



AFRICAN YOUTH PANEL

Report from the AYP's participation in UN MDGs Summit events in New York, 16th – 23rd September 2010.



Picture: The AYP pose for a group photo in front of the UN Building, UN Plaza, New York.

General Report

October 2010

Introduction:

The preparations for the participation of the African Youth Panel in processes around/in occasion of the UN MDG's Summit in New York in September 2010, started in the end of February 2010, early March when it was noticed that the AYP post Copenhagen proposal have been denied by the Danish Ministry of Development and that by the same time a new proposal to best use the remaining fund of the AYP campaign of 2008 would be introduce to the Danish Ministry of Development, after which it was considered the starting point of the process that led the AYPSC to New York.

The preparation and the attendance of the Summit related events the AYP succeeded to have high impact in NY at all the events that were attended despite the fact that some of its members experienced visa setbacks during the application process.

The African Youth Panel Steering Committee was invited to take part in the high level events of the UN MDGs Summit in New York. This was in line with preparations of the meetings by heads of state to review progress achievement of the MDGs and map out strategies for the next five years. The AYP took part in some of the events and provided insights from a youthful point of view. The AYP Steering Committee also engaged itself in continuous meetings and discussions to decide on the way forward of the Youth Panel. This report therefore provides in detail the key issues from the Committee's participation in the events and identified strategies for the sustainability of the AYP.

Background to the African Youth Panel

The African Youth Panel (AYP) was initiated under support of the Danish NGO Forum in spring of the year 2008 to enable African youths give inputs into the Danish Africa Commission processes. The project for the establishment of the Panel was funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The panel comprised of 60 young women and men from 23 African countries who gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in November 2008 and constituted the first meeting and general assembly of the African Youth Panel (AYP). The members of the Panel demonstrated leadership and commitment for Africa's development. They developed initiatives that were taken as recommendations to the final launching of the Danish Africa Commission Final Report that took place on the 6th of May 2009.

Danish Africa Commission recognized the importance of AYP in the production of its recommendations and adoption of the initiatives in a report to which the main objective was to *"help Africa to benefit from Globalization, with the commitment of ensuring that it takes ownership of the recommendations and initiatives identified as key areas of concern for growth, employment creation and for competitiveness"*.

The African Youth Panel (AYP) is a non-profit and non-governmental platform of participation and exchange among youths in Africa, promoting the culture of development and implementing local, national and regional initiatives. The structure of AYP comprise of a Panelist of 60 young people in over 23 African countries, the Steering Committee is the governance arm of the AYP with representatives from all sub-regions of Africa and an African youth from the Diaspora. The

committee is headed by a Chairperson, a Coordinator to implement decisions of the AYP and two (2) technical advisors. The committee consists of nine members.

The biggest achievement of the AYP, apart from influencing the work of DAC is having showed young people's ability to convey the message of engagement, intelligence and capacity of acting on behalf of the youth of Africa. At a meeting with the former Danish Minister for Development Ulla Tørnæs in 2009, the Steering Committee of the Youth Panel was promised that the minister would look favorably upon at least one project proposal from the Youth Panel for possible support in continuation of the work of AYP.

The AYP **strengths** are considered to be the following:

1. Being a genuine initiative;
2. Continental approach of action, intervention and achievement;
3. Dynamic and energetic;
4. Broad, diverse and gender balanced;
5. Members come from all areas of social and economic backgrounds (***civil society organizations, academia and business***) and contribute knowledge that is therefore broad and applicable to most African contexts;
6. Promoting Peer-to-Peer exchange with the perspective South-South and South- North cooperation;
7. Recognized by the members of the Danish Africa Commission and the Danish Government.

The **General Strategies** of intervention to the AYP include Awareness-raising/Sensitization, Collaboration/Networking, Advocacy/Lobbying, Capacity-Building/Training, Research/documentation, Initiating model projects and influencing decisions, consultation and Monitoring & Evaluation.

1. Meetings of the AYP steering Committee:

The AYP steering committee members who managed to attend the events included the following:

- 1) Jess Auerbach from South Africa,
- 2) Robert Nkwangu from East Africa,
- 3) Helder Malauene from Southern Africa,
- 4) Ibrahim Ceesay from West Africa,
- 5) Christian Kam from Central Africa
- 6) Shaymaa Zaghlool Rayed Saleh from North Africa.

These were joined by delegations from Denmark and included the following:

- 1) Thomas Ravn Pedersen (Head of Danish MDGs campaign)
- 2) Anni Skov (Dan Church Aid).

The key agenda for the AYP Steering Committee discussions included the following among others:

- i. Discussion of the role and mandate of the AYPSC as far as the UN MDGs summit events are concerned.
- ii. Discussion of future projects for sustainability of the AYP.
- iii. Governance issues of the AYP
- iv. Way forward.

