



SPECIAL YOUTH PROGRAMME REPORT



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This publication was written and coordinated by Saskia Schellekens, Technical Specialist Adolescents and Youth, UNFPA, with support of Lorena Valencia, intern at UNFPA. Final editing was done by Amy Singer. With sincere gratitude to all Special Youth Programme fellows, supervisors and colleagues for their valuable inputs and support.

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"We need you and your ideas, because the difference between our world today and our world tomorrow rests with you. You are the future, and more-so, you are the present."

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid,
UNFPA Executive Director

How it began

The Special Youth Programme (SYP) was established at the request of UNFPA's Executive Director, Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, in response to a recommendation made during the consultative Youth Advisory Panel Meeting convened by UNFPA in April 2004. At this meeting, which brought together representatives from youth networks around the world, youth participants suggested that UNFPA involve young people at various levels of the organization - as advisers, interns, apprentices, consultants or staff members. Since existing recruitment policies regarding age and educational qualifications were not favourable for providing these opportunities to young people from developing countries, a Special Youth Programme (hence the name) was established to allow UNFPA to achieve these three objectives:

- to engage youth in policy development and programming;
- to help build the capacity of young people and strengthen their leadership skills in addressing population, sexual and reproductive health, gender, and HIV/AIDS issues, especially in the context of achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- to sensitise both the young people and the UNFPA staff on various modalities of working together to address among other things, population, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and gender, culture and human rights issues.

We started piloting the Special Youth Programme with three fellows in the fall of 2004. UNFPA has now hosted five groups of fellows, with a total of 26 fellows from 25 different countries.

How it works

SYP recruits young people from developing countries who have some programme experience in development work to join UNFPA for a remunerated fellowship. Their experience may come from involvement

in NGOs, community-based organisations, UNFPA-supported youth programmes and governmental organisations. Participants first undertake a six month fellowship at UNFPA's Headquarters in New York. This is followed by a three month fellowship in the UNFPA Country Office in the country that the young person comes from.

The work assignments of the SYP fellows expose them to the advocacy, policy and programme work of UNFPA at global, regional and country levels. A significant part of the fellows' assignments at Headquarters concern getting involved in existing activities, projects or programmes, while the remainder focuses on developing a concrete work plan to the fellow's own context and country for further follow up and implementation during the Country Office fellowship.

Individual mentors monitor the fellows' professional development and provide constructive feedback to guide them in their short and longer term professional growth. Fellows are given assignments that challenge them intellectually and professionally, that encourage them to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses and help build their leadership capacity and skills in substantive areas of UNFPA's work.

The fellows also avail themselves of technical and programme expertise that resides in UNFPA. They undergo an extensive orientation programme at the start of their Headquarters fellowships and attend special briefings and interactive sessions with select specialists and advisers of the Fund. These provide the SYP fellows with a comprehensive view of UNFPA's work.

Upon completion of both their Headquarters and Country Office fellowships, the SYP fellows continue to be engaged with UNFPA through an online forum. The forum serves as a crossroads for current and former



fellows and promotes a long-term connection to the programme and UNFPA. It strengthens knowledge-sharing and offers new fellows an opportunity to draw on the experience and know-how of SYP alumni.

SYP results to date and what's to come

SYP has proven to be a life-changing experience, not only for the fellows, but for UNFPA staff as well. The programme is a living example of how "youth-adult partnerships" are possible and necessary if we want to succeed in addressing the needs and rights of young people. How better to accomplish this than by working side by side with young people?

In the following pages, you will meet each of the fellows and see how their participation in the SYP influenced their lives. Each profile consists of a brief introduction of the fellow's background before joining the programme, an overview of his or her involvement both during the Headquarters and Country Office fellowships, and an update on what the fellow did after completing the programme and what he or she is involved in today.

As this publication is going to print the latest group of fellows have completed their Country Office fellowships, and UNFPA is about to recruit a new group to start their fellowships.

In our latest survey, fellows said their experience with the SYP has empowered them with invaluable knowledge and encouraged them to use it to benefit their countries. They also report that the SYP fellowship has greatly shaped their future plans. Many see themselves furthering their studies in public health, population studies or related fields. Others intend to continue working with local NGOs. Many remain engaged with UNFPA at the country level, and all will keep working to advance the agenda of young people at the local, country, regional and/or international levels.

As part of UNFPA's new 2008-2011 Global Programme, and based on the programme's results to date, the Fund will continue to recruit young fellows and support the Special Youth Programme. Doing so serves to prepare a future generation of experts and advocates from developing countries to form a critical mass that will support the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. UNFPA hopes that by sharing the experiences of the Special Youth Programme, we will inspire other international agencies to follow our example and make youth participation a regular part of their work routine and thus expand the scope of our alliances and efforts for sustainable development.





Please meet the 26 fellows that have so far participated in UNFPA's Special Youth Programme and the countries they represented



ALEKSANDAR (ALEX) SKUNDRIC
SERBIA



OLESYA KOCHKINA
RUSSIA



KORAY VOLKAN SERIN
TURKEY



EKATERINA (KATIA) LUKICHEVA
KYRGYZSTAN



YARA JARALLAH
PALESTINE



TANG KUN
CHINA



NAZIM BENCHIKH
ALGERIA



SALMA ISMAIL
PAKISTAN



ALLAN KAYANJA
UGANDA



CHANDNI MALIK
INDIA



VATTANA PEONG
CAMBODIA



KAKENYA NTAIYA
KENYA



NGASUMA KANYEKA
TANZANIA



(MARIE) SANDRA RAMONJISON
MADAGASCAR



KEFILWE (KEFI) KOOGOTSITSE
BOTSWANA





Allan grew up in one of the slums of Kampala, the capital of Uganda, where he went to the Kololo High School. To raise awareness among young people in his community on HIV/AIDS, he volunteered as a peer educator in a local NGO initiative called "Making Positive Living Attractive to Youth" that was supported by the African Youth Alliance. He also worked with the Kamwokya Christian Caring Community youth initiative, Treasure Life Youth Centre.

Allan Kayanja >>

AGE: *20

FROM: UGANDA

Allan's fellowship began with a trip to Nairobi, Kenya, his first trip outside of Uganda, where he attended an regional meeting on knowledge sharing and capacity building for scaling up responses to sexual reproductive health and HIV prevention needs of young people. Through his participation he was able to share experiences from his volunteer work with his NGO and help identify strategies to improve the quality and outreach of UNFPA's programming in Africa. Following his trip to Nairobi, Allan joined the UNFPA Headquarters in New York. This was a huge transition for Allan, as it would prove for many other fellows that would follow him. A transition that came with many challenges as well as opportunities, that Allan ultimately navigated very well. In UNFPA Headquarters he was first and foremost involved in follow up work on the meeting he had attended in Nairobi, which included the development of an anthology of country profiles illustrating adolescent sexual and reproductive health and HIV-prevention programming in UNFPA country-supported projects in Africa. Allan also collaborated on the expansion and strengthening of the Africa Division Youth Advocacy Network and acted as its youth focal point. Additionally, Allan contributed to the development of UNFPA's annual flagship publication, State of World Population. For the 2005 publication titled "The Promise of Equality: Gender Equity, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals" he collected and followed up on questionnaire responses assessing how well country interventions measured achievements and lessons learnt in the area of gender equality and women and girls empowerment. Furthermore, Allan made presentations to New York high school youth to raise their awareness of issues affecting young people in Africa.

While in the Uganda Country Office, Allan participated in the development of a video documentary and a report evaluating youth participation in the UNFPA-supported African Youth Alliance project, a multi-sectorial youth programme that was implemented in in four African countries, including Allan's native Uganda. Allan also contributed to the Uganda UNFPA Country Programme Action Plan for 2006 and ensured that youth issues were well reflected and incorporated in the plan. Allan also coordinated a project to document the lives

of married adolescent girls for inclusion in the global photographic exhibition, "Chasing the Dream: Youth Faces of the Millennium Development Goals."

What did Allan do after SYP?

Upon completion of his fellowship, Allan participated in the 14th International Conference on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) that took place in Abuja, Nigeria. ICASA brought together a committed group of young people who initiated a regional network aimed at increasing awareness of and influencing policy developments on sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS issues for African youth at the country and regional levels. Allan also participated in the Regional Youth Forum on Population and Development in Lusaka, Zambia, where UNFPA staff working on youth issues and young people from around the continent came together to formally launch the African Youth and Adolescents Network on Population and Development (AfriYAN) and formulate its charter and methods of operation. Allan is currently the Uganda AfriYAN focal point and its youth advisor in the area of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and advocacy. Together with the network members he works to strengthen partnerships between youth organizations in Uganda and the region to ensure that youth are meaningfully involved in the design, execution and monitoring of programmes. Allan also returned to school and completed his secondary education and is now working on a bachelor's degree in social work and social administration. Next he hopes to pursue a master's degree in population studies.

What did Allan think about SYP?

With the capacity that I gained, SYP has helped me to pursue my life goals and to pass this knowledge on to other young people in my community and the country at large so that we as young people are empowered to contribute to development in our own societies.

Allan Kayanja



Katia was a student at the Faculty of Linguistics and intercultural communication in Bishkek with a keen interest in issues of sexual and reproductive health and youth participation. Katia participated as a trainer at the Kyrgyz Family Planning Alliance, where she was actively involved in the UNFPA supported Y-PEER (Youth Peer Education Network) project. Prior to her arrival at Headquarters, Katia was an intern in the UNFPA Country Office in Bishkek.

Ekaterina (Katia) Lukicheva >>

AGE: *22

FROM: KYRGYZSTAN

During her time at Headquarters, one of Katia's main tasks was to assess peer education programmes in Albania, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and contribute to the planning and development of these programmes. Katia participated in a training on gender equality that took place in Budapest, Hungary and was organized by the European Union and the Youth Express Network. She also worked with Olesya, the incoming fellow who replaced her, to make a presentation on the importance of addressing the needs and rights of youth in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the fight against HIV/AIDS. They made the presentation in Moscow, Russia at a high-level Ministerial meeting on the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Commonwealth of Independent States convened by the United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC).

While a fellow in the UNFPA Kyrgyzstan Country Office, Katia served as its first youth focal point. She designed a work plan for the implementation of UNFPA's peer education programme and conducted a desk study on existing youth policies in the country. In addition, she administered trainings and workshops on improving Youth Friendly Services and prepared recommendations on the implementation of such services. Katia also attended the 7th International Congress on AIDS in the Asia and the Pacific Region that took place in Japan. In addition, she attended a meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia organised by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria on rethinking strategies and searching for alternatives for technical assistance for Global Fund projects in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Life after SYP?

Upon the completion of her fellowship, Katia returned to school and finished her bachelor's degree. For a while, Katia continued to work with the UNFPA Kyrgyzstan Country Office as a Youth Consultant contributing to the work on young people in her country. She then joined the UNFPA Tajikistan office in the same capacity. There, she was also involved in conducting a number of field participatory learning assessments. Katia has recently returned to the US and is currently pursuing a master's degree in social work at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Katia thinks that SYP...

Has become an entry point to my work with UNFPA. The programme has helped me to develop relevant competencies for work in the UN and for bridging grassroot level needs to UNFPA goals. SYP has provided me with opportunities to practice my knowledge and skills and apply my previous experience in current UNFPA programmes.

This programme truly empowered me to advocate for the lives of young people and bring youth voices in the development of national strategies and policies. The country office fellowship allowed me to substantiate my work in the field with a good background and preparation from UNFPA Headquarters.

Katia Lukicheva



Kakenya grew up in rural Kenya and was one of only two girls in her Masai community to go to high school. She fought her way out of a marriage that had been arranged for her when she was a young girl by negotiating with her father and the village elders to allow her to instead pursue an education abroad. She was the first girl to ever leave her community. She joined the SYP just after earning her bachelor's of arts degree in international studies and political science from Randolph-Macon College in Lynchburg, Virginia, USA. She had participated in the Public Leadership Education Network "Women and Public Policy Seminar," and she also shared her moving personal history in a panel to raise awareness on the issue of child marriage. The panel was moderated by UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Obaid at the Global Health Conference in Washington D.C. in 2004.

