

# Youth-Led Action in an International Context

## Major Project Report



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**MAJOR PROJECT REPORT**

“Youth-Led Action in an International Context”

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Last but not least, I'd like to thank my family members, especially my brother and sister Joseph and Nicole, for their friendship, and Mom and Dad, for encouraging me to pursue my interests through educational and learning opportunities.

*"Most of all - never give up during the struggle."  
(Research Participant)*

## Foreword

This major project research report, focused on Youth-Led Action in an International Context, has combined outcomes from an online survey, online consultation, and individual in-depth interviews with young people who have taken action to address challenges facing their communities in countries around the world. It responds to core questions in my Plan of Study that look at issues of concern to youth in a cross-cultural context and youth-led initiatives as a strategy for meaningful youth engagement.

The youth who took part as participants in this research, who come from all regions of the world, were primarily reached through the Internet. They assisted in the process of updating a "Framework for Action", which was developed based on the work of TakingITGlobal and other youth organizations that aim to support youth-led development. The updated version created by this project will be shared with various networks of youth organizers to further support their work.

The diverse sources of data gathered for this research led to insights relating to youth leadership in this era, as well as assisting in an understanding of the contextual factors influencing the ability for youth to act.

This report also provides recommendations and insights into how to more effectively support youth-led action.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.0 - Background and Objective

If young people believed that they had the capacity to contribute to the world in a significant way - would they take advantage of that opportunity? All generations interpret the idea of youth differently. Many associate 'youth' with a sense of innocence and naivety, while others connect youth with a sense of rebellion and experimentation. Movements of both oppression and liberation have been fuelled by the energy and dynamism of youth. This paper explores the potential of youth as agents of change. It reflects the findings of a research process which studies youth-led action as a strategy for strengthening young people's ability to develop themselves, their communities and contribute to society at large.

Assumptions that are tested throughout this report connect to the idea of youth being in a position of both vulnerability and high potential. While in a transitional life stage from being dependents to being independent, youth need access to opportunities, a sense of belonging, and experiences that foster personal growth and development. Youth are often known for having a sense of idealism and hope for the future. If this mindset is not nurtured throughout adolescence, it runs the risk of being lost. At the same time, if youth are not exposed to the complex realities of the world, they will not be prepared to face the challenges that lie ahead. Youth need support that encourages them to think for themselves, engage with issues of concern, and act in ways that allow for ongoing reflection, adaptation and learning. Youth also need to be both supported and challenged as they struggle through the process of taking responsibility for their own lives and the future that they have the capacity to shape.

The objective of this Major Project has been to combine both research and action in attempt to better understand the characteristics of youth leadership in this era and how it can be made more effective. The research process involved conducting an online survey and consultation among youth leaders who are working to create change in a variety of ways, such as raising awareness about an issue of importance through youth advocacy and youth-led development projects. This was followed by a series of in-depth interviews with selected youth leaders from different regions of the world. The process was designed to provide a capacity-building experience for participants as well as to inform the development of a "Framework for Action" that will contribute to the creation of a new version of a *Guide to Action* (TakingITGlobal-2003), an existing publication and toolkit for youth interested in organizing projects. The new *Guide to Action* will draw from the diverse range of experiences shared by research participants and build upon a range of action guides that have been developed to support youth leaders. One of the major flaws with existing tools, guidebooks and resources, which are created to support youth leaders globally, is that there are few detailed case studies and examples of what young people are doing across diverse contexts. There is limited appreciation or acknowledgement of the diversity in barriers and challenges that young people face, which severely limits our sources of knowledge in this area. By engaging in this research, my intention has been to connect with a diverse range of stories and perspectives in order to gain insight on a broader range of challenges currently faced by youth.

The new *Guide to Action* which emerges from the work of this project, specifically the updated "Framework for Action", will be used by TakingITGlobal (TIG), a non-profit organization that supports youth globally through online tools and resources. TakingITGlobal has a network of socially-aware young people, and offers



programs in the areas of youth expression, action, education, and collaboration. Appendix 6 provides a full overview of TakingITGlobal's program areas. Once complete, the new Action Guide will be distributed throughout TIG's network of over 100,000 youth in over 200 countries in an effort to contribute to a culture of youth-led action and engagement globally. TakingITGlobal adds an important operational aspect of this project as it is the setting where the concepts and insights developed as part of this research process can be applied. The research itself is also dependant on TakingITGlobal's network, and technology such as the online survey and discussion forums.

As one of the co-founders of TakingITGlobal, which was started when I was 19, my motivations for this research are rooted in a desire to gain a deeper understanding of the broader context for our work, as well as to have a concrete outcome that would directly benefit the organization and thousands of youth in our networks. Given my position as a young person leading a range of projects and initiatives, I am often in situations where I am asked about what is involved in transforming ideas and concerns into actions. Several years ago, I worked with our team at TakingITGlobal to develop a *Guide to Action* which was shared with students across Canada, as well as being used as a tool in leadership workshops with youth who want to take action on an issue they care about. In recent years, I have come to realize some of the limitations of our Guide and how it could benefit from other existing and emerging youth action guides, as well as directly from the experiences and insights from other youth leaders around the world. Once updated, the "Framework for Action" from this report will be used by TakingITGlobal to update the *Guide to Action*, in a way that is inclusive and influenced by the people it is intended to support. I hope to contribute to a growing

movement of youth who are become actively engaged in their communities around the world.

### 1.1 - Defining Youth

The definition of youth often changes based on the organization, context and objectives of the classification. Both the United Nations and the Government of Canada typically define youth as persons aged 15 to 24 years; however both groups have instances where the definition of youth includes persons up to 30 years of age. For example, the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy (HRSDC -2005) defines youth up to and including 30 years of age, and many UN Agencies who hold youth conferences or facilitate youth advisory groups are inclusive of a definition up to 30, with an example being the UNESCO Youth Forum. As explained in *Empowering Youth through National Policies*, a universally understood concept of youth is one that is transitional. "That means youth is viewed as a very specific stage between childhood and adulthood, when people have to negotiate a complex interplay of both personal and socio-economic changes in order to manoeuvre the 'transition' from dependence to independence, take effective control of their own lives and assume social commitments" (UNESCO-2004: 4).

For the purposes of this study, a *young leader* has been defined as someone between the ages of 16 - 26, who has initiated an effort to affect change in their community through the engagement of youth (which can be defined as local, national and/or global), either as part of an institution or outside of formal institutions.

### 1.2 - Context of Youth Participation

Programs and initiatives that are designed to empower and engage youth have a common set of assumptions and beliefs about the importance of youth participation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations-1999) affirms the right of

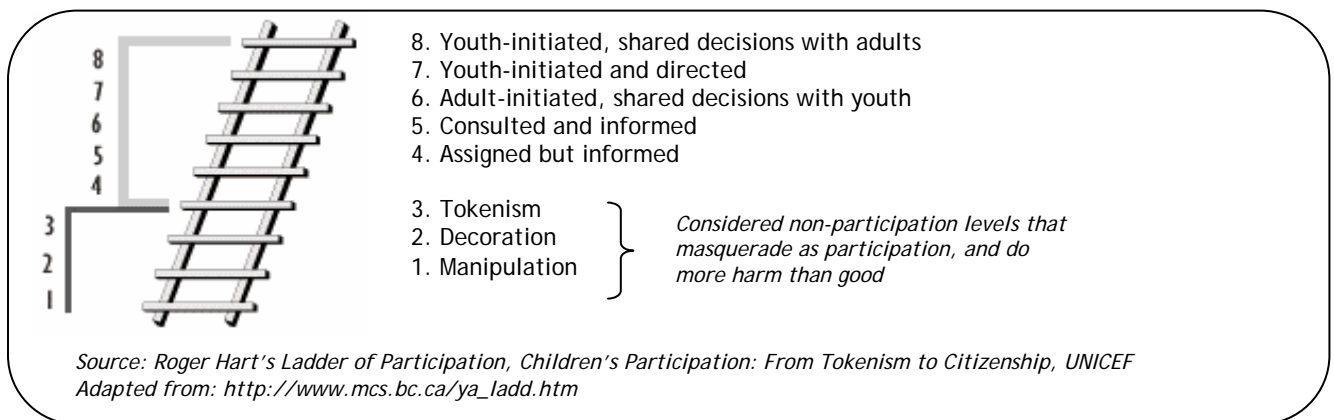
youth to participate in decisions that affect them. Participation and involvement supports young people in developing capacities and skills that they can carry through the rest of their lives. Tufts University's Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development has defined the attributes of positive youth development that need to be fostered in order to support youth in making a contribution to the community. The attributes of positive youth development that the model outlines are Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring/Compassion, leading to Contribution (Lerner-2004). In developing each of these capacities, individual youth are able to benefit in ways that allow the community to grow and flourish. This paradigm of thinking does not view youth as problems to be managed, but rather resources to be developed. These attributes provide a helpful framework, but do not look beyond individual characteristics to the social environment required for youth to be able to effectively contribute.

The Search Institute has identified 40 developmental assets, both internal and external, that are increasingly used by youth service organizations as a framework for helping "young people grow up healthy, caring and responsible" (Search Institute-2004). Assets are grouped in eight categories: Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, Constructive Use of Time, Commitment to Learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies and Positive Identity. Having an asset-based approach contributes to growing healthy communities through increased youth engagement.

A growing body of research demonstrates that youth participation reduces the likelihood of risky behaviour while enhancing overall societal health. Roger Hart, who produced UNICEF's handbook on children's participation in community development, discussed a Ladder of Participation, which provides a model of thinking about youth

participation and describes various levels ranging from manipulation and tokenism to youth-initiated and directed (Hart-1992).

Hart's ladder of participation is based on the earlier work of Shelly Arnstein who developed a ladder of citizen participation that also includes 8 steps and provides an analysis of power relations in participation. The lowest levels, which involve manipulation and therapy, are considered to be non-participative. Providing information about citizen rights and responsibilities is considered to be a first step towards participation, but still reflects a degree of tokenism. The highest form of participation is citizen control, which involves full delegation of all decision-making and action. This model highlights the "critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process" (Arnstein-1969).



Given that the highest form of youth-participation in Hart's model is seen as youth-initiated, it makes sense that so many organizations are trying to increase and support youth-led action. With the focus of my research on youth-led action in an international context, my aim is to better understand and develop insights to further enable youth participation in its highest forms.

During 2005, the United Nations conducted a review of the World Programme of Action for Youth, a declaration the world's governments committed to in 1995. The declaration outlined the importance of ensuring meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes and encouraged governments, UN agencies and non-profit organizations to improve their youth engagement activities. This commitment, made at a policy level internationally, was designed to help create a context whereby young people can gain a voice and contribute to improving their communities.

*The World Programme proposes action to:*

- Develop and strengthen opportunities for youth to learn their rights and responsibilities.
- Promote the social, political, developmental and environmental participation of young people, and remove obstacles that affect their full contribution to society.
- Encourage youth associations and their activities through financial, educational and technical support.
- Foster national, regional and international cooperation and exchange between youth organizations.
- Strengthen the involvement of young people in international forums, for example by considering the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the United Nations General Assembly.

(United Nations-1996: <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm>)

In the past few years many international youth conferences have been held:

| Event Name              | Date         | Location             | Organizer           |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Youth Employment Summit | 2002, 03, 04 | Egypt, India, Mexico | Edu. Dev. Centre    |
| Intl. Youth Parliament  | 2001/2004    | Sydney, Australia    | Oxfam               |
| UNESCO Youth Forum      | 2003/2005    | Paris, France        | UNESCO              |
| World Youth Congress    | 1999         | Honolulu, Hawaii     | Peace Child Intl.   |
|                         | 2003         | Casablanca, Morocco  |                     |
|                         | 2005         | Stirling, Scotland   |                     |
| THUMUN Youth Assembly   | Yearly       | The Hague, Neth.     | THIMUN              |
| UN World Youth Forum    | 2001         | Dakar, Senegal       | United Nations      |
| Telecom Youth Forum     | Yearly       | Various              | Intl. Telecom Union |

These events have brought young people from different parts of the world together to discuss issues of importance and develop action plans. They have also helped further catalyze and showcase youth-led action by bringing people together in a physical setting. The online survey conducted as part of this study involved youth who have been participants in some of the above mentioned conferences. Many initiatives have also been developed to bring youth together and strengthen their capacity through an online setting:

| Organization                              | Web Site           | Location          |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| World Bank's Youthink                     | Youthink.net       | Washington, DC    |
| Save the Children's Youthnoise            | Youthnoise.com     | San Francisco, CA |
| Global Kids                               | Globalkids.org     | New York, NY      |
| Intl. Youth Foundation's Youth Action Net | Youthactionnet.org | Baltimore, MD     |
| MIT Media Lab's Nation1                   | Nation1.net (down) | Boston, MA        |
| TakingITGlobal                            | TakingITGlobal.org | Toronto, ON       |
| UNICEF's Voices of Youth                  | UNICEF.org/voy/    | New York, NY      |
| Do Something                              | Dosomething.org    | New York, NY      |
| ThinkMTV                                  | mtv.com/thinkmtv   | New York, NY      |

It is important to note that the internet has played a critical role in allowing youth to gain access to information and resources, which have increased opportunities for self-empowerment.

This particular generation of youth who are growing up with access to new technologies, particularly the internet, are uniquely able to participate as a result of their rapid adoption and understanding of an innovation central to society.

*Why focus on these late teens and twentysomethings? Because they are the first young who are both in a position to change the world, and are*

*actually doing so. Babies, toddlers and children up to their teens are largely creations of their environment...The young are moving from the shadows to the spotlight in the workplace, thanks to a convergence of forces that play to youth's strength—from technology to the pace of change to the tearing down of the traditional corporate order.*  
(Anderson, 2000)

A very influential thought-leader that highlights the important role of young people in the context of the information society is Don Tapscott, author of *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation* (1998). In his book, Tapscott highlights the influential nature of this generation of young people which exists as a result of the access that they have through the internet. "They have new powerful tools for inquiry, analysis, self-expression, influence and play. They have unprecedented mobility. They are shrinking the planet in ways their parents could never imagine." (Tapscott, 1998: 3). Young people tend to be the early adopters of new technologies that are introduced and as a result, are increasingly in positions of authority, offering support, expertise and training to older generations. International decision-making processes are increasingly acknowledging the importance of engaging youth as leaders of the information society. "We recognize that young people are the future workforce and leading creators and earliest adopters of ICTs. They must therefore be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers (UN World Summit on the Information Society Declaration of Principles-2003: Paragraph 11)."

### **1.3 - Personal Background**

My experiences as a young person growing up with access to a range of leadership and learning opportunities has influenced my perspectives on this research. Throughout my years in high school, I volunteered at a range of organizations including the Kortright Centre for Conservation, the McMichael Canadian Art Gallery, and the local Food Bank as part of my required community service hours. In each position, I

was able to further understand both the needs in my community, as well as how I could contribute towards addressing them. The mandatory community service hours, that I was required to fulfill in order to graduate high school, catalyzed my involvement in the community led me to become a more involved citizen and connected me to broader opportunities to have an impact, such as joining the City of Vaughan Youth Advisory Council. I also took part in several national conferences on youth leadership, child poverty in Canada, and conflict resolution. In parallel to these experiences, I became increasingly aware of how technology can further enable youth awareness and action. At the age of 17, I was hired to develop a website for girls about the contribution that Canadian women have made throughout history ([www.coolgirls.net](http://www.coolgirls.net)), and also helped to run a program to encourage girls to use technology. I became exposed to numerous projects and instances where youth were using technology to strengthen social movements, start their own businesses, and become self-empowered.

By the age of 19, I was determined to find a way to help more young people learn about and have access to learning experiences that would allow for skill building, cross-cultural understanding, and engagement in social and environmental issues. While brainstorming ideas with a friend, the vision of TakingITGlobal was developed. The concept of creating a global platform, resource and network to support youth dialogue, expression, and action has evolved into one of the world's leading youth organizations with a website that receives over 1 million hits each day.

#### **1.4 - Action Research / Praxis Approach**

Action Research methodology has informed and heavily influenced the design of this research process and is a defining feature of the work of TakingITGlobal. "It is a process that supports the voices from the margins in speaking, analyzing, building



alliances and taking action.” (Hall-1992: 22) The TakingITGlobal.org online community provides a web-based platform for young people to engage in dialogue, analysis and action. This research has leveraged TakingITGlobal’s network of youth leaders and organizers, in order to further engage in a process of reflection and action. Action Research “fosters a collaborative consultation process between outside researchers acting as facilitators and catalysts, and inside stakeholders engaged in addressing issues of immediate significance to their lives” (Franklin-1996: 1). The approach is participatory and grounded in conducting research with the intention of supporting action among those directly involved and impacted.

Action Research is connected to praxis methodology which emphasizes the dialectical relationship between theory and practice “where each informs the other, creating a whole that would not have been possible with the simple addition of its parts” (Arsenault-May, 2003: 41). The concept of praxis is one that encourages an ongoing relationship between theory which informs practice, and practice which then informs new theory. Praxis is also an approach that recognizes participants as co-researchers, and is a process that creates a space for empowerment through its participatory nature. The design of this research was based on a praxis approach, where the participants in the research have been provided with ongoing project reports and invited to share their feedback to influence the final outcomes.

The research is not only designed to understand the context of youth leadership, but also intended to support and strengthen the effectiveness of existing efforts. Participants have been engaged in thinking about change strategies, and discussions have taken place regarding the Framework for Action with various groups who will be able to use it as a basis for youth toolkits and guides. There are a variety of praxis-oriented methodologies such as Contextual Action Research (CAR) (Franklin-

1998) which engages a broad range of groups and stakeholders within a particular domain, and Participatory Action Research (PAR) which offer “ways of facilitating processes by which spaces are created where people are encouraged to think about how to improve some aspect of their lives, be it their work environment or their community” (Arsenault-May, 2003: 49). While the design of this particular research was informed by the principles of various forms of Action Research, there were some limitations in the implementation process. For example, while the process involved facilitation of inputs through an online consultation, participation was limited to a smaller number of people due to timing constraints. Also, while the medium of the internet has its advantages, this process could have been enriched if youth research participants were able to come together to reflect on their experiences and discuss the Framework for Action and its relevance to their lives in a face-to-face setting. Finally, non-youth stakeholders could have been more engaged in the research process to discuss the issues along with strategies for change. That said, the process was influenced by the people who can directly benefit from the research outcomes - youth who are leading projects. This increases the possibility for impact. “We are likely to modify our own behaviour when we participate in problem analysis and solution and are likely to carry out the decisions we have helped to make.” (Morley-1989: 168)

### **1.5 - Outline of Report**

This report is structured in a way that is similar to the stages of the research process and how they were carried out. Chapter 2 explains the methodology and provides a summary of each of the various stages, which include the Online Survey, Online Consultation, In-Depth Interviews and the Analysis. The chapter begins with the Framework for Action developed at the start of the research process, based on models from other youth organizations. Chapter 3 presents an updated version of the

Framework for Action which heavily draws upon the online survey data as well as inputs from the online survey participants. The Framework for Action has been an evolving diagram throughout each stage of the research process and adapted based on a range of inputs. Chapter 4 includes one-page profiles on each of the young people who took part in the in-depth interviews. Each story captures a unique dimension of the motivations, strategies and outcomes that characterize the potential of youth as leaders in today's complex and changing world. Chapter 5 identifies key themes that have emerged as it relates to youth leadership, and Chapter 6 involves a contextual analysis, with a focus on the context that youth leaders are operating in. The analysis provided in Chapter 5 and 6 is heavily based on the in-depth interviews. In Chapter 7, the paper is concluded with a discussion on key insights, trends, recommendations and next steps.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

### 2.0 - Overview

The objectives of this research are to better understand and further enable youth-led action in an international context. Given my position with TakingITGlobal, and my involvement in a diverse range of international conferences and programs that aim to encourage youth to develop action projects, I have seen the need from youth leaders for greater support of their work. Youth developing projects may lack experience and could benefit from a Framework for Action to serve as a reference point, and assist in gaining clarity about how to move forward and think through the complexities of their work.

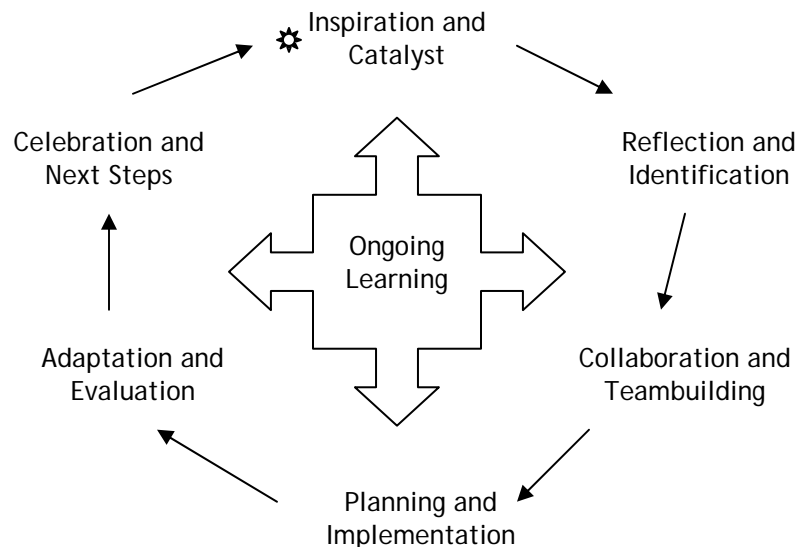
In order to further develop strategies and mechanisms to support youth organizers, this research process has been designed to leverage the access to youth networks and knowledge that I have, in order to understand the types of action projects and approaches that exist, the issues being addressed, challenges faced and overall impact of current youth-led efforts. Projects addressing a diverse range of issues from different geographic locations were invited in order to ensure that the results were relevant across a spectrum of issue areas, as well as regional contexts. My connection to TakingITGlobal's web-based platform allowed this research to access different data sources based on a variety of communication styles including an online survey for direct feedback, a consultation to facilitate dialogue, and in-depth interviews to allow for personal stories and examples to be showcased.

This Major Project Research has allowed me to pursue an area of interest in an academic setting that embraces my unique role as a practitioner. It has allowed me to further engage in a process of reflection about the programs and activities of

TakingITGlobal, with a lens that I might not otherwise have had the opportunity to view from. It has also helped me strengthen my own leadership abilities.

The methodology carried out for this research process involved an initial online survey directed at youth networks globally, a follow-up online consultation with interested survey participants who were provided with a summary of the survey results, and in-depth phone interviews with a diverse range of youth leaders from across the globe. A young leader has been defined as someone between the ages of 16 - 26, who has initiated an effort to affect change in their community (which can be defined as local, national and/or global), either as part of an institution or outside of formal institutions. This multi-layered approach was designed to allow both breadth and depth, to support an enriched analysis and perspective on key emerging themes.

