YOUTH & international development
Offering my personal perspective as a youth entering the field of international development

Hoping to generate a discussion on youth engagement in north-based NGO’s and international development work

Talking about youth is nothing new to any of us but let's take a step beyond this

Envision new and dynamic ways of integrating a youth perspective

Look forward and rethink development work and our role within it as Canadians
Taking the future by stride

- The fact is that today’s generation of youth have the potential to take the future by stride

- More people under the age of 25 than ever before: 3 billion

- Nigeria: will youth become more precious than oil?
  - 43% of the population is under 16

- In general trends are changing: cities, better connected, armed with technology, 60% of urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030
A generation at risk?

- Youth have the potential but potential doesn’t equate action
- Today’s generation of youth will need guidance and assistance to contribute fully
- Despite much optimism, our generation has been coined a ‘generation at risk’
- 73 million youth worldwide are unemployed
- In the north, are youth the new underclass: overeducated & underpaid?
- Gap in unpaid internships to real jobs
- We must address this in order to channel the passion and talent of youth!
World Urban Forum Youth Caucus

- Very inspired by peers, highlight of week
- Generated great excitement and hope for our urban future!
- Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Nepal, Egypt
- Youth led process about youth led development, concrete ideas or action
- Vibrant, innovative, looking to a bigger, faster, brighter future!
- Made me think of the organizations I am involved with and the need to channel this energy!
Engaging youth

- How do we ensure youth like these have a place to flourish, a platform to make an impact?
- Imperative to consider youth as genuine partners, create real opportunities for them not tokenized involvements
- With this we need to look critically at our own organizations and re-envision how we can better engage youth
- Does your organizations vision integrate the needs and interests of young people? Do you currently work with young people to achieve your vision
- Intergenerational partnerships are feasible
Youth Engagement

- Easy not to engage youth:
  - Difficult to share power and responsibilities, especially with those less experienced, needing supervision, creates more work
  - Many organizations don’t have regular contact with youth
  - Not all organizations have a participatory framework for input
  - Expensive and time consuming
  - Tokenization, not willing to make youth a decoration
Youth Engagement

- Failures of youth in international development which make us question the ethics and benefits of their engagement
- What is the impact beyond the personal growth of volunteers?
- Volun‘tourism’ and consumer driven initiatives
- Kony 2012: gained international attention, viral overnight, lack of information, colonial and militaristic values
- Magnitude of Kony, spoke to youth, mobilized, social media
- A different paradigm is possible and the inexperience of youth can be positive if we create an important space for innovation
Concluding thoughts

- Like gender mainstreaming, youth mainstreaming can’t be an afterthought but a concrete priority.
- Landscape of the field of international development is shifting.
- Currently the industry and Canada’s role within it is limiting, colonial in nature, its effectiveness and motivations are often under scrutiny.
- What is the role for youth, for myself for any of us?
Concluding thoughts

- Beyond the potential of orgs in the room to transform to become more youth friendly we need to think of the big picture!
- CIDA merger as an opportunity to challenge the dynamics of the dominant paradigm of aid
- Is the current path the one to take?
- Creatively implicate youth and new strategies may emerge
Moving forward!

- Decolonizing peace framework of elicitive peacework and conflict transformation
- Transform organically, participatory not prescriptive, resources not recipients
- Youth involvement is part of my vision of this
- Potential in educational partnerships and exchanges; working to a common goal
- Critical self-reflection as a sound entry point for us as individuals