

Spring 2017

Nadine Clopton, a Lehigh University student studying Public Health, Political Science, and Sustainable Development, recently attended the 2017 ECOSOC Youth Forum in New York with the support of CLAN, a founding member of NCD Child. We recently had the chance to catch up with Nadine to hear about her experiences at the Youth Forum.

Get to know Nadine and other youth advocates by joining NCD Child [Youth Voices Connect](#), *an action-oriented online community connecting young advocates interested in the prevention and management of NCDs in young people.*



Perspectives from 2017 ECOSOC Youth Forum

"The most important thing you can do is to get out there and advocate for yourself and your organization."

Can you tell us a little about what the ECOSOC Youth Forum is about?

The Youth Forum is about making sure the youth voice comes through in agendas being pushed forward by the United Nations. This was my first time attending the ECOSOC Youth Forum, and I had the honor of being personally invited by ECOSOC Director-General, Navid Hanif.

Did the forum meet your expectations?

It was an incredible gathering of youth from every corner of the globe. I was expecting it to mostly be larger meetings where we would listen rather than participate. However, there were breakout sessions each day that allowed the personal voices of people working on specific [SDGs](#) and in specific regions to be heard. The consensus at the forum was that



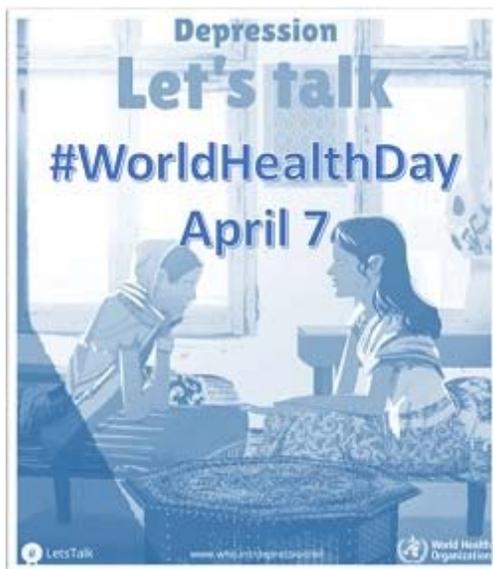
Was there a specific section or talk that inspired or activated you to do more?

I was very moved by the recurring theme of treating the SDGs as a social contract and ensuring that we are all working to reach the

youth, despite these many conferences, are still given watered down versions of the big problems at hand and are often tokenized. Overall, the forum was a fantastic opportunity to network with organizations and governments around the world.

Tell me more about this idea of tokenized participation of young people. Where have you seen it, and how did this forum avoid it?

While the forum is a great space for youth to come together, it oftentimes felt as if youth were still not being heard as equals. Panels often consisted of older people with one or two youth on the panel, which was something all attendees took note of. At the UN, oftentimes you will hear people (none of which being youth) speaking about current issues facing youth. The fundamental message that came out of this conference was that it is critical for youth to be included and at the forefront of the initiatives to tackle the SDGs. Youth will be the next leaders of the world and it is imperative for youth to have a say in what that world looks like. This forum brought to light issues of exclusion and the need for youth voices to be taken seriously and treated as a fundamental key to policy and achieving the SDGs.



most marginalized, underrepresented parts of society. Even with grand-scale plans such as the SDGs, people are still left behind. This concept made me think more about how to engage these communities and make sure that the SDGs are for them too, not just for those easier to reach communities.

If you were meeting with an aspiring young advocate, what advice would you give him or her?

Make changes, not excuses. The most important thing you can do is to get out there and advocate for yourself and your organization. The best thing you can do in situations like larger UN meetings is to sit in between two people you don't know and just talk to them. I have found that some of the best partnerships I've created have just started with saying "hello" to the person sitting next to me. Being young at the UN (or WHO or any organization) is an asset. People always are interested in hearing your story, why you are there, and who you are representing. Oftentimes this leads to wonderful conversations, even friendships. Opportunities will pop up, jump at them and make the most of them!

#WHA70

The [70th World Health Assembly](#) is scheduled for May 22-31--progress in meeting the NCD targets will be discussed. NCD Child and partners will be hosting a side event on 'Better Medicines for Children,' on May 23 at 8:00am. Send us an [email](#) if for additional details if you plan to be in Geneva that week.



NCD Child

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