

"The Past, Present, and Future of Youth Involvement"
Discussion
Washington, D.C.
December 3, 2002

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HALLY MAHLER: Thank you Naina. Thank you everybody.

Questions? Comments? Concerns? You have to come up to the microphone. Martha, come up to the microphone. Anybody who has a question, comment, or concern, come on up and line up behind the microphone so that our webcast captures.

MARTHA: Hi, thank you, good morning. I'd like to just thank all the presenters who were excellent. I just have one comment. I think as we move forward with the day, I'd like to just remind us again to be sensitive to the notion of degenerative disparities here, because again, we talk about youth participation and I'm sure it's implied that we are talking about both males and females, but I think we actually need to be explicit, because I think, in fact, that the youth participation, youth involvement, youth leadership, any of those words, actually there is real gender differences, actually in the engagement of young women in all sorts of layers of participation and I think we need to be mindful of that. That's just as a comment.

HALLY MAHLER: Anybody want to add or...

FEMALE VOICE: Thank you for your wonderful presentations. I was thinking that one useful way to think about some of the issues we were discussing today would be to take a page from both the women's movement and the civil rights movement and think about ageism in the same way we think about sexism and racism, because the rights language is relatively

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abstract, but I think we can all understand the implications of not seeing young people as fully human and how that plays out in all different kinds of institutions and activities.

HALLY MAHLER: If any of you two want to say anything, just jump up and... yeah I was about to say, next people who come to the microphone, please introduce yourself and where you're from. Don't be shy.

UCHAYCEE [Misspelled?]: My name is Uchaycee, that's an introduction, I guess from advance [Misspelled?] Africa, but I'm a youth, I won't be a youth in six months when I'm 25. So, I'm very excited to be here and I thank the speakers. I'm basically here to represent an organization I started when I was working in South Africa and it's called Natenbay [Misspelled?] and if the youth employment agency, excuse me, I'm a little nervous, in the township of Lanka [Misspelled?], in Capetown. And I want to emphasize the point that, I think Naina, made about empowering youth economically and focusing on areas, specifically me interest is in Africa, where there is not a high HIV prevalence or STI rate and watching that group and being able to monitor a specific group throughout their lives to see if a lot of programs are affective, specifically Longa Y [Misspelled?], myself and two college students, they were studying abroad in Capetown. Why we started our NGO, and that's a long story, was basically because of the lack of guidance in a lot of the high schools. None of this is new

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information to any of us in a lot of developing countries, but I think it's really, really important to put, to pump a lot of energy and linkages into preexisting NGO's. We're so small, no one knows about us, but we have a lot of positive impact and energy and we, in many ways, epitomize youth involvement, participation, and what was the last one, youth-adult partnership. So I welcome anyone to come over, or at this point address realistic ways of partnering with these bigger organizations that will forget little NGO's like us that are only two years old. Thank you.

HALLY MAHLER: Come up and line up, that's all right.

ECOM: My name is Ecom [Misspelled?] and I just wanted to ask if, from the literature search in the past, and in the present, whether you found a tendency, when we get you involved to create a new class of young persons that begin to allocate to themselves the right to speak for and also marginalize other young persons. Is there any such finding, I'm interested.

NAINA DHINGRA: Maybe I could just make a comment on that Hally. Very recently, in fact, in Southeast Asia, whenever you decide to have a youth forum or something of that nature, there's a lengthy selection process by young people. Okay, they go about it in many ways. They start off, in fact, and I think they become acutely aware of the idea of being; trying to be as representative as possible and they are getting better at it. I would agree with you, in terms of, not too long ago, whenever

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we selected young people to come to meetings, they weren't necessarily represented, however; I think there is a growing trend to take young people to a process where they try to represent various groups, boys and girls, rural and urban, etc. You know children with different experiences, children who grew up as a child soldier or someone who grew up in a simple family or whatever. So, I think that is changing. The idea though that young people will be taken to a different level and so we create this new class of young people. I think I understand what you're saying there, you know if they grow too quickly and they speak in a particular way and they dress in a particular way, like they put on a jacket, they become like you or me. I don't know if there's any problem with that, to be honest. You know people keep raising that as an issue; don't we want to leave them the way they were? Did we make a different [Unintelligible]? Not necessarily. I think young people themselves want to feel part of... they want to be seen as an equal and if that means putting on a jacket, so that they are a little bit more acceptable, that's all right. You know, this is a personal feeling, but I think there are people who feel, you know, that that's a pity. If you see a group of people who have lost, I don't know, something of themselves. I don't know if any other...

