



Innovations in International Youth Volunteering

An analysis of 22 innovative youth volunteer programs from around the world

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¹ V Research Specification for project.

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1. Amigos de las Américas

Programme Goals and Activities

Amigos de las Américas (AMIGOS), an international NGO, sends young volunteers to Latin American countries to work on local development projects. The programme, whose name means “Friends of the Americas” in Spanish, aims to build partnerships to empower young leaders, advance community development, and strengthen multicultural understanding in the Americas. Young volunteers from the United States are given thorough training in the U.S., and then spend five to eight weeks living in a Latin American country. There, volunteers partner with local community organisations and NGOs to work on development projects in areas such as community health, environmental conservation, youth-to-youth community development, and education. Volunteers are trained to value and utilise local knowledge and resources, promoting sustainable programme planning and implementation.

By contributing to local development programmes, AMIGOS volunteers develop skills such as leadership, cultural sensitivity, team-building, and problem-solving. They become more aware of the importance of cross-cultural understanding and sustainable, community-led development.

Last year, 656 volunteers participated in the programme, and over 20,000 have done so since the programme was founded in 1965. Volunteers are predominantly high school students with an average age of 17.



2006 Volunteer Shannon Zolowski cooks with her host family.

Innovation

Unlike many international volunteer coordinating organisations, AMIGOS trains its volunteers extensively before they arrive in Latin America. This training focuses on cultural sensitivity, self confidence, and creative thinking. A network of 26 AMIGOS Chapters throughout the United States link alumni and parents with volunteers to collectively train, fundraise, and prepare for the summer service.

Upon their arrival in Latin America, volunteers are assigned to communities in groups of two or three, ensuring a genuine immersion experience. Instead of interacting primarily with other Americans, volunteers work in partnership with existing local organisations and alongside community members. Volunteers get a close-up view of international development as they work within other organisations' sustainable development plans, always seeking to focus on projects that are meaningful and relevant to host communities.

To allow volunteer staff additional room to innovate within the projects, the Amigos Foundation awards grants in response to their requests. Successful grant projects have ranged from youth workshops on AIDS and teen pregnancy to construction of a computer centre and the creation of a non-profit community pharmacy.

Youth Focus

Young volunteers are the heart of the AMIGOS programme. During their stays in Latin America, volunteers gain an understanding of the primary challenges facing their host communities at the local and national level. In collaboration with other young people in their host communities, AMIGOS volunteers lead interactive classes for elementary school children on a variety of topics (nutrition, self-esteem, dental hygiene, environmental education, etc.). They also are actively involved in community projects selected by their host communities, ranging from reforestation, to construction of community facilities, to trash pickup.

Outcome data show that AMIGOS youth participants have significant growth in their leadership, cultural sensitivity, teambuilding and problem-solving skills, in addition to gaining self-esteem and self-confidence in their abilities. One of AMIGOS' key successes in empowering young leaders is through the "leadership ladder" whereby volunteers return in subsequent years to serve as supervisors and senior project staff. The staff positions are also performed in a volunteer capacity, with senior project staff receiving only a minimal stipend for their work setting up, directing, and evaluating the projects in-country.

Youth Voice

Name: Sara King

Age: 23

Position: Volunteer, 2000; Supervisor, 2004; Project Director, 2005; Board member, Washington, D.C. Chapter.

“Amigos says [to its volunteers]: ‘We trained you – go for it... It’s hard for people to see that an organisation would give that much trust, faith, and power to someone who hasn’t even graduated college.’”

Sara King

“Amigos says [to its volunteers]: ‘We trained you – go for it, you’re free to make mistakes and have successes, and we’ll support you.’ I really think the experience is unmatched in any other organisation I have run across, because you create a bond not only with the people you’re on staff with or are volunteering with... but also with the community members and the partner agencies. Those kinds of contacts and cross-fertilisation are unparalleled, especially for people who are 18, 19, or 20 years old. It’s hard for people to see that an organisation would give that much trust, faith, and power to someone who hasn’t even graduated college. [AMIGOS participants gain a] broad range of knowledge in dealing with a community. As a volunteer you see it one way, then when you become a staff member you really see from top to bottom every single day what these communities are dealing with.

At the bottom, you see the daily life of someone that’s living in [a host] family, who maybe only brings in \$100 per month. You see their daily trials and joys... then as you move up the leadership ladder, you also see at the municipal or state level the bureaucratic barriers to entry for getting teachers into schools. As a senior staff member, you see at the national level the Minister of Education facing challenges of providing funding to states and how difficult is to get that to trickle down to the community level. You realise these aren’t easy problems to solve at all.

For everyone [who participates in AMIGOS], you become a more much civically engaged and civically minded person – I can’t think of a single person who hasn’t been stretched or challenged in a new way.”

Programme Impact and Future Development

In 2006, AMIGOS accomplishments included:

Home Improvement Projects

- Projects carried out with families
 - 330 Latrines constructed
 - 80 Water-storage tanks built
 - 456 Fuel-efficient stoves constructed
 - 85 Homes improved – such as floors, roofs, and shelving

Community Improvement

- Projects carried out with community groups
 - 3,884 Trees planted
 - 37 Community/school gardens planted
 - 8 Libraries established
 - 372 Environmental improvement efforts, including trash pickups
 - 288 Community centres, clinics, schools built or renovated
 - 86 Playgrounds and parks built or improved

Community Capacity Building

- Projects carried out with children, women and community organisations
 - 14,227 Children participating in dental health activities
 - 4,803 Educational workshops held with children and young people
 - 645 Educational workshops held with adults
 - 205 Activities to support community groups, such as fundraising events or planning sessions
 - 87 Community groups formed
 - 1,571 English classes held
 - 318 Computer and digital media workshops and activities

In the future, AMIGOS is aiming to increase the number of Latin American volunteers that serve within their own countries. Within the United States, AMIGOS is also looking to increase scholarships available to volunteers to ensure that financial background is not a barrier to participation. Overall, AMIGOS is looking to double the number of volunteer participants and communities served by their 50th anniversary in 2014.

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Project Locations:

Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Chapters located in 17 US states.

Year Established: 1965

Website:

<http://www.amigoslink.org>



Inspiring a million more young volunteers

2. Proyecto Arroyo La Tapera

Programme Goals and Activities

The “La Tapera” Stream Project is a service-learning programme focusing on water treatment and conservation. The project is designed to engage chemistry students between 16 and 22 years old, in a variety of courses over three years. Since its inception, the programme has involved about 800 students around 100 each year.

Participants conduct physical, chemical, and biological monitoring of the entire water basin, focusing on 16 sample sites. They also carry out awareness campaigns, sanitation, cleaning, and reforestation activities. Another important part of the programme involves testing the quality of water from wells used for consumption by families who lack access to tap water. The final aspect of the project is campaigning to reduce water usage in Mar del Plata. This part of the programme was incorporated in 2006 because data measured by students over the previous five years showed that consumption was double the amount recommended for daily usage by the World Health Organisation.

In addition to improving the environment and local water quality and usage, the programme aims to provide technical training to better equip students to enter the labour market, and build skills to help them address real problems. “Grades become less important; it’s about learning how to solve issues,” states Professor Vilma Giannini, one of the project directors. The programme leaders also aim to promote dialogue and communication among teachers, students and administrators, as well as between the school, community and government. Finally, the programme seeks to develop students’ social awareness and change adult community members’ vision of the role of young people.

Innovation

This project transcends the boundaries of formal education and incites students not only to reflect on how the ecosystem works, but also to work to improve the environment and their community. This combination of research and advocacy teaches students two very different, yet equally important, sets of skills.



Another innovative aspect of the programme is that students participate over the course of three years, providing project continuity and opportunities for students to take on new roles. Finally, project organisers sell recycled products both to improve the environment and to raise additional money. They also call on past volunteers now working for in the private sector for their companies to provide in-kind support.

Youth Focus

Before each project, students and teachers complete an analysis of the situation and engage in group debate and reflection about how to proceed with the project. They undergo a similar process at the completion of the project to discuss and create recommendations for future project improvements.

The students have a large role in building community awareness about the importance of water and environmental protection, writing articles for local newspapers and helping to organise annual community days on the topics. As a testament to the level of student engagement in the project, several alumni volunteers have continued to participate after graduation.

Youth Voice

Name: Hugo Pincheira Saavedra

Age: 17

Position: Chemical department student



For Hugo, the project has “changed everything.” He now “has answers” when his family asks about the topic of the environment, and people stop him on the street to tell him they are proud of the work he and his classmates are doing. The project has also given Hugo a new perspective on dynamics within the classroom, school and community; he feels listened to and that he is able to teach others – even his teachers! He is also very impressed by the quality of his teachers, both their interpersonal and academic skills.

“I’m very proud of them,” he says.

Hugo now wants to teach his children about the importance of protecting the environment. “After all,” he says, “water isn’t eternal.”

Programme Impact and Future Development:

Participation in the project has improved students’ academic performance, decreased dropout rates, and reduced violence. More than 90 percent of participants in the programme pursue further education.

The programme has also increased the social commitment of a variety of actors, including local businesses and families of the participating students, and developed important inter-institutional relationships.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the students completed 7 sanitation projects, analysed 75 homes for water quality, organised an awareness campaign on water consumption, and planted 75 trees, among other activities.

The group will soon be receiving new equipment purchased by State authorities so they can continue their project and conduct more experiments. According to one of the project directors, the programme will continue to expand and take on new cases. The project is now an integral part of the community and receives requests from community members and other schools to collaborate on new projects. A former student and member of the project who is now teaching in a different province is seeking to replicate the project in her own school.

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Domingo F. Sarmiento

Location: Mar del
Plata, Argentina

Year Established: 1999

3. Campo Amigo Ecuador

Programme Goals and Activities

Diabetes is the third leading cause of death in Ecuador. Hundreds of Ecuadorian children and young people struggle with type 1 diabetes every day, but until Campo Amigo Ecuador opened its doors in 1999, many of them did not have adequate knowledge or resources to manage their condition, and some did not even know that there were other young people in their country having similar experiences.

To address this problem, two American teenagers, Nicolas Cuttriss and Jesse Fuchs-Simon, founded AYUDA Inc. in 1996, envisioning an organisation which would empower young people to educate each other about diabetes. AYUDA, which means “help” in Spanish, stands for “American Youth Understanding Diabetes Abroad.” The organisation now runs a month-long volunteer programme that culminates in a week-long summer camp in Quito, Ecuador for children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes. The camp represents a unique collaboration between international volunteers, high school, university and medical students who receive training in diabetes management before their journey to South America, and Ecuadorian volunteers, many of whom are former campers themselves.

Also known as “insulin-dependent diabetes,” type 1 diabetes is a dangerous condition which interferes with production of insulin, the body’s natural means of controlling blood sugar levels. Using supplies donated from pharmaceutical companies and American diabetes camps, volunteers teach campers to monitor their glucose levels, regulate their diets, and inject themselves with insulin. At camp, the young Ecuadorians learn that “a lack of education is equally as dangerous as a lack of insulin.”

Volunteers also address the psychological aspects of diabetes, teaching the campers to accept and manage their condition, support each other, and raise awareness in their communities.

Every year, around 20 international volunteers join an equal number of Ecuadorians to serve about a hundred campers. To date, over 700 campers have attended Campo Amigo, many of them returning several years in a row. AYUDA has sent over 200 volunteers from abroad (including Americans, French, Germans, British, Mexicans, Brazilians, Colombians and Bermudans) to Ecuador and its other diabetes camp sites in other countries.

Innovation

Campo Amigo Ecuador was founded by young people and is led and run by young people. Young volunteers staff the camp, serving as counsellors and peer-educators. For international volunteers, their experience at Campo Amigo Ecuador serves to increase their awareness of health issues in developing countries, enhance their understanding of Ecuadorian culture, and develop their abilities as leaders.

For Ecuadorian volunteers, the camp also serves to enable them to become leaders in the local diabetes community, continuing to educate their peers and families about their condition long after the camp is over. Many of the young volunteers have diabetes themselves and are empowered through serving in the programme to better accept and manage their condition.

Youth Focus

During the year, AYUDA's local partner foundation, Fundación Diabetes Juvenil Ecuador (Ecuadorian Foundation for Juvenile Diabetes), follows up with campers' families, providing home training and workshops with parents, and facilitating the formation of local diabetes support groups and advocacy organisations.



Campo Amigo Ecuador seeks to mobilise young people as agents of change. As a youth-led programme, Campo Amigo Ecuador recognises the importance of combining youth-to-youth education and empowerment with the service delivery of diabetes education and disease management skills.

