

# We're here, but we're struggling to be heard

*“I hope to see a day when more organizations and individuals alike  
take initiatives to promote the provision of spaces for young people to  
share their voices.”*

Fathmath Yamaan Shuau



How unfortunate is it, that in this rapidly changing world young people are still struggling to be heard. To be understood. Often gaps between generations can divide us as one party struggles to relate to the other. These feelings of being misunderstood translate into loneliness and more often than not, depression.

Ever since I was a little girl, I have always been passionate about social work. I would spend many nights dreaming up ways to help people when I grow up. So, naturally it was a dream come true when I got the opportunity to join UNICEF Maldives as a volunteer. UNICEF accepted me as I am with open arms, and for the first time in my life I felt that my opinion mattered. My ideas were given the same importance as anyone else's. I was made to feel that I am also an important asset to the team that UNICEF is. Which, if anything, amplified my drive to work harder tenfold. Since I started to volunteer with UNICEF, I got to experience a great many things, the most profound of which would be the children's consultations held in Male' by the Ministry of Gender and Family, which was supported by UNICEF.

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I was pleasantly surprised to find that the consultations were conducted with a very diverse group of adolescents from different areas and backgrounds, which ranged from the children's shelter, schools, girl guides and those who have begun working. As a main criterion, the

children were provided a safe space to share their thoughts, opinions and concerns in regards to fulfilling the rights they are entitled to. Few tears were shed, but at the end of the day, our hearts were a lot lighter. These consultations provide us with an opportunity to share long held emotions and aspirations, particularly concerning our futures. With heartfelt gratitude, I thank UNICEF for providing us with this avenue where we would not be reprimanded or judged for voicing our thoughts.

Despite the Maldives being a fast-developing country, we are still struggling to cater for the needs of our youth. The failure to understand youth beyond a materialistic perspective is in my opinion, the main cause of this problem. The provision of a safe space is essential to enhance their growth and development. I hope to see a day when more organizations and individuals alike take initiatives to promote the provision of spaces for young people to share their voices.



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UNICEF Maldives *Yamaan helps the National Disaster Management Authority conduct an awareness raising session for students of Iskandar School.*