



Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

*The Youth...
Hope for a better world.*

Youth Actions and Proposals for social Change

**Youth Workshop
Draft proposal notebook**

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Introduction

The Youth Workshop (YW) is a collective, international youth network founded in order to identify and meet the challenges that young people are facing all over the world today. Be it a question of fighting against injustice, poverty, discrimination, hunger, crime or violence or sharing creative ideas or views in order to bring a positive and sustainable development to their society, the YW aims to support and encourage young people to take up the challenges. The YW is based on a single premise that young people have the potential and willingness to bring about

momentous change, therefore they must be provided with opportunities to play a significant role for creating better lives for themselves, their communities and society as a whole.

We strongly believe that as we continue to work, in our own ways, in our respective communities, there is great value to be gained through the exchange of experiences, information and ideas, and by supporting one another at a global level. By building this informal, collectively organised network, we hope to go beyond the institutional barriers that freeze and compartmentalise dialogues and actions among youth at an international level. This network is therefore our own tool, through which we can become more familiar with the realities of young people in our own regions and elsewhere, and can express freely our expectations, hopes and concerns.

At a time when information is becoming more and more accessible through new technological advancements, we have a greater awareness than ever before of the world outside our own. Each day we see the devastating effects of conflict, poverty, injustice, homelessness, crime, environmental devastation, inequality, drug abuse and disease. We can, as individuals, feel overwhelmed or frozen by a sense of helplessness in the face of such tremendous problems.

It is not only a question of proposals but also of actions

The following document is one example of youth actions towards solving these problems. In the beginning, when we have started, within the Alliance, talking about presenting a proposal notebook. In our youth network, we thought that it'd be meaningless for us to draw strategies for the future without putting ahead the fact that the young people are already today's actors. As the youth are already acting for social change, we thought that it was important to highlight the ongoing work started by the young people.

In this proposal notebook, you will find proposals of strategies for change as well as youth actions in different fields of development and human betterment.

This Youth Actions and proposals for Social Change document is the result of a real collective work.

Yes, we have succeeded to make it really a collective work. In a dynamic such as the Alliance for a responsible, plural and united world where we are aware about the preoccupations and challenges identified by the common people and not only elites. It was important for the Youth Workshop to take benefit of this basic principle to highlight the diversity of challenges of its network.

In the beginning, we have asked the Youth Workshop coordinators to collect experiences of their countries and/or regions and then to propose a regional proposal notebook. Then, we found that other partners could contribute in this process and it was important to invite them to do so with the concern to enlarge the diversity not only of actions, but also of visions and views. We did it and it was necessary to follow this process.

We have received around 35 documents highlighting the problems faced by the young people from all over the world. Every document has brought tremendous richness of experiences, action plans and proposals of strategies which concern not only the practical view but also the

deep need of change in the value system which is the base to assure the sustainability of our actions for the future.

We would have loved to diffuse the compilation of all those documents. But it would have been a great challenge to read all of them before the Assembly. That is why, after reading them all, we found that the issues mentioned could be under six major chapters. The Youth Workshop coordinators have done a transversal work in order to present a shorter notebook. While going through this document, you'll certainly feel the harmony of this collective work and diverse visions even if the chapters are not following the same frame. At the end, you will find the list of the young talented people who contributed in this work. And in the contents page, the names of the coordinators and partners who participated in the synthesis work.

Before the World Citizen' Assembly, the Youth Workshop is organizing a preparatory meeting. This document will be used as a working document for the crossing views and also to add other issues, which appeared after finalizing this work.

I. CULTURE AND ART

For most people, culture and art are metonyms, each wrapped up in the expression of the other. While both practically defy definition by virtue of the infinite variety of means through which they can be manifest, each finds a vital burst of meaning in the degree to which they are mutually self-subsuming. One's culture, here understood as one's social context and experiences, is the stirring basis for one's art, the products and production informed by and inspiring one's further life and action.

For the purpose of this document, we have decided to examine youth involvement in culture and art together. And, as an arbitrary but meaningful way of distinguishing between cultural action informed by art, and artful action informed by culture, we have elected to use two themes identified and expanded upon by the International Youth Parliament held in Sydney, Australia, in October 2000: Creative Action for Change and Culture and Identity.

The dynamic Youth Workshop international team and its partners have worked hard to create a strong community of people laboring together to develop and continually energize different tools of communication, to facilitate international youth events, and always to bring more young people into an ongoing process of youth empowerment.

The Culture of Art: Creative Action for Change

We are all cultural activists of some kind. Some of us are musicians or artists, dramatists or cultural organizers. Our cultures and the cultures of the communities we work in are at the root of the work we do. We use our understanding of our cultures and our skills and talents to draw attention to issues that face our communities. Our ingenuity and creativity and the ingenuity and creativity of other young people are essential in creating interest and support for our ideas.

Asserting our right to culture is a significant act. Promoting an awareness of our own culture is important, and finding ways and means of finding and preserving lost and present cultures is part of the process. Young people have a responsibility to do this. We have to find as many

ways as we can to sustain and maintain our cultures. But we also have to find ways to celebrate our cultures and move forward into the future.

To assert our culture and to use this knowledge to solve issues and problems in our communities means that we need information about our cultures and we need to develop sets of cultural tools. Communication is at the heart of sharing culture and it should be at the heart of the strategies we adopt for creative action for change.

There is tremendous power and influence in the various creative forms we can use for social change. Whether it is theatre, art, literature, music, the Internet or any other form, we should work to educate people so that they can understand the importance of these creative forms in achieving social change.

Practical Examples and Strategies

Young people all over the world have joined youth movement to share their experiences, ideas, and skills in promotion of youth initiatives in the field of creative action for change at all levels. After all, being able to express cultural identity is an important element in preserving and developing a sense of personal identity. Cultural identity is shared and so it helps to foster community identity. A strong sense of self and culture is also important in promoting and developing the principles of human rights in a community.

There are thousands of examples of cultural activism from which to choose. Here is the smallest of samples:

The Creative Action for Change Group

Initiated during the International Youth Parliament (Sydney 2000), this group brought together 22 young people from 22 countries. Since then, they have continued to share their experiences, ideas and links. They have also been working together to build shared communication tools, like, for example, a Web site. The site (<http://www.active.org.au/creativeaction>) is designed as a forum into which all creative young people can bring and share ideas and strategies for social changes.

Also an outgrowth of the International Youth Parliament's work in creative action for change is a planned-for compilation of the overwhelming display of creative talent exhibited at the convening of the Parliament. The poems, photos, stories, songs, thoughts, dreams, paintings, drawings, and more created for and by the youth underscored their concerns about the world. It is a dynamic, powerful, and creative cross-cultural approach for highlighting youth issues and the way young people reflect on societal challenges.

Music for Understanding

Bringing Bosnian people together through music was the goal of a program started by a young, dynamic delegate from the International Youth Parliament. Tamara had been in contact with an American NGO called Balkan Youth Link looking for a project that would bring youth from the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina closer together. Tamara and her friend decided that this could be done through music. They developed a project that gathers young musicians from different parts of Bosnia and brings them to the USA for shared music

making. They have also organized workshops on intercultural communication and post war experiences. With an enlarged group of artists, Tamara, now a radio journalist, is currently working with a US-based organization to bring together youth from throughout the Balkans and the US for a music festival.

Challenges like those faced in the Balkans have been met in other parts of the world as well with music proposed as a uniting force. In Cyprus, an island bitterly divided, for one day in 1998, 200 young people, 100 from each side of the "green line" came together to celebrate peace. In the war-ravaged Congo, a popular and "therapeutic" musical mix of old and new sounds, called "Wasa" (meaning "to heal"), has been developed by a band called "Yela-Wa".

Drama for Tolerance

Holly, a Danish International Youth Parliament delegate, believes in helping people to develop tolerance towards others of different cultures and ways of living. She does this through art, something she sees as giving meaning to life since it gives people the chance to see the positive sides of things. She and a group of young people have therefore created a drama group called "Southern Edge". The group pursues its goals through dance, drama, visual arts and educational movies.

There are many other theater groups working throughout the world to communicate essential information about culture and real-world issues. In Thailand, the Mirror Art Group, launched by young people in 1991, works through drama, puppets, music, poetry, etc., with youth to convey humanitarian messages in vibrant and captivating ways. In Kenya, Amani People's Theater uses performing arts with remote communities for similar purposes. There are even small theater groups in Uganda, Vietnam and Cambodia using local traditional art forms to deal with sensitive local issues.

Artists for Local Culture and International Dialogue

YemenArts is a project designed to present Yemeni culture and heritage to the world. Apart from being an extensive show of major cities and architectonic forms in Yemen, the project gathers Yemeni artist, both men and women, working in different art forms from urban and rural areas. YemenArts was created by local artists to promote Yemen arts and to open their culture and the dialogue with the rest of the world. YemenArts (www.yemenarts.org.ye) is an initiative made possible by Dia, a French NGO, after extensive work in youth activities and programs in Yemen.

The Art of Culture: Culture and Identity

The word 'culture' when used in reference to one's 'identity' has hundreds of thousands of different meaning, depending on the context. Some people equate it with lineage, others with songs and stories, or the way people dress. The way people look is important to many people from communities with strict rules about bloodlines and marriage. For others, widespread dispossession and intermarriage have made this meaningless.

In discussions about culture, everyone seems concerned about the force of impact of information from so-called dominant cultures – the Westernization and Americanization of culture. The history of colonization, assimilation, and the commercial and material force of

modernization all come into play, as do false assumptions and stereotypes and the controversial nature of human rights, social justice, gender equity, and fair health practices. In the face of this, some people see 'cultural preservation' as very important, while others question its popular legitimacy; does each of us need to preserve past culture or is it safe to acknowledge that culture exists in everything we do?

Regardless, the importance of actively maintaining, continuing, and asserting cultural identity is undeniable, especially for traditional and older cultures that have nearly disappeared and, even today, rarely been given equal and appropriate footing with others.

Practical Examples and Strategies

To be effective in promoting an understanding of the value and uses of cultural identity, young people generally agree on a number of things: the need to share resources, knowledge and skills; the need to lobby governments and other organizations to work in partnership and provide more funding for cultural programs; the particular need for stronger alliances between international and local media and their promotion of cultural issues.

Another aim is to use education as a catalyst for social change. Key strategies are to develop training programs for cultural development, created by students using 'real life' situations; to inspire young people to develop and learn through cultural festivals and competitions; to establish 'home stay' programs where people can learn through the oral culture of the community; to foster youth empowerment to involve young people in cultural activities; to gain support for appropriate programs of bi-lingual education; and to develop methodologies to bring local and Indigenous information back to communities.

The Internet can be used in some communities to help to promote culture and boost economies through tourism and trade. Peoples should be able to market themselves on their own terms and this could be done through using already existing media associations (particularly for Indigenous groups) and creating alliances with international media associations to create a support network to exchange programs.

Another aim should be the preservation of intellectual property rights (IPR) for Indigenous cultural material. A significant and complex strategy is to build awareness and educate communities about IPR and increased participation in legislative processes that directly affect their cultures. There should be instruments of protection for Indigenous culture in all countries and to promote the adoption of a NON-authenticity label for items that are commercial imitations of Indigenous artifacts.

Yet another aim is the meaningful incorporation into domestic laws of ratified conventions (via constitutional incorporation and domestic legislation) and the adoption and implementation of the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For this, cooperation at many levels and lobbying will be required.

Once again, here is a brief look at just some of the practical things managed by young people when dealing with culture and identity:

Aboriginal Outreach

A great deal of effort is being made to turn back the clock on centuries of neglect of Aboriginal cultures. This year (2001) saw the founding of Australia's first Indigenous-controlled, independently funded national organization, the Lingari Foundation. Named after Vincent Lingari, an important Aboriginal leader in of the last century, it is under the direction of a young and capable leader of this new century. In Canada, a young indigenous woman named Carmen breathed life into the Aboriginal Youth Network (<http://www.ayn.ca>). Initiated to counteract the fragmentation of the communities of the First Nations of Canada. Using the contemporary culture of the Internet, young people are able to strengthen their Aboriginal cultural identities. There are many other indigenous groups, large and small, working to give a voice to those marginalized by the status quo, particularly the young.

