

Youth Flash Newsletter

November 2011

Focus: The Time of Now - by Benson Saulo, Australian Youth Delegate to the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2011



There is a story from remote north-western Australia of an old Aboriginal man who was the last man to speak his traditional language fluently. For generations he'd lived on his traditional land, his skin as ragged and ruff as the land itself.

To avoid losing such an important and unique element of Australian life, a group of non-Indigenous scientists and linguists made the long trip north to meet the old man and record his language. In the warm early morning sun, they sat down in the red dirt over a cup of tea, brewed over an open flame on the side of the dirt road.

The conversation was translated through the old man's daughter using a common dialect. The group would ask a question, the daughter would interpret in the common dialect before the old man would respond, first in his traditional language then repeat it by translating it into the common language before it would then be translated back into English. It was a slow process but one that was so important to the work of the scientists and linguists.

Overcome with curiosity, a linguist asked; "how old are you?" Going through the process of translation and understanding the old man replied via his daughter with the answer: "Ten Thousand". Looking puzzled the group asked him to explain. After a long conversation between the man and his daughter, the daughter turned to the group and pointed to a giant boab tree while translating his words:

"See this tree, this is a part of my dreaming, my culture, these have been on this land, since the beginning of time. I have seen trees grow tall and strong, dry up and die. I have seen animals come through these lands, produce offspring, I have watched the offspring grow old and pass away. I have seen my own family, live, grow old and return to this earth. This tree stands strong and will continue to stand tall and strong long after my time in this life. But next to these trees, I have been the most constant on my land, so if next to these ancient trees I have been the most constant then I must be ten thousand."

Having reached the end of my three months based in New York as the Australian Youth Delegate, I once again find myself reflecting on the concept of time and the sense that my three months has come to an end too soon. I have been recounting, in my mind, all the events from the opening of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly to the close of the 3rd Committee and the adoptions of both the resolution on 'The Rights of the Child' and the youth resolution on 'the impacts of the financial and economic crisis on young people' for which I had the responsibility of leading both negotiations for Australia.

The moment that stands out for me the most was that of delivering an address on the 4th October to the 3rd Committee in which I described key moments of my National Engagement Tour, a tour I undertook to gain a deeper understanding of Australian youth. The tour involved traveling over 38,000 kilometers across Australia, meeting some of the most inspiring young people and organisations who wanted to have a positive impact on Australia and the world. But it was also on this tour that I encountered some of the most heart breaking moments, moments such as hearing from a young boy who shared his fears of living in a town that had seen the suicides of four young people within three months, the most recent just two months before I had arrived. It was these interactions that made me so proud to represent Australian youth on the international stage, it was these moments that created a sense of understanding of who I was representing.

During October I was joined by 24 other youth delegates representing their respective nations, delegates from Germany, Sweden, the Dominican Republic and many others in between. This was the most amazing month of my life. Meeting likeminded people inspires, challenges and opens your eyes to different perspectives. I am immensely proud to call them all my friends and proud of all their efforts in New York. Together we pushed the youth agenda forward within the GA resolution on youth, meeting challenges with enthusiasm and meeting criticism with the knowledge that we were all here to represent our dynamic, audacious generation.

October saw the wonderfully successful side-event organized by the German youth delegates on 'Youth and Education for Sustainable Development'. This event attracted strong participation from many UN entities and organisations in an interactive dialogue on the beyond 2015 and Rio +20 agendas and the role of youth in shaping these discussions.

On the back of the success of this event I organised and spoke on a discussion panel, themed 'Indigenous Children Globally: The road to 2012'. The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Australia and Peru to the United Nations, guest panelists included the Director of Policy and Practice at UNICEF and a representative from the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Division of Social Policy Development. The event was held within the United Nations and chaired by the Ambassadors from the co-sponsoring nations. The event was a forward leaning, forward thinking discussion on the 2012 'Rights of the Child' negotiations which, thanks to the EU and GRULAC group (Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries), will have a strong focus on Indigenous children globally.

