

2011 IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings

CSOs and Youth Leaders Fellowship

Samar Mezghanni, a Tunisian writer, and one of ten youth leaders invited to the 2011 Spring Meetings, reflects on her experience.

In her own words...

When I first received an invitation for the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Spring Meetings, my friends said I should not open the e-mail because it is probably a spam. My family said I should check the source of the invitation and investigate the reason behind it before accepting it. My tutors said this is weird.

It seemed like everyone was sceptical about the fact that the International Monetary Fund could be genuinely inviting young people to this important event.

With a lot of curiosity, I travelled to Washington D.C. hoping to reunite the puzzling ideas in my head about this meeting and these institutions. And as I gazed through the plane's window into the vast lands of America, I threw some of these prejudices in the rivers.

Yet, I couldn't resist asking the organizers on the first day about the aims, reasons and processes behind my selection and participation in this event. The answer was simple: You were nominated through our network of institutions and organizations, to participate in the civil society program, aiming to bring young leaders in the Spring Meetings activities to discuss global development issues and Bank and Fund programs with their staff.

For a while, I thought we would be meeting some of the staff working in specific departments of these institutions. I thought we would probably meet few people who would lecture us in specific topics and thank us for accepting

the invitation. And at the end, we would thank them for inviting us and go back Home. Isn't it the same protocol we got used to?

I did not expect instead, that I will be given the opportunity to meet the managing director of the International Monetary Fund and its executive directors, the Vice presidents of the World Bank and many of the staff working in both institutions and coming from all corners of the world, and challenge them with questions, demands and critiques.

That diversity of countries, positions, ideas highlighted to me a more complex diversity of opinions within the International Monetary Fund itself; where people are not only looking at their work with a critical eye, but are also asking civil society organizations and youth leaders to give them feedback, to suggest solutions and to cooperate for a better communication and a deeper insight of the needs of the people, specially in our Arab region, where recently people started to matter!

Throughout my journey in this event, the search for simplicity in the complications of everything surrounding the country, the institutions, the event, the agenda was my main concern and personal purpose: the simple furniture of complicated buildings, the simple interactions in a complicated environment, the simple mission in a complicated way, the simple data in a complicated language, the simple people in complicated titles.

But even with all those complications, I was able to touch upon the truth that is usually hiding behind them. A serious attempt to hear the voice of Civil Society, to reach the people and to integrate youth ideas in the International Monetary Fund programs is undertaken, challenged by our perceptions and representations of the international community.

Samar Samir Mezghanni

April 2011