The following are the proceedings from the above discussions:

i. Role and mandate of the AYPSC in the MDGs events:

Members discussed the possible strategies they can use during the events in order to be seen and make their voices heard, not just passive participation. It was discussed that the AYP can give key inputs or comments to the meetings from a youthful point of view. The following was therefore agreed upon:

- ✓ That members should actively participate in the discussions wherever possible.
- ✓ That members should attempt to influence the decisions by providing key inputs affecting youth.
- ✓ That members should try to establish linkages with delegations at the discussions.

ii. Projects for Sustainability of the AYP:

This discussion took place almost every day in order to agree on a common initiative for the AYPs sustainability. Members were also of the view that while attending the MDGs events; we should lobby for support from the dignitaries. At the end of the discussions, members came up with a concept note highlighting the key strategies for the AYPs sustainability as a prerequisite for unleashing the potential of African youth.

The concept is based on the fact that there are over 1.5 billion young people in the world today which represents the largest global youth cohort in history. With roughly 89% of youth residing in the developing world, young people make up well over half of the national population in many countries. Most of them are already making contributions to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and their work should be further acknowledged and strengthened.

The following among others are the key issues in the concept:

- ✓ There is need to design and promote at least ten (10) youth led initiatives at the local, national and international level.
- ✓ Develop a data base and directory of at least fifty (50) youth led organizations and youth experts in the development work in Africa by the year 2011.
- ✓ Initiate a youth development fund with support from donor agencies for local initiative as the country level that contributes to Youths Employment and the MDG's
- ✓ Strengthen the African Youth Panel and by building a network of solidarity leaders through sharing of best practices and alliance building.
- ✓ Develop sustainable linkages and strong partnership between youths from Africa and Europe by the year 2011.

- ✓ Provide tools and a platform for open debates, dialogue and mutual understanding.
- ✓ By the end of 2011, the AYP will have entered into a consultative status with Danish development agencies / DANIDA / Danish Development Assistance.

The vision of the concept / project is based on a holistic approach and will be practical, positive and solution-oriented. It will provide inspiration, support and empowerment as well as fostering the spirit of commitment towards actions. The project will observe non-political and non-religious character. It will focus on a participatory approach in implementing the different activities.

The concept note is hereby attached to this report for ease of reference.

iii. Governance issues of the AYP

The steering Committee further discussed issues pertaining to governance of the AYP. Some members were of the view that the AYP is largely a consultative / opinion group while others were of the view that it plays a monitoring role of the Danish development assistance. The AYP can be largely a platform providing insights on Africa's development from a youth perspective. However this will only be possible if we have an operational structure for coordination and reporting. Also the current term of office for the steering committee is due to expire and therefore there is need to organize another meeting / general assembly. Members concluded with the following issues:

- That resources be mobilized to organize for another big event of the AYP to sort out governance / leadership issues.
- That the entire AYP should always be updated on what the Steering Committee is doing.
- That the AYP website should be reviewed to be up-to-date.
- Members further elected Helder Malauene as Acting Chairperson of the AYP for the time being.

2. Side events of the UN MDGs Summit

Members had the opportunity to attend some of the side events of the MDGs summit. These among others included the following:

- i. **NGO Stand Up for the World We Want 2015:** Here, members interacted with different Civil Society activists and exchanged information that would be useful in ensuring achievement of the MDGs.
- ii. **Meeting with young members of Danish parliament:** AYPSC expressed its fear and willingness to continue the processes (intensifying relationship between young Africans and young Europeans specially in the political domain in terms of political experience sharing, economical domain, such as the establishment of an European-African forum lead by youth, to meet people in need of fund/support with people with the capacity of funding/supporting and together agreeing about the sustainable way of taking forward any interventions). The

idea was welcomed and insurance/guarantee of support at the parliament/government was also given by the young members of parliament.

The main outcome of this meeting was the statements made by young parliamentarians regarding the need of us taking advantage of this opportunities to create a platform or set up that would allow young Africans, the majority of the population in their countries and the continent as a whole, to start playing an efficient political role that will allow them to change all negative realities of their countries. It was also stated that they will do their best to influence or play they role in parliament to influence the government to take political decisions about the role young people from Africa represented by the AYP should be in the implementation of the initiatives and way forward of the recommendations of the Africa Commission report.

Last but not least, coming from the AYPSC it was also stated that they would share with the young parliamentarians a concept under the title *“Youth Participation in Political Processes”* that could be use for a joint program of capacity building for your participation in all processes that affect its life.

- iii. **Five Years for Children- Partnering with communities to achieve the MDGs with equality:** The panel at this event consisted of CEOs/Directors of international agencies including World Vision, UNICEF, PLAN International, Save the children among others. The key issues were:
- That the private sector has a role to play in promoting the rights of children.
 - That development assistance should target communities in poor countries.
 - That resources should be spent where there will be visible impact.
 - Empowerment of the girl child and pregnant mothers in the third world.

The main outcome of this side event for the AYP that we received as a message is that we should lobby development partners e.g. DANIDA to consider funding Community Based Organizations rather than solely focusing on national governments. This will ensure that funds reach those they are intended for.