The central focus of the questions asked in each phase of the research related to the various stages of a “**Framework for Action**” that was proposed at the start of the process to initiate responses from the participants:



The components identified in the above “Framework for Action” are based on a range of Action Guides that have been prepared by several organizations focused on youth engagement, including the one that I developed for TakingITGlobal in partnership with consultants from the Toronto District School Board.

**TakingITGlobal’s** current *Guide to Action* involves the following key stages:

1. Reflect
2. Identify
3. Get Informed and Get Inspired
4. Plan
5. Implement
6. Evaluate

The University of Toronto’s Department of Public Health Sciences has a project called TeenNet which developed a Youth Action Model called **EIPARS**.

Engage: youth recruited and motivated to work in group to take action

Identify: issue of importance identified

Plan: group identifies objectives and creates plan for taking action

Act: youth implement plan to take action on identified issue

Reflect & Research: group reflects on outcomes and successes

Sustain: youth group decides on whether or not they will sustain project

(summary from the Youth Action Guide, TeenNet Project (Skinner-2005: 2)

The **Global Youth Action Network** has created a 5-level model of youth organizing:

- 1) Raising awareness of social and environmental problems
- 2) Action to solve problems
- 3) Network of information and resources
- 4) Collaboration of groups
- 5) Participation in formal, permanent structures of decision-making

(Global Youth Action Network-2003: 30)

**Free The Children’s Seven Steps to Social Involvement** include:

Step 1: Choose an issue

Step 2: Do Your Research

Step 3: Build a Team

Step 4: Call a Meeting

Step 5: Make a Plan of Action

Step 6: Take Action and Then Review

Step 7: Have Fun!

(Kielburger-2002: 2)

**Peace Child International’s Youth-Led Development (YLD) model** outlined in their Toolkit for Action includes a step-by-step methodology for identifying YLD projects:

Step 1: Confirm the availability and size of the Project Fund

- Step 2: Identify and Recruit in-country and international volunteers
- Step 3: Identify Groups and Associations in each target community
- Step 4: Assemble in-country and overseas volunteers for training
- Step 5: Travel to local hubs and settle in
- Step 6: Meet local associations and NGOs
- Step 7: Meet local youth (formally in schools, in groups and informally)
- Step 8: Needs assessment and prioritization
- Step 9: Project Development  
(BOAC model - Basis for Action, Objectives, Action, Cost)
- Step 10: Identifying the Young Project Manager (YPM)
- Step 11: Daily Reviews
- Step 12: Identifying Mentors
- Step 13: Identifying Evaluators
- Step 14: Project Management Training
- Step 15: Getting Permissions
- Step 16: Fill out Forms

(Woolcombe-2004)

The “Framework for Action” that was proposed at the start of this research process contains elements from some of the above mentioned guides, as well as from some of my own experiences and from personal discussions with youth leaders. The survey and online consultation results, as well as the in-depth interviews, were designed in such a way that the framework could be updated and adapted, allowing for greater discussion on each of the various components.

An important element of this research process is the role of TakingITGlobal as a key partner organization. TIG has provided access to its network of youth in over 200 countries as well as the online tools, specifically the survey tool and discussion boards. TakingITGlobal will benefit from the research as its next ‘*Guide to Action*’ will be informed by the research findings and identified case studies.

## 2.1 - Phase One: Online Survey

The first version of the Online Survey was entirely qualitative in nature. The survey involved 29 questions and was organized according to the following sections:

1. Background Information
2. Needs Addressed & Types of Actions
3. Barriers and Enablers

4. Results, Impact and Assessment
5. Cultural Context
6. Lessons and Skills Gained
7. Future Plans for Involvement

Please see Appendix 1 for the Consent Form and Appendix 2 for the full list of questions. The initial survey was sent to over 1,000 TakingITGlobal members who use its action project pages. This survey generated 47 responses within the time period of a few weeks. During this time, the survey questions were also being translated into French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic. Once an initial review of the survey results took place, it became clear that there was a need for more responses from North America, Oceania and Europe, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean. It was also evident that a range of survey questions could be simplified with categorized drop-down responses in order to assist with future data analysis. A number of survey questions were then modified accordingly. The essence of the questions did not change, however there were many questions that allowed for a yes/no response or for people to choose from a set of options (which were derived from the initial survey responses).

Regarding the multilingual versions of the survey, due to the length of time that it took to have the survey questions translated, a decision was made to hold off on sending them out. The multilingual surveys would have benefited from having a series of drop-down responses to choose from, which would have limited the amount of translations required to be able to read the results. The online survey tool, however, was not yet at a stage that would allow for drop-down categories with different character sets. This is a noted limitation of the research as there are many youth leaders who were not reached due to the fact that the survey was only in English. As the TakingITGlobal *Guide to Action* is redeveloped, outreach needs to be carried out among French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic speaking youth, in order to

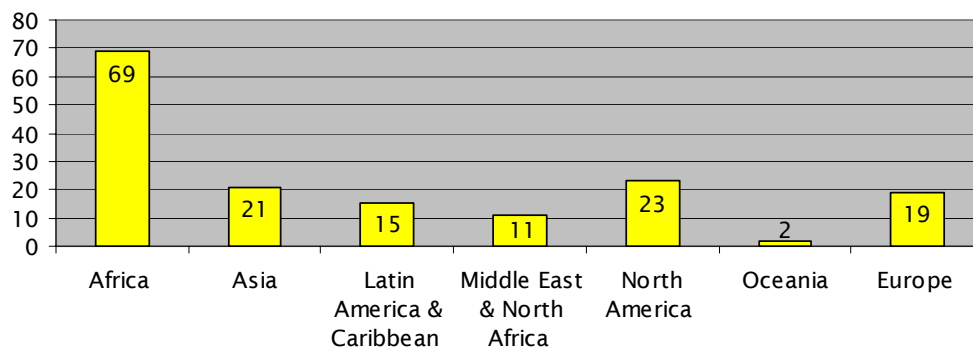


include case studies and stories that do not originate in the English language - especially since the intention of the guide is to be available in the various languages.

In order to reach a wider audience of youth leaders, the second survey was sent out to a range of youth network including the Global Youth Action Network's Youth in Action Award applicants, Oxfam International Youth Parliament's Action Partners, Peace Child International's World Youth Congress 2005 delegates, the World Summit on the Information Society Youth Caucus, along with a few others. The second survey attracted 113 responses. In total, there were 73% male respondents and 27% female. 75% of respondents consider themselves to be urban youth, with 25% identifying as rural. The following is a regional breakdown of survey participants:

| REGION                     | Survey 1  | Survey 2   | TOTAL      |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Africa                     | 25        | 44         | 69         |
| Asia                       | 7         | 14         | 21         |
| Latin America & Caribbean  | 4         | 11         | 15         |
| Middle East & North Africa | 5         | 6          | 11         |
| North America              | 1         | 22         | 23         |
| Oceania                    | 1         | 1          | 2          |
| Europe                     | 4         | 15         | 19         |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>47</b> | <b>113</b> | <b>160</b> |

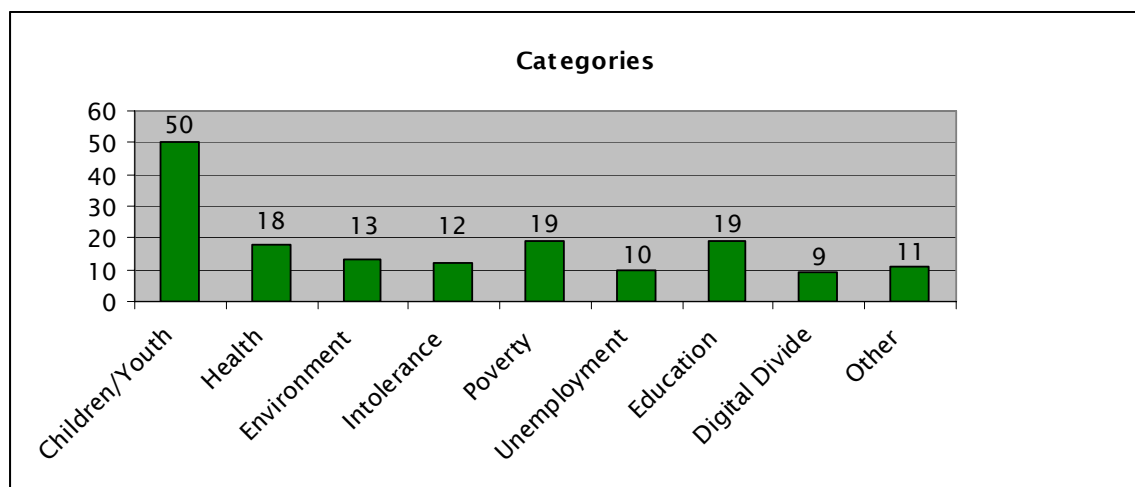
Survey Participants by Region



Survey participants were from 59 countries including: Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Dominica, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Macedonia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands Antilles, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia & Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Zambia, Zimbabwe

In order to assist with the data analysis, the results of survey 1 and survey 2 were compiled into a summary report highlighting both qualitative and quantitative responses - see Appendix 7. The responses were grouped according to categories that emerged based on the types of initiatives undertaken and the key issue addressed.

The following categories of issues addressed by the respondents were used as the basis for grouping the various responses (see Appendix 3 for further detail on the groupings):



The children and youth category is unique in the sense that all of the other categories generally involved initiatives that addressed an issue through the involvement of young people. The children and youth category includes initiatives that are specifically focused on children and youth participation, development or empowerment.

Examples include youth media initiatives, youth councils, leadership programs etc.

A key dimension of the Online Survey is the requirement of access to the internet. With greater time and resources, an additional outreach strategy could be to have representatives in different locations around the world, identify youth leaders and conduct in-person interviews or invite written responses that were then typed up and centrally collected. In this process, technology has made it possible to identify a range of youth leaders from various parts of the world in an incredibly short period of

time, with minimal costs involved. This speaks to the role that technology is playing in the context of youth-led action, especially in terms of connecting people across cultures and borders.

## **2.2 - Phase Two: Online Consultation**

The compiled results from the Online Survey Responses were sent out to the survey participants along with an invitation to participate in an online discussion. The Online Consultation took place over a one week period and there 29 people who took part. Different questions based on the stages of the initial “Framework for Action” were posted each day, organized in the following way:

- Day 1 - Inspiration and Catalyst
- Day 2 - Reflection and Identification
- Day 3 - Collaboration and Teambuilding
- Day 4 - Planning and Implementation
- Day 5 - Adaptation and Evaluation

People had the opportunity to build on one another’s responses which allowed for increased reflection and dialogue. The Online Consultation questions are in Appendix 3, the summary results for the online consultation are presented in Appendix 8, and further discussion of the results is in Chapter 3 on the “Framework for Action”.

## **2.3 - Phase Three: In-Depth Interviews**

In order to ensure an overall enriched understanding of the context, challenges and approaches of youth leaders from each region of the world, eighteen in-depth phone interviews were arranged. Half of the identified youth were those who took part in the online survey and the other half were actively sought out through recent award programs and initiatives engaging youth leaders, in order to ensure that a diversity in issues, countries and projects were included. The following is a regional breakdown of where the interviewees were from (see Appendix 5 for greater detail):

| Asia           | Africa                      | Middle East              | Latin America        | North America           | Europe   | Oceania             |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------|
| China<br>India | Malawi<br>Nigeria<br>Rwanda | Iraq<br>Israel<br>Turkey | Argentina<br>Uruguay | Canada<br>United States | Germany<br>Slovenia<br>Russia<br>Serbia and Montenegro | New Zealand<br>Fiji |

Each phone interview was approximately one hour in length and was tape recorded along with active notetaking during the interview. Participants gave permission for the interviews to be recorded and for their profile to be included as a case study in the final report. They were also asked to state when they wanted particular statements to be 'off the record'.

There were two possible formats for the in-depth interviews. For those who took part in the online survey, the interview involved clarifying questions based on their initial responses, as well as an opportunity to discuss the broader context of their initiative. While there were a set of pre-planned questions, the conversation was free flowing, allowing room to build on responses shared. The second format was also free flowing, but since those who took part had not completed the online survey, the discussion was framed around the key questions asked in the survey. Participants were also invited to send additional materials about their project.

Once the phone interviews were completed, a one page write up was prepared for each of them. Each person profiled was provided with the write up and invited to review and approve the one-page case studies. Pictures were also sent for inclusion in the final report. Throughout the process of writing each profile, which involved reviewing the notes and tapes from each interview, a list of key themes emerged that both relate to youth leadership as well as a contextual analysis. These themes will be discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 of this report.

## 2.4 - Phase Four: Analysis

The final component in the methodology has involved overall analysis of the results from each of the various phases, as well as preparation for writing this report. The “Framework for Action” has been updated throughout the research process and key themes have emerged which will be discussed in this final report. The analysis of the online survey results is based on aggregate data, primarily because the results are so clear cut. Distinctions between the different countries and continents represented from the data for this research would not be usefully explored with any further results. These results are presented in Chapter 3 on the “Framework for Action”. Chapter 5 and 6 involves an analysis of youth leadership and a contextual analysis which is based on a content analysis from the in-depth interviews. Each of the transcriptions from the in-depth interviews were reviewed in detail and themes were identified from each interview. Overall common themes were then identified and clustered into appropriate categories. These categories were grouped in terms of youth leadership and contextual (relating to the meta issues). This content analysis served as the basis for the discussion in Chapter 5 and 6.

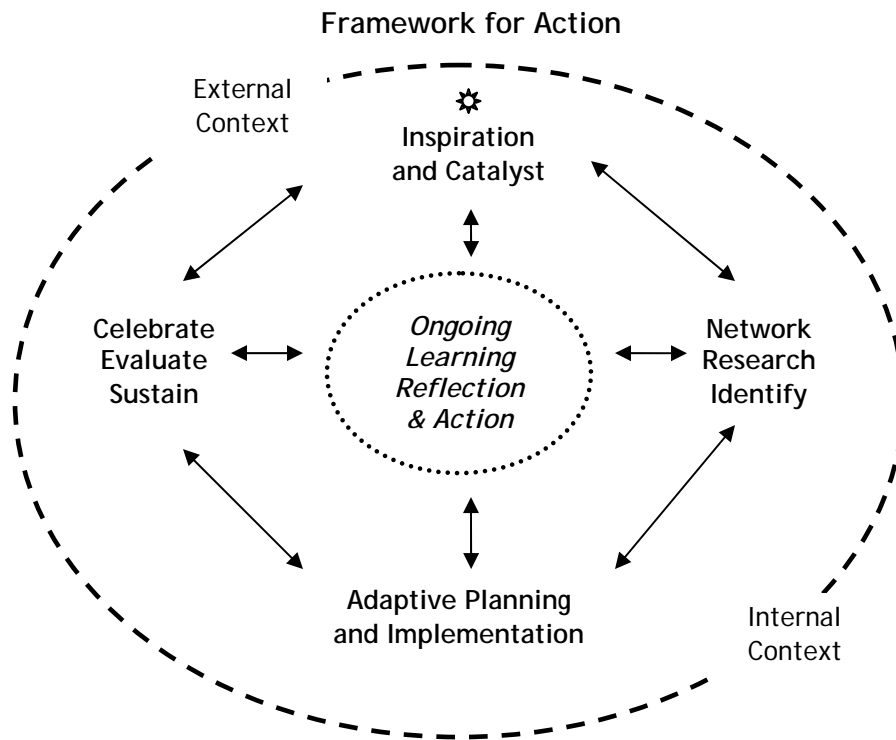
## Chapter 3 - Framework for Action

### 3.0 - Overview and Diagram

This chapter presents central findings from this research as it relates to the dimensions of the updated “Framework for Action”, which can now be used by TakingITGlobal and other youth organizations as a tool to support youth-led action projects. The various stages identified help to create a sense of continuity for those who may feel stuck or unclear about how they might proceed in their efforts. This Chapter is organized in sections that represent the “Framework for Action” stages. Quotes and results from the online survey are used to help illustrate the encounters and lessons from research participants. This Framework should not be thought of as a theoretical model, but rather an organizing framework which has been updated based on practical experiences of the people that it is intended to serve and support.

A variety of changes have been made to the diagram, provided in Chapter 2 on page 17, in order to reflect some of the key findings from the research. The various elements of the diagram are surrounded by a dashed circle on the circumference which represents the ongoing exchange through the permeable boundary between internal and external contexts of the action. The arrows do not only point ‘forward’, but rather in multiple directions, which suggests that moving back and forth between various stages, as well as to the centre, is also part of the process. In learning about the various paths action projects have taken, it is clear that there is no standard step-like pattern of activities. ‘Reflection’ has moved to the centre of the diagram, as it is an essential part of the ongoing learning that takes place throughout each stage. The concept of ‘planning’ has changed to ‘adaptive planning’, in order to recognize the fact that plans evolve and change in response to progress made, challenges faced and external influences that directly or indirectly reshape the direction of the project.

The following diagram is an updated version of the “Framework for Action”:



There is a star in the diagram to indicate a potential starting point; however it is important to note that while it may likely be the case that action projects begin at the inspiration and catalyst stage, it is not a requirement. This diagram reflects the complex and diverse nature of how youth-led action is carried out and suggests areas to focus on. Certain stages involve a cluster of activities that may happen simultaneously. For example, the process of networking, research and identification may happen at the same time, or in a way where one builds on the other. The significance of this diagram is its potential application to youth who are working on a diverse set of issues, and from different contexts (including geographic).

*“I tell them simply that the problem is not that we have so little power. The problem is that we don’t use the power we have.” (Female, Jamaica, 24)*

### 3.1 - Context (Internal and External)

With every action undertaken, there are particular circumstances, both known and unknown, that greatly affects the nature of any action and how it unfolds. This can be described as the internal and external context. The external context ranges from social, political, economic, environmental and cultural influences, having the ability to both enable and hinder the development of a project. Research participants discussed a variety of ways in which the context of their work has been influential. The mindset of a community, in particular its belief systems that are resistant to or supportive of change, makes it either difficult or much easier for new ideas to be discouraged or enabled. Living in a society with a great sense of apathy or cynicism can create barriers to new initiatives. Living in a context of turmoil and political instability can put people at risk who might be acting against the system or regime in power. The context of living in poverty, and a place that lacks the necessary infrastructure to allow people to access resources needed to both run and benefit from the project adds layers of challenges. The young people taking part in this research process have each identified a variety of ways that their external context has influenced their motivations, process and outcomes. The internal context refers to the dynamics within the organization or group itself such as how the work is organized, how decisions are made, how personalities might clash or compliment the other and how work processes are carried out. The dynamics of each group are different.

In looking at youth-led action in an international context, it is critical to acknowledge that no context is the same, and while common elements can be identified, each young person who has made a decision to act on an issue of concern, must be aware of the particular context that they are operating in. This will assist in being able to effectively deal with the additional barriers that exist, to leverage the



enablers that are available to support the development of the project, as well as to encourage the personal development of those who are involved in it. Another important point to note is that despite all the barriers that may exist in any particular context, there are always young people who have had the courage to choose to act and engage themselves in working towards creating the change that they wish to see.

### 3.2 - Inspiration and Catalyst

The seeds of each new idea for a project or initiative are rooted in some source of inspiration and catalyst. When research participants discussed their own sources of motivation and desire to act, there were four general groupings that emerged; life experiences, awareness of the problem or need, connecting with people, and personal values. Each of the dimensions offer an avenue for the individual taking action to further deepen their own understanding of themselves and the world around them.

*Life experiences*, both positive and negative, serve as catalysts for change. Several of the survey participants discussed personal hardships and the death of a family or community member as a reason to act. This was especially prominent among youth in Africa who are losing loved ones to HIV/AIDS. Positive, eye opening experiences equally act as motivators. Many survey participants felt moved by their participation in an exchange or leadership program, summer camp, involvement as a volunteer, or travel to another city or country. Such experiences offer both motivation as well as capacity building opportunities. 76% of survey respondents said that were involved in a program that they felt allowed them to develop skills they then applied to their initiative.

*"I also personally believe that many of our generation (Generation Y) are truly interested in the betterment of our world. We cannot stand for the many injustices in this world anymore. I personally believe that this is enough to inspire a whole generation. All that is needed is a 'spark,' as such." (Male, 16, Australia)*

*Awareness of the problem* can also lead towards action. Being exposed to injustices in the world and the possibility of change (through books, articles, statistics, theatre, multimedia and other mechanisms) makes apathy less likely to occur. Making connections between a particular problem in one setting and its relationship to the broader system can help deepen one's desire to inquire, challenge and critique the status quo. This creates space for new approaches and alternatives to emerge.

*"Motivation comes from every corner. Listen. See."* (Female, New Zealand, 19)

*Connecting with People* who instill a sense of hope, confidence and trust can greatly impact the chances of success among youth leaders. Stories shared that provide positive examples of others in similar situations, who have overcome hardships in achieving their goals also provides great incentive for others. There is a desire for a sense of solidarity within and across present and future generations.

*Personal Values* are often used as a basis for determining priorities when it comes to making a decision to act. Many of the youth leaders who were participants in this research spoke about their desire to help others, create positive change and contribute towards making a better world for all. A basic desire for justice (whether it be social, environmental, economic or political), was at the heart of most actions. Another key influencer to serve others was rooted in people's faith, religion or ancient knowledge passed down from previous generations.

Throughout the process of implementing a project, youth leaders will not only depend on their original source of motivation, but heavily rely on new experiences, insights and networks to expand their scope and possibility for impact.

*"Have a heart to do something good for the community and sustain it as long as you can - because little things done today is your legacy - while you are young... while you are able...while you still can..."* (Female, Philippines, 26)

### 3.3 - Network, Research, Identify

*"Surround yourself with positive people with similar goals and ensure that the lines of communication remain constantly open." (Male, Dominica, 24)*

This next stage of the "Framework for Action" involves a combination of activities which will support project preparations and contribute towards creating a strong foundation before moving towards implementation. Each of the elements defined in this stage (Network, Identify, Raise Awareness) have been grouped together because they are each dependant on the other, and often happen simultaneously. The process of taking an idea to action is one that can be intimidating and overwhelming. It is hard to know where or how to get started.

**Network:** One of the first steps taken by many youth leaders working towards implementing their projects is networking and building relationships with potential supporters. Initially, contact can be made with friends, mentors, advisors and potentially interested acquaintances or colleagues. 74% of survey respondents said that they had mentors to whom they were able to turn for advice. If contacting immediate networks of people feels limiting, it is important to expand opportunities for accessing individuals who might be able to offer insights, shared experiences or resources. Conducting research and actively connecting with other groups who are working towards addressing similar initiatives can prove to be helpful. 74% of respondents were aware of other groups trying to address the same issue. The aim of networking with other groups should not only be to develop one's own project in isolation, but to build connections, linkages and potential collaborations with like-minded initiatives with shared objectives. This will contribute towards an overall strengthened effort or movement. If institutional collaboration is not feasible during the early stages of the project's development, efforts such as exchanging knowledge, approaches and information about activities can build the relationship over time.

