COMMONWEALTH YOUNG ACHIEVERS 2015

Ears of vigour and freshness
Ears of potential
Enduring efforts and enthusiasm
Ears of hardships
Hope for a better world
TEAM OF THE COMMONWEALTH YOUNG ACHIEVERS BOOK

Editorial Team
Ahmed Adamu (Nigeria)
Tilan M Wijesooriya (Sri Lanka)
Ziggy Adam (Seychelles)
Jerome Cowans (Jamaica)
Melissa Bryant (St. Kitts and Nevis)

Layout & Design
Abdul Basith (Sri Lanka)

© Commonwealth Youth Council, United Kingdom, 2015
Published by: Commonwealth Youth Council, United Kingdom
Cover design: Abdul Basith (Sri Lanka) & Akiel Surajdeen (Sri Lanka)

Permission is required to reproduce any part of this book
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 01</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Page 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preamble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreword Message from the Chairperson – Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>About the CYC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synopses of CYC Executives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 02</th>
<th>Commonwealth Young Achievers</th>
<th>Page 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caribbean and Americas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 03</th>
<th>Youth Development Perspectives</th>
<th>Page 279</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generating Positive Change through Youth Volunteerism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When people talk, great things happen: The Role of Youth in Peace-building and Social Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why Africa’s Youths Are So Passionate about Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stop washing your hands of young people...Time for action: Youth and Politics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Entrepreneurship and Overcoming Youth Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trialling Youth Ideas on Civic Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth participation in environment protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Chapter 04 | Conclusion and Way Forward | Page 323 |
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
PREAMBLE

Years of vigour and freshness, Ocean of potentials, Unending efforts and enthusiasm, Tears of hardships, Hope for a better world (YOUTH). The very letters of the term YOUTH reflect the true meaning of a young life to a greater extent. It is the season of strength and stamina with a fresh and new psyche. It is the plethora of flowering capacities and budding leadership. It is the endless and determined attempts to achieve goals. It is the tolerated pains of difficulties to overcome various dilemmas. Through all these dimensions it is in fact the journey towards a utopia, a better world for the humanity. This is why the Commonwealth Young Achievers’ book has been titled as YOUTH.

Nevertheless, the youth has universally been defined as a specific time period of one’s life. In accordance with the United Nations, the youth is defined as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years whereas the Commonwealth interprets youth as young people between the ages of 15 and 29. Pursuant to the African Youth Charter, youth denotes persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years. Further, different countries have defined youth in terms of age at national level. These static definitions have been formulated mainly for statistical and demographic purposes.

On the contrary, from a philosophical perspective, youth is not a particular time period of an individual but a psychological status. That is why Robert Kennedy articulates that “This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease.” These philosophical definitions are predominantly based on psychosocial, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical contexts and the relevant youth definitions and concepts have been changing in line with fluctuating economic, political, and sociocultural circumstances.

It is emphatic that the world's youth pollution has significantly increased in the current demographic context. The United Nations Population Fund in its report, The Power of 1.8 Billion: Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future, reflects that “Our world is home to 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24, and the youth population is growing fastest in the poorest nations”. The paramount picture is that 89 percent of the global youth population live in less developed countries creating a unique challenge to the policy makers.

Moreover, in the 53 countries of Commonwealth, majority of which are
developing countries, more than 60 percent of the total population is youth, i.e. over 1.2 billion are young people below the age of 30. This youth bulge may be a great challenge but it is a wonderful challenge that creates colossal opportunities for development. It is needless to mention that young people possess vast potentials and thereby an effective investment for sustainable development. The cardinal factor is to guide them into correct developmental avenues.

There are numerous young role models who walk in different inspirational paths creating manifold development dimensions that galvanize young people in the world to strive for their individual development and social progress as a whole. In this context, this book is a portrayal of success stories of divers and brilliant young people from across the Commonwealth nations who have impacted in their communities and lives of others. The reflections of these unique role models will inspire youths to unleash their potentials that would pave the way for a better future.

It is significant that 112 portraits of young achievers from the five regions in the Commonwealth are reflected in the book. Divers role models in different thematic areas; 32 from 14 countries in Africa, 29 from 7 countries in Asia, 23 from 10 countries in Caribbean and Americas, 16 from 3 countries in Europe, and 12 from 7 Pacific countries, in total 112 brilliant young minds from 41 Commonwealth nations convey major life lessons, experience of their hardships and how they were overcome in addition to their unique achievements and advice to the young audience in the world.

The following is a table of countries in the 5 regions of the Commonwealth from which the young achievers are depicted in the book. It is momentous that the book profiles great young people from 41 out of 53 countries of the Commonwealth.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Caribbean &amp; Americas</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Pacific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>Fiji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td></td>
<td>Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td></td>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Kitts and Nevis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Covering the salient aspects of diversity, the book depicts 59 females and 53 profiles in different thematic areas such as socioeconomic, sociopolitical, environmental, and special interest groups. Moreover, the paramount aspect is that the book reflects portraits of young people who have overcome harsh realities. Marginalized youth, refugees, war victims, child soldiers, youth with disabilities, youth who suffered from psychological ailments and other precarious diseases, and youth who lived in pathetic milieus such as violence; murders; mafia; extreme poverty; underdeveloped areas; all these portraits forms the didactic spectrum of the book. Further, profiles of indigenous youth enhance the diversity of the protagonists manifested in the book. In addition to the portraits of young achievers, the book conveys articles on different thematic areas such as youth volunteerism, youth in politics, youth in environmental protection, youth in peace-building and social cohesion, youth entrepreneurship, youth ideas on civic participation, and youth-led social change. These articles were written by youth experts from different Commonwealth countries analyzing the thematic areas from various perspectives.

The Commonwealth Youth Council expects that the Young Achievers Book will inspire young people in the world to flower their potentials in search of a utopia, a better world for the humanity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- The Queen’s Young Leaders Programme
- Youth Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat
- Commonwealth Students Association
- Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network
- Commonwealth Youth Sport for Development and Peace
- Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network
- Commonwealth Asia Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs
- All the youth leaders who helped find high profiles of young achievers
FOREWORD MESSAGE FROM THE
CHAIRPERSON,
COMMONWEALTH YOUTH COUNCIL

Dear Reader,

I present to you an exhibition of talent, virtue, hard work, commitment and passion. This is the Commonwealth Young Achiever’s Book (CYAB).

On the global scale, this is the first time you have seen such a book and such young people featured herewith. You will be witness of the extent of the passion and commitment of young people all around the world who have dedicated their youth to youth. These young persons are examples of the modern definition of youth and beacons of hope to the rest of the world.

Following ‘Angelique’s bright idea’ from Seychelles, runner-up for bright ideas in the Commonwealth Countries the Commonwealth Youth Council did not only support this project but endorsed it, on the global scale. The Council finds value in recognition and continuity in appreciation, henceforth, a team, the CYAB Team was set up to search and gather exceptional young achievers, gather the stories of their life and desire to stand for the youth. The team has placed every effort into bringing this project into fruition to communicate with the young people who applied or were nominated by their peers to be featured. Henceforward you will find young people who have worked beyond your imagination for the future generation. Dear reader, these people exist and the important thing is to recognise and support their work.

The Commonwealth Youth Council will continue to provide support for youth, the council will continue to appreciate the good works of the youth, the council believes in having youth at the centre of development. We therefore congratulate all of the young achievers who are featured as well as those that have not been featured, we congratulate those doing the good works for the future generation and we congratulate young people who will be featured in the next edition.

Good reading.

Ahmad Adamu
Chairperson
Commonwealth Youth Council
ABOUT THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH COUNCIL

The Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) is one of the largest and most diverse youth-led international organisations. Representing 1.2 billion young people from across 53 countries of the Commonwealth, the CYC is the legitimate and recognised voice for young people of the Commonwealth. The CYC was established by young people with support from the Commonwealth Secretariat, in accordance with the terms of Article XIII of the Commonwealth Charter on the importance of young people in the Commonwealth. The CYC was endorsed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Perth, Australia in November 2011, and the election of the inaugural executive was presented to Heads of Government at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in November 2013. The CYC acts as a coalition of National Youth Councils and other youth-led civil society and private sector institutions. It is a global platform which mainstreams young people; supporting and advocating for an enabling environment that facilitates the active participation and influence of young people in decision-making processes, and influence global agendas.

Genesis

During the International Year of Youth (2010/11) the young people of the Commonwealth examined the role and contribution they played in advancing the values and objectives of the Commonwealth. At the Commonwealth Youth Leaders’ Conference in Chandigarh, India (December 2010), Commonwealth Regional Youth Caucus representatives (RYCs) examined the way forward for youth governance in the Commonwealth. The meeting agreed that more was needed to strengthen the voice of youth in the Commonwealth and that operating within the framework of the Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus had fundamental shortcomings and stifled the voice of young people in Commonwealth processes.

This examination led to an agreement that the state of youth participation and representation in the Commonwealth was weak. The youth leaders decided on immediate action to correct this challenge; they decided on a set of actions to strengthen the youth governance structure in the Commonwealth with the relevant partners and stakeholders.

The Youth Leaders Conference agreed to select and empower a working
Constitution committee to research and develop a framework that would lead to a stronger youth voice in the Commonwealth, coordinate a consultation process in each region, and work to deliver a final draft constitution that would be submitted to youth ministers at the Commonwealth youth Ministers Meeting 2012 (CYMM). The committee involved two youth leaders from each region, past and present RYCs, and advisors from the Legal and Constitution Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Committee work was funded and supported by the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

The Committee members recommended that the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) should become the new official platform that represents the voice of young people in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Youth Council should become the vehicle that integrates young people into the development work of the Commonwealth at national, regional, and Pan-Commonwealth levels.

They envisioned an autonomous entity that would promote and facilitate youth led development; operated by young people for young people; a space where the young people would democratically elect and hold to account their leaders; a space where young people serve as agents of change through meaningful participation, working side by side with governments, Commonwealth bodies, international partners, and other stakeholders.

The CYC would represent youth interests within the Commonwealth and would help promote issues relevant to young people to the Commonwealth Heads of Government and through structures and mechanisms constituted to facilitate mutual dialogue.

The youth led committee completed its work to develop a draft CYC constitution. Throughout the process the committee received support from the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division and the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Legal Advisor. The committee held virtual regional and Pan Commonwealth meetings every two months to track the development of the CYC framework. Once the working draft text was agreed, the next phase was regional consultations with Governments and National Youth Councils.

Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group and the Commonwealth Youth Council

The Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) was established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at their summit in Trinidad and Tobago.
in November 2009. The group’s goals were to sharpen the impact, strengthen the networks and raise the profile of the Commonwealth. A youth representative was a part of the EPG.

The EPG recommended that the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) should be encouraged to develop a constitution that would help to form an independent and youth-led Commonwealth Youth Council that would become the recognised voice of youth in the Commonwealth. This Council could significantly strengthen and widen the current pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus and represent a wide cross section of youth in the Commonwealth. This recommendation is as follows as quoted from the EPG report:

R50 The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) should be encouraged to develop a constitution that will help to form an independent and youth-led Commonwealth Youth Council that becomes the recognised voice of youth in the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government adopted this recommendation at their summit in Perth, Australia in 2011.

**Regional Consultations**

The Commonwealth Secretariat convened four regional consultations on the Constitution – in the Pacific in June 2012, the Caribbean in July 2012, Asia in September 2012 and Africa in February 2013. Following the consultations, the drafting committee pulled together all comments and recommendations into a draft constitution which was presented at the Youth Leaders Forum at the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (CYMM) April 16-17, 2013 and then presented to CYMM Ministers for endorsement. The Commonwealth Secretariat’s Legal Adviser reviewed and endorsed the compiled final document.

**Eighth Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting**

The Commonwealth Youth Ministers in the 8CYMM Communiqué endorsed the establishment of an autonomous Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC), grounded in Commonwealth principles and values that would replace the Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus. Youth Ministers further agreed that a revised CYC constitution was to be made available for review by youth ministers by June 2013, to ensure that the Constitution was finalized for endorsement by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).
Ninth Commonwealth Youth Forum and First Commonwealth Youth Council General Assembly

The 9th Commonwealth Youth Forum held in Sri Lanka in November 2013 was the final stage that witnessed the actualization of the Commonwealth Youth Council. During this forum, the first General Assembly of the CYC took place, where the constitution was endorsed by the youth delegates, and subsequently, elections into the 9 executive positions of the CYC was held successfully, i.e. Chairperson, Vice Chairperson - Inclusion and Engagement, Vice Chairperson - Partnership and Resources, Vice Chairperson - Policy and Advocacy, Africa Regional Representative, Asia Regional Representative, Caribbean Regional Representative, Pacific Regional Representative, and Special Interest Group Representative.
SYNOPSIS OF COMMONWEALTH YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVES

Chairperson
Ahmed Adamu

Vice Chairperson - Inclusion and Engagement
Mohamed Husni

Vice Chairperson - Partnership and Resources
Sadham Zarjahan

Vice Chairperson - Policy and Advocacy
Sudharashana Lakshmi

Africa Regional Representative
Kiziah Philbert

Asia Regional Representative
Tharika Dileepani

Caribbean Regional Representative
Royden Beharry

Pacific Regional Representative
Harry James

Special Interest Group Representative
Shiromi Wathsala
Ahmed Adamu, is the pioneer Chairperson of the Commonwealth Youth Council, which is the largest and most diverse youth led organisation in the world. He is a global high profiled youth leader, and advocate, motivational speaker, university lecturer, and researcher with over a decade of distinguished and excellent profession in youth development advocacy and research.

He held from Katsina state in Nigeria, and he was awarded a BSc (Ed) Economics at Bayero University, Kano. After his National Youth Service in Lokoja, he was recruited as a classroom teacher. Later he completed an MSc in oil and gas economics at the University of Dundee in UK. He is currently a university lecturer at the Umaru Musa Yar’adua University, Katsina, and about to finish his PhD programme at Newcastle University, UK. He is a member of several professional organisations like the Royal Economic Society, International Association of Energy Economics, Association of International Petroleum Negotiators, Society for Petroleum Engineers, Scottish oil club, Teachers registration council of Nigeria, Academic Staff Union of Universities etc.. He published scholarly articles and books. He has held numerous leadership positions, and as the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Youth Council, he was found to be as one of the most influential young leaders in the world. He is married with one son at the time of publishing this book.

Ahmed received the honour as one of the outstanding African achievers for the year 2015 presented at the British House of Parliament. He participated as organiser, speaker and facilitator in so many international events including that of the United Nations. He is a member of Policy Strategy Group, United Nations' World We Want.

He represented his country in many international events, and was the pioneer Chief Whip of the Nigerian Youth Parliament. He is the founder and pioneer president of the League for Democratic Youth. Ahmed was a member of the Katsina state executive council committee on youth development, he also served as the secretary of the Nigerian constitutional review consultation committee in his constituency, and was the founder and president of Oil and Gas scholars club. He is the founder and president of Katsina Debate Club, publicity secretary of Civil Liberties organization, Katsina branch, secretary of integrity club, among many other past responsibilities and experiences. He met many world leaders including Her Majesty the Queen of England on several occasions.
He received the award of excellence for his commitment to youth development and was recognised as the most influential student leader back in his university days. He was a student leader at his university and at National level.

As a founder of the League for Democratic youth, he helped create awareness on political and democratic rights of the young people and how they can help influence decisions and make change by themselves. His organisation set precedence, and as a result many organisations came on-board toward achieving more democratic and social participation of young people in his community. As a young parliamentarian, he led a peaceful protest against removal of petroleum subsidy in his country, and eventually the subsidy removal was postponed. Even though as a petroleum economist, he believes there should be some provisions before petroleum subsidy can be removed. As a university lecturer, he mentors and inspires his students, and teach them life lessons, and how to live a successful life beyond just acquiring the knowledge. He founded the Debate club to help enhance the speaking confidence of the young people and to help them develop the skills of deep research and expression. He believed through the debate, the people of his community can learn through listening to constructive and objective arguments about issues that are of international, national and local relevance to them.

His struggles for youth participation in governance and for helping young people raise the voices have been recognised widely. His passion for development, made him a public commentator, where he writes article on social, economic and development of his country. His generous and excellent leadership skills were equally responsible for the achievements of the Commonwealth Youth Council within a span of few years.

He considered nervousness and shyness as his limitation as a child, but through his exposure and frequent resistance, he overcome these predicaments. He is always confident and optimistic about what he can do. He likes to be simple and humble, he hates arrogance. He always want to learn, and improve. He never worried about his mistakes, but always learn from them, and he does not care about what others say about him.
Mohamed Husni, 26 years old, is the elected Vice Chairperson (Inclusion and Engagement) of first ever Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) which serves as the official and representative voice of 1.2 billion young people and provides a framework for youth-led development initiatives in the Commonwealth. He has more than 10 years of experience in environment focused activism, youth development and policy work, who has also initiated and implemented numerous projects & campaigns with high school students, youth organizations and civil society institutions in both nationally and globally. Husni is a ‘British Council International Climate Champion’ and in 2011, he was selected as a ‘British Council Global Changemaker’ for his significant track record as a community activist and a volunteer. He was also a Rotaract Past President and an Action Partner of Oxfam International Youth Partnerships (OIYP) managed by Oxfam Australia. He has officially represented Sri Lanka, British Council and the Commonwealth at many high-level meetings & regional/global strategic discussions on Rio+20, Inclusive Youth participation & Post-2015 Development Agenda and made significant contributions at a young age.

He was also one of the National Delegates of Sri Lanka to the UNCSD; Global Youth Representative at the Post-2015 High Level Panel (HLP) meeting in London with UN Secretary-General’s Panel of Eminent Persons on Post-2015 Dev. Agenda; Youth Rep.& Panelist at the UNDESA/ILO/UNEP Expert Group Meeting on “Green Growth & Green Jobs for Youth”; as well as the Youth Delegate to the UN ECOSOC Youth Forum 2014. Husni served as the Post-2015 National Consultations Officer of United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in Sri Lanka for two years (2013-2015), which includes his role as the Project Manager of UNV research publication on “Youth Volunteering for Development & Peace in Sri Lanka”. In March 2015, he was appointed as the Co-chair of the Commonwealth Youth Forum 2015 to be held in Malta in parallel to the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM). He will also lead the Rotary International’s Youth body, ‘Rotaract’ in Sri Lanka & Maldives in year 2016-17 in the capacity of the District Rotaract Representative for Sri Lanka & Maldives.

Email: m.husni@commonwealthyouth.org
husni@commonwealthyouthcouncil.com
Sadham D. Zarjahan is a Global Executive Committee member of the International Youth Council which is based in New York. He is an investor, an Engineer, Youth worker and professional football player. He was also one of the national delegate for the 6th World youth Congress as delegate which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 2012, Annual Youth Assembly at United Nations in New York 2013, 2015. He also won “Young Global Leader of the year” at the Annual Youth Assembly at United Nations in New York in 2015.

Sadham Dhirkan Zarjahan; 24 years old, is the elected Vice Chairperson (Partnerships and Resources) of first ever Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) which serves as the official and representative voice of 1.2 billion young people and provides a framework for youth-led development initiatives in the Commonwealth. He has more than 12 years of experience in youth development and education development work. He was appointed as Chairperson for International Youth Council Sri Lanka Chapter and he has made contributions in organization’s partnerships polices and youth development policies as chairperson of International Youth Council Sri Lanka Chapter. He also one of the Executive Committee members of the Professional Youth Workers Association of Sri Lanka which is working under Youth affairs and skills development ministry and Commonwealth Youth Program. He was a Sri Lankan Youth Ambassador for Annual Youth Assembly at United Nations

Sadharshana Lakshmi is much passionate in Governance & Public Policy, holds an M.A. degree from the School of Governance and Public Policy at Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur, India which is the first of its kind in South Asia for youth development. She was appointed as a Country Representative for youth by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India in 2012. Recognising her competence to serve the community, she was awarded Gold Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award in 2007. At present, she is one of the advisors for Asia Youth Council for providing strategic policy and advocacy inputs for its sustainable functioning. To her credit, she had represented a number of international and national forums for policy discussions and advocating the mainstreaming of youth development work.
Years of Vigour and Freshness  Ocean of Potentials  Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm  Tears of Hardships  Hope for a Better World

Kiziah is Currently Pursuing Masters of Science in Diplomacy and International Relations, he holds a Bachelors degree in Business management, Finance and Banking Major and a minor in Marketing and Entrepreneurship. He also holds a diploma in community development and social work. Currently Philbert is the founding President Sponsor a Child Kenya and CEO Hunger Below Zero. A cofounder and Vice President of Africa Youth Charter and a One 

Young World Kenyan Ambassador. He has had several live dialogues with H.E Dr. Kofi Annan most recently being on Youth Unemployment, Sustainable development, Elections and Democracy. He is the founder and CEO of independent community Bank PesaPedia which aims to assist,empower and enable street children,AIDS Orphans,sex workers and marginalized groups gain financial freedom.

Email: kiziah@commonwealthyouthcouncil.com
philbertkizy@gmail.com

Tharika is a passionate young leader joined the Commonwealth family as the Deputy Regional Youth Caucus Representative of Sri Lanka for the Commonwealth Youth programme. She did an excellent job as a member of the Youth Led Task Force for the Commonwealth youth Forum 2013 to bring all youth leaders across The Commonwealth to a place where they can raise their voices against various issues. She was a member of the task force for the Asia Regional Commonwealth Youth Ministers’ Meeting (AsR-CYMM) in India. She was the chairperson of the Young leaders’ forum of AsR- CYMM which opened up an equal platform for young persons from Asia to exchange their thoughts with Ministers and senior officials. She is an active member of many functioning organizations in Sri Lanka which work toward youth development and a former senator of Sri Lanka Youth Parliament.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in physical science and following her masters in Analytical chemistry at University of Colombo. She works as a business analyst for a reputed private company in Sri Lanka.

Email: tharika.dileepani@gmail.com

Kiziah Philbert
Africa Regional Representative

Tharika Dileepani
Asia Regional Representative
Royden is a Senior Project Officer at Grenada’s Ministry of Youth, Sports, & Ecclesiastic Affairs. Education, Youth and Community Development continues to be his highest priorities. He has a major responsibility in ensuring that all of the Nation’s Youth Programs are effectively executed. Under his leadership, the Chantimelle Crusaders, an organization he founded went on to receive the First Caribbean Bank Unsung Heroes award and national recognition for their role in Youth development. Mr. Beharry believes that as part of the emerging generation, it is his responsibility to be actively involved in championing the cause of young people. He is an excellent networker who remains committed & extremely passionate about the advancement of the Commonwealth Youth Agenda.

Email: royden@commonwealthyouthcouncil.com
beharryroyden@hotmail.com

Harry is a youth worker and Secretary of the Pacific Youth Council. Former Solomon Island youth representative to the Commonwealth. Harry is a recognized volunteer and committed young person dedicating his time to working with young unemployed people, those involved in anti-social behaviors and gradually succeeding in rallying nearly 100 young people to be engaged in youth activities especially the Duke of Edinburgh Award in his community.

Email: harry@commonwealthyouthcouncil.com
pacific@commonwealthyouthcouncil.org

Shiromi is a global youth activist who has won an international recognition and anchored her good work within the Commonwealth countries. She is a youth activist, a researcher, a youth parliamentarian, a mentor, an instructor and most specifically the Representative for Marginalized and Special Interest Groups of the Commonwealth Youth Council.

Shiromi was born as the eldest of the family in Pannila, Sri Lanka. At the age of 10 years, she passed the government Scholarship Exam and was able to enter Yashodara Devi Girls College, Gampaha. She completed her higher education specializing in Demography at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. As a part of her studies, she was able to learn about key population issues,
marginalized communities and other excluded population in the world. She conducted several researches on marginalized communities and worked on national and international policy papers on youth. Currently Shiromi is reading for her masters' degree in Public Administration at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

She started her endeavor in community development as a volunteer years ago which eventually turned her into a mature youth activist. With her academic and practical knowledge in youth development, Shiromi was selected to the Sri Lanka Youth Parliament as a senator in 2013. It was a platform for her to raise her voice on national youth issues.

Later on, she got the opportunity to represent the country in several instances as a youth delegate. She participated for the Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013, South Asian Summit on Youth and Human Rights 2014, World Conference on Youth 2014, World Youth Assembly 2014, Youth Wing and Women Wing of the International Conference on Asian Political Parties 2014, Youth Dialogue with the Commonwealth Heads of the Governments 2013 and she was invited for a Youth Dialogue with His Royal Highness Prince Charles in 2014. She participated as a youth panelist in number of instances and


Based on her understanding on the socially excluded, marginalized youth issues, Shiromi was nominated to the Commonwealth Youth Council by the National Youth Services Council Sri Lanka. After a competitive election, Shiromi was elected as the Representative for Special Interest Groups of the First Commonwealth Youth Council during the Commonwealth Youth Forum which was conducted parallel to the Commonwealth Heads of the Government Meeting, 2013. She was responsible in representing and implementing projects on Marginalized, socially excluded youth in 53 Commonwealth States who requires a special attention on behalf of the Commonwealth Youth Council, during her tenure of two years.

Shiromi co-founded the First Physically Challenged Cricket Team in Sri Lanka. Recognizing how youth with disabilities are excluded in social development, she initiated the concept of physically challenged sports as a source of empowering youth with physical challenges. The cricketers were used as role models
in empowering the disable youth and were participated in number of local, national and international cricket tournaments. Meanwhile she contributed in organizing the India Vs. Sri Lanka First Ever Series of Cricket for Physically Challenged 2014. Currently she works as the secretary of Physically Challenged Sports Organization Sri Lanka.

Shiromi organized panel discussions on youth issues to involve young people in representing their views, while contributing in policy discussions. She organized Commonwealth Day Celebrations, Commonwealth Awareness Programs, workshops etc. She initiated India Sri Lanka Youth Exchange Program for the youth coming from rural areas while creating a space for them to explore the world and to contribute in global understanding for sustainable development in post 2015 development agenda.

Shiromi is a mentor of the Queen’s Young Leaders program, the coordinator of the marginalized and special interest youth of the Commonwealth Youth Network Sri Lanka, District coordinator of the Lanka Youth Organizations network Sri Lanka, Secretary for Media and Information of Divisional Federation of Youth Clubs Attanagalla 2014 and the Disciplinary Committee Member in 2015, Member of Children and Youth International and Member of the Working Group on UN Major Group for Children and Youth and World Humanitarian Summit.

She is good in public speaking, project management, leading, event coordination, researching, report writing, and data analysing. Currently she is working on conducting a national conference on Youth with Disabilities.

Email: shiromi@commonwealthyouthcouncil.com
shirouoc@gmail.com
CHAPTER 2
COMMONWEALTH YOUNG ACHIEVERS
AFRICA | ASIA | CARIBBEAN AND AMERICAS | EUROPE | PACIFIC
AFRICA

1. Andile Joyce Mthombeni (South Africa)
2. Angelique Louise Marie Pouponneau (Seychelles)
3. Barkha Mossae (Mauritius)
4. Brian Mutebi (Uganda)
5. Caren Nelima Odanga (Kenya)
6. Dauda Muhammad Gombe (Nigeria)
7. Davis Akampurira (Uganda)
8. Deo Sekandi (Uganda)
9. Ijeoma Idika-Chima (Nigeria)
10. Iraguha Bandora (Rwanda)
11. Jean Paul Brice Affana (Cameroon)
12. Joannes Paulus Yimbesalu (Cameroon)
13. Julius James Shirima (Tanzania)
14. Karuna Rana (Mauritius)
15. Kaviri Ali (Uganda)
16. Kelvin Oghenemairo Ogholi (Nigeria)
17. Koziba Catherine Malibala (Botswana)
18. Mallah Enow Tabot (Cameroon)
19. Markus Regis (Seychelles)
20. Mohammad Yaaseen Edoo (Mauritius)
21. Nakaweesa Diana (Uganda)
22. Nakitende Catherine (Uganda)
23. Nkechikwu Nkeiruka Valerie (Nigeria)
24. Nondumiso N Hlophe (Nigeria)
25. Obinna Collins Nebo (Nigeria)
26. PJ Cole (Sierra Leone)
27. Prince Akpah (Ghana)
28. Privileged Cheteni (South Africa)
29. Regina Mtonga (Zambia)
30. Samuel Musembi (Kenya)
31. Sunday Unday John Oluwadero (Nigeria)
ANDILE MTHOMBENI (22 YEARS - FEMALE) SOUTH AFRICA
YOUTH LEADER & VOLUNTEER

This young woman was born and raised in a township somewhere in Johannesburg South Africa, being raised by a single strong black woman. Her childhood was as simple as life in most townships can be, she watched her mother struggle up and down trying to provide for her family. They didn’t have much and they still don’t but yet they were content, after all that is the norm in most townships (not having much). Whilst growing up this young woman held a close relationship with her mother and still maintains that bond to this very day, however just like any normative mother-child relationship, sex and sexual reproductive health issues were of no communication. Sex and boys were never a subject of discussion, if anything there is one memory that she vividly recalls, of her mother threatening her by saying “if you ever come in this house pregnant, you will raise that child alone by yourself in the cold streets, I am telling you”. Although she looks back and laughs now, at the time the struggle was real and looking back that threat might somewhat be what prevented her from falling to the trap of unplanned/unwanted teenage pregnancy. Wish she could say the same for many teenage young girls in her country.

Fast tracking to her high-school (teenage years), she had her first talk about sex, sexual reproductive health and boys. And no she didn’t learn about this in the classroom (sadly) but rather from friends who had heard so and so say that so and so said this or that. Reflecting back to those days, she nervously laughs as she sees the blind leading the blind straight to the pit of the den. Unfortunately this is a shared most common experience for young women if not only in South Africa but across the world. A shared experience of young women learning about their sexualities, their reproductive health through peers who are no experts whatsoever.

Through this talk about sex, boys and etc, this young woman would be curious about this nice thing that everyone is talking about and doing; however she would not dare do it, because just like in cartoons, an image would appear on her forehead of her mother threatening “if you dare I will kick you out”. That is how she got through high school and looking back she thanks her mother for those threats.

After high school, she had applied for university and thanks to government funding she got in, however not sure of what she was getting into, she enrolled for her B.A degree in psychology. All she knew was that she had a loan to pay back (a black people loan, if you are black and can relate then you will know what
she is talking about – for those that are lost, this is the “study, make money and spend your lifetime supporting your family, getting them out of poverty, building your mother a house, caring for your nephews, etc….the university is the lottery ticket out).

Little did she know of the challenges she would be faced with at university, the pressures of keeping up with the Kardashians, in this case the Kardashians are the university girls that have it all, the I phone the eye this, and anything and everything with an eye in it. The struggle was real, but because her mom can’t afford such let alone sustain herself, what does she do, her friends are doing it and are living the so called life, and yet once again she decides not to. However a bigger obstacle lied ahead of her, when she came near to finishing her undergraduate, and with no employment or internship to look forward, the fear of going back home with a degree and doing nothing got her panicking. Push came to shove, she felt cornered and she saw no way out but to do what the others had always been doing, which is throw herself to the male predators’ who drive around night-time (in nice Be My Wife cars (BMW) more like be my side dish type of car if you ask me) driving around in the streets around students’ campuses and residences, lurking for their next victims. This young woman was at the tip of her ice berg, and just about to throw herself in that pit, someone reached out to her and grabbed holding onto to her saving her from herself. Yes so far this is one of those fairy-tale happy ending stories. I say this with boldness because the very same young woman being spoken of here is the same young woman that is sharing this story with you. Everyone has a story to tell.

A superhero that is God, she believes saved her rom herself, through sending her way a woman whom she now refers to as her mentor. A mentor that is the advocate of young women’s sexual reproductive health, under the Young Women’s Leadership Program (YWLP), which is one of the African Gender Institute (AGI) projects being funded by the Ford Foundation Organization. She is eternally thankful and grateful for her mentor/my supervisor/professor, as well as to the AGI program and most importantly applauding and thanking organisations such as Ford Foundation for the work they are doing, because without their funding, this project might not have been. However she also acknowledges and appreciates platforms like these unveil young people like herself (the statistics that is us, the marginalized, the ones at risk), and granting them the platform to share their stories and inspire millions of lives.

Before concluding the story, she would like to highlight the very important
outcomes that programs like AGI/SRH YWLP do for young women who are at risk like herself: This is what she would like for you to take to heart from the bits and pieces of her journey thus far.

Growing up She was never encouraged to have a dream, dream beyond the township, why because her mother herself was never encouraged to dream by her own mother. AGI taught this young woman to have a dream for herself as a young woman, dreaming beyond depending on a man for financial survival. It taught her the importance of mentorship, we all can dream but not all can make them come true, and having someone to hold your hand and guide you is of extensive importance. And she cannot emphasis this enough, sometimes instead of money investing time and believing in someone is all that it takes to transform and inspire change.

It further opened her eyes to discovering her love for research as well as identifying her long lost passion of reading – most young people from the townships don't engage in the culture of reading, and believe her when she says when one engage in the culture of reading novels, or any book for that matter, you will learn to respect and value your intelligence and capacity.

It empowered her and other fellow young women to take responsibility for their own sexuality, educating themselves and others amongst them about our SRH. There's a common saying that goes “Do not do for us without us, and She cannot emphasize enough how significant it is to involve young people in the fight for a better today and tomorrow, after all they are the leaders of tomorrow.

This program is an intervention for and an investment in young black women and in return it is reducing the number of young black women that are at risk of engaging in unhealthy relationships that put them at risk of HIV infection. It has empowered young women to love, respect and know themselves. If you don't know yourself and your capabilities it is rather difficult to fall in love with that self. She further believes that the empowerment of young women, the giving to them of responsibilities, inspiring them to have dreams and aspirations, investing and keeping them busy, will contribute to the reduction of high risk of HIV incidences amongst young black women.

She would like to leave you with one last story for now. Someone very smart once introduced her to the research and interest of other people's cultures. If ever you've been to South America (she hasn't, but has only read about it) you
will know that in Peru there is a tribe of people called the Inca, (the Incan Empire) that is well known for their world site city MACHU PICHU. This was a very great Empire that united over 80 different groups speaking different languages who were divided by the mountains. The Incan Empire had to be in communication with all the different groups, but because there was no technology in the mountains, they devised forms of sending messages had to be sent back and forth, and there were Inca warriors that were positioned in-between the centre of the Empire and the other villages. These messengers would run back and forth with messages, running for days and kilometres, without ever tiring. They called them the Inca warriors”. To whoever may be reading this, I encourage you to look and see yourself as being an Inca warrior, She herself presents herself to you today as an Inca warrior/princess that is spreading the message of SRHR for young women, the importance of young black women’s empowerment as well as inspiring change without ever tiring. If already you are an Inca Warrior then be encouraged as well to march forth and stay being warriors that you are, we are the future and there is hope for our world let’s keep producing young minions like herself and see our world be what we make of it. I hope this young woman’s story moves you to becoming a warrior for greater change.

On an ending note, one of the greatest writes of this century, Chimamanda Ngozi shared a Tedx talk on the dangers of a single story, taking that into account this young woman is not sharing her story for fun. She is doing so with the hopes of being a la familiar for millions of young women that go through the same and feel hopeless. Through her story she hopes to shine bright the torch of the light at the end of each and every tunnel.

The aim for the future is to attain for herself a PhD title, become a renounced researcher that conducts research for the purposes of social change. Alongside that inspiring more young black women all over the world to follow their paths and never look back.
ANGELIQUE LOUISE MARIE Pouponneau (25 YEARS – FEMALE) SEYCHELLES
YOUTH ADVOCATE & CO-FOUNDER OF SIDS YOUTH AIMS HUB-SEYCHELLES

Angelique Pouponneau is a barrister practising in the Seychelles at the age of 25. After four years of studying abroad she returned home committed to give back to the community so her evenings and weekends are spent volunteering. She was the Speaker of the Seychelles National Youth Assembly 2014-2015 and currently she volunteers for the NGO. She co-founded the SIDS Youth AIMS Hub-SEYCHELLES which promotes and advances sustainable development projects in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Mediterranean and South China Seas.

Angelique has three major achievements as a youth leader in the community. The first and her proudest is winning the Rene Barbe Award for 2014 for making the most significant contributions to the hearing-impaired community. During her tenure as a Speaker of the Seychelles National Youth Assembly a motion was passed that public transport should be hearing-impaired friendly and this was implemented by the public transport corporation, she continue to teach children who are hearing impaired English and Math and ensure their inclusion in youth activities by promoting the use of sign language in activities.

Furthermore Angelique co-founded an NGO, the SIDS Youth AIMS Hub-SEYCHELLES, the local chapter of a larger regional NGO which advances and promotes sustainable development driven by young people. This remains her biggest preoccupation as the team works towards building a name for SYAH-Seychelles. Having set up the NGO, she continue to have an active role in driving the NGO to achieve its goals. The NGO has a number of objectives which includes educating and empowering young people on issues of sustainable development and advocating for the participation of youth in national and international decision making processes. They have already started to achieve their targets through the organisation of workshops including a workshop themed: “Our ocean—our passport to the future” where young people were educated and empowered by the career and entrepreneur opportunities that are available to young people when it comes to the ocean. This was followed by a high level-youth exchange where young people are given the opportunity to share their views with Ministers and Principal Secretaries on what they think of the blue economy. To further consolidate on education of young people field activities such as hikes and snorkeling trips. The Hub is currently leading a campaign to see a Seychelles free from plastic bags which has so far stirred debate as to whether the Seychelles can be without plastic bags. This has been through providing education on the effects of plastic bags on the environment and providing alternatives to plastic.

“There is no substitution for hard work”
In 2015 with the announcement of the theme of Commonwealth Day to be “Young Commonwealth” propelled Angelique to create an initiative to showcase the work of young people in Seychelles. It was entitled 28 Young People Making a Difference in Seychelles. This led to the creation of a book which today is referred to so as to destroy stereotypes of young people as a delinquent and lazy group. The initiative received national and international applaud and it will now be an annual project in Seychelles. It also received acclamation by the Commonwealth Youth Council to create a similar book for the Commonwealth.

Carrying out youth work will always have its challenges. A few examples have included undermining the youths’ ability to bring about positive change in society and mobilising people to volunteer towards the different causes. Angelique has overcome such challenges by having the youths in the organisation prove themselves and show exemplary work in all that we deliver and by doing so people have learnt to trust us and have full confidence when working with us as an NGO. The responsibilities of a youth leader is not merely about leading the crowd but inspiring others to join the plight. Having shown exemplary work by NGO people have more faith and confidence in the work it can carry out.

Angelique always tell the story of being a 14 year old girl at home and watching the wind blow the gate to the house slightly close which would make it very difficult for vehicles to enter the premises. She called her dad to inform him that the gate had been blown afar. Hours later he came home and could not believe I had done nothing about this. My life lessons often emerge from a scolding from my father. She had been told on many occasions that when she had identified a problem complaining would not assist but it was up to her to propose solutions and take initiative to address the issue. As can be seen from above She has made it a point whenever she identifies a problem to propose a solution. She has also embraced that what may seem as idealism or a faraway dream often can be obtainable if young people don’t undermine all it can achieve. Young people are like Small Island Developing States—although small together we can make a difference.

Angelique’s message to the youth community is a simple one: There is no substitution for hard work. Do not be disappointed when things do not come easy because if it is a worthy cause then it is worth the hard work to achieve it. Besides we should endeavor to leave a better legacy than was left to us for our children and future generations.
BARKHA MOSSAE (25 YEARS - FEMALE) MAURITIUS
YOUNG DIPLOMAT (ENVIRONMENTAL DIPLOMACY)

“Why ever did you come back?”

This was a question which Barkha heard over and over again, accompanied with the same look of tragi-comic surprise, from relatives, friends, and all the people around her, when she returned to Mauritius after her studies at the University of Manchester.

Barkha would bucked the trend: brain drain was somewhat fashionable, particularly so for young people who were on the prestigious State Scholarship, as she had been. They were expected to look for opportunities elsewhere (and at the same time be chastised for abandoning our countries). Being gloriously unemployed added to the difficulties of convincing people that she believed in her country and thus wanted to contribute to its progress. Barkha’s ambition was to be a diplomat and, in particular, to be a pioneer in the field of environmental diplomacy. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Mauritius remains ecologically vulnerable and global actions are needed to ensure that issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, overfishing and so on do not threaten the very survival of countries like ours.

Strangely enough, it is often during moments of difficulty that they find their feet, and while Barkha was unemployed she realised that youth voices were not being heard enough. Young people were still seen as liabilities, rather than assets, and actors capable of thought-leadership and on-the-grounds action. At that time, preparations were well under way for the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development: it was crucial that youth had their say, seeing as decisions taken today would be impacting their future afterwards. She took the chance of connecting with other youth to develop a capacity building initiative and utilising social media to mobilise youth in various other countries. Following this, what Barkha wanted happened: after a lot of grit, she joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mauritius as a young diplomat – with the firm belief that more young people should join the public service, an antithesis to the common belief that public service jobs are no longer relevant.

Barkha’s work has been a lot about environmental diplomacy at multilateral level. Evolving as a young civil servant has been a learning curve on many levels, particularly in terms of bridging intergenerational gaps and connecting policy makers around the table. But she has also made it a point to bring the youth perspective and as far as possible, connect youth where she could to broader debates about such issues as the development of SIDS. Barkha balanced this out with being active within the Port Louis Hub of the Global Shapers Community.

Never, for the sake of peace and quiet, deny your own experience or convictions

- Dag Hammarskjöld (Swedish diplomat, 2nd UNSG)
Eventually her focus was very much into how to involve more and more youth in key decisions around our oceans. As an island, Mauritius depends heavily on its marine environment. In fact, globally, oceans provide over 350 million jobs and protein for over 1 billion people, chiefly in developing countries. They also regulate our climate – absorbing more carbon than rainforests! – and provide half the oxygen we breathe. It’s therefore key that young people get involved in preventing the slow collapse of our oceans, which is happening due to various threats such as pollution, climate change and overfishing – all of which are the result of a void in leadership. Decisions around conservation, management, taxation, technology and royalties and property rights may sound very big (and boring) but it is CRUCIAL for young people to accept that ocean resources are part of our heritage.

As such, the Port Louis Hub, together with its partner organisation, the SIDS Youth AIMS Hub (SYAH), launched #SeeingBlue, an entirely youth-led initiative, which was a competition calling on youth to reflect on their connection with the ocean and how they impact the ocean. We wanted to give youth the chance to buy into the ocean and take responsibility for their marine environment, as well as have a seat at the table. This year, #SeeingBlue is in its second stage and is again calling on youth to be innovative in their ideas on how to tackle marine debris. The bonus point is the capacity building component, through mentorship and resources, which will hopefully boost young people’s confidence in implementing their ideas.

Oceans are so important across the Commonwealth, given that the majority of Commonwealth nations are either islands or coastal states. It was therefore an utmost honour to present #SeeingBlue to the range of people Barkha was exposed to after winning the Queen’s Young Leaders Award. The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust – as well as Comic Relief and the Royal Commonwealth Society – made tremendous efforts to organise the Awards as well as the learning programme, which to Barkha was symbolic of the fact that young people will be – are – driving the regeneration of the Commonwealth. And her aspiration is that it will be young people who take a very active role in driving leadership on our oceans – from every part of the Commonwealth. To conclude, Barkha would like to invite everyone to join the search for the next contingency of Queen’s Young Leaders by visiting queensyoungleaders.com. The Award, for me, was an acknowledgement of a journey – a quintessentially Mauritian one, but with a global perspective. In that respect, she is very glad that she came back – and hope to keep contributing to the sustainability of our oceans.
BRIAN MUTEBI (32 YEARS - MALE) UGANDA
EDUCATION & GIRL’S RIGHTS CAMPAIGNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EDOU

Brian is the founder of the charity, Education & Development Opportunity – Uganda (EDOU). This is a story of turning an impoverished difficult childhood into a springboard and motivation for success. Orphaned at 10 and nearly dropped out of school when Brian's guardians could afford no more the cost of his education only to be assisted through school by Good Samaritans. He went on to become the first graduate on his village. The year was 2007.

But the plight of young people in Brian's community who had no education touched his heart. Brian conceived a Dream. He wanted to do something that would make a real difference in the lives of people. It was a joyful burden God put on his heart – joyful because the thought of transforming lives was pleasant to the mind yet a burden because he didn't know how it would turn into a life-transforming reality.

Brian Mutebi Dream Scholarship Fund:
Convinced that education is key to transforming peoples’ lives, Brian sold his piece of land at $1,500 he had bought to build his house. He started The Brian Mutebi Dream Scholarship Fund that gives scholarships to orphaned and vulnerable children, youths and teenage mothers. 25 young people have since 2009 benefited from the Fund managed by EDOU. These are young people who otherwise would have no hope of attaining an education.

Girls’ and Women’s Rights Campaigner:
In September 2013, at the height of M23 rebels’ conflict in DR Congo, Brian was touched by the plight of Congolese refugees in western Uganda. Of the 48,718 refugees, 84% were children many of them teenage mothers. Instead of books, they carried babies. He appointed himself “UNFPA Voluntary Ambassador” for “Let Girls Be Girls” Campaign to stop teenage pregnancies. At Makerere University, he was students' volunteer coordinator for the Makerere University Gender Mainstreaming Students Project leading a team of youth sensitizing the university’s 35,000 students’ population on gender, sexual and reproductive health. Today he does outreaches in schools and churches and travel with UNFPA around the country documenting and publishing articles on girls’ and women’s rights. He uses a pen to take up their case.

Youth empowerment:
Brian sits on the Board of Governance of a youth-led savings & credit society

“Your Dream is the most valuable asset you have"
worth over $200,000 that conducts financial literacy training and advances soft loans to youth for economic development at lower interest rates than commercial banks. He hold a Bachelors degree in Tourism from Makerere University majoring in communication and project planning and management. He has certificates in Computer Applications and Gender Mainstreaming from Makerere University and have trained in Project Cycle Management with Samaritan's Purse UK. He trains youth in my community in designing community development projects.

Sheltering homeless youth:
Brian has spearheaded two successful media campaigns for youth to begin income generating projects and secured partnership with Standard Chartered Bank to build a house for two homeless orphaned youth.

Awards:
Besides Brian's charity work, he practices as a journalist and for 10 years, he has extensively reported on gender and reproductive health and rights for young people and women. In 2013, he published a refugee girl's letter to the UN Secretary General calling on the UN to pacify the Congo. The article, “Refugee girl writes to UN Secretary General” won him a human rights award by the Uganda Child Rights NGO Network. He was also award winner with the African Centre for Media Excellence. In July 2013, he was selected by Uganda’s leading daily, The New Vision, as Hero of the Month. In 2015, he featured on the global list of “15 journalists, 15 voices for girls and women” by the New York based Women Deliver.

The challenges:
Limited networking and partnership opportunities have affected Brian’s progress. At one point, a church in the USA sought to partner with his charity but he lacked a high level recommendation. He missed the opportunity. he lacks funds to run the Scholarship Fund sustainably. It pains him when the students on the scheme are chased from school over school fees.

Overcoming challenges:
Brian actively seek partnership and networking opportunities to expand his reach. He developed the “Be a Partner Be EDOU Ambassador” campaign to mobilize resources. He has learnt it is harder to breakthrough in life when one is born in an impoverished society, but it is possible. One has to work much
smarter and pray to God to see and seize opportunities. He started doing charity work at 26; he wished he started at 16.

Message to the youth:

Every youth must strive to get an education and get a mentor, someone you look up to and can speak into your life. Get a conviction for something noble in life – a dream – and pursue it. Brian considers his Dream to transform lives the most valuable asset he has.
CAREN, NELIMA ODANGA (21 YEARS - FEMALE) KENYA
BROADCAST JOURNALIST, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Caren Odanga is currently studying broadcast journalism at the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC) and is the founder/director of Sisari Women Initiative. She was raised in remote rural setting with high illiteracy level among women, extreme poverty, violence against women, teenage pregnancies, forced/arranged teenage marriages, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, interethnic clashes, poor healthcare, and total disregard of women rights. Within her own family, her mother was illiterate having been married of at a tender age of 13 years old to her father who was by then 40 years old. It was “normal” for her father to come home late in the night and start battering her mother without any reason. As children, Caren grew up knowing that it was ordinary for women to be beaten by men. Cases of sexual violence such as women and girls being raped were very common and nobody was ever held accountable for raping women despite the perpetrators being well known individuals. Having been a survivor of sexual/gender violence at the age of 12 years leading unprecedented journey of suffering, including but not limited to, rejection, ridicule, isolation, physical abuse and psychological abuse, Caren was always determined to be responsible for her own change through community mobilization to help save the lives of other vulnerable girls in her community. After being sponsored by Yaya Education Trust (a local charitable organization) through her education, she got a chance to volunteer with them.

At Yaya Education Trust, Caren worked as a peer educator in the areas of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and girl child education. She said: “Volunteering at Yaya Education Trust opened my eyes after realizing that there were many girls/young women who were experiencing much more problems than what I went through. In 2013, together with other likeminded young women, I established Sisari Women Initiative (Group), a local organization whose main objective is to transform the lives of marginalized and vulnerable rural girls/young women in Kakamega County through sustainable practical solutions by giving them the tools they need to empower themselves. SWI provides services in the areas counseling and rehabilitation, promotion of girl-child education, campaign against gender violence, talent identification and promotion, mentorship, provision of contraceptives and reproductive health sensitization, entrepreneurship training and job creation, campaign against retrogressing traditional practices such as wife inheritance, and engaging young men as champions for girl-child empowerment through trainings.”

Through SWI, Caren intends to create a generation that respects, protects and
promotes the rights of women. She is committed to catalyzing a transformation in the society, moving from the culture of domination to one of equality, passion and partnership. Caren says she would like to see a balanced world that operates on the principles of mutual respect, collaboration, and civic participation, therefore, reversing the old paradigm predicated on hierarchy, violence, rights violation and the subordination of women and girls. Through this change, there will be reduced violence against women/girls, hence, improving their lives economically, socially and politically.

Among other awards and recognitions, Caren is one of the 2015 Queen Young Leaders’ Award winner (UK), 2015 Young Women deliver award winner (USA), and is a board member of the Girls Engagement Advisory Board (USA).

Being a Queens Young leader has propelled her into both local and international limelight. She is now considered an influential person within her community and in Kenya at large, hence being a role model to many other girls among marginalized communities. Through the Award Caren continues to be exposed to similar initiatives around the world where she can share her experiences with others and learn best practices from them for possible replication in Kenya. The mentoring and skills development being provided to Caren and others through the Award is a huge opportunity. Of the award Caren says: “The appropriate skills I am receiving in the areas of project management, leadership, communication, and rights advocacy and campaign skills will help me grow my organization and help create more young leaders. Additionally, the award continue to expose and link me to the much needed opportunities that will enable me bring the change I desire in my community and Country.”

Last but not least, Caren is currently working on a project that seeks to produce and distribute re-usable sanitary towels to rural girls who cannot afford or access sanitary towels to hygienically manage their menses, and to address stigma, violence and taboos associated with menstruation within the community.
Dauda Muhammad Gombe was born in Damaturu the Yobe State capital in the Late 80s to a happy Family of Alhaji Muhammad Gombe. He started his primary Education at Bundugari Primary School Damaturu and later Proceed to Government Senior Science Secondary School Potiskum for the Secondary certificate. He obtain his BSc Geography at the prestigious Yobe State University and Successfully did his National Youth Service Corps assignment in Kano State. He is a Football Lover, a Reader and Innovator that believes in the spirit of “I can do everything I want”.

Dauda sponsors and supports over 150 students to further their education in various higher institution of Learning within Yobe state. He has established First Youths Organisation that involved all in the heart of North East. He is the recipient of African Peace Ambassadors Award by African first ladies Peace Mission Abuja 2014. He is in the processes of establishing various youth organisations and groups that advocates for Youth inclusion in Governance. He sponsoring and supports over ten Peace and Security summit across the states of North East Nigeria. Also he supports and promotes Violence Free Election during the 2015 General Election in almost all the states of North East in Nigeria. Further, he organizes Champion Ring Inter School Quiz, essay and debate competitions to help improve writing and speaking skills of Students.

He has been holding many positions that meant for youth development. He is the founder and president of North East Youth Initiative Forum (NEYIF) and also the founder and president of National Union of Damaturu Emirate Students. He is the Zonal Vice Chairman to North East Arewa Consultative Forum Youth Congress. Her is in fact currently the State Organising Secretary to the Muslims Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Secretary General to the Network of Yobe Civil Society Organisations, Secretary General to the Civil Society Network for Peace in Yobe, Member of the Partnership Against Violent Extremism in Nigeria, Member in Yobe State Stakeholder on IDPs, Immediate Past Secretary General to the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS Zone C), Member of State Steering Committee State Local Government Reform project (EU Funded Project ), National PRO to the Arewa Student Forum, and the Vice President to the North East Students Forum.

The challenges of every struggle is not far from acceptability, finance and time. Most of the times peoples of the community fail to understand and reason with you when it comes to issues that will help them except if there is monetary
benefit. Finance or funding him as a key player that determines one's ability to implement or not a certain project in communities. He does his best in ensuring proper advocacy is done before undertaking any project and also make the communities or individuals part of the implementation committees that will give them sense of belonging.

Dauda thanks that if he had all what it takes to achieve his set goals and objectives he could have done more projects that help in improving the living condition of Needy, Poor, disables, Women, Children and Aged People. He says, “In my life the happiest movement is for me to see I add value in to the life of someone.”

Dauda would like to call on potential youths and Youths leaders across the globe to understand that they are the heart of every society and nothing can be done without them. They should always think positive and ensure that their target is always to improve the lives of a common men. They should also understand that it is not money that made everything but rather hard work and dedication are the key ingredients in making things possible. “if you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or things”
DAVIS AKAMPURIRA (27 YEARS - MALE) UGANDA
YOUTH LEADER & SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

When Davis Akampurira travelled to the US for a short course in Democracy and Good Governance in 2012, he hadn’t set out just to collect a certificate. He was also on a mission to look out for like-minded people who could rally and train the youth to become Africa’s next generation of leaders.

While there, he sold this idea to Yammin Ibrahim, the then deputy minister for Youth and Sports in Ghana, and Martin Sean, a youth leader in Mauritius, and the two immediately jumped on board. The idea was to form a non-governmental organisation that would help empower the youth to take up leadership positions in different sectors in their respective countries.

Akampurira already had a name in his mind for the NGO, and was to call it the Africa Leadership Awards. The reason he emphasised African integration was because he thought it would help in creating markets for Africa’s products, remove barriers to movement and help in reducing unemployment, one of Africa’s biggest headaches.

“Look at the US. If they had not integrated into one nation, where would they be now?” Akampurira asks.

As part of the activities of the organisation, Akampurira’s colleague, Martin Sean from Mauritius, organised the inaugural African Leadership Awards in 2013 in the Southern African island nation. And last year, Akampurira brought the event to Uganda with a lavish ceremony at the Sheraton hotel, where the organisation awarded outstanding individuals in different sectors in Africa.

No Easy Task:

He plans to hold the African Leadership Forum this year, where he intends to invite the chairman of the African Union and a host of other African presidents. It is at the Leadership Forum that Akampurira and his team will get the platform to relay to Africa’s leaders the problems affecting the youth across the continent.

As part of the operations of the African Leadership Awards, Akampurira and his colleagues from other 31 countries in West, South and East Africa, engage their fellow youth in discussions about the problems affecting them and the possible solutions.

“We, the youth, need to put forward our problems to our leaders, because the future is ours, and in fact, we are tomorrow’s leaders. So, we need to lay a proper foundation for a better world tomorrow, and we can do this by holding
our leaders to account to do what is good for our countries.”

Akampurira, through the National Youth Council structures, and Africa leadership Awards organised study groups where youth from various countries and universities, through social media and radio talk shows, meet every two months to discuss policies and present them to their team leaders, who in turn present them to their governments.

He says that he plans on approaching religious leaders to spread the gospel of poverty eradication, as well as elders who will guide the youth in the study groups on how they can point out priority areas, for which they need the governments to design adequate policies.

Akampurira, an ordinary youth, needed a lot of courage and determination to start this project. It was not very easy at the start. The project required a lot of money, yet he did not have any. But using his exposure and good track record in youth service, he lobbied the Presidents’ Offices, the National Youth Councils and capable individuals to get funding for his project. Most of his benefactors were impressed by his innovative and developmental ideas.

In fact, Ronald Kibuule, the then minister of state for Youth, considers Akampurira one of the most innovative youths in the country. “Davis is very innovative, hardworking, but above all, a good team player,” Kibuule told The Observer.

There is so much confidence in Akampurira that President Museveni agreed to pen the foreword to his book, The African Leadership Book of Fame, which he launched at the Golf Course hotel Uganda this year.

The book, part of his African Leadership Awards project, recognises leaders in different sectors such as business, politics, security, agriculture, tourism, education, as well as Africa’s founding fathers.

Akampurira, hails from Kabale district in western Uganda and is one of 12 siblings. He went to Kabale primary school, Ntare School and Makerere University, where he did a bachelor’s degree in Commerce.

While doing his A-levels at Ntare School, where he was the chairman of the student’s council, he won the presidency of the Uganda National Students Association (UNSA), and this set him on the path of his career as a youth leader. He later joined the National Youth Council, where he is currently the secretary for External Relations.
Akampurira has been recognised internationally and rubbed shoulders with great leaders in the world. He received an honorary citizenship from the mayor of the City of Pensacola, Florida, in the United States, won the Youth Leadership award in South Korea for his contribution to global youth development, and won the same award again in South Africa. He has also represented Ugandan youth twice at the commonwealth youth forum/youth council in Perth, Australia (2011) and Sri Lanka (2013).

Orphaned at the age of 13, Akampurira faced a difficult childhood, being taken care of by his grandmother. “It was a struggle growing up. We were many children, yet relatives grabbed some of our parents’ property which could have helped in looking after us,” Akampurira, who lost two of his siblings along the way, says. This is what inspired him to work hard so that he could become successful and support his siblings. At his young age, Akampurira takes care of them as well as relatives and friends and their children. He also pays school fees and upkeep for six children. He blames today’s youth for laziness.

Most youths think they are still too young to contribute to society. But leaders like Jesus Christ changed the world at the age of thirty, he points out. To be an example to his fellow youth, he engages in agricultural activities in his home district where he grows tea and maize and employs over 1,000 people through his agricultural activities, something that has helped reduce unemployment in his home village.
DAVIS AKAMPURIRA (28 YEARS - MALE) UGANDA
COMMUNITY WORKER (VULNERABLE AND DISABLED YOUTH)

Deo won a university scholarship and trained for and achieved a Bachelor’s degree in Adult and Community Education. He has four years’ experience working to empower vulnerable persons with disabilities especially youth with Cerebral Palsy. Deo was in an accident when he was 13 years but didn’t know that he had undergone a brain drainage (cerebral palsy) which had led to him being disabled. He just didn’t know why his mobility had been effected. He experiences walking, standing, writing, speech difficulties although he undergoes interventions like physiotherapy and medication on daily basis. As for today his dream is to be an inspirational and motivational speaker through his story and also fight against the discrimination and injustices against people with disabilities in his home country of Uganda.

Deo is a Queen’s Young Leader award winner for 2015. He is also a representative of youth with disabilities from central region, a member of the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda Youth committee and also the Coordinator of Uganda National Association of Cerebral Palsy (UNAC), an organization that he spearheaded its formulation in 2013 and got registered in 2014 as a result of Cerebral Palsy project that he was implementing at National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) as a Project Coordinator.

