



Report by the International Youth Network for the StanCom meeting in October 2016

by Joshua Hofert, German Youth Delegate to the DC 2013
12 October 2016

Preliminary Remarks

The Delegate's Conference in 2013 was the first of its kind to include Youth Delegates as a distinguished group in the core international body of terre des hommes Germany. Having youth involved during the conference and its preparation has been widely perceived as an added value by other delegates as well as by the youths themselves. On the one hand, we as youth delegates added our own initiatives to the agenda, especially leading to the approval of the Global Action Month; on the other hand, we engaged in existing structures and discussions regarding strategic goals and focal themes. Following this second rationale, we greatly appreciated the approval of our motion to be represented in the Standing Committee as well.

Strategic Goal 1: Participation of Children and Youth

The International Youth Network (IYN) could be regarded as the embodiment of the first strategic goal. Each and every activity conducted by members of the IYN is related to participation as it is led by children and youth and/or as it promotes children's right to participation. Two main effects can be identified:

- (1) Given the fact that youths from all around the world shape and decide on what the IYN does, the activities become more targeted and reflect the actual needs and perspectives expressed by the youths. Recently, this was especially visible during the UN Day of General Discussion on Children's Rights and the Environment. The monthly web meetings of the IYN are usually joined by 5-10 active participants. Young people from some countries/regions are quite keen to participate (usually Central America, Southern Africa, South Asia), other regions commonly lack representation.

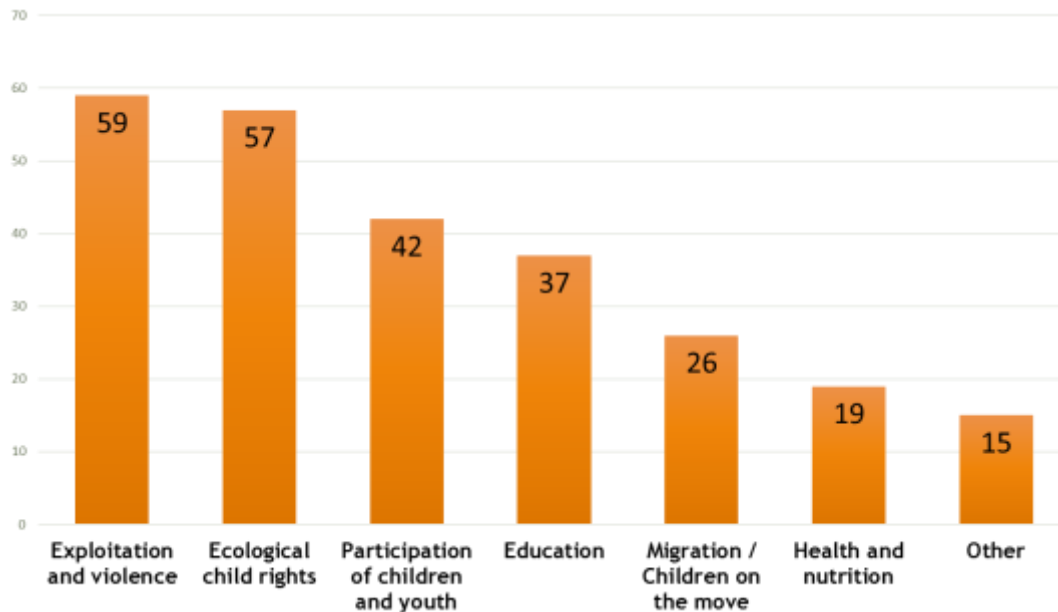
Comments: Whether the participation of youth from a certain region is high, depends largely on factors such as language abilities (English or Spanish or with interpretation), but also on the motivation and logistical support provided by the tdh coordination offices. The expectation that individual members of the IYN who participated in peer-to-peer activities in Germany or in international conferences would be more engaged in the IYN afterwards has only partially been fulfilled. In addition, we must be aware that many of the youths who are active in the IYN are rather well-educated young activists, some of which do not or no longer face the problems and child rights violations they advocate for themselves. As the IYN trickles down to regional and national networks, the group of children and youth involved becomes more diverse though.

- (2) The IYN has a big motivational effect on individual members. They feel that they are backed by an international community of peers which is usually highly encouraging. This effect has become especially evident among the contributors to the UN Day of General Discussion 2016 and to the recently published [Youth Call by the Destination Unknown Campaign on children on the move](#) which I coordinated as member of the DU Campaign.
- Comments:** The young people who engage in these kinds of activities are not necessarily beneficiaries of projects supported by tdh, but nevertheless feel connected to our work in a strong way. We should be aware of this highly positive effect of SG 1 - expanding and

multiplying our pioneer work concerning the participation of children and youth beyond our immediate range of projects and beneficiaries.

Strategic Goal 2: Spaces free from violence and exploitation

Many members of the IYN work on this issue - a recent poll on the topics for the Global Action Month (GAM) in 2016 and 2017 showed that the majority of the participants identified *Protection from violence and exploitation* as a key issue we should address (data as of 7 June 2016). As a result, it was appointed the global topic for GAM 2017 which also fits well to the 50th anniversary of tdh.



