

“The Forum is yours, act upon it!”

By Karim Abou Merhi

Two years have passed since the last UNESCO Youth Forum, and Paris is once again hosting delegates from all around the world.

At the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum, delegates will be enhancing their relationship to the organization that understands the need to listen to their voices, hear what they want, and try to help them wherever possible.

“We always want to move forward, and improve what we have done the last time,” says Golda El-Khoury, Chief of UNESCO’s Section for Youth, Sport and Physical Education.

She urges those taking part in the forum to benefit from the chance it offers them and to “take

responsibilities in your hands and act upon them.”

El-Khoury also stresses that the organization is looking to strengthen its ties with the younger generation and solve the problems that it faces, especially those that fall within UNESCO’s fields of competence (education, science, culture, and communication).

“The thing with youth issues is that they are cross-sectoral, and all of UNESCO will be involved in the Youth Forum. We have our ties with the member states, and will aim to transport the recommendations that will be issued to decision makers to include them in their policies.”

El-Khoury also says that what is more important is what young people do for themselves.

“We offer the framework, but it is youth’s responsibility to benefit from it to the fullest, to put their needs on the table, to tell us what they think, and most importantly to come out with recommendations that can be applicable in our domain of competence, and mainly to be focused and arranged, not spread out all over the place.”

She hopes the forum’s actions will result in a “small, clear, and robust” report to be presented to UNESCO’s General Conference, scheduled to start on Tuesday, 6th of October, and will fall within their mandate to ‘link research to policy’.

The experience starts today, use it to the fullest!

Why are you here?

compiled by Enoch Nohri

159 delegates, 109 countries and a whole bunch of young people can mean a lot of action.

So who are these people and what are they doing here?

Sara Mallawi, Saudi Arabia – I want to meet new cultures, to learn more, give more and share the world my personal

experiences.

Victorina Jean Matias, Angola – I have come here to discuss the ardent problems youths are confronted with and to seek ways of improving the living conditions of youths

Pema Vadivelo, Seychelles – I’m here to discuss about the global crisis affecting the youths worldwide

Chantal Cogle, Jamaica – I believe that we are the future and we have something to say. For a successful world, we need to ensure that problems affecting youths are well dealt with.

Babara Seatan, UK – I’m very passionate in meaningful youth participation and how to influence policies and recommendations.

Central America: changing repression for prevention

by Renata Summa

The murder of documentary film-maker Christian Poveda last month, in El Salvador, brought a new light to an old problem: Central America’s youth is deeply threatened by gang violence.

Shortly before his death, Poveda had just finished his documentary about the *maras* - Central American gangs formed by very young people and known by their extreme violence.

The situation is so bad that in 2005, the SICA – Spanish for the Central America Integration

System - asked for international help to fight violence among the youth.

UNESCO had the idea to implement an already successful program that was happening in Brazil.

They brought the idea of “open schools,” where kids and teenagers could do extra-curricular activities during the weekends.

Besides teaching youth new skills, the program also prevented them from joining gangs.

“Open schools” have now spread to El Salvador and are starting to take place in Honduras.

“We soon got to the conclusion that prevention is better than repression, in every aspect,” says Daniel Coulomb-Herrasti, Assistant Program Specialist (Prevention of Youth Violence) of the Section for Youth, Sport and Physical Education.

The project also wants to change the way Central-American society see its youth.

“People fear young adults and hardly give them an opportunity, especially if they have tattoos (one of the *maras* marks),” says Coulomb-Herrasti. “We want to change that with the media’s help.”

Generation Y: There’s no quick fix

By Siena Anstis

Adeola Ojeniyi, the Regional Program Coordinator for the West African Youth Network (WAYN), is the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum’s Youth Speaker. The main pillar of his work today, inspired by his first introduction to youth engagement at summer YMCA camps and later in university, centers on conflict resolution and analysis among West Africa’s leaders of tomorrow.

“West African youth have been victims and we want to channel that energy into development,” he says. His region has been wrecked by a series of recent conflicts, from Charles Taylor’s reign of terror in Liberia and Sierra Leone to recent events in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Ojeniyi’s goal is to equip youth with the necessary information to succeed in leadership positions and take responsibility for the future of their region. Simultaneously, he wants youth to engage directly with the region’s Members of Parliament (MPs) who are notoriously absent from civic dialogue.