Kakenya Ntaiya >>

AGE: *26

FROM: KENYA

During her fellowship Kakenya worked in the UNFPA Office in Washington, DC. She provided support for the global awareness raising and resource and media mobilization campaign on child marriage, and she participated in numerous advocacy visits with government representatives and other funders. Kakenya worked on a project entitled "Alternatives for Child Marriages: Testing a Programmatic Approach in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and India," which included helping to finalise research recommendations for the design phase of the project proposal. She was also involved in the coordination and analysis of media coverage of UNFPA and population-related topics.

What did Kakenya do after SYP?

Upon completion of her fellowship, Kakenya enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh, USA, to pursue a doctoral degree in education. Kakenya developed a project proposal to set up a girls' school and maternity ward in her rural Masai community in Kenya. To pursue this personal dream that she considers "paying back her debt" to her local community, Kakenya has received a planning grant in the amount of USD \$40,000 from the Nike Foundation, United Nations Foundation and the Communication Consortium Media Centre (CCMC). She has also been researching possible long-term NGO partners for her project and investigating what steps she needs to take with the Kenyan government and local authorities.

Kakenya was the master of ceremonies during the gala-event at the UN Secretariat to launch the photo-exhibit "Chasing the Dream: Youth Faces of the Millennium Development Goals," an interagency initiative led by UNFPA. The photographic exhibit brought viewers face to face with eight young people from different parts of the world, providing insight into the daily realities faced by youth as they pursue their dreams for a better life. As master of ceremonies, Kakenya was responsible for introducing and

engaging with the event's celebrities from the sports and music sector as well as with high-level speakers, such as Ms. Nane Annan and UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Obaid.

In 2006, Kakenya was featured in the first-ever UNFPA Youth Supplement to its flagship publication State of World Population, "Moving Young" report that presented the life stories of young people affected by international migration. Kakenya's story of leaving her country in pursuit of an education is told in the publication. In addition, the British Broadcasting Corporation made a television documentary on Kakenya's life, telling the remarkable story of what brought her to the US and following her daily routines in Pittsburgh and her return visit home to Kenya. Kakenya, who still lives in the US, has also gotten married and become a mother.

Kakenya thinks UNFPA is...

A great place to work, full of loving and caring people. Its mandate is clear: saving women's and girls' lives and reaching the poor.

Kakenya Ntaiya

"I am very proud of Kakenya and proud that UNFPA has given her the launching pad to achieve her dreams. I am confident we will continue to see great things from her."

Kakenya's supervisor in the UNFPA Washington DC office



"Both at Headquarters and at the Country Office, I learned skills and knowledge about reproductive health and rights, as well as girl's and women's empowerment. I shared my experiences with the UNFPA staff in the Country Office and with fellow youth from my NGO and was able to draw strategies on how to incorporate some of the best practices and skills within our programmes so that other young people can indirectly benefit from the SYP."

Fellow

"In my own perspective, I feel that through SYP UNFPA has meaningfully involved young people, and successfully advocates for their full participation and puts it into practice for young people to have a voice with policy makers at the top."

Fellow

"The SYP has further reinforced our belief in the importance of youth participation. The fellow's creativity, energy, enthusiasm and dynamism have been important assets around this office and are virtues that this office intends to uphold by continuing to work more with young people. The fellow's presence and interaction with the young people, have opened the doors of the office to more young people and made it easier for us to reach out to them."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor

"I faced two main challenges during my fellowship. The first had to do with working in a multi-cultural, diverse working environment, which was sometimes hard to adapt to. To second was the fact that there is too much bureaucracy: for instance dealing with travel documents required numerous steps and at various levels of engagement."

Fellow

"I have learnt a lot from my fellow fellows: Each of them has such unique talents, they are intelligent young men and women who have a vision, high integrity and work hard to achieve their goals. From them I have learnt that our ideals and our objectives come second to nothing, we must never lose sight of what we have been brought here to do, and never forget that we are representing those who have had the least opportunities in our world."

Fellow





Undergraduate student of international relations at the University of Brasilia. Ana Laura interned with a Brazilian NGO on nutrition and human rights, as well as with the Brazilian Ministry of Justice on the combat of human trafficking of women and girls. She also undertook an internship with the UNESCO field office in Brazil working on projects in the area of education, and she founded a study group on human rights and studied public policies and the Millennium Development Goals at her university.

Ana Laura Becker de Aguiar >>

AGE: *22

FROM: BRAZIL

During her fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters, Ana Laura provided support to the youth initiatives related to human rights and youth policies. She also took part in the Latin America and Caribbean Youth Leadership Summit in Brazil, which she considers one of the highlights of her fellowship. The Summit gave Ana Laura an opportunity to network with many youth from the region and to advocate for youth rights, particularly the right to participation and the right to health, including sexual and reproductive health. Like the other fellows in her group, Ana Laura was involved in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS and the Beijing +10 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Ana Laura made significant contributions to the design of a UNFPA-IPPF joint project on human-rights-based programming for young people that addresses the reproductive health needs and rights of adolescents and youth.

While a fellow in the UNFPA Brazil Country Office, and in follow-up to her work at UNFPA Headquarters, Ana Laura contributed to the organization of the photo exhibition, "Chasing the Dream," in Brasilia. She also contributed to the monitoring of a project on the prevention of violence in schools as well as a project on the prevention of sexual exploitation of adolescents and young women. Furthermore, Ana Laura participated in the Epressa! Youth Campaign for which she was interviewed by MTV Brazil and able to raise awareness amongst the popular television network's youth audience on issues related to young people's sexual and reproductive health.

What did Ana Laura do after SYP?

Upon the completion of her fellowship, Ana Laura continued to work in the UNFPA Brazil Country Office for an additional four months as a Youth Consultant, and she graduated from the University of Brasilia with an undergraduate degree in international relations. In 2006, she went on to do a four-month internship at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica and later volunteered in the Organization of American States electoral observation mission in Guatemala. Upon her return to Brazil, Ana Laura continued working as a Youth Consultant with the UNFPA Country Office. Recently she has left UNFPA to join the UNIFEM regional office based in Brasilia. She continues to be an active member of the Brazilian youth network for sexual and reproductive rights of young people and plans to get a master's degree in the field of international human rights.

What SYP meant to Ana Laura...

One of the most wonderful experiences I had in my life was to live and interact with other young people from different parts of the world and of different cultures and experiences. It is inexpressible the way this experience changed my view of life and of the world. Professionally, SYP is one of the few opportunities young people from developing countries have to actively participate and contribute to the technical and programmatic work of the UN.

Ana Laura Becker de Aguiar

The Special Youth Programme has sensitised colleagues, but more than that, it has in some way "legitimised" youth participation in UNFPA projects.

Ana Laura's supervisor in the UNFPA Brazil Country Office



Medical student at Beijing University. Tang initiated a peer education programme supported by the Ford Foundation. He was also a co-founder of the China Youth Network on Adolescent Reproductive Health and president of the Students' Union of the medical school at his university.

Tang Kun >>

AGE: *22

FROM: CHINA

During his fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters Tang made an in-depth assessment of China's adolescent sexual and reproductive health situation, including its policies and legislation. Along with other fellows in his group, Tang participated in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) Review of Progress on the implementation of the global commitments to combat HIV/AIDS. Tang also commented on reports of various national programmes in the Asia Pacific region, which he says broadened his understanding of the region and the variety of youth issues in each country. Towards the end of his Headquarters fellowship, Tang attended the UNFPA Asia and Pacific Strategic Planning meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, where he made a presentation on the situation of adolescent sexual and reproductive health in the region.

While a fellow in the UNFPA China Country Office, Tang developed a technical database on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and took part in the final evaluation of the UNFPA 5th Country Programme. He also organised and facilitated the annual planning meeting for China Youth Network and coordinated its participation in the UNFPA 6th Country Programme Planning Meeting. In fact, this was the first time ever that youth in China were involved in a meeting at this level with ministers, vice-ministers, and other high-level representatives from the National Population and Family Planning Commission and from the Ministry of Health. In this sense, the meeting was a significant step for China Youth Network and Tang to unite young people in working more closely with the government and UNFPA to achieve common goals of promoting reproductive health and rights for young people.

What did Tang do after SYP?

With the experience gained from the UNFPA Special Youth Programme, Tang was elected Regional Youth Representative for East & South East Asia and the Oceania for the International Planned Parenthood Federation

(IPPF), and he became a member of the Federation's Governing Council. In this capacity, Tang has participated in the 3rd Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where he advocated for youth issues on behalf of young people in the region. Most recently, he was appointed a panelist at the Presidential High Level on Sexual Rights, where he contributed to the drafting of the IPPF Bill of Sexual Rights. Lastly, an abstract by Tang, "From Global to Grassroots: Sexual Education and HIV/AIDS Prevention through the Youth Network of China," was accepted by the Global Health Council, and he presented it at the Council's 2006 annual conference in Washington D.C., USA. He also presented his paper titled "Youth Action in National Fighting Against HIV/AIDS in China" to the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto, Canada.

Tang finished his bachelor's of medicine degree at the Beijing University and is now pursuing a master's degree in population and international health at Harvard University School of Public Health in the US. He continues to advocate for the reproductive health and rights of adolescents and youth in China. He one day hopes to become a professor of public health with the goal of improving the health and welfare of the Chinese population.

Thoughts on SYP...

Now I can have a deeper and overall vision on the population issues and the situation in my country and beyond, that furthers my critical thinking about the key issues of young people...The SYP has set up a bridge for me to network with youth from around the world.

Tang Kun



"This fellowship has given me a solid knowledge on issues around UNFPA's mandate and given me the skills to not only work in multicultural cultures and appreciate the richness of the differences but to also be professional; working under supervision for measurable goals within a specified period of time. It has also sharpened my abilities to work in a team by giving me the opportunity to work alongside other fellows and with other UN partners to achieve common goals."

Fellow

"One of the challenges for me was dealing with who I am as a youth and what happens when I am in a work environment. I am fun, light spirited and young, but I also want to portray a responsible and mature image at work."

Fellow

"The fellowship also strengthened the capacity of our partners (Ministries as well as NGOs) in the area of youth participation and partnering with youth. In addition to strengthening the capacities of these different organizations, the fellow also contributed to their increased knowledge in regard to the problems and challenges faced by our country's youth."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor

"Across the board, I find adults in UNFPA are great, they have tremendous expertise and knowledge and that was the best thing that I got from interacting with them."

Fellow

"The most important concept I learnt from being in UNFPA is the "rights-based approach". In my country's traditional and adult context the rights of youth often go unrecognized, and it's considered impolite for young people to advocate for their own rights in regard to their sexual and reproductive health. Therefore, I am now working together with my youth colleagues to challenge this tradition."

Fellow

"Through the SYP I have gotten to see UNFPA really includes young people. I am part of what started as their aspiration. I am living proof."

Fellow





"New York is always busy and can be challenging. But it is a great place, because of its manifoldness and diversity. I met people from all over the world, from all sorts of cultural backgrounds. I got to see so many things and there is something going on all the time."

Fellow



Medical student at Rabat's School of Medicine. Imane participated in an awareness campaign on reproductive health for illiterate women, led by a local NGO. She also participated in the African Youth Forum during the International Conference on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Burkina Faso and was elected Youth Coordinator for North Africa. And she worked as a peer educator on puberty, sexuality and adolescent sexual reproductive health in orphanages and high schools in Rabat.

Imane Khachani >>

AGE: *23

FROM: MOROCCO

During her time in New York, Imane compiled an inventory of NGOs working on sexual and reproductive health issues in the Arab Region and reviewed and put together a short presentation on the contents of a Training of Trainers tool for peer education. At the UNGASS Review of Progress on the implementation towards the global commitments combating HIV/AIDS, she facilitated, with other youth, the Young People's working session attended by high-level country representatives.

While a fellow in the UNFPA Morocco Country Office, Imane assessed Youth Friendly Clinics in several cities and designed, in collaboration with peer educators, an action plan for their information, education, and communication (IEC) spaces. She also helped organize a workshop on youth participation in partnership with UNICEF, UNDP and the Ministries of Health and Education. During this meeting, Imane facilitated a session on how to promote rural youth participation. Her other endeavors included assisting the UNFPA Morocco Country Office in setting up a Youth Advisory Panel in Morocco and becoming its first youth coordinator.

What did Imane do after SYP?