Strategic Goal 3: Ecological Child Rights

As the above chart reveals, the topic of ecological child rights is attached with a similar high level of importance. It was selected as the global topic for GAM 2016. Furthermore, upon an offer by the advocacy department of the tdh head office, the IYN decided to contribute to the UN Day of General Discussion on Children's Rights and the Environment on Sept. 23rd, 2016 in Geneva. Members of the IYN submitted short video sequences towards an international three-minute video to illustrate how children in all parts of the world are affected by environmental pollution and destruction impeding their health and perspectives for life. The clips also presented hands-on activities by children and youth to protect their immediate environment. With lots of positive feedback, the video was shown during the Day of General Discussion at the UN. Moreover, four children and youths from the IYN (Tom from Thailand, Ritu from India, Caleb from Zambia, and Gina from Colombia) attended and spoke during the opening session and the workshops of the conference in Geneva. Before the DGD, they informally met with members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child twice; Tom was invited to join a two-day meeting with John Knox, Special Rapporteur to the OHCHR on Human Rights and the Environment. In order to make the children and youths more confident and their input more targeted, the IYN provided a five-day training ahead of the DGD for them.

Comments: The strong and outstanding participation of children and youths at the Day of General Discussion was most certainly one of the most significant causes that led to the success of the conference. The DGD is only the very first step towards children's environmental rights being recognized on an international level, yet it put tdh in a pole position for future advocacy work

with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. On a policy level, we have made some important progress on our SG 3 and 4 through the UN Day of General Discussion.

Strategic Goal 4: Children's Rights in international politics

The activities by the IYN on SG 4 overlap with the report given for SG 3 (UN Day of General Discussion). Furthermore, the IYN has been involved in the Destination Unknown Campaign - with the Youth Call as mentioned under SG 1, but also with other activities and contributions. Through the DU Campaign youths are able to gain access to international fora like the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

Comments: Even in a large international campaign like Destination Unknown, the IYN of tdh Germany is perceived as a role model in terms of empowering and involving children and youth on an international level. Members of the TDHIF as well as other NGOs associated with the Destination Unknown Campaign have sought opportunities to exchange best practices with us. The GFMD 2017 will be chaired by the German government (BMZ and AA). It will be taking place in June 2017 in Berlin, which gives tdh various opportunities to get involved.

Focal themes

There have not been any systematic activities on the focal themes in the IYN which could be included in this section.

Global Action Month

The second Global Action Month in 2015 reached high popularity rates again - 128 activities were entered into the world map on www.gam-tdh.de. The GAM is gradually being established in the regions, recently booming especially in Southern Africa. Since the beginning of 2016, the preparations for GAM 2016 (Global topic: ecological child rights / Slogan "Let's talk future - for ecological child rights!") are in process.

The IYN has conducted a survey-based evaluation of the Global Action Month which will be available shortly and will function as a main source for the general evaluation of results in preparation for the DC 2018. Therefore, I am keeping this report rather short at this point.

Preparation of the IYN Youth Delegates for the DC 2018

The youth delegates for the fifth DC in 2018 will be elected within the respective regions by March 2017, at the latest. The first election will take place in November 2016 during the meeting of all children and youth groups in Germany.

From then on, there is a solid year left for preparation. This time frame was not managed ideally last time since having a group of youth from the IYN join the DC was unprecedented. Thus, the delegates only got in touch shortly before the conference, if at all, which made it difficult to work on the common motion and join the strategy debate as an own group of the Youth Delegates. Individually, some of the youth delegates were part of the preparations within their regional platforms, especially in Germany and South America.

Learning from our past experience we (especially referring to the coordination of the IYN) must establish a clear roadmap for the preparation of the youth delegates, including the following:

- The youth delegates should get to know each other shortly after the elections are over; they need to be familiarized with *terre des hommes*, the DC structure, their role, their responsibilities, and opportunities in the process. The delegates should understand that they are able to join the debate on the upcoming international strategy of tdh as well as introduce their own motions/inputs.
- If not already the case, the youth delegates should take an active role and become the new driving forces of the IYN. This means joining (and later leading) the monthly web meetings, as well as feeling responsible for coordinating activities on an international level and setting the agenda of the IYN as a “steering committee”.
- The youth delegates should be included in any meetings and communication related to other delegates’ preparation in their region. If necessary, special guidance by tdh staff should be provided.
- The delegates do not only attend the DC as individuals, but as representatives of their constituency. On a regional level, they should be supported as much as possible in receiving the inputs and perspectives of other children and youth from the region they represent (e.g. youth meetings, interviews, surveys, trips, etc.). Especially those youth delegates who advocate for the rights and the protection of children *on behalf* of children, but do not necessarily possess personal experience in this respect, should be encouraged to meet with affected children and youth in order to represent their actual views and needs.
- Of course, a face-to-face meeting of the youth delegates would be ideal at this point of the preparations to discuss potential motions and (joint) feedback regarding the strategy debate. While, for instance, the German delegates attend 3-4 face-to-face meetings ahead of the DC, the youth delegates cannot meet in person before June 2018 since that kind of a meeting would cost too much. Thus, suitable communication means which can be accessed equally by all delegates must be identified (social media, web meetings, mailing list, etc.). Translation/interpretation must be included by all means.
- Immediately ahead of the conference, the youth delegates should have at least one week to prepare once they are in Germany. If need be, inputs and motions can be finalized then. After the conference, at least one day should be set aside to exchange experiences, for evaluation, and to elect and brief the new youth representative to the StanCom.

Additional comments:

- Before the elections take place, the tdh staff in charge of the procedure in the respective region must convey clearly that applicants must be able and willing to invest time and energy before (and after) the actual meeting in Germany.
- Being appointed the official youth delegate of an entire region can in fact be very motivating. Delegates should be encouraged to see their function as a chance to exchange ideas with other children and youth from their region - as mentioned above.
- A special methodology must be developed to effectively include youth delegates in the strategic debates. As a large portion of the preparation has been text-based in the past, alternative methods should be sought for the youth delegates to participate.