

## WORLD SCOUT PARLIAMENTARY UNION - 1ST YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM

From the 20th to 27th July 2011, 31 Scouts from Cambodia, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Philippines, and Thailand participated in the 2nd KUDU Jamborette, which took place in Sangju, Korea.

During this cultural exchange program, these international Scouts took part in a group discussion centered on questions about youth participation in the decision making process in their respective countries.

### INITIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT PARLIAMENTARIANS IN PARTICIPANTS COUNTRIES

#### Do you know who is the youngest parliamentarian in your country?

##### Cambodia

The youngest parliamentarian in Cambodia is excellency Khim Lucky. He is currently 36 years old but he was 33 years old when he was elected in 2008.

##### Hong Kong

Unknown

##### Pakistan

Abduh Ghaffor – 37 years old

##### Philippines

Hon. Edcel C. Lagman, Secretary General of AFPPD

##### Thailand

Thailand's election commission was still being organized at the time the discussions took place. However, participants sent the following answer: *"Mr. Ekanat Prompan is the youngest parliamentarian in Thailand. He is 25 years and 2 months. A general election for 24th House of Representatives took place throughout Thailand on Sunday, 3 July 2011. With an overall turnout of 66%, populist. Pheu Thai Party won majority with 265 seats, with its leader Yingluck Shinawatra expected to become the first female prime minister in the history of Thailand. However, right now we still have to wait for the Election Commission to endorse all 358 successful election candidates"*.



#### Are there any existing structures, which give young people the possibility of participating in decisions in your country?

##### Cambodia

There are currently no structures, which give young people the possibility of participating in decisions, but we have a training course for young people to help them become leaders. Many

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Non-governmental Organizations are organizing these courses to prepare future leaders.



### Hong Kong

City Forum: young people can share their opinions with the government officers.

In HK, when a law is formally adopted, there is a “buffer time” which allows the citizens to give feedback. This is an opportunity where young people can also give their feedback.

There are also many NGOs, including the Scouts that offer some ways for youth to participate in decision-making, or at least given them so structures.

### Pakistan

A youth parliament and scouting are the existing structures in Pakistan.

### Philippines

In the Philippines, the government provides activities and programs that will help the youth. One example of this is scouting, because they include it in the curriculum of the students. They also provide support systems for the youth, the Sangguniang Kabataan (youth council).



### Thailand

Every school in Thailand have their own electoral process which obtains representation through all grades. This helps promote to school children the idea of participating in decision-making in school. Their representatives also will have a chance to participate in brain storming to give ideas to parliamentarians on what young people need. Additionally, we have a youth parliament. We select the representative from each province and then each province selects an elected adult parliamentarian, who will be responsible for listening to the youth’s opinion.



Moreover, the Thai government will also offer the chance to the Thai youth to take part in the constitutional reform.

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## Can you imagine a better system to encourage youth participation so that parliamentarians listen to young people and hear their opinion and ideas?

Some of the answers were quite fun and imaginative, such as:

★ <i>The government should build an internet forum for youth, to discuss current social issues of their country. It can be built by joining the intranet of the secondary school together to make a big network. Promotion of the internet is needed, the government should post advertisement on famous web sites, such as google, yahoo or Facebook</i>	★ <i>It is very important that before any policy which concerns youth is adopted, that the youth should have the opportunity of being informed about it, understand how it may affect them and have the possibility of providing some feedback</i>
★ <i>Recruit young people as poll workers</i>	★ <i>Hold mock elections in colleges and youth centers and provide outreach materials and support to schools on the electoral process</i>
★ <i>Parade and advertisement to encourage young people to vote</i>	★ <i>Forums which give the opportunity to youth to voice their opinion and have a discussion with officials is always a good idea</i>
★ <i>At the 18th birthday of each citizen, (or birthday of voting age in country) the government should send a birthday card to the new voter encouraging him/her to vote, while explaining why it is important</i>	★ <i>There needs to be programs which allow young people to talk about their ideas and the problems they face in society. Parliamentarians also need to understand why it is important that youth participate in decision-making</i>

## At what age can you vote in your country?

All countries have a voting age at 18 years old. However, it was 21 until recently in Pakistan.



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## OUTCOMES OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

**Are there any existing structures, which give young people the possibility of participating in decisions in your country?**

In Hong Kong, a forum is organized by the radio station RTHK that every citizen in Hong Kong can join, they can discuss about any policy in Hong Kong and it is customary for many students to join and participate in that program.



Most other countries knew of the existence of "Youth Parliaments", which let youth discover the work of parliamentarians.

In Philippines, there is an event which takes place one day each year which is called SOFAD Day, which stands for "Scout Official For a Day". During this special day, young people have the chance of taking the position of a judge, policeman, and other official positions, to experience what it is like and have the opportunity to better understand these public serving functions.

Cambodia's participants noted that there were no existing structures for participation of youth in decision making, however they added that many NGOs and other organizations were conducting training programs for young leaders.



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## Do you think that the government really wants youth to be involved in decision-making? Why?

Unfortunately, most groups felt that the government provides few programs for youth to express opinions. For example, in Hong Kong, they felt that the government does not want people born after 1980 disturbing the policies. In Pakistan and Cambodia, they felt that the government does not want youth to be involved in decision-making because they feel they lack the knowledge and experience to take informed decisions.

## Do you think that Scouting is a good way of preparing young people to take an active part in their society? if yes why?

Most groups agreed that Scouting was a good way for the preparation of young people, because Scouting gives them confidence, responsibility, it teaches many skills which they felt will be beneficial to them in society. Scouts are different from common civilians because they can help their society in a better manner.

### Why is scouting important to you?

★ <i>Scouts can work efficiently due to their high training and experience, which they've usually gained in scout gatherings, events and programs</i>	★ <i>Scouting brings me to places to discover and meet new people</i>
★ <i>Scouting is fun</i>	★ <i>It teaches young people how to do the hard work. When other young people live the easy way, they don't understand how some things require hard work.</i>
★ <i>It helps people learn more about themselves, about why they want to do things</i>	★ <i>Scouting strengthens my knowledge</i>
★ <i>Scouting is helping young people to practice their teamwork and teaches them to be prepared</i>	★ <i>Scouting prepares me for future professions</i>
★ <i>Scouting is important to us because it is a very major part of the society and plays an important role in the welfare of youth. It helps people of the world unite in one platform to remove any bad relations among them and share their cultures</i>	★ <i>Scouting includes different types of activities, which can help young people build up their confidence and help them to be alert about everything in their society</i>
★ <i>Scouting has improved my life</i>	★ <i>I feel closer to society</i>
★ <i>Scouting makes us brave and increases our knowledge</i>	★ <i>It provides me with new abilities</i>
★ <i>Scouting is a friendly partnership</i>	★ <i>I learn to better communicate</i>

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## Fears for the future

The participants discussed what were their main fears for the future and these were the most mentioned:

1. *Enrollment of job*
2. *Educational system (government provides insufficient support / two different education systems which spreads confusion and makes entering university harder)*
3. *Environmental problems*



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