Forward thinking, being able to look to the future, is a great ability and a great strength. It is something that involves selflessness, patience and a willingness to think beyond ourselves. I strongly believe that young people need to play a leading role, as catalysts for change in this forward thinking process. As I said in my panel address, “there is rarely a quick path to achieving positive change. Developing and delivering successful programs and shifting the mindsets of institutions and governments are processes that take time and dedication.” That is the challenge for our generation.

Time is conceptual, subjective and relevant to our surrounds. In the city that ‘never sleeps’ days become weeks and weeks suddenly become ‘*how long is it since I’ve spoken to family?*’. But it is this understanding that time is conceptual and subjective that creates the sense that age has no relevance to creating change, age has no bearing on what is achievable; it only presents a challenge of how you are going to make an impact. For the time is now.

News from UN offices

GA Resolution on Youth

A General Assembly Resolution on policies and programmes involving youth was adopted in early November at the Third Committee of the GA. The draft resolution was co-sponsored by 31 Member States and was adopted by consensus. The theme of this year’s resolution was the financial and economic crisis and its impact on young people. This is a timely and important theme due to the fact that youth are in many ways disproportionately affected by the crises. Unemployment and decent work are a particular concern and this is reflected in the resolution, which “urges member states to specifically address youth development in their economic and financial recovery measures by emphasizing youth employment and promoting entrepreneurship.”

In addition to employment, the resolution covers familiar ground such as international cooperation, access to education and health care, discrimination and youth participation. It is worth noting that in paragraph 19, the GA encourages Member States to “...consider establishing a national youth delegate programme...”. Although previous resolutions have encouraged member states to bring youth delegates to the General Assembly, this is the first time that a GA resolution has encouraged the development of a *national youth delegate programme*.

The resolution also welcomes the initiative of the Government of Sri Lanka to host in 2014 a world conference on youth in Colombo, with a focus on youth development and the post MDG and 2015 development agenda. The Youth Flash will have more on this new development in forthcoming issues.

Youth activities at COP 17/CMP 7

With the generous support from the Government of Norway and input from United Nations agencies and youth organizations, the secretariat has designed and planned various events to support and enhance the effectiveness of participation of young people at COP 17/CMP 7. The objective of these events is to facilitate dialogue between youth and influential actors in the intergovernmental process and to promote active contribution of youth to climate change decision-making. For more information visit:

http://unfccc.int/cc_inet/cc_inet/information_pool/items/6566.php

Contact person: Luis Davila, ldavila@unfccc.int

WORLD BANK: Global Partnership for Youth Employment

To build and disseminate evidence on youth employment outcomes and effective programs to help young people in their transition to work, the World Bank has created the *Global Partnership for Youth Employment* (GPYE) in cooperation with the International Youth Foundation, the Youth Employment Network, the Arab Urban Development Institute, and the Understanding Children's Work Project. The GPYE leverages the technical and regional experience of the five partner organizations in youth employment research, programming, evaluation, and policy dialogue. The partnership's work focuses on Africa and the Middle East, regions in need of better evidence on effective approaches to promote youth employment. Past, ongoing, and future work are now available online. For more information visit www.gpye.org and sign up to the distribution list.

Youth in Action

Youth HIV Prevention Research - Requesting Your Contribution

Are you working in HIV Prevention? Are you familiar with an institution, organization, group or individual working in this area?

Connect African Development Blog is conducting a research exercise to document EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES and PRACTICES in HIV Prevention Efforts targeting young people. We believe there is a need to assess our position. Young people today are not the same everyday. The practices we develop, the challenges we face and the experiences have today in efforts to mitigate the pandemic will not be the same 5 years from now. That is the case for much of the thinking, the information we use to debate the issue and inform our efforts. We need to examine the picture and confirm whether we are still following the correct path of action or whether we need to change direction with new thinking and new methodology and strategies to conduct our prevention efforts.

It is to this end that CAD invites you to contribute to an Online Information Gathering Survey. Please [CLICK HERE - SURVEY](#) to access the Survey Page and within 10 to 20 minutes, you should be finished. If you do not have the information to respond to the survey at hand, we encourage you to read through the questions so that you can prepare the information and you will always be able to go back to this email for the link.

For more information on CAD's thinking behind this process, read the article "[Experiences - Challenges - Approaches; where are we with HIV Prevention among young people?](#)", which is also published on their Blog.
