



Partnerships for Success: NGOs, Youth and the United Nations

By Ann Grosjean

The United Nations has made recruiting and engaging younger members a goal. Increasing the age definition of youth to thirty-two years, they employed a Youth Envoy at the UN to work with youth around the world and they encourage each NGO to include two youths among their representatives. At a recent UN Briefing, Dr. Bill Hunter (a CTAUN member) from Lehigh University moderated a panel of NGO youth representatives to discuss youth partnerships with NGOs and the UN.

Most of the young panelists had participated in Model UN at their schools. Finding their passion through volunteering service in fields of interest to them and identifying NGOs in these areas, they eventually worked their way to being Youth Representatives. Amanda Nesheiwat, representing Foundation for Post Conflict Development, spoke of the UN pass which she said is “a key to the global world” opening the door to attend weekly briefings about topics being discussed at the UN. She was invited to attend Malala Day, to provide input to the State Department about climate change and to participate in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change as a youth delegate and State Department liaison.

Viktorilia Brezheniuk is a Masters student at Lehigh and a youth rep for the World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations, representing 27 women’s organizations in 17 countries on four continents. “Youth,” she says, “is not an excuse for inaction, irresponsibility or unawareness. We join an NGO to bring energy, expertise and skills.” She demonstrated the global power of social media with the video she created just days before the briefing with clips of youth who spoke from around the world.

A sophomore at Seton Hall, Gabriela Taveras serves as her school’s youth rep for the School of Diplomacy and the UN Association of the Dominican Republic. She emphasized the importance of study abroad programs enabling one to put theory into action. Seton Hall provides this travel experience as well as a summer program at the UN.

Joy Ukaigwe, the daughter of Nigerian immigrants, is a Masters student at Columbia University and represents the Environmental Development Action (ENDA) in the third World based in Dakar. As an epidemiology student and also interested in mental health, she brings the importance of data to facilitate the discussion between research and policy development important for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to be adopted this September at the General Assembly.

The “millennial” generation, born after 1984, looks at the world differently; connected globally, they maintain that if it happens anywhere it happens everywhere so you can’t turn a blind eye.

You can find UN Youth on Twitter at **DPINGOyouthreps** and on Facebook at **United Nations Youth** and you can e-mail them at **youth@un.org**. View the briefing in full including the video, *What does youth empowerment mean to you and how can youth contribute to the SDGs?*

<http://webtv.un.org/search/partnerships-for-success-ngos-youth-and-the-un-dpi-ngo-briefing/4082419379001?term=Youth&languages=&sort=date>

Have You Heard Us?

By Lochie Musso

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the theme of this briefing was, “*Children’s Voices in Creating a World Fit for All.*” Using the latest technology, the United Nations reached out to people of all nations and ages to seek input on the Post 2015 objectives, “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs). By the end of 2014, over 723,000 children age 15 and under from 194 countries had responded to the *My World Survey* conducted by the UN “for a Better World”. The top six priorities chosen by this age group were: a good education, *better job opportunities, better health care, *protection against crime and violence, access to clean water and sanitation, *equality between men and women. They even placed the starred priorities here higher than any other age group.

The Trusteeship Council room was filled with children from elementary to high school and beyond. One assembly of middle school students uniformly dressed in black and white opened the briefing in song. Another group performed a Haitian story-telling and an elementary chorus closed the meeting.

During the Q and A session Global Expert Advisor on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Ravi Karkara, fielded such questions from the children as “Why do adults tend to ignore or pass on what kids say?” Jennifer Tang, Child Participation Action Researcher at the City University of NY advised adults to “change how we listen to children,” and Dr. Roseanne L. Flores of Hunter College held that “adults have an obligation to children to listen.” Youth advocate and Co-founder of A World at School as well as the youth representative on the High-Level steering committee for the UN Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative, Chernor Bah told of his early life in Sierra Leone where young boys were conscripted to war but never a part of the peace process.

Jocelyn Formosa, spokesperson for Canadian Indigenous children shared a story of how the children in her territory dreamed of a new school then pursued that vision until it was built! She said, “One mosquito can make a difference but a room full of them is a problem to deal with!”

Who’s Who at the UN

By Lochie Musso

The United Nations employs hundreds around the globe with many stationed at the headquarters in New York. Your DKG reps at the UN thought you might be interested in meeting some of these people who work “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. . . to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights . . . to promote social progress and better standards of life. . .” (From the Preamble to the 1945 Charter of the United Nations) With this in mind and from time to time, we would like to introduce you to some of the UN personnel we have been privileged to get to know. Our first interviewee is a man many of you who attended the NYC DKG International Convention in 2012 or a CTAUN Conference may recognize.