His work has largely culminated in the West African Youth Parliamentary Participation Forum held by WAYN. This Forum brings twenty MPs and twenty young people from West Africa together to discuss the needs and ideas of the region’s young people. His goal is to help transform these youth into responsible leaders; equip them with the necessary information to succeed in leadership positions; and take responsibility for the future of their region. Simultaneously, he wants youth to engage directly with the region’s MPs who are notoriously absent from civic dialogue.

While passionate about the process, Ojeniyi does not believe that current leaders will change anytime soon. Instead he highlights a three-pronged, long-term approach:

Firstly, one opens a “corridor of information” between youth and their respective MPs. This gives the latter the necessary information to come forth in Parliament and speak for the people. Currently, there exists a huge gap between civil society and MPs themselves.

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Understanding the crisis

- *Nobelism Paul Krugman explains the crisis:* <http://www.newsweek.com/id/164602>
- *What I learned at the Economic Crisis. The Insider Joseph Stiglitz:* <http://www.mindfully.org/WTO/Joseph-Stiglitz-IM-F17apr00.htm>
- *Entretien avec Elie Cohen: de la crise financière des subprimes à la Société Générale:* http://www.elie-cohen.eu/article.php?id_article=307

From 1999 until now

The UNESCO Youth conference is a biennial event that began in 1999 as “a very important tool in bridging the inevitable gap between young people and a complex international organization with its many partners and networks.” The Youth Forum will bring together ‘young delegates from all over the world to exchange views, share experiences and identify common opportunities and challenges’.

The UNESCO General Conference voted in 2003 to make the Forum a permanent feature, with a final report to be presented at the plenary session that would allow “young delegates’ views, concerns, and recommendations to be taken into account by the representatives of the member states and the UNESCO Secretariat.”

The first forum took place in November 1999, with 120 participants from Member States, along with observers from youth NGOs. It marked ‘a decisive step in the organization’s action to involve young people as delegates in the conceptualization and implementation of UNESCO’s future orientation and programme and to integrate youth perspective into this end’.

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Canadian youth delegates. Harbingers of change?

by Siena Anstis

How important is the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum? According to Anne Lemieux and Xing Chiu, Canada's two delegates for this year, there have been two* common complaints about the forum: youth recommendations are not always implemented by UNESCO National Commissions in their own countries and influencing the General Conference through the Youth Forum has been difficult as the conference continues to see the Youth Forum as an 'infant' of their 'more important' event.

In an attempt to remedy these problems, Canada has implemented new mechanisms to try and ensure a successful – and useful – Youth Forum.

This year, to ensure cross-country representation and participation, Canada brought in provincial coordinators to represent all regions within their multicultural borders. As Marie-Christine Lecompte, the Canadian Commission's Youth Program Officer, explains, this was an attempt to "take the pulse of

Canada's youth" and ensure an inclusive process. These coordinators organized deliberations with youth within their region and brought forth a summary of their recommendations to the main drafting committee, of which Lemieux and Xing, who are both engaged in youth organizations in Canada, were key participants.

Both Lemieux and Xing, although new to the process, noticed that previous Youth Forum recommendations were not always well-implemented in Canada. To change this, the Canadian Commission has decided to bring together an action plan team soon after the Youth Forum, that would come up with practical solutions to youth's concerns.

Lastly, both delegates and organizers are concerned that the General Conference does not take the Youth Forum seriously. Canadian delegates are suggesting a mentorship program between attendees of the General Conference and youth delegates. Both parties would have the chance to learn from each other and open a more personal mutual dia-

logue.

It remains to be seen how the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum will affect national youth policies as well as the General Conference. While some are doubtful of the Forum's actual impact, the above shows an attempt at rapprochement. With youth as the 'leaders of tomorrow', a closer dialogue between youth and their current leaders will be necessary – in the long run – in addressing all aspects of the current global crisis.



Left to right: Anne Lemieux, Canadian delegate, Marie-Christine Lecompte, Youth Program Officer with the Canadian UNESCO National Commission and Xing Chiu, Canadian delegate.