Upon the completion of her fellowship, Imane resumed her medical studies and prepared her doctoral thesis on therapeutic education programmes for HIV-positive patients. She became a member of the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, an international, youth-led organisation working to promote young people's sexual and reproductive rights, and she was recently elected chair of its HIV taskforce. She also participated in the Oxfam International Youth Parliament and Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS joint research on successful youth-led initiatives in the area of HIV/AIDS, and she worked with the Association of African Women on Research and Development on a survey that examines Moroccans' perception of gender equality after the country's recent family code reforms. Imane also became a member of the UNFPA

Global Youth Advisory Panel that consists of youth representatives from international, national and regional youth networks and organisations and which, in addition to ongoing online discussions, meets annually at UNFPA Headquarters to provide input into UNFPA programming and policy work in all areas of its mandate. She participated in the League of Arab States Youth Forum that took place in November 2007 to raise awareness of the issues of young people's sexual and reproductive health in the region. Imane also represented the Youth Coalition at the UN Special Session on Children in December 2007.

What does she think about SYP?

The Special Youth Programme has been a really valuable "school" and an incredible experience that definitely changed my life. It has enriched my knowledge, strengthened my capacities and developed my skills, which will be very useful for my work in the field. I feel more "professional," and I'm sure it's going to reflect positively on my work in the future.

Imane Khachani

What are Imane's future aspirations?

Keep trying to change the world! Wear my white overalls every morning, share and promote life skills with my patients, and feel at the end of the day that I could help improve someone's life. Continue to sensitise people on women's rights and to fight for gender equality, in light of Morocco's new family code. Keep trying to raise the taboo on sexuality and to open a responsible dialogue on sexual and reproductive health issues in the Arab region.

Imane Khachani



Educational background in computer studies, Institute for Information and Technology in Dar-es-Salaam. Ngasuma worked as a partner of the African Youth Alliance (AYA), with a media house in Dar-es-Salaam and was involved in creating themes for local youth educational programmes; She had participated in the "Bangkok Youth Force" that facilitated and drove the participation of young people in the Bangkok XV International HIV/AIDS Conference in 2004. She also had written articles for a local Tanzanian youth health magazine, FEMINA, and for a local newspaper called "The AFRICAN." Ngasuma was also a radio presenter for a local programme called "Girls Wanna Have Fun."

Ngasuma Kanyeka >>

AGE: *21

FROM: TANZANIA

As a follow up to Allan's involvement with the Africa Division, a focus of Ngasuma's Headquarters work plan was to further develop the compendium of good practices that highlighted adolescent sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention programming in UNFPA supported projects in the Africa region. She was also involved in an evaluation of the youth participation component of the UNFPA-supported African Youth Alliance. Like Ana Laura, Ngasuma has been actively involved in the design of a project on human-rights-based programming for young people in collaboration with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). She took part in the team that prepared the photo exhibit, "Chasing the Dream: Youth Faces of the Millennium Development Goals," which used pictures and written testimonies to portray the lives of young people from around the globe and how they relate to the issues contained in the eight internationally agreed-on Millennium Development Goals.

While a fellow in the UNFPA Tanzania Country Office, she participated in the review of the draft country office strategy for adolescents and acted as the office's youth focal point.

What did Ngasuma do after SYP?

Ngasuma's country office fellowship was cut short halfway into the term, when she accepted a job offer with Marie Stopes International (MSI) in Tanzania to become the NGO's youth programme officer. In this capacity, she was responsible for a number of EU and DFID funded projects including a project on the social marketing of condoms, a youth sensitisation campaign and a community outreach project. She provided general support to MSI's provision of free family planning services to impoverished youth and women in remote villages in Tanzania. Ngasuma was also involved in an HIV Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission programme supported by the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria, that was piloted in 60 districts in Tanzania.

In 2007, Ngasuma embarked on a new career working as a programme officer with the UN Association of Norway under the Fredskorpset North/South Exchange. In this capacity, she is responsible for sensitising the Norwegian public, especially young people, about the work of the UN and engaging them in various international issues such as Millennium Development Goals, peace and mediation and climate change. Ngasuma is simultaneously completing her bachelor's degree in information and communication technology. She plans to pursue a master's degree in communication and international development, through which she hopes to learn more about the effects of communication on young people's sexual and reproductive health, gender norms and behaviours.

Ngasuma's thoughts about UNFPA and SYP...

SYP was an eye opener. There are so many opportunities that you are exposed to in the programme, and you build a great network that becomes very useful as you pursue your goals. You think BIG! after SYP, but you also learn to be proactive. It might not always seem that way when you are in the program, but once you are out of it you will realize how much more you are able to do than before. SYP gave me good friends, good networks and great exposure!

Ngasuma Kanyeka

Ngasuma was very eager to use her skills learned in Headquarters and apply them in the Country Office. She had a lot of experience to share and she shared whenever she found the opportunity to. The Country Office gave her the responsibility as a focal person for youth, in which, in the short period she was here, she showed her mastery in youth issues.

Ngasuma's supervisor in the UNFPA Tanzania Country Office



Graduated from Saint Petersburg State University, Journalistic Faculty and Institute of Psychology and Sexology. Olesya interned at a Saint Petersburg-based NGO, View of the Future, that focuses on the prevention of risk behaviours. She worked there on public relations, project coordination and the organization and implementation of peer education activities for teenagers, including the training of trainers and the drafting of peer education tools. She also completed a course to become a certified trainer with the UNFPA-supported Y-PEER programme.

Olesya Kochkina >>

AGE: *24

FROM: RUSSIA

Olesya began her fellowship by making a presentation with her predecessor Katia at the high-level Ministerial meeting convened by the United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC), "Urgent Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Commonwealth of Independent States," in Moscow, Russia. In the presentation, Olesya spoke of the need to address the vulnerabilities to HIV of young people in the region. During her fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters, Olesya facilitated activities for Y-PEER, the regional youth network. Olesya also helped organise UNFPA's annual Global Youth Advisory Panel meeting and organised and co-facilitated the Y-PEER Advanced Training of Trainers in Istanbul, Turkey.

While a fellow in the UNFPA Country Office in Moscow, Olesya finalised an assessment of peer education programmes in the Russian Federation. In collaboration with some of the office staff, she developed a project proposal for UNFPA Russia to strengthen the capacities of youth peer educators for reaching young people through behaviour change communication programmes, which was successfully approved. In addition, throughout the Country Office fellowship, Olesya worked to update information on the Y-PEER Russia web site, which included translating information from the international portal from English into Russian. In addition, she created a listserve that brings together 28 youth organisations working in peer education all across Russia. Through this listserve, the youth organisations now inform each other weekly about ongoing activities and exchange resources and ideas.

What is Olesya doing after SYP?

Upon completion of the Country level fellowship, Olesya continued to work with the UNFPA's Russia office as a Youth Consultant, where she is currently overseeing the implementation of the above-mentioned youth peer education project.

Olesya's thoughts on UNFPA and SYP...

After this learning experience I am determined to commit all my professional life to working with young people. The whole experience of working with UNFPA was life-changing for me. It helped to broaden the boundaries of my own world, helped to find better focus for my professional development, advanced my professional skills and, in addition, gave me friends all over the world.

Olesya Kochkina

The Country Office has been extensively working with young people for many years with national partners. However, the Special Youth Programme gave the country office the opportunity to work with youth at the international level and bring the international experience through a national youth representative to the country level.

Olesya's supervisor in the UNFPA Russia Country Office



"Though working in what used to be a 100% adult environment was very challenging and even frustrating sometimes, as time passed, I realized how rewarding had been the Special Youth Programme fellowship to me. It opened to me many opportunities: I got involved with various international organizations and had a chance to participate in key governmental meetings and United Nations processes and to bring my perspective as a young person working in the field to actively advocate for young people's right to participate in decision making that affect their lives."

Fellow

"I have worked on several health care and education programmes and experiences in other countries and regions over my SYP fellowship and the knowledge I gained through analysing and assessing these experiences has helped me contribute to improving similar initiatives in my country."

Fellow

"I feel UNFPA has a strong sense of respect and friendship to youth; our opinions are valued at the Headquarters from the level of Executive Director to office administrative staff."

Fellow

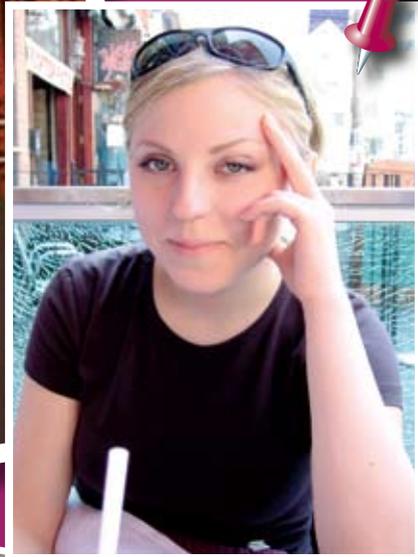
"For some staff, the fellow was more of the youth around. But with the quality of his work and the professional manner with which he conducted himself, they came to appreciate him and value his professional commitment. They have fostered a very good relationship and all of them are thrilled to work with such brilliant youth on various issues."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor

"The Special Youth Programme is a real example of effective engagement with and empowering young people. The programme gives young people the opportunity to not only learn about and get involved in UNFPA's work at the global and country levels, but to also contribute their skills, energy and creativity to the organization's mandate, projects and activities. And if I had a second chance in life, I will definitely do this again!"

Fellow









Advanced vocational diploma in computer science from the University of Benin. While working with the Beninese Family Planning Association, Loukman was involved in sexual and reproductive health trainings at the community level. Loukman also served as an advisor in the Cotonou regional office of the Young Action Movement, the youth section of the Family Planning Association. He had also been engaged in research on the integration of sexual and reproductive health issues in adolescent programmes within the Network of Youths and Adolescents of Africa (NAYA).

Loukman Tidjani >>

AGE: *20

FROM: BENIN

During his fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters, Loukman contributed to the planning and facilitation of the African Youth Forum that took place in Lusaka, Zambia under the theme "Greater and Effective Youth Participation in Africa's Development." Here, Loukman played an instrumental role in the creation and strengthening of the African Youth and Adolescent Network on Population and Development, AfriYAN, which was launched at the Lusaka forum. He also moderated an electronic forum for the youth members of AfriYAN in preparation for their participation in the 2006 XVI Toronto International AIDS Conference. Loukman was also involved in the development of the first-ever Youth Supplement of the UNFPA flagship publication the "State of the World Population". The youth companion report titled "Moving Young" presented the life stories of young people affected by international migration and included related background commentaries highlighting specific issues to which Loukman and his fellow fellows contributed by undertaking research activities. Loukman in his research particularly looked at the vulnerabilities of youth from Sub-Saharan Africa migrating to Europe and often risking their lives en route. Loukman and the other fellows in his group visited Columbia University in New York and met with students from the US and other countries to raise their awareness of issues affecting youth in developing countries.

While a fellow in the UNFPA Benin Country Office, Loukman contributed to the implementation of the National AFRIYAN Network as well as the Behaviour Change Communication Programme for Young People.

Coming from a Francophone country, Loukman faced significant language barriers when he arrived at UNFPA Headquarters. His perseverance and great commitment to improving his English skills and his enrolment in an English-as-a-Second-Language course for young adults, helped him learn the language while also building an additional network of friends in New York. At the end of his fellowship, he could not only

speak and write superior English, but he could also communicate easily with and bring together people from both Anglophone and Francophone backgrounds.

What did Loukman do after SYP?

After completing his work at the Benin UNFPA Country Office, Loukman enrolled in a master's programme in communication and language strategies as well as a bachelor's programme in social sciences, both at the University of Benin. He recently successfully completed his bachelor's degree. In addition, Loukman became a freelance consultant for various NGOs, youth networks and institutions that deal with youth issues. He has also remained an active volunteer in the Young Action Movement's regional office in Cotonou.

For Loukman, SYP is...

One of the most interesting programmes which gives youth the opportunity to work with adults. In addition, it gives youth a clearer view of their generation in order to help them develop their leadership and capacity to work for the development of their own society
Loukman Tidjani

Working in the Benin UNFPA Country Office was ...

An exciting and not always easy experience, because I had to face challenges in youth participation at the country level. I thank God that I was able to overcome all the barriers, and that the youth network is now a reality in Benin.

Loukman Tidjani



Bachelor's degree in economics and business administration from Birzeit University in Palestine and master's degree in population health at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon. Yara has worked as a health consultant with Palestinian refugees at the Centre for Research on Population Health at AUB. She volunteered with the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, a community-based Palestinian health organisation, where she was involved in the areas of first aid, social work, health education and youth leadership.

