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## UN agencies look to world's youth to find solutions to global problems



12 August 2010 – United Nations agencies, peacekeeping missions and officials around the world marked the start today of the International Year of Youth with concerts and public forums and a call to celebrate the potential of the next generation to solve the problems of today.

Speaking at the launch of the Year, as well as celebrations today for International Youth Day, senior UN officials said the estimated 1.2 billion people aged between 15 and 24 deserve greater attention from policymakers and governments.

"Young people have the energy and motivation to propose innovative solutions to today's global challenges and the aspiration and tools to build bridges of dialogue across cultures," UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) Director-General Irina Bokova said in a message marking International Youth Day, which is observed every 12 August.

She appealed for stepped-up public investment in youth, noting that the current global downturn has made the world more insecure for young people, especially those from vulnerable or marginalized groups.

"Youth policies that promote equity and directly engage young people must be strengthened," Ms. Bokova stressed. "Development assistance policies should be better geared to address youth's needs and concerns."

The World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) has enlisted young people in its campaign to end world hunger, with more than 1 billion people are currently chronically hungry.

"You are the generation that will end hunger," the agency's Executive Director, Josette Sheeran, said at a seminar in London last month. "In the future, we want our grandchildren to ask us what hunger and starvation were.

For its part, the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)) is hoping to employ the tremendous energy, imagination and initiative to promote peace and development.

The agency said that poor young people living in rural areas can help to feed the world's population as tomorrow's farmers and producers, but cautioned that they are also among the most vulnerable members of society.

"We should remember that these young women and men, with their hopes and dreams, hold our planet's future in their hands," IFAD President Kanayo F. Nwanze said. "Helping them gain access to investment and financial services means empowering them to start and expand businesses."

He pointed to unemployment as a major problem that youth face, stressing that underemployment and outright exploitation are often harsh facts of life for young people in rural areas.

"In order to make a real difference to the lives of these young women and men, governments and development agencies must invest in agriculture and boost economic growth in rural areas," Mr. Nwanze underscored, calling for increased resources for education, empowerment and access to finance.

The UN's peacekeeping missions are also getting involved in the launch of the International Year.

The joint UN-African Union mission in Darfur, known as [UNAMID](#), is organizing a concert for the youth of the war-ravaged Sudanese region. Entitled Together as One, the event will showcase the music of internationally-renowned Sudanese musicians Omar Ihsas and Nancy Ajaj.

Meanwhile in Timor-Leste, the UN mission there, [UNMIT](#), took part in the opening of a National Youth Forum allowing young Timorese to share their visions of the future and their aspirations for their country.

"This event is about you, your lives, your opportunities, hopes and dreams," Finn Reske-Nielsen, the acting Special Representative of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, told participants. "So, too, is the International Year of Youth. "Use these platforms well. I can assure you, the UN is listening and will hear your voices."

The UN first marked the International Year of Youth in 1985. A decade later, the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth, setting a policy framework and guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people.

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