Hult Prize Competition in Pentecost University

Pentecost University made its debut in the Hult Prize Competition in 2019, through the efforts of Mr. Joseph Kofi Asante (former and premier Campus Director). Dr. Mrs Abigail Kyei, the head of the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, was invited on board as the Patron for Hult Prize in Pentecost University and Mr. Reginald Arthur-Mensah Jnr, a lecturer in the same department, also joined as the University coordinator. The On-Campus programme at the Pentecost University was largely successful, with the eventual winners, RBG, representing Pentecost University at the World Regional Finals in Monterrey, Mexico. Competing with 63 other top universities in the World such as University of San Francisco, Rutgers University, University of California Berkeley and Duke University, the school advanced into the Top Six Finals, a remarkable achievement by the team and the school, especially since this was the first time Pentecost University entered the competition.

This year, Hult Prize Pentecost University seeks to offer a solution, seeing beyond the On-Campus program, by echoing the call for students to be job creators, rather than job seekers to champion the creation of an Entrepreneurship Hub at Pentecost University to train and equip students to succeed. This will provide an opportunity for teams and students who do not advance to the finals to receive continuous support from the school.

The 2021 Hult Prize challenge dubbed, “**FOOD FOR GOOD**” is asking teams around the world to build viable food enterprises that will impact the lives of 10 million people in the next decade while strengthening communities, increasing incomes, feeding the hungry and creating jobs. In order for these lives to be impacted however, we need to have the human beings alive.

Tying in with this notion, September happens to be the suicide prevention awareness month globally. The focus is to increase the awareness of the public health significance of suicide and suicide attempts and to make suicide prevention a high priority on the global public health agenda. It also aims to encourage and support countries to develop or strengthen comprehensive suicide prevention strategies in a multisectoral public health approach. Hult Prize therefore seeks to take advantage of this global initiative to address issues of suicide prevention within the month in the University.

About suicide

Suicide is the act of killing oneself intentionally. It is a tragic end to a life, a permanent solution to a temporary problem, yet it is one of the fastest growing epidemics across the world today. Close to 800,000 people take their own lives every year, with the statistics showing one death every 40 seconds due to suicide³. Suicide negatively impacts families, friends, communities, and entire countries long after the loss of the victim. Amongst the youth aged 15 to 25 years, suicide is the second leading cause of death globally². In 2016, over 79% of global suicides occurred in low- and middle-income countries³. Crude estimates suggest there are over 34,000 suicides per year in Africa, with an overall incidence rate of 3.2 per 100,000 population. Further, in Africa, suicide rates in men are typically at least three times higher than in women¹.

Causes of suicide

1. A prior suicide attempt is the single most important cause for suicide in the general population.
2. A breakdown in the ability to deal with life's stresses such as financial problems, workload, work pressure, lack of work motivation, frustrations etc.
3. Alcohol use disorders
4. Chronic/intense illness and/or pain
5. Loneliness and Isolation
6. Marriage break-ups, relationship break-ups
7. Mental disorders e.g. depression

8. Poverty
9. Substance use disorders
10. Unemployment
11. Unpleasant personal past history e.g. sexual abuse, disasters, violence

Who is at risk?

1. Everyone

Methods of suicide

1. Hanging
2. Ingestion of Pesticides
3. Ingestion of certain medications
4. Use of firearms

Prevention and control of suicide

Suicides are preventable. There are several measures that can be taken at national, regional, community and individual levels to prevent suicide and suicide attempts. These include:

1. Early identification, treatment, and care of people with mental and substance use disorders, chronic/intense illnesses and/or pain and acute emotional distress
2. Faith-based interventions
3. Follow-up care for people who have ever attempted suicide
4. General family and community support for every member of the society
5. Introducing alcohol legislation to reduce the harmful use of alcohol
6. Reducing access to the means and methods of suicide (e.g. pesticides, firearms, certain medications)
7. Reporting by the media in a responsible way

8. School-based interventions

Response of Hult Prize Pentecost University

Suicide prevention efforts require coordination and collaboration among stakeholders including the health sector, education, labour, agriculture, business, justice, law, defense, politics, and the media. These efforts must be comprehensive and integrated as no single approach alone can make an impact on an issue as complex as suicide. Furthermore, they are preventable with timely, evidence-based, and low-cost interventions. For national, regional, community and individual responses to suicide to be effective, a comprehensive multisectoral and multidimensional strategy is needed, and such is the Hult prize competition. To explain further how Hult Prize at PU intends addressing this global topic of interest, it will be good to recount the story of one Hult Prize candidate who made it to the top in the competition last year.

The Uche success story from the Hult Prize Pentecost University

Uche Godswill Ogbu, was part of last year's winning team of the On-Campus edition at the Pentecost University. Through the Hult Prize competition, Uche was able to secure a job with BraveHearts Adventure, a million-dollar company in Ghana into adventure. His opportunity came when one of the Judges for the On-Campus event, Mr. Jay Jay Segbefia, recruited him to work with his company. Uche, a student in Communication Studies who was struggling to pay his school fees, has now settled all of his outstanding fees and now enjoys a comfortable life. He returns this year as a Teams' Coordinator in Hult Prize, to inspire and motivate this year's Hult Prize Pentecost University participants.

Motivation to join the Hult Prize Initiative against suicide

Learning about suicide prevention is a great way to educate oneself and others. Suicide Prevention Awareness Month is your chance to stop and assess yourself and those around you, and make sure someone who desperately needs your help is not missing out on that help.

We from the Hult Prize Pentecost University say, “*Suicide is real. No more fear and inhibition to talk about suicide as has been the norm. We are empowering suicide attempters and the youth through entrepreneurship. We believe entrepreneurship is a strong foundation to kick out suicide away from the lives of the Ghanaian youth. We invite the Pentecost University community to support us, as we execute this year’s On-Campus program scheduled between the months of October and December, 2020, as once again we seek to raise high the flag of Pentecost University and Ghana.*”

References

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