*"I believe that collaboration with other groups is very important when working to create a social change as this give a wide space for all of these groups gives them inspiration and creativity and generating new ideas for the project or maybe generating sub project under the main project." (Male, Egypt, 23)*

Some of the challenges to collaboration as identified in the Online Consultation include groups not wanting to lose their identity or sense of ownership, conflict of interests or differences in approaches and leadership styles, funding and administrative challenges, distance and misunderstandings due to lack of communication and the lack of an effective framework for collaboration, allowing efforts to be presented and carried out in a complimentary manner.

60% of survey respondents said that people responded positively when the initial ideas behind the initiative were presented and 32% had mixed reactions. This speaks to the power of having a positive response and feeling supported when project ideas are shared. However, openly discussing a project idea with networks of people is not always rewarding. Youth are often faced with great cynicism from both their peers and adults who either do not understand or are unwilling to support the new initiative. They may feel threatened, doubtful, indifferent, confused or critical. This may serve as a reason for the low percentage of youth who are actively running projects in their communities. Taking such responses as completely negative can be damaging. The opportunity to both clarify and respond to constructive criticisms is often lost in feelings of incompetence and insecurity. Youth need opportunities to be able to increase their own resiliency and ability to respond to negativity, by having access to more people who believe in their abilities and potential.

**Research:** Connecting with a range of people can spark new ideas or raise potential areas for concern. It is important to take the time to conduct further research in order to explore the issues raised and gain a deeper understanding of the issue being addressed through the project as well as the internal and external context.

*Identify Core Team:* Networking can greatly assist with the process of identifying core team members, project goals and objectives, as well as existing assets and needs. 88% of participants who responded to the survey stated that there was a core group of people whom they worked with in trying to achieve their goals. Team members involve people who share a common interest and are willing to work together to achieve a shared vision.

*“Teams must be aware that they are composed of unique individuals with different attitudes and cultural background. Each member must accept this and compliment the needs of one another.” (Male, Philippines, 26)*

Participants in the Online Consultation discussed some of the ways to foster teamwork which include having a common understanding of the vision, a sense of mutual trust and belonging, a shared sense of ownership, clear roles and responsibilities, effective and ongoing communication, supportive learning environment respect for diversity, and sense of fun, creativity and openness. The concept of distributed leadership was also raised, which is when a team is not over dependent on one person and has the capacity to contribute to decisions being made, generate ideas, respond to feedback, problem solve, innovate and overcome challenges.

*Identify Objectives:* While working with the core team for the project, clear goals and areas of focus need to be identified. This includes both longer term objectives and shorter term milestones. It is important to be able to list specific, concrete next steps that can then be reviewed at later stages in order to track progress. *“Focus on what you want to achieve and go for it.”* (Research Participant) Thinking about desired outcomes and strategies to measure outcomes (success indicators) will assist in the evaluation stage. Young people who are starting a project or initiative often lack the experience required to be able to set out an effective framework for evaluation. This capacity needs to be developed further.

*Identify Assets and Needs:* Youth often lack the resources required to be able to fully carry out their ideas and plans - yet there are many who have managed to accomplish a great deal with very little. These youth have relied on their courage, determination, commitment and energy, as well as a high degree of resourcefulness. It is important to take stock of existing strengths in order to move forward in such a way that takes full advantage of these assets. It is also critical to identify areas of need and leverage networks to gain access to required resources. Research participants have identified a range of resources that they were able to access in order to support the development of their initiatives which include the following:

- Media: air time on radio, print, television, internet, awareness attracts support
- People: friends, volunteers, expertise within team, mentors or advisors, community support, own knowledge
- Organizations: partnerships fostered to lower costs, access resources (i.e. posters, materials, networks), development of skills through training, technical assistance, legitimacy through umbrella framework
- Rooms (for meetings or events): offered by schools, libraries etc.
- Funds: raised through cash donation, small grant, scholarship, \$ from shows,
- Resources/Materials: distributed documentation, guides, DVDs, books
- Research: Survey conducted, literature

### 3.4 - Adaptive Planning and Implementation

*"How else would you know that it can work without trying?"* (Male, 23, Kenya)

At some point, a decision needs to be made to move beyond the preparation phase and into the implementation phase. While a basic plan has been set out in the process of identifying objectives, strategies, assets and needs, the planning process should be thought of as an adaptive and evolving one. 73% of respondents created a strategy that required adaptations while being implemented. Key areas to consider when developing a plan includes a clarification of goals, values and guiding principles, a review of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and any historical data that would allow for learning from previous experiences.

*“Work hard. It's not going to be an easy task” (Research Participant)*

The implementation phase is unique for each project and person, and project leaders are often confronted with an array of internal and external challenges that arise:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Internal Challenges</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling overwhelmed by the heavy workload</li> <li>• Lack of infrastructure to support operations (facility to meet/work, electricity, internet, telephone, fax),</li> <li>• Team dynamics (recruiting, managing and motivating volunteers, structuring the group and decision-making, working virtually, internal politics, building trust,</li> <li>• Naive approach to decision-making (lack of experience)</li> <li>• Responding to high or low demand/interest</li> </ul>  |
| <b>External Challenges</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion about initiative, doubt or lack of understanding, indifference, criticism, negative perception of youth (and young person as leader of initiative), changing perception of the ‘unknown other’</li> <li>• Financial needs/constraints and high costs of operation</li> <li>• Global context of other issues being more important</li> <li>• Poverty and it’s connection to many other issues</li> <li>• Bureaucracy, red tape, paperwork etc. registering the organization with the government,</li> <li>• Language barriers (ie: translation of communications)</li> <li>• Fragmentation among other groups, lack of coordination</li> </ul> |

*“Expect a certain degree of unknown and unpredictability to avoid disappointment”*

*Raising Awareness* about the project can be utilized as a mechanism to attract support for both the project initiated and the broader issue being addressed. Often, efforts are made to shift attitudes and behaviours. Creating this type of change often starts with education and awareness. Young leaders are looking to a variety of tools to communicate their message. Many make presentations, facilitate workshops or distribute materials at school assemblies or conferences and events. Others raise awareness through various forms of media (both mainstream and youth media) including the radio, newspaper, magazines and in some cases television. The other major media outlet utilized is the internet. Youth are creating websites or project profiles to both distribute information and connect with others globally. Other forms of information and communication technologies, such as cell phones, are also used.

Overcoming challenges requires strong leadership. *Leadership* has been defined by research participants as the process of leading, facilitating, mobilizing, influencing, energizing, organizing and guiding people towards a common vision/goal. The attributes of a leader is someone who is selfless, responsible, enables others, sets an example, has integrity and is a problem solver. They create environments for both action and personal learning and development. The following list of words provides an overview of what was identified by survey participants as characteristics of good leaders. Many of the research participants felt that they expressed these qualities:

### LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS - AS IDENTIFIED BY RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

|                                   |                      |                        |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Able to accommodate diverse needs |                      | Open-minded            |
| Able to transfer skills           | Fair                 | Patient                |
| Able to work under pressure       | Focused              | Persistent             |
| Able to initiate                  | Good decision-making | Personable             |
| Accountable                       | Good listener        | Responsive             |
| Approachable                      | Honest               | Seeks self improvement |
| Charismatic                       | Humanitarian         | Strong commitment      |
| Compassionate                     | Humility             | Talented               |
| Creative                          | Humble               | Team player            |
| Dedication                        | Imaginative          | Transparent            |
| Does not lose temper              | Intelligent          | Understanding          |
| Drive and vision                  | Lack of ego          | Values                 |
| Dynamic                           | Motivational         | Visionary              |

*"Leadership means treating everyone as equals and bringing everyone together for a common goal, while taking into account all sorts of circumstances, situations, and individual attributes."* (Female, Malaysia, 20)



### 3.5 - Ongoing Learning, Reflection and Action

At the core of the diagram, learning and reflection takes place in the context of ongoing action. Each stage of the “Framework for Action” connects directly to the centre by two-headed arrows. This signifies the ongoing process of Action Learning. This allows for renewal and rejuvenation which is necessary throughout the process, and essential to avoiding burnout and over-extension. While all experiences allow opportunities for learning, if time isn’t taken to internalize key insights in the context of action, the value and knowledge is less likely to be realized, transferred or shared with others. Having meetings on a regular basis to review successes and failures as well as internal and external challenges faced, will allow the group to prepare for change, think through scenarios and adjust the process and priorities as necessary. This time can also be used to discuss both positive and negative feedback from various stakeholders of the initiative (including those who benefit or are supporting the work).

This component of the “Framework for Action” can prove to be helpful during times when the level of motivation is at a low point. When there is a need for greater inspiration, creative activities can be organized on an individual basis or with the group which could involve reading poetry, books or articles, painting, asking questions (such as those that start with ‘what if...’ or ‘I wonder....’), having a retreat, going on a trip etc. Having the ability to pull out of the intense, focused mindset is important for the health of the team and the project. The level of personal development that is fostered among youth who lead their own initiatives is overwhelmingly high. 99% of survey respondents felt that their experience in running the project helped them to grow as a person. Examples of personal growth include an increased level of confidence, self-esteem and responsibility, a sense of personal empowerment, improved skills (i.e. communications and advocacy), and increased knowledge.

### 3.6 - Celebrate, Evaluate, Sustain

*Celebrate:* Celebrating progress after milestones are achieved is a great way to help team members remember and feel motivated by their achievements, and the fact that they were able to overcome difficulties. It can also be a way to have those external to the project feel invited to take part in some way. Surprisingly, only 48% of respondents had an opportunity to celebrate their achievements. Many of those who did not yet have the opportunity to celebrate said that they hadn't really thought about it. Celebration does not necessarily mean organizing a big and elaborate event. It can be simple yet creative and should reflect the nature of the project. Group activities and outings that are fun can allow for celebration, reflection and teambuilding.

*Evaluate:* Many youth leaders understand that evaluation is important, however they lack the knowledge, tools and necessary support to conduct effective evaluation of their efforts. 57% of survey respondents state that they have been able to achieve the objectives that they set out to achieve with 29% being on track to achieving the set objectives. The following is a summary of the impact various groups hope to have, broken down by what they are aimed at increasing and reducing:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Increased</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representation of children and youth in decision-making processes</li> <li>• Feeling of responsibility for future generations</li> <li>• Knowledge of civil society</li> <li>• Health of a community</li> <li>• Awareness about the environment</li> <li>• Demand for fair trade products</li> <li>• Employment capacity among youth (especially vulnerable youths)</li> <li>• Literacy rates (reading, computer literacy, etc)</li> <li>• Respect between youth and adults (intergenerational dialogue)</li> <li>• Hope for country</li> </ul> |
| <b>Reduced</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early pregnancy rates</li> <li>• Number of people who smoke</li> <li>• Number of HIV/AIDS affected people</li> <li>• Cultural barriers, stereotypes and intolerance</li> <li>• Poverty level</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> </ul>   |

It is interesting to see how high the percentage is for survey respondents who feel that they have been able to achieve their objectives, considering how large in scope their desired outcomes are. Many of the research participants recognize that their work serves as a small step or catalyst in addressing a larger goal or issue, however, there does not appear to be a clear sense of how much progress is actually being made. Despite the need for improved measurement mechanisms, there is a strong sense that a profound impact has been had as a result of youth-led initiatives on the people directly affected by the project as well as the issue at large.

In leading the project, those running and supporting it are impacted by the new perspectives, experiences and skills gained. Others who are directly affected by the project are people who benefit from the activities organized, such as events, training sessions, improved access to facilities, etc. The community affected is therefore likely to have an increased level of citizen participation and resiliency. Given that many youth-led initiatives have a strong education and awareness component, they are likely to contribute to a culture of engagement and civic responsibility across generations. They are also able to have an effect on decision-making processes both directly and indirectly through sharing advice, inputs and visions for the future.

*Sustain:* Each project or initiative has its own unique lifespan and has the potential to expand or emerge in new forms. Being aware of future possible directions for the project and intentional about the ideal path it might take, will allow for an increased likelihood of success. When asked if they would participate in similar future initiatives, 97% of the survey participants said yes. Through their experiences in running the project, youth feel encouragement about the possibility of having an impact and want to be able to continue to do so throughout their lives. As stated by one of the participants, *“Making change is what I want to do with my life. Too many*

*people are complacent” (Research Participant).* Youth leaders want continued opportunities to serve humanity and impact the world positively. They want to be able to respond to the needs and concerns of their communities and of the world.

When asked to further expand on their future plans, research participants discussed their plans for expanding their programs by increasing and diversifying the number of people reached, increasing outreach, promotions and partnerships, as well as going regional or global and replicating their activities in other communities. 85% of survey respondents feel that their initiative could be replicated in other settings. People feel that the model or framework of their work is broadly applicable and could be adapted by other groups. Aside from plans directly related to the project, survey participants expressed intentions to develop new projects and activities, as well as a desire to join other existing initiatives. Some felt that they had a stronger desire to gain further knowledge and experience which they hoped to gain through volunteerism and aligning their career objectives with the objectives of their initiatives. Finally, there was the discussion of mentorship and knowledge transfer. Youth leaders are willing and desire to share their ideas and lessons learned with other groups in an advisory or mentorship capacity. Some are working on creating documentation to support training and transition. What is clear from this research is that the long-term impact of fostering participation and engagement among youth through self-directed, community based projects, is creating generations of people who grow up with the ability to identify opportunities among challenges, and who take responsibility for pursuing and clarifying ideals and objectives to work towards, in the midst of difficult, complex and changing environments. The “Framework for Action” can serve as a tool to support youth-led action projects. The conclusion will further discuss plans for how it will be used.

## Chapter 4 - Case Studies

### 4.0 - Overview

In order to gain further insight on the diversity of experiences and approaches of youth who have led projects, in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 selected individuals based on a range of factors. The inspiring stories resulting from the interviews illustrate the type of impact possible when young people are captivated by an issue and focus a part of their lives on addressing it. In many cases, they have directly impacted the situation of a major issue in their community or country, and done so using unique approaches that they envisioned would effectively help them achieve their goals. Most of the projects were initiated and even completed without any large amount of funding, demonstrating the resourcefulness of this committed group of youth.

Some were chosen based on the strength of their responses to the online survey, and others were identified through networks in an attempt to ensure that a cross-section of youth from various regions of the world, as well as diversity in issues and approaches were reflected. The projects represented in the online survey results were categorized as addressing a range of issues. Many projects had the aim of increasing youth participation in decision-making processes, as well as addressing issues of youth apathy and lack of access to opportunities for self-development. The issue of youth participation was also present in the various other issue areas, but in the context of the particular issue of focus.

Key groupings of issues outside of youth participation related to Health, Environment, Intolerance and Conflict, Poverty and Hunger, Unemployment, Education and Literacy, and the Digital Divide. Youth are taking action in a variety of ways.

The following list of examples has been taken from the results in the Online

Survey and in-depth interviews:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Advocacy Campaigns<br>(i.e. Fair Trade)               | Linking graduates with employment<br>(support with Resume and promotion)   |
| Awards Programs                                       | Literacy through Hip Hop   |
| Awareness Campaigns<br>(i.e. human rights violations) | Mapping Youth Organizations and Groups<br>(creating directory of services) |
| Building Houses                                       | Mentorship Programs  |
| Cleaning Public Spaces                                | National Student Day of Action   |
| Community Service                                     | Open Discussion Forums<br>(on topics relevant to community)                |
| Announcement Video                                    | Peer Education   |
| Community Service Internships                         | Playground Project (raised funds for activity bin)                         |
| Conference  | Policy Advocacy  |
| Contests  | Policy Test  |
| Counseling Centre                                     | Public Speaking Competition (topic of agriculture)                         |
| Cultural Events                                       | Reading to illiterate people   |
| Development of a Networks                             | Research and sharing of best practices                                     |
| Distribution of health kits                           | Role Playing   |
| Eco Theatre   | Setting up telecentres<br>(internet access and training centres)           |
| Educational Materials (create<br>and distribute)      | Skills & vocational Training   |
| Environmental Education                               | Student Clubs  |
| Exchange Program                                      | Summer Camp  |
| Food/Clothes drive,                                   | Summits & Festivals  |
| Friendships (pen pal program)                         | Therapy through Art  |
| Fundraisers (i.e. bake sales)                         | Tolerance Theatre  |
| Fundraising for Libraries                             | Tree Planting Initiatives  |
| Games (with social message)                           | Volunteerism Promotion<br>(holding a volunteer festival)                   |
| Improve waste management<br>systems                   | Youth Councils<br>(Municipal level or National level)                      |
| Internet Literacy programs and<br>workshops           | Youth Forums and Consultations   |
| Leadership Training                                   | Youth Radio/Media  |
| Lesson Plans (on social issues)                       |  |

This chapter provides a summary of the youth who took part in the in-depth interviews with an overview of their background and their project. An analysis of the case studies is included in Chapter 5 and 6.

#### 4.1 - EcoPibes.com: Meet Cecile from Argentina



In Argentina and other countries in Latin America, children and youth grow up with little access to localized information about environmental issues and the negative impacts our actions have on the earth and our lives. At the age of 23, Cecile was working hard in an environmental department of a consulting firm but feeling frustrated with the lack of impact her efforts were having. *“In Argentina companies have to produce Environmental Impact statements to have the authorization to work. Many consulting firms offer services to write such reports but the companies don’t usually implement the recommendations and there is not a lot of enforcement from the government so they get away with not following standards.”* Cecile decided to start a project that would become a turning point in her life - EcoPibes.com. The aim of her project was to address a growing need for localized environmental educational materials by creating a website that has now grown to attract between 45,000 and 50,000 users each month. The website was developed during a time when the internet was starting to gain a growing presence in Latin America. *“I was an environmental science student with no prior experiences in educating kids and adolescents, absolutely no idea of ICTs (information and communication technologies) and just a few economic resources in my pocket.”* Cecile was able to develop the technology skills she required to implement the ideas that she had for the site. She was able to find the strength to overcome a range of challenges including being told that she was wasting her talent. In 2004, Cecile was recognized for her work and awarded the “Top Outstanding Young Persons of Argentina” Award. Her work has also been recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme.



#### 4.2 - Literacy through Hip-Hop: Meet Shahmeer from Canada

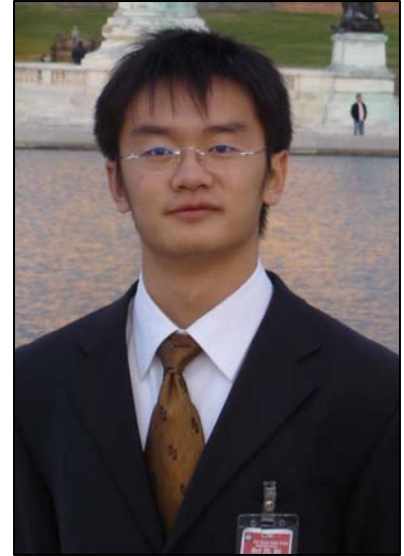
In the summer of 2005, Shahmeer and his friend Jason launched a program called Literacy through Hip-Hop, with the aim of having a method of teaching that would appeal to kids, ages 7-12. The goal was to support kids in lower-income areas of Toronto, with a focus on recruiting kids who were from immigrant families, in order to allow them to develop a stronger foundation in English. Shahmeer used Hip-Hop music, something he very much has a passion for, as a tool for both literacy and social change. The four week program was designed with advice from a Linguistics Professor and took place through the summer. The first stage involved playing a lot of music and having the participants write down the lyrics as they heard them. As the program progressed, in addition to spelling and grammar exercises, time was spent on deconstructing some of the negative messages portrayed in the media such as violence, racism and sexism. In the last phase of the program, the participants were writing, recording and performing their own songs! Since implementing the summer program, he has been working on preparing to expand nationally which has involved forging partnerships with a range of corporate and non-profit partners. Shahmeer states, *"I didn't expect it to blow up this quickly. Once we realized the program actually taught kids how to read - we thought, let's spread this out next year - and there was interest"*. In order to expand the program's reach, Shahmeer has been working with curriculum experts who have offered their support to develop a text, as well as program guidelines and resources that will allow educators to run the program in their community. As a third year student at the University of Toronto, Shahmeer has been able to juggle between his academic workload and scaling up the program.





### 4.3 - Household Wastewater Recycling: Meet Wu from China

With a population of over 1.3 billion, China is facing a water crisis - a situation that is a growing concern and similar in many other parts of the world. Since the age of 15, Wu has been interested in environmental protection and is now on his way to proving that environmentally friendly enterprises can work. Wu explains that currently, there is *“only one pipe line supplying drinking water for the kitchen, bathroom and toilet”*. His Household Wastewater Recycling Management project proposes to *“separate pipelines to sort household wastewater of different quality for recycling”*. The first stage of his project is to foster public awareness about the importance of saving water. He has begun this undertaking by delivering speeches in communities, distributing handouts on water saving, broadcasting environmental education videos and advertisements as well as creating a website ([www.wise-use.org/wastewatermanagement](http://www.wise-use.org/wastewatermanagement)). Next steps have involved working with the government to change wastewater recycling policies, as well as partnering with construction and technology companies to implement the system in pilot locations. Wu's idea for this project was initially outlined in a paper that was submitted as part of a contest and then led to him being recognized by UNEP as “Bayer China Youth Environmental Envoy”. As part of this recognition, Wu was one of 6 representatives in China who went on a field trip to Germany, which provided him an opportunity to further develop his skills, networks and project plans. Wu has had other forms of international recognition for his project which have led to networking opportunities including being selected to participate as a delegate in the ‘World Youth Congress’ as well as a panelist at the World Bank’s conference on ‘Young Social Technopreneurs’.



#### 4.4 - Deaf Handmade Card Project: Meet Nileshni from Fiji

50% of the population in Fiji is living in poverty. Much of this is due to the closing of textile and garment industries. The deaf community is heavily affected by the situation as they are less likely to have access to employment opportunities. While volunteering at FRIEND (Foundation for Rural Integrated



Enterprises N Development), an NGO that offers programs to assist people in need through income generation projects, Nileshni talked to her supervisor about how she could apply her creative and artistic skills to a project. She decided to start up a project with FRIEND that involved working with the deaf community on creating and selling handmade cards. Nileshni explains *“it was quite difficult to take up the project as I did not have sign language skills and never worked with this community before”*. Despite the communication challenges, the project began with an initial two months of training, leading to the first batch of handmade cards that were ready to sell. After the initial project development stage, Nileshni wanted to ensure that their product was unique from other handmade cards in Fiji. She conducted research on the internet and identified ways to distinguish their cards. Some of the changes she wanted to make involved accessing materials off the island. Sometimes they ask flight attendant friends to bring back special paper from their trips. Nileshni explains that *“it is hard to find materials and also hard to import and export overseas in small quantities”*. Despite this challenge, the group made over 10,000 cards last year, and over 10 people who were previously unemployed now have jobs through this project. Nileshni was recognized as a winner of the 2005 Youth and ICT Awards program which involved a trip to Tunisia to the World Summit on the Information Society. She is grateful for this recognition as she feels that it serves as a *“big motivator”*.