Ramu Damodaran is an engaging gentleman with a charismatic smile whose speech writing and presentations make him a much sought after spokesman. He is currently Deputy Director for Partnerships and Public Engagement in the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information at the United Nations. This involves reaching out to and partnering with non- governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, and the general public. He also oversees publication of the *UN Chronicle* magazine and the *Yearbook of the United Nations* as well as UN Academic Impact. One fine day in June, he graciously spent his lunch hour with this first time interviewer.



Question: How did you get to this position at the UN?

RD: As the son of a diplomat in India I traveled all over Europe and Asia moving from one post to another. Everywhere we went I had to learn enough of the local language to get by. I think the excitement of travel and meeting new people inspired me to follow the diplomatic path. But when I came to work at the UN in New York, I said, “They speak English here! This is easy!” and I decided to stay!

I had two “lucky” life experiences which guided me. The first is when, at thirteen. I was chosen to be one of the youth DJs for a national radio program devoted to young people in India. Twelve years later this led me to a TV news writer and anchor job. Secondly, my masters in Foreign Service positioned me perfectly for government work.

Q: Academic Impact is a large part of your responsibilities as Deputy Director. How did this program come about?

RD: In 1996, I was working at the Chronicle, which was mostly keeping records of events and meetings at that time. I refocused the paper to include more current events and I asked open-ended questions such as “What should the UN do about poverty . . . health . . . education . . .?” It was about this time that I became motivated with the idea of how academia could contribute to the mandates of the UN. And I was invited to speak at a CTAUN conference and I learned of that group’s Best Practices Program. This reinforced my ideas that educational research could and should contribute to the underlying constant sector problems of the UN, essentially the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). In 2007, I was attending a UN reception where I was introduced to Ban Ki-moon and I was able to casually share these ideas with him. He was very interested. In 2008 the announcement was made and in 2010, United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) was inaugurated.

Q: Where do you see the UNAI heading in the Future?

RD: We have over 1000 institutions from around the world involved now. There are the very real problems of finances and human resources to maintain a large program.

Q: I read on the AI website about university Hubs. What are they about?

RD: Hubs are groups of universities or institutions reaching out to each other collaborating on specific programs and projects. I see the UN as working on two tracks. One, are the headlines of the moment, mostly peace, security, conflict resolution and crisis, man-made or natural crisis situations. Two, are the underlying constant sector problems of the MDGs, poverty, hunger, education, etc. This is where we need vigorous connections to academia. Their excellent research and investigation can contribute to finding answers to these issues.

Q: I have heard you speak on several occasions and I am so impressed with how you incorporate what is happening at the event with your agenda and use no notes! How do you do this?

RD: (Smiling almost chuckling) Well, thank you. I think my years in radio helped. There you learn to formulate your sentences on the fly! I try to live in the moment and listen carefully.

Q: You are so easy going, what makes you angry?

RD: (A pause) People - and countries - who continue to take a stand and don’t budge, seeming impervious to sound logic contrary to their position.

Q: And what makes you happy?

RD: My job and the people I work with. There is never a sense of certainty, something new every day.

Q: Tell me something people might not know about you.

RD: Well, at the end of a long day, I enjoy sitting with an Agatha Christie or Ellery Queen mystery. I collect mystery magazines.

Q: What can a group like DKG do to contribute to the global picture, besides money? What advice would you give DKG members?

RD: What DKG is doing with the Schools for Africa is very commendable and their presence at the UN is an important contribution, too. Think and act locally. Do good things in your neighborhood. Identify local

needs and act. Then think and act globally. For example, in India, yoga was a local program helping people. The people took it to the government and it spread across the country and then it became global when the UN declared 21 June 2015 the first International Day of Yoga! So, start local with the bigger picture in mind.

For more on Ramu Damodaran go to www.wise-qatar.org/ramu-damodaran

For more on UNAI go to www.academicimpact.un.org

HAPPY BIRTHDAY UNITED NATIONS – TACKLING GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND HELPING THOSE IN NEED SINCE 1945!

The United Nations

PROVIDES FOOD TO 90 MILLION PEOPLE IN 80 COUNTRIES

USES DIPLOMACY TO PREVENT CONFLICT, ASSISTS SOME 60 COUNTRIES A YEAR WITH THEIR ELECTIONS

PROMOTES MATERNAL HEALTH SAVING THE LIVES OF 30 MILLION WOMEN A YEAR

AND MORE!

YOUR UN REPRESENTATIVES

The members of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International listed below are your official representatives at the United Nations Department of Public Information and the Economic and Social Council. Most of them also work with CTAUN. You can email us for further information.

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(Note: Damodaran picture with permission from UN website, student picture by Jason Musso)