Youth Voice

Sofia Alarcón grew up in Quito, Ecuador and was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when she was 8 years old. She first attended Campo Amigo as a camper at age 15. Before arriving at camp, she did not know very many other young people with diabetes. “I felt lonely,” she says, “but Campo Amigo changed my life.” After spending time as a camper, Sofia returned to staff the camp as a counsellor, and is now the camp director. She helps with recruitment, mentoring children, and directing camp activities.

Name: Sofia Alarcón

Age: 21

Position: Camp Director

“The camp is my life... the positive energy that the volunteers transmit to the children is amazing.”
Sofia Alarcón

Sofia now sees diabetes as a normal condition that can be controlled, not a shameful disease. “Now I love to tell people that I have diabetes – I make lots of friends that way!” Sofia says that through the camp, she has learned life-saving medical information as well as valuable leadership skills. She has recruited her entire family to become involved in the camp, from attending activities and workshops, to staffing the Fundación Diabetes Juvenil Ecuador, to hosting American volunteers in her home. “The camp is my life,” she says. “It’s a super-cool environment. We’re a family. It’s so incredible to see other people with diabetes, and the positive energy that the volunteers transmit to the children is amazing.”

Sofia eventually hopes to put the skills she has learned as a volunteer at Campo Amigo to further use by becoming a nutritionist, continuing to empower children and young people to control their diabetes.

Programme Impact and Future Development

Young people from all over Ecuador have improved their health status as a result of their participation in the camps, as measured by fewer complications and visits to hospitals, while volunteers gain valuable leadership skills and appreciation for Ecuadorian culture. International volunteers also learn valuable lessons about fundraising; each is required to raise \$3,500 toward the costs of Campo Amigo prior to their training.



AYUDA Inc has facilitated diabetes camps in several Latin American countries and is currently developing pilot programmes in Belize and Croatia.

Campo Amigo Ecuador aims to become entirely locally sustainable, as increasing proportions of the volunteer staff are local alumni of the programme rather than volunteers from abroad. This will be accomplished with the support of the Ecuadorian diabetes community, which has become increasingly active due to the networking opportunities created by the camp and the establishment of the Fundación Diabetes Juvenil Ecuador.

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AYUDA, Inc. (American
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Diabetes Abroad, Inc.)

Location: Quito,
Ecuador, with training
in USA

Year Established: 1999

Website:

<http://www.ayudainc.net>

4. Say No to Sexual Abuse

Programme Goals and Activities

Through a network of youth clubs and peer educators and with the support of local chiefs, teachers, and religious leaders, the Centre for Alternatives for Victimised Women and Children (CAVWOC)'s Say No to Sexual Abuse Programme is empowering over 300 young people to take a stand on an issue that has long been taboo in local communities.

The project grew from a research project CAVWOC organised in response to frequent stories in the news about the sexual exploitation of children in the lakeshore areas of Malawi. The survey not only confirmed the severity of the problem of child abuse in the area; it also highlighted the desire of young people to learn more about the issue and how they could help prevent abuse.

In response to these findings, CAVWOC began to reach out to schools and youth groups across five districts of Malawi, seeking to give young people the chance to learn about their rights and discuss how child sex abuse was affecting their communities. They worked with District Education Officers to establish clubs in ten secondary schools in the city of Blantyre, and total membership has reached about 250 students. Led by teachers trained by CAVWOC, clubs meet to discuss what rights children and women have and how these rights can be used to design a strategy that prevents child abuse and exploitation. They also hold quarterly club exchanges, giving young people a forum in which to exchange experiences and plans, as well as give feedback directly to CAVWOC staff.

Participation goes beyond Blantyre's secondary schools. CAVWOC has also created a club for secondary school graduates, encouraging them to stay involved and use their experience to become peer educators and trainers. These graduates run a radio programme, in both English and the local language of Chichewa, which allows them to spread their message to rural communities. Young people from across the four regions of operation call in or write to the show, sharing their opinions on the issues of children's and women's rights.

CAVWOC has coordinated with the District Youth Offices to build a network of young people to act as Peer Educators. These young educators work to raise awareness of child sexual abuse, counsel affected peers, refer victims to responsible service providers, and write progress reports on their actions.

They partner with Guardians trained by CAVWOC and local government Child Protection Officers, who help ensure that cases of child abuse are reported and accorded the necessary attention.

Innovation

The programme relies on productive partnerships between young people and adults, both at the level of the clubs and the peer educators. Clubs are coordinated by teachers or staff at the schools, and Peer Educators work with adult Guardians. However, young people take control of the message and share it with peers and the wider community. In particular, they have pioneered the radio show, not only leading it on air, but also writing the scripts and poetry to read on the show. They have also contributed to the evaluation of the programme and worked to collect data on child abuse in their communities. Being young themselves, the Peer Educators not only understand young people's lives better than an adult might, but are also less intimidating to other young people.

Youth Focus

Through teaching others what they have learned about their rights, the young participants of Say No to Sexual Abuse investigate on a deeper level the problems their communities face and what young people can do to solve them. They are leading their communities in a discussion which was previously taboo, and using their talents to confront a reality affecting young children and women across Malawi. The technique is effective: participants report that their communities have become more positive and open to discussing sexual rights. At the same time, the programme equips the young people for continued activism and future employment. It creates opportunities for them to develop their leadership skills while giving other young people in the community information vital to improving their health and safety.

Youth Voice

Name: Lilian Kamowa

Age: 22

Position: Information Technology Technician; club member since 2002

"Most of my friends joined..."

There has to be someone standing up to say 'No.'"

Lilian Kamowa

"At the end of the day, it was an eye-opener," said Lilian Kamowa, a 22 year old IT technician currently working in Blantyre. She explains how through CAVWOC's programme, she had the opportunity to stand up for rights she previously did not know she had. Lilian joined a club at her secondary school in 2002 when she saw a flyer about an introductory meeting at her school. "Most of my friends joined. The programme deals with a very serious issue. There has to be someone standing up to say no." Joining the clubs, she explains, allows young people to take a stand. Lilian also leads the radio show, a role that has taught her to communicate coherently in public and to reach out to multiple communities across Malawi.

“We suggested to CAVWOC that the radio show should be in Chichewa as well as English so we can reach all the children.” The show has been a great success, with people calling and writing in to share how the show has helped their communities begin a discussion on the problems of sexual abuse. Lillian hopes to continue her social work in the future: “I know when I hear such a response, there’s an impact – which is something I really like.”

“At the end of the day, it was an eye-opener.” Lilian Kamowa

Programme Impact and Future Development

The Say No to Sexual Abuse project has created a forum where children’s rights issues are tackled and young people have an opportunity to present their views. However, many challenges still exist. Project managers cite the attitudes of some elders towards children’s rights as a concern, particularly their support of early marriages. Girls often feel it is better to get married than to stay in a home where they have to struggle and share dwindling resources. In addition, CAVWOC faces the challenge of supporting the victims of abuse and following up on cases where Peer Educators identify problems that need to be reported to qualified counsellors or police. Finally, all of the organisation’s projects are constrained by the lack of resources available to fund them. These constraints lead to high staff turnover and restrictions on how much the programme can reach out to rural areas.

The project hopes to mobilise more resources and improve networking to continue to build a support system for the victims of abuse. Additionally, CAVWOC hopes to create a resource centre through which Peer Educators can learn vocational skills to improve their economic status, furthering the opportunities open to young people who participate in the programme.

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and Children (CAVWOC)

Location:

Blantyre, Malawi

Year Established: 2001

5. Selo Escola Solidária

Programme Goals and Activities

Selo Escola Solidária (SELO) is a biannual service-learning certification process that encourages projects in schools to improve education and build a more socially just nation. SELO incorporates young volunteers on teams with parents, staff, teachers, coordinators, administrators, and members of the community to enhance the role of the school as a nucleus of community citizenship.

The SELO process begins every two years by identifying quality service-learning practices and inviting project proposals from schools throughout the country.

Proposals are evaluated according to specific criteria: the significance of the experience for participants and the people served, the coherence of activities with service learning goals, and their pedagogical and social impacts.

After projects are selected, certified, and run throughout the school year, experiences are analysed for content and methodologies and written into a report that is disseminated throughout the country. These results are used to encourage schools to develop more complex and numerous projects, raising the standards and criteria for the following certification round.

Since 2003, 18,193 Brazilian schools have been certified, engaging an estimated 546,000 young people from every state in service-learning projects. The average age of youth participants ranges from 15 to 20 years of age, and is balanced between the genders. Over 80% of participating schools are public, state, or municipal, which primarily serve lower and lower-middle class young people.

The most commonly involved academic subjects are environmental education, arts and culture, Portuguese, and mathematics. Projects concentrate in areas such as working to improve health, the environment, human rights, and gender relations; caring for seniors, children, disabled persons; and working with other schools and rural communities, among others.

Innovation

SELO's approach is unique in its ability to reach national scope very rapidly. In addition to the certification programme, SELO presents, trains, and contributes to the national debate on service-learning to encourage schools to adopt the pedagogical practice. Faça Parte has organised talks in 12 states this year regarding the value of service-learning for both education and community improvement.

To support both SELO and other volunteering programmes it runs, Faça Parte has created strong partnerships with the National Council of Education Secretaries and the National Union of Municipal Education Directors. The Secretaries of these organisations appoint state coordinators who are trained by Faça Parte and participate in annual planning meetings. Faça Parte has also begun to share the successes of the SELO programme at the regional level, participating in international congresses in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Israel to date.

Youth Focus

As each school determines the organisation of its specific projects, there is significant diversity in the roles young people take on. However, effective youth participation in the project is one of the most valued requirements for SELO certification.

Commonly held youth roles include: working to participate in and lead the project, writing up the experience, organising, serving as members of planning committees, and working to connect with diverse actors in the school community and the community that is served.

Through these roles, young people engage in values education on how to both improve the quality of learning and the quality of life of the community. Guided by educational professionals, young participants rethink their role in society when they start to act with, in, and for the community. Young people recognise that their own knowledge, skills, abilities, and actions can make a difference to improve the life of their community, and they feel more valued as students and as citizens.



Youth Voice

Name: Flávia Boni

Age: 17

Position: High school student in a technical teacher's school, undertaking a teaching internship. She intends to pursue a degree and job in the education field.

"Anyone who participates even for a day, ends up staying. What you do does not seem like much, but it actually is...[volunteering] is a professional as well as an emotional experience."

Flávia Boni

During her 3-year stint at Cultura Solidária, one of the programmes certified by SELO in the city of São Paulo, Flavia has performed a myriad of activities. These include visiting retirement homes, where she organised activities for senior citizens; leading talks about subjects from AIDS to university education in community centres and public schools; teaching remedial classes to public school students; and developing (along with other participants) group dynamics workshops to improve primary school students' social and life skills.

Due to her long "career" in the programme, Flavia says she has been able to actually see the impact of her work. "The kids, who at first were listless and unmotivated, soon became more active, inquisitive, and interested in being active in the community or in pursuing university degrees. Children who were barely literate improved their reading skills. Even the mothers of the participants, who just dropped off their children in the beginning, became interested and now stay for the whole duration of the classes and talks."

Flavia says that she has always had a desire to be a volunteer and believes that “most of us share this desire yet do not carry it out because we do not know what exactly volunteering is.” Whenever a friend asks her what volunteering is, Flavia declines to explain and instead brings them along to one of her talks or classes. As she puts it, “anyone who participates even for a day, ends up staying. What you do does not seem like much, but it actually is...[volunteering] is a professional as well as an emotional experience.”

Programme Impact and Future Development

In addition to certifying 18,206 schools during the first two SELO certification rounds, involving approximately 546,000 students, the programme has developed partnerships with the Ministry of Education, local educational organisations, private sector firms, national press organisations, and various UN agencies. These relationships testify to the level of national support the programme has generated in the five years since its inception.

SELO is currently working to create the online Solidarity Schools Network, which will allow for broader dissemination of information about service-learning projects. The free online database will be searchable by grade, discipline, areas of action, and location, thereby facilitating consultation and networking.

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Organisation:
Instituto Faça Parte

Location:
Brazil, nation-wide

Year Established: 2002

Website:
<http://www.facaparte.org.br>

6. Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance Training Programme for Young People in Institutions of Learning

Programme Goals and Activities

Human rights protocols and information on good governance often remain inaccessible to many young people around the world, whether because of the language used in the texts or because young people simply do not have access to copies of the documents. The Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance Training Programme for Young People in Institutions of Learning gives young people in Cameroon a way to change that. Sponsored by the Canadian Development Cooperation Cameroon Agency, the programme not only teaches young people about governance and human rights, but also encourages them to use that knowledge to become involved in democratic institutions throughout their lives – starting with those available at their schools and colleges.

