

Chapter 3

Institutional Pathways to Empowerment

Indira Ravindran and Laila Duggan

Mahatma Gandhi, while still a young leader, said 'never underestimate the power of the individual to change the world'. While his own life was proof of this conviction, Gandhi, along with the other leaders of the Indian independence movement, dedicated most of his efforts to institutional and structural reform. Women and men who have 'changed the world' have done so through transforming institutions. Appropriately enough, the longest chapter in this book is dedicated to a survey of organisations whose mission and activities are aimed at youth empowerment, and the reform of debilitating political and civil institutions.

Ten organisations are featured in this chapter, and they each present a 'case study' of a particular project that has demonstrably led to skill-building and confidence-building in the young people involved. Between them, these ten case studies cover two international networks, four continents, seven countries, dozens of transformed communities and many more young lives. They stretch across a spectrum of issue areas, including: reproductive health; the global population problem; mainstreaming sustainable development in national life; HIV/AIDS; self-expression through art and photography; rural reconstruction; and young people creating new institutions on the strength of already successful youth programmes.

Steve Mokwena's discussion in Chapter 2 examines some of the social mechanisms that systematically exclude young people from the decision-making spheres of public life. Too often, they are constructed as 'objects' to be acted upon or passive targets for policies and decisions made elsewhere. When we see young people as scientists, parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, artists or writers, we treat them as exceptions.

We also tend to exceptionalise young people who are engaged in other, more distressing, 'adult roles'. We are daily inundated with soundbites and images of young people (sometimes barely out of childhood) as child soldiers, sex workers, child labourers, rag-pickers, gun-wielding murderers in suburban schools, juvenile delinquents and accidental parents. Yet we do not always question the structural disempowerment that assigns young people to these roles. We need enabling and supportive institutions that value each young life and its place in the community.

There is a vacuum in information on positive youth schemes and initiatives that aim to change the world or one community at a time. In presenting these case studies, we hope to begin to fill this vacuum. The experiences of these ten organisations and their affiliates bring hope and optimism to our collective aspirations. In

keeping with the spirit of participation and openness underlying this publication, we have opted to let the stories speak for themselves, and have tried to limit our editorial intervention to a minimum. Each of the case studies stands alone, and stands well. Yet, taken together, they present an exciting canvas of common colours, textures, patterns and trends. We give a brief survey of the main themes at the end of this chapter.

Case Study 1

Drik: Out of Focus

Ten years ago, a small group of people in Bangladesh decided they would right a wrong. The Western media had created an image that was distorted and far from the truth. Their country was known for all the wrong reasons. It was to challenge that image that Drik was created.

The Sanskrit word stands for vision, inner vision, philosophy of vision. Drik was set up to provide a platform for photographers and writers of the majority world to present their vision. Adhering to its core concept, the organisation has grown from being a provider of images and text to being a media resource centre that challenges western hegemony. Drik stands tall amongst the image banks in the developing world. The in-house gallery holds several major international exhibitions every year. The Centre boasts a modern studio, photographic laboratories and a multimedia unit. It also operates as an Internet service provider.

Drik's social commitment is central to its work ethos. In fact, Drik's founder, Shahidul Alam, was a commercial and advertising photographer when he started documenting the popular resistance against Bangladesh's autocratic president, General Ershad, in 1987. This won him the Mother Jones Award in 1992. Alam founded Drik Picture Library (www.drik.net) in 1989; the Bangladesh Photographic Institute in 1990; Pathshala, the South Asian Institute of Photography (www.drik.net/pathshala), in 1998; Meghbarta (www.meghbarta.net), Bangladesh's first web-based news magazine, in 1999; Chobi Mela (www.chobimela.org), the first festival of photography in Asia in 2000; and Bangladesh Human Rights Network (www.banglarights.net) in 2001.

In keeping with its founding vision, Drik's training programmes range from providing education for working class children to training the region's brightest young photojournalists to operate at an international level through Pathshala. Through the first Bangladeshi web portal (<http://bd.orientation.com>), which Drik maintains, the original platform is now taking global shape.

Origins of 'Out of Focus'

On 4 October 1994, the Drik Picture Library Ltd. launched **Out of Focus**, a participatory photography initiative with young working class children. The goal was to assist the children in learning photography as a means for them to communicate their experiences and as a means for future employment.

Drik Picture Library works with several groups of children. The core group has 11 children, six girls and five boys. The children have since grown into young adults,

one girl is 14 and the rest are 16- and 17-years-old. The inspiration for **Out of Focus** is articulated in a statement by one of the children about the owner of a garment factory where many children died as a result of a fire. 'If I had a camera, I'd take his picture and put that guy in jail.'

We chose to work with the children from working families because we saw that there is no working class representation in mainstream media, and reporting on issues important for poor people is done from an urban middle class perspective. **Out of Focus** was an attempt to redress that bias.

Photography was chosen as a means for participation because, in a community where levels of textual literacy is low, images are the most powerful means of communication. Using photography was a way in which the children could readily articulate complex issues regarding their environment and social conditions in a direct manner.

Drik believes there are unique benefits of using photography as a means of participation and empowerment, particularly with young people. Even at a very early stage the children have made some very powerful statements using photography. They are becoming increasingly more articulate with words, and now combine words with images to get their ideas across.

Photography was also a means by which they could share their statements with their community. As a result, the children's exhibitions have belonged to the community and have had a lot of community participation.

Since its inception in 1994, **Out of Focus** has grown in strength as the children have developed their skills. Drik has become integrated with the immediate community because of our frequent and varied interactions with the core group of children. We have also tried working with other children, particularly in rural areas, but have observed that our proximity and frequent contact with the core group has meant that they have matured far more quickly than the rural group. The same applies to the other groups of urban children where we have not been able to integrate as well.

Achievements

The young participants of **Out of Focus** have become very responsible young men and women, and while they appreciate the opportunity they have received, they do not want to feel dependent on Drik and are trying to find ways of attaining self-sufficiency. They are, however, deeply attached to the organisation and are constantly looking for ways that would allow the organisation to prosper. We have an extremely warm relationship with the parents, and the children (no longer children really) look upon Drik as part of their extended family.

Since 1994, the children have had publications and exhibitions internationally. Several of them now work in a national television channel, two work at Drik and

another works in a leading audio-visual NGO. The children have, therefore, established themselves at a professional level. Two of the children are now at college. The most significant development has been in the children's self-confidence and their heightened social awareness. Some of the children have taught their parents to read and write.

The children's photography and writing have been published in several international books and magazines. They have had two exhibitions at the United Nations building in New York, and one at the Photographers Gallery in London, besides three major exhibitions in Bangladesh. A new exhibition is scheduled in Dhaka for 23 March 2001. The children have been featured in television programmes in several countries. Audio-visual presentations by the children are being used in schools in Sweden for educational purposes. The work is also featured on the web: <http://zonezero.com/magazine/essays/shahidulchildren/p0en.html> and <http://www.drik.net/chobimela2k/htmls/bangladesh/bdourlang/bdourlang.html>.

People and organisations have been overwhelmed by the quality and the strength of the photographic work of the children participating in **Out of Focus**. The rural programme was initiated in collaboration with Save the Children USA, as it wanted to replicate the project. UNICEF bought 500 copies of the first publication for distribution. The audio-visual production was commissioned by Radda Barnen for educating school children in Sweden.

As I hold the calendar in my hands (I only got it an hour or so ago and have done nothing but look at it and share it with my daughter, since) I honestly can't tell you, for I cannot find the right words, what I feel about this initiative ... and the whole concept behind it. I cried tears of joy and sadness as I looked at what the pictures and the text said. God bless you and all those who are part of this ... give the young photographers a great big hug from me. In fact, I'll do it myself, for they have made me 'finalize' the thought that I need to visit Bangladesh again.

Zaheer Alam Kidwai, Media activist, Pakistan.

Resources

Out of Focus has been an ongoing independent initiative of Drik for nearly seven years. The first six weeks of the project was partially supported by the Arkleton Trust in the UK and UNICEF. Since then, Drik has allocated a significant part of its annual budget for the children's development, which includes their education, health care and social awareness. Besides receiving help in school subjects, they also work with sociologists and anthropologists on a regular basis. Some of this is provided on a voluntary basis by friends of Drik. Small donations have also been made by individuals. The children now generate some income from sales of their images. They are selling a 2001 calendar, which features their work, to raise monies for their upcoming exhibition.

Challenges

At Drik we feel strongly that one hindrance to any such participatory initiative stems from thinking of them as 'projects'. Projects have finite starting and end points. They require quantifiable outputs, which need to be justifiable on the basis of measurable inputs. These are children who are very much part of Drik's family. The usual question is, 'how is all this funded', yet the same question is never asked regarding our own children. The problem lies in treating them as 'special children' who are being salvaged. How does one measure a child's confidence? How does one quantify their ability to create spaces for themselves in a hostile environment where people are assessed on the basis of their family standing, the clothes they wear and the accents they have? How does one value the deep social commitment and the extremely high quality of journalism that the children obviously have? Iqbal has taught his mother to read and write. How much is that worth in money terms?

If in place of salvation, we looked upon it as addressing a situation of exploitation, where we ourselves are in normally in the exploitative role, perhaps we would look at the whole thing differently.

In monetary terms, of course, it has been difficult for a small organisation like Drik to sustain such a programme. Other unforeseen pressures came in the form of family illnesses, where Drik had to bear the bulk of the medical costs. One of the girls, Shapna, was married off by her father and later became pregnant, and we had to deal with the complications of a young pregnancy. Now that the children are going to college, their educational expenses are mounting. Since they find themselves in professional roles, it is important for them to be dressed smartly, so there are additional costs. However, the most significant area of conflict arises when they face class prejudice in work situations. Sometimes this prejudice is even found within Drik, where not everyone shares the Drik philosophy in the same way.

In the early stages, the children faced a lot of criticism from the community, who claimed that Drik was there merely to get some benefit of our own and the friendship wouldn't last. Over time, Drik and the children established their credibility within the community, on the strength of their commitment and the ongoing success of **Out of Focus**.

Case Study 2

collective echoes

Shabna Ali and M. Simon Levin

collective echoes (The Society for Collectively Echoing Culture in Public Space) is a small, non-profit organisation based in Vancouver, Canada. Emerging from a project initiative of Vancouver Multicultural Society, *collective echoes* outgrew its host organisation and became self-standing in 1999. An arts organisation that valued the voices of community and youth equally in the creation of public art, *collective echoes* initially aimed to provide young people with the opportunity to create public art, gain skills and experience and, more importantly, to find self-expression. The mission expanded to empower youth to educate the public about the role youth plays in healthy communities and to create learning opportunities for people to become cultural innovators.

Youth involvement

collective echoes, although originally conceived by adults, moved very quickly up the rungs of Roger Hart's ladder of youth participation (see Roger Hart, *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, UNICEF). We asked ourselves hard questions: what decisions are these young people truly making? Are they decisions that will shape the organisation, or are they decisions that are relatively superfluous? Ultimately, are the adults willing to give up power?

As an organisation that was serious about youth expression, we decided that young people needed to have an understanding of decision-making processes and be informed about the issues. All decisions had to be shared and no-one could act unilaterally without the consent of the group. To achieve this a consensus-building process was established in which all issues, big or small, were discussed until the group felt that they had enough information to support a decision. Individuals began with a personal 'check-in' that established sensitivity to each other's needs and concerns. All participants were expected to be accountable for their involvement and question themselves on whether their language and approach were inclusive and respectful of cultural difference.

If a particular issue did not greatly concern a member, they could remove themselves from the discussion and this made the consensual system feasible. But no-one was ever asked to support anything that they were fundamentally opposed to.

The co-mentorship model

Co-mentorship is based on the idea that every person can and should learn from

interacting with the others. In order to allow the co-mentorship model to flourish, each person had to work from a place of strength and understanding; they had to have a specific area of knowledge (or niche) that was necessary to the creation of community-based public art. To accomplish this, we divided the public art projects into teams, each comprising an established artist, an emerging artist, a community developer, and an organisational leader. Each member therefore either had knowledge based on previous work, understanding of various perspectives (young emerging artists), knowledge of the community or organisational insights. This did not mean that each person was confined to these tasks, just that they were able to mentor their team members on that area.

public:untitled

public:untitled began by examining and questioning traditional ways of operating. In hiring the 13 young people who took part, we decided to:

- Post the position in the ordinary manner but also in places frequently accessed by socially excluded people;
- Allow people to apply without a formal resumé. This helped those young people who did not have access to computers or training on application skills;
- Conduct simple phone interviews that asked about the candidate's passion and vision for themselves. This served to narrow the applicants from 300 to 30;
- Invite the entire group of 30 in for a group interview in which games and art were the focus. We were looking for creativity, ability to work with different people, openness, willingness and compassion;
- A group of 20 were invited in for individual interviews. In an attempt to balance the power dynamic, they were asked to be prepared to interview the hiring team (a group of 5:3 adults, 2 youth).