National Cross-Cultural Understanding

In the Congo, in 1996, three young men came together to promote traditional African values. A year later, their work found form as a cultural association called "Le é de évolution" (The E of Evolution). The work of its members is to research and develop a culture of peace around by energizing African youth and their cross-cultural initiatives. In Algeria, the sluggish non-profit sector is working hard to galvanize disparate youth elements into a structured voice.

Regional Cross-Cultural Understanding

Pushing forward with the motto "The more people know about the one another, the less likely they will be to fight," the American non-profit organization BikeAbout Inc (<http://www.bikeabout.org>) spent a year (1997-1998) in the Mediterranean region working with young people to develop international educational projects that dispel the fear and antagonism spawned by generations of misinformation used to keep regional neighbors apart. Similarly, the Asian Youth Assembly of 2001, an outgrowth of the work of the Youth Workshop and the International Youth Parliament, came together to bridge the cultural divides that have so embittered relations in Asia. A permanent exchange network has grown out of that.

International Cross-Cultural Understanding

One of the most striking aspects of bringing together a group of people from all over the world is that they bring with them not only their own knowledge and life experiences but also diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, spiritual and religious beliefs, customs and traditions. It is just such an adventure that the coordinators of the Youth Workshop are living through. It has been an incredibly enriching and fascinating experience, but it has also posed (and continues to pose) many challenges and difficulties particularly since its active members are, for the most part, not dealing directly face-to-face but using new technologies and long distance communication methods. We have survived. The new challenge for the Youth Workshop and many other youth networks similar to it is how to share and develop with others the experience of those fortunate enough to be involved in such a particular dynamic, which should in turn enrich the lives of others and create a more open and tolerant society.

II. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST POVERTY AND HIV/AIDS.

This is a struggle which must involve everyone -this paper concentrates on the youth role and experiences. It attempts to outline the priorities for young people in the struggle against poverty

and HIV/AIDS, as identified by Youth Workshop members and the participants and partners of the International Youth Parliament at its first sitting in 2000. It also demonstrates some of the solutions young people are proposing and how they are facing up to the problems that confront them.

Breaking the cycle of poverty: IYP 2000

"...when it comes to effective action, the only real question is whether the poor are the object of concern or the 'subject' of their own futures. The poorest members of our societies can be reached by global action if that global action involves them and preserves their dignity..."

Nimbewe Phillip Kuambiana, IYP2000 Tanzanian Delegate

Combating the effects of poverty is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today. Poverty is a lack of access to economic, technological, cultural and ecological resources. It can result in unemployment, environmental degradation, political and economic instability, conflict and inequality. These burdens fall disproportionately on the shoulders of women, minorities and young people.

Working within the following 6 working groups at the International Youth Parliament young people from more than 150 countries came up with problem analysis and action strategies for:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Education for Life | 4. Tech Solutions |
| 2. Learning for Change | 5. Youth Livelihoods |
| 3. Sustainable Futures | 6. Fight Aids |

Education for life

We looked at developing ways to enhance universal access to high quality, relevant education, recognising its importance in combating poverty and allowing people to share in technological, environmental and cultural resources.

Education was identified as crucial for:

- Building and understanding ones identity
- Gaining access to employment, good health, political participation and social inclusion.
- I.e. Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

Problems limiting people from gaining an education include:

- Poverty makes it difficult for young people to continue their schooling
- Cultural norms which discourage the participation of certain groups e.g. women
- Great distances some young people have to travel to get to school
- Lack of a regular power supply and other amenities
- The need to seek refuge during periods of intense conflict
- The need to find employment
- Lack of qualified and professional educators
- Overcrowding in classrooms
- A belief in some societies that the education system reinforces the existing levels of discrimination based on race, gender or class
- Lack of educational resources e.g. books, computers, freedom to participate in designing ones own learning, libraries etc.

Questions raised included the rights of minority and special needs groups, language, access and whether schools use a holistic approach to education or whether it focuses only on developing the mind.

The Way Forward

Lobby to increase the access of disadvantaged groups to basic education and as such aim to combat child and adult illiteracy

Campaign, raise funds and lobby governments to make available educational resources
Through various actions in local communities, aim to improve the quality and relevance of education in the communities.

To promote the value of culture through education and to combat social discrimination in education.

To reach out to groups who are not served by the formal education system by promoting community based learning and other forms of informal learning methodologies.

To work to promote and support the education of people with special needs.

YOUTH ACTION

Nadem Nashef: Association for Arab Youth – Baladna

Nadem's organisation strives to provide financial assistance to children and youth by way of collecting donations and delivering aid. Assistance includes providing pens and notebooks for needy Palestinian children. The education of Palestinian youth is a key to the struggle against poverty and for understanding, but the obstacles are great. Nadem says; "As a result of the closures and shelling many are unable to reach schools, colleges and universities, and in some cases, learning institutions have closed because they have been appropriated as military sites."

Learning for change

Our focus was to develop strategies for promoting formal and non-formal education in particular areas such as human rights and poverty awareness, so that young people can become actively involved in change on those issues.

"Poverty is found in every country in the world. Improving young people's understanding of poverty issues and motivating them to act against poverty in their own and other communities is crucial if the cycle of poverty is to be challenged. This is especially so when the actions and priorities of people in developed countries have a large impact on the opportunities of people in less developed areas, through their consumer patterns." Learning For Change IYP2000 Discussion Paper

Lessons learnt from our experiences include the beliefs that:

Young people can be empowered by critical thinking, activism and participation

Unrestricted access to education can reduce the levels of conflict

Learning about and having pride in one's culture, can lead to tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences

Young people should have the opportunity to take responsibility for changing their learning environment

Strategies to assist in implementing these learning are:

Using teaching methods that are creative, interactive, empowering and flexible
Improving conditions under which people learn
Providing access to education which promotes the right to choose values through critical thinking
Encouraging an awareness of poverty and its implications for environment, peace, stability, and equal responsibility for the future.

The Way Forward

Human Rights Education

To make young people aware of their rights and the rights of others, the aim is to contribute to the Global campaign for Peace Education by developing, materials and training programmes for communities.

Exploring the potential synergies between cultural and global education

To combat prejudice, promote tolerance, educate for peace and create an awareness of indigenous issues, the aim is to create a global awareness-teaching module, which will focus on encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their interactions in global issues.

Encouraging Activism and Mobilization

To establishing e-groups through which to send out educational information.

YOUTH ACTION:

Natasha Horn: People and Planet, YW Member – United Kingdom

Tasha committed at the IYP2000 to imparting global education in her local community through schools and universities in order to improve international understanding by breaking down stereotypes, challenging pre-conceptions and encouraging people to be critical. People and Planet run campaigns on social and ethical issues. Natasha says about her P&P university group, "One of our greatest achievements was an Environmental week we organised in February in which we raised awareness about environmental issues and encouraged all students to get involved. We made eye catching banners and posters, protested against road pollution and congestion with a Bicycle Protest round the city, organised a photographic exhibition highlighting Global environmental issues, and hosted an ethical careers fair."

Sustainable futures

We were concerned with finding ways to involve young people in managing their involvement in the ecosphere, raising awareness about sustainable lifestyles, and promoting informed and responsible decision –making.

Our group recognised that:

Issues of degradation and pollution are linked to politics, domination and the unequal distribution of resources.

The destruction of the environment leads to the destruction of Indigenous values, traditional practices and the disempowerment of individuals and communities. The culture of consumption has created pollution and destruction of waterways and to mountains of waste. There is an increasing need for grass roots actions to make Trans-National Corporations accountable.

The Way Forward

Recognising the role of education as crucial in creating awareness.
To lead by example.
To lobby and campaign governments drawing on multiple skills.
To discourage the use of nuclear energy
Lobby for the UN Convention on Sustainable Development.
Develop appropriate communication strategies.
To use scientific research as a basis for all work and campaigns.

YOUTH ACTION:

Soraia Mello: Management Tapajós National Park (previously YW Coordinator) - Brazil

Soraia's project 'PROMANEJO' aims to develop practical models for the sustainable management of a part of the Amazon region by involving the grass - root communities. Her job is dealing with environmental education and eco tourism in the National Park and with her colleagues she says she is "developing strategies in order to give incentive for youth participation."

Tech solutions

The focus was on ways to ensure that technological developments promote global equality and cultural participation of young people from all backgrounds.

In our discussions it was noted

That there are various aspects to technology such as sustainable energy sources.
That the use of technology can help reduce poverty by offering employment opportunities, creating a market for development projects, and increasing educational opportunities.

The introduction of technology has also had negative influences in areas such as social practices, and where out of date equipment does not compare with more developed nations.

Access to information technology can be a key resource for social change.

The Way Forward

To overcome problems of access by promoting the use of open source software and shareware as a low cost and equitable form of information technology.

To work toward the integration of technology into educational environments and lobby for changes to the curriculum, so that young people can learn how to use and appreciate the power of technology in presenting information.

To develop strategies to ensure that culture and technology function hand-in-hand.

Ways in which this will happen is through the recording and communicating of Indigenous knowledge and culture.

YOUTH ACTION:

Terah DeJong: Nation 1 - India

Following the IYP2000 Terah began a computer education program for polio children in his community. He said "I want to complete this action because it will help to improve job opportunities for children involved; will help me better understand technology's role in poverty and will hopefully broaden understanding."

Ethan Gelber: Youth Workshop Coordinator – USA

In 1997 Ethan created an organization called BikeAbout, a non-profit devoted to educational Internet adventures. BikeAbout's first major project was a nine-month, 10,000-mile circumnavigation of the Mediterranean Sea by bicycle during which thousands of students and teachers around the world used the BikeAbout Web site (<http://www.bikeabout.org>) to teach and learn about the people and places of the Mediterranean.

Youth Livelihoods

In talking about breaking the cycle of poverty and the empowerment of young people a major factor is the creation of employment or job opportunities for young people. Our group was concerned with looking at ways to break the cycle of poverty through the strengthening of opportunities for meaningful and non-exploitative youth employment and enterprise.

In addressing the topic we identified the following as consequences of unemployment amongst young people:

- Boredom and destructive behaviour

- Low self esteem and lack of empowerment

Further problems/ issues concerning youth and employment are:

- Discrimination in employment opportunities for minority groups

- Lack of transferable skills

- Vulnerability to exploitation in the work place

- Young people who are forced into work in order to contribute to the family income are being denied the opportunity to get an education

We decided on the following as universal principles that should be part of all work practices.

- The opportunity to be consulted and contribute to decisions surrounding the job
- Should be constructed around the cultural practices of a community
- Should maintain equality and not discriminate against minority groups
- Should consider the health and well-being of employees
- Suitable employment for people with disabilities should be made available
- Workers globally should be aware of the impact of their employment on the sustainability of the environment, and to minimise this by lobbying for changes to the use of resources.

The Way Forward

- Development of employment and entrepreneurship.
- Establishment of youth centres and organisations.
- Upholding and defending the rights of young workers.
- Education for disadvantaged youth.
- Community development.
- Recruiting volunteers.

YOUTH ACTION:

Nicole Rambelo: NGO -LOHARANO Formation & Développement - Madagascar

The main activity of Nicole's organisation is assisting young people to enter professional life. Like many NGOs working with youth they are constrained by the absence of a national policy or institution for youth and the corresponding lack of resources and political will to make change.

Nicole believes the formation of a national policy would make it possible to carry out major research on the subject and to develop a comprehensive plan of action rather than to continue with 'patchwork' solutions. She says; "The first problem " to be treated " as a priority relates to employment ...so that young people can define a project of life which enables them to consider the future in a more optimistic way." The problem now is of a scale too large for a few NGOs to tackle, "Indeed, the greatest proportion of young people does not have a diploma or occupational qualifications; and many are in extreme cases of illiteracy. Survival replaces then the motivation and the hope of a better future."