Yara Jarallah >>

AGE: *24

FROM: PALESTINE

During her fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters, Yara worked on consolidating a report based on the country assessments of UNFPA's Y-PEER peer education programme in 13 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In addition, Yara contributed to the 2006 State of the World Population Youth Supplement, "Moving Young," by examining the situations of migrant domestic workers in the Arab Gulf states, as well as the situations of Muslim girls of migrant descent in Europe and the issue of arranged marriages. She also participated in the Y-PEER Training of Trainers in Theatre Based Peer Education and in a Planning Meeting on Programming for young people in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Arab States held in Marrakech, Morocco.

While a fellow in the UNFPA Palestine Country Office in Jerusalem, Yara helped develop and finalize an annual workplan for a youth project that aims to increase the awareness of young youth leaders and scouts on sexual and reproductive health and build their leadership skills in these areas. Yara also participated and assisted in developing three projects submitted and implemented by local NGOs in the area of young people's sexual and reproductive health. In addition, she assisted in the formation and development of the Palestinian Youth Advisory Panel. Sparked by her involvement in the 2006 Youth Supplement report on international migration, Yara was accepted for a two-week academic programme at the European University Institute's Summer School in Florence Italy, titled "Euro-Mediterranean Migration and Development." The programme helped Yara to further expand her knowledge of the various interactions between migration and development.

Life after SYP?

Upon the completion of her fellowship, Yara continued to be actively involved in the international Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights that she had joined during her time in New York, and she remains

a strong advocate for young people's needs and rights in Palestine, the Arab region and beyond. She has become a member of the Youth Coalition's board, first as treasurer and now as chairperson. In the fall of 2007, Yara participated on behalf of the Youth Coalition in the International Women Deliver Conference in London, UK. The Conference marked the 20th anniversary of the global Safe Motherhood Initiative and sought to create political will to save the lives and improve the health of women, mothers, and newborns worldwide. Yara brought a youth perspective to issues related to maternal health, and she highlighted the importance of involving stakeholders, including youth activists, to advance the agenda. Recently, she was a visiting Research Fellow at the American University of Beirut. She has worked on papers on adolescent health and wellbeing and marriage dynamics in Palestine, and she has collaborated on a paper on the trends of Palestinian fertility. Currently, Yara is based in Palestine and is working with the Institute of Community and Public Health at Birzeit University. She is also undertaking a consultancy with the American University of Beirut.

Yara's thoughts on SYP...

The Special Youth Programme is about giving opportunities to young people and engaging them in working with UNFPA while giving them a wider exposure on issues related to sexual and reproductive health and continuously working on enhancing some of their skills.

Yara Jarallah



"The SYP experience and the exposure and knowledge it has given me, will also be harnessed by young people in my country as I continue to work with them through various initiatives. I hope to share a lot with the young people in my country and work with them, contributing my new skills, to make our lives and situation better."

Fellow

"Staff are generally willing and excited to work with young people, but at the same time they are often extremely busy and getting hold of them can be a challenge."

Fellow

"I know that the experts working in this field all have diplomas, degrees and the required competencies. But I am also sure that as a young person I still have something to contribute, an energy, commitment and idealism that many people who are moving in different development programmes, projects or initiatives across my country may be lacking or may have lost. While they do their work, it is not always really all what we want or expect from them. It is not easy to change the way we do business in my region, but I am sure we will get there."

Fellow

A substantial amount of my time has been spent with the fellow in discussions, reviews, updates etc. I am very impressed by the fellow's intellectual and leadership capacity. He is always bubbling with initiatives and new ideas."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor

"The deployment of the fellow to our country office was a blessing and we will surely take full advantage of the fellow's assignment to better position youth in the government frameworks and in our own programmes."

A UNFPA Country Office representative





The CO Fellowship helped me to get a deeper understanding of UNFPA operations at country level, which is much different from Headquarters. I learnt a lot about the collaboration of UNFPA and the government, as well as implementing partners.



Student at the Bogazici University department of management and administration in Istanbul. Koray was trained as a peer educator through Y-PEER Turkey's first peer education project with university students and subsequently became a trainer of peer educators himself. He participated in a development project for youth in rural areas and suburbs, funded by the European Union, that aimed to introduce adolescents to computer technology and the Internet. As part of this project, Koray was also involved in conducting trainings for teenagers on human rights and democracy.

Koray Volkan Serin >>

AGE: *20

FROM: TURKEY

During his time at Headquarters, Koray was involved in the facilitation of the Y-PEER network. Together with Yara, he worked on the consolidation of the Y-PEER country assessment reports for 13 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. He was also involved in the organisation of a Y-PEER art contest and participated in the establishment of the Y-PEER Youth Advisory Panel. Like the other fellows in his group, Koray was engaged in research on international migration for the 2006 Youth Report "Moving Young." He focussed on the issues of trafficking in Eastern Europe and researched data and trends related to the integration of young people of migrant descent in Europe.

As a fellow in the Turkey Country Office, Koray was involved in the preparation of helped prepare the Y-PEER web-site for the International AIDS Conference in Toronto by providing the web team with youthful input on the design, content and language of the site. He also attended the EXIT Festival, an annual music festival in Novi Sad, Serbia, where he promoted the Y-PEER network. Additionally, he participated with other fellows and SYP alumni as part of the Youth Force in the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto. At this Conference, Koray was also part of the MTV Staying Alive 48-fest, a 48-hour film competition in which selected teams of youth delegates were challenged to write, shoot and edit a short public service announcement film on HIV/AIDS.

What did Koray do after SYP?

After completing his fellowship, Koray resumed his undergraduate studies in management and administration. He stays closely involved in the work of the Y-PEER network, both at the country level and the regional level.

What does Koray think about UNFPA and SYP?

The Special Youth Programme is not just an office experience but a complete life experience, which changed my life totally. The Special Youth Programme is learning, sharing and enjoying.

Koray Serin

The UNFPA Country Office has been promoting meaningful youth participation for a long time in Turkey ...and though there is still some resistance, progress has been achieved since the beginning. The Special Youth Programme can help to accelerate this progress if it gains continuity. Having a young person full time in office also strengthens UNFPA's efforts and demonstrates a good example for the national partners. We hope that UNFPA's leadership in promoting meaningful youth participation will continue in the future.

Koray's supervisor in the UNFPA Turkey Country Office



"SYP has influenced and strengthened my commitment to and belief in young people and the field of sexual and reproductive health"

Fellow



Graduated in social work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai with a major in family and child welfare. Chandni interned with a home for destitute girls and with the Childline India Foundation, a national 24-hour emergency service for children in need of care and protection. She had also worked as a project officer with a local NGO that focuses on awareness and prevention of HIV and young people's sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, she worked in a life skills education programme for public and private schools helping to sensitise school authorities to adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues. And using participatory methodologies with a gender lens, she led sessions with students on issues that included peer pressure, interpersonal relationships, responsible sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS.

Chandni Malik >>

AGE: *24

FROM: INDIA

During her fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters, Chandni worked on a review of proposals for country level Youth Advisory Panels and on an assessment of investments in youth in national poverty reduction strategies in Asia. Chandni also conducted a regional policy review on the UNFPA/European Union-supported Reproductive Health Initiative for Young People in Asia (RHIYA). Like the other fellows in her group, Chandni was actively involved in the 2006 State of the World Population Youth Supplement "Moving Young," and also contributed to a paper on urban migration and youth in Asia for which she conducted an analysis of youth-related policies across Bangladesh, India, Vietnam and the Philippines. Chandni participated in several international events such as the launch of the Indian Young Professional's Network. She and other fellows in her group contributed to the work of a multi-disciplinary team of technical experts from UNFPA Headquarters, Country Offices and Country Support Teams that worked on developing and drafting the UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth. Chandni was elected Youth Representative for the UNAIDS Steering Committee and has participated in various meetings of this committee by bringing in the perspective of young people as related to HIV prevention.

Upon completion of her six-month Headquarters fellowship, UNFPA's Asia and Pacific Division asked Chandni to assist with its follow-up work for the RHIYA by staying on at Headquarters for another two months as a Youth Consultant.

While a fellow in the UNFPA India Country Office, Chandni continued to work on issues related to young people and gender. In addition to work in the office, she also had the opportunity to do field work and to participate in trainings across the country.

What did Chandni do after SYP?

Upon completion of the Country Office fellowship, Chandni started working at the Population Foundation of India, an NGO that has been at the forefront of creating a rights-based, gender-sensitive approach to human development. Chandni has joined the organisation as a Project Officer on the Advocacy and Communication team. There, she will be putting into practice her knowledge of sexual and reproductive health programming.

Chandni thinks that...

Being in the Special Youth Programme has been beneficial to me in every way. Besides getting international exposure in the field of my interest, I also participated in a variety of activities and projects that interested me. The Special Youth Programme is a great opportunity for young people, especially those interested in the field of sexual and reproductive health and youth issues, to develop their skills and knowledge with a rich international experience at UNFPA.

Chandni Malik

Chandni was articulate and well informed about the UNFPA's agenda and mandate. She was able to participate in various programmes and workshops, especially those that impact out of school adolescents. She also obtained in depth information regarding the various policies that cater to the youth and adolescents and the existing gaps. And her skills pertaining to writing, research and trainings were effectively utilized. Chandni has been hard working and dedicated and has showed us great initiative during the workshops and sessions that she facilitated.

Chandni's supervisor in the UNFPA India Country Office



Bachelor's degree in clinical psychology at the National University of Asunción. Ariel worked with PROMESA, a nongovernmental organisation, coordinating adolescent sexual and reproductive health workshops and online communications. He also has a degree as a human sexuality educator from the Argentinean Association of Sexology and Sexual Education, and he has volunteered in the Paraguayan Viceministry of Youth, the Paraguayan Red Cross Department of Youth as well as the Paraguayan Youthful Protagonism.

Ariel González Galeano >>

AGE: *23

FROM: PARAGUAY

During Ariel's stay at Headquarters, he updated the Latin America and Caribbean Division's website and contributed to the creation of a project about young people's rights and media communication. Along with other fellows, Ariel was involved in UNFPA's partnership with the MTV "Staying Alive Campaign," which involved the review of scenarios for short public service announcements on HIV targeted to young people. In addition, Ariel had the opportunity to participate in the meeting of the Commission of the Status of Women at the UN Secretariat. With the other fellows in his group, Ariel met with a group of young people from Sweden who were visiting New York and being featured in a Swedish reality TV series highlighting social issues and youth. The fellows and young Swedes were filmed as they discussed issues of young people and HIV/AIDS in developing countries. Ariel also collaborated on the development of the Youth Supplement of the 2006 State of World Population by gathering information on the cross-border spread of youth gangs in North and Central America.

At the Paraguay UNFPA Country Office, Ariel collaborated in the "Creating Youth Policies" project, which sought to contribute to the development of a national youth policy and to ensure that young people's sexual and reproductive health needs and rights to information, education and services were addressed in this policy. At the same time, Ariel worked to raise awareness on the importance of youth participation in all sectors of the country.

Life after SYP?

After finishing his fellowship, Ariel continued to work with PROMESA and completed his bachelor's degree. With the help of the Paraguayan Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ariel developed and conducted HIV/AIDS workshops for youth, women, men, health consultants and local authorities in rural areas of his country. In addition, he completed a course on

family planning and contraceptive methods at the School of Medicine of the Rosario-Argentina National University. Currently, he continues to be involved in the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, which Ariel -like other fellows- had joined during his SYP fellowship. With the Youth Coalition, Ariel has engaged in the facilitation of workshops at the international, regional and national level and has helped develop informational materials and has participated on various panels. Ariel has also become an active board member of the Paraguayan Society of Human Sexuality Studies. And he participates in "The Sexologist" section of a weekly radio show titled "Sonido Urbano," during which he answers young people's questions about sexuality.

Ariel thinks that SYP...

Has given me the chance to be in contact with many people that I used to know just by articles or other documents written by them. It has been a real exchange of culture, knowledge and constant professional and personal training.

Ariel González Galeano



Fiona studied economics and demography at the University of Swaziland, where she lived with her family to escape the conflict in her native Sierra Leone. As a peer educator with the University of Swaziland, she received training in basic counselling and HIV peer education, and she coordinated the organisation's central efforts to make educational materials available to the university community, including the organisation of open lectures, the publication of newsletters, and the establishment of a website. She was also one of the founding members of a movement that aims to make a positive change in the lives of the youth in Swaziland.