The level of trust created from that process, both among the hiring team, and between the hiring team and the candidates, was immense. Many young people who did not get selected were so impressed that they continued to participate as volunteers or by joining the advisory group.

We recognised that cultural differences among the young people could pose a barrier to communication; with this in mind we sought diversity training. The diversity trainer we brought in from another multi-cultural organisation was also a young person. This immediately changed the power dynamic in the group and most of the participants were more comfortable and less intimidated, given her age.

If we were going to change power dynamics, then the administrative components traditionally held by adults had to include youth. We decided that the financial end of the organisation had to involve young people. One of the young people initially hired had an aptitude for numbers and developed an interest in the

budgeting and finances. The same young person is currently still financial coordinator and she is training two new young people to take over the accounts. An adult volunteer accountant is still available, when necessary, to handle any questions or difficulties that arise. Obviously handing the financial accounts of an organisation with an operating budget of \$750,000 to a young person with no formal training required much trust, openness and understanding from all parties involved.

Another task traditionally handled by adults is fundraising. Initially, in securing start up funds for *collective echoes*, adults generated all grants. Young people soon called into question how decisions were made on which companies would be supporting us financially. A sub-committee of the advisory group met to examine ethical funding principles; this group consisted largely of young people. This led to the creation of a set of ethical screens that *collective echoes* adopted in its funding operations. A fundraising team was developed, and was mentored on all elements of grant writing, corporate solicitations and cold calls. The small team quickly grew and young people originally mentored by an adult went on to mentor other young people.

Achievements

Below is a brief description of the organisation's temporary and permanent public arts projects:

THE MOUNT PLEASANT GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB takes the form of an 18-hole miniature golf course linked through three sites in central Vancouver. By employing the metaphor of game, this public artwork invites the local community to play in a popular family-oriented activity while subverting the élitism associated with golf and country clubs. Each hole is artist-designed and evokes issues such as neighbourliness, crime, class disparity, youth culture and public transit.

ADVERTISING BODIES ALLIANCE (A.B.A.) addresses the use of our bodies as billboards in public space. A.B.A. believes that we have a right to be paid as human advertisements, when wearing clothing with corporate logos. Public performance interventions throughout Greater Vancouver involved handing out invoices to the public who were then encouraged to bill multinationals for their service.

FOUND YOUTH FOUND VOICES challenges the way youth culture is made into a commodity. It does this through sticker and poster campaigns and a series of public performances. The 'Wanted Youth' poster campaign targeted apathetic youth, challenging them to make a difference while offering ways to get involved.

WATERMARK consists of symbols designed and created by community members stencilled onto streets and sidewalks with road paint, following the path of lost streams in the Trout Lake neighbourhood. These personal voices speak out in resis-

tance to the dominance of official and consumer signage in our visual environment.

SYSTEMS OF SUSTENANCE addresses issues of sustainability by focusing on the Coast Salish fish bone ceremony. This ritual returned salmon bones to the water to thank the salmon spirit and to ensure future bountiful harvests. A public performance involved three spirits with offerings of fish bones made of sodium bicarbonate, which bubbled and dissolved when dropped into False Creek. On another occasion, metal salmon shapes were installed on near 'Science World'. In progress is a monumental sculpture carved from three cedar stumps that will function both as rain catchers and nurse logs. Also an aboriginal medicinal garden is to be planted in nearby Creekside Park.

Another outcome of *public:untitled* was the emergence of the Teaching Team, made up of young art educators. The Teaching Team uses the educational principles of *collective echoes* among high school students. It develops curricula that aim to create entry points for groups of young people who might otherwise be overlooked. The team also introduces high school students to the role that contemporary art can play in social change. The Teaching Team has fulfilled ongoing contracts for the Contemporary Art Gallery and the Vancouver Art Gallery, and is consistently booked for youth conferences.

Although these achievements fulfill the initial mandate, other less tangible outcomes continue to have an impact. For instance, the dialogue that emerged from diversity training, and increased awareness about power and privilege has and will continue to impact on Vancouver.

Challenges

The greatest challenge that *collective echoes* faced was one of funding. In attempting to create a new model of working, *collective echoes* was charting new ground in Vancouver. This damaged our perceived credibility and made securing funds extremely difficult. Without the partnership of A.I.A. Arts in Action, and the initial organisational support of Vancouver Multicultural Society and the Vancouver Foundation, *collective echoes* would still be simply a dream. These organisations had the vision, the leadership and openness to assist us in creating *collective echoes*.

We were heavily reliant on a government grant that would pay the wages of most of the young people. This grant fell through after the interviews had taken place. Losing this grant meant that we had to restructure our budgets, teams, wages and work hours considerably. We were forced to compromise one of our fundamental principles: paying artists fair and reasonable wages. This shift affected the morale of the staff and the amount of time people could dedicate to the project, as most had to supplement their income with other paid work.

A few people, both young and old, left the project early. New people were brought into the process at varying stages, resulting in different levels of knowledge, understanding and communication skills. The co-mentorship model made it possible for these people to be brought on board quickly, as everyone was able to educate. However, those associated with the project the longest benefited most.

Another struggle for *collective echoes* throughout was establishing effective community connections. Many long-standing residents and community stakeholders were uncomfortable with youth-led sessions. Although the meetings were run fairly traditionally and facilitation skills were exemplary, our work was not seen as legitimate. It was not until the teams redesigned their approach, developing more playful methods and working from their own strengths that they made the necessary inroads. Scavenger hunts, contests, T-shirt making and cartooning workshops successfully bypassed the reluctant community members and attracted a younger audience that endeared *collective echoes* to community programmers. Ultimately the most successful community development was done within *collective echoes*.

Lessons learned

By living and working for our ideals to the fullest, we inevitably created a vulnerable organisation, one that required people to be sustained by their enthusiasm. Large doses of reality need to be part of the equation if this kind of model is to be replicated. Ideally, we would not have forged ahead without secured wage funding, or we would have greatly reduced the kind of public art pieces we were undertaking. But our desire to fulfill the original vision kept us focused on our early goals.

Dana Thorne – First Nations Woman, Youth Project manager for public: untitled

I am honoured to be able to share my thoughts and feelings about this project with others. I ask that you take the time to really read what I am saying, and not to just skim it over and nod, acting as if you understand everything that I have written. With that in mind, let me start by telling you a little about my background and myself.

My name is Dana Thorne and I am a twenty-year-old First Nation's woman who was born, raised and spent most of my life on Vancouver Island. I am a member of the Cowichan Tribe, which is the biggest tribe in British Columbia. Growing up with the identity of a Native Indian was hard for me. I caught myself always claiming the identity of my Italian grandfather, and feeling guilty in doing so. I would always add at the end of my sentences, in a quiet voice which faded out each and every time, the words, 'and. ... Part ... native'. I always felt blessed that my family was all fair-skinned compared to many other First Nation's people, and that my skin colour was even more fair than the colour of my family's skin.

Society has attempted to understand what it is like to be a minority. We now have Aboriginal Day, and Multicultural Week, and people protesting and fighting to no longer have racism among us. I give thanks and acknowledge those who try to under-

stand, and think they understand, but racism goes much deeper than a remark on the street or a refusal to serve those of colour. There is the racism of the subconscious mind, a racism that I have just become aware of, or should I say that I have finally accepted, because of the mentoring and the open discussions that take place here at collective echoes. I can try to explain, but only people who are open and aware can understand. I am talking about how when we, as minorities, are in meetings or talking, people don't always listen. However, if a person of the dominant culture presents the same idea, it is often heard louder, even though we had just spoken the same language not even five minutes earlier. This is what society and people don't always understand or want to admit. I too am guilty of having prejudice, and I too did not want to admit, but when working with a project that truly deals and addresses diversity as public: untitled does, it becomes a part of reality that you can no longer ignore in society. I now understand and must change this prejudice against my own people that I hold within.

My understanding of how society tries to accept minorities comes from the experiences that I had working in my first job. At the age of sixteen I was confronted with a job posting for a bank; they were looking to hire aboriginal people. I applied and got the job a week after my interview. I thought it was amazing to have my first job be in a bank instead of a fast food restaurant. The job was very professional and precise on how things had to be done. I would at times forget to do things here and there, but that was only because I was still learning. My supervisor soon told me that I was hired only because I was native and now I had to prove myself. I felt worthless and called the area manager to complain. He assured me that she didn't mean it that way and it must have just come out wrong, but he would have a talk with her. I was then transferred to another branch, and in my evaluation the woman wrote that I had a tendency to do things my own way and not the way the bank liked it. I told her that it was only because I would forget to do things sometimes, like fill out a deposit slip when someone hadn't done so, but she wouldn't hear it. I felt like I didn't have a voice and that I didn't matter. I felt that I was just there as an accessory. I was there to make the bank look better, because they now had First Nation's people working for them. I continued to work for the bank and just accepted that I didn't have a voice that carried weight, and that I was just a person to help fill their quota of employees of a visible minority. At this time I was living in Mission, BC and decided that I wanted to move to Vancouver. I was presented with a job posting and applied to the public: untitled project.

When I started working for collective echoes, I would barely participate in meetings, always had to be told what job had to be done next and had low self-esteem. I didn't participate because I was used to being shut down constantly, and I sadly accepted into my heart that people just didn't listen no matter in what capacity I spoke. I did not realise this about myself at the time, however, because the constant ignorance and abuse made me subconsciously shut down and close up to the world. I have been employed for a year, and it is amazing how much I have grown personally and professionally. I now take part in meetings, and have gained many skills including

facilitation, mediation, book-keeping, project management, conflict resolution and public speaking. I also have the ability to speak my mind, and the self-esteem to let people know when they are shutting me down. I also have the awareness to realise when I am shutting other people down.

Conflicts and problems still happen while working at collective echoes, but every workplace has its problems because we are only human. However, this is the first place I've been where everyone takes responsibility for their actions and where there is space to speak when there has been wrong done. I know that the people here are interested in what I have to say and that I do have a voice that carries weight. The difference here is that we each take the time to apologise for our mistakes as well as thank the person for pointing it out. People cannot learn from their mistakes if they don't realise that they are making them. This is a policy that I feel every workplace should uphold. I am honoured to be working in such an environment where I can be me and am comfortable around my peers.

As a final note I would also like to add that when someone asks me my nationality, I now say 'I am First Nations ... and part Italian'.

Case Study 3

A Study Visit to Malawi

Stephen Adjei, *Connect Youth International*

Connect Youth aims to enhance the reputation of the United Kingdom in the world as a valued partner, and to further the personal and social education of young people in the UK.

Connect Youth runs programmes that give young people international experience. We believe that bringing young people together lets them learn about each other and teaches them more about themselves. Our programmes are open to everybody; there are no entry qualifications people have to meet before they can take part. We target young people who do not normally have the chance to go abroad.

We are the UK's national agency for the European Commission's Youth Programme and are active in the following areas:

- Youth Exchanges
- European Voluntary Service
- Group Initiatives
- Future Capital
- British Council Youth Millennium Awards.

Connect Youth International supports a regional network of 12 committees giving advice and support locally. Their responsibilities include the selection of projects and awarding of grants.

Project description

Connect Youth wishes to contribute to the world debate on youth empowerment and youth participation. To broaden our understanding of the global context of this debate, we organised a visit to Malawi, Africa, in February, 2001. This was a follow-up to a study visit conducted in 1999.

Visit to Area 25 Youth Office, Youdaos, Lilongwe

The Youth Development and Advancement Organisation is an NGO started in 1997 by post-primary school leavers as a youth group. It was established to enhance youth participation in social, political and economic development through education and training. The organisation currently runs the following programmes:

- Campaign on HIV/AIDS

- Environmental Management
- Youth Reproductive Health
- Youth Participation Programme

The Environmental Management Programme aims to reduce deforestation by planting trees and manufacturing fuel briquettes which are used by families for cooking, as a substitute for firewood. The Youth Reproductive Health programme focuses on school-going youth, and deals with issues of sexual health and adolescent development. The Youth Participation Programme mainly works by mobilising young people into clubs and groups.

I was informed by the manager of the Centre that UNICEF had provided funding on two separate occasions to support the centre's programmes. However, it was clear that there were some young people in the community who could not be accessed due to lack of resources. The Centre runs a number of clubs in school and out of school. The School Clubs Programme is being managed in partnership with head teachers who act as patrons for the clubs.