The programme currently operates in 22 secondary schools and colleges in the southwest of Cameroon. A new initiative, it was started by a group of young people who sought to investigate the state of governance, human rights, and democracy in their educational institutions. In response to what they saw as a lack of awareness among their peers and younger students, they designed a training programme and recruited young people already working with governments and universities as volunteers.

In a “training of the trainers” session, the programme first teaches volunteers to lead a civic education course. They use information provided by the United Nations and organisations such as the Pan-African Institute for Development, making the documents more youth-friendly, understandable, and context driven. After their training, the volunteers teach a three month civic education and advocacy training course in secondary and high schools across the south west of the country.

After the civic education course, young volunteers help interested student participants form clubs to facilitate their anti-corruption and human rights advocacy efforts. The clubs act as focal points between students and civil society organisations. For instance, some clubs have organised students to participate in outreach to local prisons. The clubs also act as centres where students can find resources on civic and political issues, allowing them to further enrich their knowledge.

Innovation

Participants not only learn about the issues of governance, democracy, and human rights – they are challenged to analyse them and respond to them. By establishing their own clubs and creating their own advocacy groups, they take ownership of the debates on these issues. Not only does their involvement prepare them for lives of active citizenship; it also teaches them many skills which will be useful in the workplace. They gain confidence and leadership skills while learning about ways to build stronger societies and communities that are inclusive of those who are less privileged.

Youth Focus

The training programme is run by ten young people aged 23 to 25. They, in turn, train other volunteers who work to educate and train their peers at schools and universities across the country. Each step of the process is run by young people for young people, increasing young people's leadership skills, knowledge, and sense of mutual support.

The programme also builds trust between young people and school administrators. Student activism and civil society involvement in schools is not always welcomed by faculty and staff. However, one of the first steps taken by the young people organising the programme was to hold a general meeting for all principals to explain why the programme was necessary, the kinds of topics the programme would involve, and how the programme would train young people to engage in their schools.



Youth Voice

Name: Stephen Asek

Age: 25

Position: Political advisor at the International Governance Institute Cameroon, founder and a volunteer coordinator in the programme.

"At first the school authorities were a little worried. They didn't know who these youth were. Many NGOs have not followed through so we needed to demonstrate our seriousness."

Stephen Asek is 25 years old. He was involved in founding the programme and now coordinates the many volunteers. He works with the International Governance Institute Cameroon and serves as an advisor on youth issues to Hon. Victoria T. Ndando, who was for many years a prominent female Member of Parliament in Cameroon.

Stephen first became interested in the issues of governance and human rights when in school; he was a prefect and had valuable experience leading and mentoring his peers. His recognition of the importance of governance-related questions only heightened when he was a political science student at university; as a student leader he organised one of the first youth exchanges on good governance and sustainable development between Nigeria and Cameroon.

Programme Impact and Future Development

In 2007, the programme's second year, 30 young people were involved in the "training of the trainers" conference, which was expanded to include young leaders in civil society and universities as well as secondary school students. The total number of beneficiaries is estimated at 11,000 – a sign of the success and scalability of the programme model.

To ensure the programme's continued development, every three months training is followed by an evaluation exercise. The evaluation measures the impact of the training programme on the general student population and identifies best practices for effective communication and training. As well as improving the trainings, the programme aims to develop more ties with educational institutions – the partnerships already in place have been pivotal to the success of this programme. Finally, with further development, the programme hopes to overcome logistical difficulties involved in reaching rural locations, getting past the rigid bureaucratic procedures that exist in many schools, and raising funds to increase the quantity and quality of materials. With increased resources, the programme can continue to equip young people to tackle the issues of human rights abuse and corruption in their societies and their schools.

Stephen says the programme is important because it goes beyond offering young people an opportunity to learn about human rights and governance from their peers. It also highlights the ways young people can contribute to the democratic culture of the institutions of which they are a part. This experience, he explains, gives them the skills to engage with related issues later in life. He draws his inspiration from what he sees as the responsibility that young people have in strengthening accountability and democracy in their society.

He explains that young people have an especially important role to play in transitions to democracy – and have the energy and resourcefulness necessary to act through peaceful means.

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Organisation:

International
Governance Institute

Location: Cameroon,
South West Province:
Meme and Fako Divisions
in both Rural and urban
town schools

Year Established: 2006

7. Residencia Universitaria: Jóvenes Solidarios

Programme Goals and Activities

The Jóvenes Solidarios University Dorm programme offers an enriching and intensive programme of service-learning to an underserved population. After completing high school, young people from the rural interior of El Salvador are nominated to the programme by their communities on the basis of their prior community service work.

While studying at university on a scholarship provided by the programme, the selected students take classes during the week and spend their weekends and holidays carrying out service work in their home communities. Along with their formal education, the young people have the opportunity to participate in one of three commissions organised within their common dorm: Sports and Education; Health and Environment; or Communal Living and Culture. Interested students are also eligible to pursue a diploma in Human Rights.

The young residents come from extremely poor communities that depend on subsistence agriculture and have limited access to basic services, such as education, transportation, health facilities, water and electricity. They are between the ages of 17 and 25, with an even male to female ratio. In 2006, there were 35 participants from seven communities in El Salvador, bringing the total since the programme's inception in 2002 to 49 participants.

Innovation

The Jóvenes Solidarios University Dorm programme merges formal education with service learning projects, creating a more holistic understanding of community issues such as poverty, healthcare and education. The students learn about these subjects in a traditional classroom setting and then apply their knowledge to real-world situations. The Dorm also holds social gatherings, workshops, and cultural activities, which the students can then replicate in their home communities. These activities develop important values such as teamwork, gender equality, social responsibility, and solidarity. Participants' prior experience as community activists and leaders also helps them adapt to university life and communal living. Finally, the programme encourages students to maintain contact with their home communities and to think about how they can support their communities' development through their training and educational opportunities.

Youth Focus

The University Dorm programme was founded by a group of Salvadorian students who received scholarships through the Bancaja Foundation to study at the Colegio Mayor Universitario “La Coma” in Valencia, Spain. Upon their return, they established the programme in El Salvador, which has served as a model for similar initiatives in Nicaragua, Colombia and Ecuador, among other countries. Evelyn Rivas, the programme director and one of its co-founders, is 25 years old and a former scholarship recipient of the Bancaja Foundation.



Youth Voice

Name: Rosa Delmy Rivera Villalobos

Age: 22

Position: Participant for 3.5 years. She is studying to be a social worker.

Rosa’s community project is to run a radio programme in which young people discuss human rights, the environment, reproductive health, drugs, and globalisation, among other topics. When asked why she decided to join the programme, Rosa says, “I wanted to be a professional and to help my community at the same time.” Rosa believes the greatest impact of the programme is that it makes Salvadorian young people consider staying in El Salvador to study rather than leaving for the US to pursue other opportunities.

On a more personal level, Rosa feels the programme has allowed her to become more creative and respectful of others. The most challenging aspect of the programme has been balancing her time between community work, school and her responsibilities in the dorm. The most exciting part of the programme to date for Rosa has been their exchange with the programme in Nicaragua operating on a similar model.

Programme Impact and Future Development

The Jóvenes Solidarios programme has given many underprivileged young people the opportunity to complete higher education degrees. One of the participants received her degree in special needs education, while another graduated from medical school and is completing his residency at a public hospital.



A member of the Jóvenes Solidarios programme teaches children to make a piñata

Others are finishing their degrees in nursing, law, social work, accounting, and music. The primary impacts of the programme have been the growth of a network of local community organisations and the academic, professional and social enrichment of the students. These outcomes are measured by biannual Community Work reports, which detail the actions, difficulties, and challenges faced by each volunteer.

The programme eventually hopes to expand to include more Salvadorian young people. It is currently funded through the Bancaja Foundation of Spain, as well as by the universities the students are attending, including the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (UCA) and the Universidad de El Salvador. Additionally, the programme mobilises funds from Salvadorians living in the US who are interested in promoting the development of their home communities by supporting the educational and professional aspirations of these young leaders.

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Verde Ayutuxtepeque,
El Salvador

Year Established: 2002

8. ManaTEENs

Programme Goals and Activities

ManaTEENs is one of the largest locally-based teen volunteer initiatives in the United States. The organisation was developed by the Volunteer Centre of Manatee County in Manatee County, Florida. The region has a high percentage of senior citizens, and many young people living there did not feel that they had a voice in community affairs before the development of ManaTEENs. The programme was developed in 1994 by two young women and has grown to become an organisation of 6,778 participants 2006, with 76,000 participants since its inception. The programme aims to empower young people as local decision-makers and to encourage them to identify and address unmet needs in their communities.

ManaTEENs attracts young people to work on projects with over 600 local organisations, or to work on any of the 37 internal ManaTEENs projects. ManaTEENs participants volunteer for organisations that address environmental, social, and educational issues in their community. Most of these projects focus on animal welfare, disaster preparedness and response, the environment, community security, and health and human services. ManaTEENs also integrates marketable skills into all volunteer projects.

For example, in the Operation Transportation project, young people are trained in basic auto repair and given \$500 in parts to fix old cars and make them road-worthy again. The programme is extremely flexible; participants can choose how frequently to volunteer and in what field they work. ManaTEENs represent a remarkable 64% of the young people of Manatee County, and about a third of the participants are at or below the poverty line.

Innovation

The ManaTEEN programme has achieved success in diverse programmatic areas. For example, their innovative leadership structure, the ManaTEEN Advisory Council (MAC), is comprised of both ManaTEENs and former ManaTEENs who now serve in AmeriCorps. ManaTEENs are recruited and trained to serve on the advisory council. Aside from the council, ManaTEENs is loosely structured so that it can grow and change as needed.



Participants in the PainTeen programme

Youth Focus

In addition to volunteering for individual programmes, young people have an active role in project design, implementation, and oversight. ManaTEENS have the opportunity to bring their concerns and/or issue to the attention of the membership at large by addressing the MAC. Through their participation in the organisation, young people have the opportunity to learn about issues facing the community such as poverty, senior citizens' concerns, and beach maintenance.

Youth Voice

Name: Ashley Bower

Age: 19

Position: Intern, began as a volunteer.

Ashley began volunteering in ManaTEENS when she was in 8th grade. She has participated in various projects including Adopt a Pet, beach cleanup, mentoring, house reconstruction, hurricane support and disaster relief. She also co-founded the Big Breath and Bark project, which works to equip local fire trucks with breathing masks for cats and dogs in the case of fire or other emergencies.

Ashley believes this programme has taught her to “have more self confidence, leadership skills, patience and openness to ideas.” Ashley adds that being a part of ManaTEENs showed her “the different problems and issues in the community” and taught her that “you can’t help everyone all at once; you have to choose what to do first.” She enjoyed meeting many different types of people and learned that she can make a difference in her community. Ashley plans to continue working with ManaTEENs and to volunteer in college and throughout her life.

Programme Impact and Future Development

Components of the ManaTEENs programme have been replicated throughout the United States through the Volunteer Centre National Network, including Ashley’s Big Breath and Bark project. In addition, the ManaTEENs are currently working on writing their history so that it will be easier for other programmes around the world to replicate their programmes. Surveys of volunteers reveal that by participating in youth leadership training, 98% of ManaTEENs increase their civic skills and knowledge. In addition, 97% of ManaTEENs continue volunteering in college and beyond.

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Org.: Volunteer Centre
of Manatee County

Location: Manatee,
DeSoto, and Hardee
counties, Florida, USA

Year Established: 1994

Website:

<http://www.manateens.org>

9. Modelo Metodológico Intersectorial Comunitario (MOMIC)

Programme Goals and Activities

In Chile, young people are often defined – and define themselves – as being apathetic and disengaged. For Chilean young people living in marginalised areas within greater Santiago, their connection to society is often even more tenuous. MOMIC, which stands for Methodologically Intersectorial Community Model in Spanish, aims to provide opportunities for these at-risk young people to reengage with their communities and to “learn to know themselves at the same time,” as one of MOMIC’s youth leaders stated. MOMIC empowers Chilean young people to feel capable of guiding and leading – individually and collectively – real, positive changes in their lives, as well as those of other community members.

MOMIC operates under three core principles:

- 1) the need for connections among different groups, including government, civil society and the business sector;
- 2) the importance of cross-cutting programming that can address young people’s needs in a holistic manner; and
- 3) the idea that young people themselves are the best resource for addressing their needs and those of their peers.



