



International Development Student Partnership

Report on the 2007 U8 Annual Summit

Funded with assistance from the Reinvention Centre

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Abstract

The 2007 U8 Annual Summit held at Warwick University was a fantastic success in many ways. Over 130 students met for the summit weekend to collaborate on their research topics, finalising outcome recommendations on ten different issues. They were able to hear motivating experts speak such as Salil Shetty, Kingsley Moghalu, Professor Frankliyn Lisk and Professor Paul Collier and were welcomed to the University by the Vice-Chancellor. Other representatives from key development organisations were also present, as well as a selection of academics from Warwick University. All of the groups prepared drafted outcome documents, the finalised versions of which are due to be printed in the annual magazine shortly. The recommendations were of a very high standard and demonstrated the desire for students to actively engage with issues of international development.

Introduction

The U8 Student Partnership is a student-run global network which seeks to provide a platform for students from both the developed and developing world to engage with each other on issues of international development in order to stimulate new thought and innovation around the problems of development and underdevelopment.

The U8 aims to readdress the current structural power imbalance, where the G8 countries are able to set the agenda and determine global norms leaving developing countries no option but to follow suit and have no voice to be heard concerning decisions that directly affect them.

The U8 strives to achieve this aim by encouraging the promotion of global partnerships and global citizenship throughout our generation to ensure that development is high on the agenda of issues for the up-and-coming generation, that they favour a fairer world view, and that new, innovative approaches to improving development are encouraged.

The U8 aims to provide more than the possibility of discussion by having a research framework, to give student members a more tangible goal to work towards and to ensure that concrete outcome documents can be developed as proof of the work put in throughout the year. The research element allows the U8 to present these findings back to development stakeholders, securing an important voice for the student members and providing them with the opportunity to make an impact on current policy and action.

There is a great need for the U8 considering firstly, the failures of past and current attempts at international development to bring about satisfactory results for poorer countries, and secondly, because university partnerships are normally initiated from the departmental or academic level rather than from the students themselves, which enables the partnership to be more autonomous and flexible in its structure.

Our current member universities are:

1. Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia);
2. American University of Bulgaria;
3. Bristol;
4. Cambridge;
5. Cairo University (Egypt);

6. Freiburg (Germany);
7. Kyrgyz National University (Kyrgyzstan);
8. Leiden (Holland);
9. LSE;
10. Oxford;
11. Polytechnique (France)
12. Passau (Germany)
13. Royal Holloway;
14. Science Po;
15. Tribhuvan University;
16. Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Morelos (Mexico);
17. Utrecht (Holland);
18. Warwick;
19. Xavier Institute of Management (India)

We have set up groups (with a view to formal membership in 07-08) in:

1. Birmingham University;
2. Imperial College London;
3. Newcastle University;
4. School of African and Oriental Studies;
5. University of East Anglia;
6. University College London;
7. Upsalla University, Sweden;
8. Harvard, USA

Methodology

The course of the U8 follows an annual cycle of activities as illustrated below. The consultation process is an integral and original part of the research process and is the first step in starting off the year's cycle. The consultation took the form of a structured questionnaire. The questions were designed to be as open as possible as there was a strong desire to avoid placing any limits on the input that would influence our agenda for the year.

1. What are the key issues that you think we should consider researching?
2. Are there any relevant case studies that illustrate the importance of the topics you highlight?
3. Is there any information that will aid our groups to research these topics?

The questionnaire was then sent to governments, NGOs, private sector companies, academics and international organisations. Most of the forms were talked through, either in person or over the phone; approximately 40% were submitted in writing. Some individuals and institutions prioritised more than one aspect of development.

The profile of replies is as follows:

Number of Respondents	Sector and Area
4	Governments in more developed states

9	Governments in less developed states
11	NGOs in more developed states
2	NGOs in less developed states
5	Private Sector in more developed states
4	Private Sector in less developed states
49 (2)	Academics (and think tanks) in more developed states
5 (0)	Academics (and think tanks) in less developed states
5	International Organisations

The information was then processed by the 2 U8 presidents and Head of Communications, with oversight from a representative of each sector: Salil Shetty, Nkosana Moyo, A foreign embassy in London, Professor Diane Stone, Charles Abugre, Myles Wickstead and Simon Maxwell.

