

# Introduction

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**I**N EARLY 1999 CIVICUS, the global alliance for citizen action, together with the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), brought together an ad hoc group of individuals and agencies working with young people. The intention was to create a forum for advocacy and action to engage young people in civil society and social change. The organisations involved included: World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), International Youth Foundation (IYF), Development Education for Youth (DEFY), International Business Students Exchange (AIESEC), Commonwealth Youth Programme, Raleigh International and World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM).

Partners for Youth Participation (PYP), as the group calls itself, first acted together at the CIVICUS World Assembly held in Manila, Philippines in 1999. PYP held a series of workshops and breakout groups during the assembly on the theme of youth participation. The workshops were very well attended. A wide range of agencies, individuals and organisations showed interest in the experiences of young people and the benefits that their participation had brought to civil society. There was a real demand for information on *how* to stimulate and institutionalise genuine participation.

At the conclusion of the assembly PYP members agreed that experiences of successful participation needed to be documented. This publication was born out of the need for a simple demonstration of the links between personal empowerment and enabling environments for participation. The aim is to demonstrate the potential of young people, and to enable them and their advocates to speak; to share their experiences and vision of a world in which young people are equal partners.

The methodology for the publication was both framed and constrained by the PYP network. As most of the members of PYP are NGOs with headquarters based across North America and Europe, resources were a critical factor. PYP agreed that we would use our networks and in-house capacity to produce the book. The outline of the publication was agreed at a meeting in London in June 2000. Jane Foster (CYP) and Kumi Naidoo (CIVICUS) became co-editors. Charlotte Barran (WAGGGS), Steve Mokwena (formerly with IYF), Indira Ravindran, Laila Duggan (CIVICUS) and Andrew Robertson (CYP) all made substantial contributions. The range of case studies collected reflects the networks and resources that collectively we have been able to call upon.

In 2001 major international events with a focus on young people will take place. This made the timing of the book critical. Publication was planned so that it could be launched at the CIVICUS World Assembly to be held in Vancouver, Canada, 19–23 August. This will be followed by:

- The UN World Youth Forum 5th session, at which hundreds of youth NGOs and youth civil society groups meet in dialogue with the UN system agencies, August 2001, Dakar, Senegal;
- UN General Assembly Special Session on Children and Adolescents, 'The Future Global Agenda for Children', September 2001, UN, New York;
- Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, to be held in Brisbane, Australia, in October 2001. This will consider a new role for the Commonwealth. Engaging young people is already high on the Commonwealth's agenda and the Third NGO Commonwealth Youth Forum will take place at the same time as the Heads of Government Meeting.

So, with great enthusiasm, limited resources and tight deadlines the project commenced in December 2000.

**Jane Foster      Kumi Naidoo**  
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