#### 4.5 - Policy Test Congress: Meet Wolfgang from Germany

Before the 1998 federal elections in Germany, the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations organized the first policy test which involves youth testing political party programs.



Wolfgang discovered the group on the internet and decided to take part. *"Programs of the parties say that they are sustainable and that they are inter-generational. They say that they are the ones who will make something for the youth. We just tested to see if these words were true,"* says Wolfgang. Since the initial Policy Test, Wolfgang took the idea up and organized a Policy Test each with a team of youth engaged at the youth network YOIS. The Policy Tests have taken place prior to municipal or national elections as well as at the European Parliament level. Representatives from each political party were invited to take part in a debate led by youth who had conducted in-depth reviews of each party program and presented both results and critical questions. Wolfgang explains that *"the process helps politicians become more sensitive to the needs of young people and helps youth learn more about politics and what democracy actually means"*. A great deal of preparation work is involved, including writing a project outline, applying for funding, inviting politicians, finding a venue and working with youth to review the political party programs. Some of the common issues of concern identified by youth include youth unemployment as well as fears about the future as it relates to intergenerational justice, globalization, environmental destruction and education. Currently, Wolfgang is working on preparing to transition from his leadership role in the project, allowing the opportunity for another youth to run the policy tests. Part of this process involves compiling and creating materials and resources to support the next person in running the project. He plans on staying involved as an advisor.

#### 4.6 - Improving Hygiene in Slums: Meet Ajay from India

The slum dwellers in India are vulnerable to a range of diseases as a result of unsanitary and unhygienic living conditions. As the selected leader for the National Social Scheme (NSS) college group, Ajay proposed a project that would involve students visiting slums and supporting waste management. In previous years, NSS activities have turned out to be picnics in rural villages. Ajay wanted to take a different approach. He was able to get approval and support from the college administration and organize trips for over 100 students to six slum dwellings.

Getting support from the college was surprisingly easier than getting support from the students who were to participate in the project. Many students and families complained and expressed

concerns about the health risks associated with visiting slum settlements. In order to address such concerns, an information session was held at the college with remarks from a professor who discussed ways to prepare for the visit as well as to dispel myths and stereotypes. One the project was underway, each group brought three separate large garbage bins (donated by the college) to their designated slum location. Ajay explains, *“One can was meant for solid garbage, one for plastics and bottles, and one for wet garbage”*. The students worked with the residents of the slums to encourage them to dump their garbage in the appropriate can and arranged for the municipal authorities to collect the garbage every morning. One major problem faced was that in several cases, the municipalities would not pick the garbage up. This hindered the progress that was made. Ajay is no longer directly involved with the project as he has graduated but the work continues each year with new students involved.



#### 4.7 - Online Forum for Medical Students: Meet Nour from Iraq

The idea of civil society is an emerging one in Iraq. Nour explains that *“in the previous regime, almost all youth activities were part of the National Youth Union which is governmental and designed for those interested in the party”*.



In an effort to encourage dialogue and participation among youth, Nour, along with a group of fifth year students at the Baghdad College of Medicine, came to talk together about their need for further dialogue. They created an online forum for Baghdad medical students in order to allow people to discuss social issues, news about daily university life (ie: exam deadlines, health hazards etc) as well as suggestions and peer-support among students. Given the unstable situation in Iraq, the safety of participants cannot be guaranteed, so the discussion of religion or politics is avoided. This aside, the online forum has proven to be quite useful for students, especially since a website for the university itself still does not exist. Many people rely on the site as a means for keeping a connection with students as well as keeping updated on timetable changes. In addition to online interactions, Nour has also started to organize informal meetings with students to discuss project ideas as well as project management skills. For example, Nour is running a project to supply 6th year undergraduate students with a handbook of clinical medicine that they would return before they graduate to the college and be used by next generation of students. One of the challenges faced is that initially, there were a limited number of girls who took part. They addressed the issue by encouraging the existing girls in the forum to reach out to their friends. Nour feels that her leadership skills have been strengthened through her participation in Oxfam’s International Youth Parliament which took place in Sydney, Australia.

#### 4.8 - Junior Urgent Action Network: Meet Einav from Israel

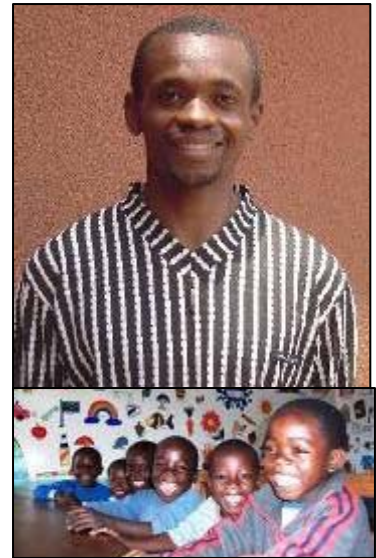
*"Growing up in Israel, you tend to mature faster than most youth in developed countries"* says Einav, who led the Junior Urgent Action Network (JUAN) for Amnesty International in Israel. Her goals for the project involved providing Israeli youth with human rights education prior to being 'lost to the army'. Einav explains, *"In the army, you are exposed to the world's complex and ambivalent reality. You hear about people wanting to kill you, about bombs - about the really sad side of humanity - of wars between human beings over land and religion instead of tolerance and respect to your fellow human being, something all religions preach to do"*. Einav served in the military herself from the age of 18 to 22 and felt that while she learned a lot from her experience, she was influenced to adopt right-wing opinions and place less value on equal rights. Through the JUAN program, kids learn about human rights violations and write letters to Ambassadors in order to express their concerns. Due to the nature of the current conflict in the Middle East, case studies are carefully selected. Einav feels that *"speaking about human rights in general terms allows people to internalize the idea of rights without mentioning the conflict"*. Her motivation is her hope for peace and true, constructive and respectful dialogue between fellow human beings. *"I want the bloodshed in this country to end. It's never going to end until we look at each other and acknowledge our mutual responsibilities."* The first time that Einav sat in a room with people from Arab countries was at the International Youth Parliament in Australia. She was the only Israeli in a room with about 30 youth from Arab countries. While her experience was somewhat unpleasant, she feels that meeting face to face is essential. *"If we do not see each other as human beings, beyond stereotypes - this conflict will not end."*





#### 4.9 - Youth Care Trust: Meet Mabvuto from Malawi

Each day, 6,000 Africans die from AIDS. Each day, an additional 11,000 are infected. Millions of children are left orphaned, forced to face a life of poverty and vulnerability. At the age of 7, Mabvuto lost his parents and years later lost his three sisters and one of his brothers. As a young child, he was faced with a tragic situation and at one point, found himself begging on the streets with very little hope. Due to the nature of his



vulnerability, he was offered a chance to go to school and study Information Technology through a government loan program. This opportunity helped Mabvuto gain a range of skills and led to the development of an incredible initiative - Youth Care Trust. Mabvuto explains that the aim of his project is to *“get street kids and vulnerable youths out of the streets and bring them to a safe and stable living home environment”*. Through creating fundraisers such as music concerts and sports games that raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, money was raised to support the project. They decided to rent a house to provide shelter for 12 orphaned street kids as well as offer education and training on basic literacy skills, HIV/AIDS, Information Technology and other relevant areas. Getting this idea off the ground was no easy task. Mabvuto knew that he would require support from people of higher status in order to obtain relevant approvals and support. In the early phase of the project, he approached the MP for his area and arranged a meeting to discuss the idea. The Honorable Zizwa agreed to support the project by providing feedback on the development of the constitution and as the project evolved his support and mentorship continued. Mabvuto offers the following advice: *“Do not be discouraged with negative responses and time limitations you might be given. Start with a single step and go forward.”*

#### 4.10 - Tech Angels: Meet Cherrie from New Zealand



In recent years, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand made a significant technology investment in the education sector. Their aim was to have each classroom equipped with computers or laptops in order to enhance learning and better prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Very quickly, they found that it was the teachers who they had to better prepare. Cherrie explains that *“some teachers find using technology annoying at first. They don’t understand the value of using it - where as computing is natural for kids”*. In order to help teachers better incorporate Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into their lives and the classroom, Tech Angels was formed at Wellington Girls’ College. The idea was to have tech savvy students work with teachers one-on-one each week, helping to improve their ICT literacy skills. Cherrie was chosen as the Head Tech Angel for her school, a role that involved pairing students with teachers, carrying out seminars, sending out daily tips via e-mail, preparing lesson plans, making presentations and entering competitions. She had guidance and support from the ICT Program Manager for the school and was responsible for training her principal and biology teacher. *“At the beginning it was quite daunting...But as we went along, we discussed a lot of things together and found that were learning together, exchanging knowledge and expertise.”* Cherrie feels that this dynamic is the best way to learn. Taking on such a leadership role in the school also strengthened Cherrie’s sense of confidence. *“Others who were older than me - my teachers who I had looked up to at a distance for so many years - suddenly, they were talking to me as an equal.”* This experience helped Cherrie gain an appreciation for how hard it is to teach something new and equally that teachers were reminded of how it feels to learn something new.





#### 4.11 - Lagos Digital Village: Meet 'Gbenga from Nigeria

*“Young people do not only ensure sustainability, they energize processes and are the major drivers of technology - extending the perimeters of innovation”,*

says 'Gbenga, who has been working tirelessly, over the past five years, on strengthening the voice of youth in decision-making processes as it relates to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). At the age of 13, 'Gbenga was not allowed to come close to the new computers that were given to his school, as he 'didn't



know how to use them'. Eight years later, he took part in an internship that allowed him to gain an array of technology skills, and become more involved in training other youth on how to use technology. With support from Junior Achievement Nigeria, 'Gbenga started Lagos Digital Village, an internet access centre that offers ICT literacy training and mentorship to youth. There are four programs, each building on the other, which are run by youth as part of a train-the-trainer model. Hundreds of youth have gained skills as a result of the program. In addition to this local work, 'Gbenga has been involved in influencing the development of IT policies on a national and global level. In 2001, He took part in a national essay competition on Youth and ICTs where he won and was selected as Nigeria's first Information Technology Youth Ambassador and had the opportunity to attend the International Telecommunications Union Africa meeting. In 2002, he joined the Youth Caucus for the World Summit on the Information Society and led a National Information Society Youth Campaign, which involved raising awareness and having consultations with youth across the Nigeria. 'Gbenga's efforts have inspired thousands of youth to have a voice and be heard.

#### 4.12 - Tolerance Theatre: Meet Sergey from Russia

*"Intolerance in Russia has taken many shapes and forms: religious, cultural, sexual,*



*ethnic and racial,"* explains Sergey. *"We believe that the high rate of intolerance in Russia should be addressed not only by official bodies, but also within the society itself from bottom up."* While on an academic exchange program in the United States, Sergey watched a play about a student who was murdered because he was gay. He says that the performance offered a *"complex portrayal that dispels the simplistic media stereotypes and explores the depths to which humanity can sink, and the heights of compassion of which humanity is capable"*. Once he returned to Russia, Sergey decided that he wanted to work on a project with other alumni, using theatre as a means of civic education - Tolerance Theatre. He ordered a copy of the playwright over the internet and began to develop an adapted version of the script to be relevant to the Russian context. He formed a team of several actors (himself included), coordinators, trainers and translators. Dates were set and performances took place at schools and venues arranged by nonprofit organizations. Each play is followed up with break-out session where the audience is split into small groups and each member of the acting team works with students to engage in reflection and dialogue. In doing this work, Sergey hopes that the *"masses in Russia will realize that the problems of intolerance and human rights violations do exist in Russian society."* He believes that the project will help to show that minority groups should have the same rights as everybody else. Throughout this experience, Sergey has learned *"to be open to new challenges and to not be afraid of standing up for your own opinion"*.

#### 4.13 - The Nieyiza Group: Meet Sangwa from Rwanda

The genocide in Rwanda wiped out more than one million people and left the country in a devastating state. As a result, unemployment rates are high and many people feel a sense of despair. Sangwa is working to encourage youth to have a more positive approach about the future. He has started a project called Nieyiza, which means something positive. His goals include developing a website ([www.nieyiza.co.rw](http://www.nieyiza.co.rw)) to serve as a source of information about youth issues, activities and



voices as well as to train youth on ICT skills. Sangwa speaks about his motivation for creating opportunities, *"We have a big problem - unemployment among youth. We have large numbers of youth who get out of school, cannot afford university and are unemployed"*. The government has suggested that youth develop entrepreneurial projects or associations; however Sangwa feels that creativity skills need to be nurtured. The Nieyiza Group encourages youth to develop a sense of initiative and creativity. Sangwa's involvement in the Glocal Youth Parliament (GYP) has played an important role in developing his own leadership skills. He was selected to take part in an international conference through an essay competition in Rwanda and has been involved in the network since. Currently, he is involved in a GYP peace building project where Tutsi and Hutu youth are invited to discuss their views on the history of the country. *"The history itself is controversial"* says Sangwa, *"it is important to invite people to think about and discuss the situation of the country"*. A follow-up project taking place involves youth putting together personal testimonials on how they were directly affected by the genocide. They are hoping to publish the stories in a book and share it online for people to read and learn from youth perspectives.

#### 4.14 - Kontra: Meet Nikola from Serbia and Montenegro

At the age of 16, Nikola became involved in the Resistance movement which was against the one-party regime in power. He gave out leaflets, put up posters and became one of the trainers of the movement.

Eventually, Nikola headed up the student component of the movement. During this time, their actions and



meetings were considered illegal. In the fight against repression, huge protests were organized in the city of Belgrade. In October of 2000, over one million people were in the streets, many of them being youth, and the regime was overthrown. This effort involved 19 political parties uniting as one. Months later, Nikola became President of youth for his municipality, as he was a member of the political party that came into power. By the age of 18, he was General Secretary of Civic Youth Alliance, organizing local branches in over 100 cities across Serbia. During this time, Nikola, as with other youth, started to become disenchanted with the political situation. *"Previously, there was only one enemy to fight" he explains, "People in positions of power didn't now how to handle it - and the old regime still resisted change. The whole party lost its way."* At the age of 21, Nikola founded a student/youth organization called Kontra, which means opposite in Serbian. *"The name came from our thinking in being opposite to the things we don't like in our society such as war, segregation, nationalisim"* says Nikola. Kontra produces a cultural magazine on the internet that is updated with news, films and cultural events. They are working on a radio show and traveling festivals in partnership with other cultural groups in the region. Nikola is trying to inspire disengaged youth to be involved *"if you are not satisfied with a situation, you have to do something. If you do nothing, nothing will change"*.

#### 4.15 - Slovenian Youth Association: Meet Ziga from Slovenia

The collapse of the communist system led to a shift in values across Eastern Europe. *“Money became the biggest value”* explains Ziga, *“youth became unwilling to help out or do voluntary work as they were focused on trying to get rich in order to buy materialistic things”*. In order to increase a sense of civic participation among youth, Ziga formed the Slovenian Youth Association, a network based organization



with the aim of supporting youth-led development on local and international projects. Ziga’s exposure to youth-led projects began at an early age. He attended a UNESCO school and had a Head Master with a strong interest in international projects. At the age of 12, Ziga was involved in the Children’s Parliament, at 14, he went on an exchange to Japan and in 1999, he attended the World Youth Congress in Hawaii where he met hundreds of young people who were working on a range of projects. Ziga had a strong sense of optimism about the capability of young people, in terms of improving their communities through creating projects and initiatives. On a National level, he was faced with extensive barriers. When attempting to get support from government agencies or other institutions for the project, people responded critically saying that he had no track record and needed to work through the existing National Youth Council. Ziga found that the National Youth Council was run by older youth who had a stronger interest in their own agendas than in supporting grass-roots projects. Ultimately, there were unable to partner or gain support from the National Youth Council and the work of the Association never really gained a lot of momentum. Ziga is working in the ways that he can to create an environment that is more supportive of change and initiative and is committed to being a mentor to youth in the future.

#### 4.16 - National Youth Parliament: Meet Ali from Turkey

Local Agenda 21 is a program that provides a framework for implementing sustainable development at the local level. While working at Youth for Habitat in Turkey, Ali has been a volunteer for implementing the youth branch of local Agenda 21 by supporting the development of local youth platforms across the country. By 2003, he helped to establish over 25 youth platforms, each involving youth in local decision-making processes. In an effort to celebrate Youth Week in Turkey, which takes place from May 16-19, Ali had the idea of bringing together youth from 75 cities to Ankara, the capital. Their goal in coming together was to discuss the development of a National Youth Policy. The event attracted high level government officials who were encouraged to further invest in youth development issues. It also led to the establishment of the National Youth Parliament. Ali's goal is to contribute to creating platforms to help youth influence policy. He explains that youth between the ages of 18-30 have little opportunity to become politically engaged. *"Youth have ideas and solutions to problems. They need a means to give their input, otherwise they will become disengaged."* The idea for the initiative was heavily influenced by the exposure that Youth for Habitat had at a range of international and European Summits. Through this participation, they were able to see different models and found that many National Youth Councils existed. They asked *"why don't we have a means for such participation in Turkey?"* The European Union process has influenced the growth of the National Youth Parliament in Turkey as it has helped to attract support for youth development and increased mobility of youth through exchange programs in Europe. As the project grows, Ali feels it is critical to ensure that the local youth platforms are strong and a bottom-up approach is maintained.





#### 4.17 - United Students for Fair Trade: Meet Lina from the United States

*"We live in a context of ignorance - people don't think about how their actions or*



*inactions affect others,"* says Lina, founder of the United Students for Fair Trade (USFT). *"Universities provide a common arena for raising awareness of inequities in a corporate-centered model of global trade. However, academic curriculum often stops short of suggesting viable alternatives."* Lina set out to raise awareness about Fair Trade in a student movement that now has more than 300 Universities across the United States carrying out campaigns. She started out as a participant in a CHANGE Leadership Program organized by Oxfam America where she attended a Fair Trade workshop and realized that more people needed to be educated about the issues. With support from people that she met at the program, USFT was formed with a mandate of making Universities across the United States 100% Fair Trade. Their campaigning efforts involved making connections with the school administration and food service providers, putting up posters and pamphlets to increase awareness about the benefits of fair trade and having thousands of students sign petitions. In order to support student organizers, a national conference was organized which has continued to happen each year, bringing together representatives from each university in order to allow people to share progress and best practices. The first round of funds that the group was able to acquire was through Youth Venture, with a grant of \$1,000. Their budget has since grown, as has their organizing capacity. Currently, a board is in place and Lina supports the group in an advisory capacity. *"The past three years have been an incredible journey. I have learned so much and met amazing people from across the country and abroad. I will always be an activist at heart because of it."*

#### 4.18 - Ñ Gora - Meet Fabrizio from Uruguay

When Argentina was faced with a social and political crisis in 2001-2002, Uruguay was affected. In an effort to prevent being faced with a similar situation in the future, Fabrizio decided to undertake a project to increase knowledge about politics among youth. *“If citizens are not prepared to vote and volunteer for their community, the risk of a dictatorship increases and big*



*social issues cannot be solved”* says Fabrizio, a young practicing lawyer. The project was called Ñ Gora, which means public square, and involves a role playing game where students decide on the budget of the nation. The process is one that promotes a greater understanding of politics and the importance of active citizenship. At the end of the process, those who are interested are encouraged to take up community projects, and be provided with access to an ongoing support network. The project is supported by the International Youth Foundation and runs in parallel with a partner group in Argentina. Fabrizio’s hope is that the project will help to change the perception of politics which is currently thought of as being a *“dirty thing”* and *“something that you shouldn’t go in to”*. He is concerned that *“if our best men and women are not willing or are unprepared to go into politics, the worst or most unprepared people will end up in positions of power”*. Fabrizio’s initial involvements in community based activities started at the age of 14, where he joined a club called ‘Interact’, which was a program of Rotary International. Over time, he became the President of the club and started to work with young people in different cities across the country. One of the most moving projects that he worked on was supporting the establishment of a community library in a small town. *“In those first years developing projects - I realized that with some good will and intelligence, you can achieve a lot.”*



Each of the stories presented in the 18 case studies indicate the power and potential of youth as leaders of their communities. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of youth leadership which heavily draws on the case studies from Chapter 4. The following is an overview of the key themes that will be discussed:

- Unique approach
- Youth-helping-Youth
- Inclusive leadership style
- Learning through doing and Adaptive Planning
- Acceptance issues
- Often over-extended
- Lack of effective evaluation
- Lack of support in growing and sustaining
- Deepened Commitment to ideals

Chapter 6 involves a contextual analysis which also builds on the themes that emerged from each of the various case studies. The following concepts will be expanded upon:

- Regional Influences
- Bureaucracy as a Barrier
- Technology as an Enabler
- Potential for manipulation and cooptation
- Lack of support structures for youth-led initiatives

Given the complex and in many cases tragic and horrific circumstances that children and youth face globally, it is hopeful to see the bravery and courage that young people are taking in the face against massive challenges.

## Chapter 5 - Youth Leadership Analysis

### 5.0 - Overview

In reflecting on the range of experiences shared as part of this research process, a variety of common themes relating to youth leadership in this era have emerged and will be presented and discussed in this chapter. The various themes described draw upon the stories and perspectives from the participants who took part in the online survey and consultation as well as the in-depth interviews.

### 5.1 - Unique approach

Regardless of whether or not other groups exist who are working on similar issues, youth leaders are developing projects that they feel address a particular need in a unique way. In running a project, based either within or outside of an existing organization, youth have an opportunity to try things differently, and explore their own creativity. Those leading projects have a desire to make a contribution, yet feel constrained, disconnected from, or critical of existing systems and institutions. Often, it is the approach of being more inclusive and participatory, especially involving youth such as themselves, which serves as a driving force for creating something new, instead of joining what already exists. An interesting dimension to note is that the youth leaders who have taken part in this research process often find themselves in a position where they are neither completely against the system, nor completely within it. This aspect of liminality (a term that describes the crossing of boundaries without awareness) allows them to operate in a way with a certain degree of flexibility and independence, while at the same time being able to leverage networks among a range of people, informal groups, and traditional institutions that may be supportive of their

efforts. To some extent, the flexibility gained through operating from this position allows ideals to have a greater chance at being realized.

Nikola's project (Serbia) entitled Kontra, which means "opposite" in Serbian, is an example of a project that has a unique approach, especially relative to what currently exists in his local context. He says "*the name came from our thinking in being opposite to the things we don't like in our society such as war, segregation, nationalism etc*". His project involves the production of a cultural magazine on the internet that serves as counter-culture to what the regime produced when it existed. Kontra is an initiative that values the importance of cultural exchange. While this concept is not new, it is unique because it was developed at a time when Serbia and Montenegro had little access to cultural activities and expressions from around the world, and was one of the first such initiatives to bring these perspectives to youth in the country.

