

RELEASE IN FULL

From: McHale, Judith A <McHaleJA@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, June 4, 2011 6:10 AM
To: H
Cc: Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma
Subject: Dialogue with young African Leaders
Attachments: DWYAL One-Pager - HiRes.pdf; DWYAL - Powerpoint.ppt; DWYAL One-Pager - HiRes.pdf; DWYAL - Powerpoint.ppt

As the President's August 2010 Forum with Young African Leaders signaled, the youth population in Africa presents great challenges and opportunities. The Bureau of African Affairs and my office have worked closely over the last year to develop on-going U.S. engagement with young Africans in order to understand their perspectives, inform our programs and policies, and provide a platform to share young people's ideas and energy with African elites. Africa's youth will be heard, and we are using our convening power to provide focused, constructive fora for their voices. The attached PowerPoint slides and fact sheet outline our recent work on this front.

As part of this effort, we designated May as the month for concentrated programming and outreach to young people across the continent. U.S. embassy public affairs officers and their American and local staff responded with a remarkable range of creative and substantial engagement, producing more than 200 programs in 37 countries. The top themes were education, leadership, entrepreneurship, governance, science and technology. Social media engagement on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter complemented the hands-on, face-to-face programs. Peace Corps and USAID supported the programs, many of which included our chiefs of mission and other senior USG officials. I participated in a number of events in South Africa and Senegal on my recent trip. Many embassies partnered with local universities, media and civil society organizations to create and host the programs. Starting with the core group of delegates to the President's August 2010 Forum, our embassies expanded the network to include other young leaders, delegates to the AU Youth Summit, young Americans, alumni of State Department exchanges, and members of the African Diaspora. A lively discussion on the Africa Bureau's Facebook page generated more than 18,000 interactions among a group of which 55% were between 18 and 34. About 40 percent of that group was women.

I believe this region-wide approach provides a good model for similar initiatives elsewhere. It allows us to leverage our assets across multiple posts within a region, act as a convener across geo-political boundaries, maximizes our impact across a broad range of targeted demographic groups and sectors and generate significant media attention at relatively low cost. For example, while I was in South Africa I used our media hub in Pretoria to host a discussion group with women in media in Cape Town, Lusaka, Dar Es Salaam and Nairobi to discuss the role of women in journalism. The event received broad coverage in major media outlets in each of the participating countries. As a follow on our Posts helped establish an on-line platform so the participants could continue and expand the initiative.

The youth engagement programs initiated in May and earlier will continue. This work gives substance to the Department's Global Youth Strategy and encourages our embassies to continue to consider youth perspectives in all aspects of their work. The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act Forum now includes a youth element, as will your trip to Africa and the First Lady's trip later this month. By working with African institutions such as schools, the media, civil society, business associations, governments, and regional organizations, we raise the importance of listening to young people without making this a USG-only initiative that might provoke negative reactions. We have found great enthusiasm and openness among young Africans

to participate in our programs, and a strong sense that they are grateful for our efforts to give them a platform from which to speak and our willingness to listen. We will continue to engage young Africans and provide these opportunities for dialogue.

jm

<http://www.facebook.com/DOSAfricanAffairs>