- iv. **Meeting with Roskilde Festival managers:** The AYPSC succeeded to obtain a meeting with the board of the Roskilde Music Festival Foundation manager and the chairperson for eventual funding to the AYP process. In this meeting, the AYPSC basically gave a summary about the AYP since Addis, the Steering Committee mandate, the Copenhagen process and the USA process. It was shared with the Roskilde Music Festival Foundation manager and the chairperson some successes and challenges, including willingness of sustainable way forward for the processes around the Panel, as well as the uniqueness of the AYP initiative and its independence that is needed to be maintained and using the skills of its members. It was also mentioned the fact of thanking Denmark for willing to help youth involvement and the willingness of flying although having the wings cut but still committed to do everything that will be possible to fly!

Henrik Rasmussen, the manager from Roskilde Foundation gave us a briefing about the festival and mentioned that the foundation has a humanitarian focus and for the next three years it will be addressing the issue of POVERTY ERADICATION IN THE WORLD, from where Africa is part of.

Mr. Steen Jørgensen, the Chairman, summarily said that the festival is nonprofit oriented and that its money is donated to humanitarian agendas. He also mentioned that their presence in the summit was for them getting to know and having better understanding about the MDG's, willing to influence Danish political processes towards development aid and AYP having interacted with them, they would also do their best to influence Danish political decision about having the AYP continuing to play its role on the way forward for the implementation of the report's recommendations and initiatives.

As an outcome of the meeting, a general comment was made and left by the Roskilde Foundation managers that the AYP has to be taken to another level but it would have to see how and what needs to be done for it. They mentioned that they would like to be inspired on how they could support a way forward process and that the Roskilde Festival was a space that could be used by us (AYP) to live out our spirits and invest in our chances.

As a way forward AYP was recommended and expected to submit a concept proposal for its way forward with a basic costing so that it could be evaluated by the Foundation and see what can be done.

v. Danish Side Event - Inclusive Growth and Employment: Accelerating Achievements of the MDGs:

This was the main side event for the AYP Mission to New York and it was on it where the Steering Committee had the space and opportunity to interact with the Prime Minister of Denmark as the main stakeholder in the Africa Commission and with him exchange the perspective and expectations of the AYP regarding the way forward of the recommendations and initiatives approved/adopted by the Commission.

The event emphasized the importance of inclusive growth and employment creation as a catalyst for achieving the MDGs in Africa. It produced a platform for exemplifying best practices, lessons learned and concrete opportunities for action with positive impact on inclusive growth and employment in Africa. The event was co-hosted by Denmark, Liberia; Tanzania and the Africa Development Bank.

The main outcome that was achieved by attending this side event and in general for the whole attendance of the AYP, represented by its SC in the Danish Side Events during the UN MDG's Summit, was the statement made by His Excellency the Prime Minister of Denmark saying that *"We need African Youth Panel to participate in the future process and we will find a way to involve you in the implementation – and I will talk with my Minister of Development Cooperation, Mr. Søren Pind, on how best we can involve you in the future."*

He also stated that *“I talk for a pragmatic approach – we are already offering facilities and invite African Youth to take part and use the Youth Entrepreneurship projects established. So you have already made a strong footprint on the Danish African Commission’s report”*.

The Prime Minister became so inspired by SC members that intervened that he at the end of the meeting said the following: *“as I said, I will ensure that we keep you in the DAC work”*.

Conclusions and Way forward:

From all the above information, the AYPSC has come out with the following views for the future:

- 1) Request for a mini AYP meeting to discuss the final outcome of the DAC report, the progress report July 2010, the Strategy for Denmark's Development Cooperation, the AYP Action Plan and map out a strategy for youth participation in its implementation.
- 2) Drawing and developing a new and updated project proposal with influence from existing AYP projects to be implemented in AYP regional secretariats serving as pilot countries for the projects.
- 3) Write a letter to the Danish Prime Minister copied to the Danish Foreign and International Development Ministry, DANIDA and Danish NGO Forum on the need to include youths at all levels (policy, designing, implementation and reporting) as determined in the final report of the DAC;
- 4) Request for support from Danish Government to the establishment an African Youth Development Fund to be steered by the AYPSC and Danish NGO Forum and Danish Youth Council to support youth initiatives with small grants in implementing any programme component of the final report of DAC;
- 5) Establish Danish-African Youth Associations or Foundations to promote Danish Government development agendas in our respective countries/regions. Establish an annual or bi-annual meeting of African youth led organizations with Danish/European youth led organizations, Danish NGO’s, private sector and relevant partners to discuss youth employment issues and sustainable development in Africa. Euro-Africa Youth Summit, Conference or Forum;
- 6) Develop a strategy to institutionalize the African Youth Panel under the auspices of the Danish NGO Forum/Danish Youth Council to serve as a platform in channeling Danish development aids to African youths;

The AYP would like to use this opportunity to thank DCA and DAC for their support whatsoever without which it would have been impossible for the AYP to reach this far.

******* The Struggle continues *******