CHRISTINE NORTON: I think that that was a very good question, because it is true, there is a difference in young

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people who have been given the skills to participate. You know I am sitting up here in a suit, very much so, but I don't think that's a bad thing necessarily, I think where we run into trouble is the thing that Shanti touched on is how do we age out. I'll tell, I'm up here and this is definitely one of the last times I will be up here as a young person because in May, I'm hopefully going to graduate college, but in my very American view, when I graduate college, that means that I aged out, that I then become a youth ally and a youth [Unintelligible] and I think that's something that's very important and I think that we don't recognize how needed young people, how young people need to make that transfer of not being the star youth all the time. It's very hard to know that, you know, I can be invited up here to say my spiel, but in about a year, I'm not going to be able to do this, I'm going to be at some entry level job doing who knows what, but my point is that your comment, your question is right in it's rank, but the idea is if we don't give young people the skills to age out, then we're always going to have one class that isn't really representative.

SHANTI CONLY: I agree with all those statements. There is just one thing to add, there is some literature that people who participate or volunteer as young people, grow up and as adults, they also volunteer more. They also participate with young people more and they are also more engaged in their

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communities, so that's something that's a lifelong thing, not just a youth participation.

CLAYTON LYNNFIELD [Misspelled?]: Good morning, my name is Clayton Lynnfield and I'm from Capetown, South Africa. I am currently with in a fellowship with the National Endowment for Democracy, who connects the difference between conflict management and democracy and I'm hoping that's going to lay the ground to look at the impact it has on HIV/AIDS. Just a quick comment, I think it's important, just as the first speaker reiterated; we need to have young people at [Unintelligible]. I think this is ways that we empower them, interns is but one way, but also you work with young people, where are they? I was fortunate to be part of UNICEF's Special Session on Children as one of the facilitators and the first [Unintelligible] that they had was all adults in the room and the first question was, where is the young people. The second [Unintelligible] was more involved with the young people and I think if Christine can also just mention how that participation went and just how the involvement of young people, she mentioned in one of the slides, the young person who was at the [Unintelligible], those were whys of empowering people, The question I want to raise to all three speakers is that [Unintelligible] young people are not the future leaders, they are the leaders. You look at all the households where the parents are dying, young people are stepping up and they are running those households. The problem

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is that state machinery cannot manage those households, therefore we have street children who are orphans, so my question again is how are we making sure there is coordination around donor and funding to make sure that we are empowering the leaders of today, not tomorrow. Secondly, you know, we're sitting in a room like this and I [Unintelligible] around bringing everyone around the table to look at youth participation, it's not that way in some of the countries, in some of the conferences that I've attended and some of the workshops in Africa, people have to come all over the world to find out what they are doing in the same country, but they don't know what's happening in their own country. And I think if we have more of these partnerships, and I agree with Naina, it has to be partnerships. We need to forge those partnerships and we need to break away from creating little empires that my organization is the best and we get the most funding from Ford. You know, how do we include small organizations, like my sister's in Languor? You know, we need to include that and if we are going to have an impact, I think if we should do an assessment now of the impact we are having, I'm sure it's going to be a small impact because we all pulling in different directions and I think it's about time that we [Unintelligible] and come up with a shared vision, a shared mission and that our impact is a collective and not each of us pulling from each side.

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NAINA DHINGRA: I'll just comment on that. First of all, when we talk about participation, we tend to talk about [Unintelligible] and we talk about participation more broadly now. It's not just about attending conferences, not just about being a voice in an event, but we really, ultimately where we want to go with participation, is we want to see young people involved with the home, school, community. Which is where they spend most of their lives. They don't spend most of their lives sitting in a room at a conference so this is an entry point that they're involved in a decision-making process or in something like this, it's important as well. And it is less a parallel thing. It is like involving them in a program cycle and then involving them in home, school, community, which is ultimately where we want to be, so I just want to make that little distinction first of all. You know I hear Clayton's point. Certainly for those young people that came to the Special Session, it was an amazing experience, in which, I'm afraid we weren't ready to see because the children who sat at the forum, who took part in the action forum, that part was not public. And for those people who were in that room and had that experience, you would be really and truly amazed when young people are given the right to take control of the whole thing, do all the talking, prepare the decorations and so on, it was actually quite an amazing experience to see these young people from all over the world, completely different backgrounds, some

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of them really take control and move forward with their agenda. They were very clear about what they wanted to do, what needed to be done and sometimes we really do underestimate what these young people are thinking or what young people are capable of. It really doesn't require a suit, you know, just to think those things or to say those things they were thinking and they really let us and I really do see that experience in the Special Session as a turning point. It was definitely a turning point and a clear indication that young people are at a different level and no question about if they should be involved at all. Whether they... where they should participate, they should participate, they have to participate. Now we just now how we structure it and how do we make it happen. How do we build their capacity to do certain things and so on.

SHANTI CONLY: I think it can't [Misspelled?] be related, but just to answer part of that question is the issue of orphans and vulnerable youth and that is a big question worldwide and some of these vulnerable youth will not have the opportunity to attend the big conferences and have their voices heard, but as Naina mentioned, they do form organizations and groups and coalitions in their own communities and locally, so that's something to consider when looking at overseas work is I'm trying to find those organizations in the community.

HALLY MAHLER: Go ahead, next question please.