Visit to Centre for Youth and Children's Affairs (CEYCA), Lilongwe

The Centre for Youth and Children Affairs runs 21 youth clubs, and targets out-of-school youth. It provides counselling and other services to clubs within the community. The programme focuses on the economic empowerment of young people. The manager explained that they were trying to incorporate school-going youth as well. In 1999, CEYCA established the first youth centre within a traditional authority area. The centre also runs a youth initiative programme. It provides assistance to young people who decide to establish their own business such as poultry farming and marketing. However, the Centre faces a number of challenges, including lack of funds, resources, and skilled and professional staff.

Visit to Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO), Zomba

Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) was founded in September 1997 as an NGO. It is a non-political and non-profit making centre, and is registered under the Trustees Incorporation Act (1962) of Malawi.

Mission statement:

- *To create a body of youth that is normally healthy and appreciates the need to exercise human rights in a responsible manner realising also the needs of others.*
- *To make young person realise his/her role in their own growth and development*
- *To give the youth skills to live in a self-reliant manner, knowing where to seek advice and what kind of advice to seek*

- *To fill gaps of essential services vis à vis sound youth development.*

The following are the objectives:

- To provide the youth with access to appropriately balanced information and knowledge about democracy and human rights;
- To promote and safeguard human rights and, in particular, child rights;
- To stimulate political thinking, evolution and participation in young people;
- To promote respect for and protection of the rights of children in a participatory manner.

The Centre has trained a number of youth workers who are engaged in the following programmes.

Drug Demand Reduction (DDR): The Centre runs a youth-friendly programme known as Drug Demand Reduction. Voluntary youth workers operate in partnership with the police to arrest drug suppliers. Many young people are using marijuana because traditionally it is used for medicinal purposes. For instance, they have seen their parents use it for various cures, including the cure of measles. It has, therefore, been difficult to persuade young people to stop using drugs as they often find the message confusing. The Centre is using peer education to raise awareness, and to explain the dangers in using drugs, among young people within the community.

Street Kids/Homelessness: There are many orphans living on the streets, and detached youth workers work with young people on the streets, offering them counselling services and support. The Centre currently houses 15 homeless kids, and is looking for resources to expand the programme. When I asked why the young people are willing to use a very basic facility at the Centre, I was told that the Centre is their only hope and the young people have great trust in the staff.

The challenges facing the centre are lack of resources, money, and skilled and professional staff.

Visit to Active Youth Initiative for Social Enhancement (AYISE), Blantyre

AYISE is a non-partisan, non-profit making voluntary organisation based in a suburb of Blantyre. It was established by young people in October 1995.

AYISE's eight main objectives are the following:

- Provision of Youth Reproductive Health Services
- Talent Promotion and Career Guidance

- Environmental Protection, Conservation and Rehabilitation
- Youth Economic Empowerment
- Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Democratic Principles
- Conflict Prevention and Promotion of Unity
- Civic Education
- Grassroots Infrastructural Development through the concept of workcamps.

The organisation has been conducting human rights and democracy awareness meetings. It is also involved in peer education, training, advocacy, reproductive health lectures for school-going and out-of-school youth, and counselling. The Manager of AYISE said the Centre runs a youth-friendly project with the local hospital. She explained that this was necessary because young people in Blantyre have developed their own jargon to describe their illnesses – the result of their concern for confidentiality. There were instances where young people have been turned away by doctors or nurses who did not understand the terms being used by young people.

AYISE has designed a confidential hospital form for use by young people. When young people visit the centre, staff assist them in completing the medical forms by describing their illness in plain, ordinary English. This helps to avoid misunderstandings when they visit the hospital. According to the manager, the reason many young people frequent the Centre today, is the absolute trust established between staff and young people, and the staff's ability to understand youth language. This system makes it possible for more young people in Blantyre area to benefit from the medical facilities without going through interrogations by doctors and nurses.

Visit to Zingawa Youth Centre

This Centre is situated in an economically deprived area of Blantyre. It provides library services to over 3000 young people. The Centre has plans to offer training in marketing, farming, poultry etc. The Manager explained that when young people have designed a programme, they are sometimes forced to shelve the plan because donor agencies are not prepared to provide funding.

Other challenges facing the centre include a shortage of professional staff, and a lack of recreational facilities.

Outcomes of the Visit: Lessons and Future Action

The visit was rewarding and gave me the opportunity to visit a broad selection of organisations dealing with youth issues. In Malawi, youth structures are firmly in place. However, most of the centres lack funding and other vital resources.

It was felt by youth leaders in Malawi that one of the problems they were facing in running their youth organisations was lack of leadership skills. Connect Youth therefore committed itself to support a youth workers' training programme. We have since funded youth leadership training in Malawi.

The trip was tiring sometimes, but always enjoyable and educative. On behalf of Connect Youth International, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr Alex Mseka and his team for organising the visit.

Case study 4

On the EDGE

A desire to engage past participants of Canada World Youth leads to a dynamic, capable and respected youth organisation.

Canada World Youth (CWY) is a national non-governmental organisation that provides young people from Canada and around the world with the opportunity to travel, live and work in different communities, to learn about local and international development, and to gain important job skills for the future. Founded in 1971 by the Hon. Jacques Hébert, retired Senator and well-known Canadian writer and publisher, CWY programmes operate in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and Eastern Europe. More than 26,000 young people from Canada and abroad have participated in Canada World Youth; approximately 1,000 young people participate annually, more than 600 of whom are Canadians. Participants are recruited through five regional offices in British Columbia, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic.

Education and Development in a Global Environment (EDGE) is an Atlantic association of past participants of CWY programmes and other young people who are interested in social justice, environment and development issues. Created in 1994, EDGE is based in the Atlantic Regional Office of CWY, and receives organisational support in the form of a paid, part-time co-ordinator (five hours a week) during the school year, which becomes a full-time position during the summer months. The co-ordinator works from the Atlantic Regional Office, with dedicated office space and support.

The EDGE initiative

EDGE was not conceived as a 'project' with a finite end-date nor with specific objectives. It was –and is – an evolving relationship between Canada World Youth and youth who have participated in its education programmes.

EDGE mandate

- To provide a volunteer base to work with the Canada World Youth (CWY) Atlantic Regional Office, providing support to Atlantic programmes and promoting public awareness of CWY
- To promote continued learning and skills development of members through their involvement in EDGE and to provide a means for social interaction and contact among past participants and volunteers

- To promote international and community development education activities in Atlantic Canada and other regions, and participate in projects focused on social and environmental justice.

Origins of EDGE

Past participants of CWY programmes have always been involved with the Atlantic Regional Office (ARO) as volunteers. Over time it became apparent that common interests could be served if these past participants and volunteers were given sufficient support to initiate the formation of a new organisation. EDGE was born as the result of an ARO decision to commit funds for a five-hour-per-week position of EDGE Co-ordinator. Essentially the decision to provide that support came from recognition of an untapped youth-based resource, whereby the ARO could engage youth in a post-programme period, thus extending the relationship between CWY and its past participants. With the support of federal and provincial job-creation grants, the Co-ordinator position becomes a full-time job during the summer months. The EDGE co-ordinator is provided with access to a computer, communications (fax, e-mail, phone) and all the benefits of being located in an office. The ARO also allocates some staff time to be responsible for support to EDGE, including occasional attendance at group meetings and the role of support person.

Projects and activities

EDGE draws upon the dynamism and energy of its youth membership to undertake projects and initiatives that are relevant to its mandate. While the EDGE Co-ordinator's salary is covered by the ARO and the summer student-job programme, the organisation has a small annual budget. It undertakes revenue-generation through fundraising events, such as public showings of the EcoEgypt video, honoraria from workshop presentations, such as CWY's pre-departure and follow-up sessions with participants, and with the Rural Youth Education Project, and occasional additional support from the ARO when budgets permit. Some of EDGE's activities are:

- EDGE worked in partnership with CWY and the Arab Office for Youth and Environment on Eco-Egypt '98, a project promoting sustainable tourism in Egypt. The youth participants produced a documentary video and accompanying website, 'Beyond Pyramids: Exploring EcoTourism in Egypt' (<http://chebucto.ca/~ecoegypt>). The video was officially presented at a United Nations NGO Forum of the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York in April, 1999. The project was made possible with the financial support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), CWY and the National Film Board (NFB).
- EDGE has been involved with the Nova Scotia Environmental Networks Youth Caucus Steering Committee and is an active participant in Oxfam-Halifax's Globalization Working Group.

- With funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Development Information Programme (DIP), EDGE prepared print media articles and media training on 'Co-operating for the Earth', based on a CWY environmental project in Costa Rica (summer 2000–spring 2001).
- The relationship between environment and development continued to be explored in another EDGE effort, its participation in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development initiative on sustainable tourism. Working with other youth organisations, EDGE intends to present a 'Global Youth Charter for Sustainable Tourism' at the third U. Earth Summit in 2002, the International Year of EcoTourism.
- EDGE presented a workshop on 'Building Cross-Cultural Bridges' at the National Youth Summit, on Prince Edward Island in April 2001, organised by the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations. as part of activities for the UN International Year of the Volunteer.
- EDGE is a partner in the Rural Youth Education Project (RYEP), a development education workshop series for youth in rural high schools across Nova Scotia. Their workshops cover issues of globalisation, based on the CCIC model.
- EDGE publishes a seasonal newsletter, *Letters from the EDGE*, which includes articles from past participants on their CWY experiences, articles on development, social justice, environment and youth empowerment, upcoming events, international and community resources, and more.
- EDGE organises an annual youth retreat weekend every fall, which includes skills workshops, sessions on development issues, project planning, and a fun, relaxed time for members to meet and re-connect with each other. A vital component of sustainability within a development-education/social justice-action organisation such as EDGE is the internal prominence given to awareness of the issues and democratic process. The annual retreat activities help to provide this.
- EDGE volunteers represent CWY at public events and high schools, and support CWY in pre-departure and post-programme activities with participants.

Youth participation

Consistent with the CWY mission to increase the ability of people, and especially young people, to actively engage in the development of just, harmonious and sustainable societies, the decision by the ARO to support past participants provided the vital support structure to launch EDGE. With a paid position and office resources, EDGE was able to stay 'in the loop' with CWY regional activities. It is important to note that CWY created the conditions in which EDGE could do its own thing; the EDGE membership chooses the person to fill the position of co-ordinator during the school year. The CWY Programme Officer provides support, but acts in

a consultative manner, not directive or supervisory. The relationship is one of mentorship, and of encouragement. EDGE is in all respects its own organisation.

With regard to the ongoing EDGE/ARO relationship, 'mutually beneficial' remains an apt description, six years after the creation of this youth organisation.

Achievements

To say that EDGE has been successful in meeting its mandate would be an understatement. In terms of the support EDGE provides to CWY, the group's members volunteer to represent CWY when delivering skills-development presentations at high schools across the region. In collaboration with CWY, they provide a peer-organised, fun follow-up gathering for participants newly returned from CWY programmes. In this way, EDGE provides past participants with a vehicle for moving on to the next stage in their lives. For many, this means becoming involved in development education in their own communities. A large number of former CWY participants use the Youth Exchange Programme as a 'break' between high school and college, and find themselves drawn to programmes of international development or environment. EDGE exists in a similar fashion to serve as a bridge for participants between their overseas experience and involvement in NGOs in the development community. Within EDGE, members pursue projects consistent with the organisation's mandate and their individual interests.

Challenges and reflections

Considering the nature of the membership of EDGE, it is not surprising that one challenge is in the turnover of the members. Youth in this age group (late teens to mid-20s) are heading to university, pursuing additional overseas experiences, and in general are less likely to be tied down to one physical location. This has been true with EDGE, which has countered that tendency with effective recruitment of past participants on an annual basis and the integration of new members.

Another issue is the location of EDGE in Halifax, while having the entire Atlantic region as its service area. CWY participants are drawn from diverse geographic locations, which places added communication and participation difficulties on EDGE activities. To maintain an informative and consultative nature, EDGE makes efficient use of e-mail and distributes *Letters from the EDGE*. EDGE has set up a structure that welcomes and encourages new members and is guided by a mission that is constant and relevant to the membership's interests.

EDGE is a small youth organisation which has done remarkable things. It has garnered a reputation for being highly active and very capable, and has recently been recognised at a local level with the award of the YMCA Peace Medal and at the national level with the award of the Arthur Kroeger College of Public Affairs Citizenship Award. Now in its sixth year, EDGE is in the enviable position of having to 'live up to itself'.