Fiona Kaikai >>

AGE: *21

FROM: SIERRA LEONE

Together with Allan, Fiona participated in the 14th International Conference on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (ICASA) in Abuja, Nigeria and acted as one of the leaders of the youth group. At the conference, she co-facilitated a session on mitigating the impact of HIV in the family and chaired a session on youth participation. Together with Chandni, Fiona was involved in the review of proposals to set up country level Youth Advisory Panels that were submitted from various Country Offices to the UNFPA Headquarters. She provided research on female genital mutilation and forced marriage in migrant communities for the 2006 State of the World Population Youth Supplement "Moving Young." Fiona helped prepare for the XVI International AIDS Conference 2006 in Toronto and participated at the conference as part of the Youth Force. She was also involved in MTV's 48Fest short film competition.

Upon completion of her Headquarters fellowship, Fiona returned to her native Sierra Leone, where her family had resettled after the war had come to an end. In the UNFPA Sierra Leone Country Office, Fiona provided support for a country-level Youth Advisory Panel. She conducted training sessions on sexual and reproductive health, HIV prevention and gender-based violence for former combatants and child soldiers. During World Population Day 2006, which focussed on the theme of youth, she worked with the National Population Unit of the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning to organise the first youth mock parliament during which young people met to deliberate on issues affecting their lives.

What did Fiona do after SYP?

Upon the completion of her fellowship, Fiona stayed at the Country Office as a Youth Consultant, where she continues to work on several of the projects she started working on as a fellow, including coordinating the UNFPA support for the country-level Youth Advisory Panel. She also participated in a technical expert consultation on young people and pov-

erty reduction strategies that was convened by UNFPA and the World Bank in January 2007 in Washington D.C. During the consultation, she shared the experience of the inclusion of young people's issues in the PRS processes in Sierra Leone. Notably, Fiona's dream of continuing her education has come true: she is now studying for a master's degree in population and development at the University of Freetown.

Fiona thinks that SYP...

Has greatly influenced my future goals. After being part of this programme, I am more certain that I want to continue in the field of population and health studies. It has helped me focus my aspirations and what I want to achieve not only for myself but also for my country.

Fiona Kaikai

I feel very satisfied with the work and personal attitude of Ms. Kaikai. She is always ready to take challenges and has been an excellent addition to the strength of the HIV/AIDS unit of the UNFPA Country Office.

Fiona's supervisor in the UNFPA Sierra Leone Country Office



"I can say the SYP completely changed the way that I look at UNFPA. While we mostly see the big picture, general programming while in New York; the Country Office fellowship showed me how the policies affect the local decision making and things on the ground. Since I had very supportive colleagues in the country office, I now feel more self-confident about my skills."

Fellow

"SYP sensitized the Country Office in terms of working with young people to the extent that the office established its own Youth Advisory Panel in order to increase youth participation."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor

"Generally at the both the Country Office and Headquarters levels I found that some adults, perhaps because of being in the system too long had become too focussed on the established processes and had stopped dreaming of the possibilities, of unorthodox ways of doing things. Young people with their open mindedness and enthusiasm can challenge such attitudes and remind them there is only so much need for process, but in the end what counts are results."

Fellow

"I believe SYP is gradually molding us into future leaders of our countries and I am confident that I have something to contribute to my country, where active involvement of youth in national development is critical."

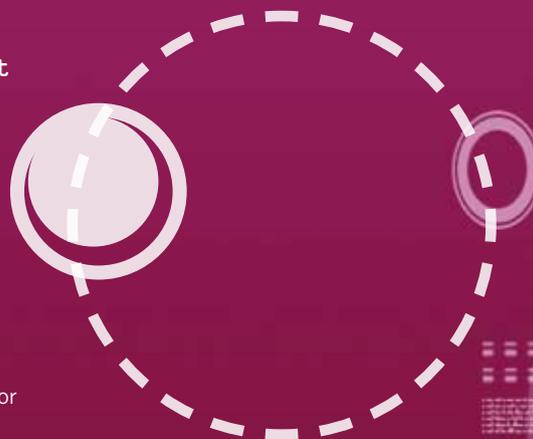
Fellow

"Common Headquarters assignments for all fellows working on a specific initiative and sharing responsibilities, were very useful. We got to learn from each other and it built our capacity in team work, preparing us for the outside world."

Fellow

"My role as a supervisor was mainly that of providing guidance, but I must admit that it ended being a two-way process. I think I did learn some things, for instance the fellow's perspective on the establishment and functioning of the Youth Advisory Panel was valuable, particularly the role of the panel vis-à-vis the newly established Ministry of Youth."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor





Combined bachelor's degree in economics, statistics, and English and a master's degree in economics from the NWFP Agricultural University, Peshawar. Salma was one of the founding members of the Coalition on Rights and Responsibilities of Youth (CRY), a Pakistani youth network funded by the Tides Foundation. At CRY, she initially worked as a volunteer organising youth groups and awareness-raising activities in the areas of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. After completing her studies, Salma became a programme officer at her NGO and was responsible for an HIV/AIDS project.

Salma Ismail >>

AGE: *23

FROM: PAKISTAN

During her fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters, Salma was involved in the preparation and facilitation of the 2006 annual Global Youth Advisory Panel (G-YAP) meeting, in which over 20 youth representatives from international, regional and national youth networks and organisations came together to discuss the global and regional operationalisation of UNFPA's newly launched Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth. While in New York, Salma, along with others in her group, participated in the Global Youth Leadership Summit organised by the UN Office for Sports for Development and Peace. The Summit brought together two youths, one male and one female, from nearly all countries in the world to discuss young people's role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Salma brought a unique perspective to UNFPA by researching sexual and reproductive health from a Muslim point of view and analysing different Islamic religious texts such as the Qur'an and the Sunnah and their references in support of reproductive health.

While a fellow in the UNFPA Pakistan Country Office, Salma was instrumental in the establishment of a country-level Youth Advisory Panel. She also assisted the Country Office in organizing the panel's first meeting, which brought together boys and girls from different regions of the country to provide input to UNFPA-supported youth programmes in Pakistan.

What is Salma doing after SYP?

After finishing the Special Youth Programme, Salma stayed on with the Country Office as a Youth Consultant for several months to complete the activities in which she was involved. She then rejoined her NGO in Peshawar. Salma was also selected to participate in an international human rights training programme organised by the International Centre of Human Rights Education in Canada. In this programme, Salma was able to draw on what she had learned during the SYP fellowship about link-

ing human rights concepts to issues of sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights and gender. Salma also attended the 8th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific that took place in Sri Lanka. There, she presented her abstract on "The Role of Youth Organization in HIV Prevention." She also played a role in the UNDP project in support of the 2008 National Elections in Pakistan with Election Commission of Pakistan in her native Peshawar District. Salma received a full scholarship to attend the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) programme on human rights held in India in April 2008 and was elected for the Mexico International AIDS Conference Youth Pavilion Sub committee.

Salma believes that SYP...

Built my own capacity, leadership skills, lobbying skills, communication skills, knowledge about gender equality, women's empowerment, women's health and sexual and reproductive health in the context of social development and has helped me in furthering my career goal.

Salma Ismail

As a former youth activist, I was already very sensitised on working with young people, but the fellow has provided me with valuable experience and information on how the Global Youth Advisory Panel works and how young people are treated at Headquarters.

Salma's supervisor in the UNFPA Pakistan Country Office



Bachelor's degree in engineering from the Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Theophilus headed the Youth Initiators Nigeria Initiative and volunteered with the Enugu State Action Plan Committee on HIV/AIDS. Theophilus also worked to raise young people's awareness about the Millennium Development Goals by holding workshops for youth audiences throughout his state.

Theophilus Ekpon >>

AGE: *23

FROM: NIGERIA

During his fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters, Theophilus developed a National Youth Profile of Nigeria, which included an extensive review of existing policies and the extent to which they are addressing the needs and rights of young people in his country. One highlight of Theophilus' stay at Headquarters was his work on issues of youth and poverty, which included moderating a global online consultation on "Youth Participation in Poverty Reduction Strategies." This consultation sought to assess the level of participation of young people across the world in the Poverty Reduction Strategy processes of their countries. Theophilus also was involved in the moderation of the electronic forum of the AfriYAN regional youth network. He played a key role in the popularisation of the African Union-adopted African Youth Charter, to the development of which UNFPA had played an important role, and promoted this strategic document amongst the AfriYAN network members as a vehicle for advocacy for increased investments in youth toward national governments in Africa.

While a fellow in the Nigeria Country Office, Theophilus participated in the National Council on Youth, a meeting between the newly-established Ministry of Youth and the equivalent Ministries from all thirty-six Nigerian states. Through Theophilus' participation, the UNFPA Country Office consequently established a partnership with the Ministry of Youth. Theophilus also had the opportunity to work on team building among youth as part of the activities required for the formation of the National Youth Advisory Panel. The Panel was created as a mechanism for open dialogue and exchange between the Government, the UN system and youth groups in Nigeria. The Panel's youth members advise on strategic opportunities and actions to address youth issues within the country. Theophilus also played a key role in coordinating input from youth consultations in all 36 states in the review of the Nigeria Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

What is Theophilus doing after SYP?

Theophilus stayed on as a Youth Consultant with the UNFPA Nigeria Country Office. As a driver behind UNFPA's work on young people and poverty reduction strategies, he continues to be a strong advocate in this area. He was able to share his experience in a UNFPA/World Bank co-convened technical expert meeting on Young People and PRSPs in Washington D.C. in January 2007. He is also a member of the advisory team of the Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa. Currently, he is involved in the review of the first draft of the National Youth Policy and the development of the first National Youth Report with the Ministry of Youth. For the future Theophilus aspires to pursue a master's degree in International Relations.

The Special Youth Programme is...

A once in a lifetime programme that helps aspiring young leaders to get there!

Theophilus Ekpon

I think Theophilus' presence provided opportunity for everyone in the CO to communicate with young people and bring their perspective to our programmes. I think that most people learned that youth should also be given a voice in all decision-making processes, particularly those affecting them directly.

Theophilus' supervisor in the UNFPA Nigeria Country Office



"We all helped each other find our footing in New York, and continuously walked each other through the dark times when we terribly missed home. In my own case, I knew I could count on the other fellows to be there to listen and help me."

Fellow

"The obstacles in terms of being enabled to meaningfully participate initially were largely a factor of the culture and the perception of young people in the eyes of especially local staff who simply saw me as the "youth" in the office. That sort of impaired my working relationship at the outset but once I was able to prove that I could contribute something to even the work that they did, those stereotypes slowly faded away. I think to a very large extent it is a process that has to do with changing patterns that are deeply culturally engrained."

Fellow

"Our fellow has done far more than the outputs originally identified in his workplan. While he was expected to assist the unit in areas related to young people, he has taken full responsibility for a number of projects. Generally speaking, his performance has been of exceptional quality."

A UNFPA Headquarters supervisor

"UNFPA should continue engaging youth and SYP alumni in its work to strengthen the advocacy for the ICPD agenda."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor

"UNFPA is serious about involving young people in our work, and the Special Youth Programme is one step towards a better integration of young people's visions and views in our programming."

UNFPA headquarters supervisor and coordinator SYP





"SYP demonstrates that young people can make a difference everywhere they go. Through SYP, UNFPA gives young people a once-in-a-life-time chance to show that they have something important to tell to the adults, that we can work with them, as well as with other youth around the world. "

Fellow



Bachelor's degree in tourism management Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute. Prior to starting her fellowship, Karima worked within her country's national umbrella NGO for HIV/AIDS, first as an administrative assistant and then as a programme coordinator. Karima contributed to the process of drafting the HIV/AIDS component of her country's 2020 development plan by working closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Family Health International (FHI) to build the capacity of NGOs and community- and faith-based organizations. Karima had also worked as a consultant for CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) on the midterm and final reviews of its Caribbean Gender Equity Programme. In addition, she was involved with the Trinidad YMCA to map best practices in youth social work among NGOs in Trinidad and Tobago.