JEAN LOWICKY: Good morning everyone. I'm Jean Lowicky

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with the Women's Commission For Refugee Women and Children, up in New York and I'm running the children's and adolescent project, which for about four years has done a lot of work on trying to focus international attention on adolescents affected by armed conflict and one of the things we've done is a series of participatory studies that are run by adolescents, facilitated directly managed etc, by youth organizations and much to our surprise, in addition to the many issues from child soldiering, sexual slavery, heads of households, lack of education. All the things that adolescents in conflict and emergencies bear, people have been extremely interested in the methodology and I have to say, in the area of the commission of the rights of the child, and such great work that is being done and talking about participation, more academic work, etc. In the field, except in fits and starts and bits and pieces, it really has not been a consistent response despite the fact that you have got some huge monetary emergencies that have gotten a lot of international attention and support, there isn't that consistency that's there and one of the questions I really have is why haven't some interventions worked, for instance, something like Actions for the Rights of Children that UNACR and the Save the Children Alliance for example, had put together. It reached a lot of people and there have been major changes, but why isn't there a greater impact with that for example, as a challenge, looking forward, what are some of the

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NGO's, you and some others come together to make some of those changes and also, I do agree, often it does feel like governments are more on our side at times than one another, but in a sense that's much easier to say, oh yeah, yeah, we support but then what do they actually do to follow up and it's much harder to be the ones that are actually working in communities and I think it is making those hard choices that it becomes difficult to do. One of the other challenges I saw and this is another challenge I saw, is that once it becomes really possible and there are the seeds of change and there's funding there, etc. Some of the bad things that happen are creating huge amounts of competition among young people. Some emergencies I've seen, kids learn really fast, how to get on the side of an organization and not work together. There's lack of coordination between NGO's, U.N. etc. When there is participation as a possibility. So how do we get beyond that to create community cohesiveness instead of everybody teaching kids what NGO's often do, which is compete with one another for very scarce resources.

HALLY MAHLER: Very tough questions. Anybody here want to tackle any of them?

NAINA DHINGRA: The question of how do we get to some of these experiences out, I think one of the things that really must be done and must be done more is capturing good practices, bad practices, lessons learned and really disseminate in them

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because there is some skepticism in some places, but there's also, countries on different levels, in terms of where they are in participation and they are in this how-to phase. I think there is an intrinsic willingness to do more, but we really have to get the experience. Part of that, we are trying to do, of course, the staff is not doing the organization working in this area and so we need to be doing much more of that to try and move the process along. I've seen the wonderful work that the commission has done with children in conflict and they really are giving a voice to those children who are really in dire need of having people hear them and hear their situations and I think it's great stuff and more people need to know about it and try to support what they are doing.

HALLY MAHLER: Go ahead Linda. Did you want to respond?

LINDA SUSMAN [Misspelled?]: I'm Linda Susman at USA ID and I want to thank you very much for your presentations. I mostly wanted to make a comment about the whole issue of youth lies [Misspelled?], but the first thing I wanted to do is say that the presentations that were in PowerPoint, I think were very valuable and we talk about increasing the ability to do youth participation as a network and I think it would be very helpful if we had some of those PowerPoint's, so that we could use those in our own presentations within our own headquarters and our own organizations.

HALLY MAHLER: You will, actually you will all be sent

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the link to the place on the YouthNet website.

LINDA SUSMAN: Great, I think that that's a really good first step. Also just to comment on some to the comments that I am hearing here. I think that our adult way of doing things often does include marginalization and competition, so I'm hoping that in the process of the day when we talk about youth participation, youth involvement, that we try to also attend to the things that we don't want to reproduce as adult models, suits and ties are fine, but competition and marginalization are a big concern that we don't want to reproduce, but most of all I wanted to thank you for bringing up the issue of youth allies. I think when we talk about youth and adult partnership as one of the terms, in addition to youth involvement and youth participation; I think it's really important to address throughout the day how we are going to increase the capacity of involvement of youth allies. As you mentioned, the youth of today are and need to be the youth allies of tomorrow and had we thought about that 10 or 15 years ago, and how do we involve youth and increase the capacity for them to become allies as they grew out of the age of 24, we wouldn't have been in the same situation related to HIV/AIDS now. Because 10 or 15 years ago, the people who are dying really were the youth of before, so I think we need to not just focus on today when we talk about youth involvement, but we really need to bring out the role and the ability to harness current youth as they involve

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into youth allies, so we that we truly have youth-adult partnership that is valuable and in the next 10 or 15 years, we will have seen a difference among the youth of those days who were the adults of 10 or 15 years from now reflected in how they were involved in the capacity built as youth of today. So, thank you again for your presentation. I think it was really a valuable way to start the day.