This initiative by the ARO – to support past participants in their desire to organise around common interests and activities – has resulted in an organic, vibrant and successful collaboration. Canada World Youth envisions a world of active, engaged global citizens who share responsibility for the well-being of all people and the planet. Members of EDGE embody the qualities and passions of global citizens of today and tomorrow.

Case Study 5

Youth Participation in the International Planned Parenthood Federation*

Kathryn M Faulkner and Jessica Nott

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is the world's largest voluntary organisation in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including family planning. It works in over 180 countries worldwide. As a Federation, IPPF works at the international and regional level and through Family Planning Associations (FPAs) at a local level. At the international and regional level, IPPF runs a secretariat to share information between the different regions and FPAs, and to promote sexual and reproductive health issues.

IPPF has a long history of working with young people at the grassroots. Efforts have also been made to integrate young people's views in work at the international level for almost a quarter of a century. These efforts have moved from sporadic international youth consultation meetings and collaborative youth projects to more systematic consultation with young people through the IPPF youth committee – an advisory body on policy issues for the Federation. In 1998, during the restructuring of IPPF's highest decision-making body, it was decided that 20 per cent of the Governing Council would be young people under the age of 25 years. This groundbreaking move demonstrates IPPF's commitment to youth participation. It is just one part of a process to institutionalise the participation of young people at all levels of the Federation, and has created the impetus for the development of a dynamic network of young people working on sexual and reproductive health issues. Needless to say, this is a process that has only just begun, and there are many lessons to be learned along the way.

This process has forced IPPF to look critically at its own structures and decision-making mechanisms as well as its approach to young people. In November 2000, an IPPF was held with 12 young people from around the world and staff from each of the six regions. The working group came together to appraise IPPF's approach to youth participation, to reflect on how far IPPF has come and to look for ways forward.

*The concepts and ideas expressed in this case study are based on the work of the following people who attended the IPPF Youth Working Group meeting in November 2000: Roellya Ardhyaning Tyas; Kofi Boakye Dankwa; Doortje Braeken; Mijail Garvich Claux; Edith Yanira Cruz; Gill Gordon, Reproductive Health Alliance Europe; Naomi Imani; Catherine Kamau; Namit Kapoor; Radhia Kour; Roni Liyanage; Velimira Atanossova Mladenova; Imtiaz Mohammed; Zaina Nyirammatama; Kolbrun Palsdottir; Christopher Penales; Zakieh Shirafkan; Chokri Ben Yahia.

IPPF Youth Working Group Meeting, November 2000

Rationale behind the participation of young people in IPPF

It is really nice to know that you have something to give and that you are worthwhile for the world.

Roellya Ardhyaning Tyas, Youth Volunteer, Indonesia

Allowing young people to make their own choices about relationships and sex has long been perceived by IPPF as their right. If it is accepted that young people should be able to make their own decisions about their personal lives, then by extension they should be involved in programmes and processes that affect their lives. Believing that young people have the right to participate is part of a philosophy that respects their ability to make informed decisions.

Yet young people are regularly denied this opportunity or, at best, are given very constricted opportunities. Why is this? One of the answers to this question has its roots in traditional ways of thinking about childhood and adolescence. This model treats young people as immature and irrational (Boyden, 1997). By definition, young people's views under a certain age can be considered 'childish', making it easier for adults to dismiss them if they wish. Another reason for treating young people as dependent, passive recipients could be that adults can reinforce their monopoly of power. In the sensitive area of sexuality, adults, who are also parents, may feel threatened.

Participation is not a luxury. Excluding young people from participating in decisions deprives them of crucial opportunities for personal growth and socialisation, and ignores their wide range of experience and expertise.

Exploring different perceptions of participation

Participation means paying attention to each individual opinion ... one person does not know everything so we should all work together.

Kofi Boakye Dankwa, IPPF Youth Working Group Member, Ghana

- Participation means so many things to so many people, but what does 'participation' mean to the young people taking part in IPPF's meetings?
- Is 'participation' of a young person as a peer educator in a local sexual health clinic the same as 'participation' on a board of an international organisation?

Exploring young people's definitions and experiences of participation is an important prerequisite to establishing how young people can most effectively participate. The IPPF Youth Working Group looked at the different ways they perceived their own and other young people's participation (see Box 1).

Box 1

Participation is:

1. A right
 - Being part of decision making
 - Not being spoken *about* but speaking *with*
 - Having a sense of ownership
 - Being treated as equal partners
 - Being really listened to
 - Having a voice
 - Making sure that projects reflect what young people really want
 - Being actively involved
 - Being part of wider processes.

2. Being a team
 - Mutual empowerment
 - Using individual talent for the collective benefit of the team
 - Equal partners
 - Acknowledging and respecting differences
 - Having a choice
 - Co-ordinating and co-operation
 - Respecting all members
 - Not expecting awards
 - Passing investment and experience to others.

3. Democracy
 - Representation
 - Being accountable/ensuring accountability
 - Effective communication
 - Information
 - Having a role and knowing why you are participating
 - Equal opportunities to participate
 - Being able to set the agenda
 - Being able to make mistakes
 - Expressing ideas in the way you want.

4. Personal
 - Being able to challenge
 - Not being afraid to speak.

Participation is *not*:

- Having to become 'adult' like
- Having to know everything.

Participants worked in groups, exchanging personal experiences of positive and negative participation, and drawing on their personal experiences of volunteering at various levels of the Federation. These were presented as a series of role plays. Boxes 2 and 3 show the results of these role plays.

Box 2. Positive experiences of participation

1. Flexible adults and people in authority
2. When young people
 - a. Are assertive
 - b. Have training
 - c. Speak out about problems
 - d. Do not give up easily
 - e. Learn from each other
 - f. Are prepared. This means they need to have access to all necessary information
3. Support from other young people and adults
4. Involving young people in evaluating their own participation
5. Persuasiveness
 - a. Using passionate language
 - b. Starting with less controversial things
6. Fitting in with organisational objectives
 - a. Having a clear role
7. Keeping a clear and cool head
8. An atmosphere that is
 - a. Informal and relaxed
 - b. Time is given for people to talk and ask questions one-to-one
9. Young people can learn things from participating in seminars and meetings
10. Young people are able to set the agenda
11. Participation should be continuous
 - a. It is important to follow up meetings
 - b. It is important to get evaluations of participation from young people and act on them

Box 3 Negative experiences of participation

1. Lack of information
 - a. Young people are not given basic information, especially on organisational structures and programmes
 - b. Outcomes of youth meetings are not reported back to young people
2. Not having a voice
 - a. At meetings young people are not always listened to or asked about their views
 - b. Young people are unable to determine the outcomes
3. Lack of communication
 - a. Young people may not be asked questions because they are either: intimidated, patronised or talked at
4. Inequality (hierarchy is bad)
 - a. Young people's views are dismissed
 - b. Unable to challenge people in powerful positions
 - c. Even though young people might have the same status as older people, they may still be treated differently
5. Exploitation
 - a. Young people's ideas can be used by others with no recognition
 - b. Young people can be blamed if things go wrong
 - c. Young people can be given pointless tasks
6. Specific situations problems
 - a. Individuals can be obstructive
 - b. Different organisations work in different ways
7. Staff can lack responsibility for young people
 - a. Staff may not be willing to work in partnership with young people
 - b. Staff can be inflexible and don't make time for young people
 - c. Staff do not always give personal support
8. High turnover of young people
9. Lack of continuity and follow-up of different participatory processes

Adapted from 2nd Youth Working Group Report, IPPF, November 2000

Practical ways forward

I say congratulations, but I must say there is more room for improvement.

Kofi Boakye Dankwa, IPPF Youth Working Group member, Ghana

Participants identified some crucial issues that need development to move forward with the idea of youth participation in IPPF.

1. Strengthening IPPF's network of young people at the local, regional and international levels through creation of a youth database, listserv and website. Also establishing regional youth working groups.
2. Establishing election procedures for young people on regional and governing councils.
3. Integrating young people into further areas of IPPF's work, and consulting more widely with young people on proposals, publications, evaluations and situation analysis.
4. Investing in young staff members, encouraging departments to recruit young staff and involving young people on job interview panels.
5. Establishing youth focal points and, through them, establishing a strong network of young people.

Training is crucial for supporting and sustaining young people's participation. Suggested training areas include management of youth groups, project-writing and monitoring, using the media, budgeting, as well as personal development skills such as public speaking and confidence-building exercises. Training is also vital for staff and older members so that they can truly understand, value and support young people's participation. Another important area is ensuring that experiences are passed on – not only between generations, but among young people themselves.

Outcomes: lessons learned about participation

Participation is about choices. The first choice is whether or not to participate. This requires providing young people with full information about what the expected outcome is, and what their role and position would be within the task. Young people should not be included simply because it looks good for an organisation, but because their opinions are valued and the choices and decisions they make are respected

Like all people, young people sometimes make mistakes. Bringing young people into new arenas that have previously been closed to them makes the likelihood of mistakes higher. It is through these mistakes that learning happens. Such mistakes might also prompt an organisation to look at its own structures and procedures critically, and to make them more supportive. Too often at the international level, ideas are expressed in difficult jargon. There should be no pressure on young people to adapt their language and behaviour to fit in with over-complex or restrictive concepts. An environment needs to be created in which everyone feels able to contribute, and in which young people are not afraid to speak.

Issues of representation raise another set of challenges. To what extent should young people be required to participate as representatives of other young people

– and whom are they actually representing? This is not just a personal issue, it is also a question for the organisation to consider. Within IPPF, we are still trying to devise effective structures to enable young people to democratically select young representatives to the Governing Council. One idea, which is yet to be implemented, is to set up local and regional networks of young people who can feed their ideas to their regional youth representatives on the Governing Council, and from whom the representatives would get their mandate.

Another issue is who comes forward as a representative or volunteer. Many young people may be ruled out because they lack the time and resources needed to attend international meetings. For those young people who work, time constraints pose particular difficulties; many volunteers at the international level tend to be students. Issues of language pose other barriers, especially where translation cannot be provided. For these reasons volunteers tend to be well-off, well-educated and articulate, with good spoken English.

With representation comes the issue of accountability. Adults who attend meetings, sit on boards and participate in activities are rarely asked to make statements on behalf of all adults; yet the pressure on young people to speak on behalf of all young people is tremendous. We need to value young people for their own experiences and contributions, and support them to link up with others – not pressure them to speak on behalf of all their peers. And to do this, as well as to keep in touch with what is going on within the organisation, they need access to communication channels such as internet, telephone and fax.

Adults need to be prepared to relinquish power to young people and allow them to take a full part in proceedings, including being able to set the agenda. Questions need to be asked about how young people can participate, what roles they will take on, and what kind of shifts in the power dynamics are needed for genuine and meaningful participation of young people. Organisations must be prepared to question their whole way of working – with the result that the organisation itself will need to change and adapt if it is to deliver on its commitment to meaningful youth participation.

We don't only form part of the problem, we are able to make decisions and we can help in finding solutions that are concrete and real.

Claudia Montalvo Sánchez, youth volunteer, Peru

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Case Study 6

Bluepeace: Conservation in the Maldives

Hassan Shifau

Bluepeace is the only NGO in the Maldives to be founded, led and driven by young people. It is totally dedicated to sustainable development. The name Bluepeace reflects the colour of our environment: Maldives is 99 per cent sea, and the sky is blue also. As Maldivians – children of the sea – our survival, livelihood, culture and traditions are linked to the sea. Even our dry land is given by the sea. The reefs produce sand, which collects and forms islands, and the reefs ensure the protection of those islands from ocean currents and waves.

Realising the delicate nature of our ecosystem and its socio-economic importance, a group of young people got together in September 1989 and decided to make a difference. Hence, Bluepeace was born with the objectives of:

- Creating environmental awareness among the public;
- Co-operating with national and international organisations in all their efforts to conserve and protect the environment;
- Initiating and implementing environmental activities and projects at various levels in the Maldives;
- Securing resources and expertise for environmental protection and conservation efforts.

Bluepeace implements its sustainable environmental development agenda through activities such as awareness campaigns, grassroots workshops, lectures for students, mass media reporting, publications, marking of events and days, clean-up campaigns, and participation in national events in collaboration with government and other NGOs. All ideas and activism generated from Bluepeace are expressions of young people, who are well represented on the Board of Directors as well as the membership.

The threat of extinction of marine turtles

Maldives has a very rich tropical marine environment and is a habitat for a host of tropical fish, corals and thousands of other marine dwellers. Also, being an archipelago it is endowed with white sandy beaches providing nesting grounds for at least five species of marine turtles listed as endangered.