The Cerebral Palsy project is aimed at mobilizing, sensitizing and advocating for rights of youth with cerebral Palsy in Uganda. The project believes that people with cerebral Palsy (CP) can do what other people do and also live an independent life in the communities once empowered. However, people living with Cerebral Palsy continue to experience marginalization in accessing mainstream development programmes. People with Cerebral palsy are discriminated by their family members, community members and service providers. They are often deprived them of their fundamental human rights to access basic social services and to participate in family and community activities.

Deo’s aim therefore is to become a high profile disability activist who advocates the rights, justices and inclusion of people with disability in Uganda. This will help change the negative cultural practices and myths towards people with Cerebral Palsy, and also sensitize the public on how to mainstream and work in harmony with people with disabilities. He also hopes this will translate into better educational opportunities for young people with cerebral palsy and better skills and abilities to defend their rights in society.
The Queen’s young leader program helped Deo to share his life experiences and also celebrate his achievements with other young leaders, business professionals, politicians and the royal family. With this opportunity, Deo has learnt and shared best practices, networks and also established contacts and partnerships, gained a lot of enthusiasm and ability to do extraordinary things that will create a lasting legacy benefiting the whole Commonwealth. All young leaders aged 18-29 years in Commonwealth countries doing extraordinary work in their communities for the betterment of youth.
IJEOMA IDIKA-CHIMA (24 YEARS - FEMALE) NIGERIA
DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST; FOUNDER OF TEENZ GLOBAL FOUNDATION; CO-FOUNDER OF OPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS & NETWORK

As a survivor of Child Abuse and Girl-child rejection, Ijeoma Idika-Chima believes that young people’s access to education, information and health service is fundamental for sustainable development in Nigeria. Ijeoma grew up in a broken home with rough experiences of child abuse and neglect. Born three weeks after her parents broke up in Owerri, Eastern Nigeria. When her father heard the news of her birth, he rejected her because she was a girl-child and showed no interest towards her education.

At different times, she lived with uncles, aunties and people; these periods were filled with lots of child maltreatment during her primary and secondary school education. Educating the girl-child was seen as bad investment so girls were not given equal opportunities at home or school. As a girl at age 10, Ijeoma’s life was already filled with horrifying experiences; nonetheless, she was determined to further her education. She would sleep at 1am and wake up at 4am to do domestic chores before going to school. This earned her constant tardiness at school; her classmates teased her because she lacked personal care. She barely had time to read and study her books or do her homework; denied the joy and happiness many of her peers had during their childhood; and was often perceived as a hopeless child, without a future. Ijeoma made several suicide attempts and was constantly faced with an option of dropping out of school. However, after her Secondary education, she searched for a part time job to pay school fees as an undergraduate to obtain a Bachelor of Art (BA) in English Language through a Distance Learning program at the University of Abuja, Nigeria.

With her decision-making ability, she believed that if she could go to school she should gain knowledge and skills access limitless opportunities and reach her potentials in life. At age 16, she started working with young people between ages 10-19 especially girls within her community to help them build life skills, she was inspired by her experience to create a platform (Teenz Tym) for young people to express themselves on social issues hampering their positive growth to get required help. She founded Teenz Global during her final year at the University at Age 20 with a vision to inspire a positive generational change of over 60,000 young people with increasing access to education, information and health services, fostering self-development and empowering them for better choices, as self-sustainers and entrepreneurs in the next five years. Teenz Global have engaged over 12,000 young people between ages of 10 – 24 in

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning but anyone can start today and make a new ending

- Maria Robinson
37 communities through grassroots and media advocacy, capacity building trainings, a development hub, community based outreaches and education support services across 8 states in Nigeria. We have implemented 23 outreaches, 3 annual cultural events, published 2 magazines and 52 episodes of Teenz Tym television broadcasts.

Ijeoma is recognized as a 2014 Young African Leader and a Mandela Washington Fellow (YALI) by President Barrack Obama; a Global Youth Ambassador by A World At School; a 2015 INEC Youth Ambassador by Independent National Electoral Commission; an Africa Region Finalist of the Commonwealth Youth Awards for Excellence in Development work 2015; a GCED Africa Advocate on Global Citizenship Education (GCED); a member of National Youth Coalition on Education, an Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society and a USIP Generation Change Global Fellow. In addition to her work, she volunteers as a Child Protection Officer with the Child Right Brigade International (FCT Chapter) and a UN Online Volunteer. Recently, recognized and received a National Award of Excellence in Youth Civic Participation during the 2015 International Youth Day by President Muhammadu Buhari and the Federal Ministry of Youth Development. She is also trained and skilled in teaching, writing, editing, public speaking, counseling, research, and ICT. She is also a Certified Civic Leader from University of Delaware, USA, a Certified Oracle Database Administrator Associate and Professional, and a Graduate of Basic Presentation Course from Federal Radio Corporation Nigeria Training school, Lagos.

Ijeoma still hopes to study Law to increase her capacity in promoting human rights among children and young people. Recently co-founded Open Community Schools and Network, a social enterprise that provides affordable schools within communities; she plans to establish Open Community Schools in over 50 locations within Nigeria in the next ten years, to contribute to increasing access to quality education among vulnerable children.

Self-awareness and development is necessary in achieving growth. As Youths, never underestimate your abilities rather focus on harnessing your personal skills. Putting ideas into actions are possible when you are passionate about solutions, you don’t see obstacles or problems, rather you see opportunities and areas to make change, you can turn those negative experiences into positive mile stones. You also don’t need everything to start - you just need to start. YES!!! funds are necessary and important for sustainability but you need to see the possibility in your ideas, even when you feel you don’t have the required
funding. This will inspire you to action!

Every great dream had a starting point. You all have greatness in you and can drive positive change within your circle of influence. Be determined to succeed because success is a decision you make. Don’t see failure as an option for you!

According to Maria Robinson “Nobody can go back and start a new beginning but anyone can start today and make a new ending” That’s Ijeoma’s Story!
IRAGUHA BANDORA YVES (26 YEARS - MALE) RWANDA
REPRESENTATIVE - RNSSO “ARISE AND SHINE: YOUTH TRAINER IN SELF-DEFENSES AND FIRST AID

About Iraguha’s social life, he is a Christian Adventist Youth Master Guide, with Special Skills in Camping, Campaigning and Youth Training in self-defenses and First Aid. He is the second born within a family of two boys, and two sisters, with only one parent and orphan to other parent, his father who died in 1995. He studied in Christian Schools in his Secondary studies Protestants and Catholic Marist Brothers where he gained knowledge about Discipline and Loving Human Creation by Almighty God which helps him in giving value to Human beings additional to his career as a Registered Nurse and as Medical Student.

Iraguha’s leadership experiences, capacity and ability in the National and International Networking, with his vision and mission as a Representative of Africa and Europe Region in the Commonwealth Students Association (CSA) Executive Committee. He was committed to apply for the Africa and Europe Regional Representative, as he is nominated from the Rwanda Nursing Sciences Students’ Organization (RNSSO) “Arise and Shine“, which he is now serving as a Representative and attributed to represent all Rwanda Nursing Sciences Students from more than 12 Public and Private Universities offering Nursing Sciences Trainings in his country Rwanda, and he graduated from Bachelor of Sciences in Nursing Program in August 2014, where he was serving RNSSO as the Acting President and Representative as he was still an Active member of RNSSO. During this academic year 2014-2015, he decided to transfer his credits in the Program of Bachelor of Sciences in General Medicine and Surgery in the same University of Rwanda, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, now as a Mentor member of the RNSSO, he is serving RNSSO as the Representative mainly focusing on public affairs, Partnerships, Sponsorship, Networking Nationally and Internationally for RNSSO as mentioned in the statutes recorded in the CSA archives. The Current RNSSO President is an Active member, MUSONI Alex, who was the RNSSO Vice President Last Academic Year and he is still studying in Year 4 Bachelor of Sciences in Nursing with honors Program.

Iraguha’s qualifications to apply for that CSA position include, he made great works to create and made RNSSO become officially Associate member of the CSA from last Academic Year September 12th, 2014, and as a University Student in the University of Rwanda, College of Medicine and Health Sciences. His country Rwanda is also a Member of the Commonwealth Community, and he was given approval from his Nominating Organization RNSSO that he contributed in its Creation and now Serving it as the Representative. He speaks and write very good English, French, Swahili which are the most used Languages in Europe,
Africa and Rwanda in addition to his Native National language Kinyarwanda that he speaks and write excellently.

Iraguha has completed a Bachelor of Sciences in General Nursing Programme with honors. He has completed it with distinctions for the modules of Leadership and Administration, Research Methodology, Medical Psychology, Psychiatry and Project Management. He has participated and presented national and international networking papers in different national and international conferences, shared advocating opinions with national and international students, youth, scientific, democratic conferences, with some recent evidences, where he participated in the 2nd International Conference on Democratic Governance in Africa, Asia, and Middle East in Kigali, Rwanda from June 30 to July 03, 2014 where he was impressed by the plenary session on measuring Governance and Democracy in Africa, with the Commonwealth Youth Development Index as presented by Mr. Lyne Robinson presentation followed by the Pan African Youth Conference in Kigali Rwanda, 1st Joint International Students’ Scientific Conference in Kampala Uganda, Global Nursing International Conference on Global Innovation in Nursing Education, Research and Practice, etc. Further he owns CPD International Paper presentation Scores which evidenced his ability in international pubic hard talking.

Iraguha hopes his experiences will inspire different youth across the commonwealth and he wishes the youth in the world to do better and better for the development of community from a global perspective.
JEAN PAUL BRICE AFFANA (27 YEARS - MALE) CAMEROON
YOUTH AND ACTION INSTRUCTOR, COORDINATOR, COMMONWEALTH YOUTH CLIMATE CHANGE NETWORK

When in 2006, over ten years ago, Jean Paul Brice Affana decided to serve his community as a volunteer in the city of Ngaoundéré, in the Northern part of Cameroon affected by droughts, he did not know that his passion for environment was about to take him through an unexpected journey going beyond Cameroon borders and this small town. The young man was concerned by the impacts of droughts on crops, on farmers’ ability to produce food and on people’s access to adequate food. Aware there was a problem called climate change Jean Paul started to think about how to change the narrative and make his community happier. He later learned that working with others have greater benefits and enable cross-learning, hence he started to mobilize his peers, other young people from the town, and from Yaoundé city when he needed to leave Ngaoundéré.

Two years later, Jean Paul completed a training programme under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education of Cameroon and graduated as a Youth and Action Instructor. As a Youth Worker, he dedicated his knowledge and time to equip other young people with capacity, skills and the ability to play an active role in the response to environmental problems in Cameroon, including climate change and the degradation of the country’s biodiversity. In 2008, the same year, he co-founded Vital Actions for Sustainable Development (AVD), a youth-led NGO that aims to promoting eco-citizenship among citizens in Cameroon and ensuring everyone becomes an eco-citizen in their daily life. The organisation which seeks climate and social justice empowers children and youth as key actors to achieving innovative and sustainable solutions to environmental issues. Its members believe in the importance of educating, empowering, engaging and recognizing the generation of next leaders, while also providing them with proper space for expressing their willing to make the world a better place for all.

Jean Paul remembers again today the first activity he ran as part of the ‘Clean-Up the World’ campaign with his colleagues in a small block of Yaoundé city. There, they cleaned-up a drinking water point close to which the local people had created a waste deposit without being aware of its impact on the quality of the water, hence on their own health. This public awareness campaign made him realised that there was a lot to do and only a strongest team of young leaders would have the ability to commit for such a crucial goal: protecting the environment from human activities and tackling climate change starting from the little things! The little commitment from this son of Cameroon became bigger in 2009 when

Young people deserve more than just being engaged in climate change policy or action; they need to be empowered and equipped with the necessary skills to act as equal partners in the global response to climate change. This should be our main goal.
Jean Paul received his first international acknowledgment of his work on climate change by the World Bank Group, through his successful participation to the World Bank Essay Competition on the theme “How can young people tackle climate change?”. As one of the eight international finalists out of over 2000 participants, Jean Paul was flown to Seoul, South Korea, to present his idea of using eco-citizenship to empower citizens’ action on climate change, especially by educating them inside public transports such as taxis, buses, trains and even airplanes, in front of an international jury representing various institutions. If he did not win the first prize, this recognition was the turning point that opened Jean Paul’s world to the international community, helping him to link his local actions to solve environmental problems with the global related processes, especially within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). That same year, he had the opportunity to participate at the UNFCCC COP15, known as the Copenhagen Summit, one of the most important gatherings on climate change in our history.

Jean Paul served as the Focal Point of YOUNGO (Youth NGOs) to the secretariat of the UNFCCC after being elected by his peers worldwide for a year-long mandate in 2011. With this position he had played a significant role in the participation of young people in the global climate change agenda, also helping to ensure their contributions to the international climate change negotiations have valuable impacts. By serving the international youth climate movement, he did not stop engaging young people from Cameroon in his work through AVD. As such he coordinated a number of local projects and campaigns including “Making your room green for the planet” during the Global Youth Service Day 2010 during which hundreds students of the University of Yaoundé 1 were trained on tips to saving water and electricity resources in their rooms within the campus and to promoting sustainable lifestyles. In 2011, he also coordinated the “I Vote for Climate” campaign on the occasion of the presidential election in Cameroon. Funded by the Global Call for Climate Action (GCCA) and supported by a number of national and international organizations/networks such as the African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC), the campaign raised awareness among citizens on the importance to vote only for those candidates with strong policies and programmes addressing climate change with citizens’ participation once elected. Over 6000 people signed a petition asking for commitment, and several media covered the campaign whose results were presented at the 1st Climate Change and Development Conference in Africa (CCDA-I) and at the UNFCCC COP17 in Durban, South Africa.
When Jean Paul started his journey as the Coordinator of the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network (CYCN), he knew this will be another exciting adventure. The Network was established by young environmental activists and practitioners from across the Commonwealth. Supported by the Youth Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the CYCN’s mission is to build a Commonwealth where young people are provided with the capacities and opportunities to effectively address Climate Change and other important environmental issues and find sustainable individual and collective solutions. Through his role as the Network’s Coordinator, Jean Paul made several incredible achievements by ensuring that climate change is a top priority for young people across and engage them as key stakeholders in addressing the issue at a grassroots, national and regional level. He for example conducted a youth delegation at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, where they hosted a public side event. The Network also made policy inputs to the 2014 United Nations Conference on Small Islands Developing States and to many other policy meetings. More recently, the CYCN hosted in June 2015 a Commonwealth Youth Expert Group Meeting on Climate Change in the lead up to the UNFCCC COP21 scheduled to take place end of this year in Paris, France. With support from the Youth Division and the Commonwealth Youth Council, the meeting produced key policy recommendations in conjunction with voluntary commitments from the young participants who agreed to work with Heads of Commonwealth governments, world leaders, their peers and other stakeholders to contribute to a sustainable post-2015 global agreement on climate change that would limit global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius, achieve 100% renewable energy targets, and protect both the environment and all communities from climatic impacts.

Today Jean Paul considers himself as a development professional with relevant work experience in climate change, sustainable development, and youth development and empowerment. He believes that his commitment to enhance youth participation into civic life and development goals, especially on climate change and other environmental issues will never stop. When looking around him, he can see how far he has contributed with his peers to this crucial goal and is happy to continue the journey, despite being aware that there is still a lot to do, from the local to the global level, starting from little things.
JOANNES PAULUS YIMBESALU (27 YEARS - MALE) CAMEROON
GLOBAL YOUTH AMBASSADOR FOR A WORLD AT SCHOOL; RESEARCH SCIENTIST; CO-FOUNDER HOPE FOR CHILDREN

Joannes Yimbesalu is a research scientist by profession, with interests in infectious diseases and public health but is currently pursuing a Certificate in International Development from the University of British Columbia. Joannes’ childhood was very challenging. His mother was never well educated because she was a girl despite the fact that she wanted to continue with school. She dropped out on several occasions to take care of her sick mum as well as provide for the entire family. With no formal education, her major concern was how to provide her children with the best education she never had. She resorted to petit business so she could keep up with their educational needs since she believed Education was the only tool that can never be taken away from anyone.

He says “sometimes we would go to bed hungry just so we could save money for school. During holidays we would carry food to sell in the market in order to help mum save for school. We did extremely well at school and today we are giving back to the community we call home”.

In 2008, after carrying out a research study on the “Prevalence of Malaria and parasitic Infections alongside Hemoglobin levels in school children of school going age” in Belo sub-division, Joannes came across many children including orphans and those living with disability who looked malnourished and desolated who were not in school and learning. Poverty was their best friend and despite their struggles, some managed to still smile but he had to do something. That same year 2008, Joannes used his university savings worth $70 and provided over 150 children with educational supplies in two primary schools. Later in 2010, Joannes alongside his twin brother co-founded HOPE for Children Cameroon, a charitable based organization with one goal of educating every child, one school, one village at a time. Since then, their organization has provided tuition assistance to over 300 children while over 500 children have benefitted from educational supplies in three primary schools. They have also constructed five clean and safe pit toilets in order to combat the practice of open defecation and reduce school absenteeism resulting from poor health.

As a strong advocate for global education and a Global Youth Ambassador for “A World at School”, Joannes has represented the voices of youths at several spaces, including the UN. Joannes serves on the Global Citizenship Education Working Group on Policy, Advocacy and Communications convened by the United Nations Youth Advocacy Group (YAG), the Center for Universal Education (CUE),
and UNESCO. He recently spoke at a UN High-level Side Event on “Ensuring the Emerging Leadership of African Young Women and Girls towards Agenda 2063”, and at a press conference on “African Women and Girls Speak on Peace, Security and Development in Africa”, convened by the African Union and the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa during the 59th Session on the Commission of the Status of Women. His work on gender equality was featured by UN Women in the April 2015 issue as one of the first IMPACT stories since the launch of the UN Women “HeForShe” Campaign, a solidarity movement that calls on men and boys to stand up against the persisting inequalities faced by women and girls globally. Joannes is actively involved in the post-2015 development stakeholder steering committee processes leading to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in September. His efforts to make a lasting difference have been recognized by the UN with the 2014 Youth Courage Award, and by The Queen of England with a Queen’s Young Leader Award, which he accepted in June 2015.

Joannes has overcome several challenges in life ranging from fear of failure to lack of funding for his projects but he never gave up. He believes that in life it's better to try and fail than never to try at all and that working as a team is very essential to human growth and development as one tend to learn varied skills from diverse lenses. As such he advices every young person not to bury their talents but rather exploit them not just for themselves but for the benefit of others. Joannes is a fervent advocate for global citizenship because he thinks that we live in an interconnected world and there has never been a better time to be a youth than now. Today, many young people especially women and girls still face several challenges ranging from education, climate change, health, gender equality, mental health and disability equality and as global citizens our task is to overcome these global challenges through active citizenship by investing in women and girls politically and economically. To accommodate these global challenges which sometimes move beyond national borders and across geographical regions there is a need for cultural diplomacy engaging young people across countries through effective communication and negotiation skills. With Joannes' background in cultural diplomacy and international relations, he plans to effectively engage and exchange ideas and values, build and sustain better relationships through dialogue with other young persons within his country and across the commonwealth in a culturally sensitive approach.
JULIUS JAMES SHIRIMA (25 YEARS - MALE) TANZANIAN
FOUNDER & CEO - DARECHA LIMITED

Julius Shirima, the recipient of Pan-Commonwealth Youth Award Excellence in Enterprise Development 2015, founded Darecha, a youth entrepreneurship organization and micro-venture capital company, while still in high school. He founded Darecha when he was a teenager which has a network of approximately 5,000 young people, enables young Tanzanian entrepreneurs to transform their business ideas into profitable ventures which provide employment to other young people.

He attended Kibaha Secondary School where upon graduating in 2007, he emerged as one of the top students in Tanzania. In 2008 he was selected as one of the 106 young leaders from across Africa to join the inaugural class at African Leadership Academy, a unique institution that aims at developing the next generation of African leaders situated in Johannesburg, South Africa. At ALA he excelled in Entrepreneurship and Leadership studies whereby he interacted with young leaders from all African countries.

While at school, Julius founded several projects and student run-business such as DukaBora the school retail shop, Eco-solution group, Grow Green Itsuseng community homestead gardens and DARECHA.

In January 2011, he was offered a scholarship to further his business and entrepreneurship knowledge at the College of Wooster in USA.

Julius strongly believes in collective development. The passion and commitment in supporting young entrepreneurs also the experiences at African Leadership inspires him to found Darecha at 19. Darecha micro venture capital fund was a way for young entrepreneurs in Tanzania to raise venture capital without incurring high interest rates or collateral from traditional financial institutions. Due to the positive impact of Darecha particularly among Tanzania young entrepreneurs has made Julius receive several awards the such as Pan Commonwealth Youth Award Excellence in Enterprise Development and ALA Entrepreneurial Leadership Award.

Julius advice to other young people, “There is no shortcut to realize your dreams it might take a while but if you’re truly passionate about it, It will soon materialize.”
Mauritius is more than just a “honeymoon destination”; as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), we face exacerbated vulnerabilities.

Karuna says, “to be honest, I have not always been environmental conscious. Our education system and even our society, has failed to integrate a sustainable lifestyle and effectively communicate environmental issues (and its urgency) from an early age.”

As such, Karuna’s first true exposure to environmental issues happened while studying for her Bachelor’s degree in Chemical and Environmental Engineering at the University of Mauritius. Therefore, over 6 years ago, she took the personal challenge to advance sustainable development in her community, empower young people for the same, and advocate for it in key policy-making processes internationally.

In 2009, Karuna kickstarted a university-based paper reuse and recycling project with the help of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Since then, I’ve had a multidisciplinary experience working within corporations, the United Nations, non-profits and other civil society organizations.

Karuna’s experience in the environmental and youth development area has spanned across grassroots projects, policy tracking, outreach, and reducing the ecological footprint of corporations – both nationally and globally. Through roles such as UNEP Tunza Youth Advisor for Africa and Deputy Organising Partner for SIDS for the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, I’ve had the chance to experience first-hand key global environmental negotiations, lobby with Governments and coordinate the participation of young people at the UNFCCC, Rio+20 Summit, the African Union, Commonwealth Head of Governments Meeting, and most recently the 3rd International Conference on SIDS, on behalf of youth. I’ve also co-authored NEP’s publication entitled GEO-5 for Youth publication which summarises the key findings about the state of our environment from the main 5th Global Environment Outlook (GEO-5) report in a language palatable for an audience of young people, concerned citizens and policy-makers.

All these experiences contributed to Karuna’s better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist in various sectors to address sustainability. However, it also alerted her to the fact that young people, particularly those
from small island states, have been underrepresented or even absent in key environmental negotiations, despite being the most vulnerable. She had to do something about it.

Karuna’s biggest breakthrough happened in 2012. Quitting her corporate job to do freelance consultancy and focus on consolidating her advocacy work was a career risk, but also a major learning process which paid off in the end. By the end of 2013, she was able to concretize and “professionalize” her work by setting up the SIDS Youth AIMS Hub (SYAH), an inter-island, youth-led organisation to exist in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) region. As the first regional youth platform connecting young people from small island states in Africa and Asia, SYAH enables young people to collaboratively implement sustainable development projects across the islands, and have their voices heard in key relevant decision-and-policy-making processes, both locally and globally.

Within only a year of its creation, SYAH has set up local chapters in 5 countries; launched a “free from plastic bags” campaign; launched an annual nation-wide youth competition and a multi-stakeholder dialogue on the ocean entitled ‘Seeing Blue’ in Mauritius; engaged in advocacy and policy dialogue nationally and otherwise; enabled 400 students in Mauritius and Seychelles to learn about the UN negotiations on sustainable development; enabled nearly hundred young people to learn swimming and discover scuba diving; and formed strategic partnerships with partners such as the Indian Ocean Commission, ENL Foundation and U.S. Embassy of Port Louis, amongst others.

It hasn’t been easy breaking the usual standards of success in Karuna’s society - one where community development work is not seen as a “proper” job, let alone a profession. Amidst such stigma and her medical history of anxiety disorder, she has had moments of doubt and illusion or even moments of failures when an initial start-up didn’t take off. But what helped is perseverance, being “unreasonable” enough to defy the norms and come out of her comfort zone, a strong belief in her causes, and working with like-minded people.

Karuna has recently received the Queen’s Young Leaders Award and she says, “the Queen’s Young Leaders Award is definitely dedicated to my organisation SYAH. This Award has not only validated the work we do, but has also given us the perfect platform that we need to raise awareness on our causes and create key partnerships for our projects.”
Yeas of Vigour and Freshness
Oean of Potentials
Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm
Tears of Hardships
Hope for a Better World

KAVIRI ALI (26 YEARS - MALE) UGANDA
COMMUNITY WORKER; FOUNDER AND TEAM LEADER OF YOUTH EQUALITY CENTRE (YEC)

Throughout Kaviri's life journey, he found many challenges while growing up and no road he took in the past seemed to lead him anywhere. Coming from a very humble background and raised by a single Grandmother in Buminza village, Kibuku District in Eastern Uganda under conditions that depicted poverty, he had a dream to attain education but lacked funds to actualize this. He went to a number of schools including Koborwa and Busesa primary schools before joining Margaret Secondary School Kyebando for O’ Level and Kyambogo College School for A’ Level. He used all means to raise funds to cover the tuition fees including working on people's gardens. Many people he called on for support couldn’t help until his uncle came in for his rescue. He was a humble, hardworking and always had good grades which prompted him to support. The opportunity that would enable him realise hi aspirations came in his Senior Six vacation shortly before he joining Kyambogo University for a Bachelor's degree in Community Based Rehabilitation.

This is when Kaviri embraced the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)'s six-week long mentorship training on gender and governance in 2009, ending up being named Mr. FOWODE at title conferred upon a man selected by a panel from FOWODE (Forum for Women in Democracy) whom they feel understands and supports women's causes in their quest to be the best that they can be. The training awakened Kaviri’s consciousness towards gender issue, governance and democracy. For me it was passion or conviction, emanating from his childhood experiences in home village of Kibuku that motivated him to apply for the training. It was a society that had no respect for a woman and Women were battered, had no decision making powers and were not allowed to raise their hand in public to speak. Only men did. It is not that he was opposed to men talking. Rather, he strongly believed that women, just like men, have got the right to express their opinions openly without fear or favor. It is these injustices against women that inspired him to advocate for the rights of women. To realise his aspirations, he has always eyed leadership roles because, he argues that it’s through leadership that one can influence decisions even at a much higher level. While growing up, he figured that being a leader would put him in positions to influence decisions to protect the rights of women and youth but obviously he needed an education first.

With other alumni of the training at FOWODE, Kaviri began advocacy and leadership development initiatives for young people, sexual rights and reproductive health for girls in schools. In 2012, he was voted president of the Young Leaders Alumni Association (FYLAA), a FOWODE initiative for young
people to advance the cause of women in leadership and development. At the helm as FYLAA's top executive, he perpetually offered leadership and strategic guidance towards realization of the Association's goals of social justice and gender equality. Some of his peers ridicule or misunderstand him. Some, in fact, think he is not in the right state of mind to advocate for the rights of women, although some section of society sees me as an example, which encourages me to keep on doing what he does. Kaviri his line of work he has learnt that behind every interest, processes and activities in our communities, leadership is the ultimate driving force behind which every woman and young people should get involved in order to liberate themselves from all forms of oppression. He has also discovered that you do not have to own much in order to spark change in society, but rather being creative in thinking and having the strong will to foster change which all young people should embrace.

In 2013, Kaviri teamed up with his colleagues to found the Youth Equality Centre (YEC), a youth led non-profit community enhancement organization that empowers young people especially girls with skills in building self-esteem, communication, technology, entrepreneurship, life skills and also imparts knowledge on leadership, Sex Education and Gender issues. Over the last two years the organization has enhanced the capacities of hundreds of Youth and young women in different communities throughout the country ranging from secondary schools to universities as well as to youth out of school.

Additionally, presently work with the Uganda Youth Network (UYONET) a leading umbrella Youth CSO Network that works to mainstream young peoples’ engagement in development and governance processes doubling as a Gender focal point person as well as a Programmes Assistant Youth Advocacy and Engagement. In the same breadth, Kaviri was privileged to be among the 20 Young Ugandans who constitutes the Young Leaders Think Tank for Policy Alternatives, an initiative of Konrad Adenour Stiftung (KAS) to enhance youth participation in governance and policy formulation. Most recently, he was named to the Young Leaders Program, a three-year fellowship opportunity sponsored by the Women Deliver organization. He was chosen as one of 200 new young advocates and will now work with the organization to advance the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women around the world.

Kaviri is happy to note that he is also currently pursuing a Masters of Arts degree in local governance and human rights from the Uganda Martyrs University on a scholarship offered by the Konrad Adenour Stiftund (KAS) in Uganda.
KELVIN, OGHENEMAIRO OGHOLI (25 YEARS - MALE) NIGERIA
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Kelvin is a young visionary, exceptional leader, insightful speaker and social entrepreneur. He is a passionate farmer of 25 years of age whose boldest ambition is to see poverty reversed in the lives of African farmers. Currently he is serving as the (COO)/Co-Founder of ALEPH TAV LIMITED, (UNFIRE Nigeria’s parent company). In May 2013, his social enterprise won the Indiafrica Business Venture Competition, University of Witswater and Wits Business School, South Africa. In 2014, he was selected as a Fellow among the world’s Top 13 young social entrepreneurs to receive mentorship and training support from the Unreasonable Global Institute, Colorado, United State of America, In 2014 he became a Fellow of Social Innovators Program under Youth Action Net and International Youth Foundation in partnership with LEAP Africa Nigeria, and in January 2015, he was selected as a Queens Young Leader transforming and impacting lives in Commonwealth Nations, an award presented by Her Majesty, the Queen at Buckingham Palace in June 2015. He is also a speaker at The Global Forum for Innovation in Agriculture, Abu-Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Kelvin’s boldest ambition is to see poverty reversed in the lives of African farmers by helping them to make more money and increase their production capacity. Growing up in a farming community where he worked with his Dad on Dad’s farm gave him a clearer understanding of the challenges several other farmers like himself are going through especially with the challenge of buying expensive feeds for use in feeding their poultry/livestock’s. In early 2013, Kelvin’s friend and brother and he started working on how they could solve this challenge of expensive feeds and on the ways was to find an alternative source of raw material which is abundantly available, cheaper and could be harnessed for the production of feeds for feeding poultry and they were able to come up with the Mango Seed feeds. Feeds made from waste mango seeds is cheap and with this farmers can and have been able to increase their farming capacity two-fold for less money. They believe as the prices of feed goes down, farmers will be able to produce more animal protein and sell at an affordable price for low income consumers. To date their initiative UNFIRE has been able to produce feeds for several farmers across communities in Nigeria and in return these farmers have been able to produce cheap and affordable animal protein for over 6000 low income consumers.

Kelvin says, “The duty of every generation is to make its shoulders available so that the next generation can follow suit. And that is my goal”.

"UBUNTU
I Am
Because We Are"
The Queen’s Young Leaders Award program has been one of the most exciting thing that has happened to Kelvin in this first quarter of his life, the unique opportunity in terms of exposure and media attraction has been extraordinary both from the international and local community. We will continue to leverage on these opportunities and make the best out of them. Special thanks to Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust for putting this awesome award together.

Young people are the leaders of today’s reality and together we will make our world a better place for all to live in. ‘UBUNTU’ I Am Because We Are... This is his massage to all young people in the Commonwealth.
It all started when she was 13 years old, when she lost both parents; when she looks back, she can only say ‘Challenges are breakfast of Champions. And she believes that ‘Her Destiny is within her walk’.

Koziba Malibala, is the Founding & Executive Director of an Integrated Consultancy Company through she has created employment she is an accomplished, dynamic and client-driven training professional. She is also an International Motivational Speaker, a facilitator and a Director of Ceremony for Corporate Events. In addition to her training skills, she is an author and a columnist.

Koziba has recently started her Master’s Degree in Business Management, she has an advanced diploma in Business Development Services with ITC(ILO); Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences majoring in Psychology and Environmental Science with University of Botswana. In addition to her educational background Koziba has studied several professional courses with different Institutions and Universities across the world, she has done Academy on Youth Development at Turin-Italy; Entrepreneurial Management-India; Entrepreneurship Training of Trainers Academy :Turin-Italy ‘Know about business’ Trainer of Trainers Academy on International Perceptive in Youth Entrepreneurship Training- ILO and (CYP RCA);GET AHEAD for Youth and Enterprise Training of Trainers; (CYP RCA). She has also canvassed a number of courses which were offered by Oxfam International Youth Partnership which includes Project Management.

Koziba has got the community empowerment spirit bubbling from the bottom of her heart which is demonstrated by over 18 years of doing Youth Leadership. At National level she has recently been appointed by the Office of the President as Member of the Presidential Task Team for the Beyond Vision 2016 Strategic Frame Work, She is a member of the Local Organizing Committee for 2018 International Working Group in Women & Sports Conference. She is a Board Member for Tati Landboard appointed by the Minister of Land & Housing. She has previously served a Board Member for the Botswana National Youth Council, a Board Member for Botswana Junior Chamber International and many other different boards with different organizations.

At International Level, she is currently the CYC: through a member of the CYC Committee member for the Media, Public Relations and Publicity. She is the CYC Peace Ambassador. She was speaker during the 2015 Commonwealth Local Government Conference. She is has previously served as the Botswana
Commonwealth Youth Representative; She was among the Commonwealth youth who initiated, advocated and lobbied for the birth of CYC, and she was involved in the drafting and amendment of the CYC Constitution. She was previously been nominated as a representative by CYEP to participate in the Commonwealth Young Professional Forum 2011 (Cardiff- UK) prior to the Commonwealth Local Government Conference. She attended several Commonwealth Youth Forums since 2009 representing her country Botswana. She was among Young Batswana who the bid to host The 2013 Africa & Middle East Conference, which was a success. She was nominated by Oxfam.

At Community level she founded a Youth Group in her home village through she promotes positive behavioural change among the youth. To appreciate her efforts in 2011 she was among the JCI 10 outstanding young people of the world, she was also nominated by one of the Outstanding young leaders in 2013 she also been awarded an overall youth achiever award through the Botswana Women's Thari ya Sechaba awards.
MALLAH TABOT (27 YEARS - FEMALE) CAMEROON
YOUTH LEADER, PROJECT LEAD AT UNITED VISION

Women and girls should be at the forefront of decision-making around everything concerning them; their bodies, their education, their health, and their own future.

Her name is Mallah. This is what drives her. This is her passion: to know that women have full control over their lives and that the decisions they make are fully informed. Mallah is a feminist, blogger, journalist, and women`s rights activist who very strongly believes that women and girls` and young people`s access to sexual and reproductive health is a basic right.

But she also know that this dream is far from current realities. So many gaps and inequalities still exist against women and girls worldwide and particularly in her country and community where 141 out of 1000 girls aged 15-19 have been pregnant at least once. That`s 14% of all childbirths in the country. Yet reproductive health and family planning services mainly target older married women, leaving young girls overlooked.

That is why Mallah set up a program to address these needs. She is working with adolescent and school-age women to empower them with the knowledge and tools necessary to guide them in making informed and healthy choices concerning their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). We do this through a peer-support approach and in partnership with youth-friendly SRHR service providers at community level. We are setting up Girls` Clubs to serve as safe spaces for young women to discuss issues around their sexuality and using theatre and art activities in schools to educate young people on their SRHR.

Mallah`s dream is that women and girls own their lives, make their own decisions and are accountable to themselves and those who support them. In June she received the Queens Young Leaders Award for my commitment to addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people in my community. This didn`t happen by chance. Over the years she has led campaigns to end early and forced marriages in villages in the Akwaya subdivision of Cameroon, coordinated a youth-centered HIV/AIDS program thanks to the MTV Staying Alive Foundation, designed a program that has involved more men in maternal health issues, educated women on the importance of birth control, and she is currently drafting an initiative that would give young women greater control and knowledge about their sexuality.
This award has given validation to the work she so dearly commits herself to. Not only has it connected her to a wide network of amazing young people throughout the Commonwealth who are doing fantastic things to transform their communities, it has also given her access to some big names in the corporate and NGO sector who are mentoring her to work more strategically.

Thanks to this award Mallah has also been appointed as an Associate Fellow at the Royal Commonwealth Society, and the Queen Elisabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust has done an amazing job in bringing voices of the Commonwealth together and galvanising youth for social change. She cannot describe the plethora of opportunities she now identify through this network and the momentum she has gathered to impact her local community and continue her work for women and girls’ health.

All has not been rosy though. As young people, they have their own fair share of challenges when working for change. As a young woman, that challenge only gets worse. Young women have had to deal with angry village council leaders over teaching sexuality education to young women and girls in the community. They have gotten turned away by government officials who consider they too young, too female or too inexperienced to be talking about advocacy or policy change. And on a lighter note, we’ve experienced the first aid competencies of villagers after falling off or bikes 1001 times on our way to the rural settings where we work.

In deed young people are the change makers. They are not a group of people that governments need to forever render services to. They are not a threat to the status quo. They are actors in development, and till their policies are informed by a youth perspective, they would still have a long way to go.
MARKUS REGIS JOLIFF CONFIANCE (25 YEARS - MALE) SEYCHELLES
FIRST AIDER

Markus was raised by his grandparents (mostly); he has eight biological siblings, three brothers and five sisters. He grew up on Praslin Island and soon moved to the main island of the Seychelles, Mahe, at an older age to continue with his studies at the Seychelles Institution of Technology (SIT).

As a teenager, his hobby was dancing - hiphop - he would train almost everyday after school and hang out with his friends. But, soon the dream came to an end when he got a serious injury - did not permit him to dance again till today.

However this permanent injury was nothing compared to what Markus was facing since the age of 12, he was diagnosed with kidney disease and his life has been quite challenging ever since. He had to change his diet and activities—he started to eat less of red meat -dairy products and eat more of vegetables and fruits. Yes, it was difficult, he felt different, like he did not belong! This is when he started to drink excessively and smoke, though it was bad for his kidney (everyone’s health) it did not matter to him because it made him feel better and he fitted in.

That was not all, Markus also started a sport, “racing”. It is one with many risk, but every time he would be speeding or drifting he would feel free—free from the world and free from the sickness. This was his way to “get away”. But then, this dream ended too! He got into a car accident and luckily was not severely injured. Basically, lucky to be alive!

Markus now work at Bodco Limited in the warehouse department, lifting construction materials and working excessively—which is disallow by the doctors; he loves his job and they understand his sickness, he will never let his sickness define him. Your health is the most important and the choice is always up to you!

He chose to stand up and fight! He does not want the easy way out! It is through his sickness, that he realised how people in this world suffer from far worse illnesses in their life and still have the courage to go on! And also realised that most just gives up along the way, they do not have the strength to finish the battle.

It was then, that Markus decided to join Seychelles Red Cross Society. He has helped out at National Events, e.g. National Sports Day (school children), Carnival...
de Victoria and etc. He is now a certified First Aider and try his best to help others - to give them as much support as possible, give them a reason to keep moving on with their life and that God has a plan for each and everyone of us.

It’s enough to make Markus realise that this sickness is nothing compared to all the great things in his life. Many do not have what he has, and some has more than what he does. However, he says, “we are all equal and we all deserve good things. I am religious and I believe in the words of the Lord. My cure might not be on earth, but I am 100% sure it is with the Lord.”

Markus cannot deny that he has never given up on life that he has never wanted to end the suffering but through all that he has been through, it’s his family, his friends, his partner and most of all God that has always be there for him.

He grew up not in a wealthy family, not in a mansion and nor with his parents. Markus grew up with much sadness, anger and joy- people have all been through so much and have all made mistakes in their lives but it is these mistakes that made one who he/she is today! And it is through these mistakes that one learns and assures oneself that it will not be repeated again.

In addition, Markus has always loved the environment, in other words, a freak for nature. He recently joined SIDS Youth AIMS Hub (SYAH) where they do different activities to promote sustainable development in the Seychelles—they just had this great campaign “Free from Plastic Bag” and it is an on-going success. Also joined Eko Youth Seychelles, which aims for environmental protection and awareness—they basically go on hikes / trails and learn new interesting facts about their native / endemic flora and fauna.

Eko Youth has been inactive for the past few years and they plan to change that; Sir Terence Vel, Shafira and Markus are trying their best to get it back on track and recruiting new interested members.

His greatest achievement would be, standing up for himself and to accept that his illness does make him different. But Markus is loved, he is loved for who he is and not what he was trying to be.

To conclude, he says, “Learn to love your life, learn to love all the little things—they should matter the most! This is YOUR life, and it’s up to you to choose how to live it”.

...
MOHAMMAD YAASEEN EDOO (28 YEARS - MALE) MAURITIUS
YOUTH LEADER; AMBASSADOR FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Yaaseen is from Terre Rouge in Mauritius. Since birth he has suffered from Spina Bifida, a malformation of the vertebral column affecting the spine and the nervous system.

He never attended primary school and instead stayed at home with his mother. He never learnt to read but he used to watch television and try to read the programme schedule of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) after the news. From that he began to decipher words and gradually taught himself to read. Newspapers and the dictionary became two things that he never separated himself from.

At the age of 12, Yaaseen was registered to a specialized school for people with disabilities called Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board (T.E.D.P.B). There he met a primary school teacher called Mr Rishi Bundoo, who was appointed to work with the disabled children. While working with Yaaseen, Mr. Bundoo noticed his potential, interest and desire to learn more. Mr. Bundoo talked to the manager of the school Mr. Ajay Thacoor and they decided he should sit for the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examination. Unfortunately though it was too late to register with for the exam, as the deadline for that year had passed. In 2001 Mr Bundoo left T.E.D.P.B to go back to his primary school. However he decided to visit Yaaseen at home once a week for the following nine months in order to help him prepare for the CPE exam. He sat the exam that year and did very well.

Yaaseen wanted to pursue his studies, so he attended Professor Hassan Raffa State Secondary School at Bois Pignolet Terre-Rouge, where he completed his School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. There was no ramp at the college when he joined, but the rector made the necessary arrangements so that he could move around easily in his wheelchair. His classes were transferred to the ground floor and practical computer classes took place in the administrative office. After that he attended Université des Mascareignes at Beau Plan Pamplemousses, where he completed a BSc (Hons) in Multimedia and Web Technologies.

Yaaseen’s major achievements to date are receiving the Queen’s Young Leader Award and winning the Junior Chamber International (JCI) Mauritius, the Outstanding Young Person 2015. The Queen’s Young Leader Award was established by The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, in partnership with

Avenue des Allamandas, Morcellement Raffray Le Hochet Terre Rouge
Comic Relief and The Royal Commonwealth Society. It recognizes exceptional people aged 18-29 from across the Commonwealth, who are taking the lead in their communities and using their skills to transform lives. These two achievements have had an impact and influence on his advocacy work for equal rights for people with disabilities.

He is also the leader of Leonard Cheshire Disability Young Voices of Mauritius, a Global Youth Ambassador on Education for A World At School and a member of the Global Partnership on children with disabilities (GPcwd) of UNICEF. With Young Voices Yaaseen has participated in conferences in Zambia and Kenya and with GPcwd he took part in the UNCRPD Conference in 2014 at the United Nations in New York.

With determination, he says to other young people, “never be discouraged. Problems are here to make us stronger and build our personality. Strive hard and try to achieve your best in your studies and work. It is through perseverance, hard work and dedication that we bear the fruits of success. Enjoy each and every moment of your life. Life is beautiful and worth living”.
NAKWEESA DIANA (25 YEARS - FEMALE) UGANDA
YOUTH ADVOCATE, TEAM LEADER OF YOUNG MOTHERS SUPPORT GROUP

Nakaweesa grew up with her three siblings and her single mother, who has gone through tough conditions to raise them and pay their school fees. Her mother has been living with HIV for 15 years. During childhood her mother introduced her to different youth and HIV women organisations, where her mother was accessing her psychosocial and medical support; including groups like Nsambya Home Care (NHC) and the National Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Uganda (NACWOLA).

Nakaweesa was very self-motivated as she was growing up and she was determined to be successful in life, because she believed this would be the way to break the vicious cycle of poverty in her family. She thought education would be the key to achieving this. Before joining university she decided to utilize all of the opportunities that came her way. She did this by joining various youth and women’s organisations on their volunteering programmes, as she looked for ways to fund her university studies. She also completed many short courses at certificate level.

In 2005, at the age of 15, Nakaweesa became the leader of the NACWOLA Youth Group. But in 2008 he observed that almost one-third of female young people had dropped out of the group. When she inquired why, she found out that a number of girls had dropped out of the group due to pregnancy and early marriages. With her mother’s help and the experience of the youth that she was leading, she developed the idea of the Young Mothers Support Group (YMSG) in Kampala, which addresses the issues of girls and young mothers. The Young Mothers Support Group’s main aim is to provide a platform for fellowship, mutual support, hope and a voice to young people, through promoting their sexual reproductive health rights, especially women and girls affected by HIV.

This work was the reason Nakaweesa was chosen to be one of the first Queen’s Young Leaders and she was invited to meet Her Majesty the Queen in London. The Award recognises young people who are taking the lead in their communities and using their skills to transform lives.

She gained many skills working for the various organisations and in 2011 she joined Nkumba University’s School of Social Sciences, as a weekend student to do a Bachelors’ degree in development studies. She will graduate in October 2015.
Nakaweesa’s future plans are to transform more lives of young people, especially young women and girls. Over the next few years she would like to support at least three young people from Uganda to apply to become Queen’s Young Leaders. She also intends to broaden YMSG’s networks and membership to a national level, if not international level. Nakaweesa hopes to build main offices for YMSG and to start up income generating projects for women and girls.
NAKITENDE CATHERINE (25 YEARS - FEMALE) UGANDA
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Catherine is a social entrepreneur focusing on sustainable safe and clean energy, environmental conservation, and community development in Uganda. Confronted with an alarming rate of deforestation, waste management problems, respiratory diseases and limited access to energy sources in her local community thus the many violent challenges a girl child faces in the process of collecting firewood.

An enthusiastic young woman, decided to tackle all these problems at once through her initiative armed with 1000/= as Capital in 2013 November, under Kingfire Energy Solutions LTD.

The traditional wood charcoal requires a lot of wood or tree cutting, very expensive, and pollutes environment, so through Kingfire, Catherine recycles organic waste materials into quality briquettes for households and schools. These briquettes cost 50% less, produce 30% more energy, environmentally friendly. By offering briquettes, solar products, improved stoves and trainings, she hopes to create a movement of like-minded people working toward environmental conservation and sustainable energy in Uganda.

The innovative dirty hands clean money business, which benefits poorer communities, made Catherine famous. The change programme had a dramatic effect with profit increasing by 67%, eight new jobs created, and production capacity expanded 12-fold from 25 kg/day to 300 kg/day. In 2014 KingFire was the Africa winner of the awards run by SEED Africa, a global partnership that identifies and supports promising small-scale social and environmental entrepreneurs around the globe. It praised KingFire for reducing the number of people suffering carbon monoxide poisoning from charcoal burning. In 2015 Catherine was a finalist in the 2015 Commonwealth Youth Awards for Excellence in Development Work.

She became a Set Africa fellow a program under International Youth Foundation and Youth Action Net making her a member too. As a youth many Organizations in her country recognize her presence to address youth because she is a living role model and mentor to other youth. So many networks and partnerships of both beneficial and non-beneficial have been created for Kingfire in just a snapshot. Increased production capacity from 50 to 300kg per day, the factory which started under a shade can now be used as a site visit for visibility study as it hosted recently members who attended Safe Energy in humanitarian setting.
workshop hosted by UN Foundation, organized by UNHCR, Global Alliance For Clean Cookstove and Safe Energy and it is used for research too. Company was fully registered with trading license inclusive.

The challenge was how to improve the quality, scale up the business, and especially the critical areas of production and distribution, Drying inclusive. But as a young lady involved in dirty hands work Catherine has been rejected in the beginning, undermined & discouraged. The power of networking, partnership and collaboration; Catherine’s Partnering with Enterprise Uganda, connected her to Grow movement a partner organization with Enterprise UG, who helped her with a volunteer consultant(VC) whom they have walked a journey of growing KingFire. Together with the support of Uganda Industrial Research Institute, internet use, Catherine with Jorge her VC, focused on research and quality was improved. Then Catherine and her VC, realized they needed to focus on the segments of KingFire’s customers, commercial model and scaling up production. Jorge’s role was to guide Catherine in the implementation of the business plan while she dealt with the day-to-day running of the business. Then she managed personal challenges with determination and passion.

Catherine with her determination, is willing to do better with community work or humanitarian work of which she has started on surveys in refugee Camps to see how she can tap in the opportunity of the ongoing environment restoration activities, for instance, promoting the use alternative sources of fuel such as briquettes other than wood charcoal, and fire wood as a way of minimizing deforestation as she is connected through Office of the Prime Minister in her Country, under Environmental Department. Most Refugee settlements are facing high deforestation rate due to high competition for cooking fuels yet affiliated with high risks more so for girls and women who normally move miles and spend over 5 hours searching for firewood.

Catherine did Visibility study when she visited Rwamwanja Camp, Kiryadondo and Adjumani. Adjumani is one of the biggest settlements in Uganda currently hosting over 100,000 South Sudanese refugees but access to safe energy is still a challenge.

Having started business at six years, Catherine’s spirit of entrepreneurship has never faded but instead, her belief is that “successful entrepreneurs begin small but with a working brain has grown stronger. It’s all about your determination and passion towards something”.
NKECHIKWU NKEIRUKA VALERIE AZINGE (26 YEARS - FEMALE) NIGERIA
YOUTH VOLUNTEER, FOUNDER OF SICKLE CELL AID FOUNDATION (SCAF)

Nkechikwu is a dynamic young lady with interest in human rights and community development as it relates to health, working on the premise that ‘health is wealth’. This interests have spurred her to volunteer with numerous not-for-profit organisations with focus on inter alia, Malaria, HIV/AIDS and Sanitation. Her passion for human rights has led her to volunteer for Amnesty International where she joined the campaign for the rights of women in war zones in the Middle East and also the rights of persons in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. Furthermore, she has also worked as a generalist adviser, working to solve the problems of clients by providing free legal services at the Citizen’s Advice Bureau.

Her greatest passion however is to ensure that there is exigent awareness on Sickle Cell Disorder (SCD) and more so to ensure that the less privileged with this disorder have access to quality healthcare. This is even more pertinent in Nigeria where over 4 million persons suffer from this disorder and over 25% of the population have the trait thereby increasing the chances of passing this disorder to their children. Unfortunately statistics have revealed an absence of knowledge on SCD by those with the trait thus the continuous circle of SCD births and early mortality rate, with an adverse effect on the Nigerian economy.

It is for these reasons she started the Sickle Cell Aid Foundation (SCAF) in Nigeria. This, she considers her greatest achievement, as due to the projects initiated by her team, over 3000 persons in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, have been tested to know their hemoglobin genotype at no cost in order to ensure that their off springs are protected from inheriting SCD. Most importantly SCAF has established sickle cell clubs in over 30 schools across Abuja, Nigeria thus reaching over 5,000 children with a curriculum Nkechi prepared thus informing and educating the younger generation about sickle cell and its complication thereby empowering them to impact on their immediate community. As a result of these projects, more people now have access to free drugs, free medical care and warm clothes; students with SCD are placed on a merit-based scholarship. All of the aforementioned SCAF activities has resulted in an increase in awareness of sickle cell as an additional 7% of the Abuja population (from the year 2012 - 2014) now have substantial knowledge on sickle cell and 5 % have tested to know their genotype. Through their social media campaigns, over 500, 000 have been reached so far, more interestingly an online blood donor register has been created through this means. SCAF has brought optimism to a society where 100,000 SCD patients die before they are 5 due to persistent hospital strikes and inadequate expertise and facilities.

“Years of Vigour and Freshness Ocean of Potentials Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm Tears of Hardships Hope for a Better World

There are many dark days when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair.”

- Nelson Mandela
She however did not accomplish these without some challenges, starting as a young person occasioned a lot of cynicism from younger and older people alike. Furthermore, SCD and non-communicable diseases alike are on the bottom of the hierarchy for grants thus complicating the process of accessing funds and given the complications associated with this disorder there is absence of health insurance cover, making it expensive to cater for patients in need. She however overcame some of these challenges by persistence, hard work and building an efficient team of members and volunteers. It is however not over as the fight for health insurance cover is still on going. It is due to her relentless work to improve lives that she was recognised by the Queen of England as a Queens Young Leader. This award granted her access to lectures on leadership and management thus expanding her leadership skills and potentials. More so the media attention has improved awareness on SCD globally. She beckons on young persons to apply for the 2016 Queens Young Leaders Awards.
NONDUMISO N HLOPHE (28 YEARS - FEMALE) SWAZILAND
SOCIAL ACTIVIST AND ENTREPRENEUR

Born abroad and raised by parents who were civil servants, Swaziland is Nondumiso’s home and her heritage forms the essence of who she is. This is the country that she wants to make the most and longest lasting impact she can in the world. She was raised in a home where the belief was that an important norm to be an active citizen, where she had a sibling with a learning disability and where she was the only daughter. Thus her passions were based on those factors—chiefly education, gender equality, persons with disabilities and youth empowerment—these are all issues close to her heart.

Nondumiso began actively volunteering in high school in Swaziland, where her experiences ranged from time spent with children with disabilities and/or living with HIV/AIDS to fundraising for causes such as paediatric cancer and being involved in after school programmes with children from economically vulnerable backgrounds. The most significant catalyst towards the path that she is now on came during her graduate years at university. She became active in student activism during her time at Rhodes University, where she served as Chairperson to her university’s chapter of Amnesty International. She became the first female One Young World (OYW) ambassador for her country in 2011, which provided opportunities for her to have a platform on pertinent issues. She organized a national “Wake Up Call” campaign to her country’s Ministry of Education and Training concerning her country’s targets for MDG 2 (Education) in 2012. She co-hosted a global e-campaign with fellow OYW ambassadors in honour of World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development in 2013. She also contributed articles to several platforms, including Mail and Guardian’s Thought Leader, but still felt she could do more.

Enter the World Economic Forum, who selected Nondumiso as the Founding Curator of the Mbabane Hub of the Global Shapers Community, in 2012. This initiative is a network of city-based ‘hubs’ developed and led by young people who are exceptional in their potential, their achievements and their drive to make a contribution to their communities. At age 25, she felt as if someone saw something in her and believed in her, as young as she was, to drive change and make a difference in her home community. She fully embraced Richard Branson’s quote: “If somebody offers you an amazing opportunity but you are not sure you can do it, say yes—then learn how to do it later!” The Mbabane hub’s inaugural project which she founded and co-project manage is called “Fundza (siSwati meaning ‘Learn’ or ‘Read’) Friday”. She was inspired to found this project after her own experiences of learning siSwati, one of her country’s

“If somebody offers you an amazing opportunity but you are not sure you can do it, say yes—then learn how to do it later!”

- Richard Branson
official languages, as a high school subject. She found that ‘filling the gaps’ in my knowledge between my oral comprehension and the written language and literature of my mother tongue difficult. The mission of this project, run in partnership with the Swaziland National Library Service, is to expose children between the ages of six and twelve to bilingual reading aloud and interactive story-telling, with the vision being to help bridge this gap from an earlier age while equally promoting literacy of both official languages (English and siSwati).

The next chapter of Nondumiso journey has been catalyzed by being named Swaziland’s first recipient of the Queen’s Young Leaders award. It is an honour bestowed upon 60 exceptional youths from the Commonwealth Realm, supported by the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, awarded by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This programme included a residential week in the U.K., the support of one-to-one mentorship throughout the year, and the specialized “Leading Change” course run with The University of Cambridge’s Institute of Continuing Education. What she has enjoyed the most about being a part of the inaugural winners of the Queen’s Young Leader award is that it has provided her with a remarkably different take on leadership development that called for true self-introspection and grow, for herself and her present-day and future organizations.

Nondumiso has a newfound appreciation for how united the Commonwealth member states are in their shared values, yet are so diverse in their historical narratives and in culture, especially on political and gender issues. She is looking forward to applying more insight and perspective to her work in international affairs that the Queen’s Young Leader award has given me, especially as an Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society. It is a humble honour that she look forward to utilizing in engaging directly with the future of the Commonwealth as a whole.
OBINNA COLLINS NEBO [25 YEARS - MALE] NIGERIA
SOCIAL ACTIVIST


As a young visionary Nigerian, Obinna has served as Secretary General Udi Students Association UNN, Technical manager Students in Free Enterprise UNN, and Enugu state coordinator National Association of South East Nigerian Students. As a successful student leader and a youth development crusader, he was appointed Enugu state coordinator Youth Alliance on constitution and Electoral Reforms in 2013, Nigeria coordinator African Youth Union in 2014, elected National Secretary of Ohanaeze Youth Council (apex socio-cultural youth organization) in 2014, he was appointed as the South East coordinator Commonwealth Youth Council Peace Marshals during Nigeria’s 2015 elections, South-east region focal person Nigeria Youth Reform Group and also nominated as ambassador for peace and humanity by Youth Education and Leadership Initiative Nigeria. He founded New Century Initiative which has successfully involved in various community development works in Enugu state; Nigeria and was endorsed by Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) as an eligible organization to be part of 2015 elections observer groups. He also founded youth online interactive forum called “The Youth Cave”. He has attended several trainings, conferences and seminars which have built his capacity overtime and as a young man who believes in giving back to the society, he has also written many articles on youth and socio-political development on his blog (www.obinnacollinsnebo.wordpress.com).

Obinna’s challenges are enormous, Life is always about struggle. His greatest challenge was when he started to develop his dreams and desires. It was never an easy task as a social activist, his major concern is to solve human social problems. Human problems are uncountable and to solve them, it requires selfless sacrifices. As a young man who has a vision, he had no abundance resources to set up his own organization. At the starting stage, nobody believed in his vision not even his friends and family but he remained consistent and focused. Today his dream is spreading like a wild fire because from the shortest of time I’ve been able to inspire many young people and his family with his track record of success so far. His greatest challenge was how to start.
Obinna says, “Life is not a bed of roses, life is always a-2-way causality ‘either you fail or you succeed’.
For one to succeed in life, he or she must be ready to make sacrifices. I learnt to be optimist, steadfast and patient. I learnt never to envy or jealous people owing to life role differences. I learnt to be bold, mannered and calm when engaging people. I learnt to adapt to varying life circumstances because we cannot always break-even”.

He further adds, “To build the youth is to build the nation. Youth population is the greatest resource of any country. Sometimes youths are like a car without a driver, you need to drive them safely and diligently in order to effectively harness and utilize their strength for nation building”.

Obinna’s experiences with young people so far have showcased that young people just like agent intellects can be used for positive or negative activities, they have the strength and the charisma which depends on the area one can be better-off or worse-off.
In the pursuit for social development he wishes to invest more in young people because they exist in the future they plan.
PJ COLE (29 YEARS - MALE) SIERRA LEONE
SOCIAL ACTIVIST

Cole was born in Liberia just before the civil war broke out. His parents developed grassroots sustainable development projects in the local community. When he was 4, the conflict forced them to flee to Sierra Leone, not without having been captured by rebel soldiers along the way! The war spread to Sierra Leone and in 1996 his father, pressed by the circumstance around him began to pull child soldiers out of the conflict and into their home. When the war ended, they continued to build a home for ex-child soldiers or those otherwise affected by the civil war. After his father passed away, he took over to lead this work in 2012. They now run four schools, a safe home for vulnerable children and a vocational training centre. They are working with farmers, running businesses and doing everything they can to bring economic and social restoration to Sierra Leone. Some of the child soldiers that his father rescued now stand alongside him as members of the senior management team.