KENT CLINTER: I'm Kent Clinter. I'm with Advocates for Youth and actually this suit and tie thing, I think we would be very happy if we got rid of that. It's a good model that I'd like to copy. Thanks for all your presentations. It was great. I want to go back to the conference issue, about young people attending conferences, about focusing resources on that and just speak to, having invested a lot in the Barcelona Conference, advocacy for about 15 young people. The effects that it's had on the young people that have gone. The guys people from Botswana, I was just there, they are now fully engaged in their National AIDS Control Agency. Because of Barcelona, because they were there and they met colleagues, you know and they were seen as leaders, they had come all the way to Barcelona. I can think of a number of other, just recently, activities I have done where young people had been with me and networked and met the adult, the funder [Misspelled?] and gotten funding. Just because they were there, at that meeting and so I think it's also the look at, yes it's visibility about

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having young people there, but we need to research. Okay, if youth are involved coming to these major conferences, there is an effect and it's also that psychological boost that it gives to them. I went to Barcelona, I had my bag and each one of them that were up there, every time I visit them, they have their bags, too with them and it says, I was there, but it gives them that boost that says, yes I am a leader, I'm involved.

Christine, I wanted to thank you, your presentation, I'm very glad that that will be shared with us, but I want to just comment on one of your points... no the one statistic you had, or the piece you had about Uganda and I have to respond for several of my Uganda colleagues who want to let the world know that ABC was a part of Uganda, it wasn't just a B meaning, but in Uganda, we had this abstinence and be faithful, but there also was a strong emphasis on condoms and protection and I think there is a message being sent out to the world that Uganda, the success story was just A&B and my colleagues in Uganda want me to say that C was just as strong as the A&B. Okay. Thanks.

HALLY MAHLER: Thanks, Ken.

JOCELYN NEWCOMB [Misspelled?]: Hi, I'm Jocelyn Newcomb from PSI and two comments. One related to the past and one related to the present and future. Things of the past, we are talking about research an evaluating youth involvement and one study that I think we should consider is the operations

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research which was tied to the Smash Project, which was a PSI program sponsored by USAID and the evaluation of the Smash activities found that the partnership between youth and adults and the involvement of youth in one country in particular had... was not ideal and in conjunction with that we had less than ideal behavioral outcomes so the country where youth were involved, but perhaps the adult supervision was not ideal and that partnership was not ideal. It was the country where we had. We did not achieve the behavioral changes we were looking for, so that's an important lesson as well, evaluated and documented. In terms of the present and the future, I just wanted to highlight two things that I think are very exciting and ways to involve youth in terms of program implementation, design and implementation. One is involving youth in developing youth-friendly outlets for reproductive health products and services. I think that's a really exciting program strategy. One that PSI is using in several countries where 15-24 year olds are identifying outlets where they want to buy condoms and help designing the types of clinics where they want to find ETC services, STI treatment and other reproductive health services and they're not always clinics. Sometimes they are linked to youth centers etc. So I think that's important and the other exciting initiative is we talked about mass media and how mass media can be a negative thing, but I think that it can also be a very, very positive thing, especially when youth are involved

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in developing mass media campaigns and materials and one example of that is the 100% young program in Cameroon where youth are developing an intergraded mass media campaign that involves a monthly newspaper and radio call in shows, television and radio spots and evaluation of that program [Unintelligible] not only that are the program, the mass media components of the program wildly popular among the kids that the program is trying to reach but exposure to the program is correlated with increased rates of condom use which is very exciting.

ABRAHAM MCCULLOUGH: Good morning. My name is Abraham McCullough. I'm an economist. I was with the African bureau for sometime. I am now semi-retired. My interest in coming to this meeting is basically because I have no idea about youth involvement in the 21st century, but I worked with an organization. A small NGO that's involved in molecular air control and now moving into HIV/AIDS and sanitation, and this NGO is involving a lot of young people. Approximately about 1000 young people are trained to help in their respective communities in the area of HIV/AIDS in the area of prevention and sanitation. But being an economist, I'm very much interested in finding out how one mixes youth involvement sustainable institutionally as well as economically. There is some turning going on. Every year new students are being trained to do these things, but once they graduate and are no

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longer in high school or in college, they moved on and there's no institution to maintain this movement, nor is there any financial backup for maintaining this activity. So, I'd be very much interested in learning what facilities are there for maintaining institutions that foster youth involvement, as well as what kind of financial assistance might be available. I have already learned something this morning and that is in my days; I was also involved in the youth movement. I participated in a literacy campaign in my country, which is European, and here in the United States I also participated in one of the historically great youth movement's. The anti-Vietnam War movement, but then again like they say, once college is over its over and I'm no longer a youth and I regret that. So some sort of sustainability would be required and I was hoping that during the course of today's meeting that these issues would be erased.

HALLY MAHLER: You dropped the bomb, the big one, sustainability. Does anybody want to try and talk a little bit about what makes youth participation sustainable?