Adeola Ojeniyi - cont. from page 1

Secondly, it requires a change in mind set, fostered by these peace-building conferences that train people in non-violent methods of conflict resolution. Having these tools at hand is necessary when faced with conflicting and potentially violent, interests.

Lastly, it's about blocking the political platform to dictatorial leaders, accomplished through the above. Youth training and empowerment, however vague those terms may be, ensures that people engage in a sustained effort to unseat those who do not fit the democratic bill.

Ojeniyi's message to a notoriously impatient Generation Y is that "there is no quick fix." Undeterred beliefs and methods are key to long-term change. Development, peace-building and other related fields are often filled with empty jargon that mystifies (and bores) the average reader. But slowly, by listening to people like Ojeniyi, we begin to understand the root of this elusiveness: change is not something that happens overnight. Continued influence and pressure makes subtle ripples that eventually compound into big changes, like Obama's Presidency, or in small

changes, like sustained peace, which unfortunately often go unnoticed. **Adeola Ojeniyi will be speaking at the Opening Session (Room XI) from 11:30-12:30 today.**



The famous Eiffel Tower. Photo by Karim Abou Merhi

Beyond the Eiffel Tower

By Renata Summa

You're in Paris and you have a moral obligation to have fun. So to understand what Parisian life is all about here's some tips on what to do:

- Get lost in Saint-Germain-des-Près for its elegance and intellectual flavors.
- Experience the historical Quartier Latin and take a look at the world-known Sorbonne university.
- This Saturday night, from 7pm to 7am, Paris holds its famous Nuit Blanche. This year, the city invites you to discover three main itineraries full of music, art and lights. Find out all about it at www.nuitblanche2009.com
- Finally, if you still have some energy left do not miss a Sunday morning walk in le Marais. Have a *pain au chocolat* for breakfast, or climb to the top of Montmartre and have a *crêpe au Nutella*.

From 1999 to now - cont. from page 1

The number of participants rose to 131 in the second forum and looked at the opportunities and negative effects of globalization.

The title of the 3rd forum 'UNESCO and Young people: a mutual engagement' was accompanied by a forum website 'conceived both as a search tool and an interactive forum of exchange and discussion'.

The 4th forum in 2005 gathered 189 delegates and 48 observers and resulted in recommendations such as strengthening the dialogue, engaging with global youth community and NGOs, and involving youth focal points in the preparatory process.

The last forum in 2007 brought together 261 participants. It offered an opportunity to evaluate a series of regional forums that were held in 2006 and 2007 and contribute to the two Ministerial roundtables that took place during the General Conference.

Please check out the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum's blog at <http://unescoyouthforum.wordpress.com/>. Contributions are welcome!

Do you smell that? It's called "Change"

By Shuk-Wah Chung

It's 4am and I'm lying wide awake in bed. I'm not a coffee addict, an insomniac nor coming down from an intense night of partying. Instead it's the voices running round my head and I can't get them to stop. "I'm going to Paris, I'm going to Paris, I'm going to Paris. I can't believe I'm going to Paris!!"

No doubt most of you also had the same feelings. In my dreams I'm climbing the steel stairs of the Eiffel Tower; walking along windy, cobbled Parisian streets; and tasting the smooth buttery goodness of an authentic French croissant. And now, after a 12 hour plane ride and jetlag well and truly out of the way I'm here walking the cobbled Parisian streets, with the Eiffel Tower in full view as I make my way towards the UNESCO building and a croissant in hand.

But that's not the best thing about being here. Being in a different country is all about the peo-

ple you meet and from today we'll all be meeting like-minded young people who are all doing amazing and inspiring things. We've been engaged through the forums, debates have gotten heavy (but not too heavy), and we've shared our inner thoughts, goals and desires.

Now that we're all here in the same room there's no doubt different ideas will be shared, tears will be shed and chairs might be thrown across the room*. Ultimately though, no matter what country we're from, what language we speak or what global crises might try to underpin us, we all share the same spirit and inspiration: young people are the voice of tomorrow, and if we do things right change can happen.

So on behalf of the journalism team here I wish you all an engaging, exciting and thought provoking UNESCO conference. Let's make things happen kids!

*UNESCO does not condone violence. Let's keep things happy.