

The IYF Partner Network @ 20 and Beyond

The following is a brief synopsis of IYF's 2010 Global Partner Meeting, held in Washington, DC October 7-9. We are pleased that representatives from nearly 70 partner organizations from 45 countries attended this meeting – the most ever in our 20 year history! For those unable to attend, we hope this will give you a flavor of the rich dialogue and exchange of information that makes every global partner meeting so uniquely interesting and memorable. Please note that many of the presentations referred to below are available on www.iyflive.net.

DAY I: OCTOBER 7: *Youth Leadership & Livelihoods Conference*

“There are 1.3 billion young people growing up in our world right now, and they are why we’ve gathered here today.” With that dramatic statement, Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan opened up the Conference, via video, and set the tone for the day: “Our goal must be to ensure that every young person becomes a healthy, productive, and engaged citizen.” The Morning Session, entitled “The Global Challenge – And Opportunity- of Youth Employment,” opened with remarks from the moderator, Helio Mattar, President and Founder of Akatu Institute for Conscious Consumption in Brazil. Focusing in on the global youth unemployment crisis, which at 13% is the highest jobless rate ever, Mr. Mattar engaged the panel in a rich exchange around both the challenges and some of the emerging solutions to that crisis.

Jay Knott, USAID Mission Director in Jordan described how IYF's Youth:Work Jordan initiative is the first of its kind to focus specifically on at-risk, marginalized youth. “We want to engage them, build their skills, and get them active in their communities,” he said, “and working with the private sector is critical if we want to create jobs that respond to the aspirations of Jordan’s young people.” Dr. Maureen Lewis, economic advisor at the World Bank, noted that youth unemployment is finally being recognized as a critical issue that demands far more attention from policy makers and donors. She also highlighted the kinds of skills that employers are now demanding in new hires, which include IT and technical skills, life skills, and entrepreneurship training. “We rely on IYF and all of you,” she said, to help identify the most effective youth job training programs being implemented around the world.

In his keynote address, President Martti Ahtisaari, the 2008 Nobel Peace Laureate, picked up on the themes of the conference – highlighting the enormous challenges facing today’s youth when they are unable to find a job and become frustrated and hopeless about the future – and yet how young people themselves are very much part of the solution. Describing his early efforts with IYF to create the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, he noted that “to rebuild and to grow, a country needs jobs, economic investments, and an engaged youth who are hopeful about the future and seek to play a leading role in the revitalization of their country.” In an impassioned call on all sectors of society to expand their efforts to empower and employ today’s 1.3 billion young people, he concluded: “Even in these difficult times, young people remain my greatest hope for the future.”

After the speech, IYF President and CEO Bill Reese announced the establishment of the IYF Martti Ahtisaari Youth Peace Award to be presented every year for outstanding and creative social entrepreneurship “in the cause of building and maintaining a peaceful society.”

The afternoon session on Youth Leadership, introduced by Maria Otero, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, offered a lively exchange between Moderator Nicole Lapin, the anchor of CNBC's "Worldwide Exchange" and IYF's Ashok Regmi, YouthActionNet® Fellows Therese Fernandez, Nick Martin, and Bright Simons; White House senior advisor Marta Urquilla, and Rodney Hines, Director of Community Investments at Starbucks.

After compelling video presentations from the Fellows of their projects, Doug Becker, CEO of Laureate Education, Inc. and IYF Board Chair, said he was always impressed with the innovative ideas that young people bring to the table, the importance of investing in these young entrepreneurs, and their ability to inspire others. Mr. Hines from Starbucks asked the Fellows, "How do we multiply you by the millions?" and called on all sectors to strategically invest in and support young people's innovative solutions to pressing problems.

DAY 2: OCTOBER 8, 2010: *Global Partner Meeting: The IYF Partner Network @ 20 and Beyond*

IYF's President and CEO Bill Reese offered a warm welcome to global partners and opened the Global Partner Meeting (GPM) with a brief history of its ever expanding network and a look forward to future plans. Clearly pleased that this 20th anniversary meeting had attracted leaders from 68 IYF partner organizations, representing 45 countries – the most ever at a GPM – Mr. Reese noted that IYF's "ecosystem" now embraces 175 organizations in 78 countries – but also includes YouthActionNet® Fellows as well as partners in the private and public sectors, including the World Bank, the IDB, and USAID. "Today," he said, "the real work begins."