Marine turtles are fascinating reptiles that have lived on Earth for over one hundred million years. Their primordial and peculiar nesting habits and low

survival rate have brought them close to extinction. Trading of turtle parts has been banned, as recorded in Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Marine turtles are great voyagers, relying on the earth's magnetic field and wave motion for guidance. They travel long distances and across oceans over many years and accurately track their way back to their birthplace for nesting.

Maldives has a long history of marine turtle-hunting for meat, and poaching of eggs for exotic dishes. However, the total stock of turtle population was long undisturbed due to the availability of a number of virgin nesting habitats and abundance of food. Then, marine turtle shell became the fastest moving product in souvenirs for the growing tourist industry. Young people with and around Bluepeace became increasingly concerned that marine turtles in the Maldives were being over-exploited and were on the verge of extinction.

Maldives was once a haven for turtles to nest and breed, but due to human intervention and greed, nature's balance was disrupted. By the 1990s, the over-exploitation had peaked to the extent that there was hardly any reporting on turtle sighting by nature-lovers and scuba divers. Around the world, the survival rate of marine turtles reached less than 1 per cent due to continued turtle-hunting for commercial needs, complemented by other threats such as marine pollution, accidentally getting caught in nets and hooks, turtles accidentally consuming synthetic material, predators, beach and soil erosion, and artificial development of coastal areas for tourism.

Campaign strategies developed and implemented by young people

Bluepeace reacted to the situation by formulating the 'Marine Turtle Conservation Campaign'. The group targeted the public through mass media campaigns and lobbied the government to bring out rules to restrict turtle-hunting and poaching of eggs. The campaign was launched in January 1990 by distributing greeting cards with the slogan 'SOS Marine Turtles! – Save Marine Turtles' to senior government dignitaries, public figures and businessmen. Bluepeace has a tradition of assigning a theme for every year and focusing its efforts on the theme. But in the case of turtle conservation, it continued for three consecutive years. To generate publicity, we printed and distributed T-shirts and stickers with slogans on turtle conservation. As a major component of the project, we started research on marine turtles, their life-cycle, migratory patterns and their habitats in the Maldives. At the same time, we initiated an awareness and education campaign for students in the form of mini-lectures, and involved them in the information dissemination process by peer education. The Marine Turtle Conservation Campaign was designed in such a way that it had a 'multiplier' effect with information being passed on from friends to neighbours. This proved to be an inexpensive, yet high-impact technique. It allowed us to reach out to the most elusive target groups with our message. The

impact of these messages delivered emotionally by children to their parents was greater than that through any other media.

Forging links

In 1992, one of our Executive Committee members called on His Excellency Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom, the President of Maldives, to bring to his notice our environmental concerns, especially that of turtle conservation. We also had the opportunity to take our message to various national and international forums on the environment.

While Bluepeace continued its research and awareness campaign, several NGOs joined the campaign and even took very radical stands. Our research work recommended the setting-up of a turtle hatchery in the Maldives. However, further research, and a subsequent study tour to a turtle hatchery based in Sri Lanka, contradicted our initial faith in artificial nurturing. We found that artificial nurturing tampers with the unique life cycle of marine turtles. The nesting, growth and survival of these creatures is linked to environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity and natural lighting. For example, the sex of the hatchling is determined by the weather conditions of the nest, and its travel from the nest to the sea is also determined by the natural composition of moonlight and its reflection on the sea. When reared at a hatchery, marine turtles' natural feeding habits and buoyancy controls are lost. Thus, the artificially reared young ones lack survival skills, have underdeveloped natural instincts, are unfit for living in the wilderness and are often easy prey for predators. Bluepeace immediately dropped the turtle hatchery project and continued the mass awareness campaign for the sustainable revival of turtle stock in the Maldives and the sustainable exploitation for exotic turtle meat. Therefore, Bluepeace started promoting natural turtle sanctuaries on certain uninhabited islands as an alternative to the development of hatcheries. These sanctuaries would be zones where people's activities against marine turtles would be restricted, and would be officially protected by the government.

We met with many business owners, especially those from the tourism industry, and informed and advised them of the importance of adhering to the eco-tourism and sustainable development concepts. We also advised them on ways to develop the beaches for tourists in a more turtle-friendly manner.

Meanwhile, the government had started taking necessary steps towards turtle conservation in the Maldives. Initially, a regulation was passed to ban hunting and catching of turtles less than a stipulated size. However, it was insufficient to make a positive impact as it still left eggs, as well as a portion of the productive adult population, unprotected. Further awareness and media reporting continued before the government imposed, in 1995, a more comprehensive moratorium of 10 years on turtle shell products, and declared protected zones and islands to facilitate natural sanctuaries. This achieved part of the short-term objective of the campaign, but the work continued as the revival of the turtle population in the

Maldives largely depended on the attitude of the people as well. In 1998, Bluepeace published a reference book on environmentally friendly lifestyles, which contributed to the turtle conservation project being launched into the academic arena; the book is widely used as a reference for environmental studies at lower secondary schools.

Outcomes of the campaign and future challenges

After eight years of government regulation of turtle hunting, the turtle population has started to flourish tremendously. The enormous amount of resources, time and effort pooled by many organisations and individuals had come to fruition. However, poaching of eggs still continues.

Looking back at the project – its conception, the long march and the success achieved – we realise that it was because of the coming together of like-minded young people full of energy, and with common objective and targets. A good deal of the campaign's success depended on our ability to tap into similar energy in our peers and the larger population. By involving young people in a participatory manner and making the young feel that they are an important part of a larger social structure, we proved that young people, if united, can make a positive difference to socio-economic and environmental development. There is no magic in the recipe but the lesson is that ideas need to evolve and radiate from young people themselves. The young have to internalise, believe and own the mission before their youthful energy can yield. At Bluepeace we believe that small, practical things can be put together for a greater and long-lasting impact. Minor activities such as producing T-shirts and stickers with turtle-conservation slogans had far greater impact than we ever expected.

Bluepeace does not attribute all the success of the mass campaign to itself. Credit is due to young people who concentrated their efforts and resources towards a common goal, the other NGOs who collaborated in the effort, and the government the Maldives for realising the importance of conserving and preserving our natural heritage and inheritance. The government responded positively to the plea and the expressions of the young citizens of the nation.

Now the challenge for Bluepeace is to educate the masses on the importance of sustaining the success achieved. There are a number of environmental threats and concerns that directly or indirectly affect the turtle population around the globe, and therefore, need to be addressed internationally. Bluepeace strongly recommends the establishing of a regional and international sea turtle conservation network to sustain the success of the Maldives and revive the sea turtle population around the globe. Sea turtles are migratory, and only regional and international collaboration will ensure safe passage for their long journeys on earth and to the future. In the Maldives we have proved that young people can make a difference. We need to prove this internationally.

Case Study 7

Pachen Village Water Supply Project

National Youth Movement Programme of Papua New Guinea

The Youth Pioneers Scheme (YPS) of the National Youth Movement Programme (NYMP) of Papua New Guinea has had a profound impact on communities that took part. One such community was the village of Pachen in the Yangoru area of the East Sepik Province. With encouragement, advice and assistance provided through the scheme, the Husena Youth group from Pachen completed a water supply project in the village. The success of the project over the past seven years is testimony to the positive transformation which a youth scheme such as the YPS can have on entire communities.

The YPS was a programme component of the NYMP. The scheme was initially introduced in 1984 through the Department of Home Affairs, in order to meaningfully involve Papua New Guinea's young people in the development of their communities.

The specific objectives of the programme were to:

- mobilise and enable youth to undertake community infrastructure projects;
- provide skill, discipline and citizenship training to the youth;
- involve youth in the development process of the nation, and
- promote national integration and nationalism.

Project identification and documentation

The scheme required community groups to identify the kind of training or service projects that were needed in their area. These were then documented as a project and forwarded to the Provincial Youth Council for appraisal and endorsement, and to the National Youth Co-ordinating Committee for funding considerations. Documentation was done by skilled resource people within the local area or sought from technical agencies of the government. Applications that were not identified with the consensus of the people were discouraged.

Funding of Projects: Funding was normally provided through a grant from the youth office, from other departments carrying out similar activities or through a donor agency. If approved, funds were channelled to the Provincial Youth Councils, so they could manage and disburse them to the approved projects. Wages or cash payments to young people were discouraged. Instead, funding was directed towards the purchase of materials needed for the projects, which were then sup-

plied by the project committee.

Equity contribution: All community groups who applied for assistance under the project were encouraged to provide evidence of equity contribution. This could either be in cash or kind. Contributions were also sought from public institutions and individuals (provincial administrations, members of parliament etc.). Projects that did not have equity contributions were discouraged.

Training: All projects were encouraged to provide training to youth who would be employed in the project. The training normally consisted of leadership, citizenship and skills training related to the project. In cases where skills training could not be provided separately, training was done on the job as part of the project.

Project management: Project proponents were required to establish a co-ordinating committee, whose primary role would be to co-ordinate the community's participation in the training and projects. Duties included the selection of young participants, scheduling of youth work parties, fundraising, negotiating with the technical supervisory team, bringing out periodic progress and expenditure reports, and settling disputes.

Technical supervision: Each project was required to have a competent technical supervisor (such as a trained engineer or experienced builder). The technical supervisor, together with skilled youth, formed a technical core group for the proposed projects.

Roles and responsibilities: In successfully implementing such a scheme on a nationwide level, it was important that the roles and responsibilities of all concerned parties be clearly outlined in the implementation guidelines. The table below provides a summary of these responsibilities at the four levels of decision-making and administration. These responsibilities relate primarily to the role of youth offices, youth councils, youth co-ordination committees and the youth groups.

National	Provincial	District	Community/Local
Set policy guidelines	Carry out awareness	Carry out awareness	Identification of
Mobilise funding	Mobilise youth	Facilitate	project
Publicise scheme	Train youth leaders	identification	Equity contribution
Monitor	Appraise projects	Facilitate	Selection of youth
implementation	Recommend	documentation	participants
Fund approved	proposals for	Recommend	Provide reports
projects	funding to NYCC	proposals to PYC	Participate in
	Manage approved	Monitor	projects
	grants	implementation	
	Co-ordinate		
	programme in		
	provinces		

Project description: The Pachen Village Water Supply Project

The Pachen experience has clearly demonstrated that youth can become a catalyst for wholesome changes within their communities.

The Husena Youth Group learned about the Youth Pioneer Scheme through its adviser, Mr. Damien Sengi. Mr Damien witnessed the scheme's assistance to three projects in the neighbouring district of Wewak in 1985: in the villages of Passam (school classrooms rehabilitation), Turubu (women's training centre) and Kremending (water supply). Inspired by the positive impact of these projects on the communities, the Husena Youth Group was formed and registered with the East Sepik Provincial Youth Council on 2 February 1986.

In the youth meetings that followed, the community was asked to identify needy areas in the village. Water supply was identified as the first community project to be undertaken by the youth, and the request was forwarded to the youth office. The youth leaders were advised to approach the Health Extension Officer in the subdistrict to investigate and document the project before it could be processed for funding considerations. The transfer of the Health Extension Officer to another district delayed the investigations until the matter was presented again in 1991.

Eventually, the request was given preliminary approval in 1992 by the East Sepik Rural Water Supply project. A detailed technical survey was carried out in 1992 and the design was formulated. In July 1994, the health extension officers and youth from the community constructed the water supply following a grant of Kina 15,000 (\$US1 = K3.30) from the European Union's Rural Water Supply programme. It took three months and three days to complete. Youth and the community contributed K2000 in cash, and K4000 in kind to the project.

The project consisted of three kilometres of pipe-line, a water catchment box, and eight community taps. It cost approximately K7.00 per metre, including materials, labour and other project overheads. The total project cost in monetary terms was K21,000. The youth and the community raised their contributions by levying K20.00 per family and also collected 0.50t per youth. Those working away from the village sent in their contributions.

Youth leaders took charge of the village co-ordinating committee with elders as advisers. The committee co-ordinated the work parties and ensured the technical team was taken care of during their stay at the village. It ensured that all conflicts and problems were resolved during the entire period of construction. The project was completed without a hitch. The project is still operational and is maintained from fees collected within the community.

How the Youth Project transformed the community

The Pachen Village Water Supply project is just one example of how a good programme can meaningfully transform the lives of young people and their

community. If the move towards strengthening youth participation is done by the community itself, and not imposed from outside, then such service projects are capable of changing a community's way of life.

Husena Youth Group's accomplishments have placed youth at the centre of decision-making in the village. Today, the youth are more confident in discussing community issues as well as national issues of concern to the village. For example, in village meetings, elders have made provisions for youth to voice their views. This is a significant change from past practice. Today the elders pay respect to youth leaders in community meetings.