Karima Mckenzie-Thomas >>

AGE: *23

FROM: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

While at Headquarters, Karima assisted with the development of an essential package on adolescent sexual and reproductive health services by reviewing country examples and compiling short briefs. Like the other fellows in her group, Karima helped update the Adolescent and Youth Programming Tool and undertook research on specific thematic sections for the tool to ensure the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art materials would be included. Karima also helped develop an implementation toolkit for the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth, and she made a presentation to UNFPA Headquarters staff on the Convention, which UNFPA had supported in development. Karima also attended the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto and its preceding youth conference to bring in the issues of young people and HIV in the region. She assisted with the coordination of participants from the Latin America and Caribbean region in the Youth Leadership Summit organised by the United Nations Office of Sport for Development and Peace, and she participated in the summit. Karima also developed a set of country youth profiles for the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean, including Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

What is Karima doing after SYP?

Because Karima was expecting her first child during her SYP fellowship, she decided to leave the programme early in order to prepare for the delivery of her baby and then care for her child full-time. Karima has expressed her continued commitment to youth issues in Trinidad and Tobago and the region, and she hopes to pick up her engagement again as a strong advocate for sexual and reproductive health.

Karima's thoughts on youth participation...

It is imperative that young people be involved at all levels and in all phases of development work, not only involving themselves in projects labeled as youth-oriented or youth-centered. We, youths, need to realise it is not only the issues that affect youth that are important. The general issues affecting us now will determine our futures, our way of living. We have a stake in these issues, because the future is ours.

Karima Mckenzie-Thomas



Milena studied Bulgarian philology at Neofit Rilski South West University in Blagoevgrad. She assisted in a project on HIV prevention among young people in and outside school settings that is part of the Bulgarian Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS Programme implemented by the Ministry of Health. She also worked as a short-term assistant with UNFPA's Bulgaria office and as a peer coordinator for the UNFPA supported Y-PEER programme in Bulgaria. In that capacity, she served as editor of Chas Pik, a bulletin that addresses youth sexual and reproductive health issues. Milena also started a youth club for HIV/AIDS and drug prevention at her school.

Milena Zaharieva >>

AGE: *23

FROM: BULGARIA

During her fellowship at UNFPA Headquarters, Milena was involved in the implementation of the regional initiative focusing on youth-adult partnership, as well as daily implementation of Y-PEER activities. Milena's responsibilities included writing and editing Y-PEER's newsletter, network facilitation and programme development. Like the other fellows in her group, she contributed to the updating of the Adolescents and Youth Programming Tool, and specifically focussed on the review of programme experiences and latest research findings in the area of peer education. In addition, along with other fellows and alumni, she had the opportunity to participate in the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto and MTV's 48Fest. She also attended a Youth Festival organized by the UNFPA Country Office in Georgia, which brought together young people from the Black Sea region, and she attended the Y-PEER Advisory Panel Meeting, which consists of national peer coordinators who provide input for the programming of initiatives and activities in this regional network.

While a fellow in the UNFPA Bulgaria Country Office, Milena worked on the development of proposals and project documents on adolescent sexual and reproductive health. She also actively participated in the National HIV/AIDS prevention campaign.

According to Milena, the conferences that she attended while at Headquarters were one of the highlights of her fellowship. Through these events, she met many different and interesting people, such as world leaders, young people and people living with HIV. These people motivated her to continue advocating for young people and sexual and reproductive health.

Life after SYP?

Upon the completion of her internship, Milena continued to be engaged with the UNFPA Bulgaria Country Office as a Youth Consultant. She is an active Y-PEER Bulgaria representative and has been involved in the MTV Staying Alive Campaign. In addition, she has participated in a peer education training on "Theater-based Techniques" as well as a "Youth, Pop Culture, Media and HIV/AIDS" workshop. Both were organized by UNFPA.

Thoughts on UNFPA and SYP?

Working in the diverse environment of UNFPA is a unique opportunity. I had to understand different approaches, working and living styles, meet high-level professionals and to further convince myself that young people can make changes and contribute to the success of international organizations such as UNFPA.

Milena Zaharieva

The programme has been instrumental in sensitising colleagues in our Division on the importance of Youth-Adult partnership as well as youth involvement in all aspects of programming.

Milena's supervisor in UNFPA Headquarters



Bachelor's degree in communication and pursuing a master's degree in the same field of study at the University of Antananarivo. Before joining the programme, Sandra worked as a journalist for the national newspaper *Le Quotidien*, writing articles that dealt with social issues. She was also responsible for the paper's section on young people. In addition, she volunteered at *Accueil des Sans-abri*, an NGO that works to integrate homeless people back into society.

(Marie) Sandra Ramonjison >>

AGE: *24

FROM: MADAGASCAR

During her stay at Headquarters, Sandra played a crucial role in strengthening the Africa Youth and Adolescents Network on Population and Development (AfriYAN), particularly by acting as the co-moderator of the bilingual (English and French) AfriYAN e-forum. Sandra also actively participated in the preparation and facilitation of the Global Youth Advisory Panel meeting 2006.

During Sandra's fellowship in UNFPA's Madagascar Country Office, she was involved in the operations of the newly established Malagasy Youth Advisory Panel to UNFPA and acted as the liaison between this panel and AfriYAN. She also conducted a training on advocacy for the members of the Youth Advisory Panel and worked to connect them with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Helped by the National Youth Profile that she had developed during her Headquarters fellowship, Sandra contributed to the development of the Annual Work Plan of Madagascar UNFPA Country Office and to the alignment of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) with the Madagascar Action Plan.

One of the highlights of Sandra's fellowship was the interview she held with the President of the Malagasy Republic, Marc Ravalomanana, when he was visiting New York to attend the United Nations 60th General Assembly. In the interview, she questioned the President about his views on young people's access to sexual and reproductive health services and education, HIV prevention, child marriage and the high rate of adolescent pregnancies in Madagascar. Sandra's article was published in the Malagasy newspaper, *Le Quotidien*. Several months later, during the inauguration of a new Mother and Child Health Centre in the northwest region, the Malagasy President announced that the legal age for marriage would be raised, that contraceptive services would be made widely available and that the Government would continue its fight against HIV/AIDS. This was, of course, very satisfying for Sandra and was a major achievement for all Malagasy youth.

What did Sandra do after SYP?

Sandra continued as a Youth Consultant at the UNFPA Country Office where she has been involved in a research project on Youth Programming in Madagascar and for which she reviewed national policies on reproductive health, education and population. She also worked on a publication titled "Youth for AIDS Programme," that is issued by the Ministry of Youth and the National Committee for the Fight against HIV/AIDS. Sandra has remained an active member of the AfriYAN as the co-moderator of the e-forum, and she continues to support the Malagasy Youth Advisory Panel. At her university she was involved in a research that focuses on language sciences and communication strategies in reproductive health advocacy in Malagasy society. Currently Sandra is working with the UNICEF Country Office in Madagascar as an Assistant Project Officer and contributing with her programmatic and journalistic experience to a project called the Juniors Reporters Clubs, that aims at setting up clubs of adolescents who will act as youth journalists in their communities.

Sandra thinks that SYP...

Gives fellows the opportunity to provide input about youth programmes within the organisation. It strengthens a fellow's relation with international youth networks in their region.

(Marie) Sandra Ramonjison



"Working with adults at UNFPA Headquarters sensitized me in terms of working with people from different origins, religions and traditions. I had a great lesson in diplomacy and communication with highly varied staff."

Fellow

"I think that the fellow came with a lot of experience in working with adults and was able to build on this and made sure her voice was heard during meetings and working with all the units of the Country Office."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor

"Having spent six months in well-organised, comfortable New York, it can be challenging to be confronted with the realities of one's country upon return home: this has to do with the sheer and dire needs that consume most people's daily lives but also with such practical things as lack of running water, electricity and Internet connectivity."

Fellow

"During my Country Office fellowship I also learnt a lot from managers of youth centers who are young people themselves; in my daily interaction with them I had the opportunity to witness a rich partnership of youth and adults at district level as they strive support the development of young people. They have built strong working relations with different stakeholders and the community, which is highly impressive. They are highly gifted and I am glad they are on board."

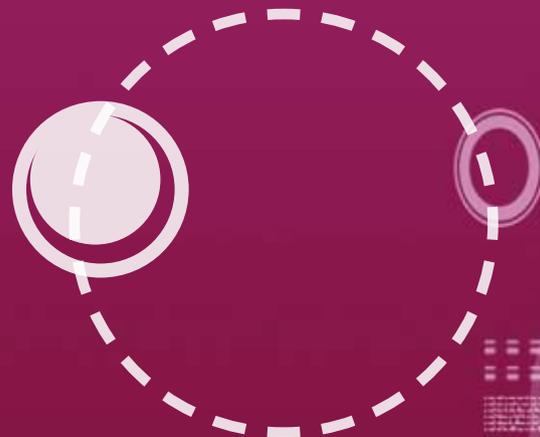
Fellow

"Working with experts, in youth-adult partnerships, really helped me build my capacity. Above all it was wonderful meeting with the UNFPA Executive Director, first soon after our arrival and later again for a debriefing before we left for our Country Office assignments. I was very impressed and honoured to experience her dedication to young people's issues and her belief in us."

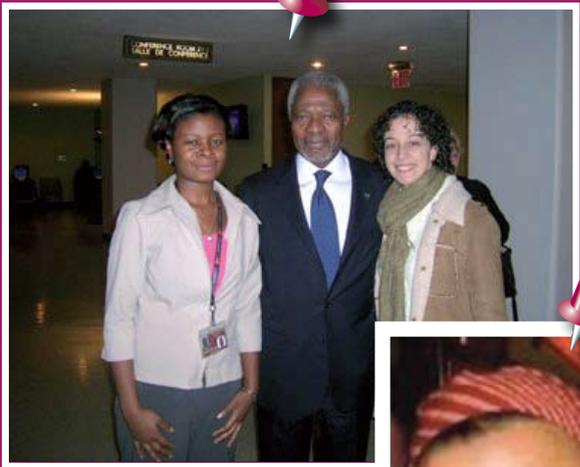
Fellow

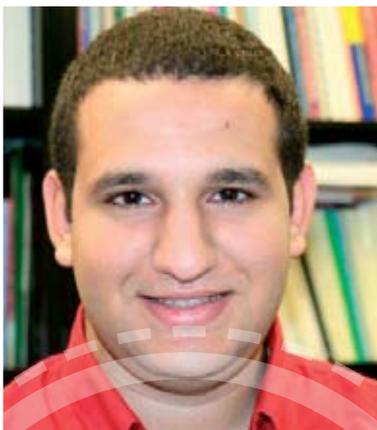
"Young people have passion and energy and know what needs to be done. Often however, we don't know how to deal with the processes to get involved. Through the fellowship experience I think I can help young people in my country to better understand and deal with the processes and increase their opportunities to meaningfully engage in matters that affect their lives."

Fellow









Medical student at the Faculty of Medicine of Western Algiers. Nazim was a volunteer in "Le Souk," an NGO that seeks to help sick children in various Algerian hospitals. Nazim is also a founding member and manager of the Algerian Medical Students Association's Standing Committee on Reproductive Health including AIDS. For this Committee, Nazim oversaw the implementation of a UNFPA-supported peer education programme, "Youth Talk to Youth," that encourages youth involvement in education and communication. Nazim has also been involved in Y-PEER trainings and meetings conducted by UNFPA's Division of Arab States, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Nazim Benchikh >>

AGE: *22

FROM: ALGERIA

With his multilingual talents, Nazim was involved in the review of the Arabic and French translations of the 2007 Youth Supplement of the State of World Population report, "Growing up Urban," which focussed on the issues of urbanisation and youth. Together with UNFPA staff, Nazim was able to participate in an Interagency Youth Working Group meeting organised by USAID and Family Health International in Washington D.C., in which new research findings, programme experiences and applications in the area of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health were presented. In collaboration with Kefilwe, Nazim made a presentation at the UN Secretariat for the Science Lab Project on Young People's Initiatives in Achieving the MDGs, where he convincingly engaged an international youth audience to discuss issues of young people's sexual and reproductive health in developing countries. Nazim has also developed an elaborate Youth Profile of his country, concentrating on topics such as education, gender, and sexual and reproductive health of Algerian youth that the UNFPA Country Office plans to use as an advocacy tool. Like his predecessors, Nazim was actively involved in the Y-PEER network in his work with the Division of Arab States, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and was involved in managing Y-PEER's communication tools, contributing to the network's newsletter and website design. He also contributed to the review of the Peer Education Programme Assessment Toolkit and the Peer Education Manual during Emergency Situations.

While in the Country Office, Nazim has been involved in formulating a project with Le Souk for the new country programme 2007-2011 and also developing a proposal to create the UNFPA Youth Advisory Panel in Algeria.

