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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am Essa Al-Mannai, from Reach Out To Asia (ROTA), a not-for-profit organisation based in the Qatar Foundation, that focuses on providing quality education for needy communities around Asia. In Qatar, our focus is on youth community service volunteers. It has been really interesting to hear my colleagues on the panel talking about the world today and how technology is really erupting. In addition, drones are available to everyone, but also how information is changing cities as smart cities, but also education and how education is evolving. My input in this session is about the people. How about the people who are going to live within these cities? A number of years from now, when we are old and need someone to push us in a wheelchair, how about that person? Who is he or she and how engaged are they in shaping that world?

I am going to talk about youth and, since we are talking about governance and policies, I will refer to the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. Reach Out To Asia supported and implemented and coordinated the youth consultation and heard their voice about how the education system should be involved.

The youth voiced their opinions and out of it came the Doha Declaration on reshaping humanitarian work, the humanitarian system putting youth at the centre of humanitarian work. This is available online if you look for it and it was discussed by a high-level panel at the Humanitarian Summit. From the Declaration, itself, we can hear that the youth are asking to be not just on the other side of the table as the recipient of the humanitarian work but to have an active, engaged, responsible player within the process itself, from putting the policies in place, preparedness, response, recovery, monitoring and evaluation, and the full spectrum of the process. In addition to engaging the young people, youth provide a unique perspective and insight, since they are more responsive to fast-evolving systems.

My colleagues on the panel have talked about how fast the world is changing around us, when it comes to technology and all the things that are becoming parts of our daily lives. Looking from the perspective of an NGO, how did we make it this far? How do we engage and govern youth programmes in our work? Looking at youth programmes, we realised that we should not just provide services and programs, when the best way to engage youth is to get them to serve youth. The youth should be the ones leading the processes. Within governance, ownership is a key thing when it comes to youth engagement. Therefore, we have a ROTA Youth Advisory Board for actively engaged teen members as the ones who will say which programmes they want, what these programmes should look like, and who should be engaged, and how the programme looks. By starting the loop with a leadership training programme, which equips them with the knowledge skills and toolkits they need on the nature of community service and global citizenship, and how the world is changing. From knowledge, we move to action in the form of the ROTA youth service clubs, where after this training for 40 people, they are divided between the clubs, each one of which has a main mission, an idea or programme based on their community service objective. We then have knowledge and action, to which we add advocacy. Advocacy can be more to do with voicing the changes they want to make, through an annual conference called 'Empower', which they can attend to discuss and learn from each other. We also have United Nations General Assembly Taskforces, advocacy taskforces, and side events that will help them to come to those international platforms and see and share the change themselves.

The ROTA Youth Advisory Board also takes into account gender equality but also provides leadership training. The United Nations defines youth as the age of 15 to 25; with Reach Out To Asia we stretch that a little bit, with from 15 to 30. Looking around the room, I wonder if we have anyone that age here. Okay, maybe 15 to 30? We have four people in that age group in the room, only four, and we are talking about international governance. Youth is the heart,



not a number of age. The eye-opening thing for us here is that we are talking about how the world is changing but those who are going to live in it are not here in the room. This is what the Declaration is about, including them as responsible, committed citizens who will be able and responsible in shaping that world. We started the Empower conference small but now, after nine years, it has expanded from being regional to going international. There are also youth delegates at the United Nations General Assembly.

Talking about that and, apart from our programmes, governance has to be based on a very strong monitoring and evaluation framework, with which youth have to be engaged. Monitoring and evaluation is not just a checklist; it is a lengthy process that requires true ownership and engagement from all the stakeholders, from planning the results to collecting the data; data quality assurance; analysing and storing data; reporting the results; using the data for advocacy, PR and media; to evaluation and disseminating the results. One of the lessons that we have learned is that my team and I can do almost the minimum when it comes to our youth programmes. Within our Empower conference, the registration is done through a committee and an interview panel who have been trained in interview skills and who interview the youth; they are the ones who say who comes to the conference and who does not. That boosts the energy and the ownership of the conference. We even give our Twitter and Instagram accounts to our youth media panel and our last three conferences have trended internationally, sometimes even going to number one trending topic worldwide. We even did better than Lady Gaga, can you imagine that? It is only through the power of youth that you can showcase this ownership but also advocacy and shaping their voice on how they want to see the world. It did not happen overnight. It started with our strategy of asking how we wanted this engagement to look and then the early years of Empower, which we developed with a small, dedicated youth team, who then took over ownership and mobilisation of these programmes. After four years of the Empower conference, leading to a youth advocacy campaign, holding the consultation conference here in Doha, taking it back to Istanbul and now the conference is in a much better shape.

Finally, proper planning and more youth engagement. We have moved on from each Empower conference from 2012 and 2014 to the Inter-Governmental negotiations that took place in 2015 in New York and then the first week in September, holding the consultation here in Doha and then another Empower conference, where the Youth Advocacy Taskforce continued its work. Then they went together to Istanbul, attending the high-level session, then coming back to another Empower session and now there is discussion about what is going to happen after the World Humanitarian Summit. These are some of the lessons we have learned from our programmes as we move forward. We also have some handouts for anyone who wants to take a copy, showing our governance structure and, in parallel with it, our monitoring and evaluation. I will end with the main lesson that we have learned about youth engagement. Basically, it is true belief in youth as the owners of their programmes, along with true engagement, and with engagement comes ownership and with ownership comes sustainability.