## 5.2 - Youth-helping-Youth

A common component of most projects led by youth is that the primary group directly affected by and involved in the activities carried out is also youth. The theme of youth helping youth is strong. In many circumstances, youth who have access to opportunities and experiences that have allowed them to develop new skills and insights hope to share what they have gained with their peers. This peer-to-peer approach is very common among youth. In many ways, it allows identities to be explored and a sense of belonging to be fostered. In some cases, youth are helping youth within their local context or country, while in others, networks are international in scope, connecting young people from completely different parts of the world.

Nour from Iraq has created an online network for students at Baghdad University to connect and share information about courses and timetables as well as discuss issues

of interest and concern. When the group was initially founded, there was nothing similar that existed to promote dialogue and open discussion. This network provides a support mechanism for students by students. An example of youth helping youth on an international level is the Junior Urgent Action Network. The coordinator of this initiative in Israel was Einav, with a project that involved educating youth about human rights abuses through case studies provided by Amnesty International. Students were then involved in letter writing campaigns. Einav feels that *"this effort can help kids internalize rights in a way that does not automatically focus on the conflict between Arabs and Israeli's"*. While most youth-led initiatives tend to support other youth, it is fair to say that there are also a number of youth-led projects that are aimed at supporting adults, especially in the area of technology. An example of this is Cherrie's (New Zealand) Tech Angels project where students are helping teachers integrate technology into the classroom. This type of project is flipping around the traditional dynamic of youth as learners and adults as the "learned", especially in a school context. While many adults realize the value of the knowledge intuitive to these young people and embrace the opportunity to learn, some feel threatened and refuse to believe that technology could be valuable if it requires that they take instructions from a student, and refuse to learn technology skills.

### 5.3 - Inclusive leadership style

It was fascinating to review the various words that survey respondents used in their definition of a leader. The theme of inclusivity persisted throughout. Research participants expressed that good leaders have a strong focus on listening to the needs of people in the group, allowing them to influence the direction of the project and decision-making outcomes. *"Leadership is all about people.... the ability to successfully act on the needs of others... the commitment to put others first and build*

*team excellence.*" (Survey Participant) When youth leaders describe how their projects are implemented, they exhibit characteristics of an inclusive leadership style. For example, Lina from the United States explained that each year, a conference takes place bringing together representatives from various chapters of the organization together in order to discuss common priorities. Those who are implementing priorities have an active role in shaping them. This philosophy is also the basis of good community development projects more broadly. Ali from Turkey also shares in this philosophy. The National Youth Parliament is a body that is comprised of over 75 local youth councils. Their approach is inclusive and bottom-up, bringing the issues and input of the local councils up to the national-level body.

#### **5.4 - Learning through doing and Adaptive Planning**

Youth who are leading projects are often starting without the in-depth knowledge, skills or experience that might be required to be able to implement the project. In many ways, this serves as a motivation for people to learn along the way. A basic level of confidence and ability exists, as well as an open mind that allows for learning to take place. Youth leaders have a willingness to pilot or test out ideas, learn from what happens, adapt and try again. This ability to ask questions without fear of failure adds an important element to the planning process that is adaptive over time and based on feedback loops. A set of goals and requirements are established at the start of the project and reviewed and modified throughout each phase. Youth often prefer to learn through doing as they are prepared to take more risks and create the experiences they desire.

Cherrie's Tech Angels project (New Zealand) helps to illustrate this further. At the start of the process she had the mandate of training teachers in her school on how

to make use of technology in the classroom. She had no prior experience in teaching and her technology skills were self developed. With minimal 'qualifications' she established a program to support the teachers in her school by pairing them up with students and arranging workshops, one on one mentorship sessions and work plans. The level of adaptive planning that was required to run this project was high.

### 5.5 - Acceptance issues

There is an emerging group of youth who have had access to educational opportunities and capacity building experiences that see themselves as actors of development and agents of change, with the capacity to lead. These youth are often connected to peer networks, in most cases outside their local context that they have accessed through technology or leadership programs and events that provide a basic support system for their efforts. Beyond that, they frequently feel isolated in their efforts - especially from friends and family members who are not accepting or understanding of their efforts. Devoting one's passions and focus in life towards a particular project can sometimes have negative consequences. There are examples of people who end up barely communicating or breaking up with loved ones as a result of feeling disconnected. Awards and recognition can sometimes help to validate the project and can build confidence among the team. However, it is not unlikely that youth feel a lack of acceptance and rejection on some level.

Issues of acceptance can be addressed by active listening, providing encouragement through building on ideas and making connections as well as increasing the profile of both projects and people who are having an impact. Opportunities for communities to be educated about the issues being addressed and the importance of encouraging creative ideas and actions can contribute towards creating a more supportive context for youth leaders.

## 5.6 - Often over-extended

Making a decision to start up a new initiative as a young person can be a quite significant act. The time and level of commitment required to carry out project ideas, facilitate input from team members, prepare proposals, plan events and organize activities on top of existing priorities such as school, and in some cases work as well as spending time with friends and family - can leave anyone feeling exhausted. One research participant states *"sometimes it is hard to manage ups and downs - especially when you are tired"*. Having such a deep commitment to the project makes it difficult to prioritize and results in feeling overwhelmed. There are some organizations such as Youth for Environmental Sanity, which exists to provide spaces for youth activists and change agents to come together to reflect, re-energize and re-connect. This is necessary in order to for efforts and optimism to be sustained.

*"In any community we will experience those who will ignore or recognize us, agree or disagree with us. What is important is to keep the rhythm - like the way you originally started with! Not too rapid and not too slow, not too brave and not to afraid and not too strong and not too weak - because both extremes will negatively affect the initiative."* (Male, 23, Egypt)

## 5.7 - Lack of effective evaluation

There appears to be an overall gap in terms of youth-led projects having effective evaluation frameworks and mechanisms to track and assess progress and impact. While it may be understood that this is necessary for the project to grow and attract support, increased capacity building is needed in this area. Project leaders would benefit from training on how to design appropriate mechanisms to assess the impact of their work as well as helping to access financial resources to assist with costs involved. There is often less time spent on evaluation because the group has had to be incredibly resourceful to simply get the project off the ground. This makes it difficult to step back in the midst of constant deadlines and deliverables.

## 5.8 - Lack of support in growing and sustaining

Not only is there a need for more support of youth projects in the initial phase, there is an even greater need for capacity building among youth when projects are ready to grow and expand or come to an end. Youth who have initiated projects may reach a point where they have a desire to move on and transition to different experiences outside of the project. In the case of transition, establishing mechanisms for knowledge transfer and mentorship is critical. Enough time needs to be devoted to support the transition phase, otherwise, efforts will run the risk of a quick death without the opportunity to extract lessons that can be shared moving forward. Should the project team feel that the lifespan of the project needs to come to an end, time taken to de-brief on lessons learned and possible next steps can assist the process in feeling less abrupt.

For projects that are ready to grow and potentially expand or replicate in different locations, youth leaders need access to people who have experiences with scaling up, to provide mentorship and support across a variety of issues. The set of skills required to grow and sustain a project are somewhat different from what is required to start up a project. New team members and advisors may need to be recruited, additional research may need to be done, and new resources need to be acquired. There is a need to build a community of practice among youth who have had experiences in running projects and scaling them up, to create a network for fostering exchange and mentorship, ensuring that today's young leaders can help to play an important role in supporting continual, emerging generations of youth taking leadership roles.



## 5.9 - Deepened commitment to ideals

Having the chance to turn a project idea into action that is based on an issue of concern can set a strong foundation for a deeper, longer-term commitment. Leading an initiative tends to provide an experience of empowerment, where those who have identified a problem are taking active steps towards addressing it. While the ultimate goal may not be achieved, such as alleviating poverty or putting an end to environmental destruction, the process of engaging in an issue through leading an initiative creates a level of awareness and understanding that is unforgettable. A sense of total despair is overcome by the possibility of co-creating a better world. On the other hand, if youth don't have opportunities to see themselves as agents of change in their youth, they are more likely to become discouraged and disengaged as they grow out of their youth. In many ways, youth-led action projects are a recipe for both meeting current needs, and creating a pathway for sustainable development in the long term.

## Chapter 6 - Contextual Analysis

### 6.0 - Overview

The direction and nature of each project and action undertaken by youth organizers is greatly affected by the social, economic, political and cultural context they are in. The issues that young leaders are addressing are not isolated issues only relevant to youth, but rather reflect some of the most pressing issues facing each particular context and region. The youth leaders identified in this research process are also working in a dual capacity, aiming to have both a local and global impact through their efforts. In most of the case studies, there is some example of the youth leader having access to an international conference through an awards program, essay competition, internship or leadership development experience. This international exposure is often a source of their inspiration, insight and ongoing motivation.

### 6.1 - Regional Influences

Young people are developing solution-oriented projects in response to some of the most pressing issues facing their countries and regions. Often, such simple and practical solutions are being overlooked by policy-makers who are focusing on developing grand, long-term plans to address such major challenges. But many small actions can add up to large change, so it's not hard to see how many of these projects, if replicated and/or successfully scaled up, could have a large-scale impact on the countries and communities they serve.

In China, for example, the ongoing explosive growth of the population is placing new strains on systems to deal with waste and pollution, and on water supplies. China uses 7-15 times more water to produce a Unit of GDP than developed economies (McAlister-March, 2006: 7). "To fight for every drop of water or die...that is the challenge facing China." Hon. Wang Sucheng, Minister of Water Resources

(March 14, 2001, China Daily) Wu's Wastewater Recycling project directly responds to the water crisis in China. He has a strong commitment to environmental protection and aims to encourage the city of Beijing to implement a system to recycle waste water for toilet flushing and lawn watering. Wu explains that *"China is the largest developing country in the world, with the fastest economic growth and enormous, unreasonably wasted resources"*. In addition to making more efficient use of waste water, Wu is working to increase the level of environmental awareness among citizens through his efforts, as awareness itself can lead to changes in personal behavior, which combined together can make a big difference.

In Africa, the effects of years of the AIDS pandemic have taken their toll on families. Statistics show that by 2003, 15 million children under 18 had been orphaned by HIV/AIDS worldwide. Almost 12 million of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa, and this number is expected to rise to more than 18 million by 2010. "The increased spiral of adult deaths in so many countries means that the number of children orphaned each day is expanding exponentially. Africa is staggering under the load."

(Lewis-September 2003) Growing up in Malawi as an orphan himself, Mabvuto's project is dedicated to supporting children who are orphaned by AIDS. *"Being one of the former street kids who has seen and felt what it means to be one - I have wide experience on how I may tackle any problem."* Mabvuto aims to contribute to the improvement of the lives of vulnerable youth by facilitating basic access to education and training as well as running HIV Awareness and Prevention activities.

When the democratically elected government of Fiji was overthrown in May of 2000 by the military, many large scale factories in the textile and garment industries closed down, leaving large numbers of people unemployed. The crisis has "had significant social consequences, especially for the more vulnerable and poor garment

workers" (Storey, 16). Nilesni's handmade card project directly works with the deaf community, a particularly vulnerable group, to provide employment opportunities through the creation of handmade cards. She says that *"the long term objective of the card making income generation project is to create a sustainable micro enterprise for the deaf community"*.

The strength of the European Union has had an incredible influence on countries in the region who are striving to join. Turkey is a great example of this as the country is in the process of a variety of reforms (i.e. political, economic, judicial, human rights, freedom of religion and freedom of the press, etc.) aimed at showing that it is committed to improving transparency of its processes to be accepted into the EU community. There are a range of initiatives throughout the country that have been developed or supported with the aim of demonstrating that standards are being met. In the case of Ali and the National Youth Parliament, it is fair to say that the overall strategy has the attention and support from decision-makers. It is clearly seen as a mechanism to increase citizen participation among youth. This is an important component to any healthy democracy, and one more strategy for Turkey to lever its accession to the EU.

## **6.2 - Bureaucracy as a Barrier**

One of the greatest challenges identified by youth leaders who are implementing projects is being held up by bureaucracy. In many situations, youth have to go through an extensive approval process involving paperwork and "red tape" in order to be able to carry out their proposed activities. This may relate to registration of a new organization, writing proposals to obtain permission from administrative bodies and in some cases approval may be required for meetings to be organized in public places. Youth-led action is especially dangerous during times of

political instability and dictatorship. In these situations, youth may need to be especially cautious or secretive about their work, particularly if it appears to be against the regime in power. Over-zealous authorities can fine or even jail young people just for gathering in a group to hold a meeting to plan a project. Regardless of the circumstances, young people often feel frustrated with delays to the project that are out of their control.

In the case of Mabvuto in Malawi, he was required to obtain a series of approvals in order to implement his project. Vulnerable children from various local districts were invited to take part in training programs outside of their district. In order to be able to leave their district, permission was required from the Village Head Men. Initially, Mabvuto was not taken seriously. In order to generate support, he contacted the office of his local Member of Parliament and was able to arrange a meeting. During the meeting, he was able to explain his project goals and aims and as a result, he gained access to someone in a position of authority who could then speak with the Village Head Men in order to encourage and ultimately convince them to provide their approval.

### **6.3 - Technology as an Enabler**

Most of the projects discussed here would not have been possible without the use of the internet as a critical communications tool, providing access to broader support networks, information about opportunities, deeper knowledge about the issue, and a platform for promotion, and even in some cases reduced costs through technologies such as online ordering. When the role of technology was discussed, many research participants explained that it helped to make the program or initiative possible and/or played a key role in supporting communications (internally among

team members and externally for promotions and awareness-raising), as well as facilitating research (gathering information), planning and shared learning (able to discuss challenges and best practices). Many participants discussed the importance of computers and the internet as well as use of text messages and cell phones. People also spoke about the power of being able to print out posters and relevant materials on demand, instead of having to wait weeks or even months for printed materials to arrive if ordered from another country. A variety of initiatives involve various other forms of technology, such as the use of a tractor to dig trenches, and the use of a sewing machine in making clothes. Those who stated that technology hindered the development of their initiative felt this because there was little to no access to that technology in their community, thus leaving people behind or disadvantaged. Unreliable access to electricity is also a connected issue, as many countries in transition vary from having little or no power due to outages. Examples include cases like in Sierra Leone, where a computer might only be able to be used for 1 or 2 hours per day, or simply not having a fully developed infrastructure for the delivery of power such as in slum areas of India or rural areas of China.

#### **6.4 - Potential for manipulation and cooptation**

As with any newly forming project that lacks a strong infrastructure and sustainability model, youth-led initiatives have a certain level of vulnerability. In the stages of growth and transition, projects run the risk of being taken over or heavily influenced by more powerful or well established institutions. In order to survive or perhaps reach the next milestone, compromises are made, which in some cases may go against the initial core values, beliefs, or ideals of the project. In any negotiation process, being in a position of weakness might mean that not all decisions are made in full alignment with the mission of the group.

As much as possible, youth-led initiatives need to retain their independence, while at the same time having positive and healthy relations with various stakeholders. It is important to find ways to ensure that the assets developed through the project, such as networks, relationships or other program delivery outcomes and approaches, are not misused or exploited. This speaks to the broader potential that exists for vulnerable youth to be manipulated. For example, the genocide in Rwanda was fueled by many youth who were recruited to fight as they were unemployed and lacked access to educational opportunities to further develop their skills and abilities, and were easily brainwashed into believing that their actions were just and necessary.

With an increasing climate for youth participation, it is critical to ensure that youth are not merely regarded as a mechanism for helping to achieve a particular political, corporate or religious agenda, but rather, as citizens to engage in public dialogue and decision-making processes. Youth groups who challenge those in power should not be threatened, but rather engaged in co-creating solutions to the problems they identify, since they provide the unique opportunity for political leaders to authentically engage with their critics and develop a meaningful dialogue to address their concerns, or at least help them feel heard.

#### **6.5 - Lack of support structures for youth-led initiatives**

There are a variety of organizations and programs operating on an international level that are devoted to supporting youth in developing their own action projects. Examples include Oxfam's International Youth Parliament, Peace Child International's World Youth Congress, the Education Development Center's Youth Employment Summit, UNESCO's Youth Forum and Small Island Youth Forum. While these programs provide support to the relatively small group of youth from around the

world who have the opportunity to take part, they demonstrate the need for a more solid framework to support youth participation and leadership development at local, national and regional levels.

The dominant mentality that seems to persist is that young people are not in a position to make valuable contributions as they lack the necessary experience, or are only able to participate if they abide by a strict set of terms and rules. Young people have very little authority over the terms of engagement, which can lead to disengagement. The perspectives that youth have to offer are often not embraced or encouraged, and in many cases adults in positions of authority feel uncomfortable in sharing a decision-making platform with youth. Perhaps this is based on fear of the unknown, negative experiences where trust was lost, or simply an age-old feeling of superiority over the young.

Creating support structures for youth-led initiatives means fostering inter-generational dialogue in order to increase the level of trust and respect among people with varying levels of life experience. It also means encouraging a more open minded approach to problem solving, allowing ideas to be presented in a context that is less threatening or intimidating. In addition, creating an enabling context for youth leadership requires increasing access to infrastructure that will allow for self-organizing and implementation of projects. This could mean access to meeting rooms, libraries, conference facilities, computers, printers, phones, office supplies, etc. These resources may seem simple, but they can mean the difference between an idea and a successful initiative, which can in turn lead to many more inspired young people.



## Chapter 7 - Conclusion

### 7.0 - Overview

Young people are growing up in a world of constant change and increasing global connectivity and uncertainty. According to the United Nations Population Fund, over 50% of the world's population is under the age of 25. "This includes the largest-ever generation of adolescents who are approaching adulthood in a rapidly changing world." (UNFPA-2003) Young people represent a portion of the world's population that has both the power to transform the world in new ways, while at the same time being potentially vulnerable as a result of the complex issues they are confronted with. The World Youth Report produced by the United Nations Youth Unit in 2005, highlights aspects of development and progress in the various areas of concern including poverty, education, employment, health, environment, leisure, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, girls and young women, participation in decision-making, globalization, information and communication technology, HIV/AIDS, youth and conflict and intergenerational relations. The report speaks to a range of issues such as how the estimated 130 million illiterate youth of today are at a serious disadvantage as they enter adulthood and the job market, how poverty and gender discrimination are barriers to schooling, how there are ten million young people, most in Africa and Asia, who are currently living with HIV/AIDS, and how rates of global youth unemployment have increased to an all-time high of 14.4% (88 million) (World Youth Report, 2005). What is so intriguing is that there are youth in situations of crisis, oppression, and exploitation who have gathered the courage to confront the key issues facing their world. The projects reviewed as part of this research process were not merely run by privileged youth only concerned about their own self-interest, but rather respond to some of the most pressing and critical challenges and are rooted in sincerity and a

desire to solve problems and create a better world for all. That said, a greater effort needs to be made to empower those who are most marginalized and voiceless. In many ways, this research has shed light on the capacity for youth from a diverse range of backgrounds to lead and act towards sustainable development. There are additional barriers that vulnerable youth face. While this report does not pay particular attention to these issues, it is recommended that these are priorities for future research.

The effectiveness and appeal of youth programs and services are higher when young people are involved in influencing and shaping what is offered, providing opportunities for helping youth to help themselves. On the global level, there are many pressing global issues that require the enthusiasm and energy of youth in order to have a chance at being addressed, both in the present and in the future. When young people from different backgrounds and contexts are brought together to share experiences, a culture of peace and commitment is fostered which can last for generations. In the midst of exploring and making sense of the world, youth are naturally drawn to idea of being actors and agents of change. A central organizing characteristic of youth activity is one of constant invention. It is normally assumed that adults tend to hold on to what they think they have already learned, while youth tend to be more eager to re-invent their world. By definition, each generation of youth learns everything as new for the first time. It is this generation of youth that has learned how to embrace the power of networks. In many ways, this is a defining feature that characterizes youth leadership in this era, and will be explored further in this chapter.

### **7.1 - Insights**

This research process has helped to generate a wealth of insights related to youth-led action in an international context. Existing youth groups and organizations

are playing a central role in helping to catalyze and strengthen the capacity of youth leadership through a range of programs, access to networks and providing capacity building experiences. Almost all of the young people interviewed as part of the project's case studies referred to some experience outside their local context that they had access to. Experience that allowed them to gain awareness and that in many ways nurtured the development of their ideas. These experiences range from winning an essay competition and attending a conference, going on an internship or exchange program, participating in a workshop or leadership development event. Having the opportunity to meet people who think about the world differently, and who recognize their own ability to affect change, can fundamentally influence people's beliefs.

Another major theme that was evident was the inclusive leadership style that was valued. This approach and expectation persisted among many youth in both democratic and undemocratic countries. People expressed the importance of having leaders who are actively taking the needs of people into account. The organizational structures of youth-led initiatives tend to be less bureaucratic and hierarchical. The flatter structure allows for increased collaboration and shared ownership among the youth team, allowing an increased level of commitment. Many young people are increasingly seeing themselves as leaders, not only of the future, but of today. They demonstrate this belief through their actions and inquiry. The leadership capacity of young people needs to be nurtured with positive and thoughtful, constructive criticism. Feedback mechanisms can play an important role in strengthening confidence and the likelihood of success. However, if this involves negative criticism the opposite could also be true. Those who feel isolated or rejected by people who they value and respect as a result of their idea, may be less likely to feel encouraged

to develop it further. Mentorship across generations has played an important role among youth who have been able to get their projects across the ground.

Youth have a lot to gain from those with more experience, and they also have a lot to share, and can prove to be incredibly resourceful. As a result of new information and communication technologies, youth are growing up with instantaneous access to knowledge, case studies and resources that previous generations did not have. With the world's library at their fingertips, they are enabled to think through ideas more critically, and equip themselves with what they need to pursue their goals. Training and support mechanisms are needed to help those who are unable to navigate this material to make the best use of this access on their own. Support is also needed for youth leaders who are over-extended and require time for reflection and renewal.

By creating a more enabling environment for young people to go through the process of identifying needs and creating initiatives that they then implement to address the issues, an increased level of confidence, self-empowerment and resiliency is fostered. The challenges and lessons of leadership that are encountered in one's youth will be experiences that are carried into adulthood. Young people are impressionable, and desire a sense of belonging, while at the same time, a chance to explore their own individuality and identity. Self-directed projects are a natural way for youth to access the experiences they desire. Projects that relate to pressing social, cultural, environmental and political issues, raise awareness about the importance of a particular issue at a young age, and will likely leave an impact that carries forward in the years to come.

## 7.2 - Trends

The greatest overarching trend that emerged in this research process was the power of networks. This generation of youth is heavily impacted by new forms of social networking technologies that are increasingly accessible and will continue to evolve. Youth-led action projects are affected by networks in the sense that project leaders have access to a range of networking circles and opportunities through youth networks, mentorship networks, partnership networks and networks of influence.

Peer-to-peer youth networks with specific topics of interest or concern have emerged. These lead to the process of shared envisioning and the co-creating of ideas for a better world. In turn, this leads to strengthened action projects. While such activity often occurs in face-to-face settings, the internet has allowed for an incredible increase in opportunities for collaboration and networking among like-minded youth. Having a peer-to-peer approach for sharing interests and getting feedback is natural among youth. It allows for a sense of belonging to be fostered and new identities to be explored. New technologies that allow for social networking have further enabled knowledge sharing and teambuilding among youth groups.