In addition to reviewing IYF's signature programs around work, learning, and citizenship, Mr. Reese previewed new global partnerships that include programs in Jordan (to improve youth employment and civic engagement among at-risk youth); Mexico (to reach vulnerable youth with after-school and job training programs); Africa (to assess youth needs and opportunities in Sub-Saharan countries); and West Bank/Gaza (to help Palestinian youth get decent jobs and secure productive livelihoods.)

Plenary: Technology for Youth Development: New Approaches for Greater Impact

An international panel presented various technologies and social media being used to promote their particular youth development agenda. While there were a few technological glitches along the way ... due to complex presentations and new media platforms, including a call in from a partner in India -- the room was filled with a real "buzz" of excitement and interest. Bryanne Gilkinson, Director of Emerge Global in Sri Lanka, explained her work with young female victims of sexual abuse – and her use of a highly engaging website (including the use of blogging, Facebook and Flickr) to get out the word about the jewelry they make as part of their path back to independence and healing. Nairobi in Kenya has developed the "Sambaza Peace" initiative that uses an interactive digital and mobile learning program that teaches and works with young people to develop a culture of peace in their communities.

Among the "lessons learned" around the use of technology: any technology integration will take time and resources, to it's important to identify the correct type of technology; each technological tool should meet a particular and relevant task; training and "evangelization" are key to effective use of those tools; and the need for organizations to recognize that technology is

just a tool ... it can't solve everything – but it does require competence, commitment, and persistence. Among next steps for people to think about: increase the convergence between mobile phones and social networking platforms and devise new strategies that can reduce the costs of communication between mobile phone users.

Break Out Workshops: The GPM offered a wide range of workshops on subjects that engaged participants in lively discussions and debates throughout the meeting.

Discussion Highlights:

- Presentations from the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, the Foundation for Young Australians, and the Chamber of Commerce in Sri Lanka focused on the issue of **empowering youth across ethnic and religious divides** by introducing participants to very different situations in their particular countries, and the impact of the government's role in these situations. If supportive, it is much easier for civil society organizations to carry out programs that contribute to the empowerment of minority youth. Panelists agreed that the current economic crisis has only reinforced negative attitudes toward minorities in general and immigrants in particular.
- The workshop around shifting the conversation **from scale to innovation** used a “life cycle of social innovation” model to launch the discussion, led by IYF's Ashok Regmi with Peter Baynard Smith of the Foundation for Young Australians. The questions to the group included: should the philanthropic world be focused on innovation rather than scale, and what are the ramifications of this shift in the broader development dialogue?
- A discussion around **trends in public/private partnerships** offered rich insights into how those alliances are changing and how to work effectively within these new frameworks. Patricia Flanagan, a Program Office at USAID for IYF's Youth:Work initiative, noted the evolution of her agency toward building multi-sector partnerships and being a strategic player in bringing them together. USAID is far more engaged with the private sector as a partner in its development initiatives worldwide than ever before. Another trend: there's far greater emphasis by the private sector to ensure CSR initiatives address social needs while supporting the company's business objectives.
- Concerned that there is too much duplication and waste in the development field, corporations are seeing real value in bringing multiple organizations and sponsors to the table. NGOs need to be clear and confident that what they have to offer is valuable and unique, and be able to show a strong track record on their achievements. NGOs also need to reach out more to the media with a positive communications message so that they (the media) understand the role of civil society in development issues.
- In a workshop on strategies for **job creation and entrepreneurship**, panelists highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship programs to focus on small businesses that have the potential to create jobs – rather than solely work around self-employment. Also emphasized: the need to offer a comprehensive approach -- including a two-year mentoring period to support young entrepreneurs that would offer on-going services in marketing and business linkages and life skills training. For out-of-school youth, career counseling interventions are highly recommended, in addition to

entrepreneurship training that includes market research, business plans, and customer-oriented life skills training.

