

Open Letter to High Level Panellists from youth partners in development

9th May 2013

Dear Panellists,

The High Level Panel meeting in London in November last year was a first: a first that the youth sector had been brought to the table as an equal partner alongside the private sector and civil society to provide expertise and insight into tackling the world's biggest problems. **We reached an understanding that youth are not another tick box, token participant or an afterthought in development.** We are the MDG generation. Young people will inherit a world shaped by these new development goals and thus we want to see a clear mandate for our inclusion as an essential development partner in the design, implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda.

We are putting our trust in this process. Over the last six months, we have worked hard to bring you our perspectives, priorities and ideas. As you finalise your report for the Secretary General, we are writing to strongly recommend that the main outcomes of these discussions outlined below are reflected in the framework across goals, targets and indicators, and not just the conversations alongside them.

1. A transformative agenda bringing about sustainable development

In all our consultations, the strongest message emerging is this: **the next agenda has to bring about transformation.** We're not looking for an updated version of the MDGs, but an agenda fit for the challenges of today and the future. In practice, this means bold commitments to transform our economies, societies and our approach to the environment to ensure sustainable, equitable development. We want to see the eradication of poverty, but we have enough experience of poverty to know that aid is not enough: we need **institutional reform and structural change** at all levels underpinned by a commitment to active global partnership.

2. A clear mandate for action, innovation, implementation and accountability

You will remember that during our first meeting in London, we gave examples of innovative, scalable and effective youth-led interventions. We urge you to ensure your report officially acknowledges the role of young people as innovators and solution providers in achieving sustainable development. **We encourage you to take a three-lens approach to youth participation: young people as leaders, partners, as well as beneficiaries¹.**

The MDGs failed to make explicit who was responsible for monitoring progress. It has led to fragmentation both within and outside the UN system, for ownership of specific MDGs and commitment to them.

We strongly recommend the integration of a mechanism for Member States, Major Groups and other stakeholders to record, report and track incremental and short term progress on their own efforts to achieve longer term global goals².

3. Young people recognised as full and equal partners in development across all goals

Half the world is under 25. Harnessing the particular knowledge, experience and skills of young people will be essential to transforming economies and societies. We have an active role to play in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of the new framework. We are counting on you to ensure that the gains youth have made in this process to be better recognised as equal partners are not lost in the conversation going forward. So, when you identify who the global partnership includes, don't forget young people and youth-led organisations in all their diversity. Although this is an agreement between Member States, the **goals must make explicit that young people are essential in a multi-stakeholder approach.** Governments, the private sector and civil society cannot bring about transformation without us.

Don't limit our engagement to typical youth issues. As stated in the Global Youth Forum declaration (December 2012), young people are disproportionately affected by poverty across all indicators and see the inter-linkages between the traditional development "silos" such as employment, education, health, families, and civic participation. Unless **youth are specifically identified in wider**

¹ The three-lens model is explained in the Youth Participation Guide (2010): <http://www.ygproject.org/>.

² For example the Major Group of Children and Youth recommend a mechanism similar to the Universal Periodic Review process of the Human Rights Council

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goals, targets and/or indicators we know from experience that not only will we be left behind, but the efficacy of the entire post-2015 framework will be compromised.

The findings from our consultations

At your recommendation, we reached out further after London; running over 40 youth consultations across every continent. We made efforts to reach diverse and marginalised groups. These findings were shared with the HLP in Monrovia and, more recently, during our meeting with the HLP in Bali.