Remarkably, a number of customary practices considered detrimental to the welfare of the village have been discarded upon the advice of the youth. For example, pigs used to be raised in the village for traditional rituals and exchange ceremonies. When it was pointed out that domesticating pigs required that fences be built around gardens, and that such intensive labour was taking its toll on people's health and keeping them from engaging in more important activities, the village substituted chickens for pigs.

Young people are now actively involved in the development process of the district. A radical change from the 'back-seat' or passive attitude of the past was evident in the last local government elections, when, with the support of the youth, the village was very successful in installing their candidate. In the coming national elections, the Husena Youth Group has requested a respected person from the village to contest. When this case study was being prepared, they were mobilising village people, including those in the neighbouring area, to support their potential candidate.

Husena youth will no doubt become a role model to youth groups in the Yangoru area of the East Sepik Province in terms of the confidence and the experience they have built up. Indeed, most rural youth do not need to be told what their needs are. They are well aware of them. They need to be provided the opportunity and guidance to prove their capabilities. If the government of Papua New Guinea is to address problems of rural youth and their communities, programmes such as the Youth Pioneer Scheme deserves high priority for funding.

Lessons learned from Pachen village

There are important lessons to be learned from the manner in which the Youth Pioneer Scheme was able to empower youth and 'mainstream' their participation in the development process of their community. The most notable outcomes of this scheme are discussed below:

Firstly, YPS allowed youth and their respective communities to decide their own priorities and needs. Upon reaching a consensus, they received guidance and encouragement through agents such as the community youth co-ordinators.

Secondly, it is essential to understand that young people everywhere want better lives for themselves. They have a lot of energy and are very adventurous. Thus, they are very willing to attempt anything that gives them a sense of satisfaction and self-esteem within their community. A scheme such as the YPS allows them to tap into their enormous potential and earns them respect from older members of their community.

Thirdly, not all young people need to have trade skills to contribute to the improvement of community infrastructures. They only need basic training and technical supervision from a competent supervisor to accomplish less complex projects. In many cases, there are already people in the local communities that have the basic skills to cope with the demands of projects such as community water supplies.

Fourthly, young people readily take on responsibility if they have a sense of ownership. This can only be possible if they are involved in the identification, planning and implementation of projects, and share the responsibility for the welfare of their communities.

Fifthly, it is important to understand that networking provides opportunities to enlist the support of agencies providing important services to the community. It is through this network that misconceptions about the abilities of youth can be dispelled. Young people must not be seen as a segregated segment of our population, as is typical of many Western approaches to youth development. Young people are an integral part of our families, community and development process.

Finally, the 'hand-out' mentality as seen in some welfare state or youth grants will only make youth a liability to the nation's development. Good programmes will encourage young people to find their place as productive members of communities by being involved in community development initiatives.

Case Study 8

World Assembly of Youth: Development of Youth and Population Handbook

Background to the project

The World Assembly of Youth (WAY) took note of the fact that the world population is rapidly increasing and posing grave concerns. The world population was 4 billion in 1976, by 1991 it was 5.5 billion, and by 2000 it had soared to 6 billion. The effects of population growth were visible all around the world: too few jobs, crowded schools, expanding cities, jammed roads, incapacitated health delivery systems, insufficient housing and a polluted environment.

The 12th General Assembly of the World Assembly of Youth resolved to tackle population issues seriously and mandated the Executive Committee and Secretariat to identify project opportunities that would contribute to the control of mounting population concerns. A proposal was developed, and in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) WAY started to work on its Youth and Population Handbook.

Objectives of the Handbook project

The objectives of developing the Youth and Population Handbook were to:

- Raise awareness on the importance of population issues;
- Highlight current and future global population challenges;
- Educate young people on population growth and development issues;
- Highlight the need for family planning and safe motherhood;
- Discuss issues regarding sexuality and STDs;
- Develop a template for population project formulation;
- Indicate potential sources of resources for population projects;
- Identify action – steps needs to be taken by youth organisations.

The aim of the Youth and Population Handbook project was to produce a comprehensive, understandable, yet stimulating publication that young people at all levels, including grassroots, national, regional and global structures, could use.

Facilitating youth participation

It was clear from the inception that designing a handbook for young people needed the involvement of the young people themselves. WAY believes that the active participation of young people in population, health, development and environmental programmes is the best guarantee for the future. WAY has been active in population awareness programmes for young people since 1968, and considers population and family planning activities to be key components of development programmes. The Youth and Population Handbook project was considered one of the largest youth and population programmes ever conducted in co-operation with the UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

Young people were involved in all stages of the project. When the application for funding was made, it was on the basis of input received from young people about their areas of need. All the manpower and labour, whether voluntary or hired, was of people below the age of 40.

In preparation for the handbook, a questionnaire was circulated to samples of young people in three continents (Africa, Asia and Latin America). The responses helped to show the needs of the youth in terms of population planning.

Apart from making substantive contributions to the style and content of the handbook, young people were also involved in the project's decision-making and implementation. The Board of WAY is the main policy-maker and it consists of young people. The project co-ordinators, who were responsible for implementing the project, were hired young interns.

Project planning, execution and findings

A project team was formed, headed by the WAY Secretary-General. The team consisted of four additional staff from the WAY Secretariat, as well as a consultant in each region of the world. Once the division of responsibilities was completed, work began on the challenging but rewarding task of developing the Handbook.

The first step was to hold consultations around the world, obtaining youth perspectives on population issues, as well as case studies. National and regional workshops were co-ordinated. WAY was also represented at the 1994 UN Population conference to obtain the latest information on global population. At the same time, an inter-country workshop was organised in Copenhagen to engage national youth councils.

The Handbook contained the following examples of projects, to assist in the development of new project ideas, including:

- A survey of the sexual behaviour of young people carried out by the World Assembly of Youth in conjunction with the World Organisation of the Scout Movement and the World Health Organisation. This project featured young

- people themselves developing and carrying out surveys about young people's sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in East, Southern and West Africa;
- Teenage Theatre Speaks to Teens in Canada – young people in Ottawa, Canada were learning about family planning and sexuality through the efforts of a teenage theatre company. Insight theatres, set up by Planned Parenthood Ottawa, toured high schools performing sketches on issues like homosexuality, pregnancy and single motherhood.
 - The Society for a New Generation – a youth volunteer group at the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong carried out a varied programme that included family life education in schools and factories, a telephone hotline and clinical services.
 - Reaching Young People through Rock: Tatiana and Johnny in Mexico – this project was an effort to promote sexuality, family planning and STD prevention information to young people in Mexico through Rock music. 'Tatiana and Johnny' were a popular rock duo who sang about issues relevant to the young people of Mexico – issues of chastity, faithfulness and the 'macho' pride which makes men reluctant to use contraceptives. The duo's songs were once at the top of the hits charts in Mexico.

Project outcomes

Due to the involvement of young people at all stages of the project, the final document, *The Youth and Population Handbook*, was well received worldwide. Many national youth councils then designed and implemented projects based on the information in the Handbook. The projects that resulted from the Handbook included an Adolescent Fertility Education Programme in the Philippines, AIDS and STD prevention campaigns in Europe, family planning education in Chile, peer to peer AIDS prevention in the USA and peer education on sexuality issues in Jamaica. The verdict – to get the best results for young people, let them do it themselves!

As they were the centre of the consultations, their ideas were the basis of the final document.

One of the main reasons of developing a population handbook was to enable young people to make the right decisions about reproductive health and other population issues. The project therefore empowered both the co-ordinators and the beneficiaries with better information for decision-making.

Case Study 9

Young Ambassadors of Positive Living

Freddie Mubitelela, President and Mathew Miti, Co-ordinator in Zambia

Young Ambassadors of Positive Living (YAPL) is a programme initiated by the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) Africa Centre in response to the spread of HIV/AIDS among young people. It is a youth-run, youth-focused non-profit NGO. Its head office is in Lusaka, Zambia and it has branches countrywide. There are over 50 registered members with Young Ambassadors, all open about their HIV positive status.

The main objective of the programme is to enable young men and women living with the virus to exchange personal experiences with their peers, and to create public awareness by promoting dialogue on the need for increased HIV/AIDS programmes for young people. This dialogue needs to take place among young people living with the virus, their local communities, NGOs and governments.

CYP provides assistance to the Young Ambassadors by offering them administrative, technical and financial support (for example, sponsoring them to attend conferences). CYP also works in partnership with the Ambassadors for HIV/AIDS events, such as the recent Youth Forum in April 2001. However, YAPL is an independent organisation that stands on its own.

The governments of the countries where YAPL operates provide varying degrees of financial and technical support.

YAPL recruits through CYP Africa contact points, and national AIDS control and prevention officers. Ambassadors have good communication skills and proven records of education and outreach efforts in the area of HIV/AIDS. Their main task is to improve the quality of life for young people living with HIV/AIDS through the formation of support groups.

Other objectives include:

- To help young people be self-sufficient economically through the support groups;
- To help reduce the stigma attached to young people with HIV/AIDS through the sharing of personal experiences;
- To promote and protect the rights, interest, participation and responsibility of people living with HIV/AIDS;
- To prevent HIV infections through promoting behaviour change.

Our main activities involve outreach, networking, income-generation and support.

Young Ambassadors visit primary and secondary schools, giving personal experiences of positive living as well as disseminating information about HIV/AIDS through video and drama. Young Ambassadors also give health talks to out-patients, TB patients, and to ante-natal, post-natal and lactating women. We conduct our health talks in a variety of locations, including clinics, work places, local markets and bars. In our effort to facilitate economic self-sufficiency for HIV-positive young people we have conducted tie-and-dye, papier maché and candle-making programmes. We also make home visits to patients and are committed to giving emotional, spiritual and physical support to those who need it.

YAPL is affiliated to the Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS. We also network with other NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), government departments and churches.

The organisation continues to carry out advocacy through high-profile local and information events such as World AIDS Day, candlelight memorials, international conferences on AIDS and STDs in Africa (ICASA) and its own annual general conference. Young Ambassadors are also involved in the government HIV/AIDS television and radio programmes. This helps us to reach young people in remote rural areas.

Our future plans are to advocate for the full participation of young persons in AIDS impact mitigation efforts, at both the grassroots and national levels. We also hope to consolidate the Legal Branch of the network. We will advocate for the establishment of specialised HIV clinics and improvement in access services for health care for all.

When the Young Ambassadors Programme started in Zambia, it had just three young persons. It was difficult for people to join the programme due to the social stigma attached. Now we have more than 30 young people in the programme who have turned out to be role models in our country. These young people, through their bravery, have helped to break the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS.

Mathew Miti: A long road to YAPL

My name is Matthew Miti. I am Zambian and I was born on 29 September 1975, the second in a family of five. I have completed my primary and secondary school education. My mother died in 1994 when I was writing my secondary school final examinations. She was the breadwinner for our family. My father was not working. Therefore I could not continue with further education, as there was no-one to pay for it.

I engaged myself in raising funds so that I could continue school. I started by selling second-hand clothes. Later on I started running a bottle-store and I made a lot of money. A lot of girls came close to me. I got involved with one whom I planned to marry, but later on she died. I did not know what killed her.

In March 1998, I got sick. I was so thin I was weighing 39 kilograms. I went to the hospital where tuberculosis was diagnosed. In our Zambian community once one is

said to have TB people conclude by saying that it is AIDS and this happened to me. People were saying that I had AIDS. This made me so sad and the only solution to prove them wrong was for me to undergo an HIV test.

I then went to Kara Counselling to have an HIV test. I was counselled before taking the test. The counsellor probed my previous sexual life. I told him that I had had two girl friends and that I was very intimate with one them. The counsellor asked me if I had received sex education from my parents, teachers, the church or even from friends, and whether I knew anything about STDs. I told him I had never discussed sexual issues with my parents, as it is a taboo in our tradition. The only people I could really discuss matters of sex with were my grandparents. However, they lived far away and we did not communicate. I told him that I had talked about sex with friends. Also our science teacher sometimes mentioned one or two things about sex, but it was only when we were learning reproductive health. After the counselling session, I learned more about HIV/AIDS, its mode of transmission and how it can be prevented.

The counsellor then took the blood sample and asked me to come back for the results the following morning. The following morning I did not go for my results. I was afraid of being found HIV-positive and that I might end up taking my own life, as this would bring shame not only on me but also on my family and my friends. Two weeks later, I convinced myself that it was tuberculosis that I had, and not HIV. So I went for my results. I did not find the counsellor whom I had met the last time. Instead, I found a different man who again counselled me before giving me the results. He first asked me if I was ready for the results and I agreed. He then showed me a paper with 'REACTIVE' in big letters. I did not understand what this meant. He then told me was that I was HIV-positive.