Fight AIDS

HIV/ AIDS is affecting all communities and young people aged 19-28 years are most at risk. In many countries the spread of HIV/AIDS has affected a significant proportion of young people and children. The social stigma surrounding the disease and those infected makes it harder to effect the social change needed to combat it's continued spread. The following were identified as key factors:

Ignorance – limited education, misunderstandings regarding the transmission of HIV, cultural practices, religious and social taboos which prevent the open discussion of sexual behaviour.

Poverty – low levels of literacy, access to information and services, governmental priorities in setting national budgets, often overlooking the significance of HIV/AIDS in the development of the country.

Sexual Behaviour – the denial in some societies that young people are sexually active therefore making it difficult to address issues of casual and unprotected sex, the belief that HIV/AIDS affects only the homosexual community, inequalities which put minority groups at risk.

The following broad goals should be used in challenging these factors:

The establishment of compulsory education programmes in sexuality focussing on HIV/AIDS prevention.

The promotion of empowerment and participation of young people in working to prevent HIV/AIDS.

YOUTH ACTION:

Gustave Assah: Youth Workshop Coordinator – Benin.

Gustave's projects include an intercultural approach to the fight against AIDS. He has been active in organising a series of activities, including school meetings, the production of documents in the principle national languages and mass mobilization at the community level, to assist in sensitising Africans on the HIV/AIDS issue.

Lamin Camara: Lend a Hand Society - The Gambia.

At the International Youth Parliament 2000 Lamin developed an Individual Action Plan to design and implement an HIV/AIDS AWARENESS PROGRAM TARGETTING YOUNG GAMBIANS. He has created a weekly radio program called 'We Care', is geared mainly towards HIV/Aids education. It has been highly successful in spreading information about HIV/AIDS to a young Audience. He has also succeeded in beginning to influence government policy on HIV/AIDS because of the success of the radio program. He is working to solicit funding for some small awareness raising projects, particularly for rural youth, but says; "My IAP is well on course even without finance." His action plan proves that with little resources innovative youth directed programs can still have considerable impact and that the youth role in fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS is a crucial one.

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"In Moldova youth under 24 make up over one quarter of the population, young people experience equal or higher levels of poverty, unemployment, and migration than the general population. There are corresponding increases in high risk-taking behaviour, with violence, delinquency, substance abuse and HIV infection becoming more prevalent...yet there is no established system for encouraging and empowering young people." Silvia Mosneaga., League for Defense of Human Rights in Moldova

The good news is that many young people have a passion for determining their own futures, however, only some have the opportunities, the knowledge and the resources to begin to see how they can make a difference. There is a very strong need for more support of those working to empower young people and for those youth struggling against the threats of poverty and disease.

III. EDUCATION

Education is a fundamental right of every person; a key to other human rights; the heart of all development, the essential prerequisite for equity, diversity and lasting peace.

-- *World Education Forum, Education For All: All For Education, A Framework for Action, Dakar, April 2000*

Education in a broader sense is the most important, perhaps the only process that equips human beings to survive on the earth. Education, which includes natural learning, socialization, organized information sharing, skill training or imparting discipline and moral values etc. is undeniably essential part of human progress. It is accepted universally. What is put into question time and again is the method of educating people, the relevance of its contents in order to create an independent, responsible and peace loving individuals. Recent concerns include the exploitative and commercial dimension of the educational institutions. **Youth workshop** as a collective youth voice emphasizes the urgent need of a reexamination of present education systems in the light of the above and that of making basic education accessible to each and every individual all over the world.

The evaluation of the state of education everywhere presents a rather grim picture. Our purpose here is to present some illustrative concerns brought out by the YW partners through extensive discussions during the course of several national and international seminars, meetings and workshops and the proposed strategies for change.

Due to the complexity of the thematic, our thinking was based on two levels: we used regional as well as topical approach to the education. Both facing some relevant problems and challenges, the two approaches lead to some common conclusions:

First of all, education is considered as the most important for the building of both an individual and citizen everywhere. The approach vary from country to country, from region to region, the implementation as well. Since French revolution, the occidental society is searching, more or less successfully, to implement the postulates of democracy, but lot is still to be done. Education as an important part of this evolution and object of so many interests should so be one of the prior field of action. Once liberated and independent, the developing countries have to face even more challenges : to question the occidental democracy, citizenship and education system incorporated in their respective societies in order to find a compromise with their own context every day more dependent from the global and occidentalized dynamics. To create a locally and globally responsible citizen, each society should integrate a civic dimension in its education system, a civic dimension that correspond to its respective context but which results are shared elsewhere. An example of such approach is for sure the new project of DIA association in the Mediterranean region.

The gap between education systems in developed and developing countries is one of our major concerns. This gap is a result of the different level of accessibility, but also of the different social, economic, cultural and religious contexts. And it is even larger if we take in consideration the percentage of young people under 30 years and the pressure this percentage makes on education there where the conditions of life and education are the hardest. Difference between grades or levels when we talk about education in general should also be underlined: for a great number of developing countries the alphabetization remains the main concern while in the Occident we are facing a hyperinflation of diplomas and university and post-university courses.

However, accessible for the majority of the population, the education in the developed world faces now some new challenges: those of quality, of equivalence, of job opportunities, all in relation with the progress of the economy and occidental society. Anyway, some regional disparities within these countries are also present and more precisely when we talk about rural and mountain areas or those where immigrants are considered as pressuring.

Although we were maybe more sensitive to the problems of the developing countries, due to the difficult life conditions and the interest of YW participants, we should not neglect the necessary reforms of the education system in the West. In the process of globalization but also locally, these changes are essential for the self-development of each citizen. Some new conditions of life that emerged from the economic development, are not always so positive. Being more individual than socially oriented a nowadays occidental citizen is at the same time very dependant on, for instance, labor market or new technologies. It is not necessary to mention that this dependence starts already in primary school where although self-expression and creativity are considered as fundamental rights, in reality they are not encouraged enough. Even more fragile is the question of mobilization of citizens and their interest and ability to assume or face a crisis especially if they find that they are not directly concerned, as solidarity and open-mind thinking are also lacking within the school system. However, these are only few examples of the functioning and results of the present education system in the West. A more exhaustive list should also contain:

Slow adaptation of school programs to the progress of the society, as new concerns, approaches and technologies are appearing continuously and day after day.

School programs are not always well accommodated to the age of pupils.

Although the access to education is not anymore a problem as such a free choice is still to be encouraged, as it is still largely dependent on social status and labor market.

Development of an individual as a social being should be re-established according to new circumstances.

Dependence of education system on exclusively governmental policies and economic needs is not only dangerous if not opposite to a democratic society.

Knowledge on exterior world is rather weak.

In order to overcome the present lacking different strategies should be taken into account:

School programs should take advantage of new tools in order to follow new tendencies.

Education system should take into account new social concerns and effects, both in a scientific and critical way.

Development of an individual should not exclude his ability to identify himself as a social being, different school programs should encourage social dimension, sharing rather than competition, solidarity and ability to respect the other no matter his social, ethnic, sexual or other status is.

Students should be encouraged to develop their creativity, their own point of view in order to be able to choose rather than to be chosen.

New values should be put on table in order to overcome disparities regarding old-fashion system of privileged and prestigious schools still open only for certain categories of the population.

Participation of a greater number of actors in the reform of the education system, and more precisely teachers, students, parents, social workers, civil society.
Better the knowledge on global events and tendencies, on other cultures and regions and recognize, through the education system, the past and the present market colonialization of developing countries, raise the environmental issues, etc.

Generally speaking, it has often been recognized that education in developing countries suffers on account of a number of limitations. Specifically:

Universalisation of primary education is still a distant dream. Gender disparities, high rate of school dropouts and lack of access to educational institutions by the poor and vulnerable segments of the society are characteristic features of the educational system.

Concerns with higher education have been separately presented in detail.

Education for people with special needs and those who are challenged on various counts has to be integrated with the educational system in order make education inclusive.

Excessive emphasis on learning by rote which leads to an all round stifling of the creative engagement of the child with the surroundings.

Formal education through schools does not equip students with the necessary lifeskills for holistic development of the personality. Aptitude and interest are generally not correlated with curricula and offer limited career choices to students.

Higher educational degrees have been linked with jobs as a result of which a large number of students are forced to pursue higher education even without interest or aptitude.

There is very little emphasis on vocational education/training as a result of which higher education is often perceived as irrelevant for jobs/careers.

School curricula is often dated and out of tune with modern needs. Sex education for instance is never given its due place and a healthy interaction between girls and boys is not encouraged.

School education has been commercialized and is treated as business ventures. Quality of education often suffers from a superfluity and loses its basic objective.

Education has been divorced from core humanistic values and overemphasizes success in material terms.

Strategies for Change

Necessary changes at all levels in the light of the above concerns has been emphasized. Life skills training and capacity development of youth needs to be incorporated in the education system.

Youth power has to be recognized to bring about the change.

Appropriate screening and training of teachers has been seen as a crucial element of change.

Easy access to all sections of population to relevant information is necessary for youth empowerment.

Technology should be utilized to address education of children with special needs and those who are challenged in various ways.

In order to exploring the hidden creative force and energy of the youth there is a need to generate spaces where the youth can express themselves freely and creatively, develop their aesthetic sense and appreciation, and build their self-esteem and confidence.

There should be mechanisms to initiate a dialogue with the youth's families and communities on how they can further support their future generations learning potential, learning processes and further develop/ improve their own communities.

Finally, the interdependencies between education systems in the North and in the South, developed and developing countries are very present. As the example of Algeria shows, the occidental education remains a model for self-determination of a young man and woman. For sure not because it is perfect but because the local circumstances were not propitious to delivering of a system that young people could be satisfied with. Even somehow different and likely, the two education systems bring some common questions, those of ethics, values, respect, quality, tools, citizenship...

For the purpose of a concrete approach to this topic, we have chosen to present our efforts when dealing with higher education in particular.

Higher Education

Introduction

Students are forced to adapt to university instead of university answering the needs of students!

"University reflects wishes and ideas of the privileged minority."

---Mariana Ferraz-Duarte (a student from Canada)

The principal aim of higher education is to develop responsible citizens for the service of all humankind. Starting from this communally held view of what higher education should achieve, the Youth workshop partners from 16 countries with varying levels of economic and social development (Algeria, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mauritania, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Thailand, Togo, Yugoslavia) met under the umbrella of the Alliance for a Responsible, plural and United World. They are the students, graduates and young professionals from a variety of cultural and academic backgrounds, who have dedicated their lives to the healthy, developed and a responsible society.

The present system of higher education forces us to reflect on the following questions: What is the basic aim of education? Does the educational system aim to create individuals who have internationally recognized knowledge and skills? Does it aim to create men and women who possess talent, skill and broad mindedness -- humble, moral, ideal citizens with a vision of future? Does it aim to create non-violent, honest and brave citizens who will be our future leaders and reformers? Whilst deliberating over these issues we ask ourselves, on behalf of our societies: How many of these qualities are imparted to the students within the present higher educational system? The results of our enquiries sadden us.

Our specific experiences, which stem from the social, cultural, economic, and political situations in which we live, led us to the realization that perceptible differences exist in our understanding of concepts related to higher education. For example, uniformity between universities in Cameroon and France could not be envisaged. However, this does not imply that student or teacher exchanges between such universities is not possible. Those countries, which maintain 'imported' systems of education, must take on the responsibility of adapting these systems in

order to make them suitable for their local cultures and relevant to the particular needs of their communities.

Higher education - as it is now

When we speak of higher education, we are referring not only to academic institutions such as universities, but to the wide range of possibilities that exist now, and that could exist, for people to continue building on their knowledge and experience throughout life. However, due to our experiences as university students, most of the problems that we have noticed and outlined are linked to academic institutions.