What does Nazim wish to do after SYP?

In the future, Nazim wishes to contribute by developing youth programmes in his country and continuing to conduct trainings and workshops for young people from different parts of Algeria. Nazim wants to unite his role as a doctor(to-be) and as a youth advocate and generate change in the field of public health.

Thoughts about SYP...

The major outstanding experience in SYP is that by being exposed to global and regional issues, we had the opportunity to identify the different needs of diverse areas. I also had the opportunity to learn how sensitive and crucial are the mandates of UNFPA. UNFPA is the LIFE agency.

Nazim Benchikh

Working with adults has its methodology: getting to know each other, finding common goals and objectives. I learnt that adults are often expecting youth have an opinion regarding their work. But we have to trust them first, and then we will talk.

Nazim Benchikh

Sadly, Nazim was undertaking his fellowship at the UNFPA Country Office when the UN in Algiers was targeted in a terrorist attack. Though severely injured, he survived the tragic assault in which several UNFPA staff and employees of other UN agencies lost their lives. With medical assistance and professional help, Nazim is recovering from his injuries and is coping with the trauma of the attack. It's been inspiring to learn that Nazim is holding strong and his spirit remains unbroken. He has let us know that he is now more determined than ever to dedicate his life to the development of his country and particularly of its youth. Nazim recently resumed his medical studies. UNFPA is also proud that he is resuming on a part-time basis his SYP fellowship with the Fund's Algeria Country Office.



Completed his secondary education at Queens College in Georgetown. Norwell was a volunteer and then the youngest member of the Board of Directors of the Guyana youth organisation GuyberNet. As a youth volunteer he participated in development activities on conflict resolution, governance, environment, education, children's rights and HIV. As of November 2005 at the age of 19, he became the youngest employee of the UN agencies in Guyana, where he worked as an administrative/programme assistant with the UNFPA Liaison Officer up until joining the UNFPA Special Youth Programme.

Norwell Hinds >>

AGE: *20

FROM: GUYANA

At Headquarters, Norwell was--along with other fellows in his group--an active member of the technical working group on Young People and Poverty Reduction Strategies. Norwell's work with this group involved the creation of an online course for young people from developing countries aimed at increasing their knowledge of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and their opportunities to participate in these processes in their countries. The course consists of six modules, and Norwell's work focussed on the module that deals with the Consultation phase of the PRS process. Norwell also attended a meeting of the UN Inter-Agency Task Team on Young People and HIV/AIDS in Paris. At the meeting, he provided youth input on the substance and the dissemination of the UNAIDS Global Guidance Briefs on HIV and AIDS Interventions for Young People, which will guide country level efforts of all concerned UN agencies working with these issues. Norwell was also involved in the evaluation of a regional project supported by the Japanese Organisation for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP) that focused on the expansion of quality adolescent sexual reproductive health information and services for underserved young people in Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru. In this undertaking, he designed the evaluation methodology and was part of an evaluation mission that visited project sites in Nicaragua and brought together people, including young people, from the other countries involved in the project.

Norwell conducted the second part of his fellowship in Jamaica at the UNFPA Subregional Office for the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean, which oversees the programme in Guyana and 21 other countries in this region. Here, he was responsible for the Youth Advisory Panel of the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean, and he organised a retreat for the panel to finalise its Terms of Reference and a workplan for 2008. He has also been involved in the CARICOM (Caribbean Community and Common Market) Health and Family Life Education

Subcommittee (for out of school youth) and worked on a newsletter, "Youth Focus," for UNFPA staff and partners in this region.

Life after SYP?

Upon completion of his fellowship in Jamaica, Norwell returned to his native Guyana where he continues to work as a Youth Consultant with the UNFPA Liaison Officer there. Norwell was selected by the Mexico International AIDS Conference Leadership Programme Committee as a panel speaker for a non-abstract driven conference session on "Addressing the Gap: Commitments, funding, and youth engagement" to speak on the topic of "Meaningfully Involving Young People" in which he will share, amongst other things, the UNFPA experience with the Special Youth Programme.

Thoughts on UNFPA...

The most important message I want to give to UNFPA is to continue to be champions in focusing on adolescent and youth development and continue to not underestimate the potential and capacities of young people...even those without degrees and especially those from developing countries.

UNFPA has not given me a different perspective about youth as such, but certainly a better sense of the 'how to' in relation to youth participation and a greater appreciation for the uniqueness and dynamism that partnering with young people adds to a process or outcome.

Norwell Hinds

SYP is about

Giving real young people a chance to really be involved and "shake" things up the 'young people way'

Norwell Hinds



Bachelor's degree in linguistics from the University of Yaounde. Undergoing a master's programme in English at the University of Yaounde. Wendi is a member of the Association for Creative Teaching and Women in Development. She has worked as a freelancer for a youth reproductive health magazine, "100% Jeune," for a number of years, reporting on issues like HIV and stigma, intergenerational sex as a key factor in the spread of HIV and the vulnerabilities of women and girls. Wendi, who was born and raised in rural Cameroon, has also worked as a peer educator, and she has been a strong advocate for the issues facing rural youth in her country.

Wendi Comfort Mungho >>

AGE: *23

FROM: CAMEROON

At Headquarters, Wendi was involved in the review, translation and completion of the draft of the evaluation report for a multi-country adolescent sexual and reproductive health project funded by the Belgian government. As a member of the technical working group on Young People and Poverty Reduction Strategies, Wendi contributed--in collaboration with Vattana--to the development of a module on Costing and Budgeting for the online training course. She also had the unique opportunity to participate in the Global Forum on Youth & ICT (Information and Communication Technology) for Development held in Geneva, Switzerland and organised by the UN and the Global Alliance for ICT and Development. At the Forum, she was able to engage in discussions with young people, policy makers, technology leaders and others to explore ways of empowering young people to participate more fully in society through the appropriate and responsible use of ICT. In addition, Wendi was involved with a series of presentations at colleges and public spaces in and around Washington DC for the Sierra Club, an influential US-based grassroots organisation, that works on issues of population and environment. By making use of the National Youth Profile she had developed during the fellowship, Wendi was able to raise awareness in these presentations of issues affecting young people in her country, including the lack of access to sexual reproductive health information, education and services; continued gender inequalities in education, employment and other spheres of life; and harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting and breast ironing.

During her stay at the Cameroon Country Office, Wendi contributed to the strengthening of the AfriYAN national youth affiliate network and the popularisation of the African Youth Charter. She is created a map of youth-serving organisations in Cameroon to help the Country Office improve its youth programming. She was also involved in the appraisal of a project on condom vending machines in the country for which she

visited sites to assess their use and effectiveness. She also updated the UNFPA Cameroon website.

Life After SYP?

Wendi wants to continue advocating for youth in her country to have a voice in youth issues and influence policies affecting their lives. She especially wants to advocate for the most marginalised groups, such as orphans, disabled youth, street children and youths living with HIV/AIDS, and help them realise that they are important members of society.

Wendi wants UNFPA to know that...

I feel so proud and privileged to be part of UNFPA, and I am so amazed by the things I have learnt from the trainings we had. I can never stop thanking UNFPA for the opportunity of being part of SYP, which had developed a lot of hidden potentials in me, and I have learnt and shared a lot with my wonderful colleagues in the SYP team.

Wendi Comfort

I had the pleasure of attending a well-attended event in Washington, D.C. featuring Wendi Comfort, one of the UNFPA youth fellows, who did a wonderful job of talking about UNFPA, its commitment to youth and her work as a fellow. She was articulate, compelling, and delightful and it was exciting to see this young dynamic leader talking about the ICPD and UNFPA. What a great ambassador for UNFPA and youth worldwide. She made us proud!

UNFPA staff member based in Washington D.C.



Bachelor's degree in English from the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Vattana was involved as a programme assistant in the Health Sector Development Section of the Japan International Cooperation Agency. He also assisted in the administration and implementation of a project by the Italian Association for Aid to Children, working to improve the health and living conditions of orphaned children affected by HIV/AIDS and of children with disabilities. During his high school years, Vattana was a peer educator with the Youth Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia and provided his schoolmates and out-of-school youth with basic information on sexual and reproductive health and helped them access affordable and confidential health services.

Vattana Peong >>

AGE: *23

FROM: CAMBODIA

During Vattana's time at Headquarters, he has reviewed and analysed the Asia and Pacific regional programme from the perspective of UNFPA's Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth, and he has identified new areas where the organisation could intervene and make a difference for young people in the region. Vattana also developed a National Youth Profile of his country. His Profile takes into account different indicators such as education, health and employment, from which he developed a set of arguments to be used for advocacy purposes with policymakers in Cambodia. He also contributed to the work on Young People and Poverty Reduction Strategies, joining with Wendi to create a module on Costing and Budgeting for the online training course. On behalf of UNFPA and in collaboration with Kefilwe, he developed and conducted a workshop titled "My Health, My Right, My Life" at the 21st World Scout Jamboree in Chelmsford, UK, where more than 28,000 young people ages 14-17 came together.

During his Country Office fellowship, Vattana provided necessary support to cover UN joint youth activities such as the establishment of a Youth Advisory Panel for the entire United Nations Country Team (UNCT) consisting of all UN agencies that have country presence in Cambodia. For this, Vattana's task was to ensure the UNFPA perspective was reflected and that input from the youth members of the panel were sought in the areas of UNFPA's mandate. He is also gave support to a proposal for a National Youth Situation Analysis that the UNCT is going to conduct in Cambodia. The National Youth Profile that Vattana developed while at Headquarters was one of the documents feeding into this analysis.

Life after SYP?

Vattana plans to earn a master's degree in Public Health, while continuing to be a strong advocate for youth in his country and promoting young people's rights to participate fully in the social, cultural, political and economic life of Cambodia.

Vattana's thoughts on SYP...

Through SYP, I have had many opportunities to sit and work with adults who are the experts in different fields. I have learnt a lot from them, such as leadership, presentation and management skills, etc.. I believe that they have also learnt a lot from the fellows, in particular the perspective of young people. Comments and feedback from youth fellows were well welcomed and incorporated by the adults. Young people were provided with opportunities to express their opinions and to take a lead in a number of activities.

Vattana Peong

Vattana's unique perspective, enthusiasm and eagerness to learn was very uplifting. We definitely need a youth perspective in our programmes. He was very responsive to our views but defended his views when needed, by many times providing a very critical and realistic assessment.

Vattana's supervisor in UNFPA Headquarters

Vattana was very well prepared prior to starting his fellowship with the Country Office. His knowledge on youth Sexual and Reproductive Health was very strong as he could interact with the other youth at the advocacy events as well as during the face to face discussion in the field with relative ease. His technical contribution during the interaction with young people was highly appreciated. Additionally, Vattana's dynamic nature and commitment to learning new things contribute to the increased knowledge and skills in all the UNFPA key focus areas.

Vattana's supervisor in the UNFPA Cambodia Country Office



"At the beginning, the fellow often expressed what he sees without balancing the adults' sensitivity. After being explained and sensitised to the approaches in dealing with adults, the fellow gradually learned the cultural sensitivity adults often hold and could easily find ways to deal with by not being aggressive in his interaction. This was apparently confirmed by the fact that the fellow is liked and appreciated by all of the Country Office staff and the partner colleagues with whom the fellow interacted."

A UNFPA Country Office Supervisor

"My expectations about the programme have changed, since the beginning of my fellowship. I noticed that my role in UNFPA was more than only about learning and building my professional capacity and skills, but it is part of a bigger strategy of changing the organization's attitude and mindset towards young people and renewing itself."

Fellow

"For me SYP is a programme that recognizes and taps into the invaluable importance and rare, unwavering power and energy that young have. Through SYP UNFPA is fulfilling its mandate and "walking the talk" of involving young people. It's not just written in documents, they mean it!"

Fellow

"The contribution made by the fellow in bringing the youth perspective to UNFPA programme was highly valued and greatly appreciated. The fellow took active part in many initiatives and events related to young people. Those included the UNFPA support to the establishment of a country-level UN Youth Advisory Panel, contributing to the draft Terms of Reference for the national UN Youth Situation Analysis, and engaging with various partners."

A UNFPA Country Office supervisor

"We feel that in the past number of years, SYP has grown immensely and that UNFPA staff have become much more sensitized in working with young people. They now see the importance of including young people, a group that has always been marginalized."