'So instead of proving the people of the community wrong, I am now proven wrong', I said to myself deep down in my heart and I started crying. I saw death two steps ahead of me. The counsellor gave me words of encouragement, 'Mathew! This is not the end of your life but it is the beginning of your new life'. He later referred me to Hope House, a centre for Kara Counselling where people who have been tested HIV-positive are trained on how they can live long with the HIV virus. During this period one can also be trained in some skills such as tailoring, papier maché, candle-making, batik, and tie and dye. I joined the group of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) and slowly I started coping with the virus. I was the youngest at the Centre. I did not tell my family that I was going to Hope House. I did not want anyone to know about my status, for fear of being victimised or being discriminated against.

At Hope House I became so active in the field of HIV/AIDS that in no time I was chosen as the chairperson. I was later introduced to the Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS (NZP+). At NZP+, I was again chosen as the Secretary for Lusaka province, which has more than 200 PLWHAs as its registered members. Lusaka province also has 31 support groups for PLWHAs in various communities. As a chairperson at Hope House and a Secretary for NZP+, I was able to attend a lot of AIDS

workshops, and I gained recognition from many HIV/AIDS sister organisations and people.

In December 1998, one of my friends went to a meeting in South Africa and met some people from MTV in America. They wanted a young man in Africa who could do a documentary with them depicting the theme for that year which was AIDS: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE. A friend proposed my name without my consent. When he came back, he persuaded me to do the documentary, since it wouldn't be on our local television.

The television crew came and it was time to do the recording. One of the scenes would be recorded at my parents place where I was staying. I ensured that at the time we would be shooting the documentary, my father and my stepmother would not be at home. But when we reached home, I was surprised when I found my father there. My father was also surprised to see me with the 'muzungus' (white people). He asked me about the delegation and I lied to him. I told him that we were recording a drama play and one of the scenes was to be shot at home. My father did not argue when he heard this and he gave us the go ahead.

When we were doing the shooting, it appeared that the Zambian television crew also heard about the delegation and the programme they had come for. They also became interested. They approached me to ask if I could also take part in a short television clip called 'Health Beat'. I tried to refuse by telling them that I did not want to be seen on our local television. But they told me that it was not going to be a long clip and not many people would see or pay much attention to it. I then accepted and they filmed me.

On 1 December 1998 I came home from Hope House as usual and was relaxing in my bedroom. My family was watching TV in the living room, when suddenly I heard my young brother calling me in panic, 'Mathew, Mathew, hurry come and see'. I rushed outside. My brother pointed to the television. It was me. Under the picture were the words written, 'MATHEW MITI – HIV POSITIVE'.

I knew that everyone in the world had now watched me. I felt so humiliated, black-mailed, disgusting – I even hated myself. I rushed to the bedroom and the first thing that came into my mind was to commit suicide. I started searching the room for a possible thing that could assist me to reach heaven in time. I then heard someone banging and pushing the door, which I had locked. And within the shortest period the door was opened and Dad entered. I thought to myself, 'Thank God Dad is here'. I expected Dad to help me die by beating me so hard for having being a disgrace to him and the family.

Dad then started by saying, 'I did not know that you could be so brave, my son. You should have told me the time you were shooting the programme. I would have assisted you in one way or the other.'

'I knew about your HIV-positive status before you knew it. Anyway, keep up the good job you have started. But you have to be strong with the community out there. Most

people you think love you will now shun you', Dad said compassionately.

For almost two weeks, I did not come out of the house for fear of people's reaction. The following week I decided to go to Hope House. I expected to be comforted, congratulated and encouraged by my friends at Hope House. When I reached Hope House I was late. Everybody was in class. When I entered the classroom, everyone looked at me as if I was a stranger. They kept quiet for a moment as if I had died. Then one of them started talking to me. He said, 'Mathew, just how could you disgrace yourself like that on television?' Others followed by saying, 'We have also been disgraced, for every person who sees us here at Hope House will now know that we are all HIV positive.' I was condemned by nearly everybody at Hope House. Instead of being a place of hope for me it became a place of misery.

I then decided to go and seek counselling. The counsellor advised me just like my father did and encouraged me to continue sharing my experience. He then suggested I join the outreach team, which is responsible for disseminating information in schools, churches, colleges, universities, workplaces and the community at large.

Since then, I have ignored people who were saying bad things about me. People started telling my brothers and sisters that they were also suffering from AIDS simply because we were staying in the same house. This made me feel very bad and I moved out. I rented a house in another compound. I had nothing in the house apart from my clothes, one blanket, an electric plate and some plates for cooking. I gave my life to AIDS prevention work. Now, I am well recognised in my country. A lot of young people come to me for counselling, as I am now a trained counsellor. I have helped to break the stigma, though it persists. To help me with my work I joined YAPL. With them I have been to Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

YAPL's achievements ...

- Young people are now starting to accept that AIDS is real and there is some behavioural change among them. Though behaviour change is a long process, we try to revisit them until positive change is attained. Currently the spread of HIV/AIDS in Zambia has stabilised.
- Parent-to-child sexual education has improved. In schools the Zambian government is trying to put sexual education into its curriculum.
- The government, organisations and individuals have started to appreciate the work we are doing. Some organisations, like the Zambia Integrated Health Programme (ZIHP), have included me in their youth advisory committee and their designing team, called the HEART CAMPAIGN. HEART means Helping Each other Act Responsibly Together. This campaign team is also responsible for designing the behaviour change and condom advertisements, and messages on television and radio in seven local languages.

Challenges

- The main difficulty is lack of funding. Since its inception this programme has never been funded. We just use our initiative. Sometimes, the Commonwealth Youth Programme helps us with some logistics, but only when we are invited outside the country.
- Some young people still can't change their behaviour despite having information about AIDS.
- Stigma also prevents young people who are living with HIV/AIDS from getting involved in this programme.

Our hope

We want the government, NGOs and individuals to take up and support this programme.

Our aim is not to transmit HIV/AIDS to others, but to impart good morals and behaviour change.

Case Study 10

Population Control through the Empowerment of Adolescent Girls in Mewat, India

About the organisation

The Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM) is an NGO founded in 1983 by Dr Rajesh Kumar. It has 22 regional branches concentrated mostly in the northern and north-eastern states of India. Most of the members and staff of SPYM are young people. The pillars on which SPYM carries out its health and development work are efficiency, trust and sustainability.

SPYM's Motto is 'Be Your Own Light', inspired by the saying of Lord Buddha, 'Self-Help Is The Best Help'.

SPYM's Mission is to provide quality services within the available resources, to enable people to maximise their potential and to increase their abilities, preserve and enhance human dignity and worth, and prevent or reduce the need for service.

SPYM's objectives

- Building the confidence and skills of marginalised communities;
- Promoting gender justice;
- Influencing public and political attitudes towards the recurring problems;
- Addressing the complex links between ignorance and diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

SPYM's reproductive health programmes work to increase community access to appropriate reproductive health care services. They aim to improve the quality of reproductive health services through training and to create demand for those services in the community. SPYM ensures that projects are sensitive to local beliefs and can be sustained in the long term. SPYM's significant contributions in the areas of health and development earned it the prestigious National Youth Award in 1990, presented by the Prime Minister of India.

How the Mewat adolescent project came about

SPYM has been forming and sustaining women's self-help groups (SHGs) in Mewat, northern India, since 1995. Members of the SHGs voiced the need to focus also on adolescents and, based on their request, the project was drawn up. It was conceptualised in consultation with the beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Area profile

Average age of marriage for boys: 19

Average age of marriage for girls: 13

Average family size: 9.5 members

Mewat is the land of proud and valiant warrior Meos, situated in the southern part of the districts of Gurgaon and Faridabad in Haryana State. The Meos are predominately Muslims, although their beliefs, customs and rituals are a mix of Hinduism and Islam. Located about 120 km south of Delhi, the area is sandwiched between the southern and western Aravalli ranges. In spite of being very near to the capital of the country, the people are not well versed in developmental activities. Many people live below the poverty line and the education level is very low. The condition of the women is very unfortunate. They are politically, socially and economically exploited by their male counterparts. Forms of gender discrimination that are in evidence include wife battering, the dowry system, forced marriages, and deprivation of education, healthcare and nutrition.

Women usually work about 18 hours a day, from 4 am in the morning until 10 pm at night. Most men do not take part in household work. Even in agricultural work, women's share is much greater than men's. Besides this, women collect firewood and provide care for children and other members of their family.

In theory women enjoy 33 per cent representation in the Panchayat Raj institution. However, often it is husbands, father-in-laws and sons who attend on their behalf, as they are considered more knowledgeable and able. Furthermore, suggestions by the few elected women for improving the situation are not taken seriously. Often they are not informed about the agenda or the dates of the meetings. Orthodox traditions, illiteracy and the caste system all inform this lack of political participation by women.

Girls usually do not go to school and form one of the most neglected sections of Mewati society. They lack self-esteem, as they are engaged full-time in household chores and looking after their younger siblings. There are no avenues available to girls to learn and develop skills. Men do not care much about the health problems of the girl child. The girls are physically and psychologically unprepared for childbirth, which they experience around age 15. Accordingly they cannot give proper care and attention to their children. They do not receive medical check-ups, or natal/ante-natal vaccines, and this is a hazard to both mothers and children. The deliveries usually take place at home attended by untrained dias using unsterilised knives and blades, which causes serious health complications and mortalities. By the time women are 20–25 they have already produced four or five children.

SPYM/HIPA's baseline survey in the target area found that STI/RTI prevalence is high. The awareness level regarding reproductive health and contraception, STIs/HIV/AIDS and RTIs and safer sex practices is low. Hygiene is poor. Many women suffer from anaemia, RTIs/STIs, malnutrition, leucorrhoea, premature deliveries

and problems related to their menstrual cycle. Men commonly have unprotected sex and use drugs and alcohol, raising the risk of infections within the local population as a whole.

Project goal, objectives and inputs

Goal: Empowerment of 250 adolescent girls of the Mewat area through family life education and skill building over the period of one year, through:

1. Vocational Training
2. Family Life Education (FLE)
3. IEC activity
4. Clinic based services
5. Advocacy and networking.

Objectives:

- To form ten self-help groups of adolescent girls, comprising 25 members each, in five villages;
- To develop vocational skills such as cutting, tailoring and stitching embroidery in two cycles of six months each;
- To impart Family Life Education (FLE) in weekly group sessions;
- To train 20 peer educators to provide information and sustain development;
- To undertake advocacy and network with PHCs and other health agencies for the provision of contraceptives, immunisation and also to route their resources/ services through self help groups.

The following activities were carried out to achieve the goal of the project:

- Creation of self-help groups

Develop and pre-test the Performa for baseline survey.

Collect and compile data.

Procure a list of probable adolescent SHG members. Visit the houses of SHG members. Mobilise and motivate them to join meetings. Start the formation of adolescent SHGs. List the expectations of the girls as well as what their contributions will be.

Form and train adolescent SHGs through meetings in five villages of the project area.

Invite resource persons and other SHG members to address SHGs.

List their expectations as well as what their contributions will be.

Hold regular meetings of SHGs.

- Vocational training

The basic thrust of this activity is skill-building and making this an entry point amongst the adolescent women for family life education (FLE).

Identify existing vocational trainer and mobilise resources such as a free place for training, and tools and raw materials for the vocational centre.

Identify trainer for Family Life Education. Conduct FLE training for project staff. Prepare course schedule for adolescent SHG members and conduct one session per week for six months or 48 hours (which ever is earlier) with all the SHG members. This means that the 24-hour module will be implemented in three months and the same will be repeated in the next three months for reinforcement.

- Advocacy and networking

Establish network with line departments for better service delivery.

Visit important line departments on regular basis.

Organise meetings with line departments.

Monitoring, supervision and evaluation plan

A project monitoring committee was formed with a Project Director, Project Co-ordinator and two representatives from the local community. To assess the progress of the programme, the co-ordinator will visit the whole target area on monthly basis. S/he will also talk to beneficiaries and local community leaders and SHG members to ensure the smooth functioning of the project. The project co-ordinator will organise monthly meetings with the educators/trainers to discuss the achievements and plan for further actions and activities. During these meetings all educators/trainers will submit their progress reports to the Co-ordinator. The meetings will ensure regular feedback, and that necessary changes are made, with the help of input provided by the local beneficiaries and the field staff.

Sustainability plan

- All the existing adolescent SHGs will be handed over to the main Mewat area development project for further growth.
- All SHG members were encouraged to produce products and sell them in the local market.

- Micro-credit was arranged for the SHGs from the local rural bank.
- Peer educators were encouraged to impart education to other village women on Family Life Education.