Accessing knowledge, advice, expertise and support outside of youth networks has also proven to be critical to the success of new initiatives. Mentorship networks across generations have allowed for new projects to benefit from those with more experience. In the past, people only had access to mentors in their immediate circles, people they knew through family, education or workplace contacts. People are increasingly able to expand their contact circles in order to access expertise. Many youth-led organizations and initiatives are collaborative in their approach and have formed partnership networks to further strengthen their efforts. In building

relationships with groups that have common goals and objectives, duplication of effort is reduced, which can also increase overall impact.

As challenging as it may be, organizations committed to supporting youth participation and leadership development are increasingly working in complimentary ways. This has contributed towards an overall strengthened youth movement and led to greater awareness on the importance of youth participation. Networks of collaboration and knowledge sharing among peers, mentors and partners can ultimately lead to inward and outward influence. The project itself adapts, evolves and changes based on various sources of input, and the external environment is also influenced, especially when more people are reached. As seen through this research, young people have had an influence in political, economic, social, cultural and environmental contexts as a result of their ability to mobilize, organize, change consumption patterns, create alternatives, and express concerns in alternative media that attracts attention (especially over the internet). This ability to access and influence networks is a critical factor of success.

### **7.3 - Recommendations**

In reflecting on my own experiences over the past few years that both directly and indirectly connect to the research process outlined in the methodology, I have a range of insights related to supporting youth-led action in an international context. Considering all that was discussed in the contextual analysis in Chapter 6, prior to making broad recommendations and assumptions about what youth need, it is critical to consider the diverse context of youth and ensure that they are engaged in the process. An underlying issue is the question of whether or not youth leadership is learned or intrinsic. It is my belief that while many are born with natural talents and abilities, leadership can manifest itself in a variety of ways. The idea of leadership is

often presented as one that is narrow in scope and inaccessible. It is my belief that all people have the potential to lead - and that one's own ability and leadership capacity needs to be fostered at a young age, through an enabling environment, access to learning opportunities, and experiences of leadership.

The societal perception of youth is often seen as one that is negative, where youth take on very passive roles. In the classroom setting, youth are students who are expected to absorb information and present it back in a way that demonstrates understanding, but does not expect or facilitate engagement. In the context of the workplace, young people are often in positions with the lowest level of authority or decision-making power. Entry level positions do not offer opportunities for a great deal of influence. As consumers, youth are often encouraged to buy products that they don't need, without thinking critically about the effects it might have on their own well being, or the lives of those who produced the product.

A shift is beginning to take place where young people are transitioning from having passive roles to more active roles. From being passive students, they are peer mentors and trainers; from being voiceless employees and consumers they are driving innovation and corporate social responsibility from within and outside of companies; from being disengaged citizens, they are taking a stand and becoming active participants in public dialogue. In order to support this transition towards increased engagement, and to contribute towards creating a world with active citizens across all generations, youth first need to be recognized as stakeholders, with the capacity to contribute in their own right. Assumptions need to change with regards to young people and their ability to serve as community leaders, role models, problem solvers, innovators and change makers. This shift in attitudes will contribute towards a culture and world view in which youth are included as stakeholders in decision-making

processes, and are further enabled to explore and realize their potential. It will also contribute to building more resilient communities, with the capacity to respond to challenges that arise.

There are various ways in which to foster youth leadership once the basic assumptions about the capacity and potential of youth have shifted. Actively soliciting youth advice and input on issues that directly affect or relate to their life experiences is one way of improving consultation and decision-making processes, as well as encouraging youth to think about solutions to the problems they face. Having a chance to articulate concerns and ideas to an audience of policy-makers, executives, educators or others in high profile positions can be an empowering experience. Providing open spaces for youth to engage in dialogue with each other on issues of importance can also build capacity and confidence. Being in a position to take action can only come when issues and possible approaches to addressing them are identified. In some cases, safe spaces may not exist for youth to discuss sensitive topics such as sexuality, religion, racism or other issues. It is important to ensure that a level of facilitation exists in a way that encourages sharing and active listening among those participating. Youth-produced content and creative expression can also be used as a tool to facilitate dialogue and understanding. Encouraging and supporting the development of youth media in a range of forms such as writing, photography, film, radio, visual art and digital arts can serve as a communication mechanism both across and within cultures.

In addition to dialogue and expression, other ways to support young people's motivation to understand and act on issues include increasing exposure to new ideas and perspectives through workshops, training programs, internships and connections to inspiring people. Having positive and diverse activities available for youth to



participate and develop their skills will contribute to expanding their assets. It is important to have places for youth to go where they can express themselves, have fun, share opinions, access resources and explore ideas. These places can exist in both online and offline settings.

Supporting youth in achieving project leadership opportunities can occur through offering unique and challenging experiences that are defined by youth. If a particular challenge is faced in the context of a non-profit organization, a company or a policy-process, youth must be encouraged to submit proposals in which they can develop solutions, and offer budgets and resources to support the implementation process. This will encourage youth to think more creatively and become solution oriented. It will also allow for a deeper understanding of the complexity of both the issues and of being in a position of greater responsibility.

Supporting youth who are leading projects or initiatives within or outside of existing institutions means expanding and strengthening their networks, increasing mentorship and capacity opportunities, providing access to available resources, and creating more open learning environments to allow for enriched peer-to-peer learning. These strategies and suggestions offer concrete ways for organizations across sectors to more actively support youth leadership.

*To those who are youth leaders and reading this report I say. . .*

*continue to challenge*

*to innovate*

*to support one another*

*to engage across generations and cultures*

*to live your dreams.*

## 7.4 - Next Steps

...*imagine a multiplier effect*

Completing this report does not complete this Action Research process by any means. It marks an important step in a broader process of research and action that is focused on increasing the capacity of youth across cultures through youth-led action. This final report will be shared with research participants and further feedback will be invited. A Community of Practice on Youth-Led Action has emerged through the ongoing process of dialogue and consultation, and will continue to take shape through the TakingITGlobal.org online community. This research process was designed to inform the TakingITGlobal *Guide to Action*, which will be updated in the upcoming months based on the "Framework for Action" outlined in this report. Youth leaders will continue to participate as co-creators of the final guide. A wiki page will be set up on the internet which will allow people the possibility to make suggestions and edits to the document. Case studies will be included from those who have been part of the research process thus far, along with other youth who are identified. Multilingual case studies will be sought out and included to ensure that English speakers are not the only people whose experiences are shared. Once the next version of the *Guide to Action* is complete, it will be translated into at least 6 languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic and Russian), with others to follow as determined by volunteer youth translators. It will then be distributed to TakingITGlobal's network of over 100,000 online community members, as well as through partner networks. Versions of the guide will also be developed with a thematic focus. One that is in progress will focus on HIV/AIDS and will be distributed at the AIDS 2006 conference. My intention is also to be able to co-develop activities to support the *Guide to Action* in order to be able to have youth around the world facilitate workshops in their communities. The aim is to catalyze a multiplier effect.

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## Appendices

### APPENDIX 1 - Consent Form

*(participants will read and click 'I agree' button prior to responding to survey)*

June 20, 2005

The following survey is being conducted by Jennifer Corriero, a Masters student at York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) whose Area of Concentration is Youth Engagement and Capacity-Building Across Cultures and is run in partnership with TakingITGlobal.

The purpose of the research is to explore, understand and evaluate the various approaches that young leaders have taken in trying to create change to improve their communities in various cross-cultural and geographical contexts. The methodology involves an online survey and follow-up consultation with select survey participants. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and the online consultation will take place over 2 weeks. Participating in this research will contribute towards the re-development of TakingITGlobal's guide to action which will then be translated into many languages. The guide may include quotes and case studies from the survey. Unless your explicit permission is given with a copy of the quotation, your name will not be used in any of the results or follow-up publications which assures confidentiality and anonymity. You have the freedom to withdraw or deny answers without prejudice.

This survey is part of the research for my major project at FES. By participating, you will contribute an effort of strengthening youth leadership globally and will have access to a summary of the research results. Given that the survey has global reach and some forms of leadership are not acceptable in certain countries, please use your discretion when responding to questions as nothing should be offered outside of what you see as a constraint. The results of the survey will be kept indefinitely for ongoing reference.

The research has been reviewed and approved by the FES Human Participants Research Committee on behalf of York University. If you have any further questions about participating, you can contact:

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19 Duncan, Suite 505  
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 3H1  
[research@takingitglobal.org](mailto:research@takingitglobal.org)  
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|   |   |
|---|---|
| Kristin Denault<br>Manager, Faculty Governance,<br>Faculty of Environmental Studies<br>York University<br>416-736-2100 x33783 | Manager of Research Ethics<br>Office of Research Services<br>Ross S414, York University<br>416-736-5005 |
|---|---|

Please proceed with the survey questions. I consent based on the above terms.

## APPENDIX 2 - Online Survey Questions

### 8. Background Information

- 8.1. Age | Gender | rural/urban | Country of Origin | Currently living in City, Country
- 8.2. What organization(s) are you affiliated with?
- 8.3. Think of one youth-oriented initiative that you have undertaken. The questions that follow will relate back to this particular initiative. Please provide a brief description of the action(s) that you planned to undertake and what was carried out.

### 9. Needs Addressed & Types of Actions

- 9.1. What problem/need were you trying to address and why do you feel that this issue is important?
- 9.2. What motivated you to act on this issue?
- 9.3. What steps did you take to act on this issue?
- 9.4. Are you aware of other groups who are trying to address the same issue? If so, what is unique about your approach? Did you collaborate with any of these groups? ( how?)

### 10. Barriers and Enablers

- 10.1. Was there a core group/team of people that you worked with in trying to achieve your goals?
- 10.2. to achieve your goals?
- 10.3. How did people (both within your group and outside of your group) respond when you presented the ideas behind the initiative?
- 10.4. Did you have mentors that you were able to turn to for advice? If so, how did you connect with them and what was their area of expertise? In what ways were they most helpful?
- 10.5. What resources and support did you draw upon to implement your plans?
- 10.6. Did you create a strategy that fell into place and worked out or did you need to make significant adaptations to your plans?
- 10.7. What are some of the challenges that you faced in implementing your initiative? How did you respond to these challenges?
- 10.8. In what ways did technology enable and/or hinder the development of your initiative?
- 10.9. Were you involved in a program that allowed you to develop skills which you were able to apply to your initiative? If so, describe the program and how it helped most?

### 11. Results, Impact and Assessment

- 11.1. What do you perceive to be the impact of your initiative?
- 11.2. How do you assess the initiative in relation to its objective?
- 11.3. In what ways could your initiative be replicated in other settings?
- 11.4. Did you have an opportunity to celebrate the success of the achievements of your initiative?

12. Cultural Context

- 12.1. *How do you define leadership?*
- 12.2. *What are the qualities, characteristics and values that you expect of a leader?*
- 12.3. *To what extent do you think you demonstrated these qualities?*
- 12.4. *What are the external factors that have influenced the nature of your initiative (ie: local culture, socio/economic/political situation, environmental context etc?)*

13. Lessons and Skills Gained

- 13.1. *What lessons did you learn throughout the process of trying to create change and how could the initiative have been improved?*
- 13.2. *How has your experience with this initiative helped you grow as a person?*
- 13.3. *What advice would you offer to other young people who are trying to carry out similar actions?*

14. Future Plans for Involvement

- 14.1. *Would you participate in a similar future initiative? (Why or why not?)*
- 14.2. *What are your future plans for involvement in this particular initiative or other similar initiatives?*

### APPENDIX 3 - Summary of Needs Identified and Key Actions Taken (from Online Survey Results)

| Health  | Peer Education, Awareness Campaigns and Materials, Open discussion, Improve waste management systems, Friendships   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The spread of <b>HIV/AIDS</b>...an issue raised by many young people across Africa and Asia. “Adolescent reproductive health – this issue is important to the Philippines and around the world because of the lack of information adolescents have on the issues of STDs and HIV/AIDS...and the connected problems of drug addition, alcoholism and suicide” (Philippines, M, 25)</li> <li>• “Rape and violence against women including <b>women’s rights</b>, peer pressure, female anatomy and health” (Kenya, F, 20)</li> <li>• “Surveys have showed an increase in the number of <b>smoking</b> students in Kampala and other districts. Many start smoking at the University so it is important to stop students from picking up the habit at the university.” (Uganda, M, 26)</li> <li>• “We wanted to address diseases caused by <b>poor hygiene</b> and lack of waste management systems. The issue was important as accumulation of filth and poor hygiene in the slums caused numerous diseases including malaria, tuberculosis, leptospirosis and even had the potential to cause pneumonic plague.” (India, M, 26)</li> <li>• “Trying to address needs of persons with <b>disabilities</b> especially persons with intellectual disabilities.” (Ghana, M, 22)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created awareness to football captains who do not have access because they are not literate enough” (Nigeria, F, 22)</li> <li>• Part of an HIV/AIDS Campaign, held an event on World AIDS Day (Zimbabwe, M, 23), seminars for students (Nigeria, M)</li> <li>• Providing a team of experts and information materials</li> <li>• “I have been a peer educator for a couple of months” (Kenya, F)</li> <li>• “Open discussions on the effects of smoking to human life, used fliers posters and video, also used panel displays” (Uganda, M)</li> <li>• “I was a student leader of the National Social Service Scheme in my college at the University of Mumbai. We held a camp where members spent time in Bombay’s slums and tried to install a better hygiene and waste-management system. The camp was held for 10 days in various slums across the city and 6 groups of 20 students each worked per slum.” (India, M, 26)</li> <li>• Initiated a youth-led organization with a program that involves one to one friendship programs for students with disabilities and organizing entertainment programs. (Ghana, M, 22)</li> </ul> |



| Environment   | Tree Planting Initiatives, Raising Awareness  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deforestation and desertification: “forests play an important role in our ecosystem as they act as carbon sink and are homes to millions of species. Their disappearance poses a serious threat to our survival and to millions of species.” (<i>Uganda, M, 25</i>)</li> <li>Climate Change: “we recognize the need for preserving and saving the natural habitat in which we live as this is the future we inherit”. (<i>Jamaica, F, 24</i>)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many people are undertaking tree planting initiatives: “Instill a culture of natural resources conservation, develop and spread a culture of tree planting and conservation, contribute to greening of cultures and communities...” (<i>Uganda, M, 25</i>)</li> <li>Undertook national student conferences to raise awareness</li> <li>“We carried out a website with plenty of fun information about our environment” (<i>United Kingdom, F, 18</i>)</li> </ul> |

| Intolerance and Conflict   | Open Discussion Forums, Summer Camp, Theatre, Cultural Events  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Young people are being killed and used as <i>child soldiers</i>. The objective was to map a way forward on how best to help those affected to reshape their lives after the war.” (<i>Zimbabwe, M, 26</i>)</li> <li>“Need to educate Palestinian and international youth about the importance of the non-violent movement in addressing social issues” (<i>Palestine, F, 24</i>)</li> <li>Need to “reduce intolerance and xenophobia, reduce the rate of <b><i>hate speech</i></b> as well as promote multicultural understanding and interethnic communication” (<i>Russia, M, 22</i>)</li> <li>“Need to establish some sort of cross-cultural understanding – telling others about our culture, traditions, religion and country and finding out about their in order to identify common values. (<i>Saudi Arabia, M, 23</i>)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Organize Open Forums to discuss the role of young people in national politics and world conflicts.” (<i>Zimbabwe, M, 26</i>)</li> <li>Launched an Activists Summer Camp as part of a Peace and Reconciliation Department. 10-day training summer camp brought together Palestinian and intl. youth (<i>Palestine, F, 24</i>)</li> <li>Formed a theatre group and worked with a project called “Tolerance Theatre”. The play depict “a complex portrayal that dispels the simplistic media stereotypes”. It is followed up with materials about human rights and civic education. (<i>Russia, M</i>)</li> <li>Facilitation of online discussion forums and plans to run educational and cultural open forums (face-to-face).</li> </ul> |

| <b>Poverty &amp; Hunger</b>  | <b>Building Houses, Food/Clothes drive, Fundraising for Libraries</b>  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem of poverty housing - “proper and adequate housing is a component of the right to life because people cannot enjoy a good quality life without proper housing” (<i>Uganda, M, 23</i>)</li> <li>• Lack of sufficient food and clothing in slum areas</li> <li>• “These children in poor countries in rural places have nothing of our century! Without that they can’t do good studies and then have good qualifications to help their parents to improve the situation of their country” (<i>France, F, 16</i>)</li> <li>• “Poverty is a lack of productivity, a lack of skill, a lack of value – all of which may be changed by commercial value.” (<i>Canada</i>)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertook an ‘International Youth Build’ – planned to build 25 houses for poor families (only able to build 10 houses). Also organized training workshops on volunteerism. (<i>Uganda, M, 23</i>)</li> <li>• Gave foods and used clothes to people living in the slum area (<i>Philippines, M, 23</i>)</li> <li>• Fundraising to build a small centre for children to put a library with resources such as books and computers</li> <li>• “I strive to make myself a living example of my own words by nurturing and guiding today’s youth I may better the odds and make a different for those around me.” (<i>Canada, M, 25</i>)</li> </ul> |

| <b>Unemployment</b>  | <b>Skills Training, Mentorship Programs</b>  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many young people with good talents are living in poverty because they are unemployed and illiterate (<i>Uganda, F, 23</i>)</li> <li>• Unemployment is very high. “we wanted to facilitate youth through training in the vocational area namely: sewing and cooking as well as ICT to help prepare for employment” (<i>Jamaica, M, 19</i>)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting unemployed vulnerable youth by attempting to find a market for their talents (i.e.: needle work, arts and crafts, hair dressing etc) of vulnerable youths. Also encourages youth to use money accumulated in formal education (<i>Uganda, F, 23</i>)</li> <li>• Held community meetings and invited businesses and organizations to assist in the project. Began a club and held cooking lessons, sewing lessons &amp; reading/writing lessons. (<i>Jamaica, M, 19</i>)</li> </ul> |

| <b>Education &amp; Literacy</b>   | <b>Student Clubs, Advocacy, Awards Programs</b>   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The current education system in Malaysia is too stifling and does not allow for creativity or out-of-the-box thinking. There are many youths in Malaysia who would love to experiment with different forms of learning that suit them best” <i>(Malaysia, F, 20)</i></li> <li>• “Inadequate level of skill that teachers had with ICTs was a major problem particularly with the government’s aim of improving ICT use in schools. ICT can greatly enhance student learning experiences. <i>(New Zealand, F, 19)</i></li> <li>• Issues related to high school drop outs and high illiteracy levels (partially because parents/guardians cannot afford high school education for their children and in some cases cannot even afford putting a meal on the table). <i>(Kenya, F, 26)</i></li> <li>• Media Literacy and need to eliminate corruption in media by preparing future generation of journalists. <i>(Philippines, M, 23)</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project called ‘Brick in the Wall’ that raises awareness of alternative education amongst Malaysian youth.</li> <li>• Student club (Tech Angels) providing accessible support to school teachers and staff to ensure effective integration of ICT into classrooms and learning. Club provides one-on-one student to teacher mentoring on how to use technology.</li> <li>• Began income generating imitative making handcrafts like red ribbons. Forming youth clubs at the community level to address HIV/AIDS, drugs and education. Working to educate women on the importance of education. Attend ‘chief barazas’ to address social and political issues. <i>(Kenya, F, 26)</i></li> <li>• Established youth media group to converge school newspapers, supporting young journalists and running an awards program.</li> </ul> |

| <b>Digital Divide</b>  | <b>Internet Literacy programs, policy advocacy, set up telecentres</b>  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem of internet illiteracy: “being internet literate is important because most communication today in the world is done through the internet”. <i>(Cameroon, M, 25)</i></li> <li>• Lack of conducive policies at the national level to accelerate ICT related development. The inequitable distribution of telecommunications infrastructure due to poor electrification of rural areas and poor living standard... <i>(Malawi, M, 26)</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained a copy of a booklet called ‘Internet Basics’ from the UNESCO website and developed an internet literacy program in various schools.</li> <li>• Policy advocacy through National Information Society Youth Campaigns and involvement in decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Establishment of a multimedia centre (telecentre)</li> </ul> |

| Children/Youth Participation and Development  | Conferences & Festivals, Youth Councils, Youth Radio/Media   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The lack of enough confidence and motivation to pursue and birth dreams that will make our future” (Nigeria, M, 21)</li> <li>• Need for full participation of youth in national, regional and international issues. “Since the youths are the engine for development and any nation’s future is seen through the current activities of the youths, a catalyst for these valuable resources must be present in every society. (Zimbabwe, M, 21)</li> <li>• “voice of the children/youth need to be heard ad the youth to shape themselves. I found that children had problems that affected them so much but these were only discussed on their behalf. When a child talks about an issue that affects him/her a possible solution can be derived because they feel what affects them.” (Zambia, M, 25)</li> <li>• “National Youth Week in Australia is a brave commitment by our governments at all levels to support young people and their value. Problem is they do this by handing out lots of small grants to young people to run dance parties art exhibitions and the like only reinforcing the stereotypes of young Australians as mindless consumers of cultural products. (Australia, M, 22)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dare to Dream conference series designed to empower youth on what is important in life. (Nigeria, M, 21)</li> <li>• Formed an organization that was transformed into a department in the Ministry of Youth Development and Employment Creation. Currently forming the United Nations Youth Association of Zimbabwe.</li> <li>• “Radio production programs to raise out on issues concerning children to parents and the fellow children/youth. Another issue was to be taking part in global programs that concern the development of youth/children. So far we have produced 7 radio programs participated in the Walk the World Fight Hunger program. (Zambia, M, 25)</li> <li>• Established a local youth council to provide input to Municipal Council. Involved identifying stakeholders, conducting and assessment and holding consultations. (Kenya, M, 24)</li> <li>• Coordinated an online festival - a conference for young people done completely online. It ran as part of Australia’s national youth week and consisted of 3 streams; Global Issues, Media &amp; Democracy, Creative Expression. (Australia, M, 22)</li> </ul> |

*“Each day countless children around the world are exposed to dangers that hamper their growth and development. They suffer immensely as casualties of war and violence; as victims of racial discrimination, apartheid, aggression, foreign occupation and annexation; as refugees and displaced children forced to abandon their homes and their roots, as disabled; or as victims of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. They also suffer from the scourges of poverty and economic crisis, from hunger and homelessness, from epidemics and literacy, from degradation of the environment. These problems are very strong issues in my country and the world as a whole and they are the main point of focus. Until these issues are solved I will never give up to the challenges faced by my peers.” (Sierra Leone, M, 21)*

## APPENDIX 4 - Online Consultation Questions

### DAY 1 - Inspiration and Catalyst

- The online survey results show that people are often most motivated by life experiences, awareness of the problem, people and personal values.
- How can other youth be encouraged or inspired to take action?

