

UN Agencies discuss enhancing youth participation



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Panelists (left to right) Prateek Awasthi UNFPA; Pamela Wridt, Wright Graduate Centre, CUNY; Ravi Karkara UNICEF; Kecia Romiel, Youth from East Harlem Project, and Nicola Shepherd UNDESA

NEW YORK, 15 April, 2011 - The UN Programme on Youth (UNPY), together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), hosted a briefing session on Youth Participation in the context of the International Year of Youth. The session kicked off with the presentation of a joint UNPY and UNICEF video entitled '[Young People in Action](#)', a Film on Young People's Participation. This was followed by a panel discussion with young people, civil society and UN experts. The session was attended by over 100 participants.

Tuesday's Briefing Session was a dynamic manifestation of youth participation. All of those present heard from adults working with youth, and appropriately, from youth as well. Several people agreed there needs to be additional similar opportunities for unpacking experiences of work done with youth, where the young people involved share their perspectives. Another important highlight of the briefing was the premiere screening of a special message by actor Ewan McGregor on Youth Participation in the International Year of Youth, prepared by UNICEF UK Committee and DoC.

[ Watch Video: [PSA by Ewan McGregor UNICEF GWA](#)]



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Participants of the International Year of Youth Briefing Session organized by UNICEF and UNPY on 12 April 2011 at UNICEF House NYHQ,

A portion of the event was a skit prepared by young people involved in the Child Friendly Communities East Harlem project. Their presentation brought to life the sentiments of their peers uncovered by their research, primarily, a lack of opportunities to participate

in meaningful ways. One student, said, "We need opportunity to participate to create dialogue and discussion with decisions that affect us." The tone was set for a solutions-oriented discussion and seeking youth as partners in social transformation. UNFPA speaker Prateek Awasthi mentioned the need for meaningful young engagement in policies that affect youth. A young women, Aisha said, "It's about meeting youth where they're at, and having them discusses issues that matter."



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(left to right) Mariama Barry, Brandon Herd, Kecia Romiel, and Torrick Dixon from Child Friendly Communities East Harlem Project made a presentation on their project at the briefing session

Moving forward with youth participation requires a collective effort and a general paradigm shift toward setting an AGENDA FOR YOUTH WITH YOUTH. This idea cuts across all arenas in society including family, schools, community, government, the media, and more According to Nicola Shepherd, the UN Focal Point on Youth, "participation is about putting youth in real decision-making processes".

The session was moderated by Ravi Karkara, Participation Specialist with UNICEF HQ, who emphasised positive dialogue with young people and their meaningful participation as key in creating human rights based societies.