NAINA DHINGRA: Except to say that it's a challenge and you will have fast turnover of young people because that's where they're at. They come in and they make a contribution. When they feel satisfied that they've made their contribution, then they move on to something else and I think that's normal and we have to find ways of dealing with that, with that

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specific turnover but you know, people are doing different things. In some countries, for instance, where agencies want young people involved in their program, what they do is, for instance, they have some accounts [Misspelled?], they have a collection of young people and you select from that group. They have like a pool of young people and they keep adding to that pool on a fairly regular basis. You keep them updated; sometimes they are internship programs where they are coming in to learn about how the agency or the NGO, what ever, is run and the kinds of programs and then basically, we have to live with the fact that there will be a turnover. I don't know that there is a solution to that problem. You pay them money and they'll stay. Not necessarily, I don't know, I mean so far that's been the experience. We've had limited experience with that and so far everybody's still trying to learn a way to cope with that. We haven't conquered that.

HALLY MAHLER: I think that sustainability is such a big question and I'm sure there are a lot of people here who have a word or two to say about it and I'm going to defer that conversation to the program design, small discussion group this afternoon, so maybe that group can bite off the sustainability issue in one of their commentaries. Okay. Come on down.

TIJUANA JANES TRIORY: Good morning. My name is Tijuana Janes Triory. Thank you all very much for your presentations. I had a comment and a question. My comment is, it seems to me,

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in many other countries where the marginalization of young people is very much a part of the fabric of the culture. So, well I agree that more needs to be done with NGO's and helping them realize youth involvement at a higher level, I'm wondering what is being done, or what should be done at the family and community level, because coming from sort of a developmental approach, I know it's very difficult for young people to suddenly become teenagers and be expected to be responsible for making decisions about their lives when they haven't had that experience within their families and within their communities and I'm wondering what we can do as a way of both preparing young people to make greater decisions and take a bigger role in their own lives, as well as preparing adults to be more accepting all of that, what is sometimes a new role for young people in their communities.

CHRISTINE NORTON: I can make a brief comment; because I think that this is really were the idea of true partnership really comes in because that young person really needs to have a strong ally, who was not a parent because when I became a peer educator when I was 14, my parents being first generation didn't really quite understand, and of course I didn't fully explained to them that I was telling young people how to protect themselves by using condoms and that sort of thing, but having an adult ally there to support me was and really helped me to build up my confidence to be able to talk to my parents

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about it, was the key thing. If I hadn't had that person to support me in building my confidence, I wouldn't have been able to talk to my parents about it and I'm still really not quite sure if they really understand what I did, but the point is, I think you have to look, in terms of family, I think it's very difficult between definitions of parenting and an ally and I think when you look at yourself truly as a mentor and an ally for that young person, you take on a much greater role and that's really what it is.

SHANTI CONLY: I'd like to comment on back question as well. I think it parallels community participation movement, which although you used to be able to participate and be involved, there's also an effort to involve community leaders, parents, and religious leaders in making decisions about a community, so that the entire community is empowered, so I think youth participation is one element of that, but it's also about empowering communities which could address the cultural issues.

NAINA DHINGRA: That reminds me of a young woman that I just met in Emon [Misspelled?], in India and she was explaining how she dealt with this very issue with her parents, in terms of her involvement and wanting to be involved with a youth group and as far she was concerned, she was really learning a lot and her father never understood this and she was very, I wish I had pictures of this because she was very vivid in

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explaining how she what about doing that. At the end of the day, what she did is, she tried to communicate. She said she had a heart-to-heart talk with her father. She's coming from a very conservative family, and you know she's all covered up and she's there in this youth group in association with boys, something that's not really allowed at that age and she tried to explain to her father that this is something I need, you don't understand, I need this, she said, you know and she said when she opened communication and talk on a one-to-one basis and tried to explain that this is making a difference in her life. Look at me, I'm different now, and I know why I'm wearing this. I'm not just wearing this because you told me to wear it and so on, and she says I understand and I have more confidence and at the end of the day, I think basically, what she was saying like some of the other young people there that establishing communication with their parents and inviting them to these things that they do to let them see what they're doing made a difference. It did make a difference because they were pleasantly surprised at how good they were and how much control they had over their lives and over their situations, so that was wonderful.

HALLY MAHLER: I am going to call these the last three questions.

YORK DENNISON: Good morning. I apologize for wearing a suit, but that's the national dress of the country I come from,

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the Netherlands. My name is York Dennison. I work for the U.N. secretariat; so therefore, the national dress of the Netherlands has become a little bit, the national dress of the U.N. as well. Well thank you for inviting me and thank you for this meeting. It's a very, very interesting subject and I have too much to say, so I will be very short. In addition to what my dear colleague, Christine mentioned in her presentation, we have a number of chilling figures globally that really make this whole question of whether participation is a good thing or not really superfluous. We know for a fact that we have 70 million young people being unemployed today, that's a fact. I mean these are confirmed people who are unemployed. We are not talking about the number of people who are under employed or are in some kind of lousy, underpaying job. We've been trying to make an estimate recently of how many young people are living in poverty and if you think back at this 1.2 billion people that we have in the world today, we really don't know how many of them are in poverty. We have a low estimate of 135 million and a high estimate of 400 million, so that depends on what estimate you are using. There are all kinds of things going on with young people experimenting with drugs, more now than ever, so there are lots of things that really call for participation. It's really beyond debate I would say. So, just what Christine said, we have some experience in the U.N. system as a whole and a lot of young people giving young people a real

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voice at the U.N. Being part of the U.N. secretariat, of course, we have done that in the general assembly itself, the U.N. special session on ageism is a special session of the general assembly. We've had the UNICEF forum. We recently had the Johannesburg conference, which had a very, very strong youth caucus. For those of you who are interested in learning from that experience, there's tons available. We have youth delegates coming to the general assembly for many years already and since 1991, we've had a World Youth Forum of the U.N. system, we've had four, so sessions of that, which we are evaluating now, so there's a whole body of evidence, good and bad experience in youth participation in the work of the U.N. and not only events because that is really a trend that I think we can observe in the U.N. and looking around what is happening in the U.N. System is that, yes we have a lot of events at the U.N. That's a fact and of course, it's very, very important that you participate in the decision-making there. And there's been some very good results, but sometimes failure and disempowerment too, so let's be honest with that, to me, so you know, I can mention a dozen U.N. agencies that have a youth participation institutionalized and the U.N. advisory council for example that the U.N. passed, the [Unintelligible] Youth Coordination Unit, Habitat, UFP [Misspelled?], they are all there, so I really invite you to look into that. As for the concept of participation, to us the World Program of Actions

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for Youth, which is the official U.N. endorsed global action plan, which is really defining participation and decision-making and there is participation and decision-making that we really sometimes tend to forget from a developmental point-of-view and that's, for example, political participation. It means voting rights of young people are by far not secured. I mean sometimes you cannot vote, but you can be punished for things that you are doing as a juvenile. There's a whole spectrum of issues that relate to youth participation, youth political participation that's related to juvenile justice. Maybe that's not the topic of today, but I just invite you to think of that as well. Sorry, I'm taking too much time, unsustainability came on, I was in the queue. Young people come and go and some are active in the youth organization and some will drop out after a while, but that just means for us that we just have to stay alert and live with it, and you know, there's no harm in that. That's really the energy and that really keeps us connected, so let's work with that and stay alert. Thank you very much.

HALLY MAHLER: Thank you. Come on up.

MARIE ANTOINETTE NATALDA: Hi, I'm Marie Antoinette Natalda, I'm with the Youth Coalition and the first thing that came to my mind when we talk about youth participation and we argue about it, the first thing is like, we have the right to participate, like it's very strange when you argue about a right that you have. It's not because it's good for someone and

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it's good for adults and it's good for young people, it's because it's your right to participate in the decisions that is made around you, the second one is like, when you talk about youth participation and I've been working a while on this, we have to realize how challenging this could be for many people, because your talking about, you're questioning this power structure of most of our societies, I mean like most of our societies are based in a power structure where, when, where young people are seen in a very low level, I mean, when you talk about youth participation, you're questioning the family structure, you're questioning the church structure, you're questioning the school structure, so when I've been working with teachers and fathers, they are very happy to have young people participate in an AIDS projects and to have peer education, but when you ask them, how in your family is the decision-making. How is in the schools, we have an opening into the decision-making of your school, they are saying like wait a minute, this is another issue, this is completely different, so we have to realize that if we are really committed to the idea that young people are full human beings and with full rights, we also have to do things to translate that idea to the basic institutions in the site, it's also related to what you are saying, that it's not only about having young people in the organization participation, it's also about how they learn from the beginning, from school, from family that they need to

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participate and that it's very important for them to participate and that is the second one. The third one and the last one is like, I think suits and ties is important, like I cannot avoid to say that. I was working in Guanamala [Misspelled?] with that group of children and they decided to have a meeting about [Unintelligible] and this organization let them decide how they wanted to make everything like the structure of the meeting and everything and I was very shocked because they decided to have a very formal conservative meeting, I mean with a [Unintelligible] and with tables and they were sitting and I was very shocked, like the most challenging thing that they did was that they decided to go to Burger King for lunch, but I mean the rest of the meeting was like just an adult structure, so I think that that is a symbol of how young people and older children feels like the only way to be heard is wearing a suit and using the formal structure and that is because we did teach all the time that the only way to participate and being heard and being important is being an adult because if you're young and you act like young people, no one will hear you, so I think that it is important that we change all that. That's it.

HALLY MAHLER: Thank you. All right, come on down.

SANYA TRAMATER [Misspelled?]: Thank you for letting me be the last question. My name is Sanya Tramater. I'm with the International Center for Research on Women. I also wanted to

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thank the panelists for their presentation and also for the interesting questions and comments that people have been posing here. I wanted to make a last point and perhaps this can [Unintelligible] is that we not view youth as a homogenous group and the first commentator already made this point, that how we involve young men and women differently, but also how we involve urban and rural differently and how we involve married and unmarried youth differently. We tend to forget that for the majority of the world, young people, ages 15-24 are within union or in marital relationships and how we involve them in reproductive health and HIV programs is increasingly important. Thanks

HALLY MAHLER: I made a special dispensation for my newest staff member. I told Max he could ask a question. Excuse me. I'm imperfect.

MAX: Hell-o everybody, I'm wearing a suit and this is a culturally inflicted thing. I'm a British, a former British Colony person. I'm from Kenya, so I have no option but, I hesitated to do this, but I can't, I mean energy just overwhelmed me. One thing I want to just mention is that the next verse we are going to talk about participation, so I won't like go much into that but, as a young man growing up in Kenya, I was told that I'm the leader of tomorrow. Now, just to bring you to the reality and this is coming from [Unintelligible] state of mind. As a young man, when I got my voting rights, I

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was told, well you're going to be the leader of tomorrow, you've got to vote, it counts and that's your right and you're a very important leader today, so up until now, the same man who told me that is still a president which brings me to question that when am I going to be a leader. If I'm not given the opportunity then, but I'm told then when will it happen, so just something to think about, and in terms of aging, which really concerns me, and it, does include sustainability. I was at the U.N. conference about two months ago and there was an issue of aging, we were discussing aging, not just youth, I'm thinking ahead, thinking all right, if I grow old, what's going to be my options. Well the issue is this, the pandemic that we have right now, the AIDS epidemic, you're looking at a 15 year old, let me say a 10-24 year old. The saddest part of it is, if we don't put our heads together and see how we can control the situation, have them involved right now, there will be no tomorrow for them. This population is going to disappear and in terms of the young people who are leaders today and who have the chance, come out and be active about this. It's important that if you come out of that age group. You turn 25. Don't let it go. We all that youth in us, don't let that spirit go and that's one thing I want to capture in here. Those who have already committed themselves for this cause should not let it go, cause the youth need you and need I mention that there's need for guidance, mentorship, we need to keep it going because

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that age group that was put out by Christine, 1.2 billion, they might not be here tomorrow. They might not be [Unintelligible] for the young children to have the AIDS, so let's think about that as we go through the day. Thank you.

HALLY MAHLER: Max, don't sit down, are you a youth leader?

MAX: I am a youth leader. Thank you.

HALLY MAHLER: Okay, I want to make sure. Don't wait for Morey [Misspelled?]. I don't know if it's going to happen.

HALLY MAHLER: There's one challenge that was given to us during the presentations that nobody in any of the question-and-answers took on. It was Naina's question. Well, it wasn't a question, it was sort of a challenge, that you felt least supported within the NGO community and I'm wondering what you suggest as a remedy for that and I'm wondering if there's suggestions in this room as a remedy for that and you know, we don't have to dig too deep at this particular point in time cause I think that's going to be really where we are headed today, but I'm curious if you have anything to say about that.

CHRISTINE NORTON: I think that a lot has changed in the past and I think that that it was June 2001 and I think that a lot of, particularly in D.C. a lot NGO members have gotten use to this couple of random young people that keep showing up and I think it has, within D.C. it's definitely become more accepted. I think it's hard to make a recommendation on that

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because I go back to that thing of it being a state of mind and when somebody is so against that idea of a state of mind, it makes it very difficult to reach them and I think what I've found a lot of times is that when working with a lot of adults, they tend to treat everybody just like, like their child, so when you're thinking about someone as your child, you know, you think of them as a lot younger, no matter if they are going to be 35, they are still going to be your child and you're going to do everything for them, no matter what I do with my mother, it's always going to be like that, and so, it really is a different way of thinking. It's thinking of that person as an asset, you know and not as just that young person who just kind of floats around and doesn't, you know, know what she's doing like I'm there, she's there, we are all there for a reason because we care about these issues and we need support, we need a hand to be reached out to us, not to be like all the time banging on the door and I think that's what it is it, it's this idea like, hey let your guard down for a minute. We are not threatening. we're really not. Yeah but, you can't change the way you think.

HALLY MAHLER: It's time for maybe one or two people to comment on this particular issue, come forward.

MARIE ANTOINETTE NATALDA: From a similar experience, because the Youth Coalition was started on the [Unintelligible] and we are only youth or a youth lead organization, and what do

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we face, like I have to say that NGO's, at least feminist movement, women's movement is being very supportive of the Youth Coalition, but at the beginning we had, we had to prove that we had something to give, I mean like, we were only a group of young people and we decided to keep it that way, we had our own agenda, I mean we had our own five points that we were advocating for. We did are own press conferences. We were not asking for money to any organization to bring us there, we had our own money and our own [Unintelligible] system and everything, so when we approached the NGO's, they look at us like a group with a lot of things to give because we were there, we were very powerful, because we were like a bunch of young people doing things different, waiting with right [Misspelled?] callers and having fun things to do and that kind of stuff, so maybe that could be something useful, like I think it's very important for young people to have their own agenda, to have their own space, so they can work in partners to do partnership stuff, you have to prove that you have equal power. I mean like you're equal, so I think that that was very important for us and I can think that we can share a lot of experience like we're the Youth Coalition, cause we've been doing this in Cairo and in Beijing and child summit and so that's it.