Project achievements

Although mothers were willing to send their daughters to Family Life Education sessions, their fathers were reluctant. That 250 girls participated must be counted as a success, and a tribute to the SHG facilitators and to SPYM's credibility. To determine what the young participants felt about the project, we organised Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The report of one of the FGDs is as follows:

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

The focus group discussion was organised with a sample of 15 participants with whom SPYM had been having regular sessions on Family Life Education. The following was the response from the participants during the FGD in Hathin, Mewat.

What have you learned so far from the sessions? What new things in this programme did you like or feel good about? Was there anything that you didn't like?

- With the passage of time we should change ourselves and our thinking.
- We have learned skills like stitching, cutting and tailoring.
- The vocational skills will make us self-sufficient as we can earn.
- The programme has certainly helped us to understand where we stand.
- Day by day we have learned something new from this programme.
- By sharing each other's experiences we can learn the prevailing pros and cons of our society.
- We are also now aware of some games.
- We have certainly developed a vision to plan our future.
- We are getting time and opportunity to discuss many things that we cannot discuss with our parents.
- We can think about changing traditions.
- We have a platform to think and share differently.
- It is bad to comment on others.
- Each and every individual is unique in themselves, in matters of choices, preferences and behaviour, so one must not be judgmental.
- It is not only girls but boys too who suffer.

- There should be equal division of labour at home and also in other fields.
- There is nothing we did not like.

Has your level of knowledge and awareness of the issues dealt with increased?

- Yes, we have become more punctual.
- We have learned the importance of feelings and emotions and any doubt on something without confirmation can be harmful in any relationship.
- We share each and everything frankly that we think and feel.
- We could discuss what we have learned and explore it.
- We could learn about ourselves ('ZABAN AA GAI').

How do you feel, and what you have learned, now the programme is over?

- We are feeling very sad and uncomfortable as we are separated from each other after having a good time.
- In future we are not sure that we will get any chance to participate in such a programme.
- We have benefited a lot from this programme.
- Our thinking has developed and now we can plan for our better future.
- We have developed communication and listening skills.
- We are much more aware about sex.
- We learned about health issues.
- Now we are comfortable and mature enough to discuss topics like puberty.
- We now understand the advantages of having a small family.
- Now we have specific goals in our lives and for that we are putting our maximum efforts.
- We are now able to plan our career.
- Now we can express our feelings quite confidently in front of others.
- Before when we did something we used never to think of consequences, but now we are very much concerned about consequences.
- Now we have realised that instead of changing society we must change ourselves as each one of us is part of it. By changing ourselves we can change the whole society.
- We would love to have such programmes for all the youth of this country.

Would you now reach out to the other girls in their community, who have not gone through this programme? How would you do this?

All the participants said they would help in:

- Involving more girls in their villages in such programmes;
- Making space available and doing other things that were a prerequisite of organising the programme.

Conclusions

Trends, patterns and lessons

Youth-led and *youth-driven* movements can be viable and earn credibility purely on the strength of their actions and message. As for those organisations created by *adults* for youth advancement, the most effective ones have succeeded in building skills and confidence in their youth, to a point that they are able to participate in their own right in the life of the organisation. In other words, they have enlisted youth as partners, rather than as ‘objects’ or ‘targets’ of their programmes.

These institutional studies illustrate young people’s ability and desire to organise around topics of interest, to forge links to achieve objectives, and to sustain the enriching and educative experiences of their lives. We have chosen a few discussion themes out of the dozens of possibilities presented by the case studies.

Think differently

- Drik’s Out of Focus project is unusual – it uses a visual medium, photography, to enable self-expression in working class youth.
- The EDGE case study reveals creative use of multi-media and advanced technology by young people to disseminate their messages. Bluepeace campaigners brought their issue into the mainstream by distributing T-shirts and stickers to the public. They also published an easy-to-use reference book on an eco-friendly lifestyle which generated so much interest that it is now part of the primary school curriculum in the Maldives.
- The informal and creative format of the SPYM’s self-help groups seems to have been enabling and fun for the young girls, encouraging them to think of reproductive health options they previously did not have access to.
- *collective echoes* emphasised creative use of the public space and used locally available materials to articulate young people’s artistic aspirations.
- WAY’s Youth and Population Handbook project documents successful and creative approaches to educating youth on reproductive health issues. The Handbook itself is an innovation, as it draws young people into a dialogue on a daunting topic.

Youth movements and schemes have captured the public imagination when they have promoted unconventional thinking. The best youth movements have offered new paradigms, new ways of thinking, knowing and being.

Multi-generational learning

It is well-known that young people learn best from their peers. Often young people can be understood only by their peers. The Connect Youth visit to Malawi provides a good illustration. AYISE, a youth centre based in Blantyre, assisted a local hospital in its efforts to provide good health care for young people by engag-

ing with young people's language. As suggested by the Self Help Groups of SPYM, the co-mentorship model of *collective echoes*, the photography training by Drik and the HIV/AIDS counselling sessions in the YAPL study, *once trust is established*, young people will learn from adults just as well as they do from their peers. The most successful youth initiatives have been holistic in their approach, involving sympathetic elders and the wisdom of multiple generations, and ultimately earning respect for youth within their communities and beyond.

Effective use of technology, print and electronic media

Many of the organisations featured here have taken advantage of the technological revolution to reach a wider audience and to widen their network of partners. Drik is a pioneer in the information and communications technology field in Bangladesh. EDGE uses multimedia, including movies shot by youth members, to encourage interest in eco-tourism and sustainable development. YAPL activists regularly target the media to engage youth in discussions on HIV/AIDS.

Nonetheless, we must recognise that the 'digital divide' is more than a cliché. It is a reality in many societies around the world. Indeed, several youth organisations are increasingly mindful of the fact that, in some parts of the world, children do not have access to basic literacy or to a black board and chalk, let alone to computers. Since English is the major language of the internet, there is also a concern that non-English speakers may be left out of interesting youth initiatives.

Information and knowledge

Ours is the information age, and the era of information technology. As vital as 'information' is, it is not an end in itself. Many of the case studies prove that information has to be mediated locally if it is to have an effect. SPYM encourages young girls to think about reproductive health in the context of their own lives in traditional patriarchal communities.

All roads lead to the community

One of the most important themes that emerges from these institutional studies is that of the mutual empowerment of youth and their communities. As illustrated by the Pachen Village case study, 'young people readily take on responsibility if they have a sense of ownership'. If young people are engaged as full partners in the life and development of the community, the ultimate winner is the community itself. As illustrated by the Drik and *collective echoes* experiences, the community might even take a while to understand or welcome the new initiatives. The experiences of the youth of BluePeace, Pachen Village, YAPL and other organisations also attest to their ability to reach out from communities to government agencies, politicians, foreign donors and others. In NGO parlance, this is known as 'multi-stakeholder involvement'. Over and over again, the lesson we draw is that there can be no 'community' without youth.

Think locally and globally – act locally and globally

Young people must be consciously and systematically involved in seeking solutions to 'global' problems, even when they are traditionally 'adult' issues. No issue is out of reach, because adult decisions affect every aspect of our lives every day. IPPF and WAY are both international youth organisations dealing with 'serious' adult issues such as planned parenthood and global population. YAPL and SPYM operate at the national and regional levels, dealing respectively with HIV/AIDS and reproductive health.

EDGE and Connect Youth are both national youth initiatives, with a consciously international outlook. EDGE members, like Bluepeace members, attend international conferences on the environment and sustainable development. Connect Youth conducts international study trips for youth who might not normally have the chance to go abroad and learn about the world. Ultimately, all the youth initiatives described here have an impact on global discussions.

Common goals but different starting points

Drik was created to 'right a wrong'. In the words of Drik's founder, Shahidul Alam, 'Western media had created an image that was distorted...' Their country, Bangladesh, was known for all the wrong reasons. This is illustrative of the divisions characterising our 'global village', both across and within social units of every scale. Although we talk about common global problems, ours is a fractured human community. Many of the youth organisations represented here have to take this into account. *collective echoes* insisted on diversity training for its members, to reflect Vancouver's ethnic mix. WAY and IPPF have been diligent in putting together truly international and representative youth committees, so they can meaningfully discuss global topics such as population and planned parenthood. A large element of YAPL's effort is concerned with the stigma attached to this already cruel disease, and to reintegrate those with HIV/AIDS into the mainstream of society.

Creating enabling structures for youth participation

Youth perspectives are sometimes different from prevailing norms, and youth empowerment might entail replacing debilitating structures and installing norms and systems that better reflect young people's needs and abilities. The IPPF case study describes the process of institutionalising youth participation within an organisation. Youth participants of the Working Group concluded that young people must be valued for their individual contributions. But achieving this may require structural transformation. *collective echoes* deliberately adopted a daring and inclusive approach in its organisational structure which, although perceived as 'different' by donors, accurately reflected Vancouver's multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism.

Multiplier-effect or ripple effect

Effective programmes have, almost without fail, generated other follow-up or wholly new initiatives. SPYM had been organising women's self-help groups for many years. The SHG for adolescent girls featured in this chapter was created at the request of the women who had benefited from these SHGs. EDGE provides the most dramatic illustration of one successful youth initiative engendering another. The *WAY Youth and Population Handbook* has led to many creative youth initiatives around the world. Bluepeace activists talk about the 'multiplier' effect within their movement, as their message caught on among the public, and other NGOs in Maldives started taking up the cause of saving turtles and conserving the environment.

Keeping the focus: sustaining youth participation

The success of the Bluepeace initiative lies in its remarkable ability to learn from mistakes, consistently come up with alternative solutions and never lose sight of its campaign goals. When Bluepeace found that the turtle hatchery project that they had been promoting was actually harmful to the turtles, they quickly conducted further research and came up with alternatives. Idealism and pragmatism also come together in the self-assessment of the members of *collective echoes*; 'large doses of reality need to be part of the equation if this kind of model is to be replicated. Ideally, we wouldn't have forged ahead without secured wage funding ... But our passion and our desire to fulfill the original vision kept us focused on our early goals.'

As we have seen in several instances, focus and passion must be supplemented with real training and skill-building in order to ensuring sustainability of the programmes. For example, SPYM's empowering Family Life Education for young girls was supplemented by vocational training (in tailoring, craft-making etc.). Drik's Out of Focus project crucially imparts marketable skills to the children involved.

Young people need an opportunity, not charity

Not all projects that empower young people are actually initiated by them. Often, an individual or a civil society organisation with the right motivation can reach out and provide the critical first opportunity. To quote from the experience of the Husena Youth Group of Papua New Guinea, 'the "hand-out" mentality as seen in some welfare state or youth grants will only make youth a liability to the nation's development. Good programmes will encourage youth to find their place as productive members of communities.' Drik and SPYM have reached out to young people with a message and an opportunity for skill-building. IPPF and WAY provide opportunities at the international level.

The gift of life and the power of one

While each case study featured here emphasises this final and most important theme, its best illustration is provided by the Young Ambassadors of Positive

Living, who have battled a disease and the attendant social stigma, to bring hope, inspiration and awareness to young people. Each personal pathway to participation, and each individual success story empowers us all. Who can remain unmoved by the statements of Mathew Miti of YAPL and Dana Thorpe of *collective echoes*?

Challenges and future visions

Young people, as we have seen in the statistics quoted in the Chapter 1, and in the analysis of Chapter 2, are the single largest untapped constituency of human potential. Yet social and political organisations across the spectrum are soliciting and using young people to advance their objectives. We have civil society organisations with their message of youth participation for development and peace. On the other hand, young people are invited to participate in their national life by joining the military. We have political parties who mobilise youth as foot soldiers, distributing pamphlets, putting up posters and canvassing in elections, but not as decision-makers.

At the extreme, we have religious, political and civil society organisations with openly xenophobic or racist missions. These organisations, too, actively solicit youth participation. They systematically target young people and recruit them with visions of a better future and purer, stronger communities. The main instrument of inclusion in these cases is explicit exclusion of certain other groups.

Advanced technology means that young people are assaulted everyday by competing ideologies and confusing messages. 'To participate or not' is only part of the problem. Young people also have to confront the issues of how, where and when to participate. They are required to sort through multiple recruiting opportunities, relying only on their best judgments and, if they are lucky, on the advice of family and friends.

Our belief is that robust, versatile and sustainable youth participation – at the level of the individual and the age group as a whole – has to be based on an inclusive approach. This much is obvious. But the dependency is mutual: organisations that wish to promote inclusive societies in the widest sense, must pursue youth participation. They should be aware that their competitors are recruiting the young.

Our vision is one of empowering environments for all young people and their communities, all over the world. We hope these institutional examples show that this is possible.