With the regional specificities that arose from the regional discussions, we came to the conclusion that it is not possible to have a 'universal' university. Due to the disparities of our countries, we cannot imagine a global educational system, but we can work together towards an educational system that is in harmony with the culture and realities of each community and, at the same time, in contact and dialogue with other communities. In spite of differences in experiences, positions and opinions, four common issues, which were seen by all as being crucial in the improvement of higher education, were identified. Further in-depth discussions were organized along the following themes: ethics, responsibility of students towards the future of education, unity in diversity, and the social contract between society and higher education.

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Through discussions and thematic debates the group highlighted the major problems in the current system of higher education and emerged with propositions for the resolution of these inadequacies.

Quality of Higher Education

Curriculum

In some countries, due to political disturbances, the curriculum of higher education is unstable. In some cases it is not followed at all. Differences also exist between curricula for a particular program within universities/countries.

There exist significant disparities between higher education curricula and social professional realities.

Higher education is, for the most part, theoretically oriented and, in some cases, too general. Lack of practical knowledge creates difficulties for newly graduated students in coping with the realities in the field, as does the lack of specialization in study in some countries.

Lack of pedagogical competence

Many professors are not pedagogically prepared to transmit knowledge effectively and are often focused on research work, which takes up most of their time. Many are therefore incompetent in their teaching and lack initiative.

System of evaluation

There is a lack of objective and transversal evaluation of teachers and students (the system of grading should not be the only way of evaluating students).

Development of courses and orientation

The variety of courses available for students in institutions of higher learning are often not adaptable with the needs and interests of students. There is generally a lack of interdisciplinary courses.

Relevance of research projects

There are few funding agencies, which sponsor research projects in developing countries. But generally, those financed projects are for the benefit of developed countries, rather than for developing countries. These projects also tend to follow fashionable trends in research (for example: genetic engineering), rather than responding to the true research needs of society.

Selection and competition

Because of the intense competition in the system of higher education, many individuals are denied the opportunity to pursue their studies.

Free thinking of students

There is a lack of possibilities in some countries for students to express their wishes and desires about the courses they follow.

Lack of ethics

The current system of higher education is entirely lacking the ethics to develop citizens with such issues as self respect, morality, responsibility and professional ethics. The main reasons are over-involvement of governments in educational systems, corruption, and lack of enthusiasm and motivation on the part of teachers. As a result, the system cannot develop responsible, well-rounded citizens.

Financial and materials means

Lack of infrastructure and equipment;
Lack of money for more professional training of teachers;
Inadequate planning between needs and means;
Expensive education

Due to financial limitations, many higher education institutions have inadequate infrastructures (laboratories, libraries, office space) and lack well qualified teachers. Government decisions with regards to higher education do not always take into consideration the needs of the society as a whole. Furthermore, higher education is becoming increasingly expensive, thus making it out of reach for the common masses, leading to increasing social divisions within certain societies.

Lack of scholarships, internships and exchange

Financial support for scholarships, internships and exchange is inadequate, thus limiting the possibilities for those interested in furthering their education and, in some cases, excluding them from the system entirely.

Institutional involvement in higher education

Improper allocation of budgets

Higher education is incredibly low on the list of priorities of many governments and the disparity between the allocation of educational budgets and other sectors, such as military and diplomatic expenses is of stark significance.

Over involvement in university academic system

In many developing countries, students are censored and prohibited from involvement in associations and unions, thus denying them their basic right to free speech. Unacceptable involvement, infiltration and politicization of institutions of higher education by governments and political parties and direct military intervention on campuses is common.

Involvement of foreign funding bodies in higher education system

Although it may appear as generosity, the involvement of foreign funding agencies hinders the development of local human resources, particularly if the assistance exists merely in the form of qualified personnel from developing countries being sent to the recipient nations.

Control of higher education by companies

Multi-nationals and other companies providing funding for higher education has an effect, not only on what is taught, but also on the research, which is undertaken. Higher education institutions are losing their autonomy to this private economic sector.

International cooperation

Technology transfer

The transfer of technology between countries has led to an over-reliance on foreign know-how in many countries, coupled with a lack of innovation on the part of the recipient countries.

Equivalence of qualifications

Academically similar qualifications of some countries are not consistently accepted as such by other educational institutions and employers.

Exchanges of students, teachers and experiences

Due to both political and religious reasons there is a lack of exchanges of teachers, students and their experiences between universities at the international level. This lack is even more pronounced between universities in developing countries and those from developed countries.

University and Society

Higher education institutions tend to exist in an autistic world. There appears to be no real link between society and institutions of higher education with regard to the real world. Little or no effort is made to forge links between higher education institutions and the communities in which they exist.

There is a perception within society at large that students are a burden. There is a lack of positive status for students, although they bring positive contributions to society during and after their studies.

Student responsibility in building the society of the future

Many students, within some particular educational systems, focus so much on gathering professional knowledge during their studies that they find themselves almost completely removed from society and unable to face the challenges of the real work world upon graduation. This 'student autism' also leads to apathy with regards to problems of society and thus affects their reactions to them..

Maintaining unity in diversity

The idea of maintaining unity in diversity in the field of higher education is perhaps the most difficult issue to tackle. Foreign structures of higher education, which have been adopted by various countries, have proved inadequate or unsuitable for local situations. It is however positive that the whole idea of cooperation between countries in the field of higher education remains important. The idea of evaluation therefore becomes of primary importance in this field. The international system would have to re-examine its methods of evaluation. This system would have to include the major tenets, which are required for the approval of the standards attained by individuals from these institutions of higher learning within the various countries. We therefore propose that countries, while pursuing this, do the following:

Strategies for change on higher education

Quality of higher education

Curriculum

Some subjects should be common to particular courses of study and the *quality* of curriculum should be equivalent between countries. Curriculum itself should be set according to the particular context of each country. Once curricula are managed comparably in different countries then the question of equivalence between countries will be easier to tackle.

Relationships between students, teachers and community must be strengthened and consolidated. Practical experience should be increasingly provided for students, integrated into theoretical teaching and link directly to the realities of the society of work.

Lack of pedagogical competence

Further and more comprehensive investment in the pedagogical training of teachers is essential. Academic institutions must recognize the importance and impact of teaching, and place as much value on this means of learning as it does on research. Teachers must be given more “freedom” to decide the balance with which they can handle their teaching and research requirements – research must not be seen to be the only valuable exercise in higher education.

System of evaluation

Create a clear-cut system in which students and teachers know what is expected of them, and have the opportunity to mutual evaluate their work.

Development of courses and orientation

Increase the participation of students and civil society in university councils so that they may take part in the process of course planning.

Better orientation must be developed for those entering higher education, so that they may be better informed about the variety of options available to them in the pursue of their higher education. Also, higher education programs could begin with a first year of very general and practical studies for orientation and civil education.

Relevance of research projects

Research must be useful and available to the community. Communities must benefit from the universities' activities.

Selection and competition

Promote an attitude of sharing of experience and advancing together (rather than one of competition) with mutual respect for other people, environment, and local traditions and culture.

Some alternative means of selection must be created – we could imagine the inversion of the curriculum, where programs begin with more practical training leading to a first degree and then, for those who want to increase their knowledge, continued theoretic studies.

Freethinking of students

We should promote the improvement of students' right to express themselves freely with regards to the content and format of curriculum. There is a grave lack of this type of freedom in some countries.

Lack of Ethics

Every innovation brings with it the need for a control. In the case of ethics, individual universities currently have their own separate definitions of what this means. There are no guarantees that the control be done effectively, as it is carried out by the institutions themselves. As each community defines ethics according to its own cultural reality, there are multiple definitions of ethics. Therefore, a uniform, international definition of ethics is not the objective. In some southern countries, where instability and corruption are common, the definition of ethics robs the word of its meaning.

Part I: Ethics of education:

The ethics of education is the ethics of life. A crucial part of people's education lies in the ability to form one's own code of ethics, a code of values for guiding people's choices and actions, which determine the purpose and course of their lives. An education is only valid if it includes this opportunity for learners to develop themselves morally.

Part II: Ethics of the subject they study:

A student must choose his/her subject of studies, which he or she is interested in and values. One should choose and study a subject that one knows that he/she is going to use as his/her profession. One should master the subject at the completion of his/her studies.

Part III: The professional aspect of the subject:

For the degree of the professional aspect of the subject, one should be trained to the practical aspects of the subject.

Financial and material means

Provide infrastructure and equipment for institutions of higher education and for schools in general. (This problem is of most urgency in developing countries.) Put more emphasis on the professional pedagogical training of teachers. Plan management in such a way as to strive for a balance between the needs and means of the educational institution.

Encourage and promote income-generating projects by universities. Release funds from other areas (such as defense) and invests them in higher education. If funding is being given to undertake research, a percentage of that should be given every year to undertake not for profit research.

For individuals with financial problems, governments and institutions of higher education should study their cases particularly in order that they have lower fees and therefore have the possibility to study. Education in general and higher education in particular must be accessible for all.

Institutional involvement in higher education

Improper allocation of budgets/How to finance higher education

In African and Asian countries, the main actors are the government, international bodies and the local private sector. As education is the most important aspect of the development of a country, these sectors should give more importance in terms of budget to the fields of general education and higher education.

Over involvement in the university academic system

Higher education institutions should be separate from governmental institutions.

Involvement of foreign funding bodies in higher education system

Accepting the fact that financial investment by industry can be beneficial, the autonomy of academic institutions must be maintained. In addition, research and teachings supported by private companies must be continually monitored and evaluated in order to assess its impact on society on local and global communities.

International cooperation

Transfer of technology

Developing countries should not become overly dependent on the transfer of technology but should encourage local societies to develop local knowledge and relevant technologies. Possibilities should be given both in terms of means and in materials for local researchers to adapt these local technologies for the purpose of the sustainable development of their communities.

In terms of industry, we should promote training in local communities so that people will be able to use and to maintain industrial materials rather than having to spend money to bring specialist technicians from abroad.

Equivalency of qualifications

Students holding degrees from higher education institutions must be recognized on an equal basis, regardless of the country in which they studied. Higher education institutions should not be regarded as institutions to solve social problems. The issue of equivalence is a manifestation of more deeply rooted problems relating to immigration. Equal chances for quality education must be promoted everywhere in terms of quality of researching, materials and information.

Exchanges of students, teachers and experiences

We should promote the exchanges of students, teachers and experiences on the three levels : between developing countries and developed countries and within both developed and developing countries.

University and Society

Higher education should have the following relationship with society:

Impart past knowledge and experience and continuously build on it by creating opportunities for society to move forward in new and creative directions.

Help individuals to take the knowledge and experience they have to another level, in a way which suits their needs and which contributes to the society in which they live.

Encourage and develop diverse forms of learning and place equal value on all methods.

Recognize that education is not limited to academic learning and that it is a life-long process.

Develop ways for learners to gain relevant practical knowledge within society, for the benefit of society. (for example, in NGOs, industry, agriculture, politics etc).

Encourage the development of well-rounded people who are motivated to take their place as responsible citizens in local and global society.

Student responsibility for building the society of the future

It must be clearly specified what does society want from the higher education and what higher education can do for society. Students must be aware of their civic rights and be capable to react on what is going on in their society. By introducing to students both their student rights within institutions of higher education and their rights as citizens it is possible to increase their interest in social life and improve building of responsibility.

Unity and diversity

As this point is the most difficult issue, we must take the time to reflect on ways in which unity and diversity can be integral aspect of higher education.

Through continuing discussions and actions, the Youth Workshop encourages the integration of this concept into our work and daily relations.

Conclusion

The experience of bringing together a group of young people from diverse backgrounds who share concerns about the directions that higher education is taking led us to a significant realization. An informal international process is needed in order to pursue our debate and reflection on this vital issue and to exchange information on our different realities and perspectives..