Under the MOMIC model, 10 youth leaders between the ages of 17 and 25 are identified in each of the three municipalities where the programme operates. These youth leaders then become mentors of other marginalised young people in their communities by offering weekly workshops in areas as diverse as dance, circus training, English and technology skills development. Through these workshops, the leaders develop trusting relationships with the participating young people (currently 150 young people between the ages of 16 and 23) and

can subsequently help identify some of their educational, professional, health, legal and psycho-social needs using a comprehensive questionnaire tool. Under the leadership of MOMIC staff, regular meetings are then held by the young volunteers with national and local government representatives, NGOs, and businesses to pool and channel resources to meet the needs that have been identified. Finally, the programme leaders help orient the young people to access these services.

Innovation

One of MOMIC's most innovative elements is the partnerships it has developed in a wide variety of sectors, including the government (municipalities, the Division of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior and the School for Police Investigations, the Division of Social Organisations, and the youth ministry, among others); local community groups; universities; national NGOs; large and small-scale businesses; and a human resources consulting agency. MOMIC also views long-term engagement as key, with young people participating in the programme for three to four years.

Youth Focus

MOMIC youth leaders occupy the central role in the programme, from identifying the needs of their mentees to articulating these needs to the partner organisations and then relaying this information back to the youth participants. Some dedicated MOMIC "youth" also graduate to become MOMIC "leaders." The very term "leaders" (as opposed to "volunteers") reflects the importance of young people in the programme.

Youth Voice

Name: Catalina Collipal

Age: 20

Position: MOMIC leader in the La Pintana neighbourhood of Santiago. She runs a dance workshop for about 15 to 20 girls each week.

"We showed them that you can have a youth movement without making a big mess or causing trouble!"

Catalina Collipal

When asked what surprised her about MOMIC, Catalina, or Cata as she prefers to be called, responded that she was surprised by how supportive both businesses as well as the police have been of the programme. She's also surprised by her own ability to speak in public and run meetings, as well as to be responsible for others. After joining the programme, she says, "I have a lot more personality!"

The greatest contribution Cata feels she is making to her community is "giving young people a space – both a physical one and a non-physical one." Also, she's very proud that people are really getting to know each other through the programme, which was a challenge given that her neighbourhood is very new and that some of the parents of the youth participants were wary of the programme at first. Cata dealt with some of this hesitation by involving the parents in meetings and inviting them to the workshops: "we showed them that you can have a youth movement without making a big mess or causing trouble!"

To summarise her three years of experience with MOMIC, Cata laughingly states, “ahora sé por donde va la micro” (literally translated as “Now I know where the bus is going,” but Chilean slang for “Now I’ve got my life on track.”).

Programme Impact and Future Development

MOMIC is still in its pilot phase, but the goal is that by the end of their four years participating in the programme, the youth leaders will have established sustainable, autonomous bodies that can carry on the programme in each locality. If the model is successful, the programme organisers plan on replicating it in other municipalities. Some of MOMIC’s important achievements include helping to draft a national public policy for young people and establishing three social enterprises, including a compost business, and a Web portal for showcasing and selling their products. Moreover, fifty percent of participating young people are now employed, and all have been registered with the national health system and received medical check-ups.

Four MOMIC leaders are pursuing higher education degrees. With such successes in its pilot stage, MOMIC’s impact promises to increase.



MOMIC volunteers participate in the circus.

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Org.: Interdisciplinary
Programme for
Ed. Research

Location: Santiago,
Chile (municipalities of
Cerro Navia, Pudahuel
and La Pintana)

Year Established: 2005

Website:

<http://www.momic.cl>

10. Museo Itinerante de la Diversidad Cultural

Programme Goals and Activities

Students attending the Primary Night School for Adolescents and Adults in San Salvador de Jujuy, Argentina, have an exciting opportunity to explore their cultural heritage through volunteering for the Travelling Museum of Cultural Diversity. The students, who range in age from 16 to 25 years, primarily come from poor neighbourhoods and broken families and are working to complete their primary education. Many come from indigenous communities, whose cultural legacy has historically not been fully recognised and respected in Argentina.

Volunteers from the night school spend an average of three hours per week creating and administering a travelling museum designed to research and disseminate information about the cultural heritage of the province. The students collect objects of historical and emotional importance from their own communities, interviewing family members and older adults about their use, history, and value. They then learn to clean, display, and preserve the objects, write up their research for explanatory labels, and construct display cases in their math classes. The young volunteers design the exhibits themselves and even serve as museum guides.



The volunteers travel around the province of Jujuy with their exhibits, sharing their newfound knowledge with members of rural communities who previously had little access to museums. Transportation, lodging, and equipment are generously donated by both non-governmental organisations and government agencies.

Innovation

The programme combines the mission of raising community members' consciousness of their own history and cultural heritage with the goals of training young volunteers in skills such as research, writing, public speaking, and creation of audiovisual media. Working on the Museum represents a practical and interdisciplinary application of the volunteers' studies in academic subjects such as history, geography, anthropology, political science, language, and mathematics.

Youth Focus

Young people are active leaders in every aspect of the museum's creation and function, including gathering objects, interviewing community members, creating displays, transporting and setting up the Museum, guiding visitors, creating and presenting audiovisual materials to guests, and publicising Museum activities.

Through these activities, the young people gain a deeper understanding of their personal, family, and regional identity and gain valuable skills which can later be applied in professional settings.

Youth Voice

Name: Natalia Juarez

Age: 25

Position: Volunteer and student at the Night School

"Now I know so much about our cultural history that I really enjoy sharing my knowledge with others, especially young people."

Natalia Juarez



Natalia Juarez is a 25-year-old single mother of three who is studying to complete her primary education at the Night School. She has volunteered for the Museum since March of this year, gathering and displaying historical objects and serving as a guide for the Museum.

Natalia says she has developed her leadership abilities and has met many interesting people through the programme. She loves sharing the cultural heritage of the province with community members of all ages and enjoys watching their reactions to the displayed objects. "The reactions of the young people are amazing," she says. "Many of them didn't know anything about the cultural history of the province, but I was surprised how interested they were." She also enjoys listening to older adults reminisce about the artifacts, many of which are familiar to them.

Being a museum guide wasn't easy at first. "The first time I served as a guide," Natalia remembers, "I was nervous because it was very difficult to remember all of the information about the different objects. But now I know so much about our cultural history that I really enjoy sharing my knowledge with others, especially young people." Natalia plans to continue volunteering as a guide for the Museum and eventually hopes to complete secondary school.

Programme Impact and Future Development

To date, over 2,300 people have visited the Museum and learned about the cultural legacy of their region. The young Museum staff have practiced their research and writing skills, connected with both older and younger members of the community, and learned an immense amount about the creation and maintenance of museums.

The programme leaders eventually hope to find a permanent space for the exhibits. They hope that this space will become a centre of cultural exchange and plan to invite local writers to come and talk with community members. They also aim to expand the programme to include participants from the Yungas region of the province.

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Location:

Jujuy, Argentina

Year Established: 2005

Website:

<http://www.mejujuy.gov.ar/esc102/museo.htm>



Inspiring a million more young volunteers

11. National Volunteer Programme

Programme Goals and Activities

The National Volunteer Programme prepares committed and capable development workers to promote participatory development approaches by recruiting college graduates to spend 18 months working in rural and remote regions of Nepal. These volunteers work with partner organisations in each village and involve local volunteers – high school graduates who are trained by the local organisations.

In addition, the volunteers learn about the participating organisations, develop managerial skills, and promote people-centred development. The specific issues that are most often addressed include poverty, access to local resources, participation of excluded groups, and gender and social inclusion.

This programme was initially started by Samuhik Abhiyan, a non-governmental organisation, but has developed ties with local and national government agencies, and both international and local NGOs. In 2006 there were 28 volunteers (14 Local Volunteers and 14 National Volunteers), and since inception there have been 88 volunteers.

Innovation

The National Volunteer Programme allows university graduates to gain community development experience and a deeper knowledge of the issues facing their country. Simultaneously, it lays the framework for long-lasting local development by improving the skills and knowledge of local volunteers and involving local community organisations in multi-sector partnerships. The programme was designed to promote the rights-based approach to development through community empowerment and awareness building. It strives to encourage volunteerism in Nepal, emphasising the role that Nepalese young people can play in the country's future. Finally, it allows recent graduates the opportunity to gain practical experience as they prepare to enter the job market or pursue further education.



Campaigning against the caste system and the treatment of untouchables in Parbat.

Youth Focus

The first task volunteers undertake is preparing a village profile to identify and prioritise the major issues facing the community. The young volunteers then organise the community into groups and build ties with local service agencies. They also act as facilitators for creating a community plan of action. Training meetings allow the volunteers to share their experiences with each other and exchange ideas. A review meeting is held at the end of their 18 months, allowing them to have input into the programme's design and execution.

Youth Voice

Name: Prakash Bishwakarma

Age: 26 (24 at time of programme)

Position: participant in the National Volunteer Programme.

"I rarely thought there was a need for social development, but have now learned that discrimination, injustice, and malpractice are the barriers for true development."

Prakash Bishwakarama

Prakash graduated college with a degree in sociology and is currently pursuing a Masters in the same discipline. Prakash says that, for him, the most surprising aspect of the programme was realising that "the people living in the community possess a great deal of knowledge." They are the "best school to learn from." He has completed his time as a volunteer, but enjoyed the experience so much that he will return as a facilitator for the programme. He said "being involved in this programme has totally changed my concept of development.

I rarely thought there was a need for social development, but have now learned that discrimination, injustice, and malpractice are the barriers for true development."

Programme Impact and Future Development

The National Volunteer Programme has equipped 88 young people with the knowledge, skills, and commitment to foster people-centred and rights-based development initiatives at the local level. More than 25,000 people from underserved communities have been organised into cooperative groups, and about 900 people from various social development organisations have been trained in promoting participatory poverty reduction strategies. Many volunteers who have completed the programme continue to work in social development organisations. There are now strong connections between the National Volunteer Programme and community partners all across Nepal.

This programme is looking to expand its training to include a pre-orientation for partner organisations on volunteerism and inclusive participation in development. They also aim to give volunteers more responsibility by including them in programme planning, implementation, and evaluation.

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Organisation:

SamuhikAbhiyan

Location:

Rural regions of Nepal

Year Established: 1995

Website:

<http://www.samuhik-abhiyan.org>

12. Never Again Rwanda Human Rights Clubs

Programme Goals and Activities

Never Again Rwanda Human Rights Clubs were started as a way to unite post-genocide Rwanda, promoting collaboration, dialogue and critical thinking among young people in Rwanda, as well as young people in the Great Lakes region of Africa and other countries. Never Again Rwanda also seeks to instil confidence and empower young people to be the advocates for positive change in the country. Each Never Again club has a different approach to meeting the overall objectives of the programme. Most of the clubs organise volunteer activities such as education and counselling in vulnerable areas of Rwanda, especially those heavily affected by the 1994 genocide. Other clubs put on cultural shows and make crafts to raise money for peers who cannot afford school fees. Never Again Rwanda is part of Never Again International, an NGO that began in 2001 after the symposium of The Institute for International Mediation and Conflict Resolution in The Hague. The programme targets mostly poor and rural students, ages 15 to 23.

Never Again clubs run year round and are staffed by part time volunteers. In 2006, about 1,000 young people participated in the programme, which brings the total to between 3 and 4 thousand since inception.

Innovation

Never Again Rwanda was “created by the young people, for the young people,” which means that the responsibility for positive change is promoted and instilled among the country’s future leaders. The programme has a very simple structure, which allows young people to have significant control over activities. This programme has also showed the older populations of Rwanda how important and valuable young people are in positively affecting Rwandan society. Finally, because Never Again has very few financial resources, participants are challenged to design innovative funding strategies and low-cost ways to achieve their goals.

Youth Focus

Never Again Rwanda is very primarily a youth-led organisation. Every day the young volunteers make a positive impact on their communities by raising awareness of pertinent social issues, showing the older generations how much young people can do in Rwanda, and creating innovative, sustainable projects to support other vulnerable young people in the country. Young participants take ownership of the issues and programming, allowing them to take responsibility for Rwanda's future well-being as well. The volunteers recruit and train other young people, creating a cycle of learning and teaching. Finally, they plan their own fundraising activities and structure their own groups and events.



Youth Voice

Name: Julian Kwizera

Age: 23

Position: Programme Volunteer & Administrative Assistant

"For an organisation that has no resources, we have achieved a lot."

Julian Kwizera

Julian began with Never Again Rwanda in February after he graduated from college. He joined the programme because he wanted to do something for his country and felt Never Again's goal of uniting Rwanda was the most important thing to do. Julian says that one of the volunteers' main challenges is dealing with the poverty of the people with whom they are working. With the programme's minimal resources, it is very difficult to help all those who need aid. However, he says, "for an organisation that has no resources, we have achieved a lot. People's dedication to this programme has been the most surprising thing about working with Never Again." In addition, people in the community are "very happy with our organisation. We teach the population how to unite and reconnect."

Julian's most memorable experience has been working with a radio show called Radio for Peace that explores the roots of conflict and how to build a culture of peace. The show broadcasts every Saturday and even has listeners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Of the young people of the DRC, Julian says, "we share the same experience, and we learn from each other."

Programme Impact and Future Development

The Never Again Rwanda clubs are measuring their impact on schools, communities and young people through an ongoing assessment process. Thus far, the results have shown that volunteers are successful in creating a positive impact on many communities in Rwanda, helping to raise awareness, and distribute services and aid. In addition, many young people have been trained on human rights issues and have learned to take control of designing and implementing projects. Several young participants also successfully apply for jobs and enrol at universities.

The organisation has been successful in spreading throughout Rwanda and may expand throughout the Great Lakes Region of Africa, thereby moving towards creating a global dialogue on human rights and the effects of genocide. Never Again Rwanda is looking to secure more funding, increase the number of trainings, and improve its reach to include all communities in need.

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neveragainrwanda.org

Organisation:

Never Again Rwanda

Programme Locations:

Rwanda-Kigali,
Ruthengeri, Kibuye,
Gisenyi, Huye and
numerous rural towns

Year Established: 2004

Website: [http://www.](http://www.neveragainrwanda.org)

[neveragainrwanda.org](http://www.neveragainrwanda.org)



Inspiring a million more young volunteers

13. IMPACT

Programme Goals and Activities

Under Communist rule, community service was mandatory in much of Eastern Europe. Consequently, since the fall of Communism in the region, many Romanians are apathetic toward civic engagement in general, and have negative attitudes about community service in particular, seeing it as a punishment rather than an opportunity for personal enrichment and community development. To combat these attitudes, New Horizons, an NGO that works within the Eastern Orthodox culture of Romania and also has ties to the Ministry of Education, founded the IMPACT service programme in 2002. IMPACT, originally implemented in the poor mining area of the Jiu Valley, mixes adventure education, character development, and service learning to involve young people in the decisions that affect their lives. Trips incorporate outdoor activities, such as rock climbing or hiking, as well as a service component, such as cleaning up a river.

Programme participants develop social capital as well as vocational and entrepreneurial skills. The volunteers meet twice each week for two to three hours to discuss public ethical issues such as corruption, and train and plan for the community service projects. Leaders train the young people in project management, budgeting, lobbying, and conflict resolution, as well as computer, public speaking, and facilitation skills. Participants apply community analysis and problem-solving approaches to development, and become involved in local public life through their work at IMPACT. IMPACT volunteers have initiated and implemented programmes in such diverse areas as reduction of corruption and bribery, peer education about HIV/AIDS, environmental preservation, provision of food and clothing to poor families, and reduction of youth violence.

Seventy percent of IMPACT participants are between the ages of 16 and 18. About 800 young people have been involved since the project's inception, with about 550 participants last year. Most young people participate in the club for two to four years.

Innovation

IMPACT uses adventure education to encourage all young people to participate, even those who are not initially interested in community service.

IMPACT uses a unique social capital framework as the basis for the programme, holding highly participatory and democratic meetings to build trust and teamwork skills. IMPACT has partnered with a local university to research the programme's impact on social capital development, and initial results seem promising.

Other innovative elements include IMPACT's easily adaptable model that uses a system of clubs as its base and has allowed IMPACT to expand far beyond the Jiu Valley. To share knowledge with other programmes, IMPACT has also created an online searchable database for all its curricula. In addition, each club creates a webpage on which they post projects, media articles, and a calendar of activities. This promotes an exchange of ideas, but also a little healthy competition, which is incentive for each of the clubs to think of new ideas.



IMPACT Retreat

Youth Focus

IMPACT young people democratically decide and implement the community service projects. Project leaders merely serve as facilitators, posing questions to try and draw out the youth participants. Young people also co-lead the clubs and help develop and manage the games, stories, and trainings. One training session focused on the negative impact of corruption.

Youth participants wrote and performed a play demonstrating their findings and reactions to the session. Another group of young people in the Jiu Valley came up with the idea to put speed bumps on a dangerous road that had been the site of a series of accidents. After 2 years of lobbying the government to support this initiative, the speed bumps will finally be installed.

Youth Voice

Name: Robi Bogdanfy

Age: 18

Position: Student and Volunteer

"We gathered sponsors, bought meals, and then brought meals to their houses on Christmas. An old lady started crying. I didn't know I could help the community... now I know that anybody can help."

Robi Bogdanfy

Robi got involved with IMPACT when one of his friends from another NGO suggested he go to a meeting. He finds the work incredibly rewarding and enjoys the fact that along with all the work, he also has fun. Robi has learned a great deal from his participation in IMPACT. He says "I didn't know some issues existed before joining IMPACT. I didn't know that so many people in my community were infected with HIV/AIDS." Before IMPACT he also "didn't know that there were NGOs that work with community service. I thought community service was a penalty." Now Robi has decided that he wants to study something related to community development.

Robi said his most memorable experience was when the group did a project to bring Christmas dinner to disadvantaged people in their community.

Programme Impact and Future Development

IMPACT has been successful in involving young people in post-Communist societies who are apathetic towards civic engagement. In addition, the programme continuously conducts research on its effectiveness in increasing social capital, which it incorporates into its planning. IMPACT has recently expanded from the Jiu Valley to seven other areas of Romania. Next year, IMPACT will partner with the Ministry of Education to launch 50 more clubs across Romania. Eighty percent of the existing clubs are becoming self-sustainable, generating and using their own resources after initial grant money runs out.

The programme hopes to improve its "youth public policy guide" to train the young volunteers to participate in the political process and advocate for their own interests, for example, by participating in town council meetings or lobbying for a line item for young people in the local budget. This public policy guide will support a long term goal of the organisation, to have IMPACT members serve as watchdogs on local public expenditures, thus increasing transparency and citizen involvement, elements which have been absent in the young democracy.

Robi recalls, “We gathered sponsors, bought meals, and then brought meals to their houses on Christmas. An old lady started crying. I didn’t know I could help the community...now I know that anybody can help.”



IMPACT volunteers working on a painting project

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Organisation:

New Horizons Romania

Programme Locations:

8 states all over

Romania. It is based in
the Jiu Coal mining valley.

Year Established: 2000

Website:

<http://www.new-horizons.ro>

14. National Sexual Assault Online Hotline

Programme Goals and Activities

The National Sexual Assault Online Hotline (OHL) is operated by the largest anti-sexual abuse organisation in the United States, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN). The OHL was born out of RAINN's recognition that many sexual assault and abuse survivors feel more comfortable seeking resources and assistance for the first time if they can maintain total anonymity and that an increasing number of young abuse survivors seek this anonymity via the internet. Yet, before RAINN developed the OHL, no online site provided users with secure, reliable and confidential support and assistance.

Now, the OHL offers survivors a secure environment in which to seek such support. The OHL is the first stop for many sexual assault survivors under the age of 25. When users visit the OHL, they are connected to an individual volunteer via secure and confidential instant message style chats. There, volunteers provide visitors with support, understanding and resources for further assistance and guidance. Although the OHL does see repeat users, its primary function is to provide an area where first time assault survivors can feel comfortable "speaking" about their experience as well as provide family and friends a venue through which they can learn about sexual assault and additional resources for care.

The programme has partnerships with two universities and is connected with over 100 Rape Crisis Centres in thirty states, from which OHL volunteers are recruited. Volunteers participate in 40 to 50 hours of training, with a requirement of 6 hours per month over one year. Because the internet is easily accessible, many volunteers find it easy to continue volunteering after their one year commitment.

Travelling, moving, spending a year abroad – none of these activities prevent a volunteer from continuing with his or her service as long as he or she stays in good standing with RAINN and/or a local rape crisis centre, rendering the OHL programme highly sustainable and replicable.

Innovation

The National Sexual Assault Online Hotline is a progressive programme, having identified and reacted to a growing – and largely young people driven – network: the Internet. Recognising that both young assault survivors and young volunteers would find such a venue for counselling attractive, the OHL has successfully developed and implemented a secure and confidential space for assault survivors to seek assistance.

Youth Focus

Initially, the OHL planned to recruit volunteers solely from rape crisis centres, but programme managers soon found that university students were both willing and technologically adept to staff the programme. Now, an increasing percentage of volunteers are university students. In addition, both the OHL programme manager and recruiter are under 25 years of age and work to ensure that both their own voices and those of volunteers are heard by programme staff and leaders. Indeed, volunteers commend the programme for its receptivity to their suggestions and comments, and cite many instances when their ideas were incorporated into the programme's agenda and development plans.

Youth Voice

Name: Danielle Guttman

Age: 21

Position: Volunteer online counsellor

"The language we use affects how we view sexual assault. The more people who change their language, the better it is for everybody."

Danielle Guttman

Danielle Guttman, 21, is a rising senior majoring in psychology at George Washington University (GWU) in Washington, D.C., and plans on working in the criminal justice system after graduating. When Danielle received an e-mail from GWU describing volunteer opportunities with the OHL, she immediately jumped at the opportunity given her own interests and the programme's flexibility. She has been volunteering as an online volunteer since March 2007.

Prior to volunteering on the OHL, Danielle did not have experience working with sexual assault survivors. Given her interest in working in the criminal justice system, Danielle felt that volunteering with the OHL would allow her to meaningfully serve as well as to gain important insights into a field in which she might work. In reflecting upon her volunteer experience thus far, Danielle is most surprised by how much volunteering six hours a month could alter her outlook on, and awareness of, gender and assault issues: "I do it [volunteering] every once and a while, and the experience sticks with me throughout [daily life]. I realise that the language we use affects how we view sexual assault. The more people who change their language, the better it is for everybody."

When thinking about her future as a volunteer, Danielle is confident that she will continue with the OHL regardless of which career she chooses. This is primarily due to the ability of volunteers to continue serving regardless of their physical location and the quality of service she feels she is able to provide. "I don't necessarily know what I want to do but this is definitely something I want to keep doing on the side. I realise that I want to work with people in need of that kind of help. I guess it narrowed my focus." Such dedication among volunteers promises that OHL will continue helping thousands of people seeking support and care long into the future.

Programme Impact and Future Development

Launched in August, 2006, the OHL has already facilitated over 2,000 sessions that last between approximately twenty and thirty minutes. In response to ever-increasing demand, the OHL has plans to establish a small full-time staff to ensure that the hotline is operational at all times, including nights and holidays. In addition, the OHL plans to launch the RAINN Fellowship programme in late 2007 to connect university and local initiatives focusing on sexual assault and abuse. RAINN fellows will work with universities to develop and improve education on campus and to recruit and train volunteers for the OHL. In addition, fellows will work to strengthen ties between universities and rape crisis centres to ensure community and university assault initiatives complement one another.

Both users and volunteers find the OHL beneficial, with users citing accessibility and volunteer services as highly satisfactory and volunteers citing increased knowledge and changed perceptions of sexual assault as life-altering. Volunteers note increased sensitivity to language describing women in music, movies, television and the media, and many engage family and friends in conversations regarding the complexities and issues encompassing assault. Volunteers continue their own service while encouraging others to join because of the results they see and the lessons they learn. As the OHL expands, such results promise only to increase.

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Organisation: RAINN

Location:

Washington DC, USA

Year Established: 2006

Website:

<http://www.rainn.org/ohldemo/volunteers>

15. Make a Connection

Programme Goals and Activities

“Young people want to take action and make a difference,” explains Maria Holzer, President of the Polish Children and Youth Foundation. The Foundation’s Make a Connection project seeks to equip young people with the skills and resources they need to do just that. Designed by the Foundation as part of a global initiative of the International Youth Foundation and Nokia active in 25 countries, the project targets young people aged 16 to 22. Every year, groups of young people apply for a grant of about \$1,300, which must be used for a project in their local community.

Volunteer projects cover a range of issues, from promoting local culture and history, to celebrating community diversity, to encouraging sports and artistic activities. Once the winning groups have been selected, their leaders undergo training on project management, budget planning, financial accountability, teamwork, and public relations. They also receive advice from local NGOs. The young people then work together for four to five months, often spending around seven hours a week implementing the project.

Young people in the project mainly come from small villages and towns with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, where there is limited access to entertainment, culture, or sport. Most are still in high school and have few places to develop their interests and life skills in their after-school time. Bartosz Sulek, Youth Programmes Manager at the Polish Children and Youth Foundation, explains that although there are a great number of young people who take up interesting activities, the truth is that without support they often encounter overwhelming problems and give up. He says, “what is lacking is the knowledge about project coordination, and more commonly, money.”

Innovation

The programme’s success in catalysing sustainable social change lies in the independence of the youth group members in planning and implementing their projects. The young people identify with their projects and can see the impact they have on the community – a lesson that carries through into their other activities and plans for the future.

Make a Connection does not just strengthen the links between young people and their communities: it also focuses on building relationships among the young people. Now a national programme, it also works to involve alumni. Participants who have completed their projects are invited to join the Alumni Club, which holds events, carries out service projects, and helps with the selection process, programme evaluation and outreach efforts.

Youth Focus

Projects are fully implemented by the groups of young people who apply for the grants. Their projects reveal an understanding of the needs of their communities, their peers, and the wider society. One group sought to investigate the lives of previous generations in their town: “The stories told by old people living in our neighbourhood refer to the period from before World War II. Such possibilities keep disappearing.” The group organised performances of the stories in schools and invited the elderly members of the community and students eager to “better understand ourselves, the world and other people living nearby.” Another group worked to open a dancing club in their town, naming it “Jungle,” both in recognition of “the jungle of the town where our needs are not noticed at all” and because it was designed to look like a jungle “because, in fact, everybody dreams of places one has never been to.” Yet another group created a pottery studio where workshops for school groups and children from orphanages give young people the opportunity to explore ceramics as well as to recognise and celebrate the region’s artistic tradition: “we wanted to prove that the art of pottery is still alive.”

Youth Voice

Name: Ewelina Kliza

Age: 21

Position: Alumni Club member

“We wanted to prove that the art of pottery is still alive.”
Make a Connection volunteer

“I realised what I really wanted to do in the future,” explains Ewelina Kliza when asked what impact Make a Connection had on her life. Ewelina is 21 years old and in her second year of psychology coursework at a university in Lublin, her hometown. She is currently taking part in an exchange programme, which means she will spend the year in Warsaw. As the Polish Children and Youth Foundation’s offices are located in the capital, she is able to spend time volunteering, leading training workshops, and participating in the programme’s selection and outreach activities as part of the Alumni Club.

Ewelina’s original project organised a group of young people to work with children from a local orphanage. The orphans ranged in age from 3 to 18 – quite a challenge for the volunteers who were themselves only 16 or 17 at the time. They also faced a challenge in finding young people to join the group once they realised they would need more people to implement the project than they had originally thought. Other young people felt uncomfortable working in the unfamiliar setting of the orphanage. The group did not give up, however, solving the problem with a Christmas party where students from the high school met the children from the orphanage.

The group of about 15 young people organised theatre workshops for the children, created musical instruments with them, and took them on walking tours of the town. "We wanted to show them they're just like us," Ewelina remarks, describing the young people's motivation to overcome children's lack of confidence. She has a smile in her voice as she recounts her favourite moment of the project, remembering when a girl from the orphanage told her it was "the most beautiful day of my life."

She seems most impressed by the trust that the Make a Connection places in young people: "At the start, I was astonished when I knew someone who gives money to young people not associated in a formal way but just colleagues or friends." She continues to grow through that trust today, advising the Foundation on how to improve the programme and teaching other young people the life skills she has learned.

Programme Impact and Future Development

Make a Connection demonstrates the power of local community groups acting across the country. Indeed, the model developed by the Polish Children and Youth Foundation is presently being implemented in the Czech Republic as well. In Poland, the programme has directly benefited over 8,000 young people. Indirectly, it has benefited an estimated 100,000 people through 365 projects led by over 2,000 young people who have gone through the programme's training. The project has carried out extensive evaluation of participants' experiences and involved the alumni in its efforts. Over three-quarters of all young people said the experience had increased their communication and interpersonal skills, empathy, self-esteem, leadership, and problem-solving abilities.

An important area of development for the programme is the Alumni Club; past participants are encouraged to help promote the programme. Partly as a result of their involvement, the number of applications jumped 80% in 2005. In addition, a group of alumni determines which applications should be presented to the final Competition Committee, a technique the Foundation has found useful as "young people are able to select the most valuable idea thanks to their knowledge of the top trends." Finally, the Alumni Club now also runs a summer camp for current Make a Connection participants, giving them another opportunity to participate in a community project, improve their leadership skills, and meet young people from all over Poland.

The Foundation staff seek to improve the youth training every year, attempting to add a new element to the three-day event. They use the sessions to build trust, an element missing from much of Polish society according to Foundation staff. They also use the trainings as an opportunity to engage donor company employees. At the last session, a representative from Nokia led a workshop on communication that was very well received by participants.

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Organisation:

Polish Children
and Youth Foundation

Location: Poland

Year Established: 2001

Website: [http://www.
makeaconnection.pl](http://www.makeaconnection.pl)

16. Projecto MetaReciclagem

Programme Goals and Activities

MetaReciclagem focuses on reutilising technology to create social transformation. The programme has two principle functions: (1) acquiring used computers and setting up “recycled” laboratories with free software and Internet access and (2) providing operational support to technology projects that focus on digital inclusion.

The decentralised MetaReciclagem programme has spread rapidly, creating dozens of “laboratories” throughout Brazil. In the laboratories, young people engage in self-directed learning projects with old computer equipment. Most projects begin with the collection, triage, and assembly of computers from used parts, generally obtained through donations. Computers are then reassembled, stimulating not only technical knowledge development, but also creativity and artistic sensibilities through the painting and decoration of the refurbished products. Completed, recycled computers are often donated to non-profit organisations or used to provide lower-income communities with access to technology and the Internet.

In the laboratories, programme staff help guide young people, facilitate workshops, and provide support and answer questions as appropriate. Training modules vary from didactic support materials written by the MetaReciclagem community to less structured experiences known as Technology Artisans, in which volunteers engage in a process of mutual learning and support through experimentation.

Since 2003, over 5,000 young people have participated in MetaReciclagem. Eighty percent of volunteers are currently in high school, and most come from families earning less than US\$500 a month. Approximately 70% of the young participants are male, and they participate for a year on average.

Innovation

MetaReciclagem encourages young people to view technology in a new way and shows them that it is possible to leverage technology for social change and inclusion in their communities. Young people participate through virtual communities throughout the country, allowing them to create new projects, obtain information, spread their own knowledge, and engage in distance education.

The programme also creates incentives for volunteers to organise new offices and laboratories. In this way, they gain skills in planning classes, preparing training materials, and public speaking, thus increasing their leadership abilities.

Youth Focus

Interested young participants are invited to the MetaReciclagem laboratories, which are community centres where they have the opportunity to learn and manipulate technology freely, as well as to learn from other young people. Young volunteers participate in workshops, develop projects, and create their own experiments, eventually teaching others what they have learned. As volunteer Joe Nascimento explains, “the project is very decentralised; there is no boss. Instead, decisions are made through group discussions, and every opinion is valued.”

MetaReciclagem attracts volunteers through online sites, such as open software and digital inclusion chat rooms. This virtual outreach allows the rapid dissemination of MetaReciclagem ideas throughout the country. In addition, newspaper and television coverage of the programme reaches young people who are not already online.



Youth Focus

Name: Joe Nascimento

Age: 22

Position: Volunteer, employee at a business owned by one of MetaReciclagem's staff, and a student pursuing a university degree

“I learned how to learn by myself, becoming more independent, more strategic.”

Joe Nascimento

Prior to joining MetaReciclagem, Joe was unemployed and studying physical education. He became aware of the volunteer programme through a friend, who told him he would learn about computers in a very unique way. According to Joe, “while the staff provided support and guidance, each participant has to decide what exactly he/she wants to learn and do.” After he became a volunteer and began working on computer recycling projects, Joe noticed he was “learning how to learn by myself, becoming more independent, more strategic,” all of which are skills he believes will help him in his future career.

Through his volunteer service with MetaReciclagem, Joe has worked in both communities and schools to provide various types of training, such as hardware maintenance, software installation, and network setup, among others. However, Joe believes that the objective, rather than the content, of these training sessions is what is important, namely “to teach people how to think and learn for themselves.” Joe is particularly proud of having shared his own knowledge with others, but dislikes the word “training,” which to him implies that someone is inherently incapable of teaching him/herself.

One of Joe's proudest moments in his volunteer work with MetaReciclagem was helping to set up a laboratory in Osasco, in the outskirts of São Paulo. At first, two community members were planning to set up an internet café, something Joe considered short of its full potential. By explaining how the laboratory could give much more to the community than just Internet access, Joe managed to convince them to set up a learning centre based on the MetaReciclagem model.

Programme Impact and Future Development

One of the main results of MetaReciclagem has been the project's ability to generate a professional outlook for young people. Many young participants have been placed in corporate internships and have continued their education through technical courses run by the state.

The programme has also resulted in the creation of many youth-led projects, small businesses, and cooperatives. In the city of Santo Andre alone, project participants created two micro-enterprises as a means of continuing their activities. Additionally, the Ministry of Culture, the National Institute of Information Technology, and the state government of São Paulo have created programmes that draw upon MetaReciclagem's model and method of involving the community in socially oriented technology.

In the future, MetaReciclagem hopes to strengthen the programme by investing in project management training for the staff, as well as in communication and documentation equipment to expand the impact and range of the programme.

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Location: Brazil,
primarily in the city and
state of São Paulo,
but also in Brasília,
Rio de Janeiro,
Minas Gerais, Piauí
and Rio Grande do Sul.

Year Established: 2002

17. Global Connections and Exchange Programme

Programme Goals and Activities

The Global Connections and Exchange Programme (GCEP), part of Relief International, uses a youth service-learning approach that is implemented and created by student clubs based in schools and community centres throughout the Palestinian Territories. The programme has three main objectives: integrating information technology (IT) and active learning methods into mainstream teaching, encouraging students to become engaged members of their communities, and promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

Every month, one club from the GCEP network comes up with the lesson plan for an online civic education project for all students in the network around the world to complete. In conjunction with these projects, the youth participants plan and implement voluntary activities that match the aims of their online projects. For example, when the students studied climate change, they also planned a campaign to plant a thousand trees and raise awareness about this issue.

The young people targeted are all between the ages of 16 and 25, and from among the poorest and most vulnerable social sectors. Most of the participants are high school and college students. The programme is growing rapidly; in 2006 there were 989 youth participants out of a total of 3,457 participants since inception. GCEP now involves students from over 25 schools and has helped to create links among students from a wide variety of backgrounds and locations.

Innovation

One interesting aspect of the programme is that students document their experiences online and create lesson plans to share with young people around the world. Additionally, the programme promotes cultural exchange and understanding between diverse groups. In one case, students from the West Bank visited different areas of the Palestinian Territories, allowing them to reflect on their own culture as well as to begin accepting different cultures. Programme coordinator Mai AbuMoghli said that today's "youth are losing hope... through our programmes; we try to channel their negative energy to allow them to express themselves and give them hope for a better future."

Youth Focus

The students conduct needs assessments, plan and implement their various monthly activities and programmes, and manage programmes offered by GCEP. The online projects and training are facilitated by GCEP coordinators, but the ideas and implementation come from the creativity of the students. The GCEP also runs training workshops for the students on a wide array of issues to give them the ability to conduct successful activities and to motivate them to create positive change for a better future.

Youth Voice

Name: Raed Hamouri

Age: 23

Position: College student and assistant youth coordinator.

"We were working in a very conservative community where mixing boys and girls was unacceptable. It was really hard to do, but people started to see that there is nothing harmful about it."

Raed Hamouri

Raed began working with GCEP when he met a member of the programme at an NGO networking meeting. Through the programme, Raed has learned to "see other perspectives and that we need to find common ground." He has also "changed his own attitudes" and learned to work in a group, be a leader, and manage his time. His most memorable experience with GCEP was the project that mixed boys and girls. "We were working in a very conservative community where mixing boys and girls was unacceptable," he says. "It was really hard to do, but people started to see that there is nothing harmful about it." According to Raed, GCEP is a "flexible programme. When we think about a problem, we immediately start to think about how to solve it. We implement and plan the programmes." Raed hopes to work more with GCEP and other NGOs to create positive changes in the Palestinian territories.

Programme Impact and Future Development

Through GCEP, many youth issues in the community that were previously not addressed – particularly through formal education – have been brought to the forefront, including drugs, women's participation, and literacy. GCEP has also given rural and isolated young people a chance to express their ideas and explore new technologies.

For the 2007-2008 year, GCEP will expand its activities within the West Bank and will work to improve the international component of the programme by including more joint activities and exchanges between the Palestinian students and students from around the world.

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Organisation: Relief
International-Schools

Online:
Palestinian Territories

Programme location:
Palestinian Territories

Year Established: 2004

Website: <http://www.ri.org>



Inspiring a million more young volunteers

18. School Girls Unite/ Les Filles Unies pour L'Education

Programme Goals and Activities

Uniting girls from the United States and Mali, School Girls Unite and Filles Unies is a collaborative effort to increase awareness of the educational inequalities facing girls across the world. Girls in the two countries actively lobby their government, work to solve community problems, and through their unique intercontinental connection, build international understanding. School Girls Unite and Filles Unies are both sponsored by larger non-governmental organisations. The Youth Activism Project is a 501c3 whose mission is to mobilise and empower adolescent young people to enact change. The organisation created School Girls Unite after a small group of students decided they wanted to start a youth effort to make sure every girl in the world has access to education. Similarly, after an initial contact from the School Girls Unite organisation and the growing interest of female students at various private high schools in Bamako, the Association pour le Développement des Activités de Promotion et de Formation formed École des Filles Unies. Based out of the greater Washington DC area, School Girls Unite mobilises teenage girls to raise funds for scholarships for girls in Mali and to lobby for greater support for girls' education around the world. Thus far, the group has raised over \$10,000 for scholarships and small school improvement projects. Because one full year of schooling in Mali costs about \$100, including tuition, school supplies, and tutors, School Girls Unite has provided scholarships to over fifty girls.

Meanwhile, girls from their sister group in Mali, Filles Unies, have become community activists for gender and educational equality. Several of the older girls who have received scholarships from School Girls Unite have become extremely active in Filles Unies, lobbying the Malian government and speaking in public on the group's behalf. The participants have also become engaged in four villages, working to create solutions for major concerns such as water shortages.

Members of both groups meet twice a month to discuss plans for further fundraising and advocacy. In Mali, the girls brainstorm about how they can continue to build projects and create new solutions for their communities' problems. Recently, they have been discussing how radio shows could support their efforts and help them spread their message. Meanwhile, members of School Girls Unite are creating a DVD of short skits they have written and directed themselves. They want to use the film to both recruit new members and to fundraise, hoping to spread their international message of the importance of educational equality. Participants from both programmes have also exchanged ideas between continents, overcoming the barriers of distance and language to hold two video conferences in an effort to increase virtual communication between the two groups.

Innovation

The sister organisations have built a relationship that encourages both groups of girls to consider how they can improve their communities and the world and then empowers them to put those plans into action. As the director of School Girls Unite Wendy Lesko explained, "Instead of pity or charity, this programme engages young women to examine barriers to girls going to school and to explore strategies to overcome these obstacles – and at the same time, actually see the advantages and disadvantages of their scholarship programme."

Youth Focus

The members of School Girls Unite and Filles Unies have all participated in conferences, spoken in front of public officials and journalists, and worked to convince their peers of the importance of their work. Their activities have taught them about project management and fundraising as well as what it takes to become a community leader. The international collaboration between the American and Malian girls has shaped their world outlook and increased their awareness of global issues and social injustices.

“I’m definitely worried about the people living in million dollar homes while young girls in Mali don’t have access to primary education,” sixteen-year-old Mira Fleming remarked. School Girls Unite still has a strong element of adult leadership and mentorship, one which it is slowly trying to change. Currently, three teenage members serve as full voting members on the Youth Activism Project Board of Directors, and as the volunteers get older, they are beginning to move into planning and mentoring roles as opposed to strict advocacy roles. Filles Unies, however, is almost an entirely student-run endeavour, with one adult female coordinator and several female mentors.

Each programme consists of approximately twenty members, most of whom have been participating since the onset of the programmes. School Girls Unite, which originally started with ten diverse middle school-aged girls and half a dozen adult mentors, has expanded its base of adolescent volunteers to make it a more youth-driven programme. Currently, about one-third of the American group is between the ages of 16 and 25, while the other volunteers are on the verge of turning 16. The Malian girls are slightly older, with all of their members within the 16 to 25 age range.



Youth Voice

Name: Mira Fleming

Age: 16

Position: Member of School Girls Unite

Mira Fleming, a 16-year-old high school sophomore, has been active in School Girls Unite for two years. She explains that she initially joined because “my friends were always talking about it at school, and when I eventually came to the meetings, learning about what was going on in Mali really made me want to stay.”

Since joining School Girls Unite, Mira has spoken in front of several Members of Congress and advocated for an increase in the U.S. foreign aid budget to meet the U.N. Millennium Development Goals of gender equity and universal primary education. Her experience with School Girls Unite has deepened her understanding of the importance of education: “Female education is important because it can lower rates of HIV/AIDS as well as infant mortality rates.”

Although she acknowledges the difficulty of the French-English language barrier between her and the Malian girls, Mira excitedly explains the video conferencing the groups had done, letters they have written to each other, and a tentative trip to Mali they are planning.



Name: Bintou Soumaoro

Age: 17

Position: Secretary of Filles Unies

"We believe in what we are doing." Bintou Soumaoro

Over four thousand miles away in Bamako, Mali, Bintou Soumaoro serves as the Secretary of Filles Unies. A 17-year-old in her last year of high school, she keeps track of the problems and solutions the group is discussing and works to ensure all members fulfil their duties. Participating in Filles Unies has given Bintou a chance to see her community in a different way. It was on a trip with Filles Unies that she visited an area of Mali that was new to her and met fifty girls they support together with their American sister organisation: "I could not believe the children dying from malnutrition and the lack of education, nor people who did not know the importance of educating young girls." The programme has also taught her that identifying problems is not enough; instead, she explains, together communities also have to search for solutions. Asked why she tells others to join the programme, she replies, "we believe in what we are doing."

Programme Impact and Future Development

Over the past three years, 40 young women in Africa and America have continued to be motivated and committed to the mission of educating girls everywhere. Attendance is steady at meetings and leadership trainings, as is participation in activities such as presentations at conferences and events. Print and broadcast media including TIME for Kids, the Washington Post, WPGC radio, MSNBC and FOX TV, as well as the daily newspaper in Bamako, have featured these influential young activists. In 2004, 15 girls in Mali received scholarships; that number has increased to 55 for the 2006-2007 school year. Four of the scholarship beneficiaries are also among the club's most active members.

The main challenges for the programmes include developing a youth-designed plan for expansion to share with potential funders. As the young girls near the end of high school, they do not always realise how important it will be to develop a long-term plan. However, preparing for change and creating a sustainable organisation will enable them to carry out their vision of making this global girls leadership development initiative an international federation.

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Organisation:

Youth Activism Project

Programme Locations:

Washington DC, USA
and Mali

Year Established: 2004

Website: <http://www.youthactivismproject.org>



Inspiring a million more young volunteers

19. Starting Line **Programme Goals and Activities**

Starting Line is a youth-run programme operating under the Chinese Progressive Association, a grassroots network that seeks social and economic justice for Chinese Americans. Starting Line is a 10 to 14 week summer programme for young people that seeks to “bridge the gap between American-born young people and new immigrant young people.” American-born or less recent immigrant high school and university volunteers, or “mentors,” lead new high school and university immigrants, or “mentees,” on a cultural exploration of New York City’s neighbourhoods, businesses and historical sites. Through tours and weekly discussion group meetings, mentors help mentees prepare for the culminating project: a presentation describing what service projects their group implemented, what they learned, and their feelings about their overall experience.

Typically, there are ten mentors and ten mentees for each summer session, and each “exploration” group is comprised of two to three mentors and three to four mentees. This high mentor to mentee ratio fosters close bonds among participants and ensures that every mentee can actively participate in discussion sessions and is provided with necessary support and encouragement.

Innovation

Starting Line provides newly arrived immigrants opportunities both to connect with other immigrants as well as to venture out of their own community to explore and learn about New York City’s other neighbourhoods and immigrant populations. Mentees initiate conversations with community residents, businesses and local leaders, broadening their perception of New York’s diversity while gaining important networking skills. In addition, mentors, many of whom went through the programme themselves, act as role models and demonstrate the active role immigrants and first generation Americans can take in changing and contributing to their communities. Mentees complete the programme feeling empowered; mentors finish the programme with an even greater understanding of New York and a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in helping their peers assimilate and adjust to their new lives.

Youth Focus

Startling Line was conceived, developed and implemented by and for young people. Mentors are responsible for planning programme activities, recruiting participants and leading mentees through a successful programme cycle. The nature of the Starting Line programme ensures that young mentees are actively engaged throughout the programme. Though this is difficult for many newly arrived immigrants who are often hesitant to speak English and venture outside of their community, the majority leave with increased confidence and a greater understanding of New York City's diversity. Both mentors and mentees cite better understanding, and thus greater tolerance of, different ethnic groups and are prepared to engage and work with different members of society. It is encouraging that participants, all of whom are under the age of 25, achieve these insights together and can share their experiences with friends and family in their communities. Indeed, Startling Line is creating young immigrant leaders dedicated to both their own communities as well as the broader community of New York City.

Youth Voice

Name: Janice Lam

Age: 21

Position: Volunteer

"It is very exciting working for this programme because you know [your] ideas and voice will be heard, and that if you have a good idea you can actually change the programme."

Janice Lam

Janice Lam, 21, is a rising university senior who has been volunteering at the Chinese Progressive Association since she was a sophomore in high school. Janice first volunteered for the Chinese Progressive Association's environmental health project. She then moved on to volunteering for the Starting Line programme. Although language is a major barrier for new immigrants, based on her own experience immigrating from Hong Kong at age ten, she felt newly arrived immigrants needed more than English speaking skills. They needed, Janice explains, the confidence to venture out of their own communities. "Immigrants feel shy to speak and therefore stay in their own neighbourhood and don't see different people. Through this programme, they [mentees] gain more confidence speaking English, [are] more comfortable going to different neighbourhoods, and feel more comfortable about American culture."

Janice feels that Starting Line is truly unique, as it was conceived and developed by volunteers. In 2001, she mentioned creating a neighbourhood exploration project to a fellow volunteer at the Chinese Progressive Association, and soon after she and a group of young volunteers began collaborating on the project that would become Starting Line. When reflecting back on her experience, Janice is pleasantly surprised by how quickly the venture gained momentum. "I didn't know it would turn out to be such a big scale project, [but] other mentors chimed in and helped develop the project."

For Janice, the programme is especially rewarding because she can both relate to mentees' experiences and see the difference the programme makes in their lives. This only makes Janice want to work harder to continue developing and expanding the programme: "It is very exciting working for this programme because you know [your] ideas and voice will be heard, and that if you have a good idea you can actually change the programme."

Programme Impact and Future Development:

With dedicated volunteers like Janice, it is no surprise that Starting Line is embarking on exciting new projects. This summer alone, Starting Line is implementing new exploration projects, including a special workshop on immigration rights, a college readiness workshop, and a trip to Ellis Island. In addition, volunteers are working on plans to implement a fall semester session, given increasing interest and demand. As former mentees return to volunteer as mentors, Starting Line will only continue to grow and implement innovative projects.

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Organisation: Chinese
Progressive Association

Location:
New York City, USA

Year Established: 2001

20. Unis-Cité

Programme Goals and Activities

Unis-Cité is a non-profit organisation which engages young people, ages 18 to 25, in a civilian youth service programme in France. Young men and women of all cultural, social and educational backgrounds come together in teams for a full-time commitment of six or nine months. Volunteers work with disadvantaged children and young people, isolated elders, people with disabilities, and the homeless. They work to fight racism, protect the environment, and promote local economic development. While they serve, 20% of their time is dedicated to debating, reflecting, and preparing for “life after Unis-Cité.” Volunteers receive a monthly stipend of approximately \$800 to enable them to meet their personal needs during their year of service.

The corps is diverse: 60% female and 40% male, of varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Thirty percent of volunteers have less than a high school diploma, 48% have a high school diploma or 2 years of college, and 22% have more than 2 years of college. Volunteers come from all over France, and partially from other European countries through the European Voluntary Service programme.

The programme takes advantage of this diversity, aiming to combat racism and intolerance by forging a common experience among young people of different backgrounds. Unis-Cité also increases solidarity by providing needed human resources to community organisations and other actors working to reduce inequality, increase social cohesion, and improve the environment in major urban centres in France.

Innovation

Full-time, long-term volunteering within France (as opposed to overseas) was little-known when Unis-Cité was founded. The co-founders took City Year, an American youth service corps headquartered in Boston, as their model and adapted it to the French context. There was no legal status for full time volunteers, meaning that until a few years ago, Unis-Cité corps members and the programme’s administrators took significant financial and legal risks in joining and developing the programme. Culturally, there was ambivalence about volunteerism as encroaching on the government’s responsibilities. There were few major, youth-driven volunteer efforts that were national in scope. Yet with persistent unemployment (25% among 16-25 year olds) and growing social needs, Unis-Cité’s offer to young people to spend a year in full-time in service to the community while gaining skills for the future met with success.

Youth Focus

Unis-Cité’s co-founders were 22 and 23 when they started the programme. Young people are the primary actors of Unis-Cité: they commit to a period of service during which they carry out a variety of projects, guided by a team leader (typically in his or her mid-twenties). They are also beneficiaries of the programme, learning team-work, gaining skills for citizenship and accessing support in developing plans for life after their service year.

Over the years, Unis-Cité alumni have also joined the staff and boards of both the local and national programmes (Unis-Cité is organised on a franchise model). Unis-Cité volunteers are excellent advocates for youth civic engagement, contributing to making civilian youth service attractive to other young people by their example, through word-of-mouth recruiting, and by speaking at conferences and to the press.

“After Unis-Cité, you have the impression that everything is possible,” said one young volunteer. “Whatever your story is, you have something to give to a team, to a project, as long as you make an effort to surpass yourself and to be open to differences.”

In 2006, Prime Minister De Villepin credited Unis-Cité with putting civilian youth service on the political agenda in a letter to its co-founders. The same year, a national survey showed that 86% of young people under 24 supported a mandatory civilian youth service programme.

Youth Voice

Name: Karima Mchouat

Age: 26

Position: Volunteer from October 2005 through June 2006

“After Unis-Cité, you have the impression that everything is possible.”
Unis-Cité volunteer

Karima decided to apply for a position at Unis-Cité, after she saw a poster calling for full-time volunteers from diverse backgrounds at her university. Looking for a break from her studies and excited about the rare opportunity to serve with young people from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, Karima applied for a position. Before the programme, she had spent time in Senegal and Indonesia contributing to various development projects. What differentiates Unis-Cité from her previous experiences the most, however, is “the fact that no technical or specific skills were initially required.” Instead, Karima found that “what matters [at Unis-Cité] is versatility, adaptability, team spirit, and motivation.” Also, working side-by-side with a diverse group of young people took time to get used to, but the results for Karima included increased self-confidence, leadership and negotiation skills, as well as acquiring the technical and organisational skills needed for the various projects. These projects included event-planning, construction, and helping a wide range of people from the disabled to asylum seekers.

Karima’s involvement with Unis-Cité and youth service has led her to pursue a career in international service and development. She says, “The programme changed my view on different things and accentuated and accelerated my desire to act and work in an associated field.”

Programme Impact and Future Development

Unis-Cité volunteers have an impact on their communities by meeting critical social needs. In the process, they discover new skills and receive citizenship training and support for developing their own future projects. In addition to completing 400 projects with 300 community partners, Unis-Cité has influenced national policy. In 2005, a law facilitating full-time volunteering was passed, and in 2006, a national voluntary civilian youth service programme was created, drawing on Unis-Cité's model. The programme has also been successful in engaging the private sector; over 55 private partners have contributed a total of 4.3 million euros since the programme's inception.

Over the next 3 years, Unis-Cité aims to continue to influence the policy debate around civic youth service in France, while extending their presence throughout the country to allow more young people to volunteer. They plan to build their corps to 1,500 in 2007-2008 and to engage another 2,800 volunteers in 2008-2009. Their objective is to increase Unis-Cité programmes from 13 to 30 sites by 2009.

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Programme Location:

Headquartered in
Paris, with 13 branches
around France

Year Established: 1994

Website:

<http://www.unis-cite.org>



Inspiring a million more young volunteers

21. Healthy Housing Project

Programme Goals and Activities

Chagas disease is a serious illness caused by a parasite that enters the bloodstream when a victim is bitten by the vinchuca insect endemic to certain zones of Central and South America. The disease develops over years or decades and has devastating effects on the nervous system, digestive system, and heart. The disease can be fatal if left untreated. In poor, rural areas of Bolivia, where the disease is endemic and the vincucha lives in traditional homes made of straw and mud, thousands of people are thought to be infected. The national government wanted to help rural Bolivians reconstruct their homes out of safer materials and educate them about the disease, but did not know exactly how many people were vulnerable and what materials were needed.

Enter VAMOS BOLIVIA Association, a non-profit organisation that empowers young students and professionals to use their skills toward advancing the common good and eliminating poverty. VAMOS BOLIVIA, which means “Let’s Go Bolivia” in Spanish, stands for Will to Interdisciplinary, Organised Action in Solidarity for Bolivia. The national government contracted the organisation to create and implement its “Healthy Housing Project.” The project aimed to create a database of households in rural Bolivia, including information on family size, type of house construction, and knowledge of Chagas disease. This database would give the government an idea of the scope of the problem and allow it to more effectively target educational programmes and housing construction projects.

Information for the database was collected by a group of 47 trained volunteers between the ages of 23 and 26 over a five-month period from 2005 to 2006. These intrepid volunteers, primarily students from universities and technical schools, devoted themselves full-time to travelling around the areas of Bolivia where Chagas disease is endemic. The volunteers, who organised and led their own activities in the field, visited 10 municipalities, including 25 communities and 4,000 individual houses. In each community, the volunteers held assemblies to explain the purpose of their visit and to engage the support of community members.

Innovation

The programme's design and creation of a database provided the national government with information regarding how many people were vulnerable to Chagas disease and what needed to be done to improve their quality of life. The programme also used young volunteers to gain the trust of rural community members, many of whom were wary of government interventions and non-profit organisations' agendas.

As one volunteer explained, "a lot of the beneficiaries are a little distrustful, because many programmes come to the community and spend time talking and training, but there are no tangible results. One of the advantages of using young volunteers is that the communities open up a little more to us. Some of them are somewhat introverted, so to see an older person makes them wary, but they trusted us."



Youth Focus

Although the Healthy Housing Project is commissioned by the Bolivian government and administered by a non-governmental organisation, it is the young volunteers who conduct the ground-level work. The young people are even involved in evaluating the programme and redefining their own role. Adult NGO representatives were initially planning to go to individual communities and introduce the project at community assemblies. However, after observing that communities were more receptive to young volunteers, young people suggested that they themselves participate in this introductory role, sending a young volunteer with each delegation of adults.

Participation in the programme raised the volunteers' consciousness of the poverty in Bolivia, the poorest country in Latin America, and increased their understanding of government policies and the complex interactions between national and local government agencies and non-governmental organisations. In addition, the volunteers gained valuable professional skills and work experience in a country where unemployment among young people is as high as 25%.



Youth Voice

Name: Eduardo Baldelomar

Age: 25

Position: Volunteer Coordinator

"Volunteering has taught me that, yes, I can get involved. Young people can become politically active as volunteers."

Eduardo Baldelomar

Eduardo Baldelomar is an architect from Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the capital city of the Department of Santa Cruz. Eduardo began volunteering with the Healthy Housing Project at its inception in August of 2005, when he coordinated a group of volunteers. Before working with VAMOS BOLIVIA Association, Eduardo was a UNV volunteer. He says that many Bolivians see volunteering as simply working without earning money, but he likes to emphasise the values and principles it instils. Volunteering has made him more aware of the devastating poverty and unemployment faced by his fellow citizens, and says that the experience has "completely changed [his] goals." While many young people believe they cannot participate in the political process, Eduardo says that "volunteering has taught me that, yes, I can get involved. Young people can become politically active as volunteers."

In addition to volunteering for VAMOS BOLIVIA Association, Eduardo is helping to draft a proposed youth policy for the new Bolivian constitution, which would transform young people from a marginalised to an empowered and socially active population. He hopes that the power of young people as volunteers can be fully harnessed for social change in the country. Eduardo is currently taking a leadership course and is working toward a graduate degree in public-private administration.

Programme Impact and Future Development

Completing this project and developing the database increased VAMOS BOLIVIA Association's capacity to conduct further voluntary action projects in the future. The next phase of the Healthy Housing Project is for the government to provide materials to improve the living conditions of those living in endemic areas in rural Bolivia, thereby reducing rates of Chagas disease. VAMOS BOLIVIA anticipates that young volunteers will be involved in this phase of programme implementation as well.

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Organisation:
VAMOS BOLIVIA

Location:
Rural regions of
Bolivia, including
the states of La
Paz, Cochabamba,
Chuquisaca, and
Santa Cruz

Year Established: 2005

22. Young Philanthropists

Programme Goals and Activities

The Young Philanthropists, an informal youth organisation in Nairobi, Kenya, has created an entirely student-led programme that provides sanitary towels to adolescent girls in poverty-stricken areas of the capital city. The organisation, which began in 2006, independently raises the money needed to provide local girls with the towels, while also conducting workshops for these girls on sexual health and how to effectively use the towels to avoid infections. Although they have plans to expand nationally, there is currently only one chapter of the Young Philanthropists, based out of the University of Nairobi. As a relatively small organisation, they have no staff and function solely through volunteer efforts. Many of the volunteers are students at the University, while others are teenage girls who have benefited from the group's charitable donations.

Currently, the Young Philanthropists regularly distribute sanitary towels to four hundred girls in the surrounding community, many of whom are in orphanages. The materials are distributed to schools, health clinics, orphanages, and residences in such a manner that each girl receives four packs of towels per month. In addition to these monthly donations, the Philanthropists also conduct a one-day workshop in which the recipients of the sanitary towels are taught how to use them and given information on HIV/AIDS and sexual health.

The Young Philanthropists' principle objective is to promote reproductive health among poor and orphaned girls in the Mathare slums in an effort to reduce the rate of truancy due to poor hygiene during their menstrual cycles. Due to the regular absenteeism of adolescent girls during this time, their academic performance is significantly lower than boys of the same age. By donating sanitary towels, the Young Philanthropists not only increase the opportunity for these girls' educational attainment, but also increase levels of self-esteem and empowerment. In addition to empowering the girls receiving the donations, the Philanthropists also aim to impart civic responsibility and fundraising skills to their volunteers.

Because the Young Philanthropists fundraise entirely on their own, the programme's annual budget is only USD \$2,500. Their two hundred volunteers range in age from 15 to 24 years old. Many of the volunteers are high school students who have received sanitary towels and then felt compelled to join the Young Philanthropists and aid other girls. The other volunteers are mainly University of Nairobi students, but the volunteers recruit friends from their neighbourhoods in Nairobi to participate as well. As volunteer Benard Muimde remarked, "I get my friends from home involved, people from my neighbourhood back home, as well as other students." All of the volunteers meet bi-weekly for organisational purposes and once a month to distribute goods.

Innovation

As Programme Coordinator Temesi Mukani, a University of Nairobi student, states, “our programme can be summarised as having a youth solution for a youth problem.” Young Philanthropists represent an entirely youth-focused initiative that has identified and addressed what appears to be a minor health issue, but one that has major social ramifications. By providing a relatively cheap good to those who could otherwise not afford it, Young Philanthropists also equalises educational opportunity across gender, while empowering impoverished and orphaned young people and students.

Youth Focus

As an entirely student-run organisation, the Young Philanthropists’ youth focus is apparent. From the administrative level to the grassroots advocating, Young Philanthropists is entirely funded and maintained by young people.



Youth Voice

Name: Benard Muimde

Age: 21

Position: Volunteer

“It was rewarding for me to see a girl whom I had personally spoken with go to school.”

Benard Muimde

Since beginning the sanitary napkin programme, 21-year-old Benard Muimde, a volunteer and University of Nairobi journalism student, has gained a better understanding of community issues, which has further informed his career goals. He says, “It was rewarding for me to see a girl that I had personally spoken with go back to school.” Because of this and similar experiences, Benard has decided to use his broadcast journalism major to garner media attention for the social problems facing Nairobi young people.

Programme Impact and Future Development

In response to the Philanthropists’ efforts, cases of reproductive infections due to the use of unhygienic materials such as rags, toilet paper, and mattress pieces have been reduced among the girls who now receive sanitary towels. School attendance for these girls has also risen, allowing them to perform better academically. Volunteers have also noticed a change in the girls’ self-esteem; those who are now participating as Philanthropists openly and publicly discuss the importance of reproductive health and hygiene to educate their community and fundraise.

Despite these many successes, however, Young Philanthropists still faces major challenges to programme expansion. One such challenge is the lack of adequate and sustained financial contributions to the organisation. The Young Philanthropists operates on student donations alone, which makes it exceedingly difficult to respond to the great demand for its services. Also, when asked what the hardest part of his volunteer work was, Benard Muimde replied that the greatest obstacle was mobilising other young people to fundraise and educate. “It can be very difficult to get young [male students] to understand the importance of our cause and get involved. They think ‘That doesn’t affect me,’ or ‘why is that important?’”

Currently, the Young Philanthropists are in the initial stages of planning a three-year proposal for national expansion. For financial support, they are seeking grants from the University of Nairobi as well as private companies. At this stage of its development, the programme model for the Philanthropists is easily replicable due to its low overhead costs and youth-led management.

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Programme Location:

Nairobi, Kenya

Year Established: 2006