### Day 2 - Reflection and Identification

- What strategies can you offer to youth who are trying to identify their project goals?
- 60% of respondents said that people responded positively when the initial ideas behind the initiative were presented. 32% had mixed reactions.
- 74% of respondents said that they had mentors they were able to turn to for advice. Do you think that the way people react to your idea (ie: positive or negative), has an effect on whether or not you have the confidence to implement it?

### Day 3 - Collaboration and Teambuilding

- 88% of participants who responded said that there was a core group of people that they worked with in trying to achieve their goals. What makes a great team? What are some of the ways that teamwork can be fostered?
- Do you think that collaboration with other groups is important when working to create social change? Do you think that enough collaboration exists?

### Day 4 - Planning and Implementation

- When making a plan, what are some of the key issues to consider?
- A range of internal and external challenges were identified by survey participants. What do you see as the most common challenges youth face when taking action? How can they be overcome?

### Day 5 - Adaptation and Evaluation

- 73% of respondents created a strategy that required adaptations while being implemented. How can youth leaders better adapt to changes that arise? Can you give an example of a time when you had to adapt to changing circumstances.
- Often times, when setting out to have an impact on a social, environmental, cultural or political level, one finds that things take time and that it is difficult to know if you have really made an impact. If you cannot clearly communicate the impact of your efforts, you are less likely to gain support. In what ways did you measure and communicate the impact of your initiative?

### Day 6 - Celebration and Next Steps

- 48% of respondents had an opportunity to celebrate their achievements while 52% did not (and in some cases hadn't thought about it). At what stages of the project do you think that it is most appropriate to celebrate achievements?
- Many survey participants spoke about wanting to scale up their projects. What mechanisms can be put in place to support this process?

- How can youth leaders who have access to opportunities and experiences be further encouraged to share their insights, access and skills with disadvantaged youth?

#### Day 7 - Ongoing Learning

- 99% of survey participants stated that their experience with this initiative helped them grow as a person. How can people who are leading projects ensure that time is taken for reflection and learning?

### APPENDIX 5 - In-Depth Interview Participant Summary

| Country               | Name      | Gender | Category             | Description                                     |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------|----------------------|---|
| Argentina             | Cecile    | Female | Environment          | Environmental education website in Spanish      |
| Canada                | Shahmeer  | Male   | Education/Literacy   | Literacy through Hip Hop                        |
| China                 | Wu Yang   | Male   | Environment          | Household wastewater recycling management       |
| Fiji                  | Nileshini | Female | Unemployment         | Deaf Handmade Card Project                      |
| Germany               | Wolfgang  | Male   | Youth Participation  | youth run policy test with political candidates |
| India                 | Ajay      | Male   | Health               | Improving hygiene in the slums of Bombay        |
| Iraq                  | Nour      | Female | Participation/Health | Online forum for Baghdad medical students       |
| Israel                | Einav     | Female | Intolerance          | Peace-building project (dialogue)               |
| Malawi                | Mabvuto   | Male   | Health               | HIV/AIDS education among vulnerable youths      |
| New Zealand           | Cherrie   | Female | Education/Literacy   | Training teachers on use of technology          |
| Nigeria               | Gbenga    | Male   | Digital Divide       | Lagos Digital Village (ICT Training for youth)  |
| Russia                | Sergey    | Male   | Intolerance          | Through Theatre and follow-up workshop          |
| Rwanda                | Sangwa    | Male   | Digital Divide       | ICT and E-Literacy Course for youth & children  |
| Serbia and Montenegro | Nikola    | Male   | Intolerance          | Resistance Movement & Cultural Association      |
| Slovenia              | Ziga      | Male   | Youth Participation  | Slovenian Youth Association                     |
| Turkey                | Ali       | Male   | Youth Participation  | National Youth Parliament in Turkey             |
| USA                   | Lina      | Female | Poverty              | United Students for Fair Trade Campaign         |
| Uruguay               | Fabrizio  | Male   | Youth Participation  | Role playing game and community projects        |

## APPENDIX 6 - TakingITGlobal Background

TakingITGlobal (TIG) is an international organization, led by youth, and empowered by technology. TIG brings together young people (aged 13-31) in over 200 countries and territories within international networks to connect to opportunities, and collaborate on concrete projects - addressing global problems and creating positive change.

With headquarters in Toronto, Canada, TakingITGlobal has a team of over 20 dynamic young staff and interns along with hundreds of volunteers around the world.

TakingITGlobal is uniquely positioned at the intersection of key global trends with the aim of:

- Strengthening the capacity of young people as leaders and stakeholders
- Fostering cross-cultural dialogue and understanding
- Increasing awareness and involvement in global issues

### Key Program Areas

- **Community engagement:** We run the world's most popular on-line community for young people interested in making a difference, receiving 40 million hits per month and with over 100,000 members from across the world. Available in French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, English and Portuguese, the website offers a platform for young people from around the world to share their ideas, experiences and aspirations through the Global Gallery, Panorama publication, discussion boards and blogs. It connects youth to resources and opportunities that relate to their interests through a range of databases listing of organizations and events as well as financial and professional opportunities. It also facilitates local and global dialogue and action through our Featured Themes which focus on different issues, as well as databases of youth-action projects and collaboration tools such as TIGgroups.
- **Organizational engagement:** We strengthen the capacity of youth programs and organizations with web-based tools required to promote their initiatives, connect with their network & collaborate with each other. Our aim is to help bridge what we call the 'continuity gap' between youth programs and networks. We provide technology-based support to partners including the Global Youth Action Network, Chat the Planet, the Youth Employment Summit Campaign, Oxfam's International Youth Parliament, Peace Child International, UNA USA, UNESCO's Youth Unit, Digital Divide Network and Global Youth Service Day.
- **Educational engagement:** We explore and create meaningful classroom implementations of technology with an international flavor and real-world application. By engaging educators as advisors, creating and archiving classroom activities, and providing online tools for students and teachers, we are enabling teachers to enhance their students' learning using TakingITGlobal.org. We are in the process of significantly enhancing our TIGed tools and expanding our teacher network in the US and internationally. We also work to inspire student engagement at conference and events, and develop partnerships with existing educational organizations. Most recently, in partnership with the International Society for Technology in Education, we created an online space for over 150 students from 65 countries to contribute to an important discussion on the future of education and

the role of technology, with four chosen to represent the group at the National Educational Computing Conference in June 2005.

- **Thematic engagement:** We support youth input into a variety of international decision-making processes including the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth +10, World Summit on the Information Society, Millennium Development Goals +5, World Urban Forum, UNESCO Youth Forum and International AIDS Conference. This work is carried out in partnership with key partners including the UN Youth Programme, UN Millennium Campaign, UNESCO Youth Unit, Global Knowledge Partnership, Environmental Youth Alliance, Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS and Global Youth Action Network.
- **Local engagement:** We are working to ensure our work is relevant to local communities and promotes peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, grassroots networking and youth-led action. TIG “Open Forums” are meetings held by youth in local communities exploring issues related to our Featured Themes. On the web, we have launched “Country Sites” for each country - and are progressively seeing these translated into local languages. Our ‘Creating Local Connections’ program provides in-depth outreach and engagement through f workshops, training, youth-media, and educational activities.

## Funding and Recognition

TakingITGlobal’s supporters have included: RBC Financial Group, Microsoft, the Canadian International Development Agency, Google, Salesforce.com Foundation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Gordon Foundation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Canadian Dept of Foreign Affairs, Hewlett Packard, UNDP, and the Lifebridge Foundation. In 2002, TakingITGlobal was a finalist in the Stockholm Challenge, and a focus project of the World Economic Forum’s Technology Empowerment Network. TIG has been featured in press from TIME Magazine, USA Today, Red Herring Magazine, Fast Company, and Stern, to the South China Morning Post.

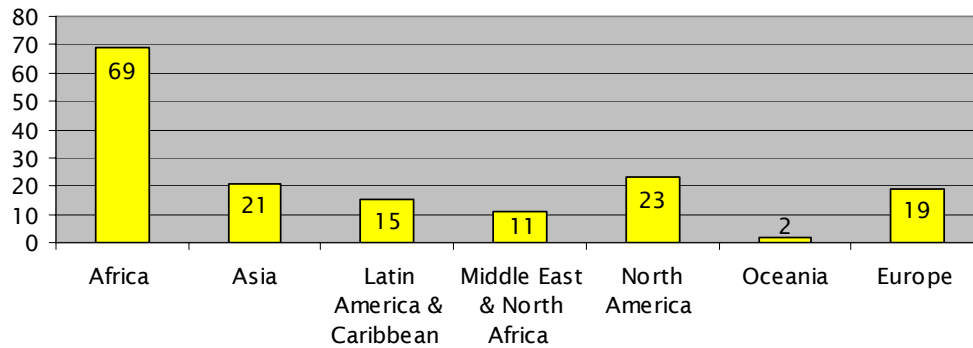


APPENDIX 7 - COMPILED RESULTS for Online Survey Responses

**Regional Breakdown:**

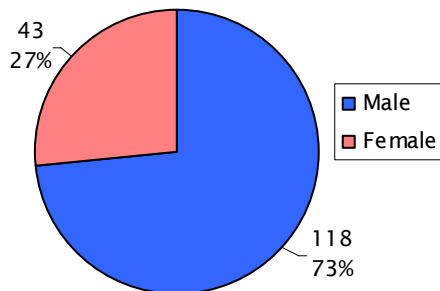
| REGION                     | Survey 1  | Survey 2   | TOTAL      |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Africa                     | 25        | 44         | 69         |
| Asia                       | 7         | 14         | 21         |
| Latin America & Caribbean  | 4         | 11         | 15         |
| Middle East & North Africa | 5         | 6          | 11         |
| North America              | 1         | 22         | 23         |
| Oceania                    | 1         | 1          | 2          |
| Europe                     | 4         | 15         | 19         |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>47</b> | <b>113</b> | <b>160</b> |

Survey Participants by Region

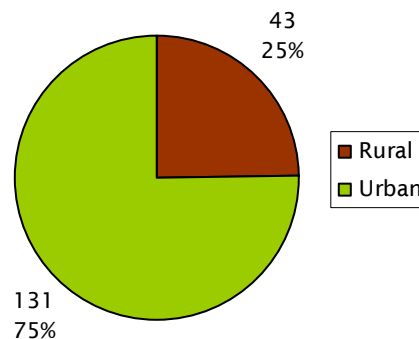


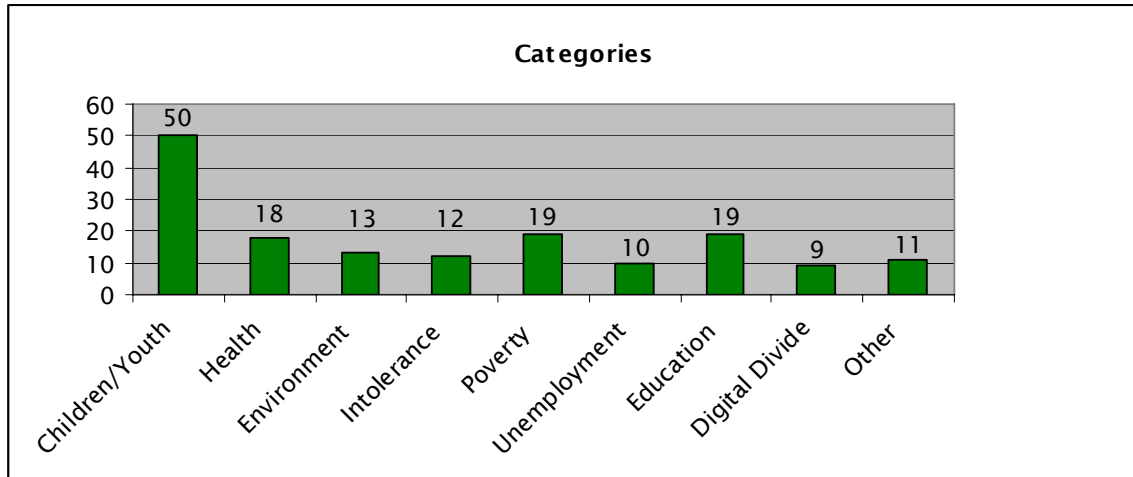
- Survey participants are from 59 countries including: Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Dominica, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Macedonia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands Antilles, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia & Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Gender Breakdown



Rural/Urban Breakdown





Each of the participants were asked to identify an initiative that they had taken. The Children/Youth Participation Category is cross-cutting in many ways and perhaps should not have been listed as a drop-down option (as some could have been re-categorized). Based on the descriptions provided, the following is a summary of the key issues being addressed along with an overview of the approaches taken to create change:

#### Children/Youth Participation and Development

- *Problem/Need:* Lack of structures to support youth participation in decision-making, apathy and lack of young people about politics, lack of opportunities or information about opportunities and resources for youth, need for media literacy
- *Actions:* Conferences, Summit's & Festivals, Youth Councils, Youth Radio/Media, Games, Leadership Training and/or Forum, Mapping Youth Organizations and Groups, Exchange Program, Role Playing, Promote Volunteerism, Community Service Announcement Video, Mentorship Project, Policy Test

#### Health

- *Problem/Need:* Tobacco smoke, violence against women, spread of HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, disabilities and need for accessibility, poor hygiene/sanitation,
- *Actions:* Peer Education, Awareness Campaigns and Materials, Open discussion, Improve waste management systems, Friendships, Playground Project (raised funds for activity bin with jump ropes, soccer balls, chalk etc), counseling centre

#### Environment

- *Problem/Need:* Environmental degradation, rights of poor farmers, deforestation and desertification, climate change,
- *Actions:* Tree Planting Initiatives, Raising Awareness, Environmental Education, Eco Theatre, Public Speaking Competition (topic of agriculture), Cleaning Public Spaces,

#### Intolerance and Conflict

- *Problem/Need:* Cultural gaps, need for conflict resolution, unjust structures, use of children and youth as child soldiers, need to reduce hate speech and xenophobia, need to establish multicultural understanding
- *Actions:* Open Discussion Forums, Summer Camp, Theatre, Cultural Events, Awareness raising about human rights violations,

### Poverty & Hunger

- *Problem/Need:* Proper and adequate housing, global poverty and inequality, poverty linkage to AIDS, illiteracy,
- *Actions:* Building Houses, Food/Clothes drive, Fundraising for Libraries, student organizer of Advocacy Campaigns (ie: Fair Trade), distribution of airline kits, develop a network

### Unemployment

- *Problem/Need:* High unemployment rates among youth, relationship between unemployment and despair & civil unrest, waste of talent and potential
- *Actions:* Skills & vocational Training, Mentorship Programs, link grad students with employment, community service internships (for experience to be gained)

### Education & Literacy

- *Problem/Need:* Importance of increasing quality and accessibility of education, literacy as a route out of poverty and ignorance, stifling education system does not allow for creativity/initiative, teacher training, drop out rates, illiteracy levels,
- *Actions:* Student Clubs, Advocacy, Awards Programs, National Student Day of Action (awareness raising, march to local MP's office), read to illiterate people, Literacy through Hip Hop,

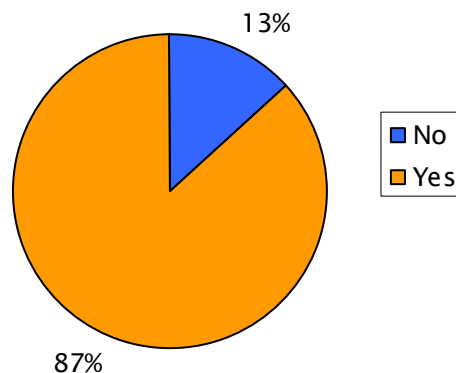
### Digital Divide

- *Problem/Need:* Lack of access to technology, lack of relevant online content, lack of conducive national ICT policies,
- *Actions:* Internet Literacy programs and workshops, policy advocacy, set up TeleCentres, Research best practices for design usability & create websites

### Other

- *Problem/Need:* Disaster Relief, Gender Disparities, low social skills of young adults who come out of orphan houses, exchange between sports groups, rural urban migration, Sustainable Development, Human Rights, Animal Cruelty
- *Actions:* fundraiser, quota system for female representatives, therapy through art

Are you affiliated with any organizations?



87% of survey participants are affiliated with an organization. Groups identified range in scale from local, national, regional and international. A range of the groups are affiliated with educational institutions and/or youth networks.

## 2.2 – MOTIVATIONS: What motivated you to act on this issue?

### **Life Experiences**

- Positive or negative
- Personal hardships (i.e. born in slum area, was a street kid)
- Suffering or Death of family or community member
- Travel, site visit, exchange program, leadership program, event or seminar
- Involvement as a club member or volunteer

### **Awareness of Problem or Need**

- Statistics, frustration with situation (ie: injustice, illiteracy rates, growing unemployment rates, infection rates etc), desire to challenge stereotypes, Read a book or article about a problem or possibilities, Research,

### **People**

- Elders, trusted adult who 'believed in me', peers, other youth leaders, networks, feeling of solidarity with present and future generations,

### **Personal Values**

- Love for country/community, natural interests and passions
- ancient knowledge or wisdom, religion/faith
- Desire for recognition
- Desire to help others and share good fortune
- Desire for a better society/world for all
- Desire to create positive change

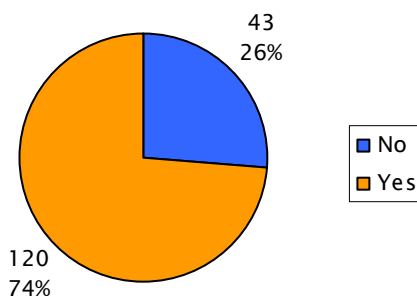
Ongoing motivation sustained with hope/vision for potential impact

## 2.3 STEPS TAKEN: What steps did you take to act on this issue?

A range of initial steps taken include the following:

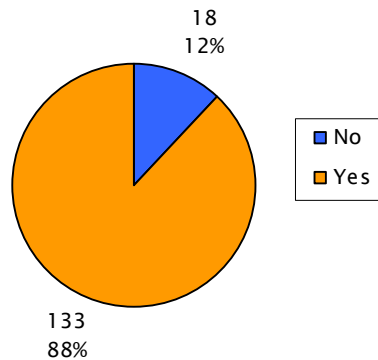
- Research of situation and initial consultation process to further understand needs and brainstorm ideas for action
- Development of a plan of action and/or proposal, targets and goals set
- Support sought from friends, mentors, advisors, volunteers, institutions
- Created networks and forged partnerships
- Raised awareness about activities and progress (blogs, online project profile, media, speeches, events)

## 2.4 - OTHER GROUPS: Are you aware of other groups who are trying to address the same issue?



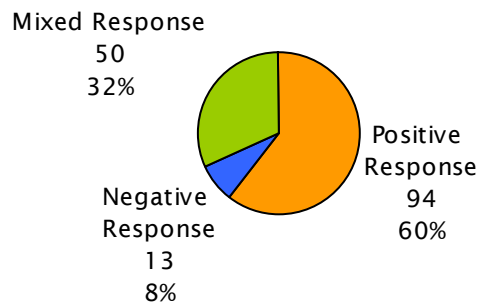
74% of respondents are aware of other groups who are trying to address the same issue. Survey participants explained that the major difference is that similar initiatives were not youth led or had a different reach or target audience (ie: global organization, or based in a different region). In many cases, collaborations exist, even on the simplest level of exchanging knowledge and sharing resources.

3.1 - CORE GROUP: Was there a core group/team of people that you worked with in trying to achieve your goals?



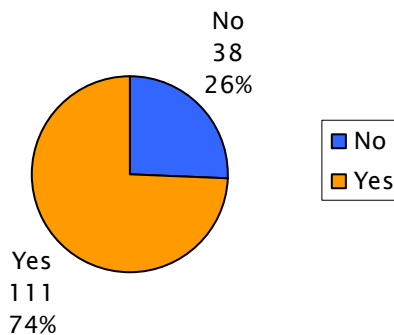
88% of participants who responded said that there was a core group of people that they worked with in trying to achieve their goals. Team members include people gathered who share a common interest, existing student clubs or chapters, advisors and mentors.

3.2 - RESPONSE: How did people (both within your group and outside of your group) respond when you presented the ideas behind the initiative?



60% of respondents said that people responded positively when the initial ideas behind the initiative were presented. 32% had mixed reactions.

3.3 - MENTORS: Did you have mentors that you were able to turn to for advice?



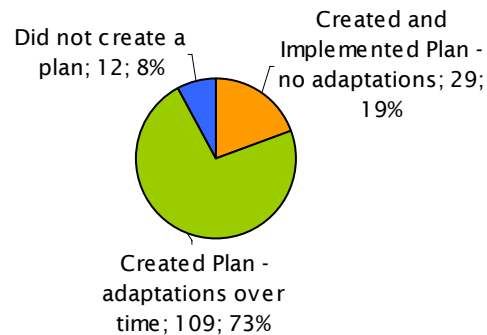
74% of respondents said that they had mentors they were able to turn to for advice.

### 3.4 - RESOURCES/SUPPORT: What resources and support did you draw upon to implement your plans?

Survey participants described a range of resources and support that they were able to draw upon including:

- **Media:** air time on radio, print, television, internet, awareness attracts support
- **People:** friends, volunteers, expertise within team, mentors or advisors, community support, own knowledge
- **Organizations:** partnerships fostered to lower costs, access resources (ie: posters, materials, networks), development of skills through training, technical assistance, legitimacy through umbrella framework
- **Rooms (for meetings or events):** offered by schools, libraries etc.
- **Funds:** raised through cash donation, small grant, scholarship, \$ from shows,
- **Resources/Materials:** distributed documentation, guides, DVDs, books
- **Research:** Survey conducted, literature

### 3.5 - ADAPTATION: Did you create a strategy that fell into place and worked out or did you need to make significant adaptations to your plans?



73% of respondents created a strategy that required adaptations while being implemented. 19% of respondents had a strategy that fell into place.

### 3.6 - CHALLENGES: What are some of the challenges that you faced in implementing your initiative? How did you respond to these challenges?

Survey participants identified a range of challenges faced both internally and externally:

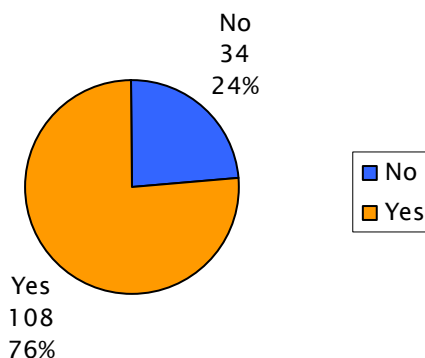
**Internal Challenges:** heavy workload, lack of infrastructure (electricity, internet, telephone, fax), recruiting, managing and motivating volunteers, working virtually, team dynamics and internal politics, building trust, language barriers, feeling alone, how to structure the group and decision-making, responding to high demand/interest, gender dynamics (ie: low interest from females)

**External Challenges:** confusion about initiative, doubt or lack of understanding, indifference, criticism, negative perception of youth (and young person as leader of initiative), changing perception of the 'unknown other', financial needs/constraints, high costs of operation, cultural differences, need for parental support (when working with children), gaining support, global context of other issues being more important (ie: terrorism), poverty, bureaucracy, registering the organization with the government, language barriers (ie: translation of communications)

**3.7 - TECHNOLOGY: In what ways did technology enable and/or hinder the development of your initiative?**

- When people discussed the role of technology, many survey participants explained that it helped to make the program or initiative possible and/or playing a key role in supporting **communications** (internally among team members and externally for promotions and awareness-raising) as well as **research** (gathering information), **planning** and **shared learning** (able to discuss challenges and best practices). Many participants discussed the importance of computers and the internet as well as use of text messages and cell phones. People also spoke about the power of being able to print out posters and relevant materials. A variety of initiatives involve various forms of technology such as the use of a tractor to dig trenches, and the use of a sewing machine in making clothes.
- Those who said that technology hindered the development of their initiative felt this because there was little to no access in their community, thus leaving people behind or disadvantaged. Unreliable access to electricity is also a connected issue.

**3.8 - PROGRAMS: Were you involved in a program that allowed you to develop skills which you were able to apply to your initiative?**



**76%** of respondents were involved in a program that allowed them to develop skills that they were able to apply to their initiative. Examples of these include volunteerism and involvement in community service projects, youth leadership workshops, summer camps, business and entrepreneurship programs, training programs on HIV/AIDS, academic studies, and activities on internationally recognized days.

#### 4.1 IMPACT: What do you perceive to be the impact of your initiative?

##### **Children/Youth Participation and Development**

- Voices of children and youth are heard
- Increased representation of children and youth in decision-making processes (ie: 30% increase in youth representation on Boards of Director's in the region)
- Making this community filled with people who have a heart for volunteerism
- Capacity building among youth
- Create a feeling of responsibility for future generations
- Communities empowered
- Increased knowledge of civil society in community/country, more open society

##### **Health**

- Reduced early pregnancy rates
- Healthy society, disease prevention
- Advanced status of persons with disabilities
- Reduction in smoking
- Change policy so that disco's and bars are non-smoking places
- Reduce the number of blind people and HIV/AIDS affected disabled people
- Improved health situation

##### **Environment**

- Increased awareness about the environment

##### **Intolerance and Conflict**

- Realization among the masses about problems of intolerance and human rights violations
- Cultural barriers and stereotypes broken down
- Increased dialogue across cultures - especially countries in conflict

##### **Poverty & Hunger**

- Reduced urban-rural migration
- Poverty eradication
- Poor people have a place to live
- The number of street people will be decreased
- Demonstrate demand for fair trade products to corporations and politicians
- Increased awareness among students on the basics of fair trade

##### **Unemployment**

- Employment for vulnerable youths
- Increased employment capacity among youth leading to less migration

##### **Education & Literacy**

- Increased literacy rates
- Dynamics changed between student and teacher (greater partnership)

##### **Digital Divide**

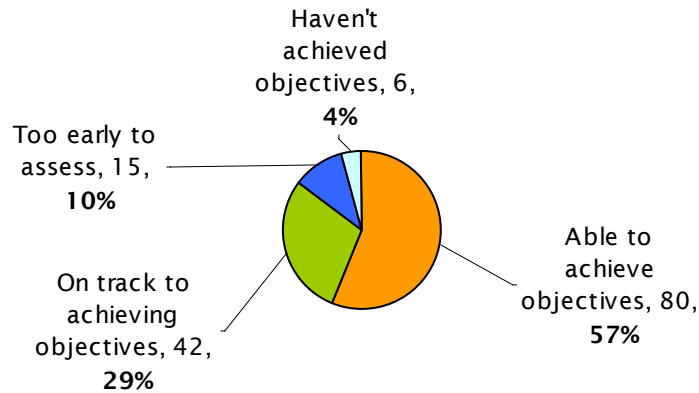
- Increased computer literacy

##### **Other and/or Overall**

- Hope for country
- Networks and partnerships formulated

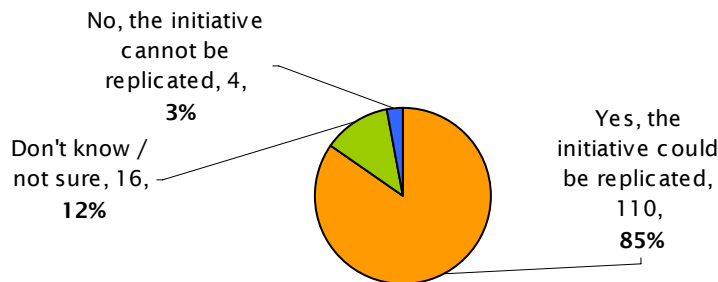


**4.2 - ASSESSMENT: How do you assess the initiative in relation to its objective?**



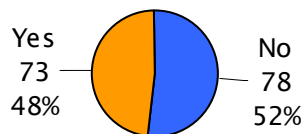
57% of survey respondents feel that they have been able to achieve the objectives that they set out to achieve. 29% are on track to achieving the set objectives. Many stated that their work has served as a catalyst for achieving the larger goal (ie: ending poverty).

**4.3 - REPLICATION: Could your initiative be replicated in other settings?**



85% of survey respondents feel that their initiative could be replicated in other settings. In most cases, people felt that the model or framework of their work is broadly applicable.

**4.4 - CELEBRATION: Did you have an opportunity to celebrate the success of the achievements of your initiative?**



- 48% of respondents had an opportunity to celebrate their achievements while 52% did not (and in some cases hadn't thought about it).

5.1 - LEADERSHIP: How do you define leadership?

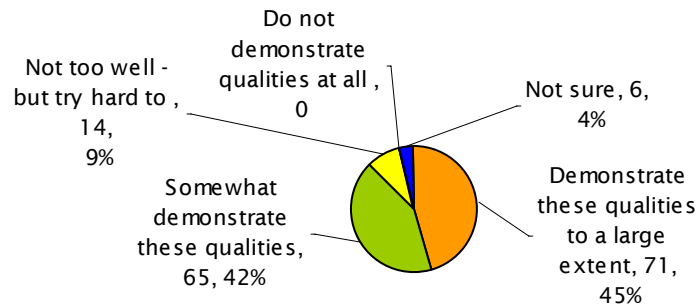
- **Process of** leading, facilitating, mobilizing, influencing, energizing, organizing, instilling confidence, guiding people towards a common vision/goal.
- **Attributes of** a Person: selfless, responsible, integrity, will, doing what is right when no one is watching, someone who enables others, who is a problem solver
- **Setting an example** for others whether in a formal position or not, 'become the change you wish to see in the world'
- **Creating an environment** for learning, personal & professional development

5.2- What are the qualities, characteristics and values that you expect of a leader?

Able to accommodate diverse needs  
Able to transfer skills  
Able to work under pressure  
Able to initiate  
Accountable  
Approachable  
Charismatic  
Compassionate  
Creative  
Dedication  
Does not lose temper  
Drive and vision  
Dynamic  
Fair  
Focused  
Good decision-making (strong & stable, able to involve others)  
Good listener  
Honest  
Humanitarian  
Humility  
Humble  
Imaginative  
Intelligent  
Lack of ego  
Motivational  
Open-minded  
Patient  
Persistent  
Personable  
Responsive  
Seeks self improvement  
Strong commitment  
Talented  
Team player (understands importance of collaboration)  
Transparent  
Understanding  
Values  
Visionary

|            |
|------------|
| Literate   |
| Energetic  |
| Available  |
| Determined |
| Esteem     |
| Realistic  |

**5.3 - DEMONSTRATE QUALITIES: To what extent do you think you demonstrate these qualities?**



**5.4 - EXTERNAL INFLUENCES: What are the external factors that have influenced the nature of your initiative?**

*Interconnected influences include:*

- Local Cultural Context – mindset resistant to change, strong beliefs
- Societal Context – media influencing behaviours, values, apathy
- Economic Context – poverty & lack of infrastructure
- Political Context - those in power fearful of resistance, bureaucracies
- Environmental Context – pollution, destruction of land

**6.1 - LESSONS LEARNED: What lessons did you learn throughout the process of trying to create change and how could the initiative have been improved?**

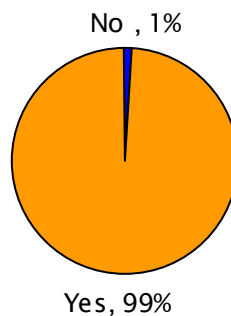
Personal skills gained

- Leadership, communication and management skills
- Teamwork and organizational skills
- Learned to interact with people from different backgrounds
- How to run a program
- Determination, patience and clarity of purpose
- Learned how to approach opinion leaders
- Advocacy skills
- How to recruit participants
- How to be more confident in own ideas and deal with negative factors
- As part of a team, your success depends on success/failure of group as a whole
- Handling pressure

Insights / Knowledge

- A proper support system needs to be established in order to avoid duplication
- There can be a lot of paperwork and bureaucracy involved in the simplest things
- It is good to involve the target group in their own development issues
- Motivation is key and it is often hard to keep this high in a large group
- The Earth is very complicated
- Young people are willing to take part in creating change but need empowerment
- There are many ways to address a problem but you can't succeed unless you take one of those ways and try it.
- It won't happen over-night and you've got to be prepared to work hard and maybe take a few steps backwards before you can make a step forward
- Learned how young people are able to affect the environment in which they live
- Social change is not easy but when people seek this change it will be easier
- It can be difficult to manage high demands without enough 'supply'/capacity
- To every story there is more than one side - and each can be right.

6.2 - GROWTH: Has your experience with this initiative helped you grow as a person?



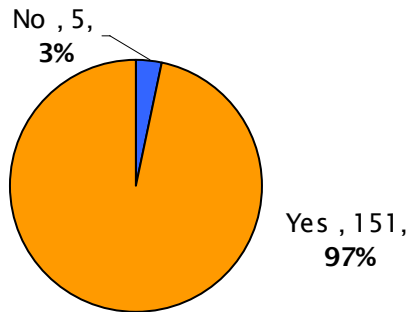
- Increased level of confidence, self-esteem and responsibility
- Sense of personal empowerment – ‘I feel that I can be capable of changing my circumstance and that of others’
- Skills developed and knowledge gained.

6.3 - ADVICE: What advice would you offer to other young people who are trying to carry out similar actions?

Advice is overall optimistic with a message about working hard and **not giving up**.

- “I tell them simply that the problem is not that we have so little power. The problem is that we don’t use the power we have.”
- “Focus on what you want to achieve and go for it.”
- “Dare to dream and follow and idea.”
- “Create a work plan and stick to it to ensure that they bring words into action.”
- “Work hard. It’s not going to be an easy task”
- “Motivation comes from every corner. Listen. See.”
- “Seek support from those that share your ideas and then take it from there.”
- “If you want to help and are committed then there’s always room for more people to do something to change negative aspects of society/culture.”
- “Be open to challenges and don’t be afraid to stand up for your own opinion!”
- “The experience itself gives you the feeling of achievement after it is done and you will feel the appreciation of others on your work through their impressions about your work and the importance of this experience to them.”
- “Undertake proper ground work before undertaking such a project. Groundwork includes knowing the feasibility of the project and setting out proper objectives and a work plan for the initiative.”
- “Be focused and set strategic objectives”
- “Believe in yourself and believe in your actions”
- “Surround yourself with positive people with similar goals and ensure that the lines of communication remain constantly open.”
- “Have a strong team of mentors, advisors and especially friends”
- “If you have an idea...share it with others – try it out – test it out – revise it – try again and communicate with those who care about your work”
- “**Most of all not to give up during the struggle.**”

7.1 - FUTURE: Would you participate in a similar future initiative?



An overwhelming **97%** of participants said that they would participate in a similar or future initiative. Reasons for this include the following:

- It responds to an important need (communities are neglected)
- Gained skills and feel experienced enough to support other processes
- Desire to further gain experience and knowledge
- Want continued opportunities to serve humanity and impact world positively
- Anything that makes the world a better place is worthwhile - even if it's tiring
- 'my love for the environment never ends...naturally so will my work for it'
- Desire to 'keep on the fight'
- Got a lot of encouragement from the first initiative
- 'Making change is what I want to do with my life. Too many ppl are complacent'

7.2 -PLANS - What are your future plans for involvement in this particular initiative or other similar initiatives?

Expand the Program

- Increase number of people reached/served/engaged
- Diversify the types of people who are reached
- Go regional, replicate in other communities
- Outreach & Promotion, increase media coverage
- Work with other groups, increase partnerships

Mentorship and Knowledge Transfer

- Share ideas and lessons learned with others in an advisory capacity
- Develop a manual for training
- support transition

Develop New Initiative

- run new projects and activities

Join Other Existing Initiatives

- volunteerism
- work with those more experienced to further knowledge
- attend events
- align or connect career objectives with objectives of initiatives

## APPENDIX 8 - Online Consultation Outcomes

From January 3<sup>rd</sup> to January 9<sup>th</sup>, an online consultation took place on the topic of Youth-Led Action in an International Context, with interested youth who participated in the Online Survey. Participants were provided with the summary of online survey results and invited to discuss the various aspects of the "Framework for Action" (proposed as part of my Masters research). The following is a summary of key points raised during the discussion:

*"...young people are catalyst to development of their communities, "No Community, No Development" No Young people , No development too" (Male, 21, Nigeria)*

### Inspiration and Catalyst

Question: How can other youth be encouraged or inspired to take action?

- People inspired through their own life experiences, personal 'testimony', values
- Through leadership of other youth (peers) who are setting an example to follow
- Making a personal connection with an issue - real or imagined.

*"Once people can feel that it's their issue - that it's real, it's relevant to their lives, and there's something that they can do about it, the transformation can be amazing. ... the most effective way of catalyzing people to take action and create change are people who are out in their communities, sharing their stories and giving others the tools to take action on the issues that are significant to them." (Male, 22, Australia)*

- Inspired by the goals, objections and vision, explaining the rationale
- Showing people the benefits to involvement (ie: experience towards future job)
- Consider context and realities in which youth live which includes geographic, social, political and economic environments
- Establish short-term goals as part of longer-term strategy

*"Youth are eager, impatient, and require continuous support systems...develop methods which are relevant, interesting and display measurable results in short periods of time as part of a long term goal" (Male, 24, Yemen/Canada)*

- Engaging initial experience - Initially involved because of the way they were introduced to the issue/org (ie: 'invited to judge a debate', 'invited to take part in a conference, seminar, lecture or workshop on the issue')

*"In summary, i young people, nowadays, can be inspired with proper information but still the medium used to convey this is very important because still... YOUTH are YOUTH... make them curious on your cause, equipt them with proper information, sustain their eagerness to help others and surely you have a successful volunteer and advocate." (Male, 26, Philippines)*

- Need a spark or catalyst:

*"I also personally believe that many of our generation (Generation Y) and truly interested in the betterment of our world. We have seen what the world has been like, and we cannot stand for the many injustices in this world anymore. I personally believe that this fact in and of itself is enough to inspire a whole generation. All that is needed is a 'spark,' as such." (Male, 16, Australia)*

- Rural-Urban Differences

*"It is relatively easier to mobilize the efforts of youth from urban areas, because they are more knowledgeable and more receptive."* (Male, 23, Moldova)

*"urban youth may lose their interests to take action cause they might seeing it's a very big step for their age and they have to enjoy their life ...so the must me a stimulating things can make them reconsider taking action and be motivated!"* (Male, 23, Egypt)

- Awareness of the problem

Through the media (radio, TV, magazines, newspapers movies, music) classrooms, arts & culture (theatre, exhibits), web-based communities and portals, books, novels and story telling, religion, science and innovations, well recognized award programs, dialogue sessions

- Need for sense of belonging or involvement

In the youth today, as with previous generations of youth, there is a desire to fit in, yet at the same time express their individuality. I have been actively involved in the Hip Hop community in Toronto and have had a chance to witness inspiration and catalyst first hand through the growth of the scene in my city, among others around the world. (Male, 31, Canada)

- Need a sense that obstacles are not too hard to overcome

*"what could freeze youth from taking an action is the way people could handle the youth views and the routine and red tapes most of the problem come one after one and they start to accumulate till they be like a big mountain in front of the young individual and that make him think twice before taking any action cause it would be hard on him to deal with each obstacle aside!"* (Male, 23, Egypt)

## Reflection and Identification

Question: What strategies can you offer to youth who are trying to identify their project goals? Do you think that the way people react to your idea (ie: positive or negative), has an effect on whether or not you have the confidence to implement it?

- Youth require a positive and constructive environment to foster determination
- Mentorship is important (as a way of gaining more experience through others), though it's important not to let those with more experience completely shut down ideas or decrease confidence level

*"mentors and positive feedback is very important. Also, to have the proper input to help guide the youth in developing the project in an efficient and productive manner will help greatly. community centres, programs and the like are all a good start."* (Male, 31, Canada)

*In any community we will experience who will ignore or recognize us, agree or disagree with us and now matter how is my ideas is pure and have a good message still you will see both different kind if people and what is important is to keep the rhythm like the way you originally started with! Not too rapid and not too slow, not too brave and not to afraid and not too strong and not too weak cause both extremes will negatively affect the initiative."* (Male, 23, Egypt)

- Peoples reaction is important, but not decisive factor (critical feedback can help shape and influence the direction and implementation of the idea)

*"As they say every truth passes three stages; the first one is it is ridiculed; then it will be opposed [opposition], and finally when they see it working, they accept [acceptance]. This is also true of any given idea which is new, true and useful, if it is something strong that it changes how people think and live, it passes difficulties and challenges."* (Male, 35, Israel/Ethopia)

*"How else would you know that it can work without trying?"* (Male, 23, Kenya)



## Collaboration and Teambuilding

Questions: What makes a great team?

*"In order to foster teamwork, for newly built teams, we conduct team building activities that would expose the capacities of each member. Teams must be aware that they are composed of unique individuals with different attitudes and cultural background. Each member must accept this and compliment the needs of the another."*

- Sense of mutual trust, unity, belonging, interdependence among members of the team
- Clarity and common understanding of vision, goals/targets with desire to achieve them
- Consultation among team in order to share decision-making (each member of the team has the ability to influence the agenda and direction)
- Each member is willing to contribute, bringing a unique blend of skills and interests that are fully recognized and used whenever appropriate
- Roles and responsibilities are defined and shared, people feel sense of ownership
- Leadership is distributed and shared among team, individuals contribute their resources
- Team has capacity to generate ideas, problem-solve, innovate, overcome challenges
- Conflicts is managed effectively, people are able to express concerns constructively
- Effective and ongoing communication within the team, involving respect, care, patience, tolerance and understanding throughout interactions
- Feedback is sought, team members are encouraged to evaluate progress and improve.
- Risk and creativity encouraged, mistakes are seen as a source of learning vs. reasons for punishment
- Sense of fun and openness (can be fostered through shared events, celebrations, icebreakers for people to get to know each other, 'pot-luck' lunches, prizes etc)

Question: Do you think that collaboration with other groups is important when working to create social change? Do you think that enough collaboration exists?

*"I believe that collaboration with other groups is very important when working to create a social change as this give a wide space for all of these groups gives them inspiration and creativity and generating new ideas for the project or maybe generating sub project under the main project."* (Participant in Online Consultation)

- Important - but not enough collaboration exists for the following reasons:
  - Ego - people want to keep their reputation in their own name than lose identity
  - Conflict of interests, people with different agendas
  - Difference in approaches or strategies to solving problems
  - Funding and administrative challenges (lack of time/resources)
  - Conflict in decision-making and/or leadership between various groups
  - Lack of communication creates distance, less synergistic
  - Lack of effective framework for collaboration and how efforts compliment

## Planning and Implementation

Question: When making a plan, what are some of the key issues to consider?

- Past performance and any historical data, to be able to learn from past mistakes
- Present capacity of people implementing the project (strengths, skills etc)
- Vision of the future and priorities - having a clear picture of the end goal
- Values and guiding principles that share actions of the group
- Awareness of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with a sense of how to approach the context and potential challenges
- Goals and action plans to guide daily, weekly and monthly actions

Question: What do you see as the most common challenges youth face when taking action? How can they be overcome?

- Lack of committed and well organized actions, lack of clear sense of focus
- Fragmented actions of youth who have varying priorities, which often change
- Barriers include routine, red tapes, paperwork, traditions, community values
- Lack of previous experience leads to naïve approach to decision-making and action

Question: How can challenges be overcome?

- Having more frequent reflection meetings will provide an opportunity to focus and strengthen level of commitment (retreat format can be beneficial)
- Continual encouragement, helping people understand their importance to the work
- Experience over time and sharing of experiences

## Ongoing Learning

Question: How can people who are leading projects ensure that time is taken for reflection and learning?

- Hold reflection meetings on an ongoing basis, inviting all members of the team
- Observe daily monitoring of progress and how activities are carried out
- Combine action with reflection and both will result in ongoing learning
- Recognize the need for change and new ideas, being open to feedback and approaches
- The leader needs to work on self-awareness, and building trusting relationships

## Adaptation and Evaluation

Question: In what ways did you measure and communicate the impact of your initiative?

- Impact on the person(s) running the project
  - Gaining experience
  - Gaining a new perspective
  - Gaining skills and insight on approaches to problem-solving
- Impact on the issue
  - Awareness raised through media, visibility
- Impact on the people directly affected by the project
  - Assess how the situation changed before and after the project
  - Both directly through the project and the broader context (other groups or projects may have formed as a result of a new approach)
- Impact through sharing ideas that were adopted or implemented
  - In some cases, youth have an impact through their ideas or advice/input

Question: How can youth leaders better adapt to changes that arise?

- Expect a certain degree of unknown and unpredictability to avoid disappointment
- Do not feel discouraged or de-motivated by the change, but rather, embrace it
- Recognize that you don't have all the answers, develop possible scenario approaches (with awareness of both what is known and unknown, what you can and can't control)
- Allow for discussion with team members and involve broad input in determining strategy or approach to dealing with the change (look for real participation with those who are affected by the problem and that you require to implement the change)
- Consider the need for inspiration
- Allow for a good level of flexibility, avoid rigid plans, communications and interactions
- Be open-minded, allowing for acceptance of a changing emerging situation

## Celebration and Next Steps

Question: At what stages of the project do you think that it is most appropriate to celebrate achievements?

- When the project is completed successfully as well as mini-celebrations throughout different stages of the project (when milestones are achieved) which can help as a source of encouragement

*"Celebrating each step will help team members remember the achievements, the difficulties and how they got over them... celebrating such steps does not necessarily have to be a big event, just something special to remember in a positive and creative way."*

Question: What mechanisms can be put in place to support scaling up of projects?

- Identify what you want to focus on scaling up and who you can work with
- Foster collaboration with other groups, networks and institutions
- Assess and evaluate past performance (ie: conduct field surveys, gain input from team members) and build on successes and strengths
- Take part in relevant workshops or conferences to gain skills and experiences
- Acquire resources to be able to have the capacity to scale