We believe that education must respond to the needs and expectations of both local communities and society as a whole. Society is continually changing and evolving and educational systems must follow this dynamic. In order to correspond with an appropriate code of ethics, education must stem both from local knowledge and local wisdom. It must be holistic in nature, tackling all aspects of human life, not simply imparting academic knowledge from teacher to student.

All of the stakeholders of the educational system must continually reflect on the Inadequacies that exist in the system and on the methods by which they can be overcome. The Youth Workshop intends to remain a part of this reflection.

IV. YOUTH AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Introduction

We have been witness to unprecedented and fundamental political and socio-economic transformation in the last century. From the vantage point of many, despite significant progress everywhere, the new world order of the twenty first century is a highly contested world order. It

is an ordering of the world marked by wide national and international inequities, socio-economic gaps and an all round assertion of identities of all sorts. It is also a highly turbulent world order with violence and conflict erupting in all areas of life and across regions. Ensuring human and state security in such a scenario is a tough ask. These challenges in the very first instance mean that the quest for a new peaceful and just world order would not merely put to a very tough test our ability to deal with these myriad conflicts which are exploding everywhere in an increasingly interdependent world but would be crucial in determining the future of the planet.

Defined broadly, conflict occurs in all areas of life and in all regions of the world. Conflict covers a vast spectrum and may take on a vast range of forms, from intensive armed conflict between countries and regions to neighbourhood disputes. Armed conflict takes an enormous toll on all involved - both armed forces and civilians and especially young people. Even in the absence of declared warfare, social conflict can be just as destructive as any war. Young people are among the most severely affected by these developments. Youth are confronted with a paradox: to seek to be integrated in to an existing order or to serve as a force to transform that order. It is incumbent on them to turn into active peacemakers and peer mediators that take action on issues that concern them most. The youth have always been highlighting and affirming their responsibilities for dealing positively with conflict and working together to build a peaceful world. We need to build on and encourage further this process of empowerment of the youth.

The forms, locations and consequences of conflict are constantly changing. So are the solutions required to resolve and prevent conflict: managing conflict or dealing with its consequences involves finding methods that are culturally appropriate, and adapted to the dynamics of the conflict situation.

In this brief write up, we present illustrative instances of conflict and also some responses.

Faith and Fanaticism

Defined broadly, Faith and Fanaticism refer to conflicting choices confronting us today referring not merely to issues of religious fanaticism but going beyond it to include mindless materialistic pursuits and intolerance of all kinds including those based on notions of exclusive identities.

We discussed how fanaticism or extremities in belief have taken strong roots in our multicultural societies. The forms have varied from religious fanaticism to aggressive displays of separate identities to gender issues and caste conflicts. No matter what the forms it takes, the effect is a pattern of behaviour with aggressive displays of violence, intolerance and overzealous impositions.

Faith, it was reiterated, was a strong personal belief, practised without imposition on others and has a rational, beneficial social premise. Fanaticism of the kind seen in the third world countries since the past couple of decades has nothing to do with faith. It has to do with instrumental use of religion. As vulnerable youth, we are more often at the receiving end of such extremist influences.

The working group on Faith and Fanaticism recognised that fanaticism was a result of a multitude of motivations and was unequivocal in denouncing all kind of extremist tendencies, be it religious, gender based, caste induced or due to political parochialism. The extent to which

one goes to forcefully propagate the tenets amounted to a misinterpretation of the scope of religion. The youth forum recognised this frenzy as a misinformation campaign by vested interests.

Some saw fanaticism as a result of abject poverty and illiteracy of the masses making them pliant tools of political manipulation by power hungry politicians and religious leaders. It was said that fanaticism also fed on the spiritual vacuum, which the middle classes in the Asian countries are enveloped with because of their unthinking materialistic pursuits.

The group further situated the issue and explored the linkages of fanaticism with identity crises, greed for power and social and economic inequities.

To counter this abhorrent culture, the impressionable young need to be sensitised to a range of problem solving measures attacking fanaticism with seriousness.

Strategic Initiatives for change

Some suggestions ranged from dissemination of information on multi faiths in the school curriculum and outside it to inter-religious dialogues while building a middle ground and a buffer between fanatical groups. This would lead to a conscious open-ended exploration of the very meaning of faith and its contextual relevance in our personal life.

Organising protests against fanaticism through media channels, stickers, art, wall writings to arouse public consciousness.

Creating spaces for exchange of creative energies through the media of paintings, music, theatre for spreading awareness of the true meaning and nature of religion and establishing mutual trust between different communities.

Highlighting the vulnerability of the youth to the appeals of fanatic groups through innovative media channels.

Eradication of poverty and economic desperation through programmes of self help groups and promotion of cottage and small scale industries.

A serious relook at expanding the domains of the current educational system by organising alternative workshops and seminars, multicultural camps which lead to an informed understanding of various cultural practices.

Promoting individual methods of attaining inner peace and harmony through meditation and other spiritual practices.

Forming pressure groups for lobbying against communal biases in government policies and ensuring participation and affording equality of opportunities to all.

Education: Formal schooling - including in the curriculum information on other religions, peoples, cultures, traditions and customs and at the same time fostering a sense of peaceful, rich diversity.

Alternative or social education – giving young people the opportunity to interact in an intercultural environment from an early age ideally, but also later, to encourage respect for and understanding of difference.

Exchange: In the Asian context where many examples of fanaticism are along religious lines one strategy for change is to multiply the opportunities for encourage inter-religious exchange. For example sympathetic leaders of different faiths may be encouraged to meet on an important festival day.

Media: Independent, and international, media channels need to be created so youth have the opportunity to express themselves, exchange their stories and opinions on issues that affect them. Well defined media policies for young peoples media initiatives are important to set clear messages for young people to send to the wider society about their own responsibility and willingness to take action on the problems they see in society. These media initiatives can create a positive, alternative to the stereotype of young people who are frivolous and interested primarily in fashion and consumer lifestyles.

Spaces for Exchange: The organisation of meetings and social discussion groups to allow young people to share and learn together AND to begin really to listen to each other.

Art: Through artistic expression, we could attract more young people for discuss and start dialogue on relevant issues. We think especially about street theatre and to raise consciousness and awareness through social songs.

These are all examples of useful strategies young people can use to help halt the forces of fanaticism. However for a real change, removing barriers of mistrust is essential at all levels of society. Young people need opportunities to gather and see a common goal of creating a positive, sustainable and united future. This is the importance of faith in a vision that a better future is possible and achievable.

Can we make a community of young people who are conscious of political and religious manipulation, aware of the issues and the need to act and who make a conscious decision to reject conflict and violence and work for change?

Youth in Conflict

Armed Conflict

The Issue and its impact

People in many communities live with the consequences of landmines and small arms proliferation as well as the larger-scale trade in arms. They are faced with the psychological effects of armed conflict on young people; these often last long after the conflict is over.

Even after end of WWII armed conflict still consumes families, countries and regions. It consumes them in every way: it consumes people, their physical and mental health, it consumes resources, the environment, jobs, welfare and hope. If it does not take them away, armed

conflict destroys young people's lives. Youths can be the instigators of armed conflict. But they are also its victims. Herbert Hoover said, "Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight and die". For instance in Rwanda, it was observed, "Rwanda has been a symbol of Human Tragedy. The youths were the main perpetrators of Genocide that claimed over 1 million lives but they were not the authors of this genocide."

In the last ten years the nature of war has changed. Civil, internal war now dominates. No longer do the armies of states fight the armies of other states on battlefields. War is now fought between and among civilians. Consequently women, children, the elderly and other non-combatants now outnumber military casualties by 10 to one.

According to one estimate, armed conflict has claimed 187,000,000 lives this century. Wars have been fought to further the political ambition of leaders, acquire 'living space' for expansionist nations, to acquire resources and to further political ideologies. Wars have been fought for freedom from the strong but also to oppress the weak.

Recruitment of Child Soldiers

One of the issues brought to the fore on armed conflict has been the involvement and recruitment of child soldiers. The International Convention on the Rights of the Child states that human beings under the age of 18 should not be directly involved in armed conflict unless the legislation of the States involved dictates otherwise. It is important to make the distinction between those involved voluntarily, particularly those over the age of 18, and those involved through forced recruitment. It has been estimated that, "At least 300 000 children under the age of 18 are currently fighting and dying in 36 armed conflicts in various African countries, across Asia and in parts of Europe and South America."

Many children are forced to become soldiers or participants in armed conflict. Forced recruitment includes abduction, coercion and intimidation. Other young people choose to participate in armed conflict, on a 'voluntary' basis. However, the term 'voluntary' can be misleading. Often young people are compelled to participate in armed conflict through individual hunger and poverty or through family economic strains. Governmental repression also has an effect.

According to the International Coalition against Child Soldiers, "the single major reason for children volunteering to join armed opposition groups is their personal experience of ill treatment by government armed forces".

Armed conflict can be cyclical: when conflicts persist, economic situations suffer, impacting on the number of educational opportunities for young people, leading to recruits becoming younger and younger. Other reasons why young people voluntarily enrol in armed conflict include religious/ideological, social/community or family reasons, peer pressure and revenge (see also the section on 'The Role of the Media/Information', below.)

The effect that becoming a soldier will have on the young person will largely depend upon the country and army in which he or she is enlisting. It has been reported that in some conflicts, youths are plied with drugs before combat, to increase their fearlessness.

Whatever the effect, it is always difficult for young people who have participated in and witnessed armed conflict to re-integrate into their communities. Young people may have difficulty disengaging from violence as a legitimate activity or means of resolving conflict. They often have difficulty acknowledging the part that young people played in the conflict and establishing an environment that fosters health, dignity and respect. And it is difficult to normalise the lives of past combatants- particularly by providing them with educational and employment opportunities.

It is important to note the different reasons why young people became soldiers and to incorporate this into reintegration strategies.

Small Arms

Small arms abuse causes violent death, injury, and psychological trauma to hundreds of thousands of people each year. These casualties occur in the context of national and regional conflicts (each with its own political, economic, social, religious and ethnic dimensions and expressions) as well as in abusive law enforcement practices, violent repression of democratic rights and violations of the right to self determination. The easy availability of small arms is also directly linked to the increase in violent crime, domestic assaults, suicides, and accidents. In the context of political conflict, small arms help fuel violence and insecurity which breeds the sort of fear and instability which has led to the existence of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. Many of these human-made tragedies could be prevented by controlling access to and availability of small arms - domestically and internationally - within the broader framework of measures to tackle the root causes of conflict.

While nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are covered by international treaties which aim to prevent their proliferation, small arms trade is ignored by most international law and trade is largely unmonitored. A combination of factors has led the recent proliferation of small arms. For example the breakup of the USSR led to the release onto the international market of inexpensive Soviet-made weapons as former Warsaw Pact countries disposed of old weaponry in order to make the new weaponry NATO compatible. The combination of cheapness and easy availability has led to non-government groups being able to acquire weapons they previously did not have access to, increasing the mortality and seriousness of internal wars between factions, tribes and non-governmental groups.

Strategic Initiatives for Change

Role of the Youth

The youth are involved essentially in three areas: conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post conflict peace building. Our strategic targets for *conflict prevention* included members of our communities, the law-makers, law enforcers and magistrates, judges and juries, the power holders in our countries, including members of government and other political parties, and powerful organisations with global reach, such as the IMF and World Bank. Our major concern in *conflict resolution* is that the approaches used should not lead to mediated outcomes which cannot be put into practice because these are likely to be the basis for future conflict. Ideally, the approaches should take into account the cultural approaches to mediation of conflict in the region and work with traditional and modern methods to reach a mediated settlement. In post conflict *peacebuilding*, we need to establish sound relationships with the media and to

encourage the acceptance of high standards of journalistic practice, which include independence and freedom of expression.

We will prevent conflict by sharing information on the production, distribution, circulation and effects of small arms and landmines in our regions. This information is not necessarily easily available and we will have to do some research. We will use this information to lobby governments, arms-producers and people bearing arms.