Weighting was given to each sector, ensuring that the inequality between the sectors in terms of quantity of response did not adversely skew the results. The results of this consultation gave the U8 a skeleton agenda to work from. Discussion within the U8 membership as well as with representatives from each sector added definition to produce the final agenda for the 2007 research groups.

For reasons of ease, and not through agreement of terms of reference, we have used the UNDP Human Development Index as a means of dividing developed and developing, using the barrier of 0.9 as the benchmark for developed country classification.

The U8 is organized through university groups that arrange and hold awareness raising events and fundraisers in their prospective universities. Each person in the university group is designated to a working group, the topic of which has been decided by the consultation process. The working groups operate online through forum discussion and debate and then meet at the summit to finalise their policy recommendations. In one of the sessions at the summit, a professional or expert in the particular field joined each working group to assist with directing debate and conversation to ensure that the recommendations would be of a high standard.

U8 Activities

Consultation Process	June- September
Finalised topics for research	September
Working Research Groups	September-March
Annual Summit	March
Outcome Magazine printed and distributed	April-May
University Awareness Campaigns	September- June (whole academic year)

The 2007 Summit itself followed the following pattern of events:

Summit Programme

Friday, 9th March

- 12am – 6pm arrival and allocation of accommodation
- 2pm-5pm Introduction (venue: Westwood Hall, Warwick Campus)

- o Welcome and introduction speech by Prof. Paul Collier
- o Overseas Development Institute Workshop
- 4.30pm-7-30pm 1st Working Group Session (Westwood Hall)
- 8pm dinner
- 9pm onwards: U8 Party (Graduate Club, Students Union)

Saturday, 10th March

- 10am-11:45am Working Group Session
- 11:45-1:15 Lunch
- 1.15pm-4.00pm Working Group Session
- 4.00-5.00 Reception in Mead Gallery, Address from Prof. Nigel Thrift
- 5pm-7.30pm Speakers Event (venue: Warwick Arts Centre, Theatre)
- 8pm-9pm dinner
- 9pm onwards: U8 party in Varsity

Sunday, 11th March

- 10am-11:45am Working Group Sessions
- 11:45am-1:15pm lunch
- 1:15pm-3pm Presentation of the working group outcomes, presented by the working group leaders (venue: Lecture Hall in Maths and Stats)
- 3pm Conclusion (speech by presidents)
- Departure of Delegations

Results

The research outcome documents are available in full on the website at <http://www.portalaid.eu/Pages.aspx?ppid=81&pid=128> and are due to be published in the outcome magazine shortly. Some groups had conflicting and opposing ideas with others but it was clear that member researchers had discovered a great deal about their particular subject and were able to talk in detail when recommending policy changes that might improve the effectiveness or lessen the inequalities currently present in that field.

Through preparing to host the summit and arranging the logistics of such an event, the Warwick team have come across many barriers and have learnt a great deal.

Firstly, there has been a certain degree of miscommunication between U8 delegations, mainly due to the limitations of using email as the primary communication tool. When dealing with needs for visiting delegations, a sense of cultural sensitivity was required.

The executive body has learnt that the U8 needs to further control and limit expectations of what the U8 can provide for its members. For example, the Ethiopian delegation were unable to get visas to attend the summit and felt enormously let down by this. The summit next year will remain a focal point of the annual activities but it is vital to ensure that people unable to attend, still feel fully involved in the decision making processes about the research conclusions.

Conclusion and Outcome

Many students undertaking the research found their involvement useful towards their degrees, or if the research was not linked to their discipline, U8 members were able to seize an opportunity to learn about and engage with vital issues as part of a wide-spanning

network of equally interested students. Many members have developed strong links and friendships since meeting each other face-to-face at the summit.

The speaker's event was a fantastic success, the Warwick Arts Centre Theatre was sold out and the expert speakers provided illuminating discussion that encouraged plenty of feedback and stimulation from the audience.

The magazine will be printed and distributed in the very near future to ensure that the outcomes of this year's research reach a wider global audience of both development stakeholders and students. This section should summarise the main conclusions of your research findings. Also add what you actually achieved throughout the project and reflect on the experience of undertaking research.

Supplementary Information

Here are a few photos from the Warwick Summit, for more information, including the detailed reports from each working group compiled at the summit, please see the website at www.u8development.org.uk









