

Overcoming Youth Marginalization

Conference Report and Policy Recommendations



Columbia Global Policy Initiative

In collaboration with

The Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

New York City, USA | March 2014

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The information conveyed in this report reflects the general discussion of the conference. The views expressed are not attributable to any particular panelist or organization present at the meeting.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations, its officials, or its Member States.

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Towards a Better Understanding of Youth Marginalization

Conference Agenda

Day 1 – Monday, March 24th | Columbia University, New York City, USA

Welcome and Introductions

- Michael Doyle, Director, Columbia Global Policy Initiative
 - Ahmad Alhendawi, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
-

First Panel: A Rights-Based Approach to Youth Inequalities

This panel discussed the unique human rights abuses faced by young people around the world. The issues covered included: juvenile justice; youth rights in conflict situations; international, national, and local laws pertaining to youth; the rights of youth in excluded demographic groups; and how legal systems can be used to advance the rights and equality of youth.

- Jeffrey Fagan, Isidor and Seville Sulzbacher Professor of Law, Columbia University
 - Ravi Karkara, Global Expert Advisor on Children and Youth, UN HABITAT
 - Leonardo Castilho, Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
 - Youth: Chernor Bah, Youth Advocate (Sierra Leone)
-

Second Panel: Youth in Governance and Political Participation

The second panel discussed how young people are excluded from full participation in governance and political systems at all levels. The issues covered included: youth interaction with established governments; youth political parties and organizations; the participation of young people in political demonstrations; how the political demands of young people relate across regions; youth demands for equal representation; and the venues for genuine youth participation in governance.

- Nur Laiq, Independent Consultant on Youth Issues
 - Abdulrazaq Alkali, Reagan-Fascell Fellow, National Endowment for Democracy
 - Diane Sheinberg, Programme Specialist – Parliamentary Development, Democratic Governance Group, UN Development Programme
 - Youth: Shaheer George, Youth Activist (Egypt)
 - Youth: Crystal Lee, Indigenous Youth Caucus (Navajo Nation)
-

Third Panel: *Gender and Health Marginalization*

This panel considered the gender and health inequalities faced by young people globally. The issues covered included: the rights of women, LGBTQI, and disabled young people; the unique health concerns of young people; sexual and reproductive health and rights; disenfranchisement from health services; and successful policy interventions.

- Kate Gilmore, Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UN Population Fund, and UN Assistant Secretary-General
- Margaret Greene, President, GreeneWorks
- Youth: Yahir Zavaleta, Director of HIV Programs, Espolea (Mexico)

Fourth Panel: *Youth Experiences of Employment, Education, & Migration*

The fourth panel discussed the unique challenges and opportunities for youth in regards to employment, education, and migration, and the inter-linkages between these topics. Issues covered included: youth unemployment; the economic disenfranchisement of young people; youth access to secondary and technical education; the cost of education; the challenges posed to youth migrants; and youth action, regional experiences, and policies for each of these issues.

- Andy Furlong, Dean of Research and Professor of Social Inclusion and Education, Glasgow University
- Hanan Morsy, Lead Economist, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- Priya Deshingkar, Research Director and Senior Research Fellow, University of Sussex
- Youth: Leila Younis, Refugee Youth Organizations (Croatia)

Keynote Speeches

- Welcome and Introductions by Kate Offerdahl
- H.E. Azad Rahimov, Minister of Youth and Sports, Azerbaijan
 - o Introduced by Ahmad Alhendawi
- Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UN Population Fund
 - o Introduced by Michael Doyle

Day 2 – Tuesday, March 25th | United Nations Headquarters, New York City, USA

UN High-Level Event and Consultation with the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

Introduction

“Young people are not just decision-takers; they can be decision-makers too.”
– Ahmad Alhendawi, UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth

On March 24, 2014, the Columbia Global Policy Initiative hosted over forty academics, youth activists, policy-makers, practitioners, and civil society representatives at Columbia University in New York City, USA, for an in-depth discussion on the marginalization and inequality facing youth worldwide. The conference brought together the diverse experiences and research findings of individuals around the world on youth issues, which often do not have a policy space in which to interact. The issues included human rights and justice; political participation and decision-making; gender and health inequalities; and employment, education, and migration opportunities. Conference participants examined the topics in the context of youth development, empowerment, and equality within society.

The event, which aimed to provide a multi-stakeholder opportunity to focus on issues of youth marginalization and identify lessons learned and best practices for addressing it, was hosted jointly by the Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth and the Columbia Global Policy Initiative.¹ The discussion outcomes were conveyed to representatives of UN Member States and agencies, civil society organizations and youth in a high-level policy dialogue.

This conference report captures the dialogue between panelists and participants over the course of the event’s four panel discussions, and includes inputs provided by participants at various Columbia Global Centers. The report also highlights specific policy recommendations offered by the experts to encourage progress and empower youth, and concluding recommendations drawn by the report’s authors. While the discussions were rich and multifaceted, the main points of agreement and debate are captured in this summary. The comprehensive research that underlies the views and recommendations can advance the agenda for youth empowerment, unite academic and policy experts, and encourage further debate and discussion on youth-specific policies and the unique challenges facing young people worldwide.

¹ Ahmad Alhendawi, the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, and Professor Michael Doyle, Director of the Columbia Global Policy Initiative, co-chaired the first day of the conference at Columbia University. Kate Offerdahl organized the meeting for the Columbia Global Policy Initiative. She also served as a meeting rapporteur, along with Alicia Evangelides and Maggie Powers.

Background on Youth Marginalization

All around the world youth are mobilizing, with groups of young people organizing themselves and demanding attention to issues that specifically affect them. Often marginalized from local and national development gains, youth are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks, social instability, and conflicts. They are frequently left behind despite widespread development in other age groups. Youth experiences in times of global economic, social, human rights and environmental challenges require dedicated research, and meeting their needs and rights requires targeted approaches and investments

Young people have been excluded from development programs and activities in numerous ways. As an age cohort, youth are less likely to be involved in governance and decision-making processes, as a result of economic, political, and procedural barriers that prevent their participation. As the beneficiaries of services, youth are also likely to face marginalization due to their membership in excluded demographic groups, including: women, indigenous, disabled, LGBTQI, refugee, ethnic minority, migrant, and economically impoverished. Additionally, young people are often further marginalized within these groups due to their age. This layered marginalization not only infringes upon the human rights of young people, but also has negative effects on the cohesion and stability of the societies in which they live.

Legal and human rights frameworks, and the provision of social and humanitarian services, need to be examined with the specific experiences of young people in mind to combat exclusion at all levels. Data collection likewise poses problems for understanding youth marginalization, as data is often not collected in a way that allows for analyzing and improving the particular experiences of young people. For refugee populations, for example, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees utilizes age 18–59 as one demographic cohort, making it impossible to identify policy gaps or ongoing marginalization specific to youth refugees. Furthermore, aggregation of data in the analysis stage often masks the particular needs of young people. Disaggregated data and statistics are essential to identify gaps and to reveal which youth groups have been left behind.

The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1995, provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national

action and international support to improve the situation of young people worldwide. The WPAY covers fifteen youth priority areas and proposes actions in each area. Member States have further renewed and expanded their commitment to youth issues through various resolutions and declarations over the years. Based on the WPAY, the UN has an important role to play in building capacity for youth participation at all levels of governance. By building mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making at all levels, Member States and the UN can increase the representation of young people in political processes. Continued dialogue on these topics, as well as increased research on and visibility of the issue of youth marginalization, is necessary to build a better understanding of the issues and encourage action and institutional reform.

Conference Goals and Outcomes

- Build a better global understanding of youth marginalization.
- Share common knowledge of the diverse international experiences of, and academic research on, youth exclusion.
- Present problem-specific solutions to combat marginalization.
- Inform the UN's work in addressing youth inequalities.
- Enrich the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Youth, as well as: the post-2015 development agenda, ECOSOC Youth Forum, International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014, World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, Habitat 3, Migration and Development Conference, Disabilities Conference, Beijing+20, and General Assembly activities.



Figure 1: March 25, 2014 UN High-Level Event with the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

First Panel: A Rights-Based Approach to Youth Inequalities

The first panel discussed the unique human rights abuses faced by young people around the world. Issues covered included: juvenile justice; youth rights in conflict situations; international, national, and local laws pertaining to youth; the rights of youth in already marginalized groups; and how legal systems can be used to advance the rights and equality of youth.

Panelists

- Jeffrey Fagan, Isidor and Seville Sulzbacher Professor of Law, Columbia University
- Ravi Karkara, Global Expert Advisor on Children and Youth, UN HABITAT
- Leonardo Castilho, Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Chernor Bah, Youth Advocate, Sierra Leone



Figure 2: Michael Doyle (left) and Ahmad Alhendawi (right) welcome the experts.

Main Challenges Facing Youth

Throughout the discussion on youth inequalities, panelists highlighted the lack of international consensus on the definition of youth. For example, the African Union Charter defines youth as ages 15-35, while some United Nations bodies define youth as ages 15-24. Neuroscientists would define the end of adolescence at 24-25, insisted one panelist, despite the fact that the age of onset of puberty in young women is declining. **All panelists asserted a need for consensus on the definition of youth, for if we do not define who youth are then we cannot have a productive discussion on youth rights. Without definitional clarity, targeted policy solutions to global youth marginalization will have difficulty measuring progress.**

“Youth rights” has come to be broadly equated with youth participation, and with the right to sit at the decision-making table. However, youth rights must go deeper and address underlying marginalization within the youth category. For example, girls and women are often excluded from the few youth groups permitted to participate in decision-making and young men often disproportionately benefit from resources designated for youth.

Without definitional clarity, targeted policy solutions to global youth marginalization will have difficulty measuring progress.

Furthermore, one panelist stressed that youth are often socially or biologically considered to be “in transition,” not yet “fully-formed” adults or members of society. Told that they must be a certain age to do certain things, such as participate in government, youth become equated with a *lack* of something. This idea of incompleteness as a person permeates discussions on the demographic. However, the “transition” from childhood to adulthood is a complex, diverse journey that can last for an extended period of time, not just a few years. If we continue to place such importance on becoming an adult, a panelist highlighted, we undermine the importance of being a youth and the unique contributions that youth make to society.

Another panelist noted the important role that interactions with police have on the relationship between youth and the state. Youth learn about the law from their families, friends, schools, civil and religious settings, and other venues. As they enter adolescence, they learn about the state from personal interactions with legal authorities and vicariously through their peers. Interactions with police – the face of the state for many youth – contribute to young people’s legal socialization, a process by which youth learn about the law and legal society. What they learn can solidify their legal attitudes and understanding of the law for years to come, and this process contributes to how they conduct their lives as adults.

There has been a fundamental shift in policing around the world in recent years, stressed another panelist, which has detrimental effects on the legal socialization of young people. Starting with New York City’s “Stop and Frisk” policy, a program where police were authorized to temporarily or even permanently detain youth based on vague suspicions and profiling, societies are instituting discriminatory, harsh actions against young people through the legal system. These are generally very unpleasant experiences in which youth are subjected to indignities that

go beyond human rights violations. Both women and men have experienced sexual victimization by police in these encounters. Such experiences fray the ties between youth and the law, and extend into adulthood. They can be emotionally and psychologically disfiguring experiences and lead to a sense of internalized stigma and poor mental health.

Every interaction that youth have with authorities is an important teachable moment. According to one panelist, when police or the state treat young people badly, it can lead to defiance of the law and withdrawal from social control, meaning that youth may be less likely to report crimes. This significant mistrust can also lead to legal cynicism and anger towards the law, especially when police abuse is concentrated in marginalized communities.

Young people are generally unaware of their legally enshrined human rights and the rights applicable to them due to their age. Some existing human rights instruments apply to youth (e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child), but there is no treaty or instrument that enshrines rights specific to youth. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly affords a distinct set of rights to a particular age group – defined as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” – the same is not true for youth over age 18 that have not yet fully transitioned into adulthood.²

Recommendations for Progress

- Reach a consensus on the definition of youth.
- Recognize youth as a distinct social demographic with specific rights rather than merely as a group that is in transition between childhood and adulthood.
- Prevent, and ensure accountability for, youth abuse at the hands of police. Train police in the legal rights afforded to young people under international human rights law and national law.
- Promote youth engagement through existing human rights mechanisms, treaties, etc., including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.
- Analyze youth access to their rights and study the effectiveness of resources marked for youth, and for different groups within youth: gender, indigenous, disabled, LGBTQI, etc.

² Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1. Retrieved June 14, 2014 from <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

Second Panel: Youth in Governance and Political Participation

The second panel discussed how young people are excluded from full participation in governance and political systems at all levels. Issues covered included: youth interaction with established governments; youth political parties and organizations; the participation of young people in political demonstrations; how the political demands of young people relate across regions; youth demands for equal representation; and the venues for genuine youth participation in governance.

Panelists

- Nur Laiq, Independent Consultant on Youth Issues
- Abdulrazaq Alkali, Reagan-Fascell Fellow, National Endowment for Democracy
- Diane Sheinberg, Programme Specialist – Parliamentary Development, Democratic Governance Group, UN Development Programme
- Youth: Shaheer George, Youth Activist (Egypt)
- Youth: Crystal Lee, Indigenous Youth Caucus (Navajo Nation)



Figure 3: Abdulrazaq Alkali speaks on barriers to youth participation.

Main Challenges Facing Youth

Panelists expressed great concern about the challenges youth encounter when trying to engage in politics. First, panelists recognized that barriers to youth participation in the formal political sector are a key issue that prohibits youth voices from being heard. **Age limits to run for office or even establish an independent organization affect and prevent youth engagement.**

Globally, only 1.65 percent of parliamentarians are young people in their 20s and 11.87 percent are people in their 30s, according to the UNDP 2012 Global Parliamentary Report.³ Lack of formal representation, termed a “crisis of representation” by one panelist, limits the spaces in which youth voices are heard. High unemployment among youth was also identified as a barrier to their participation. One panelist raised concerns that high unemployment left youth vulnerable to political manipulation and radicalization by militant elements.

A second challenge identified was the lack of actual participation of youth in formal political structures. Despite a desire from youth activists to be involved in decision-making processes, youth turnout in elections has decreased across the world since 1990, according to one panelist. Several participants asserted that young people view cooperation with established political institutions as “dirty” and prefer to work outside of existing political parties. Instead, youth often organize in the informal arena, namely within civil society. While civil society groups are a strong driver of youth engagement, many panelists noted that youth engagement through civil society and established political mechanisms are both required to realize the full participation of youth. By working only through civil society, it becomes more challenging for youth to affect change. Although civil society organizations are flexible and allow youth control, they often face organizational, structural, and financial challenges.

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- 2012 UNDP Global Parliamentary Report

Third, panelists expressed concerns about the negative public perceptions of youth. Regarding the political climate in Egypt and Nigeria, panelists raised concerns that youth are viewed as harmful to society and negative, dangerous actors. Many expressed apprehension that youth are often viewed as one monolithic group, thus overlooking the marginalization that can occur within the perceived “youth” group.

Several participants raised the possibilities of creating a “youth political party,” or establishing a “youth wing” within existing political parties. Panelists said each option had comparative advantages which would depend upon the national political landscape, but overall

³ United Nations Development Programme and Inter-Parliamentary Union. April 2012. “Global Parliamentary Report.” Page 108. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Global_Parliamentary_Report_English.pdf.

youth wings within existing political parties were discussed more favorably. Forming a youth wing within an established political mechanism gives young activists access to financial and structural stability that youth parties often lack, and avoids the problems of lack of institutional knowledge that all fledgling organizations face. Panelists also raised the concern that entrenched political parties may establish youth wings that are only symbolic in nature and are not actively engaged in policy discussion. Some commented that youth should not be lumped together into one wing nor merely included as a figurehead.

An online participant from the Columbia Global Center in Mumbai, India asked how to measure meaningful engagement beyond the existence of a symbolic seat at the table. On this issue panelists all strongly asserted that youth participation must include, but also mean, more than just a seat at the table and must signify meaningful participation in the decision-making process. The panel also highlighted the issue of social media, discussing it as a tool to advocate for youth participation in governance issues, though several panelists called for youth participation to be seen as more than just social media participation. As one panelist said, “we want to move from mere virtual participation to the actual participation of young people.”

Recommendations for Progress

- Increase youth participation in formal political structures, possibly through the establishment of youth wings in existing political parties. Youth need a seat at the table at the local, state, and national levels but also need that seat to be substantive.
- Ensure youth participants are included in cross-cutting issues – not placed in silos of exclusively “youth issues” but recognized as important voices in all issues.
- Make legislative sessions more accessible and open to interested youth, possibly through sessions open to the public or youth-led legislative watch campaigns where youth can attend sessions and assess political parties’ records.
- Offer trainings for youth to gain skills in political mediation, grassroots organization and advocacy.

Third Panel: Gender and Health Marginalization

This panel considered the gender and health inequalities faced by young people globally. The issues covered included: the rights of women, LGBTQI, and disabled young people; the unique health concerns of young people; sexual and reproductive health and rights; disenfranchisement from health services; and successful policy interventions.

Panelists

- Kate Gilmore, Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA (the United Nations Population Fund), and UN Assistant Secretary-General
- Margaret Greene, President, GreeneWorks
- Yahir Zavaleta, Director of HIV Programs, Espolea, Mexico



Figure 4: Kate Gilmore of UNFPA (left) discusses varying conceptions of youth.
(From left to right: Kate Gilmore, Michael Doyle, Margaret Greene, and Yahir Zavaleta)

Main Challenges Facing Youth

Youth is not a single category, and young people are not a homogenous group, but rather are diverse in gender, sexual orientation, economic situation, and ethnicity, among many other factors. Even with a more widely agreed-upon definition of youth, it is important to unpack the demographic and focus on its different dimensions. One important dimension is gender and sexual orientation. For all of the discrimination that young men and boys face, they do not face the same discrimination and violation that young girls and women face (e.g. child marriage and access to healthcare services), panelists emphasized.

Panelists spoke of the need to tackle cultural conceptions of sexuality and health that are detrimental to the fulfillment of human rights and may lead to gender-based violence. Young women are often much less likely to have access to reproductive healthcare than adults, stressed one expert. Dire living conditions, inequitable

While the global number of HIV-related deaths decreased by 30% between 2005 and 2012, HIV-related deaths among adolescents aged 10-19 increased by 50% in this same time period.

distribution of wealth and resources, and lack of clear data often prevent accurate measurement and understanding of the problems. Better information and data on young women's access to healthcare is necessary in order to monitor progress and implement smart policies. Furthermore, in many countries, parental consent is needed to access sexual and reproductive health, or to be tested for HIV/AIDS. **The youth cohort is the only age cohort in which deaths from AIDS have actually increased in recent years. While the global number of HIV-related deaths decreased by 30% between 2005 and 2012, HIV-related deaths among adolescents aged 10-19 increased by 50% in this same time period.**⁴ Females living with HIV are often particularly hesitant to speak publicly about their experiences and participate in politics, due to stigmas and marginalization associated with their health status.

One panelist highlighted the similarities between the experiences of girls and young women marrying or entering unions as adolescents and the experiences of being young and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other sexual orientations. In both experiences, youth are victims of sexual convention, expectations and norms of what "appropriate sexuality" is. Child marriage lies at the intersection of a broad set of problems, as these young people are unable to voice their consent for the union. Additional problems associated with child marriage include pregnancy and child bearing at an early age, limited schooling, and limited employment opportunities. Despite the fact that girls who marry at an early age are more exposed to sexual and physical violence, discrimination, and marginalization, the Convention on the Rights of the Child does not explicitly address early marriage.

⁴ World Health Organization. (2013). *HIV and Adolescents: HIV Testing and Counselling, Treatment and Care for Adolescents Living with HIV* (Policy Brief). Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization. Page 1. Retrieved June 12, 2014 from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/94561/1/9789241506526_eng.pdf?ua=1.

Likewise, LGBTQI youth are often denied sexual choice and may be considered unentitled to diverge from the heterosexual norm because of their age. Because they are young and often unemployed, one panelist explained, youth are frequently unable to support themselves and thus may live with their families. In the case of LGBTQI youth, they are more vulnerable to becoming homeless if their parents do not accept their sexuality and more vulnerable to being rejected by their families and communities. When violence and or bullying towards these youth takes place, whether inside a marriage or due to their sexual orientation, they are often less likely to seek redress as they do not think the perpetrators will be held accountable.

There is extreme inconsistency and hypocrisy surrounding conceptions of what youth can and cannot do, one panelist asserted. Young people are not old enough to drive, but are old enough to have children without consent. They are not old enough to vote, but are old enough to enter into marriage. Accounting for a majority of the population deprived of the benefits of development, youth are at risk of not being included in the United Nation's post-2015 development agenda. Young people today are marginalized, one panelist expressed in that they are not marginal. Marginalization is forced upon young people through violence, such as genital mutilation, sexual violence, and incest, as well as the deprivation of access to information and freedom of assembly. Young people are also marginalized by their identity and place, whether from living in violent situations, conflict settings, or refugee camps, where access to services is dangerous or minimal. One panelist emphasized that using the word "marginalized" requires us to identify the source of marginalization and hold that source accountable, and this is what must be done for the diverse youth around the world.

Recommendations for Progress

- Disaggregate data, particularly for LGBTQI and female youth, in order to gain a better understanding of what the data tells us about specific groups of people.
- Build youth networks for young people living with HIV/AIDS, in order to assess needs and produce more effective and efficient policies.
- Recognize the needs of young people across all aspects of the post-2015 development agenda so that the international community will be encouraged to invest in youth health as the foundation for a lifetime of health and well-being.

Fourth Panel: Youth Experiences of Employment, Education, and Migration

The fourth panel discussed the unique challenges and opportunities for youth in regards to employment, education, and migration, as well as the inter-linkages between these topics. Issues covered included: youth unemployment; the economic disenfranchisement of young people; youth access to secondary and technical education; the cost of education; the challenges posed to youth migrants; and youth action, regional experiences, and policies for each of these issues.

Panelists

- Andy Furlong, Dean of Research and Professor of Social Inclusion and Education, Glasgow University
- Hanan Morsy, Lead Economist, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- Priya Deshingkar, Research Director and Senior Research Fellow, University of Sussex
- Youth: Leila Younis, Refugee Youth Organizations (Croatia)



Figure 5: Ahmad Alhendawi (center) introduces panel on youth employment, education, and migration. (From left to right: Andy Furlong, Hanan Morsy, Ahmad Alhendawi, Priya Deshingkar, and Leila Younis)

Main Challenges Facing Youth

Panelists highlighted global youth unemployment as a key challenge during this session. A panelist reported that even in Western Europe, one in five young people are unemployed. **The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** finds that one in ten youth are “left behind,” which the OECD defines as youth who are no longer in school and who experience various challenges (e.g. living in remote areas, being a member of a minority group, and lacking a

diploma).⁵ Although unemployment among youth is typically much higher than any other age bracket, panelists highlighted that the global recession has disproportionately impacted youth, who also face the challenge of informal employment that is not regulated by existing labor laws or industry practices. Many young people work in the informal sector or are not considered full-time employees, and therefore are not protected or secure in their employment.

Two panelists spoke of the long-term scarring effects of unemployment or underemployment as a youth. They said youth who are unemployed are more likely to be unemployed later in life, earn less money over their working life, and have decreased levels of happiness. Unemployment also leads to social discontent and dissatisfaction with or distrust of the established political system. All of this can have a long-term detrimental impact on mental health, and negative financial or employment issues as a young adult could follow this post-recession generation for the rest of their lives.

According to the OECD, one in ten youth are “left behind,” which they define as youth who are no longer in school and who experience various challenges to their development.

Participants also highlighted challenges that result from forced displacement and voluntary migration. One panelist discussed the trend of South-South migration among young people age 14-25. They noted that migration in this age bracket occurs because of complex factors and a nuanced lens is needed to view its negative and positive outcomes. Many youth migrate into informal jobs below minimum wage in the domestic work or construction industries and have very little security or control over their employment. They tend to migrate internally, within their country of origin, and do still send remittances home. However, they have less access to formal migration channels and are at high risk of abuse, theft, and loss of wages. Refugee issues were raised and concern was expressed on the lack of disaggregated data on youth refugees. After childhood, the UN only collects data for the age bracket of 18-59, making it difficult to understand the unique obstacles youth face as refugees.

⁵ Scarpetta, Stefano, Anne Sonnet, and Thomas Manfredi. ‘Rising Youth Unemployment During the Crisis: How to Prevent Long-Term Consequences on a Generation?’ *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Papers, No. 106*. p. 19: <http://www.oecd.org/employment/youthforum/44986030.pdf>.

Recommendations for Progress

- Address gaps in employment law and labor market practices to cover and protect youth in non-traditional employment conditions.
- Address gaps in employment training.
- Increase access to safe housing and remitting mechanisms for internal and external youth migrants.
- Collect disaggregated data on youth refugees.

Concluding Statements

- Michael Doyle, Director, Columbia Global Policy Initiative
- Ahmad Alhendawi, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

There is a broad consensus that young people aged 15 and above have been marginalized as an age cohort, since they are neither born marginalized nor inherently “vulnerable.” Societies do not adequately take the rights and interests of young people into account, and youth and their communities suffer as a result. From their first experiences with the state, often in the form of systematic mistreatment by local police, youth feel alienated and threatened by the authorities. Youth are then often recruited to violence or to participate in conflicts due to a lack of alternative opportunities.

Young people are also victimized through unequal relationships with older adults. Child marriages, human trafficking, and migrant abuse have severe implications on the development of youth by impacting their rights to education, employment, and sexual and reproductive health. In particular, the rights of LGBTQI youth, and women and girls, have been systematically exploited and violated, making the vulnerabilities of these groups some of the highest in the entire population. The youth cohort has made much less progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals than other age cohorts. For example, the HIV/AIDS prevalence among youth aged 15-24 actually increased in some regions between 2001 and 2011, with a 20% increase among young people in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.⁶ Trends of chronic unemployment and underemployment have been particularly focused in the youth population due to global economic downturns, a mismatch of skills and labor opportunities, and lack of dedicated youth policies. Young people also face rampant social and political exclusion when they seek to participate in decision-making at the local, national, and international levels. No dedicated international legal convention exists that asserts the specific rights of youth worldwide, representing a lack in legal mechanisms for young people to secure their rights from the state.

These overlapping challenges represent a complex mix of marginalization directed toward youth, which together creates a system of enduring inequality that has stark implications

⁶ UNAIDS. (2012). *UNAIDS World AIDS Day Report 2012*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS. Page 29. Retrieved June 12, 2014 from http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/epidemiology/2012/gr2012/jc2434_worldaidsday_results_en.pdf.

over the duration of a young person’s life. Despite the grim picture painted by these realities, a number of potential policy responses and opportunities for social change exist that should be taken up by academic experts, policy-makers, and the United Nations.



Figure 6: Kate Offerdahl gives introductory remarks at the conference reception.

Summary Recommendations

- Agree to a common, international definition of youth.
- Recognize youth as a distinct social demographic with specific rights rather than merely as a group that is in transition between childhood and adulthood.
- Collect disaggregated data on the youth cohort in order to encourage comparable data between and within countries and the creation of an index of youth development.
- Recognize the needs of young people across all aspects of the post-2015 development agenda. Ensure youth needs and rights are included in cross-cutting issues – not placed in silos of exclusively “youth issues”, and recognize the importance of facilitating youth participation in all issues that are of relevance to them.
- Strengthen youth networks for marginalized young people, including those living with HIV/AIDS, indigenous youth, adolescent girls etc. in order to assess needs and produce more effective and efficient policies.
- Prevent, and ensure accountability for, youth abuse by police and authorities. Train police in the legal rights of young people under international human rights law and national law.

- Improve prospects of youth employment through dedicated national and corporate policies, education and training programs tailored to existing markets, and support for youth entrepreneurship. Address gaps in employment law and labor market practices to cover and protect youth in non-traditional employment conditions.
- Include youth in migration policies related to countries of origin, destination, and migrants themselves. Migration is a solution for many young people to escape environments of inequality - an “improvement by movement.” Migration policies should reflect this reality.
- Empower youth political mobilization through dedicated youth parties, or integration into existing political bodies, in order to make sure youth are better represented. Offer trainings for youth to gain skills in political mediation, grassroots organization and advocacy.
- Utilize existing human rights conventions to advocate for the particular interests and voices of youth. Promote youth engagement through existing human rights mechanisms, treaties, etc., including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.
- Consider the creation of a particular international youth convention to put youth interests front and center, and advance youth dignity, welfare, and empowerment around the world. One potential scenario is to let civil society organizations first negotiate a model treaty on youth, and allow this to serve as an inspiration for nation-states and an advocacy tool.
- Continue to unite universities, local communities, researchers, civil society, practitioners, entrepreneurs, the private sector, and the international public policy community made up of and acting for youth in order to define better-informed youth policies.

Overall, the social stigmas attached to the youth cohort need to be urgently addressed, and the legal frameworks supporting young people and the opportunities for youth to participate in their societies are in desperate need of a 21st century upgrade. With enduring challenges to young people’s access to their most basic rights, a selective approach to youth empowerment is not adequate. After all, with the largest generation of young people in history existing on the planet today, societies cannot afford to continue to ignore and marginalize their youth populations. For the sake of the international economy, social fabric, security, health, and the rights of young people as human beings, it is time for the world to invest in the equality and empowerment of youth.

Appendix

Michael W. Doyle is the Director of the Columbia Global Policy Initiative, and Harold Brown Professor of U.S. Foreign and Security Policy, a three-fold appointment in the School of International and Public Affairs, the Department of Political Science, and the Law School. His research interests include international relations theory, international law, and international history; civil wars and international peace-building; and the United Nations. In the 1990s, Doyle was a policy adviser to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Lessons Learned Unit of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. He has also been an individual member of the UN Democracy Fund, which was established in 2005 by the UN General Assembly to promote grass-roots democratization around the world. He chaired UNDEF from 2007 through 2013. He also co-directs the Center on Global Governance at Columbia Law School.

Doyle previously served as assistant secretary-general and special adviser for policy planning to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He formerly taught at Princeton University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom. He was vice president and senior fellow of the International Peace Institute and currently is a member of its board. Doyle received an A.B. and a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Ahmad Alhendawi assumed his position as the first UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth on 17 January 2013. Born in 1984 in Jordan, Mr. Alhendawi holds a Master’s degree in Advanced European and International Relations, a diploma as “Policy Officer in European and International Organizations” from the Institut Européen in Nice, and a Bachelor’s degree in computer information systems from the Al-Balqa Applied University in Jordan.

Mr. Alhendawi is a youth advocate at the national, regional and international levels. He was a co-founder for the Youth for Democracy Network at the Jordanian Commission for Democratic Culture, which he headed. Internationally, he is a co-founder of the International Youth Council, based in New York. He previously worked as a Team Leader for the World Bank-funded programme to the League of Arab States on Institutional Development to Strengthen Arab Policy and Participation. Prior to this, he served as the Youth Policy Advisor in the League of Arab States in Cairo and as an officer in the Technical Secretariat of the Arab Youth and Sports Ministers Council. Past experience also includes serving as a Team Leader for the National Youth Policy Project in Iraq, a Youth Programme Associate at the Iraq office of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and as an Emergency Programme Officer at the non-governmental organization Save the Children. As a regional consultant, he has also supported the Danish Youth Council’s projects in the Middle East and North Africa.

Abdulrazaq Alkali is an Alumni of Reagan – Fascell Fellow of International Forum for Democratic Studies at National Endowment for Democracy (NED) Washington D.C. U.S.A and Executive

Director of the Youth Society for the Prevention of Infectious Disease and Social Vices (YOSPIS). Abdulrazaq Alkali has directed projects on civic education in Northern Nigeria that seek to enhance state and local government transparency and accountability through youth networks, project on voter education, election monitoring, public oversight of States and local budgets, and the political mobilization of youth. As a paralegal, Mr. Alkali has been intimately involved in human rights issues and offers legal counsel to youth, girls and other vulnerable groups. During his fellowship, Mr. Alkali identified ways of promoting the participation of young men and women in Nigeria's democracy, with recommendations for civil society organizations, schools, neighborhood initiatives, political groups, and other institutions at the local and national level.

Chernor Bah is a lead youth advocate for global education, a girl champion and former refugee from Sierra Leone. He is Youth Engagement Coordinator for A World at School. Chernor serves as the youth representative on the High-Level Steering committee for the UN Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative and as Chair of the Youth Advocacy Group. In 2013, Chernor teamed up with other youth advocates around the world to launch the Youth Education Crisis Committee, advocating for the education rights of children affected by emergencies. Following years of civil war in his country, he founded and led the Children's Forum Network, Sierra Leone's children parliament. In that role, Chernor presented a report on the experience of Sierra Leonean children to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 2002, Chernor served as Junior Executive Producer of a UN children/youth radio project, designed to involve young people in Sierra Leone's post-conflict discourse. Since then Chernor has worked with youth in Liberia, Lebanon, Haiti, the Philippines and other emergency settings, leading efforts to strengthen youth voices in development and policy processes. A former UNFPA Special Youth Fellow, Chernor co-wrote a report titled "Will You Listen-Young Voices from Conflict Zones" and co-led the Youth Zones initiative. He holds an MA in Peace Studies from the University of Notre Dame and a Bachelor's degree from the University of Sierra Leone.

Leonardo SC Castilho currently serves as Human Rights Officer with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in its New York Office, where he is the focal point for different issues under non-discrimination, including youth rights, and economic, social and cultural rights. He also held positions with OHCHR in its headquarters in Geneva; its Regional Office for South America in Santiago, Chile; and its Country office for Guatemala. Prior to joining OHCHR, he also worked with UNFPA on development and human rights in different positions in its country office for Brazil and regional projects for the Latin American region, including in Haiti. Before joining the United Nations, he worked for human rights NGOs in his hometown of Rio de Janeiro and at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica. A jurist by training, he began his university studies at PUC-Rio in Brazil, graduated with a Master in International Development from Sciences-Po Paris and obtained another Master of Studies on International Human Rights Law at Oxford University.

Priya Deshingkar is Research Director at the Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium (RPC) and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Sussex. She has a background in Development Studies and is primarily interested in policy research on internal migration, particularly rural-urban migration, and the role of urbanization in poverty reduction. Prior to

joining the University of Sussex, Priya was a Research Fellow at the Overseas Development Institute in London where she led research on migration and poverty. As Research Director of Migrating out of Poverty, Priya has played a critical role in shaping the research strategy of the six-year DfID funded Migrating out of Poverty research program, where the intersection of internal and regional migration with gender, youth aspirations and family structure are core themes. She is presently overseeing the implementation of surveys and qualitative research in five global regions – Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa. She has recently completed a DfID funded study on adaptive social protection and migration in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi, which examines the links between social protection and youth migration.

Alicia Evangelides is the Assistant Director of the Columbia Global Policy Initiative. In this capacity, she explores research and policy opportunities for the Columbia Global Policy Initiative, and provides recommendations to the Director, Dr. Michael W. Doyle. She prepares reports and publications based on research findings, policy developments, and emerging issues. In terms of grant management, Alicia investigates funding opportunities for projects and prepares grant proposals for the initiative. She also administers the grant-making activities of the initiative by managing the assessment of funding proposals and overseeing the allocation of awarded funds. Alicia has worked with the Columbia Global Policy Initiative since its early stages. She also worked as a research assistant for Dr. Michael W. Doyle and Dr. Joseph E. Stiglitz on a policy memo outlining the political, social, and economic effects of extreme inequalities, which was published in the spring 2014 issue of the Carnegie Council's journal, *Ethics & International Affairs*. Alicia has a Master of International Affairs degree in Human Rights and Advanced Policy and Economic Analysis from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), and a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations and Spanish from Tufts University.

Jeffrey Fagan is Isidor and Seville Sulzbacher Professor of Law and Professor of Epidemiology at Columbia University. He is a Senior Scholar at Yale Law School, and was a Visiting Professor at Yale Law School in 2009-10 and again in 2013. In 2010-11, he was a Fellow of the Straus Institute for the Advanced Study of Law and Justice at the New York University Law School. His research and scholarship examines policing, the legitimacy of the criminal law, capital punishment, legal socialization of adolescents, neighborhoods and crime, and juvenile crime and punishment. He recently served as consultant on capital punishment to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. He has served on the *Committee on Law and Justice* of the National Academy of Science from 2000-2006, the MacArthur Foundation's *Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice* from 1996-2006, and the National Science Foundation's *National Consortium on Violence Research*. From 2002-2005, he was a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Research Fellow. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Criminology.

Andy Furlong is Professor of Social Inclusion and Education in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, Scotland and Dean for Research in the College of Social Science. Andy is an educational sociologist with a longstanding specialism in the study of youth and a strong interest in the reproduction of inequalities and in processes of social change. Since 1998 Andy has been

editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Youth Studies*, one of the leading journals in the field. He has produced several books on youth, notably *Young People and Social Change* (with Fred Cartmel, 1997, 2nd edition 2007, Open University Press), *Higher Education and Social Justice* (with Fred Cartmel, 2009, Open University Press), the *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood* (Routledge, 2009) and *Youth Studies* (Routledge, 2013). His work has been translated into twelve languages. Andy has held visiting positions at Deakin University, the University of Melbourne and Monash University, and has held an Invitation Fellowship from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. He is an Academician of the UK Academy of Social Sciences and was recently awarded a Doctor of Letters.

Shaheer George is an Egyptian young activist who is one of the founders and currently the Secretary General of the Egyptian social liberal party Masr Alhurreya. He graduated from the faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University in 2006 and finished his master's degree in Political Science at the American University in Cairo (AUC) in 2013. Professionally, Shaheer worked as the Youth and Women Empowerment Specialist at the Governance and Civic Engagement program at CARE International in Egypt from late 2008 till early 2012, then as a freelance consultant in governance, youth empowerment and NGOs capacity building. As for now, he works as the Labor Rights researcher in the Egyptian human rights NGO, The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR). Shaheer's interests are mainly in areas related to governance, civic engagement and state-society relations. He used to write daily columns for the Egyptian online news portal Aswat Masriya. In addition, he has several contributions on the issues of governance, civic education and youth empowerment. Most importantly, he co-authored the 16th chapter of the UNDP Egypt Human Development Report in 2010 on youth focusing on politics of participation.

Kate Gilmore is Deputy Executive Director (Programme) for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Assistant Secretary-General. She has longstanding strategic leadership experience, having worked on human rights issues in government and non-government organizations. From 1986-1996, she worked on violence against women, law reform and women's health more broadly as a senior manager at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne Australia. From 1992-93, she was seconded to be CEO of Melbourne's Broadmeadows Community Health Service, then Australia's largest Community Health Service. In 1996, Ms. Gilmore joined Amnesty International Australia as National Director and in 2000 she was appointed Executive Deputy Secretary General of Amnesty International, based in London. Having joined UNFPA in April 2012, Ms. Gilmore – as one of two deputies to the Executive Director - carries overall responsibility for UNFPA programmes at country, regional and global levels.

Margaret Greene has worked for over twenty years on the social and cultural determinants of health, development policy and gender. She is widely known for her research and advocacy on the conditions faced by adolescents and by women in poor countries and on engaging men and boys for gender equality. She has worked extensively in recent years to call global attention to child marriage and to highlight its linkages with education, health, human rights and other dimensions of girls' wellbeing, as well as to highlight how programs and policies can work to end

the practice. Over the past ten years, she has co-authored two volumes in the *Girls Count* series, and has conducted research on adolescent sexual and reproductive health for the World Bank, WHO and USAID. She was lead author of UNFPA's 2012 State of the World Population, *By Choice, Not by Chance: Family Planning, Human Rights and Development*.

In addition to heading up GreeneWorks, a consulting group working to promote social change for health and development, Margaret Greene is Chair of the Board of Promundo-US and Secretary of the Coalition for Adolescent Girls. Dr. Greene received MA and PhD degrees in Demography from the University of Pennsylvania, and a BA in linguistics from Yale University.

Ravi Karkara is a global advocate on human rights and human capability approach to development, advocating social development, social inclusion and social justice for over 17 years. Currently Ravi is working as the Global Expert Advisor on Children and Youth with UNHABITAT and advising the UN Millennium Campaign on child and youth engagement, based in New York. He is the lead author of a ground breaking report, "Youth 21: Building the Architecture of Youth Engagement in the UN System" (the report mentioned by the UN Secretary-General). He represented UNHABITAT as the Co-chair of the UN Interagency Network on Youth Development. Presently he is the Focal Point on youth in post-2015 in the UN Interagency Network on Youth Development as well as the global focal point for MyWorld2015 UN Global Citizen's Survey and co-chair of the policy strategy Group on WorldWeWant2015 citizen's e-platform. He has been appointed by the Government of Sri Lanka as the Honorary Global Advisor to the proposed World Conference on Youth in 2014 on youth partnerships in developing and implanting the post-2015 development agenda.

Ravi has advised various governments on empowerment of young women and young men. Some of these include countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Haiti, Italy, Japan, Germany, Norway, Sri Lanka, UAE, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and USA among others. He has been instrumental in initiating intergenerational youth-government dialogues such as the Junior-8 Summit, a formal sub-event of G8, and the African Youth Assembly with the AU. He has delivered Keynote Addresses all over the world on child and youth empowerment including the Y-20 summit, a parallel event to the G20 Summit, European Parliament, Tunisia 1st year Revolution Anniversary UNDG event, Young Billionaires Summit – Nexus Youth Summit, etc.

Nur Laiq is the social media chief content officer for the Indian National Congress Party's national election campaign in New Delhi. She is also an independent consultant on political participation and youth empowerment. Nur previously worked as a senior policy analyst at the International Peace Institute in New York, where she headed the Arab Youth Project. Prior to this she worked with a Labour Member of Parliament at the House of Commons in London and at the European Commission in Brussels. She is the author of *Talking to Arab Youth: Revolution and Counterrevolution in Egypt and Tunisia* (New York: International Peace Institute, 2013) and co-editor of *The Search for Peace in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Compendium of Documents and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, November 2014).

Crystal Lee was born and raised on the Navajo Nation and is an enrolled tribal member. Her tribal

clans are Tachii'nii (Red Running Into Water people), Tabaaha (Water's Edge people), Tsenjikini (Cliff Dwellers people), and Kin I ichii'nii (Red House people). Diné cultural knowledge and traditional life have strongly influenced Crystal's educational, professional, and political activities. Currently, she is working in collaboration with tribal nations across the world to advance research and advocacy in the areas of public health, disease prevention, indigenous healing and cultural awareness, environmental sustainability, and education. She is the Founder and Executive Director of United Natives, a national non-profit organization that aims to assist Native American youth in multiple capacities. Crystal graduated from Arizona State University in 2005 with a B.A. in Communications and a B.S. in Microbiology. She then earned her M.P.H. from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2008. Currently, she is working towards a Ph.D. in Public Health at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Crystal also serves as a Tribal Consultant to the Obama Administration on tribal affairs, is a member of the United Nations Indigenous Youth Caucus and North American Caucus, and is affiliated with the Clinton Global Initiative.

Hanan Morsy is the Lead Economist for the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. From 2003 to 2012, she worked at the International Monetary Fund across different departments including, Fiscal Affairs, Middle East and Central Asia, European, and Monetary and Capital Markets as well as Advisor to the Executive Director. Dr. Morsy also worked as an Economic Consultant for a global management consulting firm implementing a public finance reform project in Egypt. She has published in the areas of youth unemployment and inequality, impact of structural reforms on growth and productivity, exchange rate and competitiveness, financial crisis contagion, sudden capital stops, inflation, and fiscal vulnerability and debt. She holds a PhD in Economics from the George Washington University, a Master's degree in Economics from University of California at Davis, and a Bachelor degree from the American University in Cairo.

Kate Offerdahl is a Masters of International Affairs Candidate at the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, and the Project Coordinator of the Columbia Global Policy Initiative project on Youth Marginalization. Kate also works as a writer and researcher with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and is currently following the UN General Assembly negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. She previously interned at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and will be working for the US State Department in the summer of 2014. Kate represented the UN Major Group for Children and Youth at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and was one of the co-coordinators for the NY+20 Conference for Youth. Kate also earned her Bachelor's degree from Columbia University, and is studying international environmental policy. Kate was born and raised in Minnesota, USA and currently lives in New York.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, a physician and public health expert, became the fourth Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, in January 2011. He holds the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. Before this appointment, Dr. Osotimehin was Nigeria's Minister of Health. Prior to that, he was Director-General of Nigeria's National Agency for the Control of AIDS, which coordinates HIV and AIDS work in a country of more than 160 million people.

Dr. Osotimehin qualified as a doctor from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria in 1972, and went to the University of Birmingham, England, where he got a doctorate in medicine in 1979. He was appointed Professor at the University of Ibadan in 1980 and headed the Department of Clinical Pathology before being elected Provost of the College of Medicine in 1990. Years later, he served in several organizations, including as Chair of the National Action Committee on AIDS, from 2002 to 2007. Dr. Osotimehin received the Nigerian national honour of Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) in December 2005.

At UNFPA, he has introduced major reforms to make the Fund more focused and results-oriented as well as intensified efforts to promote the rights and ability of young people to build a better world in the context of sexual and reproductive health. He is married and has five children.

Maggie Powers is a Research Assistant with the International Migration and Development project at the Columbia Global Policy Initiative. Maggie is a recent graduate of Columbia University with a Master of Arts in Human Rights Studies, and she holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Political Science from Loyola University Chicago.

Azad Rahimov was appointed the Minister of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2006. He was born on October 8, 1964 in Baku. In 1986, he graduated from the University of Languages with the major of English. In 1984, he started working as the chairman of Komsomol at school No. 245 of Baku. In 1986-1987, he served in the Soviet Army and was stationed in Moscow. In 1987-1989, Rahimov worked in Khatai rayon committee and in 1989-1990 he was the chairman of Azerbaijan Youth Organizations Committee. In 1994-1998, he worked as the Executive Director of Ros-IMESKO company. From 1998 to 2006, Rahimov was the Executive Director of Italdesigncompany.

Diane Sheinberg, a policy specialist on inclusive political institutions and processes, has developed a strong technical expertise in the design, implementation and evaluation of democratic governance programmes with major international organizations, donors, NGOs and consultancy companies in development and crisis settings. Her areas of expertise include: youth participation, women's political empowerment, parliamentary strengthening, political party support and electoral cycle management. At UNDP, she provides policy and project advice on inclusive political institutions and processes to UNDP country offices and their national partners, undertakes a research agenda, and maintains partnerships between UNDP and organizations within and beyond the UN. She worked in Sierra Leone as Adviser for the European Commission Delegation where she was responsible for thematic support to elections and non-state actors and for UNICEF as fundraising officer. As a policy officer for the European Network of NGO's for Central Africa, she lobbied the European Institutions on key human rights and governance issues. Diane has also been involved in several European Union Electoral Observation Missions in Africa and Asia. She holds a BA in International Relations and a Master's Degree in Public International Law from the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Leila Younis has acquired experience in the field of youth work in recent years working as a project coordinator and trainer in various civil society organizations on national and international

levels. She has been working as a field officer in an UNHCR project named 'Supporting refugees integration' within the Center for Peace Studies, Zagreb where she delivered educational activities and daily integration support to program users. She has gained further experience in global youth policies research as an intern at youthpolicy.org, a project coordinator in Euro-Arab youth projects, and a participant in British Council and Aspen leaders programs. Leila is currently delivering a few major projects, some of which are: a project under the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme with the aim of developing systems of inclusion and active citizenship (for organization Interkultura-Intercultural center, Zagreb); FP7 Sis Catalyst Educational Partnership of European Commission running a Mentoring associates' cooperation between ConSol Croatia and Eco-Ethics International Union Ethiopia with a focus on empowerment of children and youth; running a European partnership program for CSO/NGO named Upset which focuses on educating adults and the general public on how to overcome social discrimination and stigmatization through use of theatre and performance; and a youth volunteering program for the Red Cross office of county in northern Croatia.

She is also one of the founders of CSO/NGO ConSol Croatia delivering peace education programs in Vukovar, Croatia where children and youth are being segregated within educational systems according to their ethnical background. She has acquired MA from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb; accomplished a year-long Peace Studies course in Croatia; the seminar in the Department of the Study of Religions at SOAS (School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London, United Kingdom) and various informal education trainings and educational programs.

Yahir Zavaleta is a Mexican youth activist who has been working on HIV and human rights related issues since 2008. He graduated in business management, and is currently directing the HIV programme at Espolea, a youth for youth organization that fosters national and regional advocacy efforts on young key populations in the AIDS response. Additionally, he has recently joined as the Operation Coordinator for the HIV Young Leaders Fund, a funding mechanism that enables new leadership among young people most affected by HIV worldwide. As a member of the Y+ programme, a GNP+ established group that address specific gaps and needs of young people living with HIV (YPLHIV), Yahir has placed strategic issues concerning YPLHIV within relevant spaces, such as the ILO's Youth Employment Forum, UNESCO's Capacity Building Workshop on programming with Young Key Populations and more recently as a youth representative for GNP+'s Key population living with HIV Advisory Group.

Together with a group of young Mexican people, he took part in the consolidation of the national network of young people living with HIV and participated in the building process of the Latin American and the Caribbean Network of young people living with HIV. Both networks are points of reference in the youth and HIV movement in the region. Yahir has also worked as a consultant for the Public Health Federal Institute in a clinical research protocol focused on identifying HIV and STI prevalence among MSM living with HIV. He assisted the Cultural Project for the Human Rights Commission in Mexico City and was part of the Youth Programme for the International AIDS Society headquarters in Mexico for the XVII International AIDS Conference in 2008.