We will also target people in our own countries and regions and in arms-producing countries who are not aware of the trade in small arms and its devastating effects. We will encourage people to learn more about the International Campaign against Landmines and to take part in campaign activities.

We will resolve conflict by actively supporting the revival of traditional methods of conflict resolution. We will assemble best practice principles for international relief agencies in emergency and conflict situations.

We will act as a pressure group to lobby to have these principles adopted by these agencies. We will play an active role in post conflict peace building in several ways.

We are committed to sharing our experiences, so that these can be used as a resource in other communities, and to exchanging practical approaches to peace education to promote reconciliation.

Where we can, we will work together within our regions. For example, the National Student Council for Peace and the Pastoralist Peace and Development Initiative in Kenya will work to support the establishment of the Madagascar Youth Peace Committee. And in Southeastern Europe, we will convene a Youth Parliament to continue action at the grass roots among young people who have already committed themselves to peace- building and developing civil society. In Central Asia, we will establish a peace education network for orphans and young unemployed people.

Practical help and support is important for communities recently involved in conflicts and some of us will lobby for the establishment of trauma counselling centres in our regions, operated by appropriately trained staff.

Some Individual actions plans:

Initiate the facilitation of dialogue and seminars on legal issues and human rights between Georgian IDP's and Abkhasian youth. (Georgia)

Work to establish a provincial youth parliament in a province of Kenya to empower young people from a minority group. (Kenya)

Render community and organisational support to victims of torture and will fight the resurgence of child slavery (Nigeria)

Take part in a day of action education on 12 December to support urban street children. We will organise a children's hour where people will donate their pay for one hour's paid work to raise money for a youth worker to teach numeracy skills. (Sudan)

Create a set of guidelines for youth activism which can be shared with young people in schools and colleges. The focus will be on Action for Empowerment, because many young people in my country say that their ignorance comes from not knowing how to help. (Bosnia)

Take the idea of "action" which I learned at IYP to my classmates, friends and student club members and raise their social awareness. (Taiwan)

Establish an NGO focused on youth which will deal with main concerns of youth with a view to reconciliation and social justice, peace building and (future) conflict prevention (Bosnia)

Follow up the international campaign "SOS Child Soldier" at a national level (Madagascar)

Establish an AIDS awareness campaign because young people in armed conflict are the most likely to be affected by HIV/AIDS. (Eritrea)

Instances of Conflict Prevention and Peace Building

"I am working and will continue to work on making my peers understand that the story about how a 'decade of war and insecurity in the region of the Balkans made the situation in our country beyond repair' is just a story". (Tamara Trbojevic, IYP2000 Delegate from Bosnia-Herzegovina)

"People who had been subjected to the ideology of hate and segregation have not changed because of change of power (by use of a barrel of a gun) ... the best that can be done is to make sure that their ideology is not passed on to the young or disseminated". (Frank Mukama Tanzi, ITP Delegate from Rwanda)

Conflict prevention and peace building are mutually reinforcing. What happens in the aftermath of one armed crisis is instrumental in determining the existence of another conflict later in time. The crushing terms of the Treaty of Versailles after WWI is said to have led to the rise of Nazi fascism in Germany which led to WWII. Conversely, lack of accountability and justice for perpetrators of war leads to simmering resentment which can be rekindled into more conflict.

Conflict prevention takes place in many environments, from the home as children are taught tolerance and in schools when interpersonal conflicts are resolved non-violently and acceptance and understanding applauded. For example, Nabi Ragimov, the IYP2000 delegate from Azerbaijan, works with youths and children at the Humanitarian Centre "Yuva" in Baku, teaching interpersonal conflict resolution.

Conflict prevention also takes place between protagonists in crisis situations and mediators, either from within the conflict or externally such as the NATO and EU negotiators in the Former Yugoslavia and North American senators in North Ireland.

Many grassroots efforts at peace building focus on interaction and conversing with those people considered different. Conducting open debates to exchange views between people of different

ethnic and political orientations to find commonality and compromise. For example, IYP2000 delegate from Israel, Barak Turovsky, works with Human Rights and Peace groups in the National Union of Israel Students, which promote exchanges and ideas between Palestinians and Israelis.

The key hub for action against the proliferation of small arms is the International Action Network on Small Arms. You may wish to participate in or endorse the campaigns of that Network. The Center for International Security and Arms Control, (CISAC), based at Stanford University, currently hosts a research project entitled 'Conflict and Conflict Resolution Within and Between States'. It also provides an index of publications with abstracts.

The Role of the Media/Information

Young people's participation in armed conflict is often related to their understanding of the causes of the conflict. All sides to armed conflict tend to present their own interpretation of events, and control of information is often an important aspect of strategy within the conflict itself.

Access to information technology provides a way for young people to find out information about the conflict they are surrounded by. But access to the media can also give people a powerful weapon in changing the course of armed conflict. As Signe Svensson, an IYP2000 delegate from Sweden puts it: "Media and society plays a large role in the conflicts of today. Some people even claim that most important battles are not fought at the battlefields, it is fought in peoples home, using television, news-papers or Internet instead of hangar ships and bomb planes."

Goran Mitrovic, an IYP2000 delegate from Serbia, describes the impact that access to the means to distribute information can have, and how NGOs can change the course of armed conflict: "Mr Ivan Novkovic (former Parliament President), a technician of the Leskovac television station, broadcast, in the halftime of the basketball match, a prepared message calling for the resignation of local and state authorities. This happened on 1 July 1999, and on 5 July there were 20 000 people (Leskovac is city of 80 000 citizens) in the streets of Leskovac. The protests of citizens lasted for 44 days".

Young people tend not to control guns and military tools. But through access to the media, they have a powerful weapon to shape the course of conflict. There are a number of actions you might want to take to assist in this way. For example, you could start a media project giving young people access to media. This can take numerous forms, from a radio station, to a newspaper, to a newsletter, to press releases, to posters, to stickers, to mobile solar-powered telephones that travel from village to village, allowing isolated communities to communicate with each other.

Young people's participation in armed conflict is often related to the information they have been presented with by ideological, political, ethnic, social, familial, religious and other groups. This lack of other information can lead to young people taking up arms and supporting ongoing violence. Information technology can provide a cheap and effective way for young people to access other information.

On the other hand, young people can play an important role in disseminating information that other people would not otherwise receive.

Indika Perera, an IYP2000 delegate, works with the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, which runs workshops at the grassroots level with community leaders and peace activists. "In addition to these workshops", he describes, "peace education is provided to people on a mass scale through high visibility and high impact multi-media campaigns, utilising television, radio, newspapers and wall posters which have supported the peace process and opposed the use of violence at crucial moments and by the issue of press releases and the NPC's own newsletter."

A lack of information can be especially destructive when it occurs among decision-makers. As Indika describes: "Many young politicians who have been through our workshops now see the conflict in a different way." Ensuring that information gets to young decision-makers and opinion-leaders can play a crucial role in resolving conflict. You can take action to ensure that decision-makers in your local area get accurate information about the nature of the conflict. For example, you could initiate information campaigns targeted at decision-makers, providing historical information about the conflict. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch can both provide highly accurate information. You could also run workshops for young decision-makers and leaders providing information to them about the causes and effects of the conflicts, and on conflict resolution skills and techniques.

Lack of access to information can also have drastic effects in the middle of armed conflict. Not knowing where your family is can undermine young people's mental and physical health, and can threaten their livelihoods and lives. Lack of information about the economy, and the effect of armed conflict can make financial planning extremely difficult, creating huge risks for young people trying to earn money. Even the most secure jobs become insecure.

There are a number of ways in which you can help young people to overcome these effects of armed conflict. You can seek assistance from the Red Cross and UNHCR in tracing and communicating the location of family members. Alternatively, organise your own programme helping family members to trace each other. You could set up a website allowing people to follow events in the armed conflict, and perhaps providing links to other sources of information on the conflict.

Summary of potential pathways for action

The following strategies have been compiled by members of the IYP2000 Agenda team from ideas presented by delegates in their applications and from other research. They are strategies that you may wish to adopt individually or as a working group. They are only intended as suggestions: we hope that they will broaden rather than narrow the range of possible actions that you and your working group might take.

- Lobby governments to stop the practice of recruiting children under the age of 18 into the armed forces, and to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour;

- Organise workshops and programmes to help child soldiers re-integrate into the community;

- Actively support international campaigns to prevent the use of child soldiers, such as the International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, or the US Campaign to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers;

Conduct open debates to exchange views between people of different ethnic and political orientations;

Participate in, and endorse the campaigns of, the International Action Network on Small Arms;

Support, and assist others in accessing, the services of organisations that trace and communicate the location of family members (such as Red Cross and UNHCR); or establish similar regional services via a website.

Reflections on Role of the Youth in Ireland, Palestine and Israel

Ireland (Graine Kelly)

It is my belief, however, that by focusing on the much repeated phrase - 'think global, act local'- young people have the ability to affect change within their own communities and societies and, in doing so, will also influence and shape events and issues at global levels, which they may not even have considered to be within their powers. Constantly reminding people of the need to made small changes, which can feed into a bigger picture, is an important role which we must undertake to encourage and support in the new generations which are constantly emerging. There are two main issues which young people must occupy themselves with. What can we do to improve their own position in society? What can we do to improve society as a whole in order to secure our futures and the futures of our children? The on-going challenge for those of us working in deeply divided and conflictual societies, is to encourage and instil in young people a sense of their own worth and ability to instigate change in their own vicinity, and to reach out to other communities, so that they may be enriched by the diversity of that exchange, rather than threatened by the new experiences which this brings.

Arab Youth (Nadem Nashef)

The Arab peoples are generally conservative, religious and weakened – before the international stage, much like all other 'third-world' peoples. The youth within such societies live the challenge of globalization, a challenge between old and new; the value of the past and the values of the present; the value of preserving one's cultural identity through isolationism and not mixing with any other cultures, or undergoing total assimilation. This, in the internet age and the mixing of cultures and the age of the global village – in shot – globalization which is fundamentally Western, or more precisely American. This challenge is not easy – it is in fact very difficult.

A section of youth in the Arab world lean towards total cultural isolationism, particularly those in religious movements, surrounding themselves in Arab-Islamic culture, rejecting any other civilization or culture, viewing it as incompatible with religion. From that point of view, it's easy to see how this, in extreme cases, can turn into violence against other peoples.

Another section desire complete assimilation into Western culture, and in fact they flee from challenging the reality they live in, or more – for they deny their roots, their cultural, national and religious identity. This has roots in a certain problem – the absence of critical thought in Arab society (and in other societies) – that is, accepting our heritage, civilization and Arab

identity with critical thought; accepting the good in it and being critical of its negatives; simultaneously having a critical view towards global culture – Western culture.

Here the role of NGO's, youth participation and training on the establishment of liberal democratic thought, on accepting others and those different from us, not closing the doors or engaging in cultural isolation; at the same time respecting the point of differences between cultures and societies, and freedom of belief.

Also, we must note here that global culture is Western culture or specifically American culture and it imposes and dominates over all other cultures, which cannot breathing space for its own natural change and development. In other words, the way in which the West, or in particular America, rules and imposes over the world, economically, politically, militarily, now, as a force of globalism, also forcefully imposes itself culturally – and therein is a danger we must be aware of.

Palestinian Youth in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are like any other Arab or 'third world' grouping, battling between cultures. However, they face specific problems. Palestinians have lived under various sorts of occupation and oppression for 53 years. They have suffered massive population transfers and massacres in 1948. Through the past 53 years, they have been prevented from developing naturally – culturally, economically and socially. The Palestinian people – including Palestinian youth – have been greatly affected by this. Many Palestinian youths have participated from a young age in national liberation movements, and many have been imprisoned tortured and even killed for years.