UNFPA headquarters supervisor
and SYP coordinator





"You assembled a great team of fellows, with brains and high emotional intelligence. Having such a set of people does not rule out the possibility of arguments and disagreements and stepping on each other's toes, but we were able to pull it through and act in a professional way to resolve any challenges. I believe what we had between us, whether good or bad, made is who we are, it sharpened us, just like steel on steel."

Fellow



Bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Botswana in Gaborone. Kefilwe worked as a research assistant in local and regional studies on HIV and AIDS, child labour, migration and gender-based violence. She was also involved in a project for people living with HIV and worked as a health promotion assistant at her university conducting health talks with students and distributing condoms. In addition, Kefilwe worked at Sekgoma Memorial Hospital as a social worker and with Population Service International as a volunteer promoting the female condom. She is also the proud mother of a young son.

Kefilwe (Kefi) Koogotsitse >>

AGE: *24

FROM: BOTSWANA

Kefilwe was involved in the review of 45 Country Office annual reports on the status of national programming on HIV and Young People in Africa. She participated in the technical task team on gender-based violence (GBV), for which she studied issues of integrating GBV into HIV/AIDS policies, with an emphasis on adolescents and youth. She also participated in the team on Young People and PRSPs and produced the module on Monitoring & Evaluation as part of UNFPA's online course for young people to learn about PRS processes. Together with Nazim, Kefilwe made a presentation at the UN Secretariat for the Science Lab Project on Young People's Initiatives in Achieving the MDGs, which brought issues of youth sexual and reproductive health and gender in developing countries to the attention of the college students from various countries who attended the programme. With Vattana, Kefilwe represented UNFPA at the 21st World Scout Jamboree in Chelmsford, UK, which brought together tens of thousands of boy and girl scouts from all over the world. They organized and conducted daily workshops on issues such as sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, gender inequalities and health as a right of young people. Kefi also met with her President, H.E. Mr. Festus Mogae, while he was visiting New York to address the UN General Assembly. In this meeting, she was able to raise issues of gender inequality and the importance of young people's participation in all decisions that affect their lives.

Upon her return to Africa, Kefilwe attended a sub-regional conference on HIV and Sex Work in Maputo, Mozambique, where she was able to learn more about the higher economic vulnerabilities and limited opportunities that women, particularly young women, face and how they may have no other option than to sell their bodies, which increases their risk of HIV. At the Country Office, Kefi worked to strengthen the youth centres located in various districts in Botswana, as well as Botswana's Youth Council, by advocating for youth participation and involvement in policy dialogues

and programming. Also she contributed to a review of the National Operational Plan for Scaling up HIV Prevention in Botswana.

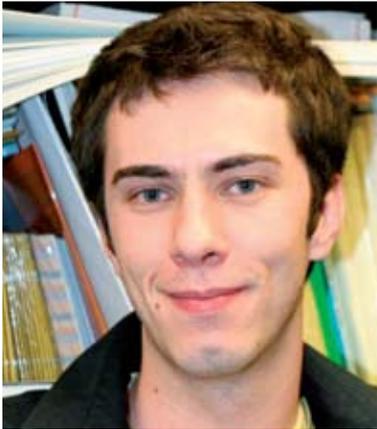
Life after SYP?

Upon completion of her fellowship, Kefilwe stayed on with the Country Office as a Youth Consultant to continue providing her support for the youth activities in Botswana. Kefi wants to influence a shift in people's thinking and make them see youth as equal partners, rather than merely as recipients of resources. Also she wants to pursue a master's degree in public health and would like to work in a developing country that needs more support than her own, especially on issues of young people.

What does Kefi think about SYP?

The fellowship has been an inspiration and a route to self discovery. I am glad I was part of the history of SYP and will cherish the moments. The mentoring was superb. But I also sincerely believe that fellows themselves have a lot of contribution. When it comes to fellow-supervisor relationship, we either make it or break it. The programme could have never been the same without the fellows: the lovely, great, amazingly skilled young fellows. They were equally great and I learnt a lot from all of them, either professionally or personally. That was a great team that UNFPA assembled there!

Kefilwe Koogotsitse



Student at the department for special education and rehabilitation at the University of Belgrade. Alex was involved as an outreach worker and counsellor for voluntary HIV testing with a local NGO called Safe Pulse for Youth. Alex was also actively involved in the UNFPA-supported Y-PEER project in Serbia. In addition, Aleksandar has been working on projects that aim to reach vulnerable and marginalised groups in his country and was a youth participant in the consultation process for adopting the national strategies for HIV and for Young People, Health and Development.

Aleksandar (Alex) Skundric >>

AGE: *23

FROM: SERBIA

At Headquarters, Alex has been involved in working for the Eastern Europe region on writing a draft of the Training for Trainers Manual for Peer Education among men having sex with men (MSM), a group vulnerable to HIV infection. For this, he helped review educational materials addressing the needs for peer education among MSM and collected and reviewed best practices and lessons learnt regarding outreach to this group. Alex also attended a workshop in Chicago that was conducted by MPowerment, a US-based NGO. MPowerment focuses on HIV prevention among young men who have sex with men, and the workshop brought together a number of specialists and NGOs working on this issue. In addition, Alex has provided extensive support to the Y-PEER network by managing and creating an electronic newsletter, assisting in the creation and updating of the network's websites and contributing to the development of a communication strategy for Y-PEER. Alex has also collaborated with a technical working group on Young People and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and is writing a National Youth Profile for his country.

For the second part of the fellowship in Serbia, Alex continued to be engaged in the Y-PEER network management. He is also contributed to the establishment of a Y-PEER regional centre that will serve as a training centre and technical backstopping office for the network and that will be based in his home city of Belgrade.

Life after SYP?

During his time at Headquarters, Alex has come to have a deeper understanding of youth-adult partnership and youth participation. Alex wants to continue to be a strong advocate for youth by representing them and working with different youth networks in Serbia. Alex also wishes to continue his education. In addition to pursuing his undergraduate degree in special education and rehabilitation, he has now

also enrolled at the Department for media and communications at the Singidunum University, Belgrade for which he was awarded a special scholarship grant.

Aleksandar's thoughts on the SYP experience...

Being able to help other people is a privilege in today's world. I guess that is the thing that I am most proud of--to being able to help others.

The Special Youth Programme is an exceptional example of how youth-adult partnership can empower young people to become active partners by giving them voice and supporting them in their role as agents of change.

Aleksandar (Alex) Skundric

What is Alex's dream?

Bringing together young people and those who are working on the issues that are closely related and directed to youth is a very important and challenging task. One needs to be persistent and work together as a team with the same goal: Improving ourselves and people that surround us, because everyone counts.

Aleksandar (Alex) Skundric



Bachelor's degree in social science from the University of Sierra Leone. During Sierra Leone's eleven years of war, Chernor was forced to flee his home and lived first as an Internally Displaced Person and later as a refugee. When he returned home, he became a child and youth activist, promoting children's and youth rights and playing a key role in the country's immediate post-conflict recovery efforts. He founded the Children's Forum, the first children's advocacy group in Sierra Leone. Chernor also interned with the Child Protection and Public Information Sections of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone and worked as junior executive producer of the UN Voice of Children Radio Project.

Chernor Abdulai Bah >>

AGE: *21

FROM: SIERRA LEONE

Chernor was the first fellow to be engaged in the work of UNFPA's Humanitarian Response Unit. During his time at Headquarters, Chernor has been exposed to a wide range of activities and has brought a unique insight to topics such as young people in emergency and transition situations. He arranged for a presentation at UNFPA Headquarters by his compatriot Ishmeal Beah, who wrote a book on his experiences as a child soldier during the conflict in Sierra Leone. The presentation raised the awareness of UNFPA staff of the special needs of young people in emergency and post-conflict settings. In addition, Chernor went on mission to Liberia to conduct focus group discussions with young people and to undertake a stakeholder analysis with the idea of developing a follow-up project proposal on adolescent Internally Displaced Persons. Chernor was also involved in working on issues of youth in emergency and post-conflict situations with other UN agencies representing UNFPA and in promoting reproductive health issues in such inter-agency initiatives. He has co-authored the Youth Report, "Will You Listen? Young Voices from Conflict Zones," that accompanied the ten-year review of the Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children. Chernor and a group of young people from conflict zones presented the report at a side event to the UN General Assembly on 17 October 2007. He lets us know that "co-authoring this report, which conveys the views, aspirations and demands of young people whose lives, like mine, have been affected by conflict, was an inspiring and fulfilling experience; and chairing the launching ceremony in front of members of the General Assembly was the icing on the cake."

At the end of his Headquarters fellowship, Chernor attended the Women Deliver Conference in London, UK, where he participated in a panel and spoke about his experiences as an IDP/Refugee as well as what he witnessed occurring with his mother and two sisters and how these experiences impacted their sexual and reproductive health. Following a short visit to his family in Sierra Leone, Chernor joined the UNFPA Liberia Country Office to support them in the follow-up work on the project on adolescent Internally Displaced Persons. He also prepared two concept notes for the Country Office: one on

the establishment of the Gender clubs in the various campuses to take the issues of gender and gender-based violence to the community and national levels, the other on the establishment of a UN Youth Advisory Panel in Liberia.

Life after SYP?

Upon completion of his fellowship with the Country Office, Chernor stayed on as a Youth Consultant to continue to support the country programme youth activities.

What does Chernor think about UNFPA?

I had so many doubts as to the extent of their commitment to actually allowing us to engage in and influence strategic decisions. But UNFPA has given value, in my view, to our participation and has overall been very serious about our strategic engagement.

Chernor Bah

Chernor arrived with a very good understanding of the mandate, mission, principles, policies and programmes of UNFPA which was very useful for the start of his fellowship here in the Country Office. He had been involved in some very important initiatives which were very much related to the context and nature of the work here. That provided him the orientation and preparation necessary for him to start on day one. The way he carried himself in a professional manner and his interpersonal skills with other staff suggested that he was well equipped for working in a professional environment. Chernor's contributions were extremely valuable. He brought about not only a youthful perspective, but a youthful outlook to our programmes. His presence and his interaction with the youth community here made our office the most youth friendly that it had ever been.

UNFPA Liberia Country Office representative



"Thanks for including us as youth. I am glad UNFPA is interested in us, because we are the people with the most needs and change is in our hands. We are indeed the pinnacle of change and the leaders of tomorrow."

Fellow

"Youth-adult partnerships are very important. Youth have a lot of information that needs to be developed and if exposed in the correct way, such as through participation in places where their ideas are taken into account, they will make the world a better place. My time with the SYP has equipped me with these tools and made me realize my hidden talents."

Fellow

"SYP has helped changing perceptions in UNFPA on how we work on issues of adolescents and youth. Young people are no longer seen as the problem, but rather as an integral and necessary part of the solution."

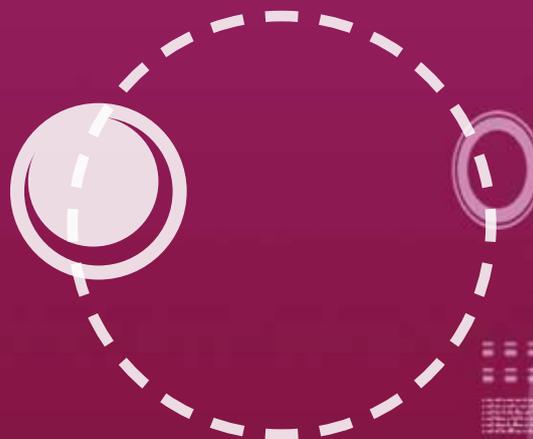
UNFPA Headquarters supervisor and Coordinator SYP

"It is a big challenge when everybody is looking at you with the expectation that one day you'll be a big personality. It is my dream to meet those expectations, but it's not easy and my experience with UNFPA Country Office is a concrete example. I am happy just because I successfully passed that step, and in looking back on that today, I know I still have many steps ahead to overcome."

Fellow

"SYP is the best opportunity to build capacity and test your own ability to really lead and be involved in true youth/adult partnership and I hope that for future fellows the SYP fellowship is as great-great-great times-a-bizillion-to-the-bizillionth power squared opportunity for them, as it was for me."

Fellow



UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every young woman, man, and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

UNFPA—because everyone counts.

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For more information about UNFPA's work on young people: youth@unfpa.org



SPECIAL YOUTH PROGRAMME REPORT



United Nations Population Fund
220 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017
U.S.A.
www.unfpa.org