- The establishment of business resource centers can be very helpful to assess current skills, identify skills gaps based on market needs, recommend relevant training, offer internships, monitor business growth and links with banking institutions, and help gain the commitment from youth and their parents to invest in these opportunities. Andrew Fiddaman, Director of Youth Business International (YBI), added that it's important to identify a young person's entrepreneurial passion – not just figure out what kind of business would do well in the market place. "If he or she really wants to do it, and does it well," he said, "there will be a market."
- In the **integration of life skills and reproductive health** workshop, IYF's Julia Freed and Sarabecka Mullen discussed strategies for such integration with Fely Rixhon from the Philippine Center for Population and Development and Arek Brzezinski from the Polish Children & Youth Foundation. Emphasis was placed on the value of holistic programming with life skills and health components and models that are used in the Passport to Success and Planning for Life projects. The group concluded: integration of these components is integral to a comprehensive youth development program.
- As part of a workshop on **positive youth messaging**, the group discussed what strategies people are currently pursuing, the challenges they face, and some helpful recommendations to do a better job. Dr. Heike Kahl, Director of the German Children & Youth Foundation, works with people throughout every department to ensure key positive messages (e.g. every child has talent) are incorporated. Mosun Layode from the LEAP Africa program emphasized how youth-led initiatives grew after it began its awards initiative, while Adam Smith of the Foundation for Young Australians underscored the power of youth-led media, including a 24-hour-radio station, to change public perceptions of young people.
- Among the solutions to positive messaging: work with the media to provide a more accurate picture of youth issues, make relevant data available, and prepare young people to speak for themselves and then give them an opportunity to do so. In the UK, for example, surveys show that 71% of the media coverage of young people is negative, and 39% of the public is not aware of the positive things young people do. Poet Ben Okri was quoted as saying: "Stories are the secret reservoirs of values: change the stories individuals and nations live by and you change the individuals and nations."
- The **Social Media workshop**, led by IYF's Caroline Esclapez and Katherine Kinzer, talked about the Poetry (the conversation you are creating) and the Plumbing (the social media platforms themselves). Most of the "poetry" is already established through the ongoing conversations and exchanges of information and ideas between organizations like IYF and their partners, donors, youth, advocates, and the interested public. It's just a matter of reaching out on line. Advice for IYF partner organizations: try to maintain a common message (around the importance of youth development) rather than individual and competing messages around different programs and strategies.

DAY 3: OCTOBER 9, 2010: *Global Partner Meeting: The IYF Partner Network @ 20 and Beyond*

Plenary: Working with Youth At Risk: Shared Challenges/Different Approaches

Fely Rixhon, Executive Director of the Philippine Center for Population and Development, described her organization's efforts to pass national legislation as one strategy to address the tough issue of adolescent sexuality and reproductive health. "Almost 3 out of 10 young Filipinos belong to poor families," she explained, "and one in ten young women, ages 15 to 29, is already a mother." To help reduce the country's population growth, her organization decided that building support for this legislation was the most effective vehicle for change.

IYF's partner in Spain, Fundacion Esplai, is empowering at-risk youth through an inter-generational program in which young people work with the elderly – teaching them new IT skills while offering those youth a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Such inter-generational interactions often lead to the older generation becoming positive spokespeople not only for the youth but also for these kinds of programs. Dr. Furio Rosati with Understanding Children's Work in Italy underscored the importance of research in youth development. "We need new research to support the good work that all of you are doing, and we need your results," said Dr. Rosati. Such research is particularly critical in whether to scale up.

Workshop Discussion Highlights

- A workshop on **strengthening organizational capacity**, led by Nelly Burrows from the Salesian Institute in South Africa and Lisa Slifer-Mbacke at Management Systems International explored various capacity assessment tools to help NGOs identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as priority areas of improvement.
- Caroline Esclapez, IYF's Web Outreach Manager, led a discussion with partners from Argentina (SES) and Spain (Fundacion Esplai) around **how the web can be used to facilitate communication** within the network and to reach out to different constituencies. In Argentina, for example, SES uses an on-line survey for youth to identify their employability strengths and weaknesses.
- As part of the dialogue around **intervening in violence-prone communities**, Maria Teresa Almada Mireles from Mexico spoke vividly about the violence and drug trafficking that has had such a terrible impact on the lives of young people in the Mexican border towns of Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana. Breaking down the culture of violence by giving young people job training and entrepreneurship opportunities is key to IYF's Youth:Work program. "This program will give these young people positive alternatives to the despair that now fills their lives," said Carlo Arze, Program Director of Youth:Work Mexico.

Farewell: Closing Luncheon and Video IYF's Bill Reese congratulated participants for a lively and productive three days of discussions and reflected on progress made. A final video collage by IYF's Sheila Kinkade with photographs of partners in conversation, speaking on panels, and enjoying each others' company – celebrated the close of the GPM.