Palestinian youth today are paying the price of a people resisting Israeli occupation in all forms, including the following examples:

1. The right to Life: Since the beginning of the Intifada, the occupation army has killed more than 150 children under the age of 18, and thousands have been injured by live bullets;
2. The right to Education; As a result of the closures and shelling, many are unable to reach schools, colleges and universities, and in some cases, learning institutions have closed because they have been appropriated as military sites for the occupying army;
3. Freedom of Movement: All Palestinian cities and villages have become embargoed and entering and existing without special permission is forbidden.

As you can see, we are discussing the most basic human rights which the State of Israel is denying – and when these fundamental rights are denied, it is difficult to talk about any other matter.

Baladna – the Association of Arab Youth, strive in the shade of this situation to help Palestinian youth however much we can by way of:

Financial assistance to children and youth in need by way of collecting donations and delivering aid trucks;

The pen and notebook project for needy Palestinian school children;

Working to raise awareness about the oppression of Palestinian people by way of solidarity cards, made by Palestinian children and other activities

It is important for NGO's, particularly youth NGO's to take a position, a stance on what's happening in the world today. NGO's should work in solidarity with oppressed people, people living under occupation who have not tasted freedom or democracy.

Palestinian Youth in Israel

As for Palestinian youth inside Israel, they also face oppression and racial discrimination before Government structures, and in all walks of life, despite being 'citizens.' I would like to give the example of education:

For every 10 shekels the State invests into a Jewish child's education, an Arab Palestinian child receives less than 1 shekel;

The State forbids the Palestinian minority from meaning about the history of their people or their poets, or literature. Meanwhile, internal security apparatus supervises education in Arab schools

What we are attempting to do here in ***Baladna*** is to allow youth access to what the State has forbidden, and to give opportunities to youth to know the history of their own people, the issues they face and to critically debate them. We work to fulfill the needs of youth through non-government channels.

V. GOVERNANCE

Governance consists of the value systems, institutions and social entities, rules, processes, whereby societies, from the local to the global level, regulate human activities within their fold, and their interactions with other societies and their environment, whilst maintaining their coexistence and facilitating their interdependence.

We do not claim here to be speaking on behalf of the "world youth" but rather attempting to reflect the views and experiences of the many young people throughout the world who have closely participated in the activities and reflection of the Youth Workshop. This is the group we hereafter simplistically refer to as "the youth".

Features of a new governance

Innovating and promoting social change often rest on breaking away from existing, taken for granted, systems, behaviours and processes, shifting our systems of representations. It is thus revealing to highlight a number of characteristics featured by youth in their views and actions. They do these "spontaneously" or find them "natural", whilst they constitute a break away from the previous generations and may be key elements in the renewal of governance:

Taking Responsibility

* **Awareness of the situation:** the youth are particularly aware of the many challenges facing them, of the complexity and acuity of issues in today's and tomorrow's world. They are not

satisfied with the existing (political, economic, social) systems which have proved inflexible and at times, harmful, for individuals, for societies and for the preservation of the planet.

* **Need for systemic change:** faced with this situation, they see the need to facilitate a dramatic change in our value system and in our ways of regulating human activities and satisfying human needs. They want to innovate, be creative and to refashion jointly relations between human beings and relations between humans and nature. They are aware that in their time they will not just inherit and "maintain" the world as it is but will have to operate and facilitate major mutations which will improve the situation for future generations.

* **Taking responsibility:** Young people are ready to take charge of the world as it is and to take responsibility for changing it. They are well aware of their responsibility in taking such steps, of the need for them to carefully assess the impact of their actions not only on their society but also on the world at large and on the planet. Their exercise of responsibility is therefore informed by the **principles of precaution and sustainability**.

* **Being enthusiastic and able:** Determined in changing the world, they do so with hope and confidence, inspired by their dreams and visions of a better future. Through their actions and commitments, they have already started to prove that they have boundless energy, enthusiasm and ability to change things. Given the scope and complexity of what they have to achieve, they remain however aware of the difficulties facing them and of the time it will take. They trust and are happy to receive support and guidance, in particular from older generations.

Values

The responsibility felt and endorsed by youth is based on a number of key values, asserted and enacted at all levels.

* **Asserting and Enacting Values:** Because they feel so strongly that part of the change that is needed concerns value systems, because they are seeking meaning for themselves and their communities, the youth carefully "review" and consider their values and what is being passed on to them. They feel a right to review and to assert for themselves what are key values. An important question which they prioritise is the place of money and the impact of consumerism as well as the impact on the planet as a whole. Moreover, as a result of this process, their actions and visions for change have a strong, and often explicit, ethical base.

* **From self-transformation to global change:** for the youth, asserting and enacting values in one's personal and professional life is a necessary basis for changing one's relation to others and beyond to society at large. There is a strong linkage from self-transformation to societal transformation: whether it is waste recycling, sharing knowledge or being tolerant, individual behaviours and actions impact on collective ones and may further broader social change.

- Amongst the **key values** they put forward are : humanity (as both the feeling of belonging to the human community and the feeling of fraternity and warmth), responsibility, solidarity, openness and tolerance, justice, hope and confidence, enthusiasm & energy, sharing exchange and co-operation, inclusion, mutual learning and respect, sensibility, creativity.

Reshaping Citizenship

By endorsing responsibility and enacting their values, the youth are redefining the content and meaning of citizenship. This new citizenship may be defined as open, participatory, responsible, aware, enacted at various levels (local national, continental, global), inclusive and united.

* **Open:** youth citizenship is essentially open, multiform. Many youth have a multicultural citizenship as they come from or are familiar with various cultures. But beyond that, the youth show their ability to endorse various identities, diverse social roles, to make use of several (linguistic or social) languages and to be at ease and at home with this diversity. They have thus started facing and resolving for and through themselves the tension between unity and diversity facing our societies.

* **Participatory:** taking steps to change things around them, mostly through their social and cultural actions, youth have reasserted the importance of individual and collective participation in the life of the city, to define issues, elaborate and implement actions, review and assess their impact. Participation is about encouraging people to voice their own issues and concerns and shape possible solutions; it is a bridge between individual needs, visions and desires and collective existence, projects and good. By taking responsibility, being active and participatory, youth re-appropriating politics, beyond representative forms of democracy.

* **Aware and informed:** in their life and through their actions, youth conceive of learning as a life-long process to increase both knowledge and awareness. Starting from their existing skills, they work to extend them and build up on them, considering not only formal education but also life skills, values, understanding of the societies we live in, etc. Learning happens mostly through sharing, as a collective and mutual process (for empowering oneself and others). Thus increasing knowledge and consciousness is a basis for the full exercise of participatory citizenship, of one's responsibilities.

* **Enacted at various levels:** many youth experience their citizenship at belonging not only to the national community, but also to their local community, to their region and continent, and to humankind. While globalisation has made supra-national levels much more immediate and relevant to them than it was for their forefathers, many also feel a strong feeling of belonging to a local community, district, city, county, region, indigenous group which is the daily locus of their life and actions.

* **Inclusive:** maybe because their own experience of citizenship is multiform and open, it is also tolerant and marked by a spirit of solidarity. Through their actions, youth work towards a practice of governance that shares rather than excludes, that encourages participation and recognition of the diversity of cultures but also of social groups. They also express a concern specifically for marginalised, detached and discriminated groups - women, ethnic or religious minorities, indigenous people, ... or in some cases youth!!

* **Building plural communities:** youth value their belonging within communities -whether virtual or local- as a source of support, sharing, learning, humanity, hope and promotion of change. Part of their vision is to strengthen social bonds, particularly at local. Through their experience of citizenship, they contribute to reshaping human societies, redefining them not around a specific identity but **constituting them around common values and a shared project**.

Means and practice of governance

* **From the local to the global:** faced with the scope and complexity of the challenges before them, youth feel more comfortable and efficient acting small, locally, day-to-day through focused and concerted actions in their immediate community. While doing so, however, they strive to keeping in mind the impact (both negative and positive) of their actions globally as a further source of hope and confidence in what they are doing to work for a better world. Besides, they interact with one another at broader levels (nationally, continentally, internationally), through networks and virtual communities, which are a source of information and learning, lobbying on decision-makers and sensitisation of the public opinion, emotional and material support, etc. This also enables them to draw from their various levels of actions the necessary resources and interactions to impact at all levels.

* **Building Relations and Articulation:** through their practice, the youth show time and time again how so much of who they are and what they do is about "relating", building links, between ideas, people, knowledge and experiences, feelings and values. They act as go-between, or even bridge-builders, in order to mediate and facilitate the bringing together of people and issues and in order to constitute them as a network, an alliance, hence a collective force.

- with people, they touch, mobilise and **bring together very diverse actors and constituencies** to enter a project. Young social activists are aware of the necessity, and prove their ability, to convene NGOs, administrative service, local authorities, religious and community leaders, business representatives, etc. They also have a special concern for listening to and fostering the participation of those usually marginalised in society .
- with issues, they adopt an integrated approach to address challenges and take into consideration existing linkages between issues. They have a comprehensive approach of societies as a set of complex relations between issues, between societies, between societies and nature.

* **Acting upon representations:** in their social actions, youth are often aware that to promote change, there has to be a link between "concrete" actions and representations (as expressed in the media, in the educational system, by the public opinion, in artistic and cultural expression) and that a change in values and representations may be a necessary corollary or even pre-requisite for change. Their actions therefore often integrate an aspect of education, awareness-raising etc.

* **Being aware of youth's own role:** young people need to be participating in both drafting the means and implementing the will. Youth participating and endorsing responsibility is essential not only because they will be the beneficiaries and the leaders in the future but also because so many of them already have a decisive role to play within their own communities. In taking up their responsibility, the youth should be aware of characteristics and behaviours that a good leader for the 21st century should have, such as sensitivity, social and environmental responsibility, positive attitude for change, entrepreneur spirit and behaviour and, above all things, justice, peace, love and happiness. Also, when they grow older, young people of today should remember to listen to the young people of tomorrow, as a departure from what the majority of today's leaders do. Finally, a key aspect of youth involvement in social change is

that young people are concerned and committed to addressing not only youth issues and policies, but all major issues that face our societies, from the local to global, in the 21st century.

Role of the third sector

Having few open space for the youth to actually act and play important roles in the governmental and the market sectors, the third sector, i.e. the organised civil society and all non-profit and non-governmental organisations, is becoming an increasingly important space for youth action, empowerment and development, for them to promote their ideals and values, to actually develop projects and solve social, cultural and environmental problems. It is also essential in contributing to facilitate multisectoral dialogue, serving as a platform for dialogue between various actors, facilitating policy debates, research, training and education and liaising with international networks.

* **Importance of networking:** all over the world young people are finding space in the third sector to put into practice their values and ideals regarding their local and global issues, but unfortunately a locus to share all these experiences worldwide is severely lacking at present. In this sense, networking process among young people worldwide is developing, particularly with the assistance of Internet resources, since the 1990s. But considering the diversity of world social and economic problems and the Internet or digital divide, this natural networking process is much stronger among the youth of the "developed" countries from the "global north" than among the youth from the "global south". This networking process still needs to be improved and expanded, via Internet or with face-to-face meetings, gathering young people from all over the place, to learn, share, be empowered and draft the paths to the future.

* **Importance of professional skills and methodology:** although young people can today find more space in the third sector to put in practice their ideas and ideals, it is clear that there is a strong need for more in-depth studies and training for them to act professionally. Universities and training centres worldwide need to take this into consideration and start to create courses and trainings to prepare youth activists to work in the third sector with a good level of skills and methodologies. Again,, it is easier at present to find courses and training programmes in the "global north" rather than in the "global south", which, in itself, is another challenge for the youth to overcome. On a positive note however, even without a very developed academic framework to train new activists, there are already young activists helping to professionalise and structure the third sector through training courses and direct support, either professionally or voluntarily within the 'global south'.

* **Acting upon the general agenda:** going beyond the public/private divide, the organised civil society serves the public good and issues without the limitations of the political system and without belonging to private means, and serves to bring together actors and issues traditionally belonging to the public and private realms. In this sense, the third sector can help in shaping local and the global agendas, by placing many issues on the agenda for consideration and helping to shape policies, by having a diversity of actors participating in policy-making, implementation, control and monitoring.

* **Acting upon the general ways:** the third sector as a whole has no geographic or mental border for action, and it can act and be present everywhere, from the local to the global level, on all kind of issues as it wishes or needs to. And it gives exactly this sense to the youth, with some standard concepts used by the governmental sector not making sense anymore. For

instance, concepts such as "foreign people", "border", "need of visa", "different rights for different nationalities", "religion" (*understanding religion here differently of beliefs and faith on whatever it points to, which are very important and positive for local and global culture and development*) ,etc. In this sense the young people taking action in the third sector have a real opportunity to think and act upon the general agenda and upon the general ways of doing things. And for the future, for the coming generations, it may be possible to see the PERSON as a **HUMAN BEING** and not anymore as a French, Brazilian, South African, Chinese, Australian (*in the sense of "nationality", not in the sense of their own culture and characteristics*); no more as a Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jew (*in the sense of "religion", not in the sense of the culture and the beliefs, which are very positive and important*); not anymore as a communist, capitalist, from the right, from the left (*in the sense of being open to others' way of thinking and understanding, not in the sense of losing a political approach, with is very important to understand and to have*); or whatever.

* **Creation of a recognised Youth Parliament structure:** once we admit that young people need to be participating in drafting and implementing the will, we need to foster their participation, and have it recognised, through some kind of real space where youth representatives could gather and formulate policies and projects towards not only their own development but the development of the world as a whole, not only globally but at all levels.

Reform of the United Nations

At the level of global governance, there is clearly a need to reform today's tools and instances for global policies, and the United Nations is the main one, playing a huge role in the global context. In this sense the UN needs to be reformed to make it a truly regulating instance of the world community, with due respect for principles such as: social justice, peaceful international relations, representation of the world's population, regulation of economic markets, and sustainability. Possible paths for such reform are:

- changing the way countries are being represented within the UN by combining demographic and geocultural factors and constituting regional blocs of similar demographic weight as a basis for seats attribution.
- Instead of having only countries represented, the UN could also have **HUMAN BEINGS** represented, in this sense not representing countries' interests, but representing the interest of the whole humankind. These representatives could be chosen via direct and general election world-wide.
- creating a Social and Economic Council which truly regulates economic systems according to human needs, counterbalances the IMF, World Bank and WTO, and promotes redistribution policies.
- creating a Youth Council to debate the visions and the needs of the youth, opening space to make them closer to act in the governmental and the market sector.
- giving to the UN the ability to propose laws concerning international matters
- reinforcing UN conflict resolutions processes (on a regional basis)

VI. LIFESKILLS AND LIFESTYLES

The issue and its impact

It was felt that the need for informed and sustained intervention from the youth for the protection of the irreplaceable resources of earth is imminent in view of mounting evidence of global environmental deterioration.

That the ecosystems have been overused is clear in shrinking forests, eroding soils, falling water tables, collapsing fisheries, rising temperatures, dying coral reefs, melting glaciers, and disappearing plant and animal species to cite a few instances.

In the Asian context, many concrete examples abounded. The widespread cases of soil erosion in Kazakhstan which had to abandon half its crop land since 1980 was one such case. The shocking widespread deforestation in the Philippines leading to the disappearance of the forest product based export industry along with attendant loss of livelihoods was another. Record sea surface temperatures over the last two years with fears that they may have wiped out 70% of the coral in the Indian Ocean is yet another example. Besides, ever increasing water deficits in India and China were cited. Adding to the situations of extreme environmental stress was the alarming increase in population pressure in countries like India and China. In India alone, the population has tripled since 1950 and water demand has climbed to where it may now be double the sustainable yield of the country's natural water reserve.

The environmental crisis is inextricably linked to the crisis of lifestyles manifest in the culture of consumerism, materialism and wastefulness practised particularly by the more affluent nations and which is now beginning to spread throughout the globe. Which of the young of Asia or anywhere in the world do not face a crisis of lifestyle? The group was of the firm view that these highly unsustainable and consumerist lifestyles are promoted particularly through the media. In many cases the youth that are most vulnerable to the devastating impact of these ecological changes are unaware that these lifestyles are unsustainable and inimical to the very viability of life on earth. In other instances, however, the ideas and opinions of the youth are often neglected or bypassed and their numbers are not fully represented in decision-making processes.

A number of participants reiterated that the youth are not equipped to look beyond a materialistic and consumerist way of life. The dominant pattern of hegemonistic globalisation is fast pushing the youth towards an alienated and fast paced unsustainable lifestyle.

The group felt that our lifeskills are not commensurate with a thinking and a rational model of development. What really has prevented us from acquiring sustainable lifeskills?

The educational system, the cold contents of syllabi with archaic teaching methods of learning by rote inhibit critical faculties by treating us as passive receptors to received wisdom.

There was a questioning of the current meaning and parameters of success, which led to unthinking acceptance of the dominant paradigm of development and promotion of unsustainable lifestyles while inventing a peculiar brand of modernity. The traditional wisdom and thinking on sustainable practices has been pushed to the background systematically.

Strategic Initiatives for change...

At all levels a systematic campaign of information dissemination needs to be initiated with schools and colleges as the core target. Methods would encompass group discussions,

setting up of wildlife and nature preservation clubs, environmental awareness camps, debates, screening of films highlighting sustainable lifestyles and traditional environment friendly practices and media campaigns.

Work towards an education system which encourages the sharpening of critical faculties in contrast to the examination orientated current stifling set up in schools and colleges. Added emphasis needs to be given on building the outlook of youth as agents of change and encouraging education outside schools to implement different learning needs of youth.

Sustainable lifestyles it was emphasised needs to begin with the individuals themselves. Each of the participants pledged themselves to sustainable value systems and sustainable lifestyles in their daily life. This included the need to conserve water and electricity and a switchover to less energy intensive lifestyles and making attempts to extend it to our work areas.

Media and the print industry to be sensitised for shifting to recycled paper for their publications.

For educationists, creative workshops that bring out innovative ways to use things, encourages practices like packing gifts in fallen leaves. Imparting a fun way to do things that helps in conserving precious natural resources for future generations.

Popularising sustainable water and energy resource management systems, organic farming at the individual, community and the governmental levels.

Resisting modern unsustainable agricultural practices with their emphasis on monocultures and preserving bio-diversity of natural flora and fauna.

Research, advocacy and lobbying with the government and other concerned national and international agencies for stricter enforcement and implementation of all national laws and international conventions and protocols, which help in the attainment of sustainable environmental practices.

Lifeskills relating to decision making skills, creative thinking, interpersonal and social communication need to be promoted at the individual and group levels.

Individual Action Plan of Eco-Friends (India)

Eco-Friends: A brief Introduction

Eco-friends, a Kanpur (India) based NGO has been working in a sustained way over the last eight years to address critical issues of environmental degradation. Over the years Eco-friends has been involved in generating mass awareness and deepening of national and international public debate on pollution related issues, mobilizing the local community in sustained high pitched campaigns, focussed action such as clean Ganga campaigns, legal activism through public interest litigation and persistent advocacy utilizing multimedia, opinion makers and other stake holders.

Perspective on Ganga Pollution: Ganga Action Plan, Phase I, II and beyond

Once famous as the Manchester of North India, Kanpur, today is a veritable environmental disaster. Known variously as the city of tuberculosis and as a stinking, decaying and dying city it has won many new epithets like 'Industrial Graveyard', 'Garbage city' and so on.

The city of Kanpur, the largest industrial town by the banks of the river Ganga depends on the river's water for most of its needs. Despite the promised action of Ganga Action Plan to depollute the river by the government, the river in Kanpur is being treated as a natural sewer, garbage depot and morgue. The Ganga in Kanpur is always strewn with human corpses and animal carcasses, trash like non-biodegradable polybags, worship materials e.g., floral offerings, clay idols, account books and so on. People can be seen in hordes defecating along the river. Cattle wallowing, washing of clothes, use of soaps and detergents are common sights at various bathing ghats and elsewhere also. Turtle poaching goes on unabated. All these non-point sources of pollution definitely add to the pollution of the river, but they also pose very offensive and repulsive sights to the Ganga users as well as common viewers. The situation has worsened to the extent that the river not only has earned the reputation of being "dead" with almost no aquatic life, it has also caused severe health problems to the entire population of Kanpur. Now even clean drinking water has become a luxury for the citizens of Kanpur, which only a few elite can afford.

Proposed Intervention

Eco-friends has been successfully playing the role of Ganga Guardian since 1993. Eco-friends has regularly been monitoring Ganga and Ganga Action Plan (GAP) in Kanpur, highlighting the shortcomings of GAP and putting pressure on the authorities to take corrective measures. Eco-friends has also forced the polluting industries to behave responsibly. It has successfully endeavored to involve various groups, specially youths and the Ganga-related communities (those who dwell along the river and are dependent on the river for their livelihood) like Pandas, Fisher-folk, boatmen, cremators (Dhanuks/Doms), and villagers in policing and cleaning process of the river Ganga in Kanpur. Eco-friends has focussed its attention on stamping out various non-point sources of pollution through regular Ganga clean up campaigns and various other measures.

Eco-friends proposes to play the role of a Ganga Guardian / Keeper / Watchdog. We not only want to monitor Ganga and GAP but also to physically clean the Ganga on a regular basis in order to achieve the ultimate objective of a pollution free Ganga. We intend to consolidate on our gains, make our efforts more sustainable and prepare communities and citizens as effective watchdogs and river cleaners.

Activities envisaged:

Consultation with all stakeholders through holding of public hearings in different areas and formation of local committees with broad participation of diverse groups. Additionally, efforts would be made to form a multi-stakeholders Ganga Parliamentary Forum with the widest possible inclusion of policy makers at the local, state and national level.

Exhaustive situational analysis of the current state of river pollution and its impact on the community through survey and research. Key findings along with relevant judicial

pronouncements would be published in order to highlight the problems of Ganga pollution and the shortcomings of GAP, the problem of tannery effluent entering the river Ganga and toxic irrigation water affecting the villages adversely. Along with other stakeholders, Eco-Friends shall carry on a sustained campaign to bring these issues to the attention of the general public, policy makers, Judiciary, Human Rights Commission in an endeavour to come up with appropriate solutions.

Regular monitoring of the implementation of and effectiveness of GAP-I and GAP-II in order to highlight shortcomings and remedial measures.

Capacity building and training of local community and NGOs to build up a team of trained volunteers for sustained and systematic work especially during religious gatherings along the river such as on Mahakumbh and Ganga Dussehra.

Eco-friends will regularly organize Ganga cleaning programs (Fishing out dead bodies and other trash with the help of Ganga keepers) with the help of trained volunteers and youth. In the past Clean Ganga campaigns have been highly effective in community mobilization and in sensitizing common public, galvanizing governmental agencies into action and also for gathering of fresh evidences of violations of various court orders.

Eco-friends will publish all the court orders (orders passed by Allahabad High Court in Writ Petition filed by Rakesh K Jaiswal) in the form of a booklet, distribute the same to various governmental and non-governmental agencies (politicians, religious heads, media etc.) in all the towns of U.P. along river Ganga. This will immensely help Eco-friends to educate various target groups and ensure the compliance of various court orders.

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 International Youth Parliament 2000 (Brett Solomon and Jane Higgins)
 International Education meeting in November 1998 (Nacéra Aknak Khan)
 BikeAbout team (Ethan Gelber)
 DIA network (Fabrice Coppin & Fatma Cossadia)

AEIFORIA: International non governmental organisation (INGO) that works for *the promotion of education as a tool for achieving a sustainable world*. (David Diaz Pardo de Vera)

Eco-Friends, India (Rakesh Jaiswal)