HALLY MAHLER: Thank you. Nika [Misspelled?] is going to be the last question.

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NIKA: Okay, I'll try to be quick too. I think in this, we have to remember, we are talking about all different types of collaborations and participation and partnerships. It might be, if you go to a community and want to work with others there, you don't have a highly established youth organization, as was just described. It doesn't have structures; it doesn't have levels of accountability, and certain training, etc. That's one challenge to a group. I think part of the issue comes with donors and NGO's working together to create coordinated approaches with some sense of a mutually held set of goals that relate directly to what the needs are. I can't tell you how many times I hear over and over, and I'm sure you all know this, that young people need as part of the program outreach plan of these International type of organizations, a capacity building component and really part of what has to happen is an NGO, for example, entering a community with a concept that it's going to be getting out of there. That it wants to leave and the issue is not what it can do, because it's got the money, but what is going to left for other people to do when they are gone and one of the things young people say over and over is that we can't get control over this money, and donors and NGO's have very legitimate concerns about turning over that control, so I think part of that has to be, and this comes up over and over in the issues of employment and protection from HIV/AIDS and it's been said here several times,

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the issue of employment for girls, for boys, so being able to build capacity as part of that process, so kids can organize themselves more effectively, that's sustainable. And also donors and NGO's and U.N. organizations and other actors who are the adult run or adult allies, being able to coordinate better, so that that is a more cohesive and holistic process.

AMIKA: Hi, my name is Amika and I work for Advocates for Youth. I think to answer Naina's question, which is sort of what do we need to do, It think and we talked a lot about, you know, young people mentoring and training. I think adults need training. And I think that, to give you an example, I think my grandfather, who is about 75, will say to this day that he is a feminist and that women should be able to do whatever they want. Not his wife, and maybe not his boss, or any women that he works with, but in theory he has this state of mind that women should be empowered and I totally agree with your point that we should look at ageism like we look at sexism and like we look at racism, so as much as we all want to believe that young people have rights and young people should be at the table, what does that mean for us as adults and I've been a non-youth for six months, so I can say as adults, what does that mean for us? And really think about the state-of-mind and the action steps that we personally and professionally need to take to prepare our programs and our organizations for non-tokenistic youth involvement.

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HALLY MAHLER: Wow, we've covered a lot here and we are asking a lot more questions than we are answering, but I think that that's probably where we are at right now and by the end of the day, maybe we will know some of the questions we want to look for answers for or prioritize. We covered ageism as a major issue, sort of preventing progress within, among youths and adults working together. You were reminded that young people are not all alike, in particular, urban rule and gender being a major issue. Actually, a while back, a whole group of people were wondering, we were just talking about whether or not we could look at what's been happening in the International movements and see what the ratio of boys to girls are and then what happens also. The international movement, sometimes we intervene and make it more balanced, but what actually happens at the community level in terms of participation. Employment came up and poverty came up as big issues. You know, how are young people participating if they need to be able to make ends meet and why is their participation considered to be any less valuable financially than the participation of adults. We looked at whether or not, by involving young people and really having sort of these professional youth that we are marginalizing them, they're marginalizing themselves, or other youths are being marginalized. We talked about how to document and in particular, about, what about all these failed experiences that we have, you know, where are the lessons

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learned being shared on that. We also... very strong theme that came through is a more developmental approach to youth participation. How is it that in our programs, we want youth to participate, but then they go home and their family, or they are in school, if we have a right to based approached, why do they not have a right to participate in those areas as much as they have to participate in the international programs. We talked a lot about rights and about youth participation as a radical thought in some communities and what that means for the future. I just, before I thank folks here, I just actually want to make one comment, that when people were putting together the Barcelona work force, we started looking the phones because we sort of said, well we don't really have enough money and it would be great, you know, other groups to get involved. We started making a few phone calls. Kent and I and some other folks and before you knew it, we had more organizations than we knew what to do with, either just wanting their name associated with Youth Participation Effort or actually money and in kind. It was pretty amazing and most of you who made these contributions are sitting here in this room, we're the converted. Though my challenge as we move past the past, present and future conversation is to think about the people who are not in this room, the folks that we didn't know who to contact. The folks who weren't necessarily interested in contributing and how are we going to move that agenda forward,

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the people that we work with in our own institutions, because we all tend to be the same people who show up from our institutions for all these youth meetings and also the people who we are not presently working with. Thank you so much to three great presenters. Thank you. And thank you for the great questions. We will now have our break. I'm sure everybody's anxious to stand and get some coffee. We are going to come back together at 11:20. Thank you.