4. **Fair, responsive and accountable governance** is the number one priority to be addressed emerging from our youth consultations. We know that better governance is essential for achieving other priorities. Political leaders are often strikingly older than the people they govern and young people, particularly young women, are not represented in political decision-making in proportion to their numbers and diversity. In practice, we want to see **fair political representation** including young men, young women and all marginalised groups. Equally, we need **new accountability mechanisms** put in place that will allow citizens, young people in particular, to monitor and evaluate commitments made by decision-makers.
5. **Measures to tackle discrimination and inequality:** The Millennium Declaration committed to the values of equality and tolerance but these were not included anywhere in the final MDGs. Young people are found in all of the most excluded, vulnerable and marginalised groups in our world: including **people with disabilities, young mothers, the unemployed, migrants, drug users, people living with HIV and LGBTIQI groups**. Our new framework must make an explicit commitment to the meaningful inclusion of these groups in accordance with the principles of human rights. It must account for the unique barriers they face to accessing basic services, economic opportunities, political representation, and living lives free from discrimination and violence.
6. **An explicit commitment to gender equality:** Recognizing that investing in girls is one of the single most effective interventions for reducing poverty, young people demand that our next development framework **tackles the root causes of gender inequality**; ensuring girls' equal access to education, the elimination of gender-based and sexual violence and early and forced marriage, and strong commitments to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
7. **Peace and Security:** Young people want to see a pledge to **ending violence against all individuals and groups**, including that committed by state parties. We need to see a focus on prevention and protection, with support offered to those affected by violence and a serious investment in conflict negotiation and peace-building that is inclusive of all those affected.
8. **Health:** There is a clear call for **universal access to affordable, quality healthcare and youth-friendly services** that are particularly sensitive to young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially those living with HIV and young women and girls. Young people want to be supported to make informed and consenting decisions about their health, bodies and sexuality.
9. **Education:** Young people want to see universal access to quality, relevant education that extends beyond primary schooling, and which **integrates life skills, vocational training, and non-formal education**, including in emergencies. We must contribute to the design and delivery of curricula and ask for more of a focus on comprehensive sexuality education, and education for sustainable development.
10. **Jobs:** The young people you have spoken to are calling for access to employment that encompasses fair wages, equal opportunities, social security, quality training and an end to precarious work. We are asking for a clear **commitment to job creation and a marked investment in building the capacities of young people to create their own job opportunities**, and develop their own careers. Tackling youth unemployment and securing safe and fulfilling jobs across different contexts in the Global North and South will directly contribute to inclusive growth and development.

The youth-led data revolution

11. We ask you to ensure that the new framework is underpinned by **data disaggregated by age and sex, and systematic country-level indicators on youth for all goals**, so that progress on development targets can be evaluated.

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As a youth sector, we are developing a big idea for the next 1000 days to revolutionise government transparency that goes far beyond citizen consultation; a process of 'open development' that provides on-going and responsive feedback loops on progress so that previously marginalised voices, particularly young people, play a central role in holding decision-makers to account.

Young people, in all our diversity, understand as well as anyone how many issues are on the table and the challenge of inter-governmental negotiations. **To give us the best chance for pushing for the agenda we need for our world, we request your report reflects our conversations, research, surveys and consultations summarised in the eleven points listed above.**

It has been our pleasure working with you in the conversation. Good luck finalising the report and please do not hesitate to contact victoria@restlessdevelopment.org should you require any further information.

Yours Faithfully,

This letter was developed by the Beyond 2015 Children and Youth Working Group and the Major Group of Children and Youth. It is specifically endorsed by the following youth advocates and organisations:

Abibimman Foundation
Advocates for Youth (USA)
Africa Monitor
Agar Vision Africa Initiative
Amanitare Nigeria
Association of Women Leadership and Sustainable Development (AFLED)
Brazilian Youth Coalition for the Post-2015
British Youth Council (BYC)
Centre for Human Security (CHS)
ChangeMob
Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council (CYEC)
Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevoelkerung (DSW)
Dutch National Youth Council
Dutch UN Youth Delegates (on Sustainable Development)
Equidad de Género, Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia (Mexico)
Espolea, A.C.- Mexico
European Youth Forum
Girls Power Initiative (GPI)
Global South Initiative
Global Youth Action Network
Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS
International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)
International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)
Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement
JusTeach Foundation

Kawsu Sillah, Youth Advocate working for Information Technology Association of The Gambia Basse Chapter
National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU)
NepalPost2015
New Dawn for Women and Development (NDWD)
Organization of African Youth-Liberia
Plan UK
Project Survival Pacific (Fiji's Youth Climate Change Movement)
Restless Development
Restless Development-India
Rural Voices of Youth
Swaziland National Network of People Living with HIV and AIDs
Taiwan Youth Climate Coalition
TakingITGlobal
Vital Actions for Sustainable Development [AVD]
VSO
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)
War Child UK
Y Care International
Youth Advocacy Group of the Global Education First Initiative
Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS (YEAH)
YMCA-YWCA Global (in Norway)
Youth Network Centre of Yunnan Sexuality Association- China
Young Voices Indonesia