In the summer of 2014, they were stopped in our tracks by Ebola. The epidemic hit their community hard. Friends, neighbours, and colleagues were dying. For Cole, the most harrowing experience was watching a pregnant woman die of Ebola in front of his eyes. Their community was under attack and they knew they had to be part of the solution. So they took on a new fight: to end Ebola in their community. Their team designed an Ebola education programme which has equipped over 80,000 people with life-saving knowledge. In addition they have provided essential supplies and support to over 13,000 quarantined individuals. This would not have been possible without the team’s flexibility and ability to respond quickly and innovatively, having gained the trust of the local community.

One of the greatest achievements, recently, happened when the Ebola crisis reached its peak. They realised that people inside quarantined homes had nowhere to seek treatment and were dying. So they started building an Ebola clinic. They had no funds and no resources, but they secured some land in the form of a local football pitch, downloaded a clinic layout plan from the internet, and started building foundations. This caught the attention of a number of international health organisations and NGOs, including the WHO, Medair and Oxfam, who offered to partner with us in order to finish building and manage the clinic. A month later they had a 20 bed Ebola Treatment Unit stood before them. The clinic treated over 270 patients in less than 4 months.

Cole has learnt that even when one thinks one has nothing, there is always something one can give. That is the power of the human spirit.
to dig deep and create out of what might seem like nothing. In 1999 his family, including the child soldiers that his father had pulled out of the war, were living next to a displaced persons camp in Sierra Leone with no access to education. One day, his father told them that they were going to start a school. They had nothing, and for three days they stapled A4 papers together to make books, and then started teaching. He found himself teaching a class of 60 young people at the age of 13. In that year, it served nearly 1,000 children.

Whenever Cole meets young seeking to make a difference, he encourage them to not only strive to get their voice heard, but also to be part of the solution. Not only do they have the opportunity to contribute to discussions, they are able to solve problems and offer influence beyond the sphere that they inhabit. Get involved, one does have something to contribute! At present they are preparing to deliver a project aiming to support smallholder farmers to achieve a higher productivity and better access to markets. They have seen how the Ebola crisis has devastated the economy of Sierra Leone, and they are already making steps towards rebuilding.

Having recently been awarded a Queen’s young Leaders Award, Cole has benefited from some incredible exposure and development opportunities, including a ‘Leading Change’ course offered by Cambridge University, media opportunities and meetings with world class political, business and community leaders. A partnership with the Royal Commonwealth Society, Comic Relief and the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, the Award programme brings together one of the most diverse groups of people on the planet. It was exciting to see 60 young people passionate about their cause, sharing their ideals, and the commonwealth is a great platform to host the honest and frank discussions which will contribute to growth. Cole hopes that many great young people in the Commonwealth would be eminent young leaders with their effective contribution to the development of youth in the years to come.
PRINCE AKPAH (22 YEARS - MALE) GHANA
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR; WRITER; FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF AFRICA YOUTH AWARDS

An African brewed in Ghana, 22 years old Prince Akpah is a young change maker who wears so many hats as a Writer, Blogger, Documentary Producer, Social Entrepreneur and Volunteer from Ghana.

Upon graduation from Senior High School as the 21st best student out of over 320 students, he has been involved in various initiatives starting with serving as the Coordinator and Ambassador of Hallowed Kids Foundation where he heads projects such as Children’s Republic Reality TV show, the Key Newspaper and Ghana Youth Icons Awards at age 19.

In High School, he co-founded the Spaco News Agency a club involved in student journalism and subsequently became its deputy editor-in-chief and news anchor. That grew him with the experience to take up the role of an Editor in Chief of the Key Newspaper, a national student newspaper published by Hallowed Kids Foundation immediately after school.

He also took to online publications and got his article published in the Africa Union’s 50th Anniversary Magazine titled “Africa My Home”. Today, that has led him to publish his articles on over 130 online journals across the world. His online motivational interviews; “Africa Rising” and “The Journey So Far” has projected the works of young achievers from across Africa and beyond including Tom Osborn, Christian Ngan, Henry Nyakarundi, Dr. Heather Beem, John Armah, Sara Nana Yeboah, Alvin Nyika, Preye Tambou and Tebogo Ditshego.

For financial reasons, he couldn’t make it the various Ghanaian best universities he gained admission into on two different occasions, but has been determined to make a difference in his community through Hard Work in order to live an eternal legacy for his continent.

In 2013 he launched his first pet project, Be A Girl, a girls empowerment project which presents Citations to young girls who have excelled in academics and other disciplines in Ghana’s educational curriculum. The aim of this project was to give reasons to young girls on why they need to take their education serious as stories of their peers (awards winners) are used to inspire them to reach out for academic excellence. The project has awarded over 300 young girls in Ghana and was shortlisted for the World Summit Youth Awards, 2014 and has received endorsements from various influential women who have also used the platform to inspire the girls.

“Poco a poco, uno viaja lejos
- Little by little, one travels far”

- J.R. R Tolkein
As a blogger, the www.africanviewpointjournal.com, www.mynaijanaira.com and www.akpahprince.wordpress.com are various platforms he continues to use to write about Africa and her Change Makers.

He is the founder of Africa Youth Awards, an initiative he launched in 2014 to reward the works of young Africans on the continent and the Diaspora and the Ghana Social Media Rankings which is involved in publishing various ranking on the use of social media by Ghanaians. (www.africayouthawards.org)

He is currently working on Educate Ghana (www.educateghana.net), an online portal to provide information on tertiary education in Ghana. The website will be used to share information on various programs and activities available in Ghanaian tertiary institutions and also assist international students to get credible information before moving to Ghana for further studies.

As an avid volunteer, organisations such as Synergy for Success Ghana, African Achievers Awards, Ghana Writers Awards, The Sangy Foundation, Mindshift Foundation, WatsUp TV, The African Network of Entrepreneurs, and Generational Thinkers Ghana have all benefitted from the passion of this change agent.

He is a member of the Global Shaper Accra Hub a community of the World Economic Forum made up of young achievers from across the world and a recipient of the Emerging Young Leaders Award 2014 by Eagles Summit Africa.
PRIVILEDGE CHETENI (30 YEARS - MALE) SOUTH AFRICA
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Priviledge Cheteni comes from a family of three. He did his primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe. Throughout his primary education he was constant involved with the choir at Helemu Primary School in Bulawayo. He was part of the choir team that scooped a number of accolades in national competitions. He went on to do his secondary school in a boarding school, were he was groomed to face the world. Towards the completion of his secondary school, his mother felt sick and was forced to drop out of school for a year or so. As he says, this was the first challenge he met in life. Fending for his family at an early age. His school dream was almost shattered by that situation. However, he kept his head up. He then completed his Advanced Level grade and was awarded a scholarship for his undergraduate study in South Africa. Throughout his undergraduate study he maintained his standard of hard work and determination to succeed. This paid off as he was awarded a cum laude/Distinction in Management and Economics. Today he is studying for his Doctorate in Agriculture Economics.

In his undergraduate degree he saw the need to do community work by volunteering. In 2010 he saw the challenges that were faced by a rural community near his university. The rural area had people with inadequate electricity. He wrote a business plan on how to solve that energy problem. Then he presented his idea to the World Bank Institute and it was selected as one of the top ten ideas worldwide. This meant that he needed to fundraise for the idea in a World Bank Challenge in partnership with Global Giving. Apart from this, he was also given a certificate as a Social Innovator by the World Bank Institute. Throughout the fundraising period he faced a number of challenges in raising the required start-up capital for a Biogas project that was meant to provide an alternative to energy. The greatest challenge was to raise the capital online, yet, most Africans were not used to the likes of Pay Pal to make payments. This had a huge impact in the capital raised, but, that did not stop him from trying. He finally got a sponsor from Cape Town Municipality who provided all the resources and as a result a 10 cubic metre biogas digester powered by cow dung was established in Melani Village, South Africa. The biogas digester converts cow dung into usable gas for cooking and lighting. This idea was well received throughout the circles in South Africa as he went on to present it in Student in Free Enterprise (Enactus) University Competitions in South Africa. The project scooped awards in best environmental sustainability, social entrepreneurship and social friendliness. This lead to his team reaching the finals of that competition. As we speak, the project landed his Enactus University team to the World Cup in China in 2014, as it has been improved throughout the years.

“...The fact that your forefathers pilled stones does not mean stones need to be pilled all times...”
Chetení was selected as Commonwealth Finalist for Youth Development awards in 2013 because of his work. In that same year he managed to establish a Non-Profit Organisation called Nkanyiso Education and Sustainability Centre (http://nkanyiso.org.za/). An organisation that promotes projects in education, agricultural and energy. The organisations addresses a number of community challenges in rural South Africa. This was motivated by his quest to uplift disfranchised communities. Part of his achievement was that he was selected as 100 Brightest Young Minds in South Africa. Where youth contributing to a betterment in their societies are honoured. In an interview recently, Chetení said, “such initiatives were driven by a passion to invest in the lives of young people and women. “The passion to impact people’s lives inspires my work and keeps me motivated, Africa will never be what we want it to be unless we have the courage to take it upon ourselves to act, I am very broad when it comes to initiatives,”. Chetení was also the Chairman of the World Youth Government in Africa, an organisation that complements the UN in addressing challenges that affect youth in Africa, in line with its Millennium Development Goals. “It is hard to attain those goals without youth playing their role in the whole setup,” Chetení said. In addition, he is a United Nation Online Volunteer and works with the Kairos Society, an international non-profit organisation of entrepreneurs and innovators from 35 top universities in more than 100 countries. Apart of this, he was a Google Ambassador teaching and hosting Google events for communities in his university. This was also honoured when he won the Google Online Marketing Challenge in 2014 in the Sub Saharan Region.

The only thing that he could have done better, was to start his voluntary work at a young age and attend a number of summits or conferences around the world. “It is through these workshops that you grow as a person and meet different people who can help you achieve more”, Chetení said. Moreover, being a social entrepreneur at a younger age exposes one to the real world, and instils that motivation to be better. The major lesson that he has learnt in life is that only few people will buy into their vision or cause. It takes more courage and perseverance to see it happen. Moreover, when faced with a challenge and one feels like giving up, that’s where the breakthrough lies. A number of challenges from funding, team and conflicts will be part of the life journey, but, brushing those bad memories aside and remembering the positive one helps a lot. He was faced with hard choice at a young age, but, he soldiered on.

Chetení’s advice to the youth is that the landscape is always changing each day. Yesterday problems are today solutions, so it will take more than what we faced
as this generation to progress. This means one may need to sacrifice certain important events and family just to make a community happy. They are good and bad days in doing community engagement work. But, it takes a soft heart to make that dream a reality. Some start as helpers and end up exploiting the same vulnerable people. But, if one wants more exposure, write one’s own narrative. Every single person walks a different path. What may work in one’s area might not work somewhere, so be open to criticism, and appreciate help all times. Most importantly be on the lookout for opportunities and apply. In that way youths can make the world a better place. He managed to do all this community work under hard conditions and patience was the key and determination. Brush aside criticism and accept it, because it is part of the journey.
Her name is Regina Mtonga. A name she was told many years ago was a powerful one as it means ‘Queen’. She was born and raised in Zambia’s capital city, Lusaka, to a combination of engineer and architect parents. Her parents raised her with strong values and strove to always prepare her for the world. Although she did not realise it at the time, but the simple lessons in how to fix a kettle plug and TV remote were merely her parents’ way of showing her women didn’t need to be in the kitchen alone.

Regina knew almost immediately after she had completed her Secondary school education that she wanted to study Computing. It is only when enrolled into College that she would notice boys weren’t quite as nice to her as they were before. She lost her father soon after she entered her final year of her Bachelor’s degree. This was a major hurdle for her because the one man who believed in her, the one man who taught her what other boys would not, was now gone and he was confused with her choices even more. She decided to take a break from her studies. Some might call it quitting, but she chose to think of it as ‘resting for a little while’.

In December 2011, she was invited by a friend to attend an Android development training session hosted by a tech hub called Bongohive. The training was wonderful, insightful, eye opening and free. However, the entire duration of this training, they had a staggering total of only three girls taking part including herself. This caused her co-founders and she who happened to be the other 2 girls who attended the training to create a group where they could find out why women still shy away from such events, what they could do help change their minds, and who they could speak to about this problem. During this time of self-discovery, she faced another challenge of her powerful mother’s passing. Asikana Network was born soon after facing these problems. Asikana, meaning young women in one of our local dialects, was a fitting name as we intended to work with just those. The young women of Zambia. They have been able to partner with several institutions both government and private in insuring girls know their rights, as well as know of the various opportunities that are available for them to study STEM courses.

The 3 of us funded Asikana Network out of our own pockets for what seemed like the longest time. That she must admit has been one major challenge for youths, especially in times when they need sums of money that cannot be produced from their little pockets. However, they quickly found a way to overcome this
major hurdle by partnering. If they could partner with an institution that could provide them with a service needed that they could not pay for, they could achieve a goal without worrying too much about funds.

Asikana Network has since 2013, started receiving recognition through various initiatives. In 2014, Asikana Network, through Regina Mtonga, received the Queens Young Leaders award. Through this program she is receiving mentorship, guidance and Leadership skills from people and organisations she is aware would not have been easily accessible to her before this opportunity. In a space of a week she had managed to learn so much through the aid and support of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust.

In 2016, it would be a wonderful vision to see if more people joined the movement that has been focusing on regenerating the Commonwealth. She comes from a place where culture dictates many things. She concludes, “Wouldn’t it be great to have culture, youth, male, female and technology all one day work together? Because the same world we are preparing our girls for, also has men in it”.

SAMUEL MUSEMBI | 24 YEARS - MALE | KENYA
YOUTH VOLUNTEER, YOUTH ADVOCATE ON SPORTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

At the age of 12, Samuel joined Sport for Development organisation where-in; his life took a major inspiration to a personality full of hope despite the setbacks he had from his background.

Growing up in the informal settlements of Nairobi was a journey full of lessons which have strengthened the current Samuel for a promising future. As he vividly remembers, acquisition of the basics of life was a struggle which he grew seeing from within his household and beyond. Crime, drugs and substance abuse were his daily scenes as he walked to school.

In 2012, his school friends informed him of a new library that was built in the neighbourhood and that first visit then was never the last. Samuel had only seen libraries drawn in books and this was an opportunity of a lifetime. It was always very difficult to study from home especially from the noisy neighbourhood and the poorly lit house which served all our family needs in the single room. It was hectic and he recalls the cold nights he woke up late in the night to complete his assignments since it was the only convenient time for a worthy study time.

Education was his only link to a better life for him and his family. His unemployed parents always reminded him of the high expectations especially from the eldest child perspective. He had no option but to give the best in his studies as he sets a pace for his siblings.

Being a member of the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) through the library was one of Samuel’s best strides and the library has been his second home until today. The library offered that missing link to his academic journey and was glad his performance was improving as he progressed through every level. His parents and teachers were proud of his notable improvement and more class mates joined him from this realisation.

The community library being a link to education in sports for development in the local organisation, they had to join a football team with the friends and happily named it library stars. They were not very good in football but their aim was to shine in the library as well as in the field and at one point they advanced to the championship level. This was motivating time in their young lives and they were very proud to be balancing library time and football time. At one period being the captain of the team which they shared a lot of similarities, he started acquiring a lot of leadership skills and values within sports participation. Samuel grew more responsible and it was always a learning moment to promote teamwork and the

"If not the best, among the best"
spirit of holistic excellence among his fellow team mates.

Through the organisation, Samuel got introduced to other activities like free tutorial classes in the library, the participatory community clean-ups, basic photography classes and awareness on leading a healthy life. His leadership grew further to being responsible for the Community Service Clean ups in his local area and later on started teaching other young children on Sustainable Community Environment. Through this exposure, his life was no longer boring as he found something to do in his free-time.

Samuel was being robed from the negative ills of the Mathare Slums and the exposure to many programs was equipping him to being in a position to make right choices. His library stars team and school mates were becoming a bolder accountability group and they had purposed to change their lives and their communities just from making the right decisions at the right time. Samuel was the top student in the school at the National Primary School Examination and the group recorded the best performance ever in the informal school and beyond and this was a major step to the commitment to improving our lives for good. Joining high school was not quite simple but was glad to have completed successfully as well advanced greatly in other spheres of life. He headed several clubs and societies and the climax was being the Deputy School Captain. During the final year, Samuel was one of the best students which led him to; The University of Nairobi.

The best realisation in his life has been in the appreciation that the power to change his life is within him and he got all it takes. His acceptance that he comes from a slum and he can change the future status also has been worthwhile since he does not live in denial and blame. The fact that No one chooses to be born poor or where to be born is indeed a reality and the steps towards changing the current situation is all that matters.

He felt very confident to begin a mentorship program to young children few years ago in his neighbourhood and the library as well and he is planning to advance his informal approach to an organized one as he purposes to empower more young leaders just like he was. Studying a double major in Economics and Sociology (BA) at the university has been a status smoothening his giving back to the informal society where he still comes from as he stays humble and hoping for the best. Through his involvement in the Sport for Development field, Samuel is glad to have joined the Commonwealth Youth Sports for Development and
Peace Working Group (CYSDP) through which he has gained greatly in facilitation skills and training from the Conferences he has attended in advocating for the power of Sport through a Youth Toolkit that they formed. Currently serving as a MYSA volunteer and one of the Sports Academy trainers, he is always glad to be learning widely and passing it to young children who he is a role model to them. From the passion to motivate and inspire dreams especially of his fellow youths, he is humbled to be a fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society.
SUNDAY JOHN OLUWADERO (26 YEARS - MALE) NIGERIA
YOUTH WORKER; PHARMACIST

Born to a village missionary on the 16th October, 1988; John Oluwadero is the last born in a family of six. As a villager; access to quality education, good health care services and even good water supply was a struggle, hence the genesis of his passion for youth and community development.

On getting admission to study Pharmacy at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, John was able to maximize the togetherness of youths on campus as a platform for the fulfillment of his vision for the making of a better Nigeria, through the access of children and youths to quality education and lifelong learning. As a first year undergraduate student at the University, he established the Better Nigeria Initiative (BNI), a youth work and community development agency, as a platform for empowering students/youths on campus and also engaging them in community development practice.

Through BNI, John has led several teams of young people to implement several youth and community development projects such as free youth entrepreneurship; computer training, annual fish farming training, book donation; library projects in rural schools, donation of welfare materials to motherless home, free health outreach, youth mental health campaigns, environmental sanitations, career orientation for high school students etc; all for the benefit of youths and marginalized communities.

The organization which started in 2009 with four founding members now has thirteen campus chapters and a community youth centre in Ekiti State. BNI is a member of Commonwealth Youth Council, a consulting firm to Ministry of Youth in two States in Nigeria, and a Global Partner on Youth for UN Post 2015 Development Agenda (a project of the office of the UN Special envoy on youth).

During the early days of BNI, members made use of their stipends as students to finance the organization as it was still green and not recognized. A lot of sacrifices were made by the members; some had to share accommodation just for the purpose of saving their rent for the benefit of the organization. However, with the passage of time the success story of BNI activities began to draw the attention of everyone on campus. The membership increased with corresponding increase in resources to do more; soon more partners and individual sponsors got involved in BNI Projects. The building for the community youth centre in Ekiti state was by the support of a Christian youth ministry to BNI.
BNI thematic operational fields are Education, Empowerment, Environment and Entrepreneurship. BNI is committed towards raising a new generation of young Nigerians that will be builders of a better Nigeria. BNI is currently working on building a library for Owotoro Community Grammar School, Owotoro Village in Oyo state. Their community youth centre hosts biweekly workshops on subjects that relates to youth empowerment and development. More information about BNI activities is available on www.bninigeria.org.

Aside BNI; John is also involved in several youth/student development engagements with national and international agencies. He is a Facilitation Team Member (Post 2015 Development Agenda), United Nations Major Group on Children and Youth and currently serves as an Ambassador for the World Bank Group-Young African Society, where he’s working on the education and training of youths in Agribusiness. He recently completed his tenure as the Commonwealth Students’ Organizer (Nigeria) for Commonwealth Students’ Association (CSA). During his tenure, he initiated the Commonwealth Citizenship and Leadership Orientation Workshop across secondary schools in Nigeria and also organized a student/youth event for the observance of the 2015 Commonwealth Day in Nigeria amongst others.


He has also served as the official youth ambassador/delegate for Ekiti State Government, Nigeria, Youth Consultant to the Ministry of Youth Development in two Nigerian states and was also a recipient of the Junior Chambers International-Fifteen Outstanding Persons Award.

John is a Youth worker, graduate Pharmacist and Social Entrepreneur. His operational principle as a youth worker is ‘youth development is not an event but a process; and as such requires effective planning, monitoring, evaluation and assessment until the desired goal is achieved’.
Years of Vigour and Freshness
Ocean of Potentials
Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm
Tears of Hardships
Hope for a Better World

ASIA

1. Ali Ehtsham (Pakistan)
2. Anoka Primrose Abeyrathne (Sri Lanka)
3. Arushi Madan (India)
4. Ayswarrya Ganapathiraman (India)
5. Cindy Chng jie Huee (Singapore)
6. David Hoe Teck Chye (Singapore)
7. Devika Malik (India)
8. Dinesh Gajendran (India)
9. Gulalai Ismail (Pakistan)
10. Hanan Ali Abbasi (Pakistan)
11. Hussain Riyaz (Maldives)
12. Joyshri Sarker Bithi (Bangladesh)
13. Kehkashan Basu (India)
14. Khairunnisa Ash’ari (Brunei Darussalam)
15. Kusala Kumara Jayendra Fernando (Sri Lanka)
16. Mridul Kumar Upadhyay (India)
17. Naushalya Manjari Rajapaksha (Sri Lanka)
18. Prashani Dilanka Dias (Sri Lanka)
19. Priya Verma (India)
20. Rohayl Varind (Pakistan)
21. Salma Yusuf (Sri Lanka)
22. Salman Ahmad (Pakistan)
23. Sameera Zaib (Pakistan)
24. Saquib Niaz Khaskhelli (Pakistan)
25. Sashini Gomez (Sri Lanka)
26. Simran Vedvyas (India)
27. Suraj Rajan (India)
28. Thajitha Saubhagya Edirisinghe (Sri Lanka)
29. Theresa Goh Rui Si (Singapore)
Ali Ehtsham has been a conscious citizen since his childhood. He is currently serving youth of the commonwealth as a member of commonwealth youth general assembly and a member of programs and budgeting committee. He graduated from Lahore School of Economics in 2013.

Ehtsham’s primary interest have always been social work. In his student life he took part in relief operation of Pakistan’s history’s catastrophic earthquake. His other interest is public speaking and debates. It compliments his to propagate the causes he has cared and helped him to put together more effective support. He has represented Pakistan at various national and international events. Being a responsible citizen he has always tried to fill gaps which are left by government or any other non-governmental organization elevating living standard of masses. In local community his primary work is on increasing cultural harmony, climate change, entrepreneurship, democracy, Peace and last but not least education.

Ehtsham has confidence that education is cornerstone of any society and it should be provided to everyone regardless of an individual can afford it or not. He was awarded Presidential award in 2012 on his work as a youth leader and motivating youth to work for better future and country at the same time. He believes that if individuals of a nation will do better country will be better consequently continent will do better and then chain reaction will make world a better place to live in. His earlier goals were to successfully implement millennium development goals now he is working for Sustainable development goals.

Ehtsham believes that small medium enterprises and entrepreneurship act as an engine of economy and youth because of having access to less capital uses these modes. He is running a campaign for modern farming techniques. But there is a dire need to empower youth financially in all developing countries of commonwealth. His work on democracy and peace started after certain factions started an armed struggle against Government of Pakistan since it became front line country to curb it. He is these days working on planting of trees because the global temperature is rising and global warming is a prime concern Pakistan being situated in a unique geographical location has access to a lot of water but there is no dam to store it.

He believes in youth and considers that youth can take best techniques used globally and apply them locally in order to make their community a better place. Having worked as part of team, he understands the value of good communication,

“Knowing is not enough, we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do.”
- Bruce Lee
Years of Vigour and Freshness Ocean of Potentials Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm Tears of Hardships Hope for a Better World

listening to others, building rapport between members and adjusting his style to needs of team have cultivated his in a major activist in Pakistan. He is making this world a better place despite of all odds he was able to achieve his goals in his community regardless of heavy resistance to change. He believes you can as well you have everything it takes to be a leader. Go out there and act.
ANOKA PRIMROSE ABEYRATHNE (24 YEARS - FEMALE) SRI LANKA
CHIEF ECO-SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AT SUSTAIN SOLUTIONS

“Success is like an iceberg. We see just the tip but not the hard work, late nights, sacrifices and the failures that all lead to success”

Anoka faced the Tsunami at age 13. It changed her life forever. Born in a country torn with the civil war, the Tsunami showed her death and destruction of unimaginable levels. Discovering that Mangroves could have prevented this major disaster to a great extent, Anoka started a Mangrove replantation programme with her friends with their pocket money. After realizing that communities do not have time to only plant Mangroves, and that they had their livelihoods to attend daily, she turned the initiative into a social enterprise called Growin’ Money. This programme grew with over 20000 volunteers, over 50000 Mangroves replanted, and over one million rupees generated from a social enterprise stemming from the Mangrove replantation called Growin’ Money under Sustain Solutions.org. This social enterprise creates handicrafts, organic products and promotes Mangrove replantation stake-holdership.

Anoka and her team also found out that Mangroves are great absorbers of Carbon dioxide, therefore acting as carbon sinks which helps mitigate climate change. This initiative has had major impact on battling climate change by ensuring cleaner lakes and water bodies, by creating and implementing laws to protect all Mangroves in Sri Lanka, by carbon sinking over 1000 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year while ensuring better health and environment for the people of South Asia.

Despite the positive ramifications of the initiative, the community has been apprehensive about the initiative as it was youth and female led, which was unheard of in a patriarchal society. It had been difficult to gain the trust of community members in Sri Lanka, however through approaching community members through trusted religious leaders, and trusted youth leaders, the programme was soon accepted by communities. The programme grew to over 4 countries with India, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Maldives coming onboard through young people to combat climate change and to lead to sustainable development.

Anoka and her team worked for over 5 years without funding to ensure that their model of climate change addressing worked by redoing and perfecting their model. They worked day and night sometimes, and through monsoon seasons because Mangroves were usually replanted during the rainy seasons. The perils they faced included rat fever, as many rats were prevalent pests in the underprivileged communities they worked with. They overcame these by working together and ensuring that safety standards were met while working...
with experts to gain input and support for better climate change mitigation. They also faced challenges with designers and clients, therefore had to work together to ensure quality standards were stringent with their products while working to engage more young people in the programme.

This led to her initiative being awarded by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Youth Award, The Commonwealth Youth Award for Excellence in Development Work while being the youngest Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society. Anoka was selected as the youngest Global Shaper of the World Economic Forum while being the only Asian in the United Nations – World Economic Forum Sustainable Development Council working to mainstream sustainability through the post 2015 Development Agenda.

Some of the things that could have been done in Anoka’s views are to have engaged more through marketing to ensure better sales of community made products, better social media engagement and to work with more design schools to create more creative products. Some of the major life lessons Anoka has learned is that to succeed one must push on no matter how hard the situation is and to work with great teams to ensure great results. She has continuously inspired and pushed her team towards settling for nothing but the best, and to give their 110% towards their passionate work.

Anoka hopes to become a leader in climate change and environmental legal policy while working to create more environmental social enterprise to support the neediest communities. She also hopes to start carbon sink systems in Asia, where polluter pays systems can be implemented to fund communities who offset carbon dioxide emissions.

To this end Anoka advices anyone to look for innovative and creative solutions to tackle climate change with communities who will be most affected in the future unless we act to mitigate and stop climate change. She believes that young people should never stop because you have no funding, because once your work starts gaining momentum, you will have support from many persons and bodies.

According to Anoka “we are the generation with the ability to make a difference and shape the sustainable development goals, so let us work together at grass root and policy levels to adapt and mitigate climate change to the best of our abilities.”
ARUSHI MADAN (16 YEARS - FEMALE) INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AMBASSADOR, YOUTH VOLUNTEER

From a very young age, Arushi has been taught not to waste electricity, water and other resources for the sake of environment conservation. It made her environmentally conscious and as she grew, she realized that the environment is deteriorating. Global warming and increasing disasters are causing havoc. All, due to human exploitation. Ironically, people still seem to be unaware of their role in reducing global warming and protecting environment. That’s why she decided to take up the cause of campaigning and spreading awareness about environment protection, not only by preaching but also by working at the grass root level and setting examples.

For more than 4 years, Arushi has been actively organizing awareness events, involving and mobilizing children and youth in events aimed at protecting environment and implementing self-initiated projects like “Waste Segregation System in our building”, “Energy Saving in our building” etc.

Arushi made beautiful tables out of discarded tyres lying in the junkyard. She has been demonstrating these tables in her campaigns to convince people that discarded items can be recycled and turned into useful items (up cycling). These tables have become her tool to imbibe into the minds of young and adults the concept of 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle).

With her belief in the saying “If you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a family /a generation”, she conducted an awareness event exclusively for women. Likewise, she conducted an awareness event exclusively for labourers who constitute the workforce but are unaware of the environmental issues the world is facing today.

She supports local environment management companies like Bee’ah and take up their initiatives to spread the movement. Currently, she is working on a “Mass Tree Plantation” project with aim to plant 250 trees in Sharjah.

There are two kinds of people in this world, givers and takers. Those who take, eat better but those who give, sleep better. With that set straight in her mind and heart, she try to help the unfortunate to the best of her abilities.

In India, during her vacations, Arushi spends 2 hours daily with old aged people at “Old Age home”. Getting them gifts, serving them their favourite dishes, sharing stories with them, giving them company and making them feel good. also volunteer my time and funds for children with special needs.
She is the President of the youth community group “Students for the Earth” and founder of “Ecoholics”. They organize charity Iftars every year during Ramadan to donate and serve Iftar (evening snacks/breakfast to fasting people). They also donate clothes to charities. They conducted a “Nepal Quake Relief Drive” and collected items like rice, pulses, sugar, biscuits, blankets, bed sheets, folding mattresses etc and donated about 1.25 tons of relief material to Emirates Red Crescent for sending to quake-affected Nepal. We volunteered for Big Heart Campaign (initiative of Sheikha Jawahar for the Syrian refugee children) in which we sold artificial pearls (donated by a merchant) in Charity Souq and all the proceeds went for supporting Syrian refugee children. Currently our campaign “A Dose of Help” is running through which they are asking for leftover, unused medicines (with expiry 1 year or longer). After collection, we would give these to Emirates Red Crescent for the needy. Through this, they are spreading 2 important messages a) to divert unused medicines from going to landfill and deteriorating the environment, b) to donate for a good cause. Recently concluded a campaign to collect old books and donated about 800 books to Dubai Public Library under an event called “Old Books, New Life”.

Due to her selfless contribution towards community and environment, she received “International Diana Award”, “International Young Eco Hero Award”, national awards like “Sheikh Hamdan award for distinguished student”, “Sharjah award for educational excellence”, “Sharjah Environment Awareness Award”, “UAE Green Star” etc. She is featured as inspirational teen in various national newspapers, magazines and also on “www.inspiremykids.com”.

Arushi is appointed as an Environment Ambassador to the Middle East by Tunza Eco Generation (venture between UN-EP and Samsung) and was invited to represent UAE for Global Youth Eco Leadership Summit at Seoul, South Korea in Feb 2014. She tries to inspire others by giving motivational talks in national and International Summits and conferences. By doing social, humanitarian and environmental activities selflessly, she learnt that one has to set an example for others to follow and practise before preaching. She realized that small acts can have big impacts if all of us do collectively.

Arushi would like to advise the global youth to shed away hesitations and not to wait for others to initiate. Have a “Let me” approach rather than “Why me”. Apart from academics, get involved in social and voluntary activities to improve the lives of others, to give back to society and to make this world a better place. Be the change you wish to see in the world.
AYSWARRYA GANAPATHIRAMAN (24 YEARS - FEMALE) INDIA
YOUNG WRITER; LIFE SKILLS TRAINER

Ayswarrya is a writer by profession and is currently pursuing a Digital Marketing Internship in Brazil. She is also an ESL teacher and personality development trainer.

Coming from a disadvantaged background, Ayswarrya’s mother had to make a lot of sacrifices to provide her with a decent education. Money was tight and as a result, Ayswarrya had to focus solely on her academics, give up on extra-curricular activities, to get good grades and secure a scholarship to pursue Electronics and Communication Engineering. Upon graduating with excellent grades, she realized that the University hadn’t equipped her with employable skills and practical expertise required of an Electronics and Communication Engineer. She was not alone and met several others facing similar problems in her country. This made her realize that the system was flawed and engendered in her a passion to bring about a change in the education systems of the world. She got involved with the Commonwealth Students’ Association, an umbrella organization for student bodies across the Commonwealth with the primary purposes of lobbying for student rights and equal access to quality education. She also started volunteering as an English teacher and life skills trainer. Along the way, she discovered her true passion – writing and interpersonal communication. Her major achievement (also her most recent achievement) is being honoured with the National Youth Award at the Government House in Nassau, The Bahamas by the Governor-General of The Bahamas for services rendered towards organizing the 19th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers (CCEM) and for serving successfully as a member of the Commonwealth Students’ Association Steering Committee from 2012-2015.

Another major achievement of hers is winning the World’s Largest Lesson competition at a regional level by submitting a lesson plan on quality education. World’s Largest Lesson (WLL) is an initiative by TES UK, in partnership with UNICEF and Ministries of Education globally to develop lessons about The Global Goals for Sustainable Development for children across the world. The lesson will be published and made available for all in the month of September.

Other significant achievements include being appreciated by HRM Queen Elizabeth II for her work as a student leader, speaking at several international platforms such as the 19 CCEM, World Conference on Youth (WCY), Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF), Asia Youth Leaders Summit (AYLS), etc. on access to quality education and role of students in governance.

“Learning is not a product of schooling, but the lifelong attempt to acquire it.”
Although she has no regrets, Ayswarrya wishes that she had realized the importance of discovering and following her passion in life. She also wishes she had been more involved in social and community development during her years of schooling.

Her advice to young people everywhere is to be fearless and follow their heart: “Don’t let obstacles discourage you from achieving what you want. Remember that mistakes and failures are the stepping stones towards success. I have no misgivings about the choices I made, for they helped shape me into the person that I am today.”

Ayswarrya wishes to pursue a career in Communications and continue here volunteer work in the field of education. She strongly believes that education is a right, not a privilege determined by the social and financial status of your family and envisions a world where quality education is accessible to all. She intends to keep working towards achieving this vision for the rest of her life, and inspire others to do the same. To conclude, she would like to quote Former President of USA Woodrow Wilson, aptly summarizing the driving force behind her passion to bring about a revolution, together with other young people across the world, in global education systems and transform the lives of students everywhere.

“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.” – Woodrow Wilson, Former President of USA
CINDY CHNG JIT HUEE (26 YEARS - FEMALE) SINGAPORE

SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Being inspired as early as 13 years old, Cindy Chng started volunteering in the various community organisations and has been contributing selflessly back to the society ever since.

As a strong advocate for Youth Empowerment and Community Development, Cindy has consistently dedicated herself to pursue her causes. She is actively involved in community organisations such as the People’s Association Youth Movement (PAYM) and youth committees where she held key appointments. She has also initiated and organised various youth and community programmes such as Go Green for Community, Little Green Champions and Community Peer Tutoring programmes which saw her personally mentor the other youths to take on larger leadership roles.

Cindy’s influence does not stop in the committees that she volunteers in. Driven by her dedication to empower the other youths, she constantly was given the opportunity to speak at various platforms to share her experience and motivates the other youths.

Due to her active involvement and contributions to the community, Cindy has represented Singapore at various ASEAN and international programmes.

Before pursuing her Masters in China in 2013, Cindy served a critical role in shaping youth development through the Commonwealth platform as Singapore Youth Representative to the Commonwealth and Asia Regional Commonwealth Youth Programme. She has also contributed to the ASEAN community through her involvement in Agents For Change (AFC), a youth development programme for youths in the Asia region. For her inspirational service to others and passionate commitment to contributing to the betterment of the society, Cindy was conferred the ASEAN Youth Award 2012 and Commonwealth Youth Programme Service Award 2013.

Besides her contributions to the local and regional communities, she is also involved in various start-ups. She started her entrepreneurship journey in 2009 when she founded Eco Travel Services which is a social enterprise that brings about alternative income to developing communities in ASEAN through responsible and community based tourism activities. Cindy had the choice of taking the easy route after graduating from school. However, she felt that eco-tour is something that she would like to advocate and grow. Subsequently, she

“All too often, people do not know what they are capable of achieving until they actually start doing it. Do not let the unknown hold you back, because you will never be truly happy until you start following your heart”
went on to set-up various starts-up that serve to address community issues such as energy production from agricultural waste which provide new energy solutions for the developing regional economy.

Cindy has dared to dream and carved a niche in the tourism industry developments for the rest of her fellow youths. She remains active in the community and hopes to inspire the younger generation of youths to become active agents of positive social change.
David Hoe is not your average youth. His parents filed for divorce on his fifth birthday; consequently, he had to live alone with his mother – who, unfortunately, had been blinded after a cataract operation as a result of a medical negligence – before she passed away when he was twelve. It has been a life fraught with immense challenges. In order to make ends meet, young David had to sell tissues and knick-knacks on the streets with his blind mother; unsurprisingly, this dysfunctional lifestyle certainly had associated ramifications – initially – for his academic-scholastic performance.

His future did not look promising when he received his primary school streaming results. He fell into bad company, and took up drinking and smoking.

“I was just being delinquent,” he says. “I hung out with these people for a few months before I met the right ones.”

His new group of friends helped to coach him in his studies and this inspired him to want to teach others. He set his mind on teaching as a career, a resolve made firmer by a couple of caring teachers and mentors along the way. Despite his less-than-privileged background and experiences, David has since made remarkable progress through his unyielding willpower and focus. Today, he is a well-respected youth and student leader, who has a teaching scholarship from the Ministry of Education of Singapore.

Having a strong belief in the potential of young people, David hopes to be able to pay-it-forward for all the opportunities that he has received. During his time at the University, he had rallied students for several projects. One mentoring programme that he had founded – TMentors, helped to encourage university students to step out of their comfort zone to mentor secondary school students in their academics and empowering them with life skills. He also founded the STep up mentoring programme that engages both local and international students to read newspapers with underprivileged children who are beneficiaries of The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

This year, David is organising the second edition of “I Am Talented” (IAT), a programme for secondary school students in the Normal stream to discover their potential talents from an assortment of focuses. This could help to empower Singapore youths with the message that talents are not necessary defined by the grades they get. Currently, he is working with a team of dedicated
volunteers in planning for IAT 2016.

On top of that, he is also working with a group of youths to create a mentoring program that focuses on students who do not have access to opportunities for self-development.

Internationally, David has also been active in contributing to the international scene through community projects and his involvement in the Commonwealth Youth Council. For his exemplary efforts to inspire and help other youths, he was conferred as one of the Asia region finalists for the Commonwealth Youth Award for Excellence in Development Work 2015.
DEVIKA MALIK (24 YEARS - FEMALE) INDIA
COUNSELLOR; CO - FOUNDER OF WHEELING HAPPINESS FOUNDATION

Being born a female with disability in a developing country like India has enabled Devika with a sensitized world view. Being a case of congenital hemiplegia herself, her mother a paraplegic for the last 15 years; and being raised in a family of Army Officers, these factors sensitized her towards the cause of Inclusive Society & Peace since a young age.

Since the tender age of 8 years, Devika has watched and learnt from her mother coping with her disability. This motivation drove her to combat and overcome her challenges with the same vigour and also to be of service to other people struggling with a myriad of challenges like disability, lack of infrastructural facilities, depression, gender discrimination and poverty.

Today, at 24 years of age, she is an International Para-athlete with a Silver Medal at the World Athletics Grand Prix, Tunis 2014 and Psychological Counsellor with a Masters in Psychology from Delhi University. Combining Devika’s passion for inclusive sport development and peace, she is an active contributor to the Olympic Truce Peace Campaign as well as an alumnus of the Youth Leadership Program conducted by the United Nations Office of Sport for Development & Peace (UNOSDP) in Tokyo.

The Commonwealth Youth Affairs Division has assigned Devika to be an Asian Representative on the Commonwealth Youth Sport for Development & Peace (CYSDP) Working Group, consisting of a total of 11 individuals selected from all 53 Commonwealth Nations. On International Youth Day 2014, she addressed a national conference organized by PHD Chambers of Commerce, expounding strategies for Inclusive sport development and also conducted an interactive session with caregivers of cancer patients, to help them develop resilience needed by them to be able to effectively support patients under their care.

With a desire to lead from the front and inspire a collective passion towards these causes, Devika’s mother and Devika have established a Foundation, named Wheeling Happiness, aimed at enhancing the emotional health of persons living with physical, emotional and social challenges in India. In today's global age, awareness regarding disabilities and impairment has been elevated greatly. However, even those with the best intentions have an outlook of sympathy towards persons with challenges. She hopes that our efforts will bring about a shift in this universal mind-set and drive people to view persons with challenges as truly valuable and empowered citizens of the world, not just objects of pity.
The foundation has already mobilized volunteers and conducted programs to promote an inclusive society, such as, construction of ramps at railway stations, awareness campaigns in schools and corporates towards disability and para-sports, free of cost counselling sessions, sensitizing road commuters to follow traffic rules keeping visually and physically impaired pedestrians in view, sponsoring slum children to experience adventure sports and raising funds for artificial limbs for underprivileged users to quote some examples. As the co-founder, she has also represented the foundation at an International Youth Peace Ambassadors’ Workshop held in Phoenix, USA with a focus on diversity and indigenous populations. She is currently in the process of formulating an action plan along with two other partners to organize an International Peace Festival in India in 2015.

Devika says, “We at Wheeling Happiness believe in Celebrating Life & the Spirit of Mind Over Body”. She is grateful to the Commonwealth family and Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust for appreciating her efforts and honouring her as one of the first ever recipients of the Queen’s Young Leaders Award. The Award, presented by Her Majesty, The Queen, is part of The Queen’s Young Leaders Programme, and celebrates the achievements of young people who are taking the lead to transform the lives of others and make a lasting difference in the communities. As part of this program they have built networks across the Commonwealth and have also helped to enhance youths’ skills through the ‘Leading Change’ online course offered in partnership with Cambridge University.
Dinesh Gajendran hailed from rural village of Tamilnadu, India having many success stories to share with the community. Dinesh plays diversified roles as youth worker, social entrepreneur, policy maker, administrator, educationalist, film maker, sportsman, etc.

Born as a son of a farmer whom has limited access or knowledge of education that dropped out school at very early age. He had been brought up with lack of proper guidance regarding higher education, career or what to do next in life, faced many challenges to get higher education in which he overcome all the hurdles and successfully came up as first generation graduate. He wanted to showcase to the world how education can change an individual and transform the community around.

Dinesh Gajendran had graduated with Masters in Business Administration (MBA), Masters in Advertising & Public Relations (MA), Masters in Political Science (MA), Bachelors in Science (BSC), Diploma in Sports Management (DSM), Graduate in Embracing Commonwealth Values (ECV) in Youth Development by Commonwealth of learning and Discovering Young Leaders Potential (DYLP) by CYP Africa.

A public speaker by passion has undergone rigorous training, invested time and energy to learn different things from his childhood with commitment and focus. An active student leader throughout his school and university he had served with youth uniformed service in National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS) Rotaract club, Knowledge council, etc. An Active all-rounder in sports player performed at state and national level in his favorite game called Kho-Kho which changed his life totally. An Active Training and Development Professional providing training for youth on Life Skills, Adolescent Health, Parenting, Civic Citizenship, Global Understanding, Employability, Entrepreneurship, Leadership etc.

He plays diversified role as youth activist, social entrepreneur, social worker, marketer, policy maker, administrator, educationalist, film maker, sportsman, initiator etc. He had experienced excellence in management and social sector where he worked in various advertising and communication agencies and as well as experience with the International social agencies. A proud Gold Award Holder of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation founded by HRH Prince Philip in which he served on various capacities within the foundation as award leader, coordinator, ambassador, trainer, TFT etc. He has received the
highest award of “Social Innovation” from the foundation for his contribution to youth development through the award. He has been appointed with Asia Pacific office where he has been involved in training and development communication and research. A special mention to his involvement in the Asia and Pacific Region and Small state Islands in which he identified and coordinated many youth development projects and represented award at high level. His policy making and youth development efforts leads to participation in United Nations High Level Meeting on Youth, New York, Beyond Sports Summit and Awards, Chicago, Youth Representative for Youth Leadership Consultation of United Nations Economic Social and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), to form Network of Emerging Leaders in Asia and the Pacific (NELAP), Bangkok, invited as speaker at #Youth for change-Girl Summit 2014, London an historical event on Ending Child and early forced marriage and FGM, serving as Youth Goodwill Ambassador for Sri Lanka United Nations Friendship Organization (SUNFO).

He has been involved with several national and international initiatives with Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Ministry of Youth Affairs, Government of India and also contributed to consultation on Asia Pacific Youth policies and programme Consultation of SAARC youth Charter, Delegate of SAARC Youth Camp, Speaker at the Asia Youth Leaders Summit by British council and CYP and Mainstreaming Youth in Local Governance etc. He also actively involved with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) to promote arts, culture youth development

Dinesh’s interest on global and sustainable development issues printed his presence in South Asian Youth Conference (SAYC), Global Citizens Youth Assembly (GCYA), South Asian Peace youth Camp (SAPYC), Youth for Human Rights Initiatives (YHRI) etc. An active Rotaract club member since 2004 serves with the District Rotaract Council RI3230 which is world’s largest Rotaract district with 23000 members. He has been selected to participate in prestigious Rotary International’s team of Group Study Exchange (GSE) for Young Professional and visited Germany for a month in which he had great exposure of visiting the high level decision makers. He also served on a Mission with Ministry of Youth affairs and skills development, Government of Sri Lanka.

With the Commonwealth Secretariat he started his journey as Asia Regional Representative which formulated the Asia Regional Working group and he also served in the steering committee in its policies and decision making process.
Later he started serving with Commonwealth Youth Sports for Development and Peace (CYSDP) as Asia Regional Representative actively contributed for the Annual General body Meeting feeding to Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting (CSMM) at Glasgow. Through his team work and ability published the Youth Advocacy toolkit on Sports for Development and peace and handled the workshops in India. His capacity of working with the team including representatives from UNICEF, UNESCO, Ministry of Youth and Sports officials and other stakeholders together contributed to the Commonwealth Sports and Post 2015 Forum in London demonstrated the contribution of sports in Post 2015. He has been invited to facilitate Session on Cross Cutting Issues in Youth Development during the Youth Forum-Asia Region Youth Ministers Meeting (AR-YMM) 2015. He works closely with the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) in executing various projects and Successfully Organised India Srilanka Youth Exchange Forum Series 2015.

His active involvement in the International understanding and building networks, he has organized South Asian Peace Youth Camp in Srilanka, India-Srilanka Friendship Forum, India-Mauritius Youth Exchange, India-UK Friendship Forum, India-China Friendship forum. He made the point of travelling from grassroots and serving as global citizen and this is one young world.

He has various grass root and global exposure served with many international organizations travelled to Sri Lanka, USA, Thailand, Scotland, Germany, Czech Republic, and England. And he has rich experience travelled to north, west, north east and around south of India, the country celebrates unity and diversity and promoting cultural diversity. He has contributed to several publications and his work has been published at various regional, national media and International websites

Dinesh founded Audacious Dreams Foundation, India aims to inspire, inform, engage, enable and empower youth for global understanding and sustainable development by using various measures starring from mutual dialogue, sports for development, youth in governance, adolescent health, gender equality, social innovations etc. He also founded “Institute of Youth Affairs and Social Development” a research institute for youth development. His interest in policy making made his debut in grassroot democratic institution/local government in 2011 he has been elected as a councilor to his Village/Grama Panchayat board. He has the capacity of mobilizing young people to participate in the democratic process and nation building in which he has organized several campaigns
mainstreaming youth in local Governance by encouraging them to participate in Grama Sabha, Village education councils, Village Management committee, etc.

With his exposure to global projects and experience with various international youth organizations, he has implemented many global programmes for marginalized and rural youth such as International Youth Day, UN Programmes and observance, Commonwealth awareness etc. An active promoter of Millennium Development Goals for past 4 years, He had formed a Youth ambassador panel in 60 different villages and trained thousands of youth in the Millennium Development Goals campaigns and organized several projects to involve youth in action. He also founded the massive campaign connecting all the local government institutions, stakeholders and municipal corporations by creating “Stop Child Labour” Campaign which aims to Reduce School Drop Outs, Promote Higher Education, Creating Equal space for Women in educational institutions, and Promoting Right to Education Act. With his support the local governments initiated many youth related projects and formed Youth Councils at the grassroot level, providing equal opportunity for youth to participate in the decision making process of local governments. He also involved in the process of providing Employment opportunity for the people by facilitating Central Government's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). He facilitated and formed Women Self Help Group and provided to start small scale businesses to build their livelihoods.

For his greater contribution in the education sector he had been shortlisted as one of the top 20 youth in the world for the prestigious “Youth Courageous award” by the UN Special Envoy of Global Education during year 2014 further to that he has been appointed as Global Youth Ambassador for A World at School by Gordon Brown to promote universal education.

Using Technology for promoting global cause he has been managing Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube with pages to promote Global Understanding and highlighting the opportunities and happening the world of youth development. Passionate film maker produced and directed films on social inclusion, migration, child labour, Gender etc and also received recognition from UNAOC and International organization for Migration. His films have been selected to various International film festivals and also received screening in Manhattan International Film Festival. He served as an anchor for UnManifesto- India’s largest crowd sourced manifesto for parliament election which mainstream's youth voice in Governance in supported UNFPA.
GULALAI ISMAIL (28 YEARS - FEMALE) PAKISTAN
FOUNDER AND CHAIRPERSON OF AWARE GIRLS

Gulalai was 13 going to School, when one of her cousin almost her age who was dreaming to become a pilot, was told the cousin can’t go to school anymore because she is getting married next month. The girl who was dreaming to become a pilot became wife of a man 15 years older than her.

Her cousin’s dreams were shattered, Gulalai was shocked, it opened up to her that education in their country is only for girls who are privileged, only privileged girls can set their goals for life and can work to achieve it, the rest have to follow the norm of the society.

Gulalai comes from the North West of Pakistan- a province known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. It is one of the most difficult parts of Pakistan and also one of the well-known parts of Pakistan for being the center of attacks of the extremist groups like Taliban. The province has borders with Afghanistan and the Tribal areas of Pakistan, after 9/11 the militant groups from Afghanistan crossed the porous tribal border of Pakistan, built alliances with the militant groups who were already operating in Pakistan and evolved into Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan- whose objective is to take control of the State of Pakistan and establish their own Sharia State. Throughout the last decade the militant groups have ruthlessly attacked the citizens including women and children and have weakened the governance. More than 50,000 people have lost their lives and millions have been displaced internally.

North Western part of Pakistan is one of the most difficult parts of the world for women- the culture is feudal and tribal and is very discriminatory to women. The human rights violation are often deeply rooted in the culture. The culture limits women to home, restricts their access to the outer world- to the schools, market, universities, to business and to politics. Around 70% of girls and women are illiterate, having almost no control over their lives. In the Country, only 18% of the women have received more than 10 years of education. 90% of women face domestic abuse, young women being the most vulnerable to it.

Gulalai didn’t wanted any other girl of her community to be either forced into marriage or any other decision which is against her choice. Gulalai had the dream of every girl being able to live her life to her fullest potential without gender becoming a barrier to it. So to bring the change she wanted to see in the lives of girls, her younger sister Saba and Gulalai decided to start a campaign to educate girls about their rights and to give them leadership skills so that
they can speak up for their rights in their families and can agents of change in their communities. At the age of 16, with her sister Gulalai established an Organisation AWARE GIRLS which is led by young women and girls, and which aspires to empower young women and girls so that they can have equal access to education, employment, sports, social services and decision making.

Aware Girls, established in 2002, and till date is a platform for young women and girls, the Board of Organization comprises of young women and girls from the community they work in. All the policies, decisions and programs are made by young women and girls to empower themselves, other girls in the community, to create conducive environment so that they can exercise their human rights, and to bring peace.

At Aware Girls we are working in five major domains i.e. Human Rights and Leadership, Addressing Violence Against Women, Political and Economic Empowerment of Women, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, and Peacebuilding.

To make these dreams a reality in the harsh environment they are using different strategies which includes educating girls, community mobilization, using digital media, talking to policy makers, and engaging men. One of the very interesting strategy we have adopted is to establish Girls Power Clubs in the rural areas which are actually leadership incubators, girls are educated about their human rights, and they mentored to run campaigns for speaking about their rights and for driving the change they want to see in their communities.

The young women who become part of Aware Girls go through life changing experiences e.g. Salma Bibi from Swabi, whose age is 26, she was married off at a young age. In 2012 she became part of Political Leadership Training of Aware Girls, after the training she decided to take part in the civic and political processes of her community. This was something very new for her family, but with she changed the mind of her family, gained their support, ran for office in Local Elections 2015 and won the election. She is now committed to change the lives of girls in her community by engaging them in the political processes of the community.

Through our programs they teach men and women, that they all human beings no matter what is their gender are born free, and with equal dignity. They teach them bravery is not about controlling women and about violence- bravery is
about accepting the equal human status of other human being, bravery is about speaking up for the violation of human rights.

Speaking up for girls’ rights and peace has been a fascinating and a difficult journey; they had to pay the cost in the form of life threatening situations. Last year, her whole family was attacked by the extremists, because they speak for peace and human rights. The cost of speaking is high— for young women and girls. But Gulalai continues to speak, because it change lives of hundreds of girls in her community.

An educated and empowered girl can break the viscous cycle of poverty, she can change her own dynamics, her family, and her village. The more we invest in girls’ education and girls’ empowerment, the more likely we will be able to achieve development goals, will be able to bring peace and harmony. If we keep on ignoring the needs and rights of more than 50% of the population of the world, then we should forget about the world becoming a decent, developed, and war free place.

Bigger discoveries started with smaller questions like why the apple also falls on the ground and not towards sky— let’s start asking small question why so many girls are out of school, why we have few women leaders, why women still face violence, why the population of girls is less than boys?

The curiosity has changed the world, Silence only perpetuates more silence, speaking about these issues, speaking give space to more sharing, more awareness, and more change! Small change but a humble change. Gulalai concludes, “I made a promise to myself that I will always break the silence and I hope you make a promise too!”
The journey from an ordinary poor villager to founder of Pakistan’s leading recognized Youth Platform i.e. the National Youth Assembly (NYA) was started at an early age of Hanan’s life when at the age of fourteen he noticed that famous, influential people sit behind large desks and offer tea to their guests; he wanted to do the same. When he shared this thought with his father, he allowed him to have a small shop in the village to serve as an office. Hence for three years after school, he would sit in his “office” and have all kinds of guests over. It was designed to be a community center for his fellow people where they can mutually contribute to the philanthropic movement started for the welfare of his members. “Those three years gave me a tremendous amount of confidence and helped me garner people skills, where he learned to communicate effectively, a skill which has paid huge dividends for me in my life. Thus it was the start of my philanthropic career.

Despite having initial struggles in the beginning of Hanan’s philanthropic career he always did believe in the notion that “A small group of thoughtful people could change the world.”

As he grew older, he was much inclined towards the advancements on her writing career and exposure to political and social structure of the country respectively. After publication of his first article “My Village” in leading newspaper’s children section, he pursued this literary voyage by penning down more than 350 columns and articles including two prominent books titled “Zameeni Sitaray” and “Cheen Say Bartania Tak”. In recognition of his services for highlighting the problems of people affected in Oct 2005 Earthquake, a Turkey-based International Human Rights Organization (I.H.H) awarded him the best Young Writer Award in Earthquake issues.

The initial significant achievement of his life has brought laurels to him in the form of state’s highest official youth award, “National Youth Award 2010,” awarded by the Government of Pakistan. Later, he has been recognized for her essential and innovative work both nationally and internationally, most notably by the Commonwealth International Secretariat London from where he received credible Youth award of almost 54 Commonwealth countries.

In recognition of the Hope campaign (food distribution among the deserving masses) and other philanthropic activities, the Pakistan International Human Rights Organization he was presented Youth Human Rights award along with
the holder of Noble Prize for Peace Malala Yousafzai.

He has visited China, Hong Kong, Sudan, the United Kingdom, Iran and the latest one which further established his reputation as a credible young achiever was the participation in Commonwealth Youth Forum, Sri Lanka. Honorably his services were recognized by the Nazaria Pakistan Council (NPC) and he was awarded gold medal last year.

Before long Hanan began to have an adequate interest in contemplating the various aspects of politics and felt particularly aggrieved by decades of political instability in every corner of the country. The idea of leadership training became logical and smooth to realize when he decided to set up a Youth Movement at the National level. This movement was named, “National Youth Assembly, “which has brought together future leaders from more than 100 Districts of the country. This platform has been giving voice to thousands of unsung heroes across Pakistan and other parts of the world. It provides an opportunity for young minds to learn about politics, democracy, social work and parliamentary system in the best learning environment.

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.” He was one of those lucky men to be poured with the finest opportunity to pay an official visit to various countries across the world as a state guest in such younger times. He faced hardships, the hostile and opposing behaviours. Even his friends called him insane and frantic to become a social reformer. Their words might have been enough to discourage him, but he never lost his hope. His poetic essence was the source of courage and uplifting the motivation:

“They got and cherished the assistance, We merely received the abhorrence, Their Fathers were all high ranked, But we, with our dreams, got influenced, Life went on flying this way, Our high spirits, concealing the dismay”

His future objective is to prepare a family of effective and sympathetic future leaders of Pakistan. As was previously stated Hanan and his dedicated team is working every day on new ideas and surely they will execute their motive.

The path he has opted is a full of thorns and upsetting, but he accept this challenge to strive towards his defined goals.
HUSSAIN RIYAZ (24 YEARS - MALE) MALDIVES
YOUTH LEADER, LEGAL PROFESSIONAL

Hussain started volunteering with projects of non-governmental organizations during his secondary school days after what he have learnt from the scout activities. He worked with various community based organizations at a grassroots level. After his high school, he was selected to attend Training for Trusteeship (TFT) in 2011 which was held in Sri Lanka. The two week long programme was organized by the Weeramanthry International Center for peace education and research (WICPER). This programme opened his eyes to various issues faced by our communities, and got the chance to engage with youth leaders from the region and have fruitful discussions on how to overcome such obstacles and issues. The two week programme taught him the importance of being a responsible human being. The concept of trusteeship means that every individual owes a responsibility towards the community they live in and the environment they live in. After a couple of months, he got the chance to represent his atoll in the nation youth leadership programme which was three week long. He met with likeminded youth leaders from there, and learnt so many important life lessons. He learnt the importance of living with love and learning in order to leave a legacy.

During the training, there was a model parliament in which he played an important role in making the dialogue creative. From the programme, two youth leaders (one boy and one girl) were selected and awarded the opportunity to represent Maldives on the Commonwealth Diamond Jubilee. The boy was Riyaz, and he took part in representing Maldives in the Commonwealth Diamond Jubilee. After the youth leadership programme he started his law school. At the same time he got a prestigious opportunity to attend conservation fellowship with DR. Jane Goodall in Hamburg, Germany. However, he had to choose between the law school or the fellowship, as the fellowship requires 10 months of commitment. He wanted to go for it, however, he had to stay with his law degree. He has been passionate about many things and for him it was hard to prioritize. One of the main challenges was he never had a mentor who would tell him how to handle things like that.

During his visit to London he attended an important parliamentary education seminar held by Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and learnt the concept of parliament supremacy and other democratic values and principles.

He was selected to represent Maldivian youth in the commonwealth youth programme and that’s where he started youth diplomacy officially. He was selected in 2012. After been selected to represent Maldives, he and his partner made a strategic action plan for the year ahead. They organized a national
youth forum to understand the issues faced by the youth and solutions from the youth. In 2012 they got the chance to attend youth forum held along with Commonwealth Education Ministers Meeting. They managed to self-fund and attend the conference. Where he was part of the young leaders who established the Commonwealth Student Association. He have been working with the Commonwealth Student Association’s Asia Regional Working Group since 2012.

He was selected to represent Maldives at the UNESCO youth forum in 2013 as a Youth representative for UNESCO from Maldives. However, due to visa issue he was unable to attend the forum in Paris. But he participated and contributed via online.

He got selected to represent Asia Region in the Commonwealth Youth Council Working Group, to establish the organization. He worked with the fellow members during his term to bring the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC). However, he did not run for any executive committee post, and was unable to attend the youth forum where CYC was launched. It was due to political instability in Maldives at the time. However, he has been working with the Membership Committee of the Commonwealth Youth Council. At the moment he is working with a group of law students and his partner at CSA to establish a student association in Maldives. They have already conducted various consultancy programs to go forward with it even though they face a lot of obstacles.

He worked at drug court during the daytime as he had lectures during the night. He earned himself, to pay through the college tuition fee as well as the living costs during course period. It was extra ordinary to multi task in such a way to earn and study while doing extra works for community and youth development. Now he is working at the legal, fraud and investigation department of Aasandha Company Ltd. He wants to become a social entrepreneur who works for the youth development. He has undergone various challenges in life, however always manage to multi task and come up with a solution and go forward. He is always looking forward with what he learn from failures. He wants to see a world where youth be more productive and have a drive to change the issues today’s world have faced by becoming leaders of today, not just tomorrow.
Joyshri Sarker is a creative and joyful young lady with enormous energy. As far as guess, she is a super sensitive, for which wherever she and whatever she see, she is a shiver and later pour this in her social-cultural activities and writing. Her works are a moving story of the contemporary social and political crisis, conflicts and chronic cycles of life of the struggling masses. She has been actively working for women's advancement, in particular on gender and women's empowerment in Bangladesh.

Joyshri has been performing cultural and social activities since childhood. She was an actor, recited, classical dancer by the age of eight/nine. She achieved lots of prized in Childhood. In 2000, She Participated in Bangladesh India Moitri Utsab in Shilchor in Assam as a Cultural Representative of Bangladesh.

Joyshri also a strong youth leader. From 2000 to 2011 she had been a regular volunteer of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Netrakona Unit. As a RCY she was engaged with Community Based Digesters Preparedness activities. Several occasions she worked with relief team and also performed Community Based Fist Aid activities. In 2004 Tornado destroyed number of thousand houses, many peoples, and animals were died. In that time she worked with the relief team as Red Crescent Youth leader. She was also working as a trainer in Community Level. She was also acted as Deputy Youth Chief in Netrakona Unit. Now Joyshri Sarker is a life member of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Netrakona Unit.

Joyshri was a trainer in youth Centre and club under Department of Youth Development. In 2014, as a national youth delegate from Bangladesh she participated at the World Conference on Youth held in Sri Lanka.

In professional life, she has been working in the social development sector with an emphasis on Gender, Human Rights, Child Rights, Migration and Governance. Joyshri received a job offer from CIVES MUNDI, Spain and it was a great chance for her to work as a Country Representative from ONGD CIVES MUNDI, Soria, Spain. As a young Social worker it was a great opportunity for Joyshri. In this time she was too young for that post and last end of the project Joyshri coordinated this project with Bangladeshi partner. It was a challenging work. But she done it successfully.

Joyshri is a Bangladeshi Writer, researcher, novelist and columnist. In 2006, her first book ‘Shunnota’ was published. It was a collection of poetry. Her research book ‘Prantobasi Harijondar Kotha’ was published by www.adornbd.com. It’s
about marginalized people in Bangladesh. It was the first research book about sweeper in Bangladesh. In February 2015, Joyshri’s first novel ‘Ambba Akkhan’ was published by www.adornbd.com. She picked the third gender life story as her first subject to write the novel.

Joyshri is a daughter of Haor. She born in Netrakona, a prominent district in the haor region or vatir desh under Dhaka division of Bangladesh. She completed Honors, Masters of Social Science background. Now she is doing MPhil from Geography and environment Department in Dhaka University. Her Mother Mrs. Shangkari Ghosh was a Primary School Teacher. Father Mr. Nani Gopal is a Business person. She always inspired by her parents.

Joyshri Sarker is rising youth. She believes that, as young lady she have energy, have power so can do anything for success. And now she wants to be a famous author. For that she is writing about livelihood of Marginalized People. She wants draw a picture of Bengali life scenario in her writing’s. As a youth she can do it one day....
KEHKASHAN BASU (15 YEARS - FEMALE) INDIA
YOUTH VOLUNTEER & ADVOCATE ON PEACE AND SUSTAINABILITY

15 year old, Kehkashan Basu, a Year 10 student, has been spreading the message of peace and sustainability since she was only 8 years old. She has been working tirelessly to enlist the support of children and youth across geographical boundaries. In 2013 at the tender age of 12, she was elected for a two year term, to UNEP’s (United Nations Environment Programme) Global Coordinator for Children & Youth and a member of its Major Groups Facilitating Committee making her the youngest person and the first minor, ever, to be elected into this position in the history of UNEP. Her internationally acclaimed work on sustainability has resulted in her appointment as the Youth Ambassador of World Future Council - Germany, Global Advisory Council member of Young Men 4 Gender Equality - USA, the 2013–2014 Global President of the Children’s Board for Plant-for-the-Planet - Germany, the Chairperson of the UAE chapter of the International Youth Council and a Global Youth Ambassador for A World At School to promote the cause of global education.

In her role as the voice of children and youth, she has spoken at over 45 United Nations and other international summits, travelling to over 20 countries. Kehkashan campaigns globally for gender equality, sustainable consumption, future justice, rights of the girl child and the right to education. She is a member of the Commission on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls at the World Future Council, Germany and a Volunteer with the World Youth Foundation. Kehkashan is the founder of a youth organization, Green Hope UAE, which seeks to provide a networking platform to children and youth in the region to carry forward the Rio legacy through several environmental workshops and ground level projects on biodiversity conservation, waste segregation and reversing land degradation. It now has over 800 members across the UAE, India, Brazil, USA, Canada, Europe and SE Asia. For her environmental advocacy at a global level, Kehkashan has received international awards from UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) in 2012, the 2012 Korea Green Foundation award, the 2013 International Young Eco-Hero award from Action for Nature, USA, the 2014 Kids are Heroes, USA award, the 2015 Solar Pioneer Award, the “Ambassador for the Environment” from GESS Education Awards 2015 and the prestigious 2014 NRI (Non-Resident Indian) of the Year award.

In her words, “The greatest challenge I continue to face is due to my young age. Civil society, in general, still has pre-conceived notions and biased mindsets about the capability and passion of young people. This has been a barrier to my progress ever since I began my journey of sustainability at the age of eight.

“

The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible - and achieve it, generation after generation.”
The typical reaction was to take my efforts non-seriously or put age limits on participation and qualification."

However, she feels that her selection as the Global Coordinator for Children and Youth at UNEP MGFC was a path-breaking vindication of her belief that young people are fully capable of taking on international responsibility. It also sent out a clear message to the international fraternity that age should not be a barrier to progress.

Her advice to the youth is to take charge of their own destiny and shape their future. She is deeply concerned about the apathy of civil society towards the environment. She feels that problems of today can be best summarized by Robert Swan’s quote “The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it”. Her ambition as a young sustainability crusader, is to spread awareness so that young people can be engaged and empowered to save the environment. Kehkashan is inspired by a quote of Pearl S. Buck “The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible -- and achieve it, generation after generation.”
KHAIRUNNISA ASH'ARI (27 YEARS - FEMALE) BRUNEI DARUSSALAM
YOUTH LEADER, RESEARCHER, CO-FOUNDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR FOR GREEN BRUNEI

Khairunnisa is youth leader holding several portfolios, including the Co-Founder and Community Engagement Director for Green Brunei, Head of International Relations with the Brunei Youth Council and Director for Green Xchange for the Society for Community Outreach and Training.

As a student, she has always been an active volunteer and held various roles while in University Brunei Darussalam, including the Treasurer of the Student Representative Council and Vice Student Director for UBDfm. Since graduating, she has been advocating for youth development, climate change action, and sustainable development through her various organisations and programmes.

She started getting involved in youth development and climate change work in 2011 when she first joined the Brunei Youth Council as their Head of International Relations. Her first project was “Brunei+20: National Youth Seminar for Sustainable Development”, a platform for Bruneian youth to contribute their ideas and recommendations towards Rio+20 while at the same time getting exposure on the various environmental issues and meeting with various stakeholders from the government and private sectors.

She continues to promote youth development by advocating towards greater youth participation in national building through community work and dialogues with the government. She has represented the country in numerous conferences and seminars abroad with the goal to create more opportunities for and inspire young people to get involved in community work.

She co-founded Green Brunei in 2012, which is a social enterprise that focuses on environmental education and conservation. She believes in educating youth in school on environmental issues and developing them into leaders in environment. Through “Green Leaders Camp”, it allows youth to take leadership in environmental stewardship by creating an impact in their communities. Recently she has introduced the Green Ambassadors Programme, where youth volunteers are assigned to conduct activities in schools on a weekly basis. Believing in the power of education as a driver for environmental protection, she has been working with schools to conduct a nationwide recycling programme yearly. The first recycling drive has managed to raise over 33 tonnes of recyclables with the participation of 50 schools.
She was also appointed as the Programme Manager for ASEAN Young Professionals Volunteer Corps (AYPVC) from 2013-2014, which is a regional programme that brings youth from the ten ASEAN member countries to volunteer in communities on various issues including healthcare, special needs, education, environment and disaster preparedness.

Since 2011, she has been involved in Green Xchange under the Society for Community Outreach and Training (SCOT), first as Volunteer Coordinator, then Vice President and now as the Director for Green Xchange. It is a project that promotes recycling in the Water Village by exchanging every $1 worth of recyclables with 1.5kg of rice. To date the project has managed to collect over 35 tonnes of recyclables over 7 projects.

Her dedication towards promoting youth development and leadership in environment has been recognised and she became the recipient of the Youth Service Award in 2013, ASEAN Youth Day Award in 2014 and the Queen’s Young Leaders Award in 2015.

Khairunnisa is currently working in research on community engagement in education at her local university. She aspires to continue making the world a better place through active youth participation and contribute towards climate change action.
Over the years Kusala was able to reach some wonderful achievements at national and international level which are very hard to accomplish.

He attended the Thurstan College, Colombo where he passed Advanced Level examination in Physical Science Stream in 2005. He was a Senior Prefect at School in 2003 and held many positions in school associations such as Vice President of School Science Society, Secretary to the School Media Circle, and Chief Organizer of School English Literary Association. He was graduated from Northumbria University (UK) in Leadership and Management in 2010. Then he successfully completed Masters’ Degree in Business Administration from Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK) in 2014. Also he has successfully completed the Professional Qualification in Human Resources Management (PQHRM) at Institute of Personnel Management of Sri Lanka and the Higher Diploma in International Relations at Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BCIS) in Sri Lanka. Currently he is reading for the LLB Degree at Open University of Sri Lanka and the Post-Graduate Diploma in Education at the University of Colombo.

After Kusala’s school education, he engaged with voluntary activities of Sri Lanka Federation of Youth Clubs and developed as a youth leader at grassroots, district and national Level. He held many positions in the youth clubs movement in Sri Lanka including Chairman of the Kelaniya Divisional Federation of Youth Clubs in 2006, Chairman of the Gampaha District Federation of Youth Clubs in 2010, and Chairman of the Foreign Bureau of Sri Lanka Federation of Youth Clubs in 2012. Also he served as the Sports Minister of the First Sri Lanka Youth Parliament which was held from 2011-2013. As well as he contributed to formulate the first ever national youth policy of Sri Lanka as a member of the National Steering Committee to formulate the National Youth Policy.

He has many experiences at international level as a youth leader. He served as the Country Representative of Sri Lanka of the Commonwealth Youth Programme from 2010-2013. Also he served as Co-Chairperson of the Youth Led task Force to organize the Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013 at Hambanthota in parallel to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2013. As well as he was appointed as the President of the first ever General Assembly of the Commonwealth Youth Council. Also he was the first ever male youth representative from the all the Commonwealth Countries to represent Commonwealth Advisory Body on Sports (CABOS). He served CABOS in 2011-2012. As well as he led the Sri Lanka Youth team participated in the UK- Sri Lanka Young Leaders’ Exchange 2012. Also he represented Sri Lanka in many
international forums and conferences such as Asia Youth Leaders’ Summit 2012 at Delhi, India, Commonwealth Youth Forum 2011 at Perth, Australia, Commonwealth Youth Leaders Conference 2013 at Papua New Guinea, and SAARC Youth Conference on Promoting Regional Harmony 2010, at Islamabad, Pakistan. Due to his engagement with the youth development in Sri Lanka and in the Commonwealth, he was invited by the Commonwealth Secretary General to attend the Commonwealth Day Reception 2014 in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II. Attended it and it was a significant achievement by a young person in Sri Lankan history.

Further, Kusala got through the very competitive Sri Lanka Education Administrative Exam in 2013 and appointed as a Divisional Director of Education in the North Central Province in Sri Lanka in 2014. He had to overcome many challenges for his significant achievements over the years. He is the elder child of two Children family and his mother and father were teachers. At the age of 10, his father passed away and mother raised me. Therefore he had to face many financial constraints during his childhood and while doing higher studies. Also it was a difficult task to elect to an executive position at Divisional, District and National level of the Youth Clubs movement of Sri Lanka. However due to his proven leadership skills, he was elected by the fellow youth club members to represent them. Also he won the Sri Lanka Youth Parliament Election which was held on 27th November 2010 at Kelaniya Division in Gampaha District defeating other two contestants and elected as the First ever Sri Lanka Youth Parliament member from Kelaniya Division and later become as the First ever Sports Minister of the Youth Parliament by exhibiting his talents. Many youth leaders from all the parts of the country were nominated to select as the Regional Youth Caucus Representative of Sri Lanka of the Commonwealth Youth Programme in 2010. After very competitive interview process, he was selected by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development of Sri Lanka for that position. After that he developed as an international level youth leader and engaged with youth development in Sri Lanka and Abroad and made some significant achievements.

Despite the challenges he faced, Kusala had a vision to be an international level youth leader and he was determined and courageous to achieve it. As well as he has developed knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for that purpose and made a good effort to accomplish it. Finally he was able to accomplish his vision. “Have a vision for your future and have determination and courage to achieve it. Also develop your knowledge, skills and attitudes and make a good effort to accomplish it. Then you’ll be able to convert your dreams into a reality”.

“Have a vision for your future and have determination and courage to achieve it. Also develop your knowledge, skills and attitudes and make a good effort to accomplish it. Then you’ll be able to convert your dreams into a reality”.
Mridul W. Kumarn Upadhyay (23 Years - Male) India
Youth Activist, Design Engineer, Oil & Gas Piping

Mridul was born and raised up in India, a country of various religions, communities, cultures, languages and a large population of youth to face many challenges. In his teens, unaware of such a wonderful diversity, he had just one goal; to study the course related books. Surprisingly he could not find anyone, to make his friend, having same pace to achieve this goal. When he finished his schooling, he made his first milestone by making it to top 20 amongst 100 thousands student who appeared in the exam.

The process of being a young youth promoter and an achiever started when he got a chance to study further in a central university. He learnt through his off college encounters with different people talking myriad of topics and learning new cultures. These experiences proved eye openers for him and exposed him to a new world. For the four years of his graduation, as a Community Services Volunteer with National Service Scheme (Ministry of Youth Affairs, India) he worked for youth leadership, gender issues, interfaith, cleaning the river, flood relief and charity fundraising for homeless beggars. He participated in integration camps, awareness campaigns, rallies and seminars. He got trained for youth leadership in Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development. He volunteered as a peer educator on HIV/AIDS, Blood Donation, and polio eradication for several organizations i.e. Rotary International and Integrated Counseling & Testing Centre (ICTC).

Such wonderful opportunities gave him diverse experiences, different approaches and a large national and international network beyond systemic differences. He understood the hidden potential of youth, power of time management and learnt to co-exist amicably irrespective of the explicit differences in every little way, thereby prioritizing the newly explored implicit similarities.

Several organizations as Youth Federation for World Peace and American Society of Mechanical Engineers have rewarded Mridul for his exemplary work. Government of India selected him as a representative to South Korea in Indo-Korea Intergovernmental Youth Delegation Exchange Program. In 2012, Mridul Upadhyay earned Bachelor of Technology Mechanical Engineering. Now he is oil and Gas plant Design Engineer and a youth activist who has eclectic range of interests. He has seven years of experience in voluntary non-profit sector. Mridul enjoys focusing on the topics of sustainable development, diversity, collaboration and culture, and has a strong passion for youth empowerment. Mridul has served on various voluntary positions and assignments. As the Commonwealth Correspondent and Photojournalist for yourcommonwealth.

It is not enough that we do our best; sometimes we must do what is required
- W. Churchill
org’, he has covered various stories from India on society, culture, art, politics, climate change, voluntarism, non-violence, commonwealth events and international travel experiences. Because of his voluntary commitment, he was selected by Commonwealth Secretariat as a youth delegate and correspondent for voluntary covering Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013, Colombo.

In another voluntary position, Mr. Mridul is supporting first ever Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) as Deputy Head of Committee on Media, Publicity and Public Relation. In this two year terms position since November 2013, he is spreading council’s words and development related engagement to the Commonwealth countries. Also he is voluntary supporting iHAV Foundation Africa as a Business Development Executive to develop and monitor iHAV Agribusiness Internship program and Agribusiness projects, for African Youth to increase entrepreneurship in agribusiness.

His thoughts resonate with BOLD’s idea of fostering collaboration and avoiding purposeless competition. “Life too would be a lot more wonderful, if we dropped the non-significant variables for they just take up degrees of freedom (Econometric Philosophy)”, a lesson which inspires him to work through his latest involvement at ‘BOLD Delhi’, a part of a global initiative- BOLD International. At BOLD Delhi, he wants to bid adieu to the culture of working in isolation and cut-throat competition within the International Development sector, and to create a culture of collaboration, equity, connections, empowerment, happiness and peace among communities, societies and nations.

It is challenging to bring people on a common platform and ask them to start working together, forgetting all the differences. But he is making small steps. He believes that mutual exchange of thoughts and ideas among peoples of different culture and belief will prevent looming racial and social discord and will also help the nations to fight with hunger, poverty, health issues and other basic needs of the society.

When asked for a message to the world youth community based on his experience and future ambition, he sings: “Hold on to your dreams and aspirations, hard as it may seem, make a firm foundation, give it a lil bit more time and understanding, hold on to your dreams and make them come alive. Each of you has a mission that only you can fulfill. If you did not have a mission, you would not have been born. Let’s fulfill it.”
NAUSHALYA MANJARI RAJAPAKSHA (21 YEARS - FEMALE) SRI LANKA
SOCIAL CHANGE ENTREPRENEUR

The Birth: Born in 1993 November 15th Naushalya’s life has always been magical and mysterious in the most unexpected ways in her life. She was always ‘that kid’ who was trapped in her little world of incredible fantasies and day dreams of flying on a broom stick while spending her days at school on either dancing, singing , acting or painting never failing to give zero attention to books and maths. Hence branded among weakest in the class.

‘Economic Crisis’: In 2006 out of all the eight subjects Naushalya did for her London Ordinary Level examinations she was just brilliant in Economics to the surprise of many. When she was topping the batch in Economics at the age of 14+ her friends and school teachers convinced her that he will get nothing but an Island Prize at the ‘Big Exam’. But leaving everyone’s mouth opened, he failed economics miserably with a “F”. And until today the reason is still unknown. But later this very ‘Economic Crisis’ taught me that, the root cause of all disappointments was simply expectations and that life doesn’t stop moving forward at failure.

A Law Turn: Having failed economics when Naushalya just didn’t know what to do for her Advanced Level, on one random evening, she came across an essay she wrote about ‘My Ambition’ at the age of 8 where she had written pages and pages about how she wants to be a lawyer one day. Giving my ‘gut feeling’ a second chance she did law and passed with a A* also receiving the prize for University Admission in Law all at the age of 16+. Lesson leant; when one door opens another opens and you just got to keep looking for the open doors in life.

The Marathon: Having joined University of London to do Naushalya’s Bachelor of Laws at Royal Institute Colombo whilst also committing to a Professional Qualification in Human Resource Management at the Institute of Personnel Management, 3 years down the lane at 19+ years of age I had a double major earning to be the Valedictorian to receiving recognition at Convocation ceremony for outstanding performance along with a strong hand on Toastmasters, Rotaract movement and the Students Council. And by 2013 she learnt that, she is definitely not a King of one trade, but a Jack of all.

Going Global: After being selected as the youngest International Youth Task Force Member to organize the World Conference on Youth in Sri Lanka May 2014, Naushalya got the chance to work with 19 other Global Youth Leaders who were real game changers. During this time she was doing a legal internship.
at FJ and G Desarams and lecturing as a visiting lecturer for law at Royal Institute International School, and later Final year lecturer of law at the Campus all at the age of 20+

Lesson learnt: If your presence doesn't make an impact then you're absence wouldn't make a difference.

Current Waves: Today Naushalya is 21 years and 8 months old. While hoping to finish her Attorneys’ before she hits 22, she’s currently working as a Young Social Change Entrepreneur at United Nations Population Fund Sri Lanka. Under the sheer guidance of UNFPA Country Office where she is enabled to initiate a policy advocacy process to recognize the sexual harassment in public transport in Sri Lanka named #OTW or On the Way. On the other hand, been inspired as a delegate to the Youth Forum of the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

She is also working towards inculcating gender equality to the disaster management processors in the country while also looking forward to develop the first ever-provincial council youth policies in the island. Whilst the work is overloading, she has never and will never compromise on education. Education keeps her sane and open to the parameters and uncharted territories where they as youth can really bring about impactful social change. Hence whilst she is currently enrolled at University of Colombo as a student doing her Human Rights Master’s Degree, following a Diploma in World Affairs and Diplomacy at the Bandaranaike International Institute of Diplomatic Studies, lecturing and studying for attorney's still has not been able to restrict her life to only studies and working.

Hence when to let in and let go is the biggest lesson she is learning at the moment not forgetting to relax and be kind to everything and everyone.

And the best lesson she has learnt thus far is that "you can't change the world. But the attitude of people towards the world. Also that to be a great leader, you got to be a great follower. Remember that we are only whom we think we are. In case you think I'm exceptionally great or bright, well just know that an open mind with no boundaries can take you a long way. Be a humble record breaker. Do your part and never seek recognition for what you did but excellence in everything you do".
PRASHANI DILANKA DIAS (22 YEARS - FEMALE) SRI LANKA
YOUTH ADVOCATE ON GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT; DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONER

Prashani is an advocate on gender equality and sustainable development in Sri Lanka. She is currently working for UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Prashani has previously worked with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator and UN Volunteers in Sri Lanka. She has also consulted for the Commonwealth Youth Council. She was a co-founder of the Initiative for Sustainable Development and the former Vice President of its Policy Division.

Prashani has been passionate about sustainable development issues ever since her one and only Model UN Conference while she was schooling. Inspired to take action without merely talking shop, she enrolled and graduated in International Relations with honours from the University of London in 2014. She is a recipient of the University of London Award for Achievement in 2011. Her areas of interest were related to Development Management, Environment Sustainability, and Complex Humanitarian Emergencies.


During her years at University, she continued to volunteer and engage in community service, which had been instilled at an early age. Following her graduation, Prashani’s dream was (and continues to be), in reality, a combination of many: from working towards quality education for all children, to ending hunger, to empowering women in building their livelihoods and advocating for equal rights and opportunities.

At UN Volunteers, Prashani was involved in the planning and implementation of the National Volunteering Secretariat in Sri Lanka. One of her proudest accomplishments was her contribution towards the 2014 UNV research study on youth volunteerism titled ‘Sri Lankan Youth: Volunteering to Make a Difference’. Prashani was extensively involved in the run-up to and during the World Conference on Youth 2014, organising and leading over 550 Conference volunteers, with the support of the UNV V-Force and Team Leaders.

Her experiences put her in good stead when she consulted for the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC). She greatly contributed to develop the CYC Action Plan for
the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and provided inputs to the CYC’s Strategic Plan 2014-2016.

Following her stint at the CYC, Prashani worked at the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka, coordinating the inter-UN agency working group on gender issues. She managed a project which supported gender mainstreaming within UN agencies.

Notably, she assisted in the finalisation and launch of the Sri Lanka Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Presently, her work at UN Women has her involved in assisting a project aimed at increasing women’s political participation in Sri Lanka. Moreover, she is spearheading the national launch of the #HeForShe campaign, engaging men and boys island-wide to break gender norms and stereotypes.

Prashani has found that being a ‘young woman’ brings its own set of challenges at times. Her advice to young people is a lesson she herself learnt with time, even though it might seem clichéd: to believe in yourself that you could be the change you want to see in the world. She further believes it is more important to take action on a cause without just limiting one’s self to talking about it. In short, walk the talk. Work hard with commitment and enthusiasm so that it would be hard to be ignored.

Prashani looks forward to pursuing her Master’s in International Development, and creating a social enterprise. In her spare time, she is a devoted travel and food enthusiast, TV/movie marathoner, avid reader, and enjoys writing in the third person. Despite her knack for words, she admits that Grumpy Cat does it best. Follow her on Twitter @PrashaniDias.
Priya Verma is a Scholar, writer, Innovator, environmentalist, youth leader, social worker, change maker and role model of youth. She is a graduate in Computer Systems and Technology in a dual degree program from Chitkara University India and George Brown College, Canada and topper of the class. She is the recipient of Noble Claes Academic Scholarship in academics and leadership from NSHSS, USA.

Her pioneer work is on conservation and preservation of precious water started at the tender age of 14 years when she was a school student. Water is the Elixir of Life. Underground water is one of the key earth resources. Unfortunately, this resource is depleting at an alarming rate. While going through various news she came to know the depleting condition of underground water in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pardesh and other Indian states. Considering the gravity of the situation, she has developed eco-friendly innovative useful technologies of rainwater harvesting to increase the underground water resources in India, which is useful to the entire world. The techniques highlighted in her project “Increasing Underground Water Resources”, have been recognized by the Government of India, UNEP and other organizations worldwide. Some of the eco-friendly techniques are Funnel System, Polythene cover System, Less Water for Plants-Growing plants in sand, gravel liquid without adding soil, Pits/recharge well system, etc. These techniques/ideas are universally applicable, globally novel, cost effective, eco-friendly, and utilitarian. She is working on the project since 2006 and highlighted the devastating impact of the decreasing level of the underground water level and succeeded in bringing this burning issue to the public notice and received worldwide appreciations and awards. Her efforts has improved the water CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION in Indian states and the world. Her technological innovation has been recognised by Govt. of India, accepted by the United Nation Environmental Programme UNEP (Volvo adventure) and was displayed in the International Project Gallery 2007 at Goteburg, Sweden. Many countries like Kenya and Singapore Environment Council, Singapore, UK, Canada, USA and Australia has also appreciated and adopted her innovative project for the conservation and preservation of precious water. The project has been posted in the websites of takingitglobal.org, campaign central UK, travel2change, www.GYSD.org, www.smg.org, www.simpol.org, teens’ planet earth.org, travel2change.org among others. The project is also posted in the GYSD Map 2015 and creating awareness to save water through digital mapping. She is also involved in the projects/campaigns like Environment everybody responsibility, Generate energy, preserving soil,
Generate energy from waste, save trees, save water and GYSD projects and many more.

She is the Founder of non-profit CYWE network working for the cause of child, youth, women, environment and global issues and working for the betterment of the world this is an online project. Her website cywe.org is working for the conservation of natural resources and bringing awareness among people. The mission of the CYWE network and quote is “Inspiring youths to create change”. The mission of her network is to engage young people as active citizens who improve the environment and protection of natural resources in their communities. Her organization works to educate people about many environmental issues, Global issues, MGD goals and development issues around the world. Thousands of people have benefited from her project. People have liked her work/website and ranked it as most popular website.

She is a digital innovator. She has been selected by the UNICEF as a digital mapper to furnish report on climate change and environmental issues in June 2015. She has submitted her campaign report in the climate Map of India with the appeal for the Conservation and preservation of precious water in the world and save trees campaign to protect life, environment and earth because it is a global problem and suggested ways to save water and environment. She has brought out the importance of trees and forests in the map and advocated to grow more trees to preserve environment.

She is a member/advisor of many youth, environmental, social, educational organizations and working for the development of the world. She is the Alumni Youth Council member of Youth Services America. She is the Global Advisor of TakingITGlobal world largest online youth organization, Conrad foundation USA, dosomething.org, NSHSS USA, NCES Canada, Presidential Youth Council USA, Associations of British scholars and worked on service learning projects, environmental issues, climate change, youth empowerment, youth policies, development issues, child and women power and conducted lectures, seminars in school and colleges, local communities, British councils, ABS and other organizations and created awareness among the masses through her writings, print and media and online conferences.

She is an accredited writer of newspapers and writing since her childhood. 1500 articles, poems, stories on various burning issues including environmental adversely affecting the population and ecosystems and social issues has been
Published in leading newspapers i.e. Hindustan Times, Times of India, Indian Express and Tribune and other Magazines and other print and media and created awareness in masses. She is an online Writer, Reporter and Journalist of AYJW, World pulse, Voices of youth, British councils, NSHSS, Allvoices, World bank Youthink, UN pub article etc.

She is a space researcher. She has propounded a new theory of the origin of universe in 2008 which is named “The Sun Explosion Theory” was accepted and appreciated by the National Innovation Foundation of India and Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and NASA. NASA has suggested for its publication and the same is published in the article base, Jet article and scientific journal Doomsday Predictions and others in 2009. She has represented India in NASA SPACE SETTLEMENT DESIGN CONTEST-2009 in school and designed and developed a future city named ARYA to settle humans in space for the benefit of mankind and received participation award from NASA. Her entry for going to Mars campaign of NASA has been sent in the MAVEN spacecraft as its journeys to MARS and received participation award for her entry.

She is the registered member of National Innovation foundation of India, World academy of young scientist, European Union Women Inventers and Innovators network and Young Innovation international inc, Canada.

Acting is another passion of Priya. She has worked in films, television serials, music albums, stage shows and has done modelling and anchoring assignments for television in her school days and begged Best child actress, dancer, model and Best Child artist award from Chandigarh. Priya has also received State award in the field of Arts, Culture and literature from Chandigarh Administration in 2006.

For her outstanding work for environmental protection and community service she has been awarded the Diana Award by Mr. Gordan Brown the Hon” Prime Minister of UK in 2009, National Youth Award from Govt. of India, Every Day Hero Award from Youth Services America, USA, and United Nations Outstanding Youth Achiever Recognition International Award 2010, Golden Key Community Service Award 2011 from Canada, SBN International Youth Award 2012 from Australia as a leader and innovator, Commonwealth youth award in excellence in development work 2015 in the field of climate change and environment protection and many other state, national and international awards in a small age. Her project is also recognized by Epsilon Sigma Alpha International, USA and
displayed in an exhibit of pictures along with her Project in their International Conference in San Antonio, Texas from 12 to 18 July 2009 to recognize her work.

Priya is the Global Advisor of TakingITGlobal, the world’s biggest online network of youths, and serves as an advisor in the Member Advisory Committee in the areas of youth development activities and global issues since 2010, she has helped to shape the future of the global youth movement.

She has been a member of Youth Service America (YSA) USA’s youth council since 2010, representing youth of North America. With YSA, she is involved in the areas of youth development, policymaking, GYSD projects, grants reviews and service learning projects and providing inputs in various topics under the mentorship of Mrs. Silvia Golombek, the Senior Vice President of YSA and proved her strong leadership. She is the 2010 Every Day Young Award holder from YSA.

She is an Alumni of IGGY the University of Warwick, UK and involved in their educational projects. In addition, Priya has been involved with the Campaign for a Presidential Youth Council (PYC) since its inception in 2010. She is the only Campaign Ambassador from Canada in the Presidential Youth Council. The Presidential Youth Council, composed of youths ages 16 to 24, would advise the President on the perspectives of youth, offer suggestions on how to make federally funded youth programs more efficient and effective, and will creates shared recommendations on issues that will affect the long-term future of USA. As a Campaign Ambassador, Priya has been involved in the policy-making and development of the Campaign since its inception by implementing a social media campaign and mobilizing students to support the campaign. With her efforts, the Campaign has received worldwide support and recommendations on the design and implementation of a long-term Presidential Youth Council.

She is in fact a multi-personality and working for the betterment of the world. Her appeal is the youth to protect the environment and conservation and preservation of the precious natural resources to save ecology, life and the earth.
Rohayl Varind, was like any usual kid of a developing nation, until one day in his teens he realized that he was not satisfied with how this world has shaped up, especially his country. A country where there’s portrayal of so much hatred and loss and so little good and lesser smiles being propagated and much lesser an awareness regarding the things going wrong. A definite and unrelenting urge overcame him and despite of limited resources, he nurtured and still nurtures unlimited dreams to make Pakistan and this world a better place to live. He is on a mission since last 5 years trying to “Reclaim Pakistan” from the shackles of unawareness and loss and make it a place worth sharing with future generations. He heads Faisalabad’s biggest welfare organization led by students.

At first, it was a usual norm to face heavy criticism in a resource-lacking and still growing nation like Pakistan. Yet, the sheer number of people that joined in the journey and all the love, support and, above all, the prayers that he received have been the biggest rewards. No world record or award can match that. To add to other feathers to his cap. He is an International Award Winning Social Entrepreneur & Digital Innovator who has won the World Summit Youth Award, one of the world’s biggest youth award, for the year 2014-15. Being chosen by 40 Juror from amongst 1898 developers, innovators & social entrepreneurs who contended from 138 countries was enormously breathtaking. His revolutionary work and services for humanity and his nation were duly respected, and he was invited to Sao Paulo, Brazil this year to receive the award for his hard work, dedicated activism and bold social entrepreneurship. Being the first amongst the youth of Faisalabad, Pakistan to organize massive protests in favor of Muslims and people of Pakistan, students from all school, colleges and universities, as also several other citizens of Faisalabad supported in the cause and became part of these protests and peace walks. Moreover, he has been the organizer of one of the biggest students’ protests in the history of Faisalabad, Pakistan. He was titled as ‘The Revolutionary Boy’ by Islo Times in March, 2013. Recently his achievements were featured in “Pakistan Today” & “Express Tribune” which are most popular English newspapers of Pakistan. Recently, he was declared a finalist of mBillionth award for his magazine “VOICE OF R” & was invited to New Delhi, India for the Award Gala. mBillionth award is one of the most influential and leading platform to explore, recognize & honor the best practices in Mobile and Telecom Industry across South Asia. For his works, he was featured in TechJuice, Pakistan’s premier technology platform covering latest tech, startups and awe-inspiring entrepreneurs as ‘Pride of Pakistan’.

His biggest challenges, were his rawness of age and unpolished yet creative
skills when he started out at first. But the fire kept burning brighter everyday on seeing the Pakistani media’s corrupt and hypocritical attitude when it comes to highlighting the positive side of Pakistan. Pakistan, around 5 years ago, lacked an effective medium to promote raw talents. He, thus, created VOICE OF R & the Times of Youth to fill this void and by Almighty’s Grace, so far he have promoted hundreds of new talents nationally and internationally. Creating a new medium altogether was the toughest part with such little knowledge and a lesser economic standing. With little professional skills or any other support from the friends of his age who were busy smoking cigarettes, dating and partying, he managed to conquer all with his stern diligence.

Tackling studies and school along with entrepreneurship has been very taxing, especially when people around him considered it all a waste of time and were utterly demoralizing. Yet, he kept treading this exhaustive path with a silent hope of a better tomorrow in his heart. Gathering people and asking them to come and protest, or just join the peace walk in Faisalabad was very tough as no one had ever done this before. Most of them considered it futile and ineffective. But, as time passed by, onlookers recognised the dedication, and he always believed that when people started believing in you, half your work is done. Eventually he started overcoming these challenges one at a time. Financial crunches are still bothersome because his organization hardly takes any sponsors or ads or donations, and keeps working in good faith for the humanity and its upliftment by toiling day and night relentlessly, to create an International platform for all Pakistani and other International youth to raise their voices for things that matter, to share their exemplary experiences, and showcase their talent. Likewise, his turmoils have finally started to bear its near sweet fruits because his motto was never to impress anyone or for popularity or publicity or any monetary gains. It all hailed from his genuine love for humanity and hopefulness in a worthwhile future. He still strives to do his best to bring about at least some positive change in this world where dreams and possibilities are yet untapped!

Rohayl says, “The youth of today needs more than an advice. It needs a hope; a hope that even a single act of theirs can and does make a difference, do not underestimate your power to bring a change, nor disregard your dreams as unachievable. Life is full of chances, especially if you have an insatiable hunger to achieve your dream. You only need to get up and go for it unflinchingly! Do not let the virtual world fool you in to believing something which humiliates your potential. Fear of losing is the worst fear of all. Hold on to that ray of hope, even if just one, which made you start out at first. Never quit on your dream!”
Salma Yusuf is a child of war. She was born into a conflict that eventually lasted for thirty years in her motherland, Sri Lanka. Growing up amidst bloodshed, brutality and insecurity sparked her interest in the subjects of law, justice and human rights which she believed were potent ideals to espouse in a bid to maintain peace and prosperity in her country.

Furthermore, she comes from a generation in Sri Lanka’s history that have made it their aim to do everything they legitimately can to ensure a non-recurrence and non-resurgence of war in their country. Being a young female professional in a conservative society has made her encounter additional obstacles which she struggles against continually. This has increased her passion and resolve to actively pursue justice and reform.

In her all her work, she is cognizant of the larger global realities such as globalization, prejudice and polarization. This has made her eager to maintain independence in all her work. Maintaining a balanced and credible position and relationships through the multiple sectors she engages with academically and professionally has been the central plank of all her work. She is a firm believer in the principle of engagement with all key stakeholders but strives to maintain independence and credibility in all endeavours. Her driving forces are the national interest of her country, and the global interest of humanity.

The war in Sri Lanka concluded in 2009 and since then, Salma has been working actively and contributing to the national struggle of consolidating the dividends of peace and security that her country has achieved.

Salma graduated with a Bachelor of Laws Honours degree from the University of London and thereafter pursued a Master of Laws degree in Public International Law which she successfully completed in 2009 at Queen Mary, University of London. She specialized in the subjects of Human Rights, Transitional Justice, Reconciliation, International and Comparative Social Justice and International Environmental Law through her Master of Laws. Significant to note is that she was awarded the Queen Mary University of London Department of Law Academic Scholarship Award for her Master of Law studies at the University of London. This made her one of two international students in receipt of this prestigious award.
One of the secrets to achieving high-impact in her professional pursuits is the high-degree of professionalism, ethics and dignity she maintains with her colleagues and associates. Earning the respect of her peers and superiors is a hallmark of her progress.

Further, Salma engages with a variety of stakeholders and has contributed towards international and national programmes on Governance and International Development. She has provided policy, programmatic, research, advocacy and advisory services in the subjects of Human Rights, Reconciliation and Governance. Her attention to detail and strategic skills have enabled her to work with key stakeholders, including policy makers, the media, academia, youth and civil society.

Salma has been a Lecturer in Law for the past four years and has served as a Journalist and later as Columnist at leading national newspapers in the country. She has also published widely, both in academic and scholarly journals internationally and also represented her country at international conferences and seminars, all of which has contributed to her respected regional and international profile.

Maintaining objectivity in her work and loyalty to her values has been quintessential to her professional and personal endeavours which have made her an inspirational young person of her country. Being a female in a South Asian country and a young person has its challenges, and Salma has experienced such without exception. She has overcome the hurdles through persistence and patience and now serves as mentor to females and emerging leaders in her country.

Salma has received numerous leadership awards and honours which she has gracefully and humbly accepted. Salma views youth activism in two distinct forms. “One approach is to be a part of a youth movement and contribute to youth engagement and activism. Another approach is to provide the youth perspective in broader national and international processes. I believe both approaches must be undertaken hand in hand.”

When asked what, in her opinion, helped to achieve meteoric career advancement, Salma reflectively answered, “Finding meaning in what I do, making sure there is purpose in all my undertakings, belief in the power of relationships built on trust and integrity, approaching my work from a multi-disciplinary perspective...
and finally, believing in multiple forms of learning that goes beyond intellectual pursuits only.”

When asked how she has progressed where others of similar profile have not, Salma responds with conviction, “I have a passion for life and living; and I cannot over-emphasize the power of strong human connections for ultimate fulfillment in every aspect of life.”

When asked how she would like to see herself and other emerging leaders, Salma answers, “We are operating in a highly advanced and competitive environment. It is important that we do not lose sight of the basics. We need to go back to the drawing board.”

Going back to the drawing board: What does this mean in practice? Salma explains, “It is time that we learn the importance of balance. We must be Professional but not Clinical. We must be Humane but not Naive. We must be Simple but not Simplistic. Most importantly, we must never fear to slow down for reflection in a fast-paced world of activity and information overload.”

Salma philosophically adds, “Learning when and how to balance Rationalization with Intuition will be the ultimate challenge for young professionals of today seeking to make a difference in their world.”

Salma is very much a product of her times. However, what makes her unique is her ability to use creativity and imagination to believe that a better world can exist, and more importantly, to believe that it can be achieved. Contact her on salmayusuf@gmail.com.
SALMAN AHMAD (27 YEARS – MALE) PAKISTAN
SOCIAL ACTIVIST

Salman Ahmad is a trainer by passion, an entrepreneur by profession and a social worker by persistence. After suffering from childhood polio, Salman has refused to let his mobility problems hold him back and co-founded the GADE Foundation, which aims to encourage and support entrepreneurship among young people and alleviate poverty. He was driven to set up GADE Foundation in 2011 after discovering that many young graduates in Pakistan were unable to find work. “I realised that there was a need in my country to motivate young people to become the job creators, rather than the job seekers, after they graduate” he says.

GADE Foundation has established a number of projects which address social problems in Pakistan. These projects are coordinated and championed on a regional basis through 26 chapters at universities throughout the country. It also works with other organisations to address issues arising from unemployment, and provides particular support for women wanting to join the workforce, including those that want to be able to operate in a freelance capacity from home. The model of GADE Foundation has proven very successful to generate social support from inside the community to address their problems through entrepreneurial solutions.

Besides working as President GADE Foundation, Salman has also worked in different other capacities for youth development. He is member of Chief Minister Youth Mobilization Committee and member of standing committee for youth affairs and development in Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Through these committees he has helped the government to add sections for entrepreneurship and skills development in Punjab Youth Policy. Government of Punjab issued a special notification of acknowledgement in 2012 to recognise his work for youth development in Pakistan.

In addition, he has participated in many international forums about Youth Policy, UN Post 2015 Development Agenda, Democracy, Commonwealth Scholars Conferences and World Business Dialogues, as a youth development expert. In 2015, he was invited by US State Department to research about entrepreneurial ecosystem in United States through Legislative Fellowship Program.

His personal achievements exceed beyond profession, however. His academic career is also full of awards and scholarships due to his challenging personality. His graduation was aided by the excellence award and consistently acknowledged
by the University Scholar Award in Pakistan.

In 2013, he received Commonwealth Scholarship to study MSc. International Business from University of Liverpool, UK. He did exceedingly well there and received Student of the Year Award for securing highest grades in Masters’ Program. He did not stop here, as his unique experience and excellent academic performance have helped him to win College of Social Sciences Scholarship in University of Glasgow, UK to start his PhD from October, 2015.

All these achievements were not very easy for Salman because he has grown up with mobility disability caused by Polio, in Pakistan, where there are no facilities for people with disabilities. Moreover, Taliban are killing innocent workers working on campaign to control Polio Virus in Pakistan. Even in such circumstances, Salman’s commitment and continues efforts have never let him down and he has always excelled in his work.

The success that he achieved by contributing in youth development with the GADE Foundation and other policy forums lead him achieving many international accolades and awards, including Queens’s Young Leaders Award for 2015. His achievements were recognized when he collected his award from Her Majesty the Queen at a ceremony held in the Buckingham Palace on 22nd June, 2015. The Queen’s Young Leader Award recognises and celebrates exceptional people aged 18-29 from across the Commonwealth, who are taking the lead in their communities and using their skills to transform lives.

“It is not merely an award for me; it is the recognition of the fact that millions of young people are stuck into vicious circle of unemployment. Moreover, it is a global admiration of my belief, that we cannot change the destiny of a poor community by donation, unless we teach them means of wealth creation” he says. Providing a global platform for young people, named as World Youth Senate, is now a priority for Salman and he plans to continue his work through research and campaigning for international entrepreneurship as source of sustainable development in poor countries.

Salman’s story illustrates BIG Challenges, Persistent Struggle and Remarkable Achievements, which makes him a role model for Young Commonwealth.
SAMEERA ZAIB (31 YEARS – FEMALE) PAKISTAN
FREELANCE CONSULTANT, YOUTH VOLUNTEER

Sameera Zaib is an Assistant Manager at Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar, Pakistan, freelance consultant, and volunteering with Pakistan Environmentalists Association as Coordinator for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa/ Gilgit Baltistan, Coordinator for Asia Pacific Youth Task Force on RIO+20 (APYTF), and ICIMOD Youth Ambassador for COP 18 (Doha conference). She holds MS Environmental Sciences degree, MSc Environmental Sciences, Post Graduate Diploma in GIS/Remote Sensing and another Post Graduate course in Protecting Mountain Biodiversity from University of Torino, Italy.

2007 was the year when she got opportunity to work for the earthquake affectees in the mountainous areas of Pakistan. After closely observing the challenges being faced by the mountain women and youth she got motivated to do advocacy for mountain communities particularly the young women and youth. During her professional career she got a number of opportunities to represent Pakistani young women and youth, and met global young leaders who inspired her to move further and join hands with the international youth and young leaders for raising the youth voices in the international negotiations. During her six years working experience she worked for different organizations (national and international) in the field of water and sanitation services, community development, project implementation, environmental education, natural resource management and has carried out a number of Environmental Impact Assessment studies of developmental projects in Pakistan.

In 2012 she became coordinator for APYTF and got involved in pre and post Rio+20 activities at national and international level by promoting environmental awareness among children and youth in the context of Rio+20 and has organized/co-organized and participated in a number of events including e-discussions, webinars, conferences and workshops to raise awareness. She represented Pakistani youth in the Youth forum on “Climate Change and Mountain Issues” in Nepal, 2011; Conference of Youth for Rio+20, Global youth forum on Mountain Issues and Sustainable Actions in Rio+20; and Eco-tourism walk in Pakistan. For Pakistani youth she organized the workshop on “Green Economy for Mountain Youth- Beyond Rio+20” in South Asian Youth Conference, NUST, Islamabad, and “National Youth Forum on Green Solutions” in November 2012, Islamabad. She represented Asia Pacific youth in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development June, 2012 in Brazil.

At the international level she organized “Global Youth Forum on Mountain

She takes keen interest in climate related issues, youth mobilization and advocacy for sustainable mountain development, community mobilization and rural development, climate and gender, and campaigning for post 2015 agenda (SDGs). She aims that young people must be represented at all decision making levels as decisions taken today will affect them in the future.
SAQIB NIAZ KHASKHELLI (29 YEARS - MALE) PAKISTAN
YOUTH ACTIVIST, PEACE REFORMER

Coming from his humble beginnings in Khairpur Mirs, Saquib came to the big bold city of Karachi for the first time to attend Young Leaders’ Conference in 2006 with the motive to unleash his potential and understand his life’s calling. From then onwards, there was no turning back for him. He started working in various companies and took different roles to understand where his true potential lies. He worked as communications assistant, program coordinator, relationship manager and finally reached the first highlight of his career in the form of LearnFest – Pakistan’s First Learning Festival. Saquib planned and executed the event and became the first lead to bring development, academic and corporate sectors on a single platform to discuss various themes like entrepreneurship, social development, motivation, leadership, and self-development.

According to Saquib, two of his major achievements were when he went to Thailand and Nepal as Youth Activist and Peace Reformer to represent Pakistan. The experience not only made him proud of being an ambassador for the country but also opened his eye to the world. Due to that exposure, he is now an open-minded change-maker.

In 2014, Saquib became successful in gathering a team of talented individuals and leading them to establish Karachi Youth Support Network (KYSN) – the first-ever platform for the youth to explore their potential and benefit from growth opportunities. Saquib, along with his team, is working to bring the youth out of darkness of social injustice, terrorism, illiteracy and directing them to optimism, social work, active citizenship and in short, a better tomorrow!

Going in the flashback of when Saquib moved from the small town of Khairpur, the greatest challenge he faced was to muster courage to move out of the conservative environment and face ‘change’, a much-feared word in rural areas. As if this was not all, he not only had to be at par with the urban individuals but also stay ahead of them in every game. With the support of his father, he found the courage to head towards change. Along with that, Young Leaders’ Conference proved to be a source of motivation for him where he mingled with youngsters from various cities and learned their different cultures, experiences and points of view.

Saquib was faced with a number of challenges when the establishment of Karachi Youth Support Network was in progress. Primarily, the target youngsters were hesitant to attain membership and be open to explore their potential as
they considered all the opportunities limited to the upper class. They were also reluctant to assess themselves due to inferiority complex. Saquib, along with his team, arranged orientation and counseling sessions to make them aware and give them confidence on the work they did. Moreover, they held capacity and confidence building sessions to elevate their knowledge, skills and confidence.

With all the ups and downs that Saquib has experienced, he believes there is nothing better that he could have done. Believing strongly in the notion that everything happens for a reason, he considers all his ups as reward for hardwork and faith, and his downs as space to do better and persevere.

Saquib is deeply concerned with the youth of this time. His message for the youth is to make positive contributions so that the coming generation has things to look upon and get inspiration from. The contribution can be as large as to the world and as small as to one’s own family. Saquib also urges the youth to spend less time on gadgets and keep a balance in their online and offline life.
SASHINI GOMEZ  [23 YEARS - FEMALE] SRI LANKA
YOUTH ACTIVIST, SOCIAL REFORMER, INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANT CUM

From a young age, Sashini has had a passion for wanting to make the world a better place to live in: to engage young people like herself, not just in youth participation, but to be in the forefront of decision making and contribute towards governmental and inter-governmental systems that create the foundation of policy and law to facilitate social change.

Her story began in her own alma-mater, when she re-established the then defunct Model United Nations Club and led its first delegation. She also secured several best delegate award on behalf of her school. Shortly after this, she was asked to be part of the executive board of a MUN conference where she took on the role of chairperson of one of the General Assembly Committees. Her efforts started paying off as her school club started to grow in numbers and more students became interested in the opportunity to engage in humanitarian and social affairs that educated beyond the confines of a classroom.

Her deep involvement in inter-school MUN and the greater understanding of the United Nations system she gained from it, led her to pursue Model United Nations on an international platform. This time, her representation at Harvard University's Annual Model United Nations Conference provided her with great exposure to a sense of cultural diversity and professionalism among fellow youth.

Sashini's passion was for continuous learning. She applied and was chosen for an Internship at the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York during the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly. Alongside her mentor, she was successful in securing the largest ever number of co-sponsors for a First Committee draft resolution that was traditionally sponsored by the delegation of Sri Lanka.

Her hard work didn't go un-noticed. Upon her return to Sri Lanka, she engaged with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development as part of the Secretariat for the World Conference on Youth 2014. Apart from providing technical support she took on the role as a facilitator for Gender Equality at WCY2014 to assist in gathering pivotal outcomes for the formulation of the “Colombo Declaration on Youth” which was endorsed by the Secretary General of the United Nations later that year.

Today, Sashini is employed by the International Organisation for Migration in
Sri Lanka. She is one of its youngest program officers. Her journey was fraught with challenges but her mantra was to always “keep growing”. Her belief is that if this mind-set can be incorporated to anyone and everyone, they could achieve things far greater than they could possibly imagine.

One the biggest challenges Sashini faced was being discriminated because of her age, as this was viewed as a limitation to what she could achieve and contribute to society. This lit her spark for engaging in Youth activism which later grew into a part of her mission of wanting to see youth in the forefront of decision making. “We belong to a generation with the largest amount of youth to live on this planet– now is our time to be heard and our time to contribute significantly”. Age should not be seen as a barrier but rather an opportunity.

This is one of the main changes Sashini hopes will come about during the coming years.

With the sustainable development agenda of the U.N fast approaching, looking at change for the long run and people’s willingness to gradually allow youth to engage more in such processes – Sashini’s message to all youth aspiring to make a change, be it wanting to be a teacher, a businessman, an astronaut or a farmer, is to always remember your goals are valid. You are valid and age or any other factor cannot and should not define you or be an obstacle for you to be what you want to be.
Simran Vedvyas (16 YEARS - FEMALE) INDIA
YOUTH VOLUNTEER, FOUNDER & CHAIRPERSON SYNERGY

Sixteen years old Simran Vedvyas is a tour de force when it comes to challenging youth to adopt a more sustainable and peaceful lifestyle. She is a ‘star’ student, an active ‘environmentalist’ and a passionate ‘social campaigner’ since a very young age. Her impressive list of accomplishments belies her young age. As the founder of SynergY a youth led group, she leads as a role model with a proven track record, working each passing day to engage hundreds of students and youth from various institutions in India and the UAE to act together by convening, converging and collaborating. Simran ensures to communicate and transpire her thoughts positively to others. She leads by example and accepts others viewpoints, holds positive discussions making valuable decisions to benefit the society.

Since 2012, her maturity is one of the exceptional quality that she is well skilled in, aids to bring together people to work for a common goal to benefit the society. Her Interest in the environment began when she was seven. Her grandfather had a farm back home in India and it always fascinated to watch plants grow. Standing outdoors gave her a sense of calm and tranquility as it does today.

She started recycling paper, cans and other materials at home and would hand them over to different organizations. As she grew, and began learning a lot more about sustainability, ethics, leadership and society as a whole. Her interests expanded further and after attending over fifty International conferences, forums, events and meetings new people from different walks of life and launching her own non-governmental organization “SynergY”, she now advocate for sustainability, welfare, human rights, education, gender equality, reduction of poverty and hunger, access to clean drinking water, education, healthy lives and the provision of basic healthcare for all.

When she was twelve, she pledged to collect one thousand pairs of shoes, to benefit children and those suffering with diabetes. She was successful in campaigning and collecting over three thousand pairs of shoes that were distributed in Kenya and Uganda in Africa through US-aided AMPATH. Chosen to carry the Olympic Flame at the London Olympics in 2012 and continuing her passion she moved forward with her social and environment work and never looked back. By her leadership, she inspired hundreds of students and youth to plant over two thousand trees at various landfill sites and a thousand more native Ghaf trees are pledged during 2015, of which three hundred trees are already planted. Currently she is also designing to implement a campaign to

“ Our world is literally at the edge of a cliff, made ready to roll down by the adverse effects of human greed. So it leaves us with two choices; either we let it roll down, or we make a collective effort to make some paradigm shift to pull it back and make it just, peaceful, and sustainable for a better future for ourselves and the generations to come.”
raise funds and awareness to support children and those suffering from wars and conflicts and in need of health-aid.

An Indian by origin and resident of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, she is youngest of the twelve chosen Youth Ambassador for the World Peace Caravan (http://www.worldpeacecaravan.org/simran_vedvyas). Scoring Five National Academic Distinction Awards including thrice the prestigious Shaikh Hamdan Award for distinguished academic performance and twice the elite Sharjah Educational Excellence Award in consecutive years, winning the legendary John Muir Youth Environmental Conservation Award USA, admired Diana International Award UK, esteemed ‘Puruskar’ National level India, Award Paryavaranmitra Leader for change, shortlisted as Best Student, International Eco Hero Award USA, First prize at Global Youth for Environment Forum by Samsung Engineering and Korea Green Foundation and several others encourage her to dream large and achieve big. Simran is connected across several global platforms as Youth Ambassador World Peace Caravan, Global Youth Board member of Plant-for-the-Planet since 2013, the Regional Middle East Ambassador for TUNZA Eco Generation since 2012, the United Arab Emirates Chapter Leader for Children of the Earth, a Youth Country Activator for the Middle East and North Africa Hub of Earth Charter International, the Youth Ambassador A World at School, the Paryavaranmitra Leader for Change 2013, and the Climate Leader and UAE Ambassador for the United States’ former Vice President, Al Gore’s Climate Reality.

Her Belief that ‘Youth are the Future Champions Today!’ was featured by MTV voices on International Youth Day 2013, at Times Square, NY, USA. Being the youngest panelist at United Nations Headquarters discussing ‘Youth Migration the Development Forward’, the theme of the International Youth day 2013. Recently she was interviewed and featured by the John Hopkins Center for Talented Youth-USA, Simran is closely working with UNEP, UNESCO, UNDP, ILO and their youth programs.
SURAJ RAJAN (30 YEARS - MALE) INDIA
SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR

His entrepreneurial thought process journey began at the age of 18 with scooping ice creams at Baskin Robbins with a clear objective to learn the franchise model of running the business, he used to spend time observing and understanding pricing, branding & customer service. He then went on to take up various jobs as distributing pamphlets with his fellow college friends to understand how managing Human resources work, he was soon working at Call Centers to improve his English speaking and communication skills. At a very early stage in life he understood the deficiencies that challenged him in reaching his dreams and thus he strategically worked at companies to learn the skills that would equip him for his entrepreneurial journey. All the Hard work lead him to setup his first startup company at the age of 25 years and scaling it to 1 million dollars in 2 years. At the Age of 28 he had setup his 2nd startup, a Transportation Service Providing company, and he has setup his 3rd startup last year to cater to customers with quality packaging products and solutions. He has been awarded as the Mahindra Youth Transport Personality in Alternative Thinking. He has also been felicitated by the Shree Narayan Cultural Mission in presence of Shri Adoor Prakash, Hon Minister Finance for the State of Kerela as a Young Achiever. He has been a part of the Indian Youth delegation to the G20 YEA Summit and to the Commonwealth Asia Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs - CAAYE Summits. He was also awarded as the Commonwealth Asia Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs – Innovate with a Purpose. He is currently a National Member at Confederation of Indian Industries Young Indians (Entrepreneurship and Innovation)

With a life Goal to impact to life of 1 billion people in a positive way and by making an impact in the Supply Chain Industry in India, Globally and then in Space, he is determined to work towards his life goals one year at a time to reach from where he is to where he wants to be.

As a Serial Entrepreneur he has always been looking out for challenges and taking on them instead of the challenges coming to him, his first challenge to get the Initial Funds for his first startup and then to scale up, at that time he looked around to identify a business which can make profit with investing no money of his own or where in vendor funds can be used to run the business and thus making a quick turnaround of payable and receivables it led to him making a small corpus funds to setup the 2nd startup. One of the ways in which he also works on his unique or situational challenges is to read books on the subject challenge and working and preparing.

“"If you can dream it, you can achieve it"
His never ending challenge has been to become the best in the field which pushes him to take on new fields and industry segment every two years and to keep delivering better to his customers and thus one of the unique ways in which he takes them up is by working on his startups to deliver the best by having Board of Advisors, even at an Startup Stage he had Board of Advisors in the Company to guide the company to greater heights.

His message to the youth is to look at greater purpose of life by dreaming big at your goals and dreams and contributing to the greater cause of taking the mankind ahead and believing that reaching their dreams is absolutely possible.

With every new startup he creates, he looks at more scalability, more value that can be offered to customers and how it will culminate to his life goal. He will be venturing into manufacturing next year.
THE JITHA SAUBHAGYA EDIRISINGHE (27 YEARS - MALE) SRI LANKA
YOUTH ACTIVIST, FILM DIRECTOR, FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN OF HUMAN WING INTERNATIONAL

Thejitha Saubhagya Edirisinghe is a social worker and a youth activist from Sri Lanka who is passionate in human development. He studied at Ananda College Colombo and continued higher studies in Sri Lanka and Foundation Digital Film Academy and National Film Cooperation. He has worked as a documentary and short film director, an actor, a stage manager, a radio drama and TV program assistant producer by profession.

Thejitha's involvement in extracurricular activities started while he was schooling which eventually influenced him to be a community mobilizer. Thejitha contributed for number of community development, youth development projects and programs lobbying with the government, non-government organizations and some affiliated organizations focusing on Human Development from grass root to the international level. He became a youth representative chairing Attanagalla Divisional Federation of Youth Clubs in 2013 who subsequently was appointed as the Vice President of the Gampaha District Federation of Youth Clubs leading the youth in District for several years. With his commitment for the youth development Thejitha was selected as a national board member of Sri Lanka Federation of Youth Clubs. Thejitha was elected to the First Sri Lanka Youth Parliament In 2012. He was re-elected to the second Sri Lanka Youth Parliament in 2013 with the highest number of votes he received from his counterparts in Attanagalla. During the second Sri Lanka Youth Parliament, He was appointed as the Minister of Culture and Arts based on his performances and maturity in the subject. During his tenure as a minister, Thejitha initiated number of projects showcasing the role of Arts and Culture in shaping Sri Lankan Youth. Meanwhile Thejitha represented Sri Lanka in number of instances such as South Asian Peace Youth Camp 2011, Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013, South Asian Summit on Human Rights and Youth 2014, World Conference on Youth 2014, World Youth Assembly 2014 and Youth Wing of the International Conference on Asian Political Parties 2014 etc.

Later on Thejitha got the opportunity to work with number of organizations heading different positions. He was the secretary of Kite Sri Lanka Organization which is responsible in organizing the National Kite Festival and popularizing Kite as a sport in Sri Lanka. As the National Organizer of Commonwealth Youth Network of Sri Lanka he worked in connecting Sri Lankan Youth to the Youth in the Commonwealth. Thejitha co-founded the First Physically Challenged Cricket Team in Sri Lanka, as the Vice President of Physically Challenged Sports Organization. He contributed for community outreach focusing on marginalized people preferably on children and youth with disabilities and who need special
interest. Rather than working with different organizations, he wanted to develop his own concept of Human Development focusing on the aspects of uplifting the living standard of people to have meaningful and dignified lives while ensuring that they are experiencing the world peace, unity and harmony. The organization focuses on psychological development of the mankind while ensuring that they are enjoying culture, arts, philosophy, religions and aesthetic satisfaction. With the understanding of how people have been limited in their lives for being money minded and increasing inequalities among people from diverse backgrounds, the organization has made more weight on the spiritual development of the mankind over the materialistic development. A special focus has been given for the “Youth Development” considering youth as the change makers of the world and the owners of future. The organization further functions on environment sustainability, preservation of arts and culture, marginalized communities and people with disabilities. The ultimate goal of the organization is to ensure that people are having meaningful and dignified lives.

Among the major projects that he has initiated, the concept of language classes for social cohesion, residential and non-residential youth camps, micro credit entrepreneur development programs are important. Meanwhile he contributed in organizing religious festivals, cultural programs, sports programs, kite festivals, disease prevention awareness programs, constructing houses for poverty stricken families, film festivals and number of community development and youth empowerment programs.

Meanwhile Thejitha’s short film ‘Kites’ was selected to the jury during Colombo International Students Film Festival. He was awarded as a ‘Queens Young Leader Award’ winner 2015 which was organized collaboratively with the Royal Commonwealth Society, Cambridge University, Comic Relief and The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust for his commitment of utilizing the mankind through the Human Wing International.

Thejitha was awarded as a youth worker of the Gampaha District for his contribution on facilitating youth in 2013 and he was awarded by the ‘Susewabhimani Award 2015’ Ministry of Social Services for his commitment on youth and children.

Thejitha is good at public speaking, organizing, coordinating, leading, project management, project designing and implementation. He is a well-motivated youth activist who works for the community development.
THERESA GOH RUI SI (28 YEARS - FEMALE) SINGAPORE
YOUTH ADVOCATE ON DISABLED YOUTH; SWIMMER

National swimmer Theresa Goh is a true inspiration. Born with spina bifida, but with grit and determination, she has become one of Singapore’s top athletes.

Introduced to swimming at the age of 5, Theresa began competing at the age of 12. In her first National Swimming Championships in 1999, she won two Gold Medals. Since then she has won 24 Gold Medals at the National Swimming Championships, bringing home a remarkable 10 Gold Medals in 2004.

As Singapore’s first local Paralympic swimmer, she established herself as one of the top athletes in the region in the 2001 ASEAN Para-Games, where she garnered six Gold Medals and two Silver Medals, and was named Sports Woman of the Games. She followed this with three Gold Medals at the 2nd ASEAN Para Games, breaking three Games records. At the 10th Malaysian Paralympic Games & ASEAN Invitation Championships in 2000 she won four Gold Medals.

In the international arena, she has won many accolades. In the FESPIC Games in 2002, Theresa took home three Gold and one Silver Medal. At the Australian National Junior Disabled Games in 2001 she won five Gold and two Silver Medals, breaking four Games records along the way. At the ISMWSF World Wheelchair Games in 2003, Theresa won six Gold Medals. At the 2004 British Paralympic Trials, she came in first in the 200m Individual Medley and broke her personal best in six events. Theresa represented Singapore at the 2002 Commonwealth Games and the 2004 Athens Paralympics where she finished in 5th position in the 100m Breaststroke.

After being awarded the Sportsgirl of the Year for two years in a row in 2002 and 2003, Theresa was awarded Sportswoman of the Year by the Singapore Disability Sports Council in 2004.

Theresa also does her part for the community. She was the Poster Girl for the then-Ministry of Community Development and Sports in 2003. Theresa is also a member of Handicap Welfare Association (HWA) and Asian Women’s Welfare Association (AWWA) Therapy and Educational Assistance for Children in Mainstream Education (TEACHME).

For her dedication and inspirational achievements, Theresa is awarded the Singapore Youth Award (SYA) 2005 – the highest national youth accolade in Singapore that recognises Singaporeans who have excelled in their fields.

“I do the same things able-bodied people do. I just do them differently.”
of endeavour and contributed significantly to the community. She was also awarded the Public Service Medal in the National Day Awards in 2008 for her outstanding achievements and contributions to the community.

Theresa’s achievements do not stop at the awards. She continues to mentor, groom and inspire her juniors of whom one of them was eventually conferred the SYA 2009. She also went on to achieve greater heights in her personal career where she clinched two bronze medals at the Asian Paralympic Games in 2014.

As an advocate for disability sports, her achievements have inspired other young Singaporeans with disabilities to set their sights on competitive sports.
CARIBBEAN AND AMERICAS

1. Alicia Audrey Wallace (Bahamas)
2. Ariela St-Pierre-Collins (Barbados)
3. Cheryl Perera (Canada)
4. Hilary Jean Clauson (Canada)
5. Jamilla Karen Sealy (Barbados)
6. Javon Akeem Liburd (St. Kitts and Nevis)
7. Jerome Marlon Cowans (Jamaica)
8. Joel Kemron Greenidge (Grenada)
9. Jo-Nelle M. Walsh (Antigua and Barbuda)
10. Kellyn A. George (Dominica)
11. Kemoy Augustus Lindsay (Jamaica)
12. Kurt Mikhail Williams (Antigua and Barbuda)
13. Leroy Phillips (Guyana)
14. Melissa Christine Kargiannakis (Canada)
15. Michael Thomas (Grenada)
16. Nevar Lionel Smith (Bahamas)
17. Nolana Esther Lynch (Trinidad and Tobago)
18. Rianna Gonzales (Trinidad and Tobago)
19. Sarah Barbara MacDonald (Canada)
20. Sheena Noel Tahyra (Grenada)
21. Sonia Rosita Boddie (St. Kitts and Nevis)
22. Sujae Hugh Boswell (Jamaica)
23. Teocah Arieal Ainka Dove (Trinidad and Tobago)
ALICIA AUDREY WALLACE (29 YEARS - FEMALE) BAHAMAS
WOMEN’S RIGHTS ACTIVIST, PUBLIC EDUCATOR

Alicia was born into a family of strong, independent, entrepreneurial Bahamian women, and she has always considered it a privilege to be raised, nurtured, and motivated by them throughout her life. She believes in the power of storytelling, peer-to-peer learning, and networking, and see herself as a product of this important combination. While studying for her Bachelor of Commerce degree in Nova Scotia, she worked as a live-in for young women at-risk of homelessness, teaching life skills, providing 24 hours support, and ensuring that program requirements were met. During this time, she was exposed to issues of social security, housing, mental health, special education, and drug dependency. For the first time, she saw the way these issues affect women in particular, and the different ways they manifest themselves based on intersections of age, race, nationality, religion, and a variety of other identity markers. This sparked her interest in women’s rights and began her journey as a feminist, working for change through an intersectional lens.

Upon return to the Bahamas, Alicia took note of the state of women in the country, from the political landscape to family life, and realized that there is a great deal of work to be done. It was difficult to connect with organizations and individuals doing the work she had in mind, and she found herself waiting for someone or something to appear. Before long, she realized that she may just have to be the person to create the programming she saw the need for every day. While developing a comprehensive life skills training and mentorship program, she followed current events and remained vocal on issues of national concern with specific focus on women and girls. She is now the Director of Hollaback! Bahamas - part of a global movement to end street harassment - and Director of Equality Bahamas which is focused on gender equality.

It is often difficult to engage governments and other bureaucratic institutions, but social media has made it easy to reach the general public. For this reason, much of Alicia’s focus has been on public education. With minimal funding, she found it to be most effective to run short campaigns on topical issues, providing explanations of relevant Articles of the Constitution, legislation, and historical data. This has been well-received, and led to opened doors at the College of the Bahamas - through individual lecturers - and local media outlets, both in print and online. Technology has made it easy and cost-effective to reach large numbers of people, meaningfully engage them, and empower them with knowledge and the availability of resources.

“My work is summarized by the three E’s - education, engagement, and empowerment. When we educate the people, it becomes easier to engage them in critical discussions. Armed with knowledge and access to resources, the people are empowered and better equipped to act as their own best advocates.”
It was an honour in January 2015 to learn that Alicia was one of the 60 young people from 53 countries in the commonwealth selected to be a part of the Queen’s Young Leaders program. We were privileged to spend one week together, attending sessions on fundraising, communications, and management, and visiting BBC World Service, Twitter, and Buckingham Palace. It was a fantastic opportunity to network, learn, and become more motivated to continue our work.

She is beyond grateful to the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, the Royal Commonwealth Society, University of Cambridge, and Comic Relief for making this program possible, bringing together dozens of powerful, innovative, fearless young people to celebrate successes, plan and develop future projects, and share resources.

Receiving the Queen’s Young Leaders Award has raised Alicia’s profile. It lends much-needed validation to her work, and increases the chances of partnerships, sponsorship, and general buy-in. She has already seen the benefits of this exposure in many forms. She has met vibrant, brilliant young people within her own region, and many others from other regions including Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. She has made connections with businesses and non-profit organizations, and university faculty through the residential program. As a result of the press on these events, potential partners have been on contact, declaring interest in lending support to her organizations and their initiatives. She knows that this is only the beginning, and look forward to further growth of the movement through sustainable efforts and the relationships she has built through the Queen’s Young Leaders program.
ARIELA ST-PIERRE-COLLINS (19 YEARS - FEMALE) BARBADOS
SOCIAL ACTIVIST, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Why Youth Entrepreneurship? Youth unemployment is one of the most crucial problems facing the youth population in the Commonwealth today, in every one of the 53 nations. Ariela is endeavouring to help to be a part of the solution to this pressing issue in her generation!

Ariela founded the NGO “Youth For Epic Change” in Barbados at only 15 years of age in 2012 with a vision to inspire, empower and help girls and young women social entrepreneurs and innovators to start, grow and scale their social enterprises. She sees herself as a teen social activist and social entrepreneur. YEC grew out of her efforts at fundraising for worthy educational causes, and she is descended from a long line of social activists. Ariela’s great grandfather, Pierre St-Pierre, founded a temperance movement in Quebec in the 1930s. Two of her great aunts are religious nuns, one of them spending the majority of her life in Lesotho, Africa and Haiti under both Duvalier regimes, in administrative leadership roles, and her older cousin has a senior administrative role with Oxfam GB, to name a few. She was raised in a household where her mother held her first directorship, for the Barbados Red Cross at the age of 27, and both of her parents are entrepreneurs, so she has acquired a love of entrepreneurship and a desire to help others as well!

In 2013, Ariela followed the University of Oxford’s online course on Social Entrepreneurship, and she knew at that point that this was her calling, that she could be one of the new social entrepreneurs of her generation that marries traditional entrepreneurship with solutions to pressing social issues, to become a social entrepreneur.

Ariela is a born entrepreneur, having had a small business of some sort since young, launching her own free digital tourism smartphone and table app, “Barbados Like A Local”, in 2014, so that tourists would have information whilst visiting the island. On September 6th, she was awarded by the Barbados government for Outstanding Success in Business Development and Commerce, for her digital app development. What an inspiration to continue her social entrepreneurship work!

Ariela has repeatedly stated throughout the years that she wants to be a role model for girls in business, “I want to inspire people. I want someone to look at me and say, “because of you, I didn’t give up.” Wanting to help other young girls start and grow their own businesses is YEC’s passion and vision! Ariela
was appointed a prestigious “Highly Commended Runner-Up” Queen’s Young Leaders for Barbados for 2015-2016, and she has been working on developing a digital media platform for girl entrepreneurship since 2014, and it was launched this March, called “Girl2B”. She will be launching the digital magazine later this year that will be bursting with information on how girls and young women can start a business in the Caribbean, especially a social entrepreneurship type of enterprise.

In 2014, Ariela’s NGO, Youth For Epic Change, was chosen to be a founding organization for CAYE-CC, (Commonwealth Alliance for Young Entrepreneurs-Caribbean & Canada), a regional alliance strengthening young entrepreneurship networks and platforms in her region of the Caribbean and Canada. She now serves as the Marketing Chair for that alliance, promoting Young Entrepreneurship in that region, so that it can positively and collectively promote Young Entrepreneurship as a means to tackle the youth unemployment issue.

There is no greater social problem affecting Ariela’s generation than youth unemployment. Young people can lead the way in tackling this issue through entrepreneurship, creating their own viable futures. Ariela is on a long-term path to living, and teaching, that young entrepreneurship spirit!
Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him.

Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually to starving millions?

Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.

- Mahatma Gandhi

**CHERYL PERERA** (29 YEARS - FEMALE) CANADA

CHILDREN’S RIGHT ADVOCATE; PUBLIC SPEAKER; FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF ONECHILD

Cheryl is a multiple award-winning, acclaimed public speaker, and front-line children’s right advocate with 13 years of successful and effective leadership in areas of child protection, global education, and authentic and inclusive child and youth participation.

Cheryl became a stand-out champion for children’s rights at age 16, after reading about the exploitation of children, for a high school project. Enraged to learn that Sri Lanka—the land of her own heritage—was a perilous trap for nearly 40,000 children forced or conned into prostitution, she sprung to action to obtain an insider’s look into the child sex industry. Wasting no time, she independently organized a fact-finding mission to Sri Lanka where she participated in a treacherous STING operation, as the decoy—the main role of a 15 year-old child prostitute—that led to the successful apprehension of a 40 year-old child sex offender. Her breadth of knowledge and heroism attracted the attention of dignitaries, and she was recognized by the Sri Lankan Government, having been offered a placement of one year at the Presidential Secretariat to serve as the President’s Nominee on Child Protection, at the age of 17.

Cheryl’s children’s rights career has spanned over 21 countries, where she has investigated international child sex tourism (CST) cases; successfully lobbied the Canadian Government to double its aid contribution towards global education; and provided shelter and long-term comprehensive care to hundreds of victims in Asia. At a time when Canada’s record on CST was abysmal, she proved herself a pioneer at the age of 19, when she launched a successful youth advocacy campaign to empower and engage an important stakeholder— the Canadian travel and tourism—for the very first time, in the fight against CST. Her initiative—lauded by the United Nations World Tourism Organization—not only convinced Air Canada to screen youth-produced PSAs on all flights, raising awareness of CST law to 22 million+, but her efforts kick-started Canada’s CST movement, allowing her to form a coalition with other NGOs and UN agencies and garner the commitment of all major stakeholders i.e. travel/tourism, government, law enforcement, civil society, and youth, in the first nation-wide campaign against CST, reaching millions.

OneChild, the organization that Cheryl founded at the age of 19, is a leader and the first in the world to build the capacity and harness the power of young people to prevent and protect against child sex slavery through education, advocacy, and child victim support such as shelter; medical assistance; therapy;
scholarships and vocational skills training; income-generation and micro-lending for families; legal aid; leadership and human rights/advocacy training. Since its inception, the organization has worked in 15 countries, including some of the world’s most pronounced child prostitution and trafficking hotspots, benefiting and empowering over 35,000 survivors and their families; non-experiential youth; and judges, prosecutors, police, social workers and communities; and addressing demand through public education and successful campaigning of the travel/tourism industry and government. The organization has garnered wide recognition, including being named as one of the Top 5 Canadian Charities run by Young Professionals.

Cheryl is currently pursuing a Master of Advanced Studies in Children’s Rights from the University of Geneva. Cheryl is also the Canadian Representative to the United Nations Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative-Youth Advocacy Group; a Global Partnership for Education Youth Advocate; and an adjudicator for Canada’s Top 20 Under 20 and World of Children Awards. Previously, she was a Board Member of Canadians Addressing Sexual Exploitation; Free the Children and Me to We Ambassador; Women’s Executive Network Mentor; Rotary Peace Fellow, adjudicator for Flare Magazine Volunteer and Do Something Awards, and has occupied a seat on the Senate Committee Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC).

Cheryl is an outspoken advocate and sough-after orator in many areas including child sex slavery, girls’ education, global citizenship, youth leadership and has addressed over 63,000 individuals from schools to Parliament Hill, and has shared the stage with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon; former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown; UN Special Envoy on Education Ahmed Alhendawi; Graça Machel; and renowned Pakistani education advocates Shazia Ramzan and Kainat Riaz.

Her work has been profiled in four books: The Humanitarian Leader in Each of Us: 7 Choices That Shape a Socially Responsible Life; Take More Action: How to Change the World; Our Rights: How Kids are Changing the World; and Making of an Activist, and in various media outlets including CNN International; Financial Times of London; CBC; National Post; Globe & Mail; Toronto Star; Flare Magazine; Gulf News (UAE); Daily News (Sri Lanka) and . She is currently authoring a novel on child sex slavery.

For her unwavering passion, courage, and track record of success in youth
leadership she has received over 23 honours/awards such as the World of Children Founder’s Award (Nobel Prize for Children’s Rights); 2006 Canada’s Most Power Women: Top 100 (youngest recipient); 2006 Do Something Award; and 2004 Canada’s Top 20 Under 20.

When asked about some of her greatest challenges on the road to youth leadership, Cheryl recounts the many times she had to deal with the popular notion among adults that children are simply adults-in-waiting; who should be seen, but not heard; as well as the difficulties in beginning a project or organization without any initial funding or network. She advises other young people going through similar situations to “not waste time. Stay perseverant, and take the opportunity to educate people on why you, as a young person should have a say. Help people understand why your involvement is imperative.” She also advises other youth to take every opportunity to share their idea for their project with others by contacting organizations and setting up opportunities to speak before them. “Use social media. Use crowdsourcing and fundraising sites. Several organizations offer grants for youth-led projects and organizations. Lastly, don’t be afraid to contact individuals in higher places to act as mentors or to lend their name and support to your project.”
HILARY JEAN CLAUSON (28 YEARS - FEMALE) CANADA
YOUTH LEADER & VOLUNTEER

The daughter of two teachers, Hilary has always been grateful for her education. International travel and activism has shown her that she cannot take it for granted. She has a responsibility to ensure that every child – of whom 124 million have never started school or dropped out – can gain an education and realize whatever he or she aspires to.

She began taking action in secondary school, where she founded a “Youth in Action” group that has raised over $50,000 for NGO Free The Children’s primary education projects overseas. She then became her province’s Free The Children representative, mentoring other youth in delving into awareness raising and fundraising for education.

With a group of volunteers from North America, Hilary went to Kenya to see the school her high school had raised funds to construct and to build another school. They spent their days under the hot savannah sun digging a trench for the school’s foundation. Their work always looked better the following morning; then they realized that Kenyans had come in the evening and improved on their efforts. Hilary’s time in Kenya taught her that Kenyans are at the forefront of their own development, whether it is the community members who help in constructing schools or the government that declares that primary school is free and compulsory, or the students who run to school each day eager to get an education.

One organization that knows and respects the power of development that places communities and their governments in the lead is the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). She spent eight months with Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) Bangladesh, working on its Early Childhood Development Support Program (ECDSP).

AKDN and others have found that a key influencer of early childhood development and school readiness is pre-primary education. Hilary and her colleagues preschools operated by NGO Prochesta (‘to endeavour’ in Bangla) for the children of tea garden labourers. The goal of the ECDSP is not to deliver programming itself, rather to increase the capacity of local NGOs like Prochesta to do so.

All development projects are complex and many are controversial. They can be external interventions into poorly understood local contexts. Hilary admires

No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated

- Nelson Mandela
AKDN for prioritizing local ownership by supporting NGOs that are familiar with – indeed often a part of – the communities in which they work.

Nonetheless, Canadians also have roles in international development. She believes they include sharing what youths do well, sharing their resources, and supporting international agendas like the Millennium Development Goals at home and abroad. On her return from Bangladesh, she became an AKF Canada volunteer speaker, talking about Canada’s role in international development.

Hilary also contributes to international development through her lifelong volunteerism with Girl Guides. As a Girl Guide, she attended the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. In 2012 (20 years after the Rio Earth Summit brought sustainable development to the world’s attention) the international community committed to drafting Sustainable Development Goals to replace the Millennium Development Goals.

At Rio+20, Girl Guides hosted a side event on youth initiatives in sustainable development. They lured their audience with Girl Guide cookies so we had excellent attendance. They were very pleased to read in the media that one participant found their side event to be “by far the best.” Hilary disagreed with the reason for her admiration, however (“Because young people do not have any power so they feel free to be honest and say exactly what is going on”). Young people do have power, evidenced by the Major Group for Children and Youth’s (the civil society representation for youth at Rio+20) success in influencing the sustainable development agenda, including securing a clause on the importance of non-formal education in the Rio+20 outcome document.

The Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted at the September 2015 United Nations Summit. But that is only an intermediary accomplishment toward a prosperous and just world for all. Today’s central challenge lies in implementing an ambitious and universal agenda of 17 goals. It is only in coming together and bringing our strengths as conscientious and passionate young people and members of a shared Commonwealth, that we will overcome today’s greatest challenges, including education for all.
Growing up in the countryside of the small Caribbean island of Barbados, Jamilla always had a thing for nature. She loved the outdoors, climbing trees, caring for animals and also planting and harvesting crops. It was no secret that Geography and Science ended up as her favourite subjects. She also decided to take Environmental Science, Geography and Biology as her main subjects at the advanced level.

At the age of 18, she decided to leave her home to complete her first degree in Environmental and Natural Resources Management with Biology at the University of the West Indies’ St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago. In 2010, after the three years, she gained useful knowledge about sustainable development. It only made her more eager to return home and make a contribution to the sector. However, at the moment that was not the case. She coincidentally stumbled upon a part-time teaching post for Geography at a secondary school and after much debate, due to her small size and shy demeanour, she took the plunge and decided it was worth a try. At first, she believed teaching was only a matter of getting the subject content across to the students. It also helped to be teaching a subject that she loved. It made it much easier to come up with lesson plans and new and exciting ways to teach the children. She was sadly mistaken and soon learnt that if she did not put her heart and soul into it, it would not work. Teaching at only 21 years old taught her to grow up. One had to become nurse, judge, mother, and most importantly a great role model at the workplace and in her private life. Teachers have a great influence on their charges.

In 2012, after two years of teaching and two different schools, she had to make the tough decision of completing her Master’s degree or continue teaching. She had become attached to the children and helping them. She however decided to further her studies in Natural Resources and Environmental Management at the Cave Hill Campus of the UWI in her home country, much to the disappointment of her students. The focus she chose was climate change as the topic seemed the most urgent. This by far was the hardest decision she has ever made in her life; to quit a steady job to become a student once again. This however did not stop her from visiting her students on a monthly basis to check on their grades. The degree was most intense but it really helped to cement her passion for the environment. She knew then that she wanted to become a natural resource management consultant for the region and the world and specialising in small islands. Her thesis focused on the effects of rapid land use change and impacts of climate change on food security in Barbados. She learned tons about herself.

“Believe in yourself; it’s all you have.”
during this process and is determined that if she can succeed in the degree she can do anything. In May of 2013, she happened across the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN) and joined instantly. She learnt later that it was a regional organisation in about 18 countries and has been around since at her first meeting, the Executive Coordinator, Mr. Reginald Burke, asked her to choose if she wanted to make a real difference or make tons of money in an international institution. She chose the former. Since becoming a member of the organisation, it has opened her eyes to how the development world works. Within the first few months, she went to government meetings representing the organisation, workshops and consultations and even participated in the United Nations Small Island Developing States Inter-regional Preparatory Meetings. In January of 2013, she took the post of Project Coordinator which included organising activities and research for the organisation.

She has also had travelling opportunities through CYEN and has visited other Caribbean countries, Tunisia and the most memorable was Sri Lanka. In May 2014, Jamilla was chosen to be an international delegate at the World Conference of Youth. It was a great experience to interact with young people from all over the world with similar beliefs. Even the journey was exciting; travelling through Dubai, Malé, Milan to get there was an experience she will never forget. For a person who used to browse the atlas as a child for leisure, this was a dream come true for her. She returned to teaching in 2013, teaching Environmental Science to 16-18 year olds. Her experiences in CYEN and around the world also are incorporated into her lessons. She also recently in June 2015, was a presenter at the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States conference in St. Kitts where she presented on using social media to communicate information on Climate Change.

She captured the top post of Regional Chairperson of the CYEN at the biennial congress in December 2014. She is proud to be in this position as it would help in making her a better leader. To aid in this new post, she decided to become a Toastmaster. She is also now the Vice President of Public Relations in the St. John’s Toastmasters Club in Barbados. This helps her in her quest to becoming an adequate leader. As extracurricular activities, she has been a performer in the arts from the tender age of 6 years old. She is also a dancer, she studied martial arts (wushu) for 12 years, played in her secondary school’s steel orchestra for 3 years, volleyball team for 6 years and is currently on the Division 2 team in her country. All in all, Jamilla is an all-round young leader in her country and region and will continue to pursue her dreams.
JAVON AKEEM LIBURD (24 YEARS - MALE) ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
YOUTH AMBASSADOR, YOUTH ADVOCATE

Javon Liburd who hails from the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, considers himself to be a youth ambassador for his country and as such, he always endeavor to utilize every opportunity afforded to promote the ideals and assets of his country. He is actively involved in numerous culturally and socially conscience groups, such as: J3H (Joining Heads, Hearts and Hands), St. Kitts & Nevis Youth Parliament (SKNYP), Jaycees International, Youth Express On The Steps, as well as hosting and commentating for several carnival shows and parades for ZIZ (Local TV and Radio Station). He was also the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) youth ambassador designate of St. Kitts and Nevis.

Javon is a Queen’s Young Leader and was awarded by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in 2015 for his youth and humanitarianism work in his country.

He is passionate about the development of young people in any and every aspect of their lives. Referencing today’s society, he says, “Young people are often belittled and devalued in so many areas, whether being seen as too incompetent or inexperienced to perform a certain role/task, simply because of age. So many great philosophers emphasize that it isn’t the age of the man, but what the man has to offer. This is a message I spread religiously in my home country. I believe that if we as young people do not receive such chances when we are deemed as ‘newbies’, then when are we expected to be veterans in our respected fields; and who would we learn from to be the best we can become, if the veterans themselves are turning us down. As I consider myself to be a youth activist, I encourage youths to stand up and fight for what they truly believe in, until they get what they think they deserve and more.”

Javon usually share his opinions on issues affecting his society and youths through commentaries, Facebook posts, day-to-day conversations and through his affiliation with several organizations. He stated “This enables me to spread my message, speak positively to other youths and most importantly be in a position where my voice is heard. I cannot express enough my concerns about young people and our advancements in our respective communities and in our respective fields, and I would continue to use any means necessary to promote my country’s young people in a positive light.”

In 2013 Javon started a community group in his village that is aimed at achieving excellence together as a neighborhood.

Embrace who you really are; never settle for who they want you to be!
Through community development initiatives, fundraisers and projects, his group took up the challenge to foster their community educationally, socially, physically, and mentally. J3H, which stands for Joining Heads, Hearts and Heads was formed and carried out a number of projects throughout his community. Serving in the capacity as President of this Organization, they hosted fundraisers, presented gifts to outstanding students who graduated from the village primary school, worked hand in hand with the school on different projects and presented gifts to elderly persons and stalwarts in the community.

He chose to be actively engaged in volunteerism, because he believes that one must give back to their community and country and give a hand to the next generation as was done by the elders in his community for him. “I give back because I am a product of giving back”

Apart from being socially conscious about his friend’s, family’s and country’s wellbeing as it regards to e-racism, country development and educational advancements, he is also an advocate for a ‘healthy earth’. Amongst 99 other young individuals from throughout the Commonwealth, he attended the 33FIFTY, which was a program sponsored by The Royal Commonwealth Society and spearheaded by Common Purpose. The program was held in Scotland, July 2014 and was centered on creating low carbon economies.

Education was not an easy road for Javon. He struggled through high school, both financially and academically. The many adversities he met in life were definitely stumbling blocks to his success, but he uses these unfavorable fortunes as encouragements to his lifelong goals.

He stated that he owes his life to his personal symbol and motto, which is an African symbol called ‘Sankofa’ that means, to take from the past what is positive and put it towards your future.

He indicated that he understands greatly that the meaning and measure of success varies, based on the individual and their geographical location.

He said “Success has always been my biggest fear since I was a child. The pressure of being the best frightened me. That pressure made me back out of so many things; failure was on purpose because it was my prediction to be the end result any way.”
He added, “I’ve learnt to use my fear and that pressure to be a better me. I fully understand that the idea of ‘success’ that my family may have had for me, does not correlate with my idea and my ambitions. Success is a personal aim and can only be defined by the individual themselves and not friends, family or society. How dare me tell my brother who is a Sous Chef, he is not successful?”

He encourages the youth of the Commonwealth to embrace who they are and not who others want them to be.

He stated, “As advice to other young people throughout the Commonwealth, I would encourage them to embrace who they are. Ever so often, we see young people trying to please society, fulfilling the wants of their families and just settling; never really venturing into what they really enjoy doing or what they would love to do in life. I encourage the youth of this 53 nation strong union to EMBRACE and showcase who they really are. Fight for what you believe in, start organizations to support causes you support, be that person to support or fight issues that affects your life and the lives of your family and your community/country on a whole.”
JEROME MARLON COWANS (25 YEARS- MALE) JAMAICA
YOUTH LEADER & AMBASSADOR; ASSISTANT CHAIRPERSON OF LEAD

Jerome Cowans is a 25-year-old young man living in the community of Central Kingston, Jamaica. He originates from extraordinarily modest beginnings; he is from a single parent family, which includes his father and younger brother. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Economics and is now reading for his Masters of Management Degree at the University of Birmingham.

Cowans is a true testament to triumph over adversity – he often witnessed horrific events in the neighborhood where he was raised, Parade Gardens, which is one of Jamaica’s most violent and volatile communities. It is here where he watched the unfortunate murders of several of his close friends at the hands of ruthless gang members. This was not the path that he wanted for himself. Cowans made a vow, an unwavering personal choice to do better for himself—beyond what was expected of a young man from an inner city, with all too often very limited prospects for a constructive future. As a natural leader, and at the age of 13 years old, he recognized that there was a need for community-based organizations that would provide personal development opportunities and support for the youth in his community.

The result of that choice today is that Jerome is very poised, confident, and self-motivated – he strives for nothing less than excellence. Jerome Cowans is a dedicated young man and takes every task given to him very seriously. Shortly after the ill-fated murders of his friends, he and a group of like-minded youth in his neighborhood formed the Leaders Endeavoring for Adolescent Development (LEAD) youth club. Due to his grit and determination for the greater good, he is now seen throughout Jamaica and the Commonwealth as a positive role model in his local community and around the globe.

“I served as president of LEAD for the first six years, managing various projects that saw the organization’s growth in numbers, locations, awards and finances,” said Cowans. “It was from those formative years that I realized that my passion was youth development and youth leadership. Coupled with the motivation provided by my father, I continuously devote my time and resources to helping others achieve their goals.”

He served as President for the first six years, managing various projects that saw the organization’s growth in every area. He was then promoted to Assistant Chairperson, a position that he maintains today.

“Being the change I want to see”
It is this passion that has fuelled him and ultimately created recognition at local, national and international levels. On the national level, he is the first Jamaican to have ever been the recipient of the country's two highest youth awards: the Prime Minister Youth Award for Excellence in Leadership and the Governor General Award for Youth Excellence. Several corporate, governmental, and social organizations such as, Junior Achievement Jamaica, the Rotary Club of Kingston, Scotia Bank JA Ltd, and the Ministry of National Security have also recognized and praised his work.

In the international arena, he has received awards from Canada, Sri Lanka, USA, UN, Colombia and the Commonwealth for youth leadership. Jerome is honoured to be the very first international winner of the Civicus Nelson Mandela – Graca Machel Award in South Africa. Most recently in a visit to Jamaica, President Barack Obama offered high praises for Jerome’s work across 5 continents. Jerome Cowans was appointed as a Queen’s Young Leader in June 2015. He was awarded this premier youth honor by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the Buckingham Palace for taking the lead in transforming the lives of others and making a lasting difference in communities.

As a Youth Ambassador in Jamaica, he travels the globe mentoring youth about personal development. “As I continue to aim for the stars,” says Cowans, “my only wish is that one day I can be seen as an example which proves that, irrespective of where you are from, you CAN achieve whatever you set out to achieve.”
JOEL KEMRON GREENIDGE (27 YEARS - MALE) GRENADA
YOUTH ADVOCATE ON CHILD RIGHTS, FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Joel Greenidge is a motivational, youth leader born in the tranquil, rural community of Vincennes, St David's in Grenada. He is known for his arduous services and dedication to youth advancement. He has honored his role as motivator and advocate through projects that tackle the countless social issues that affect the lives of young people. He currently serves as the CARICOM Youth Ambassador for Grenada and work as a financial advisor for Sagicor, and had recently launched the first ever ‘Grenada CARICOM Youth Ambassadors’ Committee at an official ceremony organized by Grenada CYAs Tahyra Noel and himself. He’s a proud graduate of the Berean Christian Academy and St. John’s Christian Secondary school, and had accomplished his studies at the American College in Marketing.

Joel is the embodiment of a very active and dynamic young person, voraciously developing a keen interest in debating critical matters inflicting young persons. He had debated at the Parish Youth parliament, National Youth parliament and Regional Youth parliament. Some of his most notable achievements include once serving as a member of the National Ambassador Corp and attaining membership on the National Youth Parliament Association as the first treasurer. In March of 2013, he had the esteemed opportunity of attending a leadership conference in England where he had received lectures from noble MPs from the British Parliament. Subsequently, in March of 2014, he was awarded the opportunity to visit the British House of Parliament. His flourishing opportunities, combined with his radiant personality, allowed him to become a Youth Representative on the panelist at the first ever Youth Conference held in Grenada. He further went on to Co-found “YOUNGMENTOR” which is an all-male Youth Empowerment and Child Rights Advocacy group. The sole purpose of “YOUNG MENTOR” acted as a direct response to the lack of positive alternatives for the dis-empowered youth in Grenada. The group went on to issue a National Youth Survey in June 2011 as part of the celebration of the “International Year of Youth”. He has been featured on radio and television programmes to deliberate on various youth obstacles, and became involved in a television internship with Bayloric Worldwide TV. As a strong believer in “Gender Equality” he participated in the “Men Champions for Change” group, a program initiated by the ministry of social development that championed the cause for gender equality. The program also awarded him a spot in consultation of the “Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan” which was funded by the United Nations’ Women. His roaring achievements did not end there. In 2014, he represented Grenada in Sri Lanka as a National Youth Delegate at the World Conference on Youth titled “Mainstreaming youth In the
Post 2015 Development Agenda”. While at the conference, he was appointed “Commonwealth Youth Peace Representative”.

Perhaps his most noted establishment, Spice Youth Magazine was newly created on the 9th of January, 2015. This magazine emerged as a unique platform for youths to voice their frustrations and observations of being a young person in a world plagued by social and psychological abnormalities. Joel was conscious of the lack of positive youth role models in the community, the significant growth of school drop outs and ‘hustlers’ on the streets, and became ignited with the burning passion and desire to help his community. Spice Youth Magazine provided that opportunity, birthing potential for a modern day, ideological counterculture for aggravated youths.

As an ambassador, he had been exposed to numerous regional and international workshops, including CSME training advocacy workshop held in Georgetown, Guyana on May 29th and 30th 2014. He was a favorite in national workshops such as the Youth Leadership Training (August 2012 – May 2013), coordinated by the Grenada Women’s Parliamentary Caucus in collaboration with Agape Foundation and the Ministry of Youth. His passion for youth development had also landed him the opportunity of being a stakeholder in the development of Grenada’s National Youth Policy. Furthermore, he served on the “Life Underwriters Association of Grenada” in the capacity as a Director.

However, no achievements would have prospered without prior hardships. He was born to a teenage mother, who had to sacrifice her dreams in order for him to live his, and never knew his biological father. His childhood was a difficult time for him since he had to endure personal darkness and pain. He was exposed to drugs, violence, and gang culture at a young age. One prominent incident that he had experienced was a vicious attack by a rivalry gang while he was with friends. Although he was never a participant in a gang, he was targeted because of where he was from. He was brutally assaulted with a beer bottle to the head and fortunately survived a temporary unconsciousness. His mother, who became his moral supporter and pillar of absolute strength from the onset, instilled in him the importance of respect, virtue, and avoiding bad company. He decided to take up the gauntlet of mentoring the gang members in his community, reaching out and assisting them in choosing a new path of finding positivity and a purpose in life. There was little he could have done to control his tumultuous environment, but he had successfully managed to foster a love for sports. Sports, mainly football, distracted him from dealing with the harsh reality
of his childhood struggles, silently carving an inner will and a fighter's spirit. Since he was an excellent football player, gang members wanted to eagerly compete with him. Often, he would organize cookouts and invite people so that they could eat, play dominoes, and laugh. He knew he was worth more than his circumstances and luckily recognized the urgency to not sink into a chained abyss of mediocrity and hopelessness. He wanted to be something more satisfactory. He wanted a second option: to be a strong beacon and agent of change.

In his early years in school, he struggled to make a favorable impression. His attempts backfired and he roughly landed at the bottom of his class in the final exams. He was a failure. He lost all hope and possessed no dreams. At age 14, life turned around for him. He was approached by his future mentor and benefactor, who was a well-known and well-respected lady in the community. She expressed her profound belief in his potential to be great. Her words of encouragement seriously contradicted his primary beliefs since he remembered constantly being told that he would never amount to anything good in life. Despite the doubtful attitudes and negativity, he managed to discover a renewed sense of hope and belief. Toward the end of the school year, he moved from a thirty-six out of forty-four to placing a solid fifth in only one term.

Nevertheless, it was rarely easy at that time. He suffered an emotional blow when his mother and stepfather - who financially supported his education - ended a fifteen years relationship. He then relocated to his mother’s family home, and there his problems seemed to have compounded. He remembered days when he would knock on his mother's door, all smartly dressed for school, and hear her whisper drip with frustration and pain as she informed him that she had no money to send him to school. It was a tough thing to accept, knowing that you might never get a shot at something everyone else around you seemed to have. He continued to battle his obstacles so that he could get his well-deserved shot. His main goal at that time was to simply buy groceries for his mother.

During the summer vacation, he would work at a supermarket, packing the shelves and transporting goods. Sometimes he felt depressed as he watched his friends freely enjoy their summer holidays while he worked to afford books and clothes for school. He sought an extra alternative to making money, venturing into farming and selling vegetables to the villagers. Most importantly, he never had any reason or excuse to doubt. He began to read books on successful people who triumphed over personal hardships, and thus strengthening his will to climb. Success was not something afforded to people: it was something
earned.

His life journey had taught him that no dream was too big for a man who had the courage and desire to surmount difficulties and trials. His decision to inspire, change and flip a new chapter in his life influenced gang members to drop their cutlasses and pick up shoes or boots to play football. His popularity expanded outside of the community and he pursued a strong relationship with victims of circumstances, using that opportunity to support and listen to their various concerns and offer encouragement. In secondary school, he won awards in chemistry, biology, social studies, and deportment, and even received an award for outstanding football player. It is his belief that his vast experience, influence, team spirit, enthusiasm, confidence, passion for excellence, commitment to service, unwavering courage, ability to inspire others to bring their best to the table of life to produce extraordinary results, and ability to communicate ideas with clarity and purpose will indeed help him to carve a rich legacy of love, opportunities and hope in the hearts and minds of future generations. His most beloved quote is: “Some men were born great. Some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them.”

Joel is proud of his achievements and elated to have overcome all his obstacles. When he is not working or involved in youth work, he is on the fields, playing football. His deep interest in football propelled him to represent Grenada at the Under 20 World Cup qualifiers, Under 23 Olympic qualifiers and a spot as a striker on the Senior National team. When Grenada had won the Windward Islands’ Championship in St Vincent in 2012, he was part of the team. His lifelong goal is to have a law degree in financial services, and to become a renowned investor and business developer. He is currently pursuing his Certified Financial Service Professional designation (CFSP) and is in the process of writing two books.
JO-NELLE M. WALSH (24 YEARS - FEMALE) ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
YOUTH ADVOCATE & AMBASSADOR; CAREER SPECIALIST

“My mission in life is not to be the richest, nor most famous, but rather to thrive through passion, love, empathy and humour,” sentiments echoed by 24 year old Jo-Nelle Walsh. The Antiguan born is from humble beginnings the second of seven children to parents Jo-Ann Jarvis a pre-school teacher in their community of Liberta and former Leeward Islands cricketer the late Hayden Walsh Sr. From an early age she was involved in positive activities in her church, school and community. At the age of six, Jo-Nelle became a Brownie Guide in her church before moving on to Girl Guides where she enjoyed learning new skills and helping others. Not long after, at age seven, she joined her school’s netball team where she was not only noticeable for being the shortest person on the team but for the impressive knack she had for the game. Her Excellence did not stop at primary school as she took her leadership qualities to her secondary school and A’Levels at the Antigua State College. At the State College she was an active member of the college’s community club, organising and participating in activities such as marches, tree planting and clean up campaigns.

In 2010, while preparing to sit her CAPE exams, tragedy struck her family when her father died suddenly. This served as motivation to succeed and make her father proud. Later that year, she enrolled as a first year student at the UWI undergraduate Department at the Antigua State College after which she gained a scholarship from the Antiguan government to assist in the completion of her studies at the Cave Hill Campus in Bridgetown Barbados. “I am very grateful to have been a recipient of the scholarship; I would not have been able to otherwise attend university, as my mom would not have been able to afford it having lost my dad a year prior to my enrolment.”

Jo-Nelle headed to Bridgetown, Barbados to the University of the West Indies, Cavehill Campus to pursue a Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Psychology with Management. It was at UWI that her philanthropy and her drive for activism developed from her new found love in Psychology. Her new love urged her to give back by volunteering at the Citizen’s Welfare Division where she was able to assist in ensuring that children were protected at all cost. Along with the welfare officers, she would make home visits to ensure that living arrangements were suitable as well as being a part of the search and rescue team for missing children.

She especially enjoyed seeing the joy that was brought to the children’s lives at the welfare’s summer camp where she would interact with them through
cooking and computer classes. However, it was time for another year at UWI but that was not a deterrent. After the summer break she returned to UWI to complete her final year but not before seizing the opportunity to become a National Youth Ambassador and later a CARICOM Youth Ambassador for both her country and the Caribbean Region.

As a youth advocate, Jo-Nelle started her tenure by giving a speech to the Antigua and Barbuda Planned Parenthood Association speaking on sexual health and Reproductive Rights. The impression left was so titillating that the organisation requested her assistance in mentoring at risk teens and she did just that. Her advocacy continued as she provided the youth’s perspective on Gender Based Violence for two consecutive years at the ‘End Gender Based Violence Campaign’. Along with her colleagues of the National Youth Ambassador Corps, she successfully organised and executed the ‘Speak Up, Speak Out’ Campaign where the youth in Antigua was given an opportunity to air their views on the decriminalisation of marijuana, alcohol consumption, glaucoma and diabetes.

Currently, she is working on the launch of the National Youth Council of Antigua and Barbuda. She hopes that this will be a major stepping stone for new beginnings for Antigua’s youth. Destined to be in the helping profession while recognising the shortage of psychologist, she aspires to be a Clinical Psychologist which piqued her interest when she volunteered at the Psychiatric hospital at the end of her university tenure.

There, she assisted in the diagnosing and rehabilitation of mentally impaired individuals, and has noted that having conversations with the patients was her favourite activity. Until she can bring her future plans to attain an MSc in Clinical Psychology to fruition, Jo-Nelle is a Career Specialist in the Ministry of Labour in Antigua where she mentors and assists jobseekers with job hunting; planning, executing and hosting work readiness workshops. She also conducts job interviews and training placements.

“I am not quite sure what is the next step for me, I am an open canvas ready to be utilised but what I do know for sure is that my philanthropic nature will always be in existence.” She urges all youth near and far to understand that life is full of bumps and bruises but with a faith, determination and hard-work success will be received.
Kellyn A. George (28 Years - Female) Dominica
Youth Advocate on Disabled Youth; Founder & CEO of Sickle Cell CARES Foundation

Kellyn’s journey to becoming a Queen’s Young Leader begins with her parents. Without them she would not be the person she is today.

She was born with Sickle Cell Anaemia Disease. This is a hereditary blood disorder that affects the haemoglobin of red blood cells. Sickle cell anaemia affects the shape of the red blood cell. It is usually supposed to be round in shape however the cells become impaired in their shape. This means that the bloods become limited in their capacity to uptake and transport oxygen around the body. The cells become stuck in blood vessels and cause severe pain episodes, called crisis. Other than that being the most common symptom, any range of other complications can occur from impaired blood flow. Therefore, management of this disease is very important.

Kellyn has always had to struggle with her disease; it has been an integral part of who she is from since she can remember her childhood days. She remembers being admitted to the hospital every semester, for at least two weeks, having to receive numerous blood transfusions, (She has probably had over 100) while she was in the United States pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Biology. On one instant her arms turned blue from having received so much IV, medications, and transfusions. In 2009, she was forced to take a semester away from school because she had to have gallbladder removal surgery. Fortunately, she completed university on time and never was placed on academic probation.

Kellyn’s struggles continued post-graduation, after she got her first job. She was excited to finally start becoming independent but her disease has other plans. She remember going to work on Friday and being in a lot of pain. She completed her shift for the day, and by the end of the night was laying on the floor writhing in pain. She could barely move. She had to call a friend to come pick her up from the floor of the apartment and take her to the emergency room. The last she remembers from that night was sitting in the emergency room, while the nurses and other admin staff were admitting her. The next time she woke up, it was Wednesday afternoon and she was in the ICU. The nurse was yelling her name and asking her if she knew where she was. She told her that she was in the hospital. However, she did not realize the seriousness of the situation. She had been in a coma since the Friday night. She had suffered multi-organ failure. Her kidneys and liver ceased to function. She was laying in the bed and had gained 40lbs of water weight. There were things attached to her legs, chest and arms. There were tubes and wires everywhere. Her body had swelled because
her kidneys were not functioning. She had to remain in the hospital for another 3 weeks to receive dialysis.

These are just a few of instances that have defined her struggles as someone living with Sickle Cell disease. Although it has brought her much pain and anguish, it has also become a huge part of who she is, and what she is doing with her life as well.

Upon returning to Dominica, Kellyn began doing some research and discovered a high occurrence of sickle cell disease on the island. This inspired her to establish the Sickle Cell Cares Foundation, with an initial mandate to raise awareness about this disease. So far, we have had awareness hikes, awareness campaigns during Carnival (including within the pageant arena, and a t-shirt band during the opening in her village Mahaut). This year, in celebration of International Sickle Cell Day 2015, a blood refrigerator was donated to the main hospital. They had a few more awareness campaigns in developmental stages that will be coming on stream within the next few months. In the future, hopefully not too distant, she hopes to establish clinics for persons with sickle cell disease to be able to seek affordable and up-to-date treatment.

The work done through the Foundation has created discussion within local communities. She has had persons coming up to her telling her that they did not know that the disease was so common, and that it was so life altering/threatening. I was pleased to have garnered discussions amongst people as I discover more and more families and individuals coming forward. She hopes to develop a database of persons and families impacted by sickle cell disease on island to have a clearer view of her target demographic and cultivate programs and actions that target them specifically.

Kellyn was selected to receive the Queen's Young Leader's Award for the work she has been doing through the Sickle Cell Cares Foundation to raise awareness about Sickle Cell Disease in Dominica. She has had the honour of meeting Her Majesty, The Queen of England; Mr David Cameron, Prime Minister of the UK; Sir John Major, Former Prime Minister of the UK, and many other persons. The Queen's Young Leaders Programme has provided leadership training through Cambridge University, and has developed into a fraternity of persons around the Commonwealth with a target goal of creating impactful global change, and change within their individual Commonwealth communities. The training and mentorship of this program will be ongoing for a full year. Hopefully, through
the Queen’s Young Leaders Programme some of the world’s issues can be addressed and solved.

Kellyn is very thankful to have received support from her family and more recently from the Dominican public. She hopes that through this journey she can serve as an ambassador to Dominica, and inspire persons, not only youth, to conquer their obstacles and make valuable contributions within their communities, country and the world. The Queen’s Young Leader’s Award has just demonstrated to me quite clearly how local actions can generate global recognition and as such, impact the world globally.
KURT MIKHAIL WILLIAMS (27 YEARS - MALE) ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
YOUTH AMBASSADOR, YOUTH ADVOCATE, FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER

The quote above amply describes my drive to succeed on a day to day basis. As a youth advocate of a small island developing state (SIDS), Kurt’s vision is to see the advancement of all young persons across his nation, irrespective of their social or economic background, religious or political persuasion, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or cultural origin; and with equal access to educational and employment opportunities which will assist them to achieve their career goals, enhance their personal growth and development and ensure their inclusion in all aspects of community and nation building.

Although he has always considered himself a champion of initiatives geared towards youth development, his formal interest in youth work began at the age of 15 when he volunteered his time and services on a regular basis to a Catholic-run home for troubled children. This experience cemented his commitment to making a difference in the lives of youth who were either from dysfunctional homes or who were from the lower tier of the socio-economic ladder but had both the ambition and determination to strive for a better life. His enthusiasm for volunteerism followed him to university where he found time to assist in the tutoring and mentoring of elementary students within the local community.

In 2010 after graduating from university, his desire to broaden his horizons and pursue new challenges led him to accept the opportunity to journey to Shimonoseki, Japan to take up employment duties as an Assistant Language Teacher (ATL) for the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) for two (2) years. This was one of his most life changing experiences to date, as it strengthened his penchant for patience, humility, tolerance and enabled him to embrace and celebrate the cultural diversity of a different society.

Upon returning to his native Antigua and Barbuda in 2012, Kurt thrusts himself deeper into the realm of youth development. He is a member of the Antigua Leo Club and was appointed as a CARICOM and National Youth Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda in 2013. His role as Ambassador has given him both a voice and a platform to articulate the needs and concerns of his fellow youth as we seek to become equal partners in the advancement of our nation on all fronts. One of his most fulfilling projects as a Youth Ambassador was the “Speak Up, Speak Out” campaign which focused on bringing greater awareness to health and social issues such as glaucoma, diabetes within the Caribbean region, alcoholism among youth in Antigua and Barbuda and marijuana decriminalization.

A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.

- Mohandas K. Gandhi
However, capturing the full attention of young people across his nation has not always been an easy and straightforward journey for Kurt. Competing interests from external sources have often meant that the task of mobilizing youth and getting them interested in topical issues can be rather challenging. However, the yearning for a better Antigua and Barbuda and, by extension, a better world motivates Kurt to stay focused. Bureaucratic obstacles motivate him to challenge societal and cultural “norms” which often stymie progress and discourage young people. He is determined in his advocacy to change the mindset of the average citizen concerning youth who are typically viewed as “problems to be fixed” and to encourage an environment which embraces meaningful youth participation in community and national discussion and initiatives where young people are seen as equal partners in achieving the nation’s aspirations.

His ultimate goal is to witness the world become a rich and diverse global village abound with equal opportunities for all to climb the social ladder without fear of prejudices, gender bias and political persecution. His message to the youth across the globe would be to reach beyond the stars and never give up on your dreams which will take you further beyond heights ever imagined. He concludes, “Remember we cannot change the world until we change ourselves!”
LEROY PHILLIPS (24 YEARS - MALE) GUYANA
YOUTH ADVOCATE FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES; BLIND CRICKET PLAYER

Leroy has been living with blindness for more than 17 years. This has been a struggle not only for him, but also for his parents and his grandmother, who has stood side-by-side with him through all of these years.

After his disability was acquired at the age of six, not much was done to ensure he received a quality and inclusive education, as members of the disabled community faced great stigma and discrimination. Throughout the first eight to ten years of Leroy being blind his schooling was his biggest challenge. It was chaotic and never looked like it would improve. But in 2013 it did, thanks to the increase in awareness in our education system to ensure teachers are more informed and equipped to function and work with children with disabilities; as well as his determination to push for what he wanted.

Leroy remembers quite vividly the many days he was left behind in the class, treated with disdain and completely ignored by his own class teacher and even worse, by his fellow students. Due to the struggles he experienced in his quest for a sound and inclusive education, he believes it is now his duty to ensure no other person with a disability goes through what he did.

Leroy is proud to have attended a number of international conferences to speak on issues concerning people with disabilities. In June 2014 he spoke about the importance of education at the opening session of the Global Partnership for Education’s Replenishment Conference in Brussels, alongside people like Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, and Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy for Education. In order to observe the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in 2013, his voice was the first to be heard in a video made by Leonard Cheshire Disability’s Young Voices, which was shown at a UN event to mark this observance. His main message in the production to governments was the importance of education and how it is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom. A year later, he participated in the seventh regional blind-cricket tournament in Jamaica and he was subsequently selected to represent the West Indies blind-cricket team in South Africa for the 2014 International Blind-Cricket World Cup.

Leroy is now a Queen’s Young Leaders Award winner and he feels an even bigger need to continue doing what he is passionate about in life. The many opportunities the programme provides cannot be easily explained; it has simply been incredible. During his one week residential in London the emphasis that was placed on networking with people was enormous and doors are quietly
opening for us. In the long run, people in need of crucial support will now get just that and more through the first 60 Award winners. We must all take our hats off to the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust team and all the other fantastic people behind the successful organising of the entire residential week.

Today if you look at much of the progress which is being made across the Commonwealth, young people are playing a large part in it. The more youths that are included in all levels of development, the better we are placed to advance in all areas of life. The Commonwealth is bringing back life to those who felt like they had no life. Children are able to live moments they never knew they would and one classical example of this is the Queen’s Young Leader’s programme.

Leroy’s ambition for the future he must say is unlimited. He hopes to establish a great relationship with the people in government not only in Guyana where he lives, but across the Caribbean, to assist in the thoughtful creation of inclusive programmes for people both with and without disabilities.

He feels very much privileged to have won this Award. He has absolutely no doubt that the road to bigger things is near. He would like to encourage all of his young friends within the Commonwealth to apply to become one of the next 60 winners.
MELISSA CHRISTINE KARGIANNAKIS (25 YEARS - FEMALE) CANADA
LIFEGUARD; YOUTH LEADER AND VOLUNTEER; CLIENT DELIVERY SPECIALIST

“If you’re scared, it means you should probably do it. Now.” Melissa is the oldest sibling to a younger brother and sister. She recently joined QoC Health Inc.—a patient-centred healthcare innovation company—upon completing her Master’s degree in Health Information Science with research on in-home medical monitoring devices. She grew up in a small town in Northern Ontario, Canada: Sault Ste. Marie. Melissa loves to sing, snowboard, swim, wakeboard, and play board/card games.

For the first 14 years of her life, Melissa and her family experienced significant abuse in multiple forms from her father in the home. For the last 11 years he has completely disappeared, absolving himself of all financial and legal responsibilities. Consequentially, all Kargiannakis children have had to work multiple jobs to meet family financial needs. Compounded with other struggles, these experiences led Melissa to develop ever-increasing anxiety and severe depression culminating in suicidal ideation that was most dangerous in fall 2014. In these deepest moments of despair Melissa finally had the encouragement of two friends to seek physiological and psychological support. As she moves through her wellness journey she encourages anyone who feels hopeless and alone to muster up just enough courage to seek help—it can be truly life-changing, and life-saving.

Despite encountering significant difficulty, Melissa transformed these negative feelings into productivity. Even as a child to avoid conflict in the home Melissa would hideaway in her bedroom doing homework. This set the tone for her strong work ethic, as a coping mechanism early on.

Among Melissa’s trajectory of achievements, she is most proud of pursuing wellness, health, and happiness. She has seen from experience how personal wellness can enable you to do so much more for others.

An example of Melissa’s community impact achievements occurred when she was President-elect of her faculty at university. There was a structural problem that plagued the disjointed student representation for 14 years. It rendered the students’ councils unable to adequately negotiate with administration on student advocacy or streamline student programming. Despite being told “bigger shoes have filled your role and failed,” Melissa worked with the four student stakeholder groups to co-create a brand new structure that is still in effect today.
Working as a lifeguard in her hometown Melissa was also inspired to help show children local options for post-secondary education. This led to the creation of Sci-FY: Science and Reading for Youth. Sci-FY partners university students with elementary school students to give them the awareness about possibilities for higher education while working on the foundational skills to get there: science, reading, and math.

Recently, Melissa has started prototyping a web-tool that will make online information more useful for individuals by enabling webpage customization to individuals’ needs, such as reading level.

Melissa wishes she had the courage to be bolder at a younger age; for example, she waited 8 years from idea to implementation of Sci-FY. She stifled and set aside many ideas out of fear that she is now only revisiting. If she could go back she would start to pursue her dreams younger, despite school, work, and extracurricular responsibilities.

Melissa has learned the power of asking. Many people who you may think are too important or too busy to pay attention to your ideas will probably be surprisingly receptive no matter how young you are. Simply asking for help from people who have the capacity to improve your projects will likely result in exactly what you need—perhaps even more.
MICHAEL THOMAS (26 YEARS - MALE) GRENADA
YOUTH ADVOCATE ON MARGINALIZED YOUTH; CO-PRESIDENT OF PRIDE AND EQUALITY SGU

Michael is a student of the St George's University Grenada and is currently pursuing his Bachelor's degree in Psychology at the university. Michael also has a passion for youth development and human rights advocacy.

Michael started at the tender age of 16 with the Grenada Red Cross as a peer outreach educator going into the different communities administering HIV/AIDS prevention and education information to help in the reduction of HIV/AIDS in Grenada. He continued his work with the Grenada Red Cross for 3 years serving as the vice–president for the local Red Cross Group his community.

Although he was very active his life was not always the best because members of the very community he belonged to were constantly bullying him. He notes that this was the most difficult time in his life and was the exact push he needed to overcome his oppression in his community and rise above the odds thrown at him everyday.

After his time with the Grenada Red Cross, Michael became a member of GrenChap (Grenada chapter of the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Partnership). A local NGO in Grenada working to promote Human Rights and Health, with a focus on marginalized populations such as LGBT, Sex Workers, and persons living with and affected by HIV. Michael has been with the organization for the past nine years he began with the organization as peer educator, and then served on the Advisory Council. Presently as of now he holds a position as one of the Co-Directors of the Organization. Michael also worked with the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Alliance for 3 and half years on a monitoring and evaluation project, which was implemented in 7 of the Caribbean OECS countries.

Because of his passion and drive he was able to secure many opportunities to represent youths in Grenada and the Caribbean regionally and internationally. He participated in the 2011 Caribbean HIV and AIDS Conference where he served on the Grenadian delegation and the UNFPA Youth Delegation. He currently serves as the Chair of the UNFPA Barbados and OECS Youth Advisory Group representing Grenada in the Group. Additionally he had the opportunity of representing to GrenChap at the World Conference on Youth held in Colombo Sri Lanka in May 2014 where he was involved in decision making efforts and dialogues concerning the consideration of young people in the post 2015 development agenda. He also represented the UNFPA Barbados and OECS Youth Advisory Group at the SIDS workshop held Jamaica to help draft
an adolescent Inclusion report, which was presented at the 2014 Small Island Developing States Conference in Samoa. He finished the year of 2014 on a positive note representing his country and being one of the only two Caribbean representatives selected to participate in the German Marshall Fund of the United States Emerging Leaders Program and Atlantic Dialogues in Morocco in October 2014.

He has likewise as of recently been selected for the UN MGCY WHS working group, working alongside different adolescents from around the globe to help make youth participation a fundamental option in paving the way to the first ever World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. He has as of recently been selected to represent Grenada as the Resident Representative for the International Youth Against Terrorism Committee.

Michael is also very involved in student life and giving back to the community though the St George’s University, he is currently a very active member of the Undergraduate Student Government Association, he also serves at the chair of the health and dining committee on the Student Government Association and currently serve as co-president of Pride and Equality SGU.

Although Michael was able to achieve many great things throughout his involvement in his particular field of interest his greatest challenge was himself, he believed because of his troublesome childhood it lead to him always doubting his ability achieve anything he set his mind to. But over the years during his growth and involvements he learned that his greatest supporter is himself and he should not allow the negatives of his life dictate his future and deny him the opportunity to achieve his greatest potential. By accepting this he allowed his passion to propel him forward this allowed self-realization opening up many opportunities for him to articulate he concerns in-terms youth development and youth involvement in many of the world’s critical decisions making processes.

He clearly believes that the world youth community should become more involved in youth development because they are potential leaders of the future. He believe as youths we should be united and participate in our numbers to ensure that the youth of the world are being heard on every level. He wishes to let the world youth community know if you are going to become involved in a particular area have a passion for it. Do not get involved because you think it’s a good idea, get involved because you have an urge to see change and a better society for many of the world youths no matter their gender, race, sexual
Years of Vigour and Freshness Ocean of Potentials Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm Tears of Hardships Hope for a Better World

orientation and or religious beliefs we are all affected by the same issues, youths should be united to end many of the world's ills we face as a young population. He also want the youth who are already involved in many different ventures and it seems like it is not working out for you, do not give up let you passion and patience by the driving factor to keep motivated and steadfast in your pursuing of your dreams and accomplishments. He believes patience is a very important trait to have when you are involved in youth development or any other important causes you advocate for. If you are involved heavily in any area and you feel like you are not reaping the rewards don't ever give up just look see it as an opportunity to getting stronger and push for your cause. Never think it's the end maybe its not the right time, just see it as an opportunity to focus on taking the same fight, passion, and will and turn it into the extra motivation and strength you need for succeed.
Nevar Lionel Smith (28 Years - Male) Bahamas
Radio Personality; Founding President of the Bahamas Youth Movement (BYM)

Nevar is a certified Youth Leader and a past member of the National Youth Policy Team and the National Youth Advisory Council in the Bahamas. He earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Tourism Management from the College of the Bahamas (COB). During his time at COB he served as the Executive Vice President of the College of the Bahamas Union of Students (COBUS) at the Northern Campus in Freeport from 2007 to 2008. He then went on to serve in the same capacity at the main campus in Nassau from 2010 to 2011.

Nevar was recently elected by the residents of East Grand Bahama to serve as a Local Government Representative. He also serves as the Deputy Chief Councilor for the City of Freeport District and is the President of the COB Alumni Association, Grand Bahama Chapter. Nevar is also the Founding President of the Bahamas Youth Movement (BYM), which is an organization geared toward bringing young people together and collectively finding creative ways to make positive contributions to his country. He also serves as host of the Youth Expressions Radio Show which airs on Mix 102.1 FM in the Bahamas.

Nevar believes in living his life by the ‘Golden Rule’ which states, “Do unto others as we would have them do unto us.” He also gets great inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi’s challenge to “Be the change in the world you would like to see.”

As a result of his frustration, born out of his awareness of the lack of youth activism in his community, Nevar decided to create an advocacy organization called ‘The Bahamas Youth Movement’ (BYM) in 2007 while still a student at the College of the Bahamas. It quickly became the most prominent and influential youth advocacy group on the island where he lives. The group’s membership was mainly made up of college students and young professionals between the ages of 18-30. This was one avenue in which like-minded young Grand Bahamians could get more substantively involved in the community development process. After starting BYM, Nevar had to get the group registered with the Ministry of Youth’s (MOY) office on the island. Once registered, he then became a part of a net-work of other youth groups and leaders that were all registered with the MOY at the time. Before he knew it, he had become a volunteer at the MOY and was assisting the youth officers with organizing various programs and events all geared toward greater youth inclusion and empowerment. BYM and its members went to work advocating for a wide variety of things such as: greater youth participation on government appointed boards and committees, more youth focused entrepreneurship and career development incentives, more
financial support from local and central government towards youth programs, greater equality between men and women, and greater awareness about environmental conservation.

One of the greatest programs that came out of the Bahamas Youth Movement was the Youth Expressions Radio Show which still airs on a local station. It has provided and continues to provide a platform for young people to express themselves and advocate for the things they are most passionate about.

This journey that Nevar has been on as a youth advocate for the last 8 years has been a very fulfilling and empowering experience for him despite the lack of financial benefits. As a result of his consistent effort to uplift his generation, he's been afforded the opportunity to represent his country at several conferences and forums around the region. He's also been given several awards by the government and civil society recognizing his contributions to youth development thus far. By way of the Youth Expressions Radio Show, Nevar has emerged as one of the most influential young people in the entire country and region, which is a very humbling responsibility. Recently, his track record as a youth advocate helped him to get elected as a Local Government Councilor for the constituency of East Grand Bahama and by extension he also serves as the Deputy Chief Councilor for the City of Freeport. Going forward, Nevar would like to serve his country as a Member of Parliament MP and a Cabinet Minister in the near future.

When Nevar first started out as a youth advocate, many people in his community didn't take him seriously and saw him as a misguided young person who was trying to push a selfish agenda. His parents also thought that he was wasting time and should direct his focus on a more secure career path like the majority of young, educated people around him. Like many other youth leaders, he lacked financial and moral support as well. His faith in God and an extra-ordinary amount of perseverance is what helped him to overcome those challenges. He also made it a point to research the best practices for youth advocacy/activism internationally in order to equip himself with the knowledge needed to be effective at his craft.

His biggest eye-opener was no doubt the resistance and cynicism that he experienced when he first made the plunge to execute his calling in life. It seemed like he was ahead of his time in the context of the social culture of his community. It was (and still is) a culture that suggests that young people ought to be seen and not heard. It appeared, at times, that an individual's contribution...
Years of Vigour and Freshness
Ocean of Potentials
Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm
Tears of Hardships
Hope for a Better World

to country would only be taken seriously if he/she was a certain age, had a healthy amount of money in the bank and enjoyed an elevated societal status. Something about that mentality seemed very off to him. It continues to be his passionate opposition to that mentality that serves as his greatest motivation as a youth advocate. The human spirit can only be suppressed for so long, no matter how young or old one may be. Being the change that he desires to see in his community and country is a passion he continues to hold near and dear to his heart.
NOLANA ESTHER LYNCH (27 YEARS - FEMALE) TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT

Nolana says, “We are the exponential sum of all our life’s influencing factors”. Today, she is an entrepreneur, who has successfully combined natural health and beauty with environmental and social sustainability with the primary purpose of empowering disadvantaged persons to greatness. It all started many years ago in 1987, in the care of her parents, who raised her with a keen sense of loving the environment, spending weekends on the beach and hiking through nature trails, while giving to those in need, whether that meant willingly giving her favourite toy to a child in her community, or sharing her bedroom with a displaced child, she learnt from a very young age that her possessions were not her own, but really conduits to bless others around her. At age 6, she developed one of her most “mischievous” traits, wherein she would mix together all her mother’s favourite perfumes, creams, and powders while she wasn’t looking and carefully bottle and freeze her fragrant mixture in tiny vials. Moments later, she would gleefully present her packages to her as gifts, prior to distributing to friends and family members. She always smiled, massaging it into her skin and eagerly exclaimed at what a wonderful mixologist she was, not minding the mess, and that one day her talent and creative chemistry would be used for greater good. The seeds that are planted into our lives as children, eventually has the greatest impact in our lives.

In high school, a group of Nolana’s classmates and herself volunteered to assist the challenged learners of a neighbouring primary school on afternoons. They were all assigned different classes of approximately 15 students each, where they would complement the lessons taught during the day in Mathematics, English and Science, ensuring that they were on par with the rest of their classmates. At this time, she also taught Sunday school and Vacation Bible School at her local church to children between the ages of 6 – 8 years. At 15, as the President of the National Young Leader’s Program, they developed a soup kitchen, where they cooked during their lunch period, packaged boxes and delivered lunch to homeless persons and impoverished families in their communities. In her years at high school, she served as Class, Library and Head Prefect, while staying active in sports and the arts; and graduated as Valedictorian.

It was in Nolana’s first year of university, while declaring her major in Environmental and Natural Resources Management and Physics, that she landed her first job in Environmental Education, at the Pointe-a-Pierre Wild Fowl Trust, it was here that she discovered her joy for generating discussion on environmental conservation, climate change and the importance of being conscious consumers and
stewards of their limited resources. During this period, she became the National Coordinator of the Caribbean Youth Environment Network and eventually elected to the regional Board, devoting her time to climate change advocacy on campus. Following her degree, she coordinated and implemented sustainable agriculture projects for rural women (and families) throughout the region with the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development. It was through her work with NGO’s, whether it be religious, emergency relief, environment or rural women; one thing stuck, all projects need funding! A lot of our time and resources were spent in raising funds, as opposed to implementing much-needed projects in their community. It was at this point she was inspired to develop models for funding development projects. During this period, she returned to a cleaner, gluten-free diet, and went all-natural with her hair and skin care, as a result of a slew of asthma attacks, which she resolved will never return to her life again.

While reading for Nolana’s post-graduate research degree, which focusses on the Influence of Temporal and Spatial Variation of Geophysical Properties on Coastal Change and the Livelihoods of the Inhabitants of Bequia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and formally linking environmental responsibility with social and financial security, she became fixated with the social entrepreneurship model as the surest way forward for Developing Excellent Projects. It was at this point, that all her life’s influencing factors merged into the project she began in April 2012.

Nolana developed Eco-Truffles, an all-natural, eco-conscious personal care brand of exotic hair, face and skin care products, which includes a signature balance of art, soothing fragrances and luscious nutrition for our bodies. Eco-Truffles, a social low-carbon enterprise, was developed to donate 50% of our profit to charitable causes, including assisting displaced women and children, providing emergency relief and seed funding for female-owned enterprises, supporting youth development initiatives and worldwide aid and missions projects, providing scholarships for disadvantaged youth while simultaneously procuring ingredients from rural women producers throughout the Caribbean, including but not limited to Trinidad, Haiti, Jamaica and Guyana.
All across the globe people have come together in one way or another to stand up and speak out on the issues being faced due to climate change. Young people have been one of the most active and outspoken advocates on this issue and it is of no surprise since it is their own future that they are fighting for, their own survival. As young persons in the Caribbean their voices have not been as loud as other regions. It can be for many reasons, culture, disconnection from the issues, different priorities and maybe simply just a lack of support from governments. Growing up in a culture where activism is frowned upon, as a young person, speaking out on issues was considered rude or inappropriate especially for a young female, culturally, they grew up as being “seen and not heard”.

Times have changed now and the issues and challenges in the Caribbean are now more pronounced and visible. Climate change in the Caribbean was always taught as “melting ice caps” and the possible extinction of polar bears. These issues are too far away for them to connect too and if they cannot connect to the issue and understand how it relates to you, how can they care about it.

This perception needed to change and it had to start with how people view climate change especially children and youth. Education is the key to ensuring a sustainable future so through an organisation called the Caribbean Youth Environment Network, the Trinidad and Tobago Chapter, they began a programme called the “Elements of Awareness”. The goal of this programme is “to bring awareness to local environmental concerns to schools and communities in an engaging and interactive manner, that will cover direct and indirect issues and sustainable solutions that exist in Trinidad and Tobago.” This programme focuses on various environmental issues that affect us in the Caribbean and how everything that they know is impacted by climate change, from water to food security, from tourism to biodiversity from jobs to education. Through this programme Rianna’s dedicated team and she has reached a wide range of young people and adults on how climate change affects us in the Caribbean.

Using videos, puppet shows, games, posters, pictures and of course the wide range of social media tools available they have been able to bring climate change to the forefront. One of the major sub topics has been the connection between climate change and water availability through the “Learn and Flow: Arima and Courland Water Story”. Young children are now being made aware of the importance of water conservation and why they are experiencing less
rainfall and how this affects how much water they receive. They have been able to reach over 300 children in Trinidad and have made them “Water Warriors” in their schools. They then spread the message in their schools and homes there is a domino effect of knowledge across generations and this is exactly what they wanted to see.

Educating young people is only one part of the solution. When these young people have the accurate information they are now armed with the knowledge to advocate for changes in policies, legislation and national action plans.

Through another organisation that Rianna is a part of - Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network as the Regional Coordinator (Caribbean and Canada) I have been able to give a voice to the regions young people on what they want as it relates to climate change and its associated impacts. The power of the pen should not be disregarded and it is essential that young people can articulate what they want and how they want to see it implemented. These suggestions were collated in document to be shared across the Commonwealth regions.

Also, as a professional in the field of natural resources management Rianna has been able to “infiltrate” the rather inaccessible group of decision makers that most civil societies are not able to interact with. Rianna was one of the youngest members of a team of experts that have developed the first draft policy on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), where we focused on “Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change”. Another opportunity that she was able to influence policy was the implementation of the National Integrated Water Resources Management Policy to move forward water management issues as it related to the changing climate.

Through these avenues Rianna was also recommended by her government to be part of the team of experts towards the publication of the UNEP’s 7th Global Environment Outlook (GEO 7).

Rianna concludes, “It is necessary for young people to understand that they have the power and opportunity to make a difference but it does not come easy. It is a lot of hard work, dedication and sleepless nights. It is not all glamor and travel. This is serious business, this our future that we are fighting for and we young people have the passion, optimism and energy to make positive change. Remember a lot of small actions multiplied by a lot of people equals a BIG change”.

Years of Vigour and Freshness Ocean of Potentials Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm Tears of Hardships Hope for a Better World
TAHYRA SHEENA NOEL (24 YEARS - FEMALE) GRENADA
YOUTH AMBASSADOR, YOUTH ADVOCATE, TEACHER

It is better to travel than to arrive

Tahyra’s journey as a Youth Advocate started at the age of 16. She was nominated for the most courteous student in her class. Her two teachers saw something special in her and motivated her to engage in extracurricular activities. She was selected for numerous leadership positions at the St. Joseph’s Convent Grenville, her former Secondary School. In 2007 she was selected for President of Rangers, House Captain, Drum corps leader and Public Relation Officer for the Young Leaders Program. After accepting this leadership positions, her interpersonal leadership skills were built from there. She began using her leadership qualities to advocate for young people. Later on in her life she was employed as a High School Assistant Teacher at the St. David’s Catholic Secondary School where she was able to better use her leadership skills as a platform to enhance the lives of the students in that institution. She spent most of her time developing the Drum corps, the 4H, and giving special attention to students who were unable to learn at a fast paste. Her two years spent at the SDCSS Institute was impactful and an unbelievable blessing.

During that period she also started a youth group in her Community where they have clean up campaigns and outdoor fun activities. She assisted with the library program at the community centre in her village which was geared to help improve the reading abilities of the children in her community. It was from that moment she was fully driven to make a difference and engage herself in youth leadership programs where she can excel and make her country proud. She was later appointed by the Minister of Youth Sports and Religious Affairs to be the Female CARICOM Youth Ambassador for her country Grenada in 2013. Upon accepting this position, her first objective was to gather a team of youth advocates to implement strategies which can improve the living conditions for the young people in her country.

Tahyra and the male CARICOM Ambassador Joel Greenidge came together and formed the very first Caricom Youth Ambassador committee with young enthusiastic, self-driven, focus, committed youth, to develop projects and workshops that would bring unity among us as young people and empower those that felt lost. Many youth friendly projects was executed that motivated the young people and gave them hope. There were many challenging moments where there was no funds or space to host our projects or the support needed was not extended to us. Most of the time money came from our pockets however we made it work because of the blazing fire in us to change lives. Being the Female Caricom Youth Ambassador Tahyra used this stage to speak on behalf
of the young people of her country who felt that their voices were not heard through youth forums both in house, regional and international.

Tahyra’s accomplishments as the female Caricom Youth Ambassador for Grenada are the opportunities given to express the concerns of the young people in her country. Some of those avenues included a CARICOM week of activities where the young people were able to showcase talent and give ideas as to how they can improve their country through discussion and meaningful gatherings. At the World Conference on Youth 2014 in Sri Lanka that focused on mainstreaming the youth in the post 2015 development agenda, she was able to shed light on youth and employment and youth rights, making recommendations to high authorities.

A CSME workshop in Guyana where she was exposed in better understanding what CSME is about and how CSME can make a different in the Caribbean and coming back an sharing it with her colleagues and youth groups. Creative Employment Business Opportunity (CEBO) Trainers of Trainers workshop and facilitating this program in Grenada. Educating young entrepreneurs on constructing business plans and managing their businesses. These once in a life time experience gave Tahyra the courage to continue advocating for young people and allowed her to gain a great appreciation for the different organization and the emphasis they put into ensuring young people have a better tomorrow. Her passion for youth work is steered by the smiles on young people faces and lives that are changed by her actions and the action of other young youth diplomats like herself. It is not an easy road but it is worth it.

There were times when she felt like giving up but Tahyra kept advocating and seeking assistance. It is hard work but the reward is a life time of happiness and proud moments. Making a difference is what she lives for, there is no boundary when you can make a transformation. Do not be discourage just keep pushing and you will achieve, aim for the moon so if you fall you fall among stars. It is a road worth travelling.
SONIA ROSITA BODDIE (31 YEARS - FEMALE) ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
YOUTH PHILANTHROPIST & LEADER, FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER

Having been raised in humble circumstances in the rural village of Tabernacle on St. Kitts, by her maternal grandmother who was a house servant, after her parents migrated to the United States in search of a better life, when she was an infant, Sonia learnt very early, that she would have to work hard to overcome her domestic challenges and to achieve success.

Even though she remains forever indebted to her now deceased grandmother for going the extra mile in her quest to provide for Sonia and her siblings and cousins who she raised, she considers her greatest life challenge to be coping with the physical absence of her mother who she first met at age 16, and her father who she only had the privilege of meeting once at age 25, when she visited him in his homeland of Haiti.

She notes their absence left her yearning to dwell in a home with both parents, to feel a sense of stability and security and to receive their physical outpouring of love, guidance, instruction and certainly reassurance, that all will be well, when difficulty struck the extended family.

Nonetheless, the young optimist found hope for a better life in education and by utilizing her God given talents to participate in many activities. These would include playing netball, athletics, pageantry, theatre, dance, debate, participating in competitions and getting involved in youth organizations, both at church and at the national level.

These would not only build her self-esteem and help her to develop personally, but later propel her to become an inspiration, role model, motivational speaker, youth advocate and youth ambassador for the youth of her Caribbean Community.

Earning her first significant achievement at age 12, graduating as the Valedictorian of the Tabernacle Primary School, Sonia earned herself a scholarship from the Cable and Wireless telephone company, to purchase her school supplies from High School to College.

Sonia who is now the epitome of youth success, has an exhaustive list of accomplishments under her proverbial belt. At age 15, she won first runner up position in the National Talented Teen Pageant and at age 16 was awarded Most Promising Youth Parliamentarian in the 2001 Commonwealth Day debate, after only being asked to participate four days prior. She received 10 pounds sterling

"I am happy when I receive, but I am even happier when I can give back"

-S. Boddie
from the Queen of England as her prize, which Sonia has said was a big deal for her, as this little feat significantly boosted her self-confidence and taught her a life lesson, that through diligence, success would never be far away. At age 18 she earned herself a Taiwanese Government Scholarship to assist her with her studies at college and also further copped a summer internship at the Embassy of Republic of China (Taiwan).

After completing College, Sonia volunteered to teach her church summer youth camp, and it was there she developed a passion for working with the youth, which moved her to become a Primary School teacher. Two years later, Sonia won herself a Mexican Government Scholarship to pursue undergraduate studies. Whilst in Mexico, she was the first Caribbean student ambassador at her University, was an AfroCaribbean dance teacher and an English teacher. She graduated from the Universidad International in 2009 with not only the top honors in International Relations, but also as the top student of the University with a 9.8 GPA.

In 2011, she was selected as one of 120 Caribbean-Canada Emerging Leaders, which allowed her to travel to Canada, Dominican Republic and Barbados for intense leadership training. In the same year, she won herself an OAS Scholarship to pursue studies in International Law in Brazil and won herself the prestigious British Chevening Scholarship to pursue her Masters’ in Public Administration in the UK. There, she was a member of the first University of Birmingham team to represent the University at the Harvard Model United Nations debate in Boston. In 2013, she was selected by Freedom FM radio as a “Young Rising Star”, and globally as a One Young World Ambassador, which allowed her to travel to South Africa. She was also selected as the CARICOM Youth Ambassador for her country for a two year period, which allowed her to become an even more active and respected youth advocate.

Today, Sonia Boddie is a household name in her country, known for her no-nonsense commentaries tackling youth issues, her participation on radio and TV panels, her many motivational speeches, (even to those in prison) and her distinguished representation of her country, in youth events all across the globe. She is known for her philanthropic work and for the Sonia Boddie Promising Youth Leader Scholarship, which she launched in 2014, to assist students.

Sonia’s advice to the youth is to be diligent, to have the right attitude, to show gratitude, to stay humble and to help others along, as they progress in life.
SUJAE HUGH BOSWELL  (20 YEARS - MALE) JAMAICA
YOUTH ADVOCATE, YOUTH AMBASSADOR

No stranger to success, Sujae Boswell has risen from the volatile community of Hendon Norwood in the parish of St. James to become one of Jamaica’s most promising young stars. Educated in his formative years at the embattled Albion Primary and Junior High School in the community, Sujae became the first student at the institution to matriculate into the prestigious Munro College after completing his external high school placement exams in 2007. While a student at Albion Primary, Sujae met an older boy living in his community who, at the time, had been involved in gun-related activities. Throughout the course of their friendship, Sujae was constantly reminded by him to try his best to avoid becoming involved in any criminal activities and instead remained focused on obtaining a solid education. It was at Munro College, Sujae learned of the untimely killing of his friend who was still involved in dangerous criminal activities. His death gave Sujae a renewed drive to achieve a quality education, and a source of motivation to launch empowerment campaigns to turn young men away from crime and towards their studies.

Sujae’s penchant for excellence was realized further and honed to the finest degree. In 2009, at the age of just 14, he was named President of the Survivors’ Police Youth Club, a role which allowed him to demonstrate his capability in organizing and prioritizing tasks efficiently, as he was charged with the responsibility for organizing inter-community football matches geared at uniting youth from different inner-city communities, as well as, organizing and implementing a homework assistance programme for primary and high school students in the community. There was an incident in which Sujae went to change a scholarship cheque at a local business establishment in Jamaica. As customary, he presented his identification card to the supervisor on duty who then realized that Sujae was from the volatile community of Hendon Norwood situated in St. James, Jamaica. The supervisor immediately without question blurted out, “You are from a place which houses common criminals! Get out of my office!” This event stands as a great impetus to continue his work of uplifting members of his community.

One of the mantras Sujae lives by is “Leadership is action, not a position” and this manifested itself powerfully in 2010 as he was elected to be the President of the Students’ Council at his school. He was elected Students’ Council President from his fourth year to grade 12. He has the distinction of being the youngest elected president, the first student to be elected president of the Students’ Council in fourth form and the longest standing president. He spearheaded

“All that we are is a result of our thoughts”
-Buddha
the implementation of the Munro College Students’ Council Scholarship geared towards providing financial assistance to indigent students, as well as, a fundraiser totaling US$1000 for a student diagnosed with cancer. He also was a fervent advocate for the opening of a second tuck-shop at the school which provided an opportunity for junior school students to be able to purchase their meals in the time allotted.

Sujae held various positions while at Munro. These include Vice-president of the Modern Languages Club, Lance-Corporal of the Munro College Cadet Unit, Captain of the Schools’ Challenge Quiz Team, Class Valedictorian. His display of leadership potential saw him being conferred with the title of Sub Prefect in Grades 10 and 11 and Prefect in Grades 12 and 13. In his final year at Munro College, from an impressive and stellar field of five student leaders, he was selected by the school’s Administration as Head Prefect of the institution.

As part of his advocacy for youth, Sujae has collaborated on numerous projects with various stakeholders in Jamaican society and this has allowed him to develop effective inter-personal and communication skills while fostering productive working relationships with others. In 2014, Sujae was gained the approval of Jamaica’s Cabinet to be a member of the Overseas Examination Commission Board, the General Council on Education and Jamaica’s Ministry of Education’s Education and Training Thematic Working Group. Furthermore, he was selected to be a member of the UNESCO National Youth Advisory Committee. The experience he has garnered while working in these positions have further burnished his reputation for being a staunch supporter of education and all the values associated with it, primary of which is that it acts as a medium for social and economic advancement.

As a continuation of his stellar record in youth-based activities at the national level, Sujae was elected to be President of the National Secondary Students’ Council that same year, which was an advancement of his position as regional Vice-president from the previous year. During his presidency, Sujae was an active campaigner for a much-needed rural bus transportation system policy for youth who must traverse difficult terrain across the country just to get to school on a daily basis. The year 2014 continued to be a marvelous one for Sujae, as he was elected Junior Councilor for the Malvern Division in St. Elizabeth, the parish in which Munro College is situated. This position propelled Sujae to become Junior Chairman of the Parish Council, and thus Junior Mayor of its Capital township, Black River. During his tenure, he oversaw the issuance of water tanks to basic
schools due to severe drought conditions in the parish that year. Such an activity exhibited his propensity for accountability and prudent management of limited resources, taking ownership of all responsibilities during times of crisis.

Sujae was selected by the Office of the Prime Minister to serve as a Liaison-Aide for the International Conference on Strengthening Legislative Oversight to Foster Accountability, Transparency, and Sustainable Development and was also named an Associate Fellow to the Royal Commonwealth Society. In April 2015, Sujae was also inducted by the Government of Jamaica to serve as a Jamaica Youth Ambassador representing the portfolio of the Commonwealth, where he continues advocacy work in the areas of youth leadership and entrepreneurship. Sujae quickly replicated the competencies developed on previous missions at the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in the Bahamas, where he was also a candidate for President of the Commonwealth Students’ Association.

Growing up in a single parent home there were many difficulties which Sujae experienced daily, especially financially. This reality was seen throughout his high school life. There were many days when Sujae had to go without meals due to his inability to purchase, there were also times when he was asked to withdraw from boarding school because he had owed a large sum of money to the institution. There too were times when he had to take his books to class in plastic bag instead of a regular knapsack- this took place when his mother was unemployed. Sujae showed his ability “to call on his inner resilience to get through any situation”, another of his many mantras and true to form, He allowed his circumstances to be his motivation for upward mobility as he believes ‘life imposes challenges but success is there for those who tackle the challenges diligently’

This proved true for Sujae as he was successful in achieving general proficiency in 11 subjects - Spanish, French, English Literature, English Language, History, Mathematics, Human and Social Biology, Religious Education, Social Studies, Economics and Principles of Business - in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations. Two years later, he was successful in achieving advanced proficiency in the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) in eight subject units inclusive of the subjects Law, Sociology, History, Communication Studies and Caribbean Studies.

Learning of Sujae’s ability to speak Spanish and French, members of his
community approached him to become a part of the illegal lottery scamming activity; they believed that there could be a possible expansion of the market. It was a more senior man in the activity who had appreciated Sujae’s choice for education versus the illegalities which existed told his younger counterparts to “leave Sujae alone because he is a good youth”.

In addition to being a Heritage Quiz Champion, he has won the Sonia Hayden award for citizenship and leadership, Best CSEC performer in Spanish, Best CAPE History Unit 1 performer, Best CAPE Sociology Unit 2 performer, Best Senior Contributor to the life of Munro College, Most Outstanding Junior Contributor for the Cadet Corps, Third Place winner at the national Schools’ Challenge Quiz team competition 2012, Popular Vote Winner of the US Embassy Jamaica’s Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest on an Inclusive Society. But perhaps his biggest achievement to date is being named a recipient of the prestigious Governor General’s Achievement Award for Excellence in Academics and Leadership in 2015.

Although Sujae maintains a very demanding schedule, he nonetheless finds time to “give back” and has a strong inclination for community involvement and volunteerism. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 2015 he founded the organization Operations Just for Cause, and in his capacity as leader of the group, he raised money and led a beautification campaign at the Louise Bennett Coverly School. Sujae’s passion for volunteerism has extended to his tenure at the tertiary level as he was involved in the tutoring of Spanish and French to students from inner-city communities and has participated in the special, ongoing project “Feeding of the 5000” in Jamaica. Furthermore, he has also led a beautification project at the McAdam Childcare and Development Centre for kids with disabilities in his capacity as External Affairs Chairperson at his Hall of Residence (Chancellor Hall) at the University of the West Indies, where he is currently pursuing a major in International Relations and minor in Spanish. In addition to this, Sujae is also a member of the Guild of Students’ External Affairs.

With the knowledge that the journey to becoming a future diplomat and leader has only just begun despite his impressive list of prior achievements, Sujae is a firm believer that, in the words of Buddha, “all that we are is a result of our thoughts” and as such he exudes a positive daily attitude in strict alignment with this statement by living his life every day to the fullest, finding time to laugh at himself and perhaps most importantly, loving himself, with the expectation that such a positive disposition will have a multiplier effect and redound to the benefit of all those he interacts with and others.
There is a certain oddity to hearing someone so young, be so assured of the power of the collective good. With strength to her voice, conviction ringing true, that transformation and greatness is indeed possible, it is a conviction so certain, that it startles many. But for Teocah, there is little doubt that the one clear path for development of the collective, lies in volunteerism.

Teocah grew up in a community termed a “crime hot-spot” in Central Trinidad, attended non-prestige schools, and like most in such situations, was told in her early years, that she would “not amount to much”. But that did not deter the determination and passion of this young lady.

Not one to ascribe negative labels to herself, or believe in the notion of where you are schooled or reside determines your success, Teocah graduated Secondary School at both O’ and A’ Levels as class valedictorian. Today, she is a Chevening Scholar, and holds an AAS in Journalism and Public Relations from the College of Science Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago, a BA (Hons) in Media and Communication from the University of Greenwich, and an Msc (Merit) in Gender and International Relations from the University of Bristol.

Many aspire to be lawyers, doctors, teachers et al. This desire comes from either example, most times set by family members or role models, varying forms of media, or more importantly, one’s own experiences.

When Teocah witnessed the plethora of social ills plaguing her country, it struck the core of her being, and jolted her into a reality she never knew existed. She was convinced that she had a duty to humanity, and made a career oath to work solely in the Third Sector (International Development Organizations, NGO’s etc) towards the advancement of at-risk and vulnerable lives (with a specific focus on youth, Gender and community development), whether that be locally, regionally or internationally.

Teocah’s story is one of persistence, resilience, faith in God, selflessness, and the merits of volunteerism. At every opportunity, she proudly exclaims how volunteerism from her teenage years to date, has provided her a myriad of professional and personal advancement opportunities, moulding her into the informed, engaged, well rounded, intuitive young professional and person she is today.
In advancing the tenets of volunteerism, Teocah notes that there is a special joy and true sense of accomplishment in assisting to improve the life of someone. She believes that the value of one’s time, invested in another for the better, doesn’t only impact and secure their present, but that of their family and also their future.

Now, with 10 years coordination and execution experience in volunteerism and societal programmes, Teocah has volunteered and worked with multiple stakeholders (Government, International Development Organizations, NGO’s) in Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, and the United States, to advance gender, youth and community development projects.

At just 26, she has served in several capacities most notably: Country Co-coordinator - Partners of The Americas Youth Ambassador Program; Country Co-coordinator – United States Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago Youth Ambassador Program; Director - Partners of The Americas Trinidad Chapter; 2Lt in the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force (Battalion Welfare Officer); and A trained Community Based Volunteer (supporting persons with HIV/AIDS) just to name a few.

Presently, Teocah serves as Trinidad and Tobago’s representative in the United Nations Development Programme - Caribbean Youth Think Tank, and Director Grants and Resource Mobilization –The Caribbean Youth Policy Institute.

In June 2015, she founded the Teocah Dove Legacy Foundation, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of at-risk and vulnerable groups through capacity building, evidence based social interventions and social entrepreneurship.

Through her varied experiences, Teocah has been able to leverage her expertise in a wide range of development programmes and socio-political challenges requiring research and critical analysis, policy recommendations, design, planning, resource mobilization, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

In recognition of her work and contributions, in June 2015, Teocah received the Queen’s Young Leaders Award from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace.
As she continues her journey and understands her calling, Teochah reminisces on the words of Hasfat Abiola, who once said ‘Peace comes from being able to contribute the best that we have, and all that we are, toward creating a world that supports everyone. But it is also securing the space for others to contribute the best that they have and all that they are’.

Teochah aims to empower others to achieve their maximum potential, secure their space, and contribute all that they have and all that they are. She oft times reiterates, “It is from giving of myself, I learn, I grow, I gain strength, wisdom and humility. For me, this is what it truly means to be wealthy”.
EUROPE

1. Amy Joan Camilleri-Zahra (Malta)
2. Angela Cassar (Malta)
3. Angelos Parmatzias (Cyprus)
4. Athanasia Konstantinou (Cyprus)
5. Darren Tanti (Malta)
6. Dr Ian Borg (Malta)
7. Edmund Page (United Kingdom)
8. Francesca Temitope Danmole (United Kingdom)
9. George Richard Robert Fielding BEM (United Kingdom)
10. John Loughton (United Kingdom)
11. Katerina Gavriellidou (Cyprus)
12. Kenny Imafidon (United Kingdom)
13. Leanne Ellul (Malta)
14. Nicolas Tarapoulouzis (Cyprus)
15. Panos Christoforou (Cyprus)
16. Sean Cassar (Malta)
AMY JOAN CAMILLERI-ZAHRA (30 YEARS - FEMALE) MALTA
YOUTH ADVOCATE ON RIGHTS OF AMPUTEES AND OTHER DISABLED YOUTH; CO-FOUNDER OF AMPUTEES4AMPUTEES

“ You fight with your spirit and no one can take your spirit away from you ”

Until February 2006 Amy lived what is pretty much an ordinary life. At the time, she was in her second year at the University of Malta reading for a Bachelor’s degree in Mechanical Engineering and very interested in all the usual activities associated with young people her age.

However, in February of 2006, at the age of 21, Amy contracted a deadly form of meningitis which left her fighting for her life. She later emerged from the fierce battle with a number of scars, and amputations to both her legs and parts of her fingers.

After long months of physical exercise and with the help of prosthetic legs, and with enormous support from her family and friends Amy began to regain her independence. Shortly after, while still recovering from this life-threatening illness and whilst adjusting to a new life as a permanently disabled person, Amy set out to co-found a disabled people’s organisation (DPO), entitled: Amputees4Amputees. The aims of the organisation are to offer support to other individuals undergoing an amputation; and to advocate for the rights of amputees and other disabled people in general. Over time, Amputees4Amputees has managed to change long ingrained policies and practices in the service provision of prosthetics to amputees. A year after contracting meningitis Amy went back to university to continue with her studies.

Shortly after coming out of hospital Amy was invited by a number of organisations to recount her experience and how she managed to overcome the challenges she has encountered. Over the years, she has given motivational talks to HSBC employees, Corinthia Group employees and to residents at a drug rehabilitation unit. As a young disability activist, to this day Amy is still invited to a number of schools to speak about her experience and to also give what is known as Disability Equality Training (DET). Amy also delivers DET to a number of private companies and service providers to ensure equal access and inclusion of persons with disability.

In 2008, Amy found out that as an effect of the meningitis she had lost the function of her kidneys. She had to start dialysis treatment, but in February 2009 she received a kidney transplant from her own father. At the time, she decided to leave her Mechanical Engineering studies, and, instead, to start reading for a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology at the University of Malta. In 2011, Amy
graduated with a First Class Honours degree.

Immediately after finishing her degree Amy started working as a Professional Youth Support Worker. As part of her work Amy mentored a number of students who were following an educational and life skills programme within the Foundation for Educational Services. Later, Amy began working as an Assistant Manager at the National Commission Persons with Disability. Amy is in charge of the promotion, protection and monitoring of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Amy still works at the Commission and in October of 2014 she was promoted to Manager (UNCRPD).

In November 2014, Amy obtained a Master of Arts in Disability Studies degree with Distinction from the University of Leeds, United Kingdom. Amy is currently a Master of Philosophy candidate at the University of Malta with the possibility of transferring to a Doctorate of Philosophy at a later stage. Amy is also a part-time researcher and visiting assistant lecturer at the University of Malta.

Amy has published her research in a peer-reviewed book titled ‘Organ donation and transplantation: An interdisciplinary approach’. Other publications include a co-authored chapter, currently in print, on disability culture; a co-authored report on Malta’s implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and numerous articles on disability issues in general, equal rights and disabled women. Amy has participated and spoken at a number of conferences, including a number of national disability conferences organised by the National Commission Persons with Disability; the National Organ Donation and Transplantation Conference in 2010 and in 2011; and the III Horatio European Festival of Psychiatric Nursing in 2014 with a particular focus on ‘Creativity in Care’. Amy currently writes a regular blog for the Maltese news portal ‘Newsbook’. Amy is currently also an executive committee member on the National Council of Women and a Chair of the Disability Forum within the President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.

In 2013 Amy also co-produced and co-presented a weekly radio programme on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on Radju RTK. Starting from October 2014 she also presented a weekly television programme broadcast on the national television station, focusing on employment.
Amy fully acknowledges the fact that, while one’s individual determination and efforts are crucial to success, without the support and constant encouragement of many people, institutions and services along the way she would not have been able to enjoy the quality of life she does today, nor would she have been able to make such a worthwhile contribution to Maltese society.
ANGELA CASSAR (25 YEARS - FEMALE) MALTA
YOUTH ADVOCATE ON YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, YOUNG ARTIST

Angela had what she describes as a rather happy and normal upbringing, enjoying the typical life of the youngest child, with an older sister and brother. From an early age, Angela preferred dance and art to formal schooling, and with the help of her parents, learned how to balance both school and dance, and went on to start ballet lessons at the age of eight, where she felt she could express her creativity in the arts.

At the age of eleven, she joined a local youth association ZAK (Zghazagh Azzjoni Kattolika / Youth Catholic Action). Her involvement within this organisation continued for a number of years during which Angela went through various phases in her life. Angela credits the organisation for helping her learn the importance of remaining grounded. Moreover, through ZAK Angela made numerous friends, and she remains quite close with a number of them to this very day. Throughout the eleven years she was a member of ZAK, Angela participated in training camps which enabled her to go on to become a leader with both local and national groups within the organisation. She also had the opportunity to participate in various seminars and exchanges, both locally and around Europe.

At the age of fifteen, Angela went through a challenging phase. First by going through the untimely death of her brother, and later by being involved in an accident herself, which left her hospitalized for a number of months. Complications resulted in her right leg being amputated, providing a new challenge which she was certainly not expecting at that age.

Although both events were life-changing experiences both for herself and her family, she felt blessed that she was always surrounded by people who loved her. When leaving hospital after three months, she was excited to go back home and re-adjust to her new reality. Settling back into the routine she had left behind, she was never made to feel any different by her immediate family and close friends, having to contribute to chores, continue studying and all the other activities and commitments that are typical in the life of any other 15 year old. However, when confronted by acquaintances and people who never knew her, she was met with a different challenge. She realised that people started identifying her by her disability, rather than as a disabled person, and this gave Angela an added challenge to surmount. While she did acknowledge that the prosthesis had become an essential part of her, and admittedly an important asset, which would enable her to get on with her life, she strived to be identified...
for her ability rather than let her disability define her.

Nevertheless with her family’s support she pulled through the first challenging months with vigour and remarkable energy. After extensive therapy she was fitted with her first artificial limb which enabled her to get on with her busy schedule. Admittedly this was complemented by the help of crutches in the beginning. Nevertheless, having a prosthesis is an on-going process, and one of the hardest things Angela had to learn to do was to understand her limitations and learn to gauge when she was doing too much. It was literally learning by doing.

A year and a half after her accident Angela joined the first ‘Ability Challenge’ organised by Ir-Razzett tal-Hibberija. Angela signed up for a week of camping in France, which saw a mixture of persons with different abilities, participating in seven different kinds of extreme sports, including via ferrata and paragliding, which was no mean feat for someone scared of heights!

Getting back into dancing was probably one of Angela’s dreams, which at first looked unachievable. Angela had to accept the fact that she could never dance classical ballet again. Nevertheless, she managed to do contemporary dance. One of her greatest achievements was when in 2010 she managed to once again perform on stage at Malta’s National Theatre, in ‘La Sylphide’ as one of the contemporary dancers. Having achieved this dream meant more than anything else to Angela.

After completing compulsory schooling, Angela moved on to Post-Secondary School, and she successfully achieved her Advanced Level Certificate. Soon after, she had her first working experience with a local law firm, however Angela always wanted to take her studies further. In 2009 Angela enrolled in a local arts college, which is where she was first exposed to photography.

She eventually, decided to read for a BA Hons. in Photography in contemporary practice. Never deterred by any challenge, the fact that the higher degree was not offered in Malta did not pose an insurmountable obstacle. The latter was regarded by Angela as a challenge that needed to be overcome. In fact, following the attainment of her Higher National Diploma from Malta’s Arts College (MCAST), Angela chose to pursue her studies at the University for the Creative Arts in Rochester, England. Having overcome a number of challenges in her early teens, moving to the UK was a new and exciting venture which she took...
in her stride, and in 2014 she graduated with honours and exhibited her work in London. This achievement gave her further determination and confidence, which led her to read for a Masters Degree in Photography at the University of Brighton, England. Throughout this time Angela adopted the artist name Giola, a name she had acquired from her father, which literally translates to Angela in Maltese.

Throughout these years, Angela has grown both as a person and as an artist. During her first year at the local arts college, Angela participated in a competition entitled ‘Divergent Thinkers’, in which she placed second and was also awarded the opportunity to put up a solo exhibition, which is her latest artistic achievement to date. The exhibition I Know I Don’t entailed hard work, commitment and perseverance, in ensuring a consistent and professional body of work and was welcomed by the artistic community in Malta and was well attended.

Looking back Angela feels blessed to have been able to have had such opportunities which have shaped her to be the person she is today. Nevertheless, at times she wishes she had been more confident and less doubtful of her instincts. She believes that whenever an opportunity arises you should embrace the challenge and never forget to be true to who you are. Moreover, she believes that obstacles are there to be overcome, with each challenge enabling you to question and understand better who you are, move away from your comfort zone and help form your character.
Angelos Parmatzias (29 Years - Male) Cyprus
Social Entrepreneur

Angelos identified his passion for entrepreneurship three years ago, and he has aligned it with what he is currently doing. As a result, he has found an organization that primarily promotes the education of entrepreneurship, named ‘Citizens In Power’ (CIP). Since then, his life has become enjoyable and pleasurable, thus drawing the appropriate amounts of energy that make him feel powerful to seek for greater achievements.

Angelos is passionate about entrepreneurship and he is dedicated to its development in Cyprus and abroad. As the founder and president of CIP, Angelos is working to promote individuals’ requirements through trainings, research, democratic dialogues and motivational speaking.

Angelos is a dedicated trainer in developing a youth targeted “Citizens in Power” initiatives. The initiatives consist of developing and implementing a number of free training seminars about improving youth’s employability skills like self-empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Good ideas are not always enough to be a successful entrepreneur, education is necessary! Angelos believes that “Entrepreneurship is not magic, is not mysterious and it has nothing to do with genes or the origin. Therefore it can be learned. I have witnessed that young entrepreneurs can build our economy and address social problem. Considering all that, I am very passionate to teach people about entrepreneurship and support them develop solutions and models for sustainable social organizations”.

The literacy rate of young people from Cyprus is very high inasmuch the majority of young population has tertiary education. Taking the above idea for granted, Angelos has realized that this creates the potential for new opportunities and for that reason he has taken the initiative to create one. Therefore, he has developed a valuable network of professional trainers and educational experts, experienced with formal and non-formal education. This network, implements activities related to the initiatives of CIP. The initiatives aim at the provision of free training seminars that strengthen young people skills. The seminars are held at CIP offices in Anthoupoli (Nicosia) whilst they mainly focus on democracy, entrepreneurship and empowerment.

Through CIP trainings young people experience entrepreneurship through practical exercises. The exercises of CIP are being implemented by using a specific
methodology and a set of instructions as for example steps to accomplish the exercise, on-line and off-line material, time plan, worksheet, pre-work and post work requirements etc. All these technicalities are being shared with the young people in such a way that it will make them capable to apply these exercises in their corresponding organizations (or communities) in order to train other groups of young people.

Angelos vision is to create a culture among the educators and trainers in order to be capable to use more practical methods than merely theoretical approaches in the future workshops and trainings related to entrepreneurship education.
ATHANASIA KONSTANTINOU (22 YEARS - FEMALE) CYPRUS
YOUTH AMBASSADOR, YOUNG JOURNALIST, YOUTH ADVOCATE ON YOUTH RIGHTS & POLITICS

Athanasia is a young journalist from Cyprus, passionate about European politics, international youth affairs and youth rights. She studied Modern languages and European Studies in the University of Cyprus and she continues her studies doing a master in European Politics.

During her undergraduate studies, Athanasia was active, energetic, enthusiastic and passionate, combining studies and work and achieving a lot at a very young age. She launched her career at the age of 19, working as Liaison Officer for the Secretariat of Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU. Having an authentic interest for media and European project management, she interned at Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation in the section of European funded projects.

She was EU Careers Ambassador for the European Personnel Selection Office, promoting the European career opportunities to the youth of Cyprus, speaking in more than 15 events on youth careers. In addition, she was selected by the European Commission to participate as Student Ambassador and Session Reporter at ICT 2013 event, Europe’s largest digital innovation event, organized by the European Commission and the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

In 2014, Athanasia was selected as Youth Ambassador for the Cyprus Youth Council and as Ambassador for the League of Young Voters of the European Youth Forum. She is also Ambassador for the European Student Think Tank. Through her different ambassador roles Athanasia has promoted the active participation of youth in politics.

Athanasia is really excited to participate in European projects and conferences in Cyprus and Europe. In July 2015, she was Chairperson of the Committee on Development at the 2nd Youth Summit of the European Youth Parliament Cyprus. She was also Cyprus Representative at the EU Youth Conference in Lithuania, debating on youth employment issues.

Athanasia is founding member, Board member and Journalist for youth affairs at Cyprus Youth DiplomaCY. Cyprus Youth DiplomaCY is a non-governmental organization and it has as vision to raise the voice of young Cypriots regarding issues dealing with Diplomacy, Politics and International Relations. Cyprus Youth DiplomaCY aims to include the youth of Cyprus in decision making processes and to prepare them in order to be the next diplomats of tomorrow, but mostly
She strongly believes that young people can fight for their rights and shape their own better future in Europe and the world!
DARREN TANTI (27 YEARS - MALE) MALTA
YOUNG ARTIST & ACADEMIC

Passion and care are the driving forces that make Darren Tanti (b. 1987) pursue his artistic aspirations. It is precisely his passion for art and painting that keeps him thrilled every time he holds a brush and it is the importance of care during the creative act that he incessantly seeks to communicate to his art students. Darren believes zeal and enthusiasm are two crucial elements that lead artists to become inspirational creators. It is care and attention that brings real quality to one’s work. Once there is genuine care, he argues, one will lead oneself to understand one’s own practice better. It is only through education this can be done. Eventually one paves the way for excellence.

Darren was raised in the town of Żebbuġ, Malta. His parents, Emanuel and Rosette both made it a priority to give him and his younger sister Annalise the best formation. His upbringing was quite serene perhaps his deep love for art was what made him different from the others of his age.

Darren was exposed to art from a very young age. His uncle Charles is an artist who specialises in religious baroque art, and his grandparents Johnny and Ėnsina took pleasure in touring him to local feasts and showing him ecclesiastic art. Consequently, Darren was immersed in a world of art since early childhood with his uncle as a mentor. Instead of playing football, he spent innumerable hours drawing and painting; he always fancied himself becoming a great painter such as his chiaroscuro and art academy idols, even though there were times when he couldn’t resist penalty shoot-outs with his friends.

Darren’s formal education was primarily conducted in state schools followed by the University’s Junior College ‘Ġ. F. Abela’ and finally at the University of Malta where he graduated as a teacher of Art and Maltese in 2009. In 2013, Darren achieved a first class Masters degree in Fine Arts in Digital Arts from the Faculty of Knowledge and Media Sciences (UoM). During his years of education, Darren learned to challenge notions of art and seek new possibilities. Currently, he is working as a senior lecturer of Fine Arts at the Institute of Creative Arts (MCAST) and he is also a visiting lecturer at the Department of Digital Arts at the University of Malta.

His enthusiasm for art made him persevere in his dream to become an artist and after years of training, challenges and sacrifices, Darren has managed to accomplish some major achievements in both his artistic and professional career. He has taken part in a substantial number of exhibitions, in which
his refined technical skills and provocative arguments were always positively received. In 2011, aged 23, Darren represented Malta as a visual artist for the 15th edition of the ‘Biennial of young artists from Europe and Mediterranean’ held in Thessaloniki (Greece). In 2012, his first major solo exhibition entitled ‘Omen’ was applauded for being witty and challenging. In the same year, he participated in the collective exhibition ‘I draw’ hosted and sponsored by the Bank of Valletta. In 2013, Darren took part in ‘DA01’, a collective exhibition organized by the Masters’ students in which he exhibited his first stereoscopic hyperrealist paintings. In 2013 he also won the competition ‘Divergent Thinkers II’, organized by Aġenzija Żgħażagħ and St James Cavalier, Centre for Creativity (Malta). During the summer of the same year, Darren was hosted by the Virginia Centre for the Creative Arts (VCCA) as artist in residence. In 2014, Darren was commissioned by Architecture Project (AP – Malta) to create three paintings that were exhibited at the very prestigious 14th edition of the Venice Biennale of Architecture in the exhibition entitled ‘Time, Space, Existence’; a major achievement in his artistic career.

His advice to young and aspiring people is very simple: be passionate about what you do, be good-hearted and genuine and stay focused on your targets. These are no new revelations but they are worth following because they are reliable leads to achieve purposefulness in life and ultimately happiness.
Born 28th February 1986, Dr Ian Borg is the Parliamentary Secretary for the EU Presidency 2017 and EU Funds within the Ministry for European Affairs and the Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto.

He is the youngest Member of Parliament as well as the Executive in the current legislature. He holds responsibility for the organisation of Malta’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union as well as achieving a more efficient and transparent utilisation of EU funds.

In 2005 he was elected as the Mayor of Had-Dingli and he was then re-elected as Mayor in subsequent elections in 2008 and 2012. In 2009 he was elected as an Executive member of the Local Councils Association while also serving in the North Regional Committee and in the Users’ Committee of the Malta Environmental and Planning Authority.

Before being elected as the Mayor of his hometown, Dr Ian Borg led various youth organisations primarily the youth branch of the Labour Youth Forum in his hometown of Dingli. Throughout this stint he was a major driving force in his quest to attract new blood to the party and to convey the party’s message. He has organised various team-building events and even exchanges to other EU countries to help spread the message of his organisation and to involve as many youths as possible. Those experiences helped him and helped the whole Dingli community who saw in Dr. Ian Borg the perfect blend: youth, energy, enthusiasm and drive.

In 2010 Dr Ian Borg was elected as a member of the Maltese delegation to the Committee of the Regions as part of the European Socialists. Consequently, in 2011 he was elected as President of the Labour Party Councillors Section and hence served as a member of the Labour Party Administration.

Dr Ian Borg graduated as a Doctor of Laws from the University of Malta in 2012 after successfully reading a Doctoral Degree in Laws, a Diploma in Public Notarial Practice and a Bachelors Degree in Law.
EDMUND PAGE (29 YEARS - MALE) UNITED KINGDOM
YOUTH WORKER ON EMPOWERING REFUGEES, YOUNG TEACHER, FOUNDER OF XAVIER PROJECT

Edmund believes that everyone has the right to equal opportunities and protection wherever they live and whatever their background. This right is denied to many refugees and at Xavier Project, the organisation he founded, they use education to change this.

Refugees and education came to Edmund, rather than the other way round. In 2008 he was working as a volunteer in Kampala where he discovered that there were thousands of refugee children not even receiving a primary education. These refugees became his friends and when he returned to his university in the UK he believed it would be easy to raise enough money to send about ten of them to primary school. They organised an African-themed party and he was able to send the funds they raised to Kampala. It was at this moment that Xavier Project was born.

People sometimes ask whether Xavier Project focuses on refugees because Edmund is a trained teacher. The answer is that he is a qualified teacher because he knew Xavier Project should use education as the tool to provide opportunities to the refugees he had met in Kampala. Education remains the best possible tool in empowering marginalised communities and bringing a world in which everyone has equal opportunities a little closer. For groups like refugees, education may be the only way to achieve social mobility, and for them accessing even basic education is much harder simply because of where they have come from. He does not see this as fair, and everything they do at Xavier Project is designed to redress this injustice. He spent two years working as a teacher in Lancashire and London in the UK, after returning from Kampala, and would have happily settled on classroom teaching as a career if he had not felt drawn to East Africa, where he planned to settle and see if working full time for Xavier Project was a realistic possibility.

On 3rd October 2011 Edmund boarded a one way flight to Nairobi and he has been living here ever since. He had enough money to survive for three months but in the end he dragged that out to six by living a very primitive existence. He rented a very small house on the edge of Kibera, Africa’s largest slum that had no plumbing and just corrugated iron for ceilings. He spent a few months upgrading it until it was bearable, but he must admit that he did not miss the place when he moved out to live with his now wife Mildred and her daughter Segen a couple of years later.
In those days Xavier Project had no office and no-one checking what time they started work, so it was a care-free existence, but all that would gradually change. Through kind donors they were able to get the support they needed to sustain themselves as an organisation, as it became clear through talking to the UN Refugee Agency and other partners that our work was greatly needed. A dedicated team working for little material reward made this a reality. They now have 28 staff members spread across Kenya and Uganda and with the help of UN funding we are directly supporting 1,500 refugees per year with quality education. However there is still a lot more to be done.

Living in one of Nairobi’s most densely populated areas does not always come easily to someone who grew up on a farm in southern England. Edmund and his family love getting out of Nairobi as often as they can at the weekends. In particular they have a Maasai friend called Simon who they go and stay with regularly in his village near the Tanzania border. They can walk in the hills for days without seeing any tourists or forestry guards, swim under waterfalls, build tree houses and rely on all sorts of Maasai medicines to provide a full detox. Meanwhile Segen gets to run free with the Maasai children, herd goats, and go for days without having a shower – her idea of fun. All three of us love swimming, bicycling and music (Segen is a budding violinist) but Segen also loves kittens and Barbie and Mildred loves shoes and Microsoft Excel, whereas Edmund is not such a fan!
Years of Vigour and Freshness Ocean of Potentials Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm Tears of Hardships Hope for a Better World

FRANCESCA TEMITIPO DANMOLE (27 YEARS - FEMALE) UNITED KINGDOM
YOUTH ACTIVIST; ADVOCACY TRAINER

‘Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared to believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance.’ (Bruce Barton: 1924)

These sentiments have formed the driving force behind the life and ambitions of Miss Francesca Temitope Danmole. Her experiences have engendered a passion to see that no child’s potential be limited by socio-economic circumstances. She is passionate about people, and seeing them equipped with the skills to fully participate in the World around them. Growing up in a migrant family; living in a deprived community in the UK and being labelled ‘socio-economically disadvantaged’, Francesca built a determination to make a difference to a generation of people who would one day walk in similar paths.

Throughout her life, Francesca’s greatest inspirations have been her Mother and Christian Faith. Her Mother gave her a real-life example of what it is to be tenacious, fearless and determined against all the odds. Her faith has taught her that Jesus Christ is a great change maker who boldly challenged leaders of the time to do things differently, and took and guided the lives of 12 ordinary men, to equip them with the skills necessary to share his revolutionary teaching through the World.

Francesca’s first ambition was to become a Pediatric consultant, and this young dream saw her determined to change the lives of people through medicine. There was however, one small obstacle. Science was her weakest academic subject, and she would later come to fail the exams she needed to make this dream a reality. During this period, Francesca felt like a failure. But it was the foundations of her Christian faith, and the unwavering support of her fiercely determined Mother, who encouraged her to believe; ‘no matter how bad it may seem, all things were possible’.

Francesca’s goal was always to help people. But at that time, she believed the only way she could do this was through medicine. She soon realised that there were alternate routes, and although she would not always know what the next step would look like, by stepping out by faith, she would eventually fulfill her childhood dream to become the change-maker for the generation of young people she remained so passionate about.

During a personal development workshop in her second undergraduate year, a facilitator asked her two questions that would remain imprinted in her mind forever:

I am a critical optimist, humble enough to know how difficult reform is but committed enough to be a change maker for a generation of young people whose socio-economic circumstances hinder them from reaching their potential.
When you die, what will the eulogies delivered by your spouse, children and colleagues comprise of?
What will your epitaph say?

Although still yet to fully answer the first question; Francesca can confidently answer the second. Her epitaph will read: “Success is knowing that another life has breathed easier because you have lived.” These words by Ralph Waldo Emerson have personified Francesca’s dedication to ameliorating policy systems around the world; so that no child’s potential could be hindered by their socio-economic circumstances.

Over the last 10 years, she has been committed to serving her generations, as well as her passion to see young people develop and become equipped to serve and empower their communities. Such focus has enabled Francesca to lead and nurture the growth of youth-led organisations nationally and internationally. Her commitment to obtain tangible outcomes for the improvement of young people’s lives has been consistently demonstrated by many of her works and initiatives to date.

As President of the largest Student group in her undergraduate university, she engaged students in creating a development plan that led to income generation, brokering of opportunities and successful reestablishment of relationships with senior management at the Institution. Still as an undergraduate student, Francesca also worked as a Widening Participation Ambassador; addressing the barriers that prevented young people from disadvantaged and minority ethnic backgrounds from entering higher education in the UK. Her efforts were notably recognised, when she was listed amongst the 100 most influential people of African and Caribbean origin in the UK.

As Youth Data Gatherer for a local Government agency, she witnessed firsthand how young people could go through education and actively reason against developing sustainable livelihoods around the world. In this role, she was also able to facilitate interventions aimed at reducing the number of ‘idle’ young people (not in education, employment or training 16 – 25 year olds). Later as non-executive Director of a national Youth Council, she was vital in developing strategic plans that included greater engagement of young people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds through advocacy training, and widening of access to international opportunities for young people in the UK.

In her subsequent role as a Research Officer for a National youth-led employment
Francesca, having supported the development of the Strategic plan at the charity, secured the charity’s position as a delivery partner for the UK Government’s start-up loan programme for young people.

Francesca has since contributed to youth development internationally. As the acting Commonwealth Students’ Association Coordinator, she worked with students and young people across 54 Commonwealth state members to manage and facilitate their engagement in the post-2015 education framework. She has also engaged with the United Nations, UNESCO, Child and Youth Finance, the International Labour Organisation, and the Caribbean Examinations Council to build the capacity of students in the Commonwealth; where she worked tirelessly to ensure that students were meaningfully engaged in policy development in their countries. Interactions with the Commonwealth Students’ Association made her fortunate to engage with the Commonwealth’s key members, including the Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General, and the Head of the Commonwealth - Queen Elizabeth II. In April 2013, she was honoured to receive the Commonwealth Service Award for her commitment to Youth Development; and earlier this year, her work was also recognised by the Government of the Bahamas. Francesca has also represented the UK globally at a number of International meetings, such as the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Australia (2011), the official delegation to the G20 summit in Mexico (2012), and the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in Papua New Guinea (2013).

Currently, Francesca works as the Policy and Campaigns Officer of her National Youth Council. She has also found time to run a small Non-profit organisation called The Smileers, which aims to enable young people to make informed decisions about their lives and positively influence their communities. She continues to regularly speak on her experiences nationally and internationally; and was invited to deliver a TED Talk in 2013.

Francesca is proud to say that she did not allow failure and the realisation that she would not become a doctor stop her, or diminish her ambitions to make the invaluable difference within her communities. Francesca has never cared about titles or accolades, and remains committed to change and inspire others, like herself, who may have also at one time been labelled “disadvantaged”. It remains her hope today that they too can shine their light in a dark World, and use their skills also to help others find their voice.
This is just the beginning of her journey, of which she knows will encounter many more failures and adversities to come. She remains resolved that the change she seeks to see for her generation far outweighs any failure she will experience. Francesca is a woman on a mission – and continually makes choices that serve this mission every single day.
George Richard Robert Fielding BEM (20 years - Male) United Kingdom
Chair of Whizz-Kidz’s Kidz Board, Young Advisor (#IWill Campaign)

The one thing George has always wanted to do is contribute to his society, encourage and empower others to do the same. He is guided by his belief that whatever a person’s background, race or ability, they can make a valued contribution to society. It is a luxury to see life from a dual perspective. One side being the mainstream, the other the more niche and specialised world of disability. The gap between the two is too often exaggerated but is still too large. George’s passion, as a wheelchair user, allows him to tirelessly promote both integration and inclusivity at all times. He explains that it is only once you start to do this that you realise that people's innate differences should be celebrated and utilised at every opportunity.

Aged 10 George was elected onto Mole Valley Youth Voice project, and chosen as the committee’s vice chair 18 months later: meeting local Councillors, leading and coordinating a successful campaign advancing healthy eating and proving instrumental in the redesign of his local youth centre, The Malthouse, in Dorking, England. George was proud to be chosen to join the Surrey Youth Parliament in 2008, fulfilling a 2 year term in this position. Meanwhile, however, George wanted to change people’s perception of disability in schools and insisted on undertaking his Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award and, as a result, he became the first wheelchair user to complete this in the United Kingdom.

Simultaneously, George was asked to sit on the Board of Young Trustees (The Kidz Board) at Whizz-Kidz - the largest network of people with mobility aids in the country (approximately 1800 and rapidly increasing). He has chaired the Board since July 2012. In this capacity George had voluntarily attended over 300 events in 5 years, proficiently speaking at everything from car boot sales to meeting with Prime Minister David Cameron in 10 Downing Street, and speaking in both Houses of Commons and Lords, in the Palace of Westminster on numerous occasions. He attended two Transport Select Committees, as well as the British Youth Council Youth Select Committee on Transport, and a conference at packed Arena in London.

In recognition of his dedication George was awarded a British Empire Medal for Service to Young Disabled People and their Families in The Queen’s Birthday Honours List of 2014. George remains the youngest person ever to receive such an accolade - aged just 19. Also in 2014 George was chosen to complete an internship in the office of Andy Burnham MP, the Shadow Health Secretary.
Demonstrating an ability to branch out, George is incredibly proud to be Educational Consultant and Young Advisor with the #iwill campaign whose Patron is His Royal Highness Prince Charles. George's aim is to increase the numbers of people aged between 10-20 participating in Social Action nationwide. In July of this year (2015) George successfully completed a 2 week internship at McKinsey and Company, under the instruction of Steve John, Global Director of Communications. As this demonstrates, for George, this is only the beginning - as he continues to undertake a degree in Philosophy, Politics and International Relations at the University of London - he has his sights set on even bigger strides towards equality in the future.
JOHN LOUGHTON (MALE) UNITED KINGDOM
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR, YOUTH LEADER, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER

John is from Edinburgh, Scotland and now lives in London. Growing up in a workless single parent household in an area of poverty and high social exclusion, John launched his first campaign aged 11. Since then, he has continued to strive for a fairer world, succeeded in giving young people a voice in society and campaigned for social justice. He is now a local and global youth leader, motivational speaker and social entrepreneur, founding his company Dare2Lead in 2012, which aims to inspire people to unlock their leadership potential.

As a teenager John helped found the first ever Youth Forum in his community and went on to be elected the youngest ever Chairman of the Scottish Youth Parliament. He was appointed as a constitutional advisor to the UK Government and has campaigned and addressed over 100,000 young people face to face. More recently, John’s major achievement was founding and growing global leadership company Dare2lead, which has expanded internationally, secured high profile clients and helped inspire over 20,000 people to adopt ethical leadership habits.

John has worked in over 35 countries across five continents and has directly worked with high profile figures including HM Queen, former UN Secretary General Kofi Anan and Gordon Brown. John served as UK Prime Minister of the Youth Diplomatic Service and been active in the Commonwealth for a decade – including helping plan two Commonwealth Youth Forums. In 2012 he was elected to address Heads of State at CHOGM and has pioneered a range of youth leadership exchange programmes and training. Additionally he has helped to raise over £3 million for charities.

He now advises many Governments on youth issues and regularly delivers high profile speeches including a TEDx talk, a speech at the UN HQ in Geneva and many national Parliaments. John was named Outstanding Youth of the World 2013 in Rio De Janiero.

He was told from a young age, that he wouldn’t become anything and that he couldn’t achieve anything because of where he is from. He was hanging around with the wrong people, not doing well at school and suffering challenges at home.

However he realized that if he was ever going to be successful, then he had to start changing the way he thought. The biggest walls he faced were the ones he
put up for myself. So by changing his thinking, he changed his life. He knows try to help others change their lives, by helping them change their thinking.

He advises the youth, “It’s better to fail trying, than fail to ever try. Don’t let anyone dilute your sense of purpose, and dare to lead to life to its capacity, and ensure you do good for others on that journey too.”
KATERINA GAVRIELIDOU (26 YEARS - FEMALE) CYPRUS
YOUTH LEADER, LEARNER AT WORLD INNOVATION SUMMIT FOR EDUCATION (WISE)

Katerina is a young leader from Cyprus, passionate about education, and youth empowerment. Realizing the transformative power of education from an early age, Katerina distinguished herself academically by winning multiple academic prizes among all students in Cyprus, and topping the European and International Economics faculty of the University of Cyprus with offered scholarship. This success, alongside the dedicated support of her family, was detrimental in her decision to pursue higher studies at top British Universities at the age of 17.

As a student in England undertaking a Business Studies degree at Lancaster University, Katerina founded a young social enterprise with two fellow students, organising charity events and empowering young people to pursue their dreams. This experience has taught her the unique value of selfless public service, as well as the positive impact that young people can have on their society. The proceeds of one of her charity activities in London supported by several Embassies in the UK contributed to the establishment of a primary school in Brazil, giving the opportunity to children from impoverished areas to attend school for the first time.

These early achievements, coupled with labourious academic effort, increased Katerina's confidence significantly and cultivated her profound interest in politics and society. Hence, she decided to pursue a Master's degree at one of the most renowned universities in the world, the London School of Economics (LSE), in the field of European Politics and Government. Studying at the LSE truly transformed Katerina's life, as it gave her the opportunity to study alongside some of the brightest young minds in the world, and attend a myriad of public lectures delivered by distinguished speakers such as Prime Ministers, Heads of State, CEOs and Entrepreneurs.

Completing both her Bachelor and Master's degree and already an intern at the European Parliament at the age of 21, Katerina's young age proved to be a major challenge when applying for job opportunities however. Without losing hope, she kept on working tirelessly and enrolled in Politics, Philosophy and Economics courses at the University of Oxford. Her hard work and perseverance proved to be pivotal in her later success, and cemented her belief that not giving up is an indispensable quality for young people who want to succeed. This experience reinforced her passion of empowering her fellow youth, encouraging them to overcome initial setbacks in order to achieve their goals.

"If you can dream it, you can do it" - Walt Disney
Returning to her home country, Katerina began volunteering at the Cyprus Youth Council, which gave her the chance to take part in multiple youth seminars and summits across Europe, distinguishing herself in the European youth field. This success led to her appointment as Youth Ambassador, with the mandate to be the voice of young Cypriots in Europe and beyond. Under this capacity, she represented the youth of Cyprus in various occasions like the EU Youth Conference in Lithuania and the One Young World summit in South Africa. In 2014 she was officially nominated by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to represent her country at the World Conference on Youth in Sri Lanka, where during the UN-style negotiations she achieved the incorporation of key resolutions in the Colombo Declaration on Youth. Earlier, Katerina was selected among more than one thousand applications to attend 33Fifty – the Commonwealth Youth Leadership Program for young Commonwealth leaders aged 18-25, and was a delegate of the Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations at Harvard, Dubai and Tokyo.

Katerina is currently a Learner at the World Innovation Summit for Education – WISE, an initiative of Qatar Foundation. As Learner, Katerina works on a team project aimed at providing primary school children in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya with access to education through the use of an innovative homeschooling education model. Formerly, she specialised in Emerging Markets finance at Edmond de Rothschild in London, and has written numerous essays on youth, women’s rights and political philosophy published in, amongst other journals, the Oxford Philosophical Society Review. In 2015 the World Economic Forum named Katerina a Global Shaper for her services in the international youth field.
KENNY IMAFIDON (22 YEARS - MALE) UNITED KINGDOM
YOUTH ADVOCATE; CO-FOUNDER & DIRECTOR OF CLEARVIEW RESEARCH LTD

Kenny Imafidon’s childhood was spent in Peckham (South East London) in a single-parent household wherein his mother raised him and his younger brother. During Kenny’s childhood, he faced many of the challenges that millions of young British people growing up in deprived communities do. He grew up witnessing poverty, drugs and alcohol abuse and crime.

By the time Kenny was a teenager he constantly felt disenfranchised, misunderstood and socially excluded. He felt that he never had a part to play in the wider society and that he was imprisoned by his situation. Kenny felt helpless to motivate and assist those around him, even though he suspected that deep within him he had the potential to.

Kenny’s dissatisfaction with Politicians constantly making decisions about young people and his community with disregard for their opinions, needs or realities, eventually led him to get involved in politics and this was the start of his journey.

Kenny was fortunate to achieve 12 GCSEs, whilst many of his peers left with none. He was also one of the few in his circle to go on to attend college. He studied A-level philosophy, politics, economics and history and during this time he was also given the opportunity to work with politicians at a local, regional and national level. This was an incredibly rewarding experience as he was able to develop a hands-on understanding of politics by shadowing and working in the offices of people such as Harriet Harman and Valerie Shawcross. By his second year in college he was already speaking at high-profile political events, engaging with high-profile politicians such as Home Secretary Theresa May MP and actively campaigning on youth issues.

A few weeks away from his final year college exams, Kenny had just turned 18 years-old when he was arrested and charged on joint enterprise for a murder he did not commit and 6 other charges. This set him back to square one. From the moment he was charged his entire world had collapsed around him. The possibility of facing a 30-year prison sentence was simply too much for him to absorb.

During Kenny’s time on remand in Feltham Young Offenders, he became the first person to sit and pass his A-Level exams at the facility. Until today, nobody else has been able to do the same. Kenny also spent a considerable amount of his time on remand sat in his cell, often for 23 hours a day. He prayed and
dreamt of what he might do given the opportunity to go home.

Eventually, Kenny was acquitted halfway during his trial on the directions of the judge at the Old Bailey. However, two of his co-defendants were found guilty and received life sentences, with a minimum of 30 and 26 years.

Now, aged 22, Kenny is a notable political commentator, a social entrepreneur and a campaigner on socio-economic issues affecting young people in the UK. He is the author and founder of the award-winning “The Kenny Report” series. Kenny is the co-founder of youth-led consultancy firm ClearView Research.

Kenny has been an advocate for the young people of Britain in countries such as Spain, Lithuania, Israel, Germany and Austria.

Kenny Imafidon is also a trustee of the British Youth Council and a Bite the Ballot ambassador. He was also recently awarded the number one position of Rare Rising Stars 2014, where he was acknowledged for being the most outstanding black student in the UK.

Kenny shares a strong belief that “as long as there is life there is hope”. Asked what were the most important lessons he has learnt, Kenny quotes that “firstly, it really does take a village to raise a child and I am here today in this position because I have been standing on the shoulders of giants and have met fantastic people and had family support. Secondly, I have also learnt the art of why I can work so hard and longer than everyone is and that because I love what I do and work has become fun. So no matter what you’re doing just make sure you’re having fun doing it. Lastly, work-life balance is important, our time on this earth is limited so it is important we just don’t work and spend quality time with those we care most about.”
LEANNE ELLUL (25 YEARS - FEMALE) MALTA
YOUNG POET & NOVELIST; TEACHER

Leanne Ellul obtained a first class grade in Maltese, after which she pursued a post-graduate certificate in education. She is currently reading for a Masters’ degree about verbal nouns in Maltese, hence exploring new grounds which so far have only been lightly discussed in academia. Whilst reading for the Masters’ degree, she used to teach for three consecutive years at a secondary school, where she was involved in several initiatives such as the events and activities committee and setting up a literary group, amongst others. Given that voluntary work was also at heart, during her time at University and whilst teaching, she did not only keep on researching and writing poetry, plays, and prose, but also coordinated several literary events.

Academically, she considers her biggest achievements to be the first class degree with an A+ thesis. In 2012 Ellul won a poetry competition organized by The Writers Club, which led her to follow a poetry writing course organized by The Writers’ Bureau. A year after, Ellul won the Francis Ebejer Prize, the only national scriptwriting award organized by the Malta Arts Council. During the same contest she was also awarded for being the youngest and most promising writer of the year. The play was staged at Teatru Manoel, Malta’s National Theatre (Ma Rridx Immur), making Ellul probably the youngest female scriptwriter to have a play staged at the main stage of the aforementioned theatre. A publication of the play will eventually follow. In 2013 she was also short-listed for the ‘Sea of Words’ national contest, and commissioned to write a play to be staged at Pjazza Teatru Rjal (Marjelena). In 2014 she won the prize ‘Novel for Youths’ with Gramma, leading to her partaking in the Iceland Writers’ Retreat. That same year she was also one of the Maltese winners of the flash fiction contest ‘flasheuropa 28,’ an international EU-China collaborative project.

Leanne has also been published on several occasions, with articles related to linguistic/literary research and literary writings. The former have been published in Leħen il-Malti (2013), l-aċċent (2014, 2015). A number of her poems have appeared, amongst others, in the following anthologies: Sekwenzi ta’Tluq (2010), L (2013), Leħen il-Malti (2014), Il-Malti (2014). Leanne is coauthoring a series of primary school textbooks with Clare Azzopardi for Merlin Publishers, namely Tikka Malti – l-abć, Tikka Malti 1a, Tikka Malti 1b, Tikka Malti 2a, Tikka Malti 2b. These textbooks are being used by a good number of schools in Malta. She has also been invited to read in public and conduct workshops on several occasions.

Leanne has also been involved in the setting up of courses meant to engage,

No medicine
cures what
happiness
cannot

- Gabriel García Márquez

“Years of Vigour and Freshness Ocean of Potentials Unending Efforts and Enthusiasm Tears of Hardships Hope for a Better World”
empower, and train other young authors. Projects such as Taħżiż, which is entering its forth edition, have resulted in publications which she has co-edited/edited (2014, 2015). She has also coordinated and co-edited Metamorfosi. This year she will be representing Malta at the 2015 Biennale for Young Artists held in Milan. For the past four years, Leanne was part of the Għaqda tal-Malti – Università Committee, the third oldest student organization at the university of Malta. Leanne was elected to the committee for the third time in a row with the highest number of votes. Helping out other younger youths than herself, through projects such as Inħarrfu l-Hrejjef, was also of great satisfaction.

Working as a full-time teacher, teaching Maltese to the Ambassador of Spain in Malta, researching, writing, editing, and being the PRO of a student organization – amongst others – proved to be no easy task. It was during this period that she wrote an award winning script (Ma Rridx Immur) and a novel (Gramma). Despite this, Leanne balanced her work and social life, as well as volunteering as best as she could. A Professor once suggested that a person’s profile is his or her own responsibility, and she therefore tries to be proactive rather than waiting to be told what is expected from her; this is particularly true when it comes to the organisations she helps at, namely Inizjamed and the aforementioned student organization. Infact, the profile of the Għaqda tal-Malti – Università has an excellent public profile when Leanne was the Public Relations Officer. Needless to say, this was achieved also thanks to other people, since Leanne is also a firm believer in teamwork. Ellul likes to describe her experience at the Għaqda as enriching because not only does she work hard, but also it is the Għaqda that has given her to space where she can work.

As a teacher, Leanne also used to go out of her way, so much so that together with the librarian and other teachers’ help she set up a book club. Students used to have weekly meetings during which Maltese and foreign authors were invited. Some of her responsibilities included organizing each meeting, contacting the authors, selling the guest authors’ books to fund raise for the library, and updating a blog. This served as an inspiration to youths who always co-operated the best way they could, even when Ellul organized events outside of the school to showcase their talent in literature. Students from other schools also used to contact her, and she served as inspiration to them to write and to pursue their dreams. Nevertheless, it was also of great satisfaction, and a contribution she feels she has left to the school.

With regards to her novel for youths; she worked on this novel whose main
theme is anorexia some years after she experienced the dark depths of it herself. She wasn’t able to write about it before stepping out, even though Ana keeps visiting her from time to time. Writing a book for youths that tackles the same issue has been a great challenge.

Another challenge was to set-up KUL, a cultural initiative Leanne coordinates with Kit Azzopardi. Several writing workshops, namely for National Festivals, are organized through KUL. Giving so much of her time to others sometimes makes Ellul feel worn-out, but all the more satisfaction she gets.

To juggle all these things, time management is crucial. Leanne believes in list making – she uses all types of papers (receipts, notebooks, sticky notes, etc) in order to make sense of all her commitments. Being able to focus on the one thing you’re doing at the moment takes practice. Ellul believes that persistence is also a trait that keeps one going. To work her way through such challenges, working hard is no option. Thus, Ellul believes that one should try and make as much of his or her potential as possible. As was mentioned before, Ellul believes dedicated teamwork is the key to success in a group, and support by lecturers, inspirational figures, fellow workers, friends, family members and group mates has sustained her throughout.

Ellul deems it fit to never give up. If one believes in something strongly enough, he or she has to keep on working hard at achieving it whilst also being humble enough to recognize weaknesses, and in doing so turning them into opportunities. Above all, trivial as it may seem, smiling has always worked wonders. Being able to smile through all the pressure is a gift, Ellul believes, one has to nurture. Being deprived of sleep is neither a good idea, nor healthy. Even though Ellul can get away with a few hours of sleep, she knows that one day this might all have its toll. This goes hand in hand with not having time for herself and close at heart. Ellul feels that at times she needs to be more assertive, be able to say no, and so find at least a minimum amount of time, in which she can focus on her personal stuff. If she were to turn back time, she might have decided to finish her Masters thesis before starting to teach. Focusing on the Masters degree was no easy task. Nevertheless, studying whilst teaching served of a higher inspiration to her students.

Though she keeps working hard to try and be good at being able to say no to more work or commitments, Ellul feels steadfast towards helping others, and
that saying no might let people down. Therefore, she has learnt that being able to be more assertive also has its benefits. She has learnt to focus more on whatever she is doing, hence finishing things before and with a better. Focusing on a genre and style of writing would sometimes render a better outcome as well. Giving the written work time breathe on its own, does so too.

Helping out homeless people in Rome, taking care of children at the crèche in Malta, and giving workshops and advice to several students and young adults that share the same passion of hers, that is language and literature, have made her realize that all that she has is a gift. Leanne feels that the paths she was able to thread and the people she met along are a blessing, and therefore she keeps these people close to heart whilst not forgetting where she started from and never ceases to be thankful and appreciative. Though Leanne feels the pressure to sometimes work for free, another major life lesson a Professor once taught her was, to value her work even more, because others might not be able to value her.

Ellul once coined a saying which was very much shared on social media; a saying that goes “qatt taqta’ qalbek, anke jekk taqta’ nifsek” (“never give up, even if you’re out of breath”). Being able to recognize one’s faults and capitalizing on them shows a great deal of inner strength that should be nurtured.

Critique makes you stronger. Being able to listen to what experts in the field, as well as friends and audiences, have to say about what it is you do, makes you grow both as a person and as a writer. Sometimes critique is hard to chew on and digest, but accepting it and working on it is an opportunity not to be missed. Being able to have such people giving you honest feedback is also a blessing in itself.

Ellul has had a number of teachers who didn’t empower her and a ‘best friend’ that once told her she not good at school as much as she was. Despite being let down by these comments, Ellul worked even harder to prove these people wrong and never looked back. Seeing that she was the only student to get a first class degree in her year and the number of prizes and publications she has until now, is an answer in itself. One has to lead by example; but giving an example leads people to believe in you.
NICOLAS TARAPOULOUZIS (22 YEARS - MALE) CYPRUS
YOUTh LEADER, YOUTh PROMOTER

Nicolas was born on 29 April 1993 in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. Since 2013, he is an undergraduate student and student leader at the Department of French Studies and Modern Languages of the University of Cyprus. He is studying French Language and Literature, as well as Modern Languages and European Studies.

He has started learning French since his young age, and that was one of his childhood hobbies. In primary school, he was fortunate to become a youth promoter at the age of 11, as he had the opportunity to participate in some youth conferences of Kenthea (a non-governmental and non-profit organization located in Cyprus which has engaged in the fight against addictions). In 2010, he has been in Italy and Spain on the occasion of the European program “Socrates Comenius”. Such experiences have fascinated him and Nicolas was ready for every new challenge.

Nikolas likes earning knowledge and experiences. He has a great passion for travelling, and education. He had the chance to meet and discuss with many significant persons by participating in a number of conferences. The last one was in 2014 in the European Parliament entitled “The way that the European Union works, the recent challenges that is facing and the strategies that developing to get over the negative issues of the global economic crisis”.

Moreover, Nicolas is a member of the Youth Council of Morphou, his father origin town in Cyprus which is occupied by Turkey since 1974. Last April, Nicolas was a team-leader of young children form Morphou that took part in Europousse (International Football Tournament) that took part in Saint Cyr Sur Loire in France and organized by the European municipalities.

Furthermore, Nicolas loves literature, intercultural and sociology-linguistics issues. His first language is Greek, but the desire of communication made him to learn French, English and German. For the whole academic year of 2014-2015, he has the opportunity to study in Montpellier, France by the exchange program “ERASMUS”. There, he participated in some charity events and organizations that raise money for poor students. Currently, Nicolas is a student leader of the faculty of Humanities at the University of Cyprus.

Nicola’s target is to work and fight for the world as the financial system and the effects on humans, as well as human rights, law, security, freedom and justice. In the future, he would like to create a non-governmental organization for helping
people in need. Everyone deserves clean water, food, house, clothes, a joyful and peaceful life, and Nicolas wants to fight for a better society, global education, living conditions, working environments and generally human rights. He hopes for a favourable international environment in which peace and development will be the dominant principles of the international community. His life experiences have reinforced his desire to become a youth leader, as they rewarded him with significant knowledge about himself.
Panos is a youth empowerment enthusiast from the island of Cyprus. Born in Limassol, a city branded as “energetic”, was quite certain that he could embody the very notion of activism. The ceremonial leap spreading his intellectual wings was by acquiring a BA in Sociology and afterwards by “slipping” in a MA in Political Science, specialization International Relations.

He strongly believes that as the individual grows up and is being integrated in the social structure, any inclination towards politicization becomes a need. Thus, by the time it realizes that the reality that lives in it is nothing more than a mere drop in the flow of global concatenation, self-awareness commands that we looked even further than the local horizon. Being an IR scholar, he had the chance to participate in two Model United Nations Conferences; RoMUN (in Rome) and MaMUN (in Mannheim). Surely, these conferences were a representational form of diplomacy, however, in Panos’ view, diplomacy is not a notion floating strictly in the sphere of inter-national relations, but also a practice in everyday life; since the core of social relations consists of interpersonal relations, where the individuals play various roles, yes, diplomacy mounts to personal, continuous practice.

Really disappointed by the fact that in Cyprus young people don’t have a way to express their views on issues affecting them directly and indirectly dealing with diplomacy and policy-making, Panos, along with other dedicated young people, decided that it was about time to take action. It was about time someone would mobilize young people and make their voice and opinion count on subjects of politics and international relations. Therefore, they established Cyprus Youth DiplomaCY (DCY); an effort not only to bring young Cypriots closer to actual diplomatic practices, but mostly and more essential to provide youth the proper voice to address the issues that concern them but they lack the ways to do so. Under the motto “where youth activism meets diplomacy”, they have already fostered a plethora of networks and practices that channel the prospects of youth in a multilateral level. After being the Public Relations Officer for the transitional period of the temporary Board, Panos now holds the position of the Secretary General.

As a PR Officer, he was assigned the introduction of “The Ambassador Series” programme; in each session an Ambassador of a Foreign Diplomatic Mission accredited in the Republic of Cyprus analyses to a group of young Cypriots, a specific thematic of global interest on which His/Her country has a prominent
role. The participants had the opportunity, by discussing different issues concerning the multilateral fields of international relations, as well as diplomatic policies and practices, to emerge as aware, global and active citizens.

Panos is determined to realise a decent career in diplomacy. Coming himself from a conflict area country situated amidst the conflict-prone Levant, he is really interested in conflict studies, peace building and peacekeeping practices as well as promotion and implementation of Human Rights. These aspects determined his MA dissertation, under the title “Nationalism; internally empowered, externally restrained (?) – The case of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, his thesis, using an interdisciplinary approach, studied the phenomenon of nationalism and its multilateral (local, regional and international) dynamics. Although the dissertation was the only one in his Class evaluated with the grade of “Excellent”, the most vivid knowledge acquired came empirically.

Representing DCY, he was chosen to participate in the bicomunal delegation at Youth in Action Information Visit in Brussels, organised by the European Commission Representation in Cyprus. There, by meeting and discussing with young people from the Turkish Cypriot community, he actually perceived the extent of internal nationalistic discourse combined with the international factors, shattering his biased “ego”. Bridging and bringing Cyprus youth voice (both from Greek- and Turkish- Cypriot communities) to the fore through meaningful dialogue in order to identify common worries and visions, is the sole answer to a viable solution to the long-lasting Cyprus Question.

Various circumstances in Cyprus hinder youth to be taken into consideration to local or national level. The absence of strong and sufficient youth participation in crucial decision/policy making centres has been always a challenge. In addition, most people have the false perception that policies are monopolised strictly by politics. These misconceptions have to end, in order youth gained its rightful place of importance.

Passiveness is contagious and dangerous, especially when it comes from the citizens of tomorrow. Contemporary youth by grasping the crescendos of their Zeitgeist can release unprecedented creative forces. There is a saying that goes “When you can't change the direction of the wind — adjust your sails”. This deterministic belief shall and must not apply to youth. Young people do have a direction called “the future”; and they have all the potential not only to shape it but also to safeguard it!
SEAN CASSAR (30 YEARS - MALE) MALTA
YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR; INTERIOR DESIGNER

As an only child Sean was very distracted at school and many times found himself drawing or painting at home. Studying and homework where the last things on his mind. Art and design and technology where the two main subjects he excelled in throughout his life. As a child he preferred to go out in the Maltese country side and explore nature, constructing tree houses with friends and cousins. At the age of ten years he came to realise that he was being very distracted at school and felt the urge to leave the country for schooling. Since he was interested in gun and arms design he was asking his parents to send him to military school in England.

After countless tantrums and consideration Seans parents gave in and sent him to a jesuit boarding environment found at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire. Here he got a taste for the military training in the Stonyhurst Cadet Corps (CCF). Due to very good teaching and extensive facilities in Art and Design and technology, Sean was able to experiment with different media and continued to feed his talent in both subjects. Since the change of school and country had turned his grades around from F’s to A’s once achieving all GSCE’s he felt he needed to move on from the isolated surroundings of Lancashire countryside. Sean considers the friends he made at Stonyhurst irreplaceable and remains in touch with them till today. He considers them family.

Since he had done so well in his studies, his parents gave him a choice to make any decision he would want weather to go back to Malta or remain in the UK to further his studies. After some research Sean decided to attend St. Clares international college, Oxford, to sit for his international baccalaureate. He was always interested in Oxford and its history. Especially the amount of students and art culture awareness. The city drew him to his passion in art and design. St. Clares college had a more liberal and self-discipline approach where a student must split up work and play accordingly, rather than being conditioned with uniforms, curfews and rugby. Oxford therefore opened up the gates to challenge his self-discipline with all the temptations found in Oxford and London. Although he achieved his IB diploma, he focussed most of his time and efforts in the art department staying on after hours and visiting on weekends. The time then came to move on to the next step of Universities. Sean needed to travel around the Uk Universities for interviews in the field of Interior Design prior to his final examinations. He got offered unconditional offers to two universities to sit for a degree in Interior Design and was set to continue his studies in the UK.

Inter-railing around Europe and camping at festivals with his St. Clares friends
was also a priority at that pivotal stage of his life. Enticed by the beauty in different architecture, art and interiors he pushed himself to perceive and many times sketch different buildings and situations himself and his friends would encounter. This continued to build very important friendships and bonds with international people, one of which is his best man for his wedding who resides in Uganda.

After all the travelling and soul searching the serious hat needed to came back on since his father was falling ill back home and University was just round the corner. He made a bold decision to leave the UK and pause University studies to go back home and be by his mother and fathers side, in case anything happened. He felt that he would had regretted anything happening to his father whilst he was overseas studying. He didn't want to achieve all his ambitions at the risk of not being by his fathers side if anything had to happen.

Finding himself back at home after six years in the UK his priorities where his family and studying Interior design by correspondence. Sean's passion for art and painting grew stronger and enjoyed painting every day knowing he is at home and still building up his creative talent. Sean always enjoyed business and money since he used join his dad at the wok place and help him organise his stocks and shares. It brought himself and his father together and his mother happy to see that we shared a passion for something.

The extreme shock of going back home after such a roller coaster ride overseas from the age of 12 isolated him with a hand full of local friends and family. Painting was his passion and he would easily work ten hours a day experimenting in different media whilst excited to show this friends and family as they visited in the evenings.

As time passed people he started selling custom paintings to family and friends but still due to his self-destructive nature always felt unprepared for an exhibition till today. He felt that his passion for the art he produces is so delicate and sensitive too him he would need many years of development to feel satisfied in having an exhibition.

Sean realise that making money to have a family in the future as an artist would be very difficult and somewhat emotionally risky. In Interior design he knew he could be as create as he would like with many different materials. From his student days in the Uk he was aware that as an architect in malta it
would be very hard for him to be expressive in design and enjoy his passion for creating. As a result from travelling around the world with his friends from 5 star hotels to sleeping with homeless people he saw that Malta had a lacking injection for interior/exterior design and space allocation for both residential and commercial. He saw the market of interior / exterior design wide open. His ambition was to become the best designer / artist he can be. He was also aware of the fact that he would need to gain a certain amount of experience before this can ever happen.

As all was seeming to be going well his parents fell apart and started separation proceedings. The experiences of his dad's health problems and broken family pushed Sean to realise his limited dependency on his parents and the lifestyle he was brought up in. Hours painting reduced in search for a job in the field of interior design whilst still keeping his studies at hand, slowly but surely.

He remembers the portfolio taken to his very first interview as a junior designer. It consisted of a large selection of over seventy images of different paintings and installations he had created in his studio at home ever since he moved back from the UK. In his first interview he was accepted to work for a small high end design studio as a junior designer where he was given the opportunity to be involved in an array of different design briefs and onsite pressures. He worked six years moving up the ranks to associate designer, always respecting his employer and making an effort on client satisfaction and attention to detail.

Sean always had a drive to be his own boss and open his own company. His ambition is to help create more lavish interiors and exteriors with the enjoyment of making money at the same time. Throughout his employment Sean kept studying and achieving different certifications in design by correspondence. He took on projects after work with permission from his previous employer giving him the opportunity to make extra money on the side and more importantly to build up an organic portfolio to be used for selling his services when the time came. Besides the family friendship he respected for his boss Sean was striving to be the best employee he could be, since he was always considering how he would want to treated as an employer.

It was very difficult for him to juggle with a full time job, part – time studying, separating parents, sick father, painting and working on other projects after work and on weekends. What kept him determined and focussed, was his passion for design and the enjoyment he would get when seeing people's reactions to his
creations whether paintings or interior/exterior designs.

As the sixth year of Seans employment closed he took the plunge in creating his own brand and company called Design Hub Malta. His idea was to open up a company that would slowly grow and offers services in the multi-faceted world of design starting from the interior / exterior design. Within nine months of opening Design Hub he had enough projects to recognise he finally reached the beginning of his goal after all those difficult years considering and investing in himself and his talent for creating and drawing.

Sean was involved in different magazines and newspapers writing about the different design packages his company offers like those of commercial, residential catering and more featuring in local newspapers ‘the Times of Malta’ and ‘Malta Today’ magazines – ‘Homeworks’, ‘Places’, ‘Money’, ‘Gourmet’, ‘Malta Business review’ and more.

Facebook and website where a very important media to help Design Hub get recognition on the local market reaching 7000 organic likes within the first nine months of operation.

When it came to restaurant design, rather than design the interior and exterior of the restaurant Sean felt it was very important to be involved in the brand recognition of the establishment and offered a separate service of branding working hand in hand with the best people he could find in the trade. Sean is adamant with the importance of client satisfaction for catering and Hotel establishments. He feels that the brand and the interior/ exterior design need to work hand in hand giving the potential client a particular consistent aura to the product or service provided. This would stem from a potential client researching a restaurant online, on facebook, through advertisements, by driving past the establishment to walking in and getting a hit with that first impression to finally being served to high standard with great food to complement. Within the two restaurants Sean has also custom designed painting installations on the walls to follow through with the brand concept he believes in. Sean puts a lot of emphasis for all the design variable to feel consistent with one another and how an increased amount of attention is needed to be made in design for all.

Due to all the publicity, innovative designs, brand consideration, client satisfaction and good word of mouth on the Maltese islands Sean recently won the ‘Malta Best Young Entrepreneur of the year award 2015’. Coincidently he
also graduated with honours in Interior Design at Staffordshire University on the same day of the Award Ceremony. He flew up to the UK whilst his best man came to Malta from Uganda to take the award in his stead. That goes to show the respect and honour he has cherished with overseas friends from school. This today reflects in his courtesy and consideration used to when dealing with clients and contractors in his profession today.
1. Alzima Elisha Bano (Fiji)  
2. Ariel Chuang (New Zealand)  
3. Brianna Fruean (Samoa)  
4. Charlotte Anne (New Zealand)  
5. Christina Houaisuta (Solomon Islands)  
6. Christina Jillian Keziah GIWE (Papua New Guinea)  
7. Emily Milton Smith (Australia)  
8. Henrietta McNeill (New Zealand)  
9. John Joe Taka (Papua New Guinea)  
10. Kate Row (Australia)  
11. Tim Poasa Baice (Samoa)  
12. Willy Missack (Vanuatu)
ALZIMA ELISHA BANO (28 YEARS - FEMALE) FIJI
YOUTH WORKER; FOUNDER OF ACT:FIJI

“You will never amount to anything” her teacher told her in a high pitched voice as she humiliated the ten year old in front of the entire sixth grade class.

These were words to live by for Elisha. Being told she will not amount to anything was the driving force behind every success from that day on. She made strict rules for herself. Education was her priority! Becoming someone. Making something of herself was the golden dream. Eighteen years later she does have so many accomplishments to show for herself. A Bachelors in Psychology and Theatre arts, a post graduate diploma in Psychology, becoming a tutor for our regional university, graduating from the renowned young women's leadership training (Emerging leaders forum), Vice president of the National Youth Council of Fiji (2014), representing Fiji and the Pacific at the United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC) Global Forum in Bali (international forum), participating in the Fiji National Women’s Forum and the Fiji Young Women’s Forum, being selected to participate in the Know India Program and now becoming the president of its alumni program the Pravasi Youth Club Fiji, being part of the One Billion Rising (OBR) organizing committee here in Fiji and annually performing monologues to raise more awareness on violence against women and bagging the biggest accomplishment of life, becoming the first Fijian to be named a winner on the 2015 Queens Young Leaders Award list.

Somewhere along the determined path of making something of herself Elisha became very interested and involved in the area of youth. Social psychology intrigued her as a student and she wanted to focus future studies in this area but now she is focused on working in the area of Youth development specifically. A few other areas she has been involved in include; gender equality, SRHR (Sexual Reproductive and Health Rights), violence against women, anti-bully, human rights and leadership. She finds that “when you work in the area(s) you are passionate about it doesn’t feel like work. Everyday is welcomed with open arms and you are focused on meeting the challenges for the day. You are not so concerned about making profits but are more determined in changing lives”. This is the wonderful life she lives. She is determined on a daily level to change lives.

At the end of June 2014 Elisha started a youth group called Advocacy (through) Creative Techniques: Fiji (ACT:Fiji) the aim of this group is to advocate on social issues using creative arts, (theatre arts, social media and graphic design/merchandise) and to empower youth with the creative arts skills and tools so
they too can become advocates in their community. More information on this group is available at facebook.com/ACT.Fj, twitter: @actfiji and on Instagram: @ctfiji

The Queen's Young Leaders Program has given her the opportunity to network with over 100 youth (winners and runner up) from various Commonwealth countries. Additionally, she had the opportunity to network with the hard working team at the Queen’s Young leaders program, the team at the Leading Change course down at Cambridge University, all the guest lecturers and contributors that they have had the wonderful opportunity of learning from and engaging with. Being in different time zones and communicating with each other was not so easy. If they have a session at 9pm (Fiji time) and she stroll in to connect late she does not only miss out on important discussions but she also misses the opportunity to contribute her points. She found it was important to have prepared notes and discussion points before the sessions started. Time was of the essence and being prepared was integral.

The program gives them an opportunity of a lifetime to receive the award from Her Majesty, the Queen, and in networking with various groups and stakeholders. She would like to thank the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust and the Commonwealth for regenerating the Queen’s Young leaders in celebrating innovative youth.

As for Elisha’s fellow youth reading this and wanting to make a difference in their community she would urge young people to make a start. Join a cause that interests you. Contribute towards it and show commitment. She advises the youth, “Use your creativity, imagination and innovation towards the cause/project. Be part of the solution and participate in decision making spaces. When you are given an opportunity to participate or to share your experiences and views, make the most of it. Don't shy away from it. If you fear public speaking, write your views down and request someone to share it. Bottom line is; participate and make a difference”.
ARIEL CHUANG (28 YEARS - FEMALE) NEW ZEALAND
ENTREPRENEUR; MEDICAL STUDENT; PHYSIOTHERAPIST

At the age of 16, Ariel went on her first overseas humanitarian trip to Mohembo in Botswana, helping the local village with building and promoting safe sexual practices amongst the school children. It was a world away from New Zealand; the country she called home and grew up in, and it opened her eyes to the inequality and injustices that were widespread. One story that has repeatedly become a point of inspiration for her was when her friends were playing football with the local children and one of the little boys got hurt. His mother lamented “The hospital is 2 days walk away; we could never afford to travel that far or to pay for treatment”. Thankfully, the boy sustained a small bruise on his forehead where he had been struck by the ball and required no further treatment, but this cry for help and the lack of medical resources close to that village propelled Ariel on a journey to, one day, return to Mohembo equipped with more than “I’m sorry”.

Back home in New Zealand, Ariel graduated with a Bachelor of Physiotherapy at age 21 from the University of Otago, and decided the unusual route of trying her hand at business. She had discovered after going on many trips since Botswana that lack of funding was usually the primary reason why organisations could not continue doing their good work- and she wanted to change this. She wanted to start her own business enterprises that would fund many projects around the world.

Equipped with nothing more than sheer determination, she set about opening a café from the ground up with her business partner. They ran this successfully for 2.5 years before deciding to venture their separate ways. 6 months after setting up the café, Ariel decided to put her Physiotherapy degree to good use, and started up a Physiotherapy clinic in Christchurch, conjointly enrolling in a Masters of Entrepreneurship course, which she completed in 2012 with Distinction. She further expanded her physiotherapy clinic in the metropolitan city of Auckland in 2012.

In August of the same year, Ariel decided to re-visit Mozambique- a country she had visited once previously and found herself spending 1 month in Angoche; 4 hours drive from Nampula. Here, she saw the work that her contacts were achieving with the local tribe and decided to start The Amina Foundation- a New Zealand charitable trust in which she wanted to fund projects through. She was approached about funding the Nasome project- which was aimed at teaching the local pre-schoolers to read before school started, as well as give

“Never stop learning; never stop seeking and never stop dreaming”
job opportunities for the young people who would otherwise be unemployed. The project grew from 10 tutors to more than 30 tutors, each teaching classes of up to 30 children. By the end of that year, there were approximately 1000 children attending these classes all across Angoche and 30 new jobs created.

When asked what major challenges in life were, Ariel would say it would mostly be one of self-belief and determination. As a dreamer, she has faced criticism from people telling her she's (i) too young (ii) female (iii) too inexperienced to achieve anything. But she believes that being awarded the Commonwealth Youth Award in 2013 was a testament to the fact that anyone can achieve things, if you believe in yourself and commit to doing it with or without help or encouragement. She encourages all youth to gain experience where possible; to try something different even if you have never done it before, and surround yourself with people who are going to dream with you and not against you. One area she believes fervently in and would like to develop is working with likeminded people; and in a group rather than alone, to achieve the goals of changing the world. The time she spent in London in 2013 with the other award winners was the highlight for her and she realised that we are all partners together and we can achieve so much more together.

Currently, projects have been put on hold as she is committed full time to pursuing her personal goal of becoming a surgeon. She is finishing her medical degree and she loves spending time in operating rooms, learning the art of medicine. She hopes with this new knowledge and skill, she will be able to set up self-sustaining hospitals in rural areas around the world, perhaps starting with Mohembo.
BRIANNA FRUEAN (17 YEARS - FEMALE) SAMOA
YOUTH ADVOCATE & VOLUNTEER, FOUNDER OF SMALL VOICES OF SAMOA

Brianna Fruean was a 11 year old Climate Change Advocate who founded Samoa’s first Environmental Awareness Group in her Primary School. 6 years later, her small group grew from 6 members to over a thousand members in Samoa. She was the youngest 350.org Coordinator and early this year, she became the youngest member to have ever receive a Commonwealth Youth Award. When Brianna was in Primary school her Science Teacher told her class “kids we must treat our planet with love and care because at the rate we are going we might have to relocate villages in the next 20 years”.

At the time she did the calculation in her head that at 31 she would start to see people moving inland, yet people have already started moving but she’s only 17. We can no longer wait around another 20 years, Climate Change waits for no one, it’s effects is evident everywhere.

When Brianna founded her Environmental group “Small Voices of Samoa”, it represented the small voices of all the Pacific Islands and especially its children whose lives have been affected by Climate Change. Each year her group grew and became stronger. Their outreach became wider and more people out there identified with them and no longer them just a group of annoying teenagers.

Empowering Pacific youth to make environmental changes is a project that is dear to Brianna’s heart, that raises awareness of Environmental challenges in the Pacific. These projects over the years have empowered them to make wise decisions and change their behaviour and mind set to benefit the environment.

These projects has also encouraged youth to become Environment leaders for their communities and inspired them to become future leaders for their Islands. Brianna being the youngest recipient ever of the Commonwealth Youth Awards this year has opened a lot of doors for herself and her group. From this amazing opportunity, she has managed to expand their activities and their work has reached wider audiences and interest from outside Partners and have raised some interest to outside Donors.

Brianna has learnt that we work best when we work in partnership with others and some of the work she has done has been done with others like her parents, her friends, her school, her church, SPREP,-Pacific Regional Environment Program, 350.org, PACMAS the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme, The Commonwealth Secretariat and Pacific youth across the region.

"Be the Change that you want to see"
- Mohatma Gandhi
Young people make up 40% of the world population and therefore are our most powerful mobilizers for change, and youth have been proving this in many ways. Even though Brianna might be one of the few youth in climate change representative in her Country, she is not the only one out there.

Everyday she reminds Leaders that there is a need to continue to work with youth when it comes to making decisions concerning their environment as they inherit their decisions made. Work with them, seek their input and involve them, not just as a token but for real participation.

This year Brianna became the First Youth Ambassador for SPREP (Pacific Regional Environment Programme). Her first official duty in her Ambassador role was to being part of the SPREP delegation to the Oceania 21 in New Caledonia.

At the Conference the Pacific Leaders asked Brianna for her advice and input. She was also was given the role of speaker on behalf of SPREP at the table with other partners and countries when they discussed the Lifou Declaration to be presented later this year at the COP21 in Paris.

Brianna carries her role very seriously as the Voice of the Pacific youth. She recommends that others consider giving their youth champions the same courtesy. Her journey as a Climate Change Advocate hasn’t been easy but she remains positive and motivated and advise the youth out there to never give up on what you believe in. Hard work, perseverance and commitment conquers all.
CHARLOTTE ANNE MCGIMPSEY (24 YEARS - FEMALE) NEW ZEALAND
GOVERNANCE ADVISOR & POLICY STRATEGIST

Charlotte is a Governance Advisor and Policy Strategist currently working in local government in New Zealand. She holds a Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours in European Studies from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. She has just returned from living in the United Kingdom for 2 years.

Her career path has led her to working in local government in New Zealand and the United Kingdom; however, in her spare time at university, she began advocating for youth issues and youth voice being heard at the decision-making table. This continues to be a passion in her spare time.

In her later years at university Charlotte and a group of students decided to encourage other students to become more involved in the political process. During the run up to the 2011 elections they ran an event called ‘Elections for Dummies’ which included the opportunity for students to ‘speed date’ local candidates. After this event Charlotte and Henrietta decided to draft a constitution for a new non-partisan club on campus dedicated to political issues - University of Canterbury Political Science Society (UCPols) was born at the end of 2011. For her contribution to founding the society and being the Embezzler (Treasurer) in 2012, Charlotte was awarded a life membership to UCPols.

In 2012 Charlotte and co-author Henrietta McNeill saw an opportunity to bring university students together to discuss politics and participation, a lively discussion which brought about action and the topic of their article. Christchurch, New Zealand, where they lived, had gone through a fatal earthquake, which had damaged most of the city and affected the population immensely. Despite the aftermath of the earthquake, the people of the city were collaborating to find ways in which they could contribute and bring the community together. Volunteerism became an ingrained part of the community, and people wanted to have a voice.

Charlotte's attitude towards life is that life isn’t about finding yourself, it is about creating yourself. Every step along the way contributes to the end picture. There are always things in your life that you can do differently, it is important to learn from these things and not to get stuck ruminating about them. The Christchurch Earthquakes opened up many gaps where the community could create new opportunities for and in their city, the silver lining to a devastating event. Charlotte and her UCPols colleagues found and created opportunities for young people to have a voice and contribute to the bigger picture.
Charlotte has spent the last two years working in the UK and travelling around Europe. She noticed that many of the issues that youth encounter in the political sphere are not limited to New Zealand. Youth in the UK and Europe have similar issues about being included as participants and decision-makers in their societies. She encourages anyone who has the opportunity to go and see other countries and experience their unique cultures and heritage.

Charlotte’s advice to the world community is to let your voice be heard. Being part of the decision-making process is important for determining your future. Politics can be simplified and it can always be broken down into more digestible chunks. Charlotte believes it is important to never be afraid to ask questions and seek answers where they seem to be lacking.
Christina Houisuta (29 years - female) Solomon Islands
Youth Advocate on Overcoming Domestic Violence and Gender Inequality, Founder of the Strive for Change Association

Christina is 29 years old and married with two children. She is the founder of the Strive for Change Association. She works with women and youths in the local community to help tackle domestic violence and gender inequality; as well as to assist them in accessing clean water and improving sanitation and hygiene. In addition she works with Catholic Communication Solomons, as a print media person and a facilitator of social and print media of the Media Education Seminar’s (MES) Programme.

Christina’s passion for helping women and young people began in high school, when she could not bear to see women and children living in fear. She began to get practically involved by looking after children in her home. When she finished secondary school she formed a community youth group and became involved in a church women’s group.

Little by little, as she dealt with one person at a time, people in the community were inspired and they supported her project. With the help of her family and the community she managed to achieve one of her major goals, which was to set up Strive for Change. She then achieved her second major achievement when she received the golden opportunity to be selected as one of the first ever Queen’s Young Leaders Award winners. The third achievement she is proud of is the growing conviction of the community to become reconciled and accept peace and development.

As experienced by many groups and organisations, Strive for Change has had its own challenges. The difficulties it has faced include a lack of good resources and venues for education and training and no strong financial support or funding from the government or aid donors. This is needed in order to achieve one of the organisation’s major goals: to build a centre to shelter victims of violence and their children.

Christina managed to handle these challenges by affiliating with other youth groups and organisations, especially for education and training. To relieve the Association from other challenges, she set up a community saving club, where women and other family members can save and invest for the family’s development. This club was designed as a grassroots organisation and is owned by its members. It has been very effective. It helps women to save for their children’s school fees and also empowers them...
by allowing them to gain saving and management skills.

Christina says “To be a good leader you need to set goals for something you are passionate about”. With experience, she can see that a true leader inspires, transforms and is there for everyone, even the smallest children. She believes that all youths have these qualities, but they are sometimes overshadowed by fear and pride. She would like to encourage young leaders to get rid of those shadows and be ready to make changes in their families, communities and nationwide. She articulates, “Let the world see the wealth you bear in your heart. Let the world know that we are heroes. We are heroes not by power and money, but by passion and the services we offer to help others. We can achieve our goals if we are patient, understanding, humble and faithful. Believe in yourself and the hope of change that you are going to bring people”.

As one of the first Queen’s Young Leaders Award winners, Christina would like to thank the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, which has enabled youths to connect with other young people from Commonwealth countries and build networks which encourage us to share our views and challenges. The Queen’s Young Leaders Award has helped her to come up with new ideas for her project and implement them through the courses and mentorship it offers.
CHRISTINA JILLIAN KEZIAH GIWE (24 YEARS - FEMALE) PAPUA NEW GUINEA
YOUTH LEADER & VOLUNTEER

Christina Jillian Keziah Giwe hails from the beautiful marshlands of Ioma tucked between the mighty Mambare, Gira and Eiya Rivers in the Land of the famous tapa cloths and home of the breath-taking Queen Alexandra Birdwing Butterfly. A descendant of the Binandere Warriors of Oro Northern Province, who are famous for their savage cannibalism; a tribe that has produced some of Papua New Guinea’s best brains. She also claims part of her maternal heritage from the peaceful Jiwaka Province up in the misty highlands of Papua New Guinea and the Island of Kiwai just off the coast of Daru in Western Province.

She spent most of her life growing up in an urban settlement community in Port Moresby since the tender age of five despite the fact that her father was a military personnel. Her parents are dedicated community leaders and being a leader’s daughter she started helping out her parents during community gatherings at a very early age and while in school, she was an outstanding student leader.

Christina was a very brilliant student and graduated at the top of her class in Grade 12 but due to certain circumstances beyond her control she missed out on securing a place to further her studies at any Tertiary Institution under the government’s scholarship scheme. And since the cost of tertiary education was too much for her family to afford, Christina remained at home and continued on working with the women, children and young people of her community.

In February 2010, she applied for the Oxfam International Youth Partnerships Program 2010-13 and was one of the 300 successful applicants from over 2000 applicants around the world. She became a Youth Action Partner and the programme became the largest stepping stone in her young life, opening up her life to the world at large.

Her involvement in the community has helped build her up to be the person she is today and has provided her the opportunity to work with a very diverse group of organizations from the local to the international level. In June 2010 she was nominated by the Salvation Army and Soroptimist International Port Moresby for the prestigious Pride of PNG Awards for Women and in August of the same, she was named Young PNG 2010.

Christina still lives in her settlement community which she calls home and was planning to return to studies and setting up a small community based organization aimed at rehabilitating, inspiring and empowering the many young
people who aimlessly roam the streets to lead better lifestyles. However, in an unusual turn of events, while preparing to attend the First Global Forum on Youth Policies in Baku, Azerbaijan in October 2014, Christina conceived her first Child which was also around the same time she applied for the prestigious Queen’s Young Leaders Award Programme.

In January 2015, she was named a Queen’s Young Leader alongside 59 other exceptional young leaders throughout the Commonwealth and a few weeks later, she was awarded another local award by the Governor of her home province- the Northern Governor’s Youth Achievement Award.

The greatest lesson she has learnt in life is never to underestimate the power and potential of young people no matter how young, inexperienced or immature they may seem but most importantly to never stop believing in your own capability as a young person. To love without regrets, to give selflessly, to care without ceasing. And the greatest challenges yet is dealing with Chauvinism and Nepotism and people who consider themselves more experienced and knowledgeable and who assume you are a threat to them, especially the elderly. It has been an overwhelming journey for her thus far but she has learnt to overcome situations and move on in life by accepting diversity- that everyone is different in their own special way. Also to humble herself and accept criticisms and never to take revenge but to work extra hard to prove others wrong.

Because of her passion for the young people, Christina has walked the streets on empty stomach and dined with Royalties. She has travelled to places She never imagined possible and represented her country on various occasions. She aspires to become a Youth Development and Human Rights Specialist someday and help serve her young people. She considers herself privileged to have at least some form of formal education and has education as one of her top priorities especially for disadvantaged children and youths in settlements and rural areas.

Christina currently volunteers as a youth and children’s leader in her local Anglican Church and community and has been working closely with the National Youth Development Authority of PNG after completing a six months Internship Programme with the Commonwealth Youth Programme Pacific Centre in Honiara, Solomon Islands in May 2013. She is also the current female youth representative for Papua New Guinea at the Commonwealth Youth Council General Assembly and a member of the Commonwealth Youth Council
Membership Committee after successfully representing the country at the 9th Commonwealth Youth Forum in Sri Lanka in November 2013.

Christina has built her life up from Volunteerism and has not gained any material wealth nor possession neither does she get any monetary benefit for what she does. She lives a simple life of a grassroot with her retired parents, three younger siblings and 6 weeks old baby daughter but no matter what; she aspires, she longs, she wants to be the best role model and savant leader she could be. Prepared to face challenges in a constantly changing environment and to use her skills and knowledge to the best of her ability to serve her people.

Young people you don't need to have a doctorate degree, you don't need to be a millionaire or live in a palace. You don't even have to be on anybody’s payroll too because it does not even cost a cent to make somebody smile or lend a helping hand. You will be mocked and ridiculed, praised and adored, supported, rejected, misunderstood and stabbed in the back by those you love yet you must continue to persevere because as citizens of our countries and of this world, we have a duty towards our future generations. If she can do it, you can do it too and even better than her, only if you set your heart to it......anything is achievable!
EMILY MILTON SMITH (23 YEARS - FEMALE) AUSTRALIA
COMMUNITY LEADER & VOLUNTEER

If there is one thing that Emily wants the world to know, it’s that each person’s voice is powerful, valuable and meaningful. Emily’s life has been defined by her journey to find her own voice and in doing so inspiring others to use their voice to speak out and take action to make a difference. Emily is a dedicated Girl Guide volunteer and a community leader, passionate about gender equality and justice and committed to boosting youth participation through human rights education and advocacy. Emily believes that education is transformative, not only for individuals but communities at large. The Girl Guide method of education facilitates civic participation, peer leadership and personal development, approaching learning holistically and experientially. Through non-formal education, Girl Guides enables girls and young women to grow into confident, self-respecting, responsible community members.

Emily joined Girl Guides at 8 years old with a strong sense of social responsibility. Girl Guides deliver community development initiatives to improve civic participation and Emily mentors and coaches a number of girls and women directly, continuing to make a positive and meaningful impact to the lives of many. With a history of extensive volunteer leadership to a number of not-for-profits and local government youth services, Emily currently holds the Advocacy portfolio in her Girl Guide organization and is the youngest appointed office-bearer in Australia. She continues to drive Australian Girl Guides advocacy, not only being critical in establishing several policy position papers based upon wide membership consultations of women and girls, Emily develops programs and events to support Girl Guides become advocates for change in local and global contexts.

Emily is a key member of several National Project Teams in Girl Guides, implementing innovative programs and campaigns to empower girls with tools and strategies to be agent of their lives. Emily’s dedication and vision has been critical to the success of these projects and her voice has inspired others to take action. These programs, such as ‘Free Being Me’ and ‘Voices Against Violence’, build body confidence, facilitate media literacy, challenge discriminatory social norms and gender stereotyping and promulgate a gender- and youth-sensitive human rights-based approach to engaging and empowering young people. Body confidence education is incredibly important to Emily also as she cared for family members battling eating disorders, witnessing the trauma and challenge it brought on. Research shows that body-related anxieties limit youth participation and disproportionately affects girls, curtailing their engagement...
with the processes that affect their lives. Girls are more affected by a number of global challenges, where gender discrimination is further compacted by other intersections of identity, but most notably their age. Girls and young women can have transformative effects on their communities if we continue to invest and contribute to their development and empowerment.

In 2013, Emily represented The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts as a Youth Delegate to the United Nations’ 57th Commission on the Status of Women in New York, where she used her voice, advocating decision-makers to recognize girls’ rights and specific experiences of gender-based violence in international development policy. Emily's expertise in non-formal education initiatives, gender and youth participation made her well placed to liaise with key stakeholders in civil society and government to make meaningful contributions to the priority examination of gender-based violence.

At the United Nations, Emily supported Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to launch the Voices Against Violence Curriculum, a primary prevention education program to tackle underlying causes of violence, as part of a wider ‘Stop the Violence’ Campaign. This program is profoundly close to Emily's heart: having grown up with adversity, experiencing domestic violence, Emily's journey has been shaped by personal trauma and resilience. Refusing to let these experiences define her life, Emily put her courage and determination into doing good and became a tireless advocate for young people. In building up others, Emily built up herself to become a champion for change.

In 2015, Emily returned to the United Nations 59th Commission on the Status of Women, volunteering as a Delegation Coordinator, where she was a key part of the leadership and management of the highly successful, albeit small delegation of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. Emily coordinated the communications advocacy to amplify the voices of girls and young women in the 20 year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action. Emily has spoken at the United Nations pressing upon the importance of preventative education to enable transformative and sustainable change to communities around the world.

With the support of a movement of 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, Emily made valuable connections during this time to become a strong voice for girls and young women, lobbying her government to take forward a platform for girls rights. Her voice has continued to impact Australian government and civil society and the growing recognition afforded to the significance of girls and
young women as leaders, not just of tomorrow but as of now. Her voice might just be one voice, but Emily shows that one voice can make a difference and that one voice can encourage others to speak up and speak out.

Recently Emily was announced as a Queen’s Young Leader, recognizing her important civic contributions to the Australian community and domestically as the New South Wales Youth Volunteer of the Year. Emily learnt that her capacity to strive to make a difference was a valuable tool for navigating her world and defining her life. As a Girl Guide Leader she continues to empower others girls and young women to be socially responsible and engaged citizens. Emily believes that young people are passionate, innovative, collaborative and visionary and in boosting youth participation society is facilitating opportunities to shine a light of these realities and let the voices of young people be heard.

In terms of Emily’s academic background, she has completed a Bachelor of Art Theory and a Bachelor of Arts in History and Gender Studies, graduating with Distinction in 2013. She is currently writing a dissertation in visual culture, examining commercial cyber-communication.
HENRIETTA MCNEILL [24 YEARS - FEMALE] NEW ZEALAND
POLICY ADVISOR, YOUTH VOLUNTEER

Her career path has led her to working at various levels, including working in the European Parliament, rural local government in New Zealand, as well as the private sector in Samoa; however, in her spare time, she is an advocate for youth issues and youth voice being heard at the decision-making table.

Her passion for youth issues ignited when she and co-author Charlotte McGimpsey saw an opportunity to bring university students together to discuss politics and participation, a lively discussion which brought about action and the topic of their chapter. This was at a time when Christchurch, New Zealand, where they lived, had gone through a fatal earthquake, which had damaged most of the city and affected the population immensely. Despite the rubble and rebuilding concerns, the people of the city were collaborating to find ways in which they could contribute and bring the community together. Volunteerism became an ingrained part of the community, and people wanted to have a voice.

Henrietta’s attitude towards life is to always find opportunities (and apply for them, because you are always in with a chance), and if they do not seem available, then to find the gaps where there could be opportunities, and to make them yourself. The Christchurch Earthquakes opened up many gaps where the community could create opportunities, the silver lining to a catastrophic event. Henrietta and her colleagues found and created opportunities for young people to have a voice and contribute to the bigger picture. This led Henrietta to consult with and speak on behalf of young New Zealanders at the 2014 Y20 in Sydney, a function of the G20 Summit. Young New Zealanders concerns to the Y20 strongly involved sustainable development, which led to Henrietta heading the Aotearoa Youth Leadership Institute delegation to the United Nations Small Island Developing States Conference in Samoa, where she could speak to other youth involved with this issue from around the Pacific and the world.

Henrietta has been involved with youth issues at a policy level, presenting advice to the New Zealand Ministry of Youth Development, and being the only New Zealand delegate at the First Global Forum on Youth Policies in Azerbaijan. Henrietta has also shared her experiences in youth participation and policy development at the Seminar on Youth Participation and International Humanitarianism in Taiwan in 2015.

These achievements have not dissuaded Henrietta from being involved with practical implementation of youth programmes in New Zealand. She has
facilitated the Southland District Youth Council, and organised innovative youth community leadership and social entrepreneurship programmes, and currently sits on the Citizenship Trust (www.citizenship.org.nz), which promotes youth participation in decision-making by making civic education available to all young New Zealanders. She is also assisting with youth employment programmes around the world.

Henrietta’s advice to the world community is to be involved in decision-making processes, because they affect your life, both now and in the future. If you find it complex, then find a way to simplify it – break it down in a way that you can understand it, because the chances are, that other people are finding it tricky too. Many people say that young people have to be included because they are the leaders of tomorrow, to which Henrietta says – young people have to be included because they are participants in today’s society, in many areas, they are today’s leaders. Henrietta says that young people should shatter the negative perception and be involved in innovative ways, through technology, culture, music – any way that young people want to voice their opinion. Henrietta’s ambition is for decision-makers on every level to recognise this and to include young people as participants and decision-makers at the table. Henrietta is an Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society.
Imagine you are living in a very remote area where there is no electricity, no health services, no clean water, poor infrastructure, and where school age kids could not go to school because there are no funds. Why? The reason is simple; 80% of the total population of 7.8 million of Papua New Guineans are still living in rural areas, with little or no infrastructure and survive purely on subsistence farming. John grew up in such a rural community and was one of the fortunate ones, including his younger brother to have access to better education because his father was a teacher.

When John started university in 2008, he began giving back to his community as a “Change Agent”. Having the motivation of helping his community with its problems, involved spending time with unemployed youths and leaders during his vacations to try to find ways that they could help themselves and their children rather than waiting for the government or not-for-profit organisations to help them.

John’s ideas of bringing change into the community were recognised by the community members in 2010 and they started “Seeds of Hope PNG”, a self-help programme to raise funds for education and help the community to participate in activities like roads and infrastructures, community health post, etc. in their village.

He joined Spark*International in 2011 whilst at Divine Word University (DWU), Madang, PNG when he recognised the similarity between the values and philosophies of Spark*International and the Seeds of Hope PNG program. This gave him the opportunity to expand Seeds of Hope PNG to what it is today (www.seedsofhopepng.com). The values and philosophies of Spark* are simple: “Local Change makers have the local solutions to overcome poverty in their own communities”.

John initiated a potato project in the village growing and selling potatoes to pay school fees for students in the community and provide income opportunities for the unemployed youths. To date, they have helped 8 tertiary students and 5 secondary school students attending private schools. As a result of all their work in the community, UMW Niugini Ltd donated us two new chainsaws to build their houses under the Home Ownership Scheme. Also, used their membership funds and hired a backhoe which ploughed a piece of land at the newly built Waknam Community Health Post. Also, under his leadership, members have built two
new roads with their hands with spades and bush knives which was completed in 2014 and now the members and surrounding community members are using these roads and make much easier for their mothers to bring their produce to the market and school children to go to school unlike before that we used the bush track.

Through John’s leadership, he was recognised for Community Service and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), PNG office awarded him the “PwC Recognise FY13 Maoro Award” and also received a Community Service Award from PwC East Cluster Team “PwC Asia Pacific Recognise Award FY13” in Perth, Australia at PwC New Partners Conference in September 2013.

He was also one of the pioneer PNG-Australia Emerging Leaders attended PNG-Australia Emerging Leaders Dialogue held at Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney in November 2013 to discuss issues that affect these nations and how best Emerging Leaders can contribute and recommend for improvements. He presented a paper to the audience on “Reform and innovations in the delivery of health and education services in PNG”. He is now the Alumni of PNG-AUS Network and recently wrote an article on Why and How young people should involve in civil society activities that was published on PNG-AUS Network website> http://auspng.lowyinstitute.org/publications/double-take

With all these achievements, he received the Queen’s Young Leaders Award from Her Majesty, The Queen at Buckingham Palace on the 22 June 2015. He acknowledge the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust and being able to meet with very high profile people like UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, David Beckham and the Royal Family. John also acknowledge that the Commonwealth is regenerating and the Queen’s Young Leaders are all making a significant contribution towards our Commonwealth nations.
Knowledge is power, unity is strength, and attitude is everything.

KATE ROW (22 YEARS - FEMALE) AUSTRALIA
BEHAVIOURAL THERAPIST, YOUTH LEADER & VOLUNTEER

Kate’s first involvements starting as a young youth promoter were enthusiastically involving in charity door-knocks, swim-a-thon and read-a-thon fundraisers, school Interact - Rotary club committee events throughout primary and high school. At university, Kate involved herself in more than 20 different voluntary programmes, community groups and NGOs work including mentoring students to raise their tertiary education goals, working as a behavioural therapist with children with autism spectrum disorder, coordinating awareness events for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, participation in Youth Parliament, the Layne Beachley Aim for the Stars Foundation, Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre’s Youth Brains Trust and various other youth-empowering Think Tanks. By age 20, Kate had completed Bachelors degrees in Science - Psychology and Arts - Political Science. She had also studied abroad a semester in the United Kingdom and Mexico and remains part-time completing a Master of International Public Health. Kate is currently making a difference through the University of Queensland’s Young Alumni Advisory Board, social enterprise projects and being part of the Queen’s Young Leader network.

When Kate was fortunate to be invited to attend a speech by the United States President Obama around the 2014 G20 leaders summit, a phrase that she believes reflects the opportunities for today’s youth’s positive impact said was how “we know that our world is getting smaller… even the Pacific has become a lake” exemplifying how connected in ways previously unimaginable is this generation. She believes that it is this ‘act locally, think globally’ mind set that ideally equips this generation that wants to do well and do good. She would encourage young people to go to meetings where you may know no one else or be the youngest person in the room by several decades, if you’re interested in accelerating development, growth and understandings to share with others in that space.

Kate considers keeping a goals settings journal a vital way to take the time to reflect and refine on a monthly basis. For her, this involves rating wholistic goals, the number of which there are is the age she is that year, out of ten for their performance that prior month then selecting the next three for daily focus on. Last year, one was to learn the capital city of every country. Travel inspires her, as does that quote - “the best things in life are the people we love, the places we've been and the memories we've made along the way.”

Kate’s biggest challenge overcome was from severe scoliosis, wearing a Boston
brace for three years and having titanium rods spinal fusion at age 15. Whilst this limited her time to play sports and socialise as much as she would have liked during this time, she has definitely made up for it since and remains enjoying swimming, playing tennis and new adventures. Kate emphasises how this hurdle was minor in comparison to what others endure and thrive through, yet acknowledges it as a formative experience that’s made her stronger, motivated and more determined to get the most out of life and for others with a passionate world view. Kate’s most recent work has been as a Young Ambassador with UNICEF Australia – advocating child rights for every child, everywhere to live a full life. This work has seen her contribute to listening to children about what is important to them – which she believes is crucial for all decision-makers to do, for their wisdom and insight into issues that affect them. This team compiled The Things That Matter Report compiled to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Rights of the Child with key recommendations for implementation. Her advice to fellow young people in the Commonwealth and beyond would be to: “involve yourself in your community, say yes to opportunities where you can make a difference, be grateful for all experiences and always follow your passions.” As for future ambitions, Kate intends to follow this advice and embrace initiatives that enhance health, happiness and living a full life in her adored home town of Brisbane and wherever else life may take her. The Readers may reach Kate on Twitter and Instagram: @KateeeRow and email kate.row@uqconnect.edu.au
TIM POASA BAICE (30 YEARS - FEMALE) SAMOA
YOUTH ADVOCATE & VOLUNTEER

Tim is from a small island in the Pacific, the Independent State of Samoa and currently lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand. Growing up in South Auckland, Tim attended Otahuhu College and went on to complete his Bachelors of Arts Double Major in History and Political Studies in 2008, a Post Graduate Diploma in Arts – Specializing in Development Studies in 2009, and a Masters of Arts in Development Studies in 2012 at the University of Auckland. He is currently the Academic Coordinator for Pasifika Success, an equity Programme at the University of Auckland’s Faculty of Education and Social Work, a role he has held for two years. His postgraduate studies looked at the disproportionate effects of poverty on youth in the Pacific, and his masters’ thesis research sought to understand the way in which Youth Agency (a concept in the social sciences) impacted on the way in which Samoan and Tongan youth understood and engaged in Political Participation.

Tim’s journey as a youth advocate began quite early in his upbringing in Auckland as a part of an ethnic minority and within that; a culture that struggled to and continues to struggle (in different ways) to establish itself within an entirely different context where he learnt quite quickly that being Samoan and being young that there were quite inherent challenges one faced in navigating and negotiating socio cultural identities and roles whilst at the same time living working and negotiating western concepts and spaces.

Tim gained much of his experience and passion for youth advocacy and equity through his experiences as a student and was active in the students associations for much of his university studies. In 2006 Tim was the Pacific Island Students Officer (PISO) on the Auckland University Students Association (AUSA). Through this role he was also the National Pacific Tertiary Representative of the Ministry of Education’s Pacific Advisory Group. In 2007, he took on the challenge of president of the Auckland University Pacific Islands Students Association (AUPISA) and from there; president of the University of Auckland Samoan Students Association (UASSA) 2009 -2011. His main focus was ensuring that the voices/issues and concerns of Pacific students were represented and holding the University to account on its equity obligations.

Tim’s passion for youth advocacy and equity has also influenced his community activities and involvement. Tim has supported a wide range of causes in NZ and within the Pacific ranging from the Samoa Business Network Incorporated (SBN) in 2012 a support network for Samoan business owners and entrepreneurs in...
Auckland and focused specifically on its charitable work. In 2012, in response to the devastation caused by Cyclone Evan in Samoa, the SBN partnered with Women in Business Development (WIBDI) in Samoa to support the rejuvenation of a coconut oil processing plant in Sa’anapu, Safata. Tim was also a volunteer for the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) Youth Group and supported their work in the lead up to the 2014 NZ General Election.

Tim has also volunteered for the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) and was the organiser of a parallel session at the United Nations Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) Conference in Samoa 2014, designed to raise greater awareness of SVSG’s work, and to commit SIDS Governments, civil society, ngos and the like to commit to greater action and attention to the issues and needs of women and children in developing countries particularly within the area of sexual and domestic violence. Tim is also currently volunteering for the Samoa National Youth Council (SNYC) in Samoa, and provides technical and social media networking support and will be supporting the SNYC in their work around the Commonwealth Youth Meeting and Games hosted by Samoa in September 2015.

Tim highlights that his experiences haven’t always been easy, coming through a New Zealand University as a young Samoan and also engaging in Pacific research as a Samoan based in New Zealand, and acknowledges that open, genuine respectful and reciprocal relationships with elder colleagues and mentors create more conducive and empowering work environments for youth. It is through these experiences which have lead Tim to become passionate about youth advocacy, intergenerational solidarity and equity.

He says the key to succeeding in navigating different social, cultural age and status related boundaries and spaces relies on being open and honest, accessing support where needed and being open to advice and constructive criticism. Young people and young leaders who are able to must work together and re-create empowering spaces and opportunities for other young people. Tim acknowledges that at times it can be difficult for youth of the Pacific to speak up given socio-cultural perceptions of their roles and status in society and encourages them to continue representing the youth voice, particularly those most vulnerable and marginalised in society.
WILLY MISSACK (25 YEARS - FEMALE) VANUATU
YOUTH VOLUNTEER & LEADER

Willy is from Vanuatu, a small nation Island in the mind hart of the Pacific Ocean. He says, “First of all, I am very happy to be one of the first ever winner of the Queen’s Young Leaders Award that recognise what I did in my communities and I acknowledge the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust for all organisation to make this happen and also thank the Queen's Young Leaders team to help us for everything, and also all the mentors and teachers from the University of Cambridge. And I also acknowledge the Commonwealth that is regenerating and that the Queen’s Young Leaders are all making a significant contribution towards that; and also to all Queen's Young Leaders Winners to thank them for sharing experiences and learning from each other”.

Willy’s project is water sustainable for local communities in Vanuatu. He began to focus on it when he had started working with an NGO called Live and Learn Vanuatu. He worked as a volunteer in a WASH project. He joined another project in with the UNDP Vanuatu, the PRRP project (Pacific Resilience Risk Program) that helped local communities to put in place their response plans for different risks, such as cyclones, earthquakes, tsunami and landslide. With the PRRP project he moves from different islands of Vanuatu, and even to schools.

One of the other program Willy worked on, is with the Baha’i communities. Through this program he helped people with different age groups to build their spiritual capacities and to serve others. The program trained youths to become mentors for a junior youth program (program that targeted the age group between 12 to 15 years). The mentors helped this age group to become role models in their communities by building up the vision and spiritual capacities that would be instrumental in serving other people.

In the WASH project, Willy’s main focus was on water sustainable development in local communities. This was because water is one of the problems in his village. This programme offered training to communities on how to sustain water, the importance of having one unique vision, and also the training in hygiene. Then the programme helped the communities to find funds for their activities on sustaining water in their villages.

From all the projects Willy did, he learnt many things. He articulates, “We have to remember that if we have a solid vision and purpose, we will move no matter what and that we will always be motivated and determinate to start and complete what we have started, and that we will never give up, but there is always hope
when we go through crises”.

The main challenge that Willy had faced during his projects was the search for funding opportunities. For most of the project, especially for water project he needed material that were beyond the communities’ capacity and resources. The other challenge is the communication and transferring information in the highly rural areas in which those communities live. Despite the constraints in terms of funds, they try to do what they can do using all the available resources for the impanation of the relevant projects.

To conclude, Willy would like to encourage youths to make changes and help building the world a better place for everyone to live. He advocates, “In whatever you do, either in the community level or national level, I believe you can make a difference and a change. You have to always remember that someone is believe in you, and your work will be known by the whole world. And, you have to know that all you do will shape you and give you vision and will help you know what your purpose is”. Willy believes in this quote from the Baha’i writings: “Youth can move the world”. He further articulates, “We young people can change and move our world and make it a better place for everyone”.
CHAPTER 3

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES
The essence of volunteerism lies in the very core of the social, political and economic life of every nation across the globe that embraces it. As a matter of fact, volunteerism is defined by the United Nations as ‘an activity undertaken out of free will, for the general public good, and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor’. Keeping in mind that it is conducted for the benefit of the society as a whole, it emerges that in theory as well as in practice, volunteerism is a powerful source of beneficial change, transforming the realities of individuals, societies and nations around the globe.

Without a doubt, volunteerism is remarkably popular among young people who seek a tunnel to flow their excess energies, passions, and creativity to causes they wholeheartedly believe in and support. Moreover, the advance of technology during the past decade, in tandem with the relevant adeptness of young people, have rendered the youth the main drivers of change, and increased their power significantly. This is especially evident by the wake of youth movements globally, and the attention that governments and international organisations begin to pay to young people’s views and needs. Therefore, one can confidently state that youth volunteerism is the principal steering force within today’s multifaceted societies.

Significantly, the practice of youth volunteerism is received with varying enthusiasm across the globe, with America and the Arab countries having the highest and lowest percentages of youth volunteerism respectively. A study conducted by Silatech in 2013 finds the median ‘volunteered with an organization within the past 30 days’ by region among young people, aged 15 to 29. According to this research, the percentage of young people that volunteered in the past month by region is the following: Americas 22%, Commonwealth of Independent States 20%, Asia 18%, Europe 17%, Sub-Saharan Africa 14%, and Arab world 9%.


Despite this suggestion, the popularity of youth volunteerism is on the ascending in most regions of the world. This is especially true in societies that are supportive of this movement, and in those nations where volunteerism ecosystems exist. Over and above that, the high unemployment rates among the youth, as well as the rapid technological advancements of the past decade and ability of young people to receive and interpret information quickly, offer plenty of opportunity for volunteerism to flourish further. Thus, it follows without saying that the phenomenon of youth volunteerism leads to certain positive outcomes in the economic, political and social facets of a nation, which will be presented over the course of this paper.

**Social change**

To begin with, youth volunteerism contributes favourably to the society by promoting social causes that improve the community and lead to a more prosperous and fulfilling life. Benefitting young volunteers individually as well as collectively, youth volunteerism strengthens trust, solidarity, participation, and mutual understanding, which in turn makes young volunteers active and meaningful players of their society. According to a discussion paper of the United Nations Volunteers, volunteerism instils in volunteers a sense of ability to participate in society and a keenness to improve it. More exactly, young volunteers will turn out to be more active citizens by voting, volunteering further and continuing to be active citizens in their communities. In addition, various studies in different parts of the world demonstrate that young people ‘yearn to be part of society and to be respected for their contributions’ and very often ‘possess the desire to play an active role in improving their countries’ (Yates and Youniss, 1999 in UNV, 2006).

Similarly, voluntary activities undertaken by young people are a powerful tool of youth empowerment, enabling young people to develop their personalities, skills and abilities noticeably. This gives them the necessary impetus to undertake new projects and initiatives with confidence. Realising this, governments around the world have developed programmes that aim to strengthen the volunteerism ethos among young people. For example, the Youth Board of Cyprus has created the ‘Youth Volunteer Team’ to foster volunteerism among young Cypriots and cultivate the mentality of contributing positively in the society. Some of the advantages for young people accruing from this programme are contribution to

---

the wider community, building self-confidence and developing their personality, gaining new knowledge and experiences, meeting new people and enriching their CV.\textsuperscript{4}

The phenomenon of volunteerism is also inextricably linked to the development of a collective consciousness and social solidarity. Capitalising on this shared spirit of responsibility, youth volunteerism develops the necessary structures and momentum to involve young people in common development challenges. Through volunteerism young people can offer solutions to global issues such as poverty eradication, sustainable development, disaster prevention and health, and most of all fighting discrimination in all its forms (A/RES/63/153). A number of global youth forums aimed at addressing these development challenges are being organized on a frequent basis on local, national and global levels in recent years. As a result, leaders around the world have a clearer view of the topics that young people care about and their respective opinions, which in turn constitutes a step in the right direction for positive action worldwide.

**Economic change**

As the global employment market is heavily affected by the recent economic downturn, young people resort to volunteerism to differentiate themselves and beat competition in the job market. Internships and previous work experiences are no longer enough to make young people stand out to employers. On that account, employers perceive youth volunteerism as an altruistic activity undertaken by those candidates that are willing to go the extra mile in the work place to achieve the required goals. By the same token, young people view volunteerism as the ideal value-added supplement to their formal education that provides them with crucial skills valued by employers, such as problem-solving, communication, teamwork, leadership, creativity and planning.\textsuperscript{5}

Relevantly, a study has identified a positive correlation between volunteerism and employment, where volunteerism increases the chance of employment by 27 per cent. Specifically, individuals without high school diploma or analogous certificates have 51 per cent higher chances to get employed if they volunteer, whereas individuals living in rural areas who volunteer have 55 per cent higher chances for employment. Importantly, the relationship between volunteerism


and employment was found by this research as enduring no matter the gender, race, age, ethnicity, and rate of unemployment. Hence, youth volunteerism is one of the safest paths to employment in today’s competitive job market.

Moreover, a strong link between volunteerism and youth entrepreneurship comes into view. In fact, by engaging in volunteering activities, young people gain access to new information, networks, financing and resources, necessary when starting new enterprises. On top of that, young people who practice volunteerism are viewed as more trustworthy and reliable to those looking for partners to start new projects and enterprises. Thus, volunteerism not only opens new doors of opportunities for employment of young people, it also leads to greater economic prospects through youth entrepreneurship and job creation. Once governments realise the positive correlation between economic development and volunteerism, they will enthusiastically support young volunteers.

**Political change**

Young people have their own individual views and are well able to play an active role in the politics of their countries. Nevertheless, a 2012 survey conducted by the United Nations shows that one of the principal challenges that young people face are restrictions to take part in decision-making procedures. This creates a feeling of social exclusion and marginalization among young men and women who are kept out of the political affairs of their countries. States must therefore respond to the willingness of young people to get involved in politics, by developing and strengthening the required participatory structures, and by building trust between the political institutions and youth. Emphasis should also be placed on inclusive participation of all young people, making sure that vulnerable groups are equally included.

Correspondingly, volunteerism provides the scope for young people to fight for political causes they believe in and support transitions toward democracy. This was evident not only in the Arab revolts of 2011 where young people played

---


a key role, but also in the Hong Kong protests of 2014 that were organised by students as a result of the suggested amendments to the Hong Kong electoral system. These examples reveal how young people react to political changes, and act as generators of political change by organizing themselves through voluntary means. Likewise, these paradigms demonstrate young people’s need to be taken into account, as they constitute the most informed and educated generation of all.

Realising the great potential of youth volunteerism, the United Nations General Assembly has inaugurated the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in 1970 in order to promote volunteerism as support mechanism for peace and development across the globe. Similarly, building on the impetus generated by young people during the Arab Spring’s uprisings throughout the Arab world, the Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future was created to build the capacity and skills of young Arabs, enhancing therefore their social inclusion and participation in the socio-economic and political development in their region.

Taking all the above into consideration, it emerges that youth volunteerism has significant positive outcomes on the social, economic, and political spheres of nations. As we have also seen, young people are especially enthusiastic about offering their ideas, energies and actions for the general public good to causes and organisations they deem as worthwhile. Besides, young people’s technological savvy and ability to receive and interpret information quickly renders young men and women the change makers of today and the key stakeholders of any society.

That being the case, governments can benefit substantially from embracing youth into their decision making structures and involving them in all aspects of their community. Equally, countries that support youth volunteerism structures and provide the necessary related resources, contribute towards creating more educated and active citizens, and benefit considerably from the talents and capabilities of young people. What is more, as today’s youth are the most connected and internationally minded generation, they are well positioned to contribute to development targets on local, national and international levels.

By and large, young people are the future of every country and nation across the world. Hence, governments must pay close attention to its youth and their development. It is moreover the responsibility of governments to encourage

---

their active citizenship and participation in the social, economic and political affairs of their nation. Youth volunteerism is the ideal medium to achieve this, and should be encouraged by governments and organisations in every country. It would therefore not be an overstatement to claim that states should adopt volunteerism as an education tool that can offer an abundant of possibilities to the youth. As Pythagoras, the great Greek philosopher and mathematician, said ‘the beginning of every government starts with the education of our youth’.

REFERENCES:


WHEN PEOPLE TALK, GREAT THINGS HAPPEN: THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PEACE-BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION

SALMA YUSUF (SRI LANKA)

To determine whether youth can play a central role in securing a permanent peace, it will help to ascertain whether youth played a role in generating conflict in the first place. In the case of Sri Lanka, it cannot be clearer: Initial youth uprisings which planted the seeds of the three-decade ethnic conflict are a fact in our country’s history. Both the ignition of the ethnic conflict and the JVP insurrections have stemmed from our Universities as well as from other youth in the country. In the Sri Lankan context, from the viewpoint of the country’s youth, these problems were exacerbated by several other considerations, one of which was the increasing mismatch between education and manpower needs of the economy. By about the end of the first decades after independence, the educational system that had been shaped to cater to the requirements of an earlier era had remained unchanged.

Flash forward to 2009, the call must be for long-term stabilization to consolidate the dividends that come with the cessation of armed hostilities. Increased investment in the country’s most potent social capital becomes imperative in post-war efforts at development, security, reconciliation and peace-building. In contrast to most countries in the developing world, the case for investment in youth is very strong particularly in a country like Sri Lanka which records a high literacy rate of over 90%. This means that there already exists a resource pool with a degree of skills and knowledge which is an ideal springboard to move society to a largely middle – income status.

Increasing opportunities through education and capacity building must be central to preventing future youth unrests in the country. Keeping youth uneducated or un-fulfilled in an environment where they are not able to realize their potential economically, intellectually, socially or spiritually is a recipe for disaster. Such will only lead to more instability and frustration in the youth creating within them a tendency to revive old conflicts or generate new ones.

In a post-war era, youth in Sri Lanka are experiencing a unique situation – they
undergo a dual transition, that is, from youth to adulthood against a larger backdrop of the country's conflict to peace transition. This dual transition is particularly challenging for youth and must be taken seriously in all national plans and programmes.

This brings me to the logical question: why is this dual transition important to consider in reconciliation and social cohesion? It is important because it means that we, the youth of today, have a unique responsibility, unlike any other generation before us, to foster reconciliation and social cohesion in our countries, regions and world.

It has been famously said that youth is wasted on the young. George Bernard Shaw was quite clear in expanding on this, his quote. He defined the statement as derogatory when he said that “young people are brainless, and don’t know what they have; they squander every opportunity of being young, on being young.” Basically he meant that youth’s waste their youth doing youthful things of little use and those who are mature enough to do useful things have little youth.

Today, in the twenty first century however, young people are beginning to reverse the fallacy in this belief. Today, it is not merely impractical but also undesirable for young people to remain beneficiaries only in a process that will deeply impact their lives, their future and the future of their world. Hence, we are humbled to be a part of a generation where there is an ever-growing awareness on the need for youth to be stakeholders in national, regional and international governance mechanisms. Such awareness includes the realization that youth can, want and indeed must contribute towards the making of a better world.

There is beginning to emerge in recent times a movement to institutionalize and structure youth engagement which is to be welcomed and strengthened. There exist a handful of concrete examples worthy of mention: At the national level, a process for youth-led reconciliation was institutionalized in Sri Lanka with the setting up of the Sri Lankan Youth Parliament in 2010 following the conclusion of the country's three-decade armed struggle in 2009. 25 percent of the youth parliamentarians at the Sri Lankan Youth Parliament are from previously conflict-affected areas and hence are given a democratic and legitimate space to represent and voice their concerns and aspirations for reconciliation and social cohesion at both national and local levels. This is a poignant example of where the local feeds into the national, a key requisite for genuine and lasting
reconciliation. Sri Lanka hosted the World Conference on Youth in May 2014 which was proposed in recognition of a combinations of current global realities: the fact that the youth of this world need to have their effective participation increased in the decision making processes of the post-2015 development agenda, facilitate effective partnerships, and establish a follow-up mechanism that support young people as partners in the global implementation of the post-2015 development agenda at the level of the United Nations.

From a regional perspective, the Commonwealth set up a process for dialogue between youth and Heads of Government at Commonwealth Youth Forums and went one step further at the 9th Commonwealth Youth Forum to set up a Commonwealth Youth Council which has now become an institutionalized and official voice for the young people of the Commonwealth.

At the international level, the United Nations Secretary General has made youth one of his second term priorities: he has recently appointed a special envoy on youth while UN-HABITAT have taken the lead in lobbying for a Permanent Forum on Youth to be in-built within the United Nations system.

Having set the context, it is fitting to shift attention to the concepts of Reconciliation and Social Cohesion and their necessity. The subject is a broad one, hence, the below seeks to highlight key aspects of the concepts within a larger awareness of Democracy.

Democracy is a system for managing difference without recourse to violence. Democracy, in other words, is a system for managing conflict. A functioning democracy, then, is built on a dual foundation: One, a set of fair procedures for peacefully handling the issues that divide a society, that is, the political and social structures of governance and two, a set of working relationships between the groups involved. The conclusion to all this is that relationships matter. And that is where reconciliation comes in. It is important to point out that the relationship which must be addressed is not simply that between parliamentarians or leaders, but between whole communities.

Reconciliation is a complex term. There is little agreement on its definition. This is mainly because reconciliation is both a goal and a process. A second source of complexity is that the process of reconciliation happens in many contexts. The focus of my remarks is reconciliation after sustained and widespread violent conflict.
Reconciliation is an over-arching process which includes the search for truth, justice, forgiveness, and healing. At its simplest, it means finding a way to live alongside former enemies—to coexist with them, to develop the degree of cooperation necessary to share our society with them, so that we all have better lives together than we have had separately.

Politics is a process to deal with the issues that have divided us in the past. Reconciliation is a parallel process that redesigns the relationships between us. While achieving reconciliation is no easy task the effort carries a great reward: effective reconciliation is the best guarantee that the violence of the past will not return. There is a moral case to be made that reconciliation is the right thing to do. But there is also a powerful pragmatic argument to be made: positive working relationships generate the atmosphere within which governance can thrive, while negative relations will work to undermine even the best system of governance.

And so we reach our basic definition of reconciliation: it is a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future.

Social cohesion on the other hand, refers to people’s relationships and interactions in society. Social cohesion is a social process which aims to consolidate plurality of citizenship by reducing inequality and promoting space for political and judicial accountability for injustice.

It is the meeting point of social democracy and political democracy, where human beings have the capacity to influence the decision-making processes that affect their lives. A cohesive society is a prerequisite for political democracy and social stability. It is evident that a society with evenly distributed wealth is better able to achieve higher levels of productivity and consequently generate greater economic growth in the long term. The creation of more social space to enable citizens to develop their full selves and decent standards of living is the best mechanism for reducing social disintegration.

At this juncture, I would like to contextualize the concepts and share a few emerging ideas in the global context that can be creatively and innovatively used to foster pluralism and peaceful co-existence in our societies and our world and from which youth particularly can take inspiration to play a role in peace-building and social cohesion. Two particular initiatives are worthy of consideration in this context.
First, the United Nations Dialogue among Civilizations Project is worth revisiting. The year 2001 was declared by the United Nations as the “International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations” which was a logical sequel to the celebration, in 2000, of the “International Year for the Culture of Peace.” The aim was to provide impetus to plan and implement appropriate cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations, including organizing conferences and seminars and disseminating information and scholarly material on the subject.

The year provided the opportunity to emphasize that the present globalization process does not only encompass economic, financial and technological aspects, but must also focus on human, cultural, spiritual dimensions and on the interdependence of humankind and its rich diversity.

The founding principles of a movement for inter-cultural dialogue are worth revisiting even today, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, for an assessment of relevance to a local context of intra-state relations. Such a movement seeks to analyze the dynamics of interaction between cultures by highlighting their mutual contributions, borrowings and interactions. The aim is to acquire a better understanding of the long-term processes that are the mainspring of the memory of peoples. They are invariably the source of prejudice and incomprehension, if not intolerance of others, and they lay the foundations for dialogue between different civilizations, cultures, religions and spiritual traditions. This approach transcends the traditional, reductive approach to intercultural dialogue addressing only the mutual knowledge of cultures and civilizations.

One of the goals of dialogue among civilizations is to spread knowledge and appreciation of the historical and cultural background of peoples living in different circumstances and areas of the world. Often, the lack of mutual understanding prevents the process of constructive communication and cross-fertilization. Inter-cultural dialogue has often been defined as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that would lead to a deeper understanding of the other.

However, while dialogue is critical, it must be followed with carefully developed measures designed to create and preserve a harmonious and inclusive society. A harmonious and inclusive society in turn enables the individual to participate in and to identify himself or herself with the community as a whole. Such identification is a key factor in the prevention of future conflicts and in advancing
A second and more recent initiative that I would like to draw your attention to is a more recent one and chaired by the internationally renowned scholar and peace activist, Amartya Sen. The Commonwealth Commission of Respect and Understanding which was constituted in the 2005, produced a report in 2007 called The Civil Paths to Peace. The report and its recommendations have thus far, and unfortunately I add, spent more time on the shelf than in governance programmes. Therefore, it is an opportune moment for young people of the world to revisit the deliberations of the eleven thought leaders who drafted the report. I believe the insights and practical ways forward contained therein to be inspirational to building pluralism and peace in our societies and world.

Civil Paths to Peace makes specific mention to the role of youth in resolving conflict. The report recommends new forms of political participation, an emphasis on non-sectarian non-parochial education that expands rather than reduces the reach of understanding, and greater support to young people, who represent over half of the Commonwealth’s 2 billion citizens.

I share with you three particular aspects of the report that flew out of the pages, as it were, and struck me instantly. First, the need for new thinking about conflicts in the world given the rise of terrorism, extremism, conflict and violence and its rise in the contemporary world. I would like to add here that we need to channel our creative energies and innovation into finding solutions to traditional and non-traditional threats and causes of conflict. This I believe to be the only way forward in an ever-changing and increasingly globalized world.

Second and often missed in the discourse of conflict and peace is the connection it bears to poverty and inequality. Hence, we must not overlook the larger issues which have the potential to perpetuate and exacerbate conflicts and tension between countries and peoples.

Third, the report highlights how the history of the world matters to contemporary problems, since the effects of past maltreatment and humiliation can last for a very long time. The civil paths must, therefore, include addressing past as well as present humiliations. When, as is sometimes the case, the confrontational perceptions are exaggerated by confusion or magnified through extremist instigation, those misapprehensions should still have to be addressed through civil means, with good use of discussion, open scrutiny and a willingness on the
part of others to listen to complaints and grievances. The outcomes of these changes would have to be periodically evaluated, in a systematic way, since complex and long-standing problems are not easily eradicated.

Civil paths to peace, the Commission argues, are important and can be very effective. Aside from individual policies, some of which have been spelt out in some detail in the report, there is a big general need for understanding the reach and rationale of using civil paths. The need for hard security measures does not in any way reduce the abiding relevance of pursuing the civil routes.

The Commission argues, in particular, that there is a strong need for much more dialogue and discussion on the richness of human identities and the counterproductive nature of placing people in rigidly separated identity-boxes, linked with religion or community. The importance of people’s cosmopolitan identity also demands greater recognition than it tends to get, without denying the relevance of other identities that can comfortably co-exist with a global outlook. At the international level, civil paths will be inescapably linked with multilateral approaches across borders.

Theory aside, there are unique reasons why youth have special power and potential in reconciliation and social cohesion for countries around the world including those of the Commonwealth.

First, young people are more open to change – Young people are searching for new ideas and open to new challenges while adults have already formed their dogmatic discourses.

Second, young people are future-oriented. Since they have more time ahead, they are willing to try alternatives and are more bound to “forget” the past than those who were directly involved in a painful moment of history.

Third, many revolutions were started and led by youth. Students often have more time to think, read, meet colleagues and develop ideas. They also have more time to engage different activists groups. Students historically have always been in the vanguard of social change.

Fourth, youth also create ideas that solve old problems in innovative ways. Youth seek for alternative roots of power and influence.
Fifth, young people do not tend to be burdened with past prejudices and predispositions that their elders sometimes carry forward into the future and therefore, can be an effective enabler for breaking dangerous trends and attitudes in conflict affected societies.

Sixth and perhaps the most important case for calling for a role for youth in peace building is because a peace agreement’s endurance depends on whether the next generations accept or reject it, how they are socialized during the peace process, and their perceptions of what that peace process has achieved.

I would like to recall a broad strategy that I proposed at Sri Lanka’s National Conference on the Role of Youth in Reconciliation:

First, the call must be for State-led programme for structured and constructive youth engagement. This must essentially involve a multi-faceted strategy that attends to the minds, the hearts and souls of the young people of the country.

Second, the youth dimension must be mainstreamed into all existing national policies and plans.

Third, cooperation from the international community in supporting such efforts must be welcomed mainly in the areas of sharing experiences of success stories of youth involvement in peace-building in other post-war contexts.

Fourth, the sharing of experiences and learning can also be a useful platform to engage young members of diaspora communities of former conflict states. Therefore, youth engagement will and must have connections to our multilateral and bilateral foreign policy efforts.

Fifth, further research, study, understanding and awareness of the integral link between youth unrest, conflict and reconciliation must be put in place immediately.

Finally, it is important that we, as youths of today come together, in work and in play, to build bridges, break shackles and shed prejudices. We are not the future, because the future is here already. It is time for us to stand together as one. We must capitalize on the fact that we have the emotional experience of war to propel us to consolidate peace once and for all. We have a compelling responsibility like no other generation before us. It is time that we find new
space and strengthen existing ones in order to do so.

I would like to conclude with the thought on the importance of dialogue for both pluralism and peaceful co-existence. The value of constructive engagement and dialogue for peaceful co-existence with those who we agree and especially with those we disagree cannot be overstated. Because, when people talk, great things happen.

The author can be contacted at salmayusuf@gmail.com

END NOTES:


6. ‘Civil Paths to Peace’, the report of the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding, chaired by the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, was launched on 9 November 2007, at Marlborough House in London. ‘Civil Paths to Peace’ is the result of a mandate from Commonwealth leaders to look into the causes of conflict, violence and extremism in Commonwealth countries. - See more at: http://thecommonwealth.org/history-of-the-commonwealth/civil-paths-peace-launched#sthash.g3Ts1ve1.dpuf


Salma Yusuf delivering under the Session II topic “The Central Role of Youth in Securing a Permanent Peace in Post-war Sri Lanka” said, “Increased investment in the country’s
most potent social capital becomes imperative in post-war efforts at development, security, and reconciliation and peace-building”. Sri Lanka is better placed with its high literacy rates which indicates an “already existing resource pool with a degree of skills and knowledge”, to leapfrog development and move into a high income earner through increased investment in youth. Salma Yusuf also stressed that “increasing opportunities through education and capacity building must be central to preventing future youth unrests in the country. Keeping youth uneducated or un-fulfilled in an environment where they are not able to realize their potential economically, intellectually, socially or spiritually is a recipe for disaster”. Sri Lanka is yet to address, even after three decades of intense conflict, the total inclusion of youth into its national initiatives she said.


WHY AFRICA’S YOUTHS ARE SO PASSIONATE ABOUT CHANGE

PRINCE AKPAH (GHANA)

From across the continent, it is evident most young people are taking not only their personal destinies into their own hands but that of the whole continent with a strong conviction that governments and state agencies are not the only agents of change.

From Algeria to Zimbabwe, they are referred to as people who believe “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” as affirmed by US President, Barack Obama. (Quotes)

Today search engines are flooded with positive results from the continent Africa because major African youths have chosen to rewrite the stories which truly show what young people are currently going to restore the dignity and cultures that we uphold.

From various definitions associated with the word “CHANGE”, the Oxford (Dictionary) quotes it as “arrive at a fresh phase: become new” and this is just the perfect referral to tell the world why Africa’s Youths are so passionate to arrive Africa at a fresh phase hence become a new birthed continent.

Involved in what could be referred to as the best revolution that any continent has birthed yet. The stories told of the actions and passions of these young people of today are unquestionable and can be best described as a germination of great hope for a better future for this land. Even though it will take time to bear the desired fruits, the continent can’t wait to experience the abundance of the works individuals are involved in.

In North Africa, Aya Chebbi is a promising African youth from Tunisian who stands tall among young women in her region as a Pan-African feminist and peace activist representing the underprivileged and vulnerable who have been subjected to various out modern ancestral traditions. She stands tall to echo the nobility of the modern woman and talks about why they deserve respectable places and opportunities in society. She champions the Africa Youth Movement to create the participation and leadership of Africa Youths in the fight for Social Change. (Civicus)
East Africa boasts of Tom Osborn, who is creating a sustainable clean energy source replacing the various traditional ways of cooking in African homes. His initiative is to make cooking simple, making families in rural and peri-urban Kenya cook in a manner that doesn't eventually destroy them and the environment. As he leads GreenChar as its CEO, the technology which is an affordable clean energy Charcoal Briquettes made by the use of sugarcane wastes serves households with long-lasting cooking fuels. (My Naija Naira)

In West Africa, a Nigerian called Tonye Rex Idaminabo who is a lawyer crafts programs to celebrate the fighters and achievers on the continent. Forbes features on his initiatives is a great affirmation that his works have blessed the indigenous African who is contributing to the growth of this Virgin continent. The African Achievers Awards has highlighted why the Future is Africa and why young people need to be inspired and mentored by the works of these unique achievers. (Forbes)

In the south of Africa, William KamKwamba a rural indigene shocked the world with his innovation of a windmill in his village with the guidance of a book he read in the library. Today he has gathered lots of education to distribute his knowledge in helping Africa solves her energy problems. He continues to develop his skills as an inventor dedicated to making affordable products using readily available materials and powered by alternative energy sources that people in Malawi and other countries can adopt to improve their quality of life. (Wikipedia)

Based in the Diaspora, Philip Joel Cole have witnessed the civil war in Liberia which made him care for 60 young people in Sierra Leone as a teacher at age 13. For him, that was the birth of a passion to place Africa’s future on the right path through education. With the recent outbreak of Ebola severely in the two countries he grew up in before heading to the UK, his NGO, the Lifeline Nehemiah Project catered for over 250 patients in their clinic as they sensitized thousands of people about the disease and continues to cater for the orphans of the Ebola Victims. These are people who confirm distance cannot be a barrier to playing the role they have been so passionate about for their dear Africa. (The Nehemiah Project)

With all these testaments I am so glad to share with you the Africa, youths are currently building. The Africa which has been taken over by massive and deeply rooted corruption, election malpractices, civil war, terrorism and many bad factors that have deprived the continent of progressiveness.
A continent that has 65% of its Citizenry to be Youths, among them we have a strong army of passionate change makers, who builds up our hope that there wouldn't be any big ploy to draw Africa into another trench.

They are as courageous as motivated by HM Queen Elizabeth II in her Christmas Broadcast in 1957, “we need the kind of courage that can withdraw the subtle corruption of the cynic, so that we can show the world that we are not afraid of the future”. Truly Africa won’t be afraid of her future for these young people. (The Official Website of the British Monarchy)

Ida from The Gambia shares her change story as “that is one of the things we are really learning to do here; is to say, no we must be heard. We are the future. So in a nutshell, that who I am, I am the future. The African Future”. (Gundan) We are simply rewriting the story of Africa.

Regina Agyare (Ghana) and Regina Mukonda (Zambia) do not only share common first names but are also passionate about the same thing, Women in Tech. Their respective Enterprises are training and empowering young women in IT as their actions resonate into debates about the importance of women involvement in tech. They have created lots of confidence in the abilities of young women in Africa. (Ashesi University) (Lusaka Voice)

Deo Sekandi (Uganda) and Farida Bedwei (Ghana) even though rendered partially incapable by Cerebral Palsy, it was not going to be a hindrance for them to showcase their abilities to create things. Farida haven been a leading tech entrepreneur also sits on the board of the National Communications Authority in Ghana whiles Deo, supports the National Union of Disabled Person of Uganda. Both are very active in supporting young people with disabilities as they use their life stories to demonstrate the power and potential embedded in every African no matter how unique their physical and mental abilities are. (Queens Young Leaders) (CNN)

Angela Benedicto Mnagoza (Tanzania) worked as a child domestic worker, who experienced all the bad things that came with the job aside a meager salary. Her belief today is to create hopes for other young people and alleviate them from same experiences. Her organization, WoteSawa enables her to work with local communities, employers, police and the judiciary to protect children from exploitations. (Daily News)
Nosipho Bele (South Africa) has witnessed the role mentorship has played to shape her life today is mentoring lots of young people and connecting them to mentors helping them throughout their education through the Mentor me to Success program. (SABC News)

Jean D’Amour Mutini (Rwanda) founded Acts of Gratitude to reciprocate the generosity that he and other genocide survivors received from other NGOs. Today, he collects clothing to distribute to the needy, purchase health insurance cards for those who can’t afford, visits people in the hospital and supports financially incapable students with school fees. (Regent Entrepreneur)

Mohammed Yaaseen Edoo (Mauritius) has never been to primary school and has seen benevolence from a primary school teacher making him a first degree holder and reciprocates same as he devotes his time in working with disable persons giving them hope for a brighter future. His life story of learning at home because of his disability and making a distinction out of university in 2014 is a demonstration that young people are truly passionate about contributing to the rise of this continent. He is a leader in various programs where he advocates on behalf of young disabled fellows across the world. (Voices of Youth)

Alain Nteff (Cameroon) is passionate about bringing solutions to teenage pregnant women with the use of low cost technology as they access varied medical advices. His mobile App, Gifted Mom sends pregnant women and mothers alert for vaccinations, checkups and answers to their medical queries. His passion was birthed out of personal experiences of witnessing mothers and new born babies die from conditions that could have been predicted and managed with proper antenatal care. (Anzisha Prize)

Africa has gone from a transformational to transactional leaders. And now it is up to us to move towards a new kind of transformational leadership. We need be to be able to pull young leaders together towards a shared vision and have a discussion about that what the vision is that we are looking for. (Idris Bello)

With the youngest population in the world, Africa is just be the right place for these people to showcase their intelligence and hunger for change as it also provides a greater opportunity for them when problems are meant to be solved. This is a testament for the world to see the continent’s youth are also the right people for investments. If thousands of young people have started turning ideas into big enterprises and taking the destinies of their various nations and
continent into the own hands, we are be sure to grow from thousands to millions. We just need to support this young people morally and financially as they get on a path to create better economies and grow their respective countries from third world to first world.

These are the leaders of tomorrow defying all odds that they can lead even from today.

The problems of Africa will get to harness extinction when the world get to believe and support the potentials of these young people instead of giving out aids to government and agencies who spend them on parties and other engagements that do not even get to benefit the benefactors.

Africa is blessed with young people who regardless of their socioeconomic conditions anticipate greater change and are also capable to leading the Change.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**


Idris Bello. (n.d.). Retrieved from idrisbello.com


STOP WASHING YOUR HANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE... TIME FOR ACTION: YOUTH & POLITICS

STEPHANIE DARMANIN (MALTA GIRL GUIDES)

Statistics show that only 28% of young people across Europe have voted in the European Parliament elections in 2014. This does not in any way mean that young people do not want to cast their vote. The reality is that they are fed up of being taken for a ride. Many politicians make unrealistic promises and keep letting young people down by what they ultimately deliver. Political scandals and corruption taint transparency. We have come a long way to fight corruption, yet it keeps emerging to the surface, from time to time. If we manage to align global efforts in favour of young people and collaborate on a deeper level on high-priority political objectives which affect them, we will succeed in making elections more relevant for young people.

Voting is quantifiable and about numbers. Election results are like carrots for politicians. The turn-out of pensioners is always very substantial at the polling booths. This is one of the reasons why politicians do not put youth-related issues at the top of the agenda. However, boycotting the election process is not a solution. Young people should put their foot down and unite - unite to make their voices heard. We ought to fight for democracy, where there isn't any of it. In this day and age, we still find countries where there are no fair elections, where people are not actively involved in the decision-making processes of their countries, where human rights are not protected and there is no rule of law. Young people deserve more as they have proved in the past. They have emerged as a powerful force for change. We all recall the Arab Spring, when young people took the lead in this revolution and showed the world that they are ready and able to take action. Political agendas and electoral manifestos should focus on all strata of society including minorities and vulnerable groups, otherwise we risk having a democratic deficiency.

In recent years, society has changed in a drastic manner. This change does not only relate to the wider gap between youths and the older generation. The electorate is more informed than before. Campaigns are more individual-oriented, more issue-related, more critical and more engaged. Young people are more capable of taking an informed decision in comparison to before. People are sending constant feedback to the political parties through social media
and online interaction though the problem is that no party has the appropriate infrastructure to analyse and react to what people are posting on Facebook and Twitter. This is the real language of the man in the street, this is what really matters. On the other hand, politicians have to speak the language of young people and reach them in a sustainable way. It is high time to shift towards youth-friendly tools of communication. Young people are not interested in billboards and pamphlets in their letterbox. They want to be heard and they want action on their concerns. We need to lobby for a change in the structure of politics on a national, a regional and a world level. Let’s not forget the value of education, especially civic education and political participation in lifelong learning courses and involvement in young people’s NGOs especially for school dropouts, to strengthen democracy, active citizenship and to foster critical thinking. Young people should be provoked to think outside the box.

The golden question is: What is the way forward for more active youth participation? In Europe, many are pushing in favour of youth quotas, others for compulsory voting, and others for electronic voting. Though I believe these are all good solutions, I do have my reservations. The starting point should be the serious consideration of the outcome of the structured dialogue processes in which all stakeholders representing our youths are engaged. There should be a follow-up through concrete actions for the demands of the participating youths and the youth organisations, otherwise this is a mere waste of time. We have to build a political landscape where young people are part and parcel of it. Young people have an opinion about many issues but do not know how to share it, the best means to share it and where to go. Roundtables, meetings and seminars would play an important role in engaging them in these dialogues and increasing youth turnout in elections.

Europe has scored high rates in relation to youth unemployment. This issue has many repercussions. Lack of youth autonomy, young people in despair for a future, unemployability, low self-esteem and economic burden on state finances are a few among others. Job-hunting can be a stressful period and can also become a vicious cycle of internships, many times unpaid, employers not recognising internships as relevant experience, unattractive Curriculum Vitae’s and young people risking poverty and social exclusion. Countries are risking a brain drain resulting in fresh graduates going abroad for better opportunities, and losing local talents and skills. In the light of this, politicians should encourage young people to volunteer. Although volunteering should never replace employment, young people do benefit a lot through volunteering. They gain
knowledge with regard to soft skills such as decision-making, time-management, budgeting, project planning, teamwork, and advocacy. In this regard, advocacy is a key area for a bright future of young people in politics. Experience on the administrative boards of youth organisations and other platforms encourage young people to contest elections, as they are more inclined to change, more idealistic in their goals and they want to step up government accountability towards young people. These benefits keep me going in lobbying for the formal recognition of youth work and volunteering. Youth workers in politics tend to serve as role models by promoting good governance, integrity, honesty and love for their country. Let us not allow young people to become indifferent and turn them off politics.

Digging deeper into the question of young people in politics, one cannot neglect the fact that at least 50% of the world's population is made up of women. It goes without saying that women are agents of progress and play a vital role in the global development. History shows the efforts done by women in gaining their right to vote, to live free from violence, to go to school and to participate in decisions. Twenty years have gone by since the Beijing Platform for Action, yet women around the world are still struggling to be represented in Parliaments, to land a masculine-stereotyped job, to hold political offices, to be protected by laws against gender-based violence, and to be guaranteed gender equality. Young women in politics would enhance the empowerment of girls and young women. 50/50 gender quotas would strike a balance between sexes. Men would not remain dominating on boards, parliaments and assemblies. The biggest challenge for women in politics is the idea that to be a successful career politician as a woman, you need to “have it all”. But in actual fact, women are not asking for anything more than what men have. The 50/50 campaign is not only a step towards gender equality in favour of women through positive discrimination but it is also beneficial to society at large. The diversity of our representatives and those occupying high-ranking roles should reflect the makeup of our society and I completely support this idea.

Young people have the potential to drive real change as today’s citizens and tomorrow’s leaders. They are passionate about creating a better society in their countries free from corruption, developing fully-fledged democratic systems and promoting education for all. So why should we let this opportunity slip through our fingers? The way forward should be that wherein young men and women walk hand in hand with older generations, shaping politics for a better world.
REFERENCES:


YEARS OF VIGOUR AND FRESHNESS
OCEAN OF POTENTIALS
UNENDING EFFORTS AND ENTHUSIASM
TEARS OF HARDSHIPS
HOPE FOR A BETTER WORLD

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND OVERCOMING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

PRIVILEGE CHETENI (SOUTH AFRICA)

Enterpreneurship is seen as one way of uplifting one’s standard of living. Today more youth are involved in entrepreneurship activities with the hope of creating change in their communities. In Africa, economic growth potential is very immense, especially in countries that are facing high growth rates like Kenya. According to the World Bank statistics, youth contribute approximately 60 percent of the African population. Therefore, a number of government have prioritized youth unemployment as a major challenge. However, most African countries are still led by old age in both the public and private sector. This means that a number of good youth policies are usually not implemented based on the reason that old people who are leaders feel threatened by the youth. This is evident in Africa were the average age of leaders of the state is above 65 years, which is a retirement age in a private set up.

The global financial crisis that was witnessed in 2008-2010 had serious implications for African countries who in many instances suffered heavy job losses. For instance, in South Africa, over 300000 jobs were lost during that period as pointed by the Department of Labour. Nonetheless, in the Sub Saharan region they has been a positive outlook with regards to youth entreprenueship. The emergence of start-ups in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa has offered youth the support they deserve. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) it was discovered that most youth in Sub Sahara are driven by necessity as opposed to opportunity. This means that as youths fail to find more spaces for job in the private or public sector they are forced to think of innovative ways of survival. GEM also noted that the Sub Saharan region has more potential entreprenuers. This means that growth potential is high, although Kew et al., (2013) argued that young entrepreneurs in Sub Sahara lack confidence compared to adults. Perhaps the reason is that old aged people do not give youth space to grow.

The education landscape has been changing in recent years. Therefore, youth are more exposed but the job market is not impenetrable. This contributes to their lack of skill and expertise which is needed in running their ventures. In literature it can be noted that most youth lack skill or experience due to a
number of factors. Starting a venture is risky business because it needs a lot of skill and expertise. Therefore, this negatively impacts youth potential in finding lasting solution to develop their communities or lives in general. Similarly, lack of finance has been documented as a huge setback for most entrepreneurs. Most start-ups struggle within the growth stage, as a result, they hardly reach five years in existence. For instance, in Namibia it was discovered that small business ventures hardly pass five years of existence (Namibian Government, 2001). This situation has been the story in a number of countries in Africa. Besides the highlighted challenges, youth struggle to manage or lead their ventures, as a result, only a few succeed. The failure of youth to run their own ventures should not be seen as a major hindrance to entrepreneurship because it is worth trying than not. Mkhize (2010) noted that entrepreneurship is a solution to joblessness. Thus, encouraging more youth to take entrepreneurship as a way of solving unemployment problems.

In order to overcome youth unemployment, entrepreneurship education and training might be needed. Athayde (2009), Dickson et al., (2008), and Frank et al., (2005) were of the view that entrepreneurship can be taught as a subject. This means that entrepreneurship can be integrated to the basic education curriculum in high schools or secondary schools. Although this route may seem hard to achieve, it needs more government to prioritize youth growth. By so doing it may be easy to set aside budgets that are meant for youth enterprises. A good example is in South Africa were a National Youth Development Programme was set up by the government mainly to targeted growth potential of youth who wish to be entrepreneurs. The programme receives funