

MALALA DAY YOUTH ASSEMBLY REPORT

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Introduction

On July 12th 2013, young leaders from around the world convened at the United Nations in support of the United Nations Secretary - General's Global Education First Initiative, the goal was to ensure that all children, especially girls, are in school and learning by the year 2015. The president of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education organized a series of events that took place on the 11th and 12th of July at the UN headquarters in New York and around the world. The main event was the youth assembly held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber where Malala Yousafzai celebrated her 16th birthday by addressing hundreds of young leaders who support education for every child. Malala demanded world leaders to make universal education for every girl and boy a reality. The day also marked the start of a youth movement where the youth representatives from around the world advocate for global education.

Who is Malala Yousafzai?

Malala Yousafzai is a courageous advocate for universal education and girls' rights. Malala was targeted for her brave activism and in October of 2012, the Taliban boarded Malala's school bus and shot her and two other girls. After the, Malala was flown from her home in Pakistan to the United Kingdom to recover. Malala is now back at school and continues to campaign for every child's right to education.

What is Global Education First Initiative?

The Global Education First Initiative is led by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon. It gathers a broad spectrum of world leaders and advocates who all aspire to use the transformative power of education to build a future for all. The initiative aims to raise the political profile of education, strengthen the global movement to achieve quality education and generate additional and sufficient funding through sustained advocacy efforts. Achieving gains in education will have an impact on all the Millennium Development Goals, from lower child and maternal mortality, to better health, higher income and more environmentally – friendly societies.

Who are the Youth Advocacy Group Members?

The Youth Advocacy Group Members (YAG) is a group of fifteen young people from around the world who strengthen the momentum and increase support for the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), launched in September 2012. The YAG will move forward the three priority areas of the GEFI- putting every child in school, improving the quality of education, and promoting global citizenship amongst their networks and partners by facilitating consultations with other youth in their countries and globally providing strategic advice to the youth representative on the GEFI High-level Steering Committee, Chenor Bah, on the education priorities of young people. The YAG will promote the priorities and voices of young people in the advocacy messages

and activities of the GEFI. Lastly, YAG members mobilize young people and governments to make pledges in support of education and hold them accountable for their commitments.

Activities carried out

1.0 The UN Youth assembly

The youth assembly was held in the trusteeship council chamber with Malala Yousafzai, the president of the UN general assembly, the Secretary General, UN special envoy for Global Education, UN special envoy for youth, Youth Advocacy Group and youth representatives. The master of ceremonies who was the UN special envoy for Global Education, Mr. Gordon Brown introduced the president of the UN general assembly, Vuk Jeremic and UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon. In Mr. Brown's address, shared a story of a picture that stands in a museum in London that was taken in Rwanda during the genocide, it is a picture of a young boy whose family had been killed and he had remained with his injured mother, the young boy asked his mother to remain strong and wait for the UN which had promised to come to Rwanda and help them but the UN never came, and the boy's mother died. Mr. Brown said that back then the UN failed the young boy, it failed to keep its promise to the children and to the youth but today, now, the UN is re affirming their promise to the young people that they will not fail to come to their rescue, he promised the support of the UN to those that fight for education for all children and that there will be no more stories like that of the boy in the museum.

The Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon shared his story of where and how he grew up. He told the story of the school he attended as a young boy, he used to walk many kilometers to school and he had his classes conducted under a tree during his early school life, he said that the experience motivated him to work hard and to aim for a position in life that would give him the opportunity to ensure that other children have a better education than he had. He also promised the support of the United Nations to the youth advocating for education.

Malala gave the youth address and presented the Malala petition. Malala shared her story of the Taliban that attacked her school bus the morning she was going to school, she spoke of the attack as an act of cowardice, and she said that the terrorists in Pakistan were cowards that were afraid of the power that a pen and piece of paper can give to a woman/girl. She said that the attack did not scare her into putting a stop to her activism but on the contrary made her stronger, she urged all women to rise up and recognize the true reason they are denied education, it is to keep them shackled in chains of broken dreams and to restrict them from growing. 'This day is not for me, it is for you, for them, for every girl, every boy who cannot go to school, we are all Malala, and this is our day' this was one of her most famous phrases at the assembly and a catch phrase 'we are all Malala' was derived. Malala presented her petition to demand quality education for all children from world leaders which had received over a million signatures and continues to be signed worldwide; this petition is online and can be electronically signed @signmalalapetition.

There was a moderated youth discussion chaired by Chenor Bah where different youth shared their stories and inspirations to advocate for education. The youth outcomes document was read by the Youth Advocacy Group members and presented to the UN special envoys for Youth and Global Education. This was followed by comments by the UN special envoy for Youth, Ahmad

Alhendawi. The UN special envoy for Global Education presented the Youth Courage Awards for education in honor of the youth leaders from around the world and their commitment to realizing the right to global education.

Youth Courage Awards for Education were;

The awards recognized the stories of young leaders who showed exemplary leadership and perseverance in standing up for the right to education, often against some of the most adverse circumstances. The 2013 Malala Day Honorees were;

1. Shazai, 15 years old, Pakistan: Shazai was the friend seated next to Malala on the school bus last year, she was also injured. The escalating violence has meant that it is no longer safe for her to be in Pakistan and she recently moved to the UK to complete her schooling safely.
2. Razai, 15 years, India: A former child laborer stitching footballs, Razai struggled and succeeded to pull herself from exploitation to education. She passed her 11th grade against all odds and now works in her community to help withdraw children from work and enroll them in school; she helped 48 children in her community last year out of work and into school.
3. Raouia, 12 years, Morocco: Earlier this year, Morocco's education minister visited a Marrakech school and told 12-year-old Raouia she would be better off leaving school and becoming a child bride: 'you! Your time would be better spent looking for a man!' he said. But Raouia stood up to him and stayed in school. Her family protested to the government about how the education minister had betrayed his obligation to promote education.
4. Keshob, 18 years, Keshob is Chairman of the 'wedding busters', a youth-led organization that runs child marriage-free zones in Bangladesh. His organization has stopped many marriages by swinging into action as soon as they hear news of a child wedding, by making door-to-door visits with the parents and educating them on the risks of child marriage and the benefits of education.
5. Urmilla, 22 years, Nepal: Urmilla was sold as a *kamalari* (child servant) when she was six years old after her parents traded her to pay off a debt. She remained trapped for 12 years before finally being allowed to visit her family when she learnt that *kamalari* was now illegal, she never went back, instead she set up the *kamalari* Girls' Freedom Forum and a group that has rescued thousands of girls and allowed them to go back to school.
6. Aminata, 20 years, Sierra Leone: During the violent civil war in Sierra Leone Aminata lost many friends and family, she can remember little aside from burning homes. When she was 13 years old she joined a children's network and since then has tirelessly campaigned to ensure children in her home affected by conflict are able to get an education.
7. Ashwini, 21 years, India: Ashwini was born with a visual impairment and brought up in a poor rural community in India; she overcame the odds, achieved great grades and got an excellent job with an IT firm. She gave up this job to campaign for other children with disabilities and to enable them to achieve the education they deserve.

2.0 Education First Youth Fair

The youth fair was organized for representatives from the different UN agencies and civil society organizations who are working on the ground to make universal education a reality, to interact with the youth representatives and share their strategies, and material. The youth fair presenters included; BRAC USA, Women Thrive Worldwide, Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, Teach for all, Pencils of Promise, Amnesty International, Leonard Cheshire Disability, Action Aid, Basic Education Coalition, Global Campaign for Education United States Chapter, UNICEF Voices of youth, She's the First, Plan international, UNESCO, IREX, Save the Children, Room to Read, Institute of International Education/Department of State, UNDP, Girls learn international, RESULTS Education Fund, US Fund for UNICEF, Girl Up, One Young World, Education International, Educate A Child, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, 10*10 Girl Rising, Mali Nyeta Inc., Sesame Workshop, Girl Scouts of the USA, Working Group on Girls, The Global Poverty Project, UNFPA, Global Kids Inc., A world at School, FOOT BALL FOR PEACE.

3.0 Breakout Sessions

The breakout sessions were held in the afternoon from which participants could pick what session to attend that they felt they needed the most, these sessions included thematic discussions; Education First priorities and skill building sessions; advocating for education.

A) Thematic discussions; Education First Priorities

- **Access to Education**
This session was introducing the issues of access to education, focusing on the barriers that stop children from going to school or push them to drop out before completing their education. The presenting organizations were UNICEF, Pencils of Promise and Global Partnership for Education.
- **Improving Learning Outcomes for All Children and Youth**
Sharing of experiences regarding the quality of education in different parts of the world and discussing the skills and competencies needed for children and youth in order to have opportunities to learn. Presenting organizations were Center for Universal Education at Brookings, Save the Children and Pearson International.
- **Global Citizenship**
Gaining knowledge about different technical and vocational education and training systems across the world and their links to the labor market and employment outcomes. Presenting organization was UNESCO.

B) Skill building sessions; advocating for education

- **Gaining Traction and Mobilizing Action: Developing Skills for Effective Grassroots Campaigning**
Introducing the elements of grassroots mobilization and advocacy as well as practical evidence based application. Presenting organizations were Plan and UN Girls' Education Initiative.
- **Making Change Happen Online**

Empowering individuals and organizations with online tools to create and share messages for campaigns. Presenting organizations were A World At School, UNICEF and Girl Rising.

- **Advocacy and Governance**

Learning about how to influence policy makers through shared tangible examples. Presenting organizations were Global Campaign for Education, UN Foundation and UNESCO.

4.0 Closing Ceremony

The Malala Day was concluded with a commitment made to education for all, there were remarks from youth representatives as well as the UN special envoys for Youth and Global Education. We had the chance and privilege to interact with the envoys during closing and there was special guest performance by Angelique Kidjo.

All photos of the event can be found on the UNGEI official website.

Conclusions

At the end of the day, all the youth representatives were asked to act back home to ensure that the right to education for every girl and boy would be realized. The member countries of the United Nations made a promise that all young people would have access to education by the end of the year 2015, we are only two years away from that deadline and we need to make this happen. The youth representatives were asked to share the Youth Resolution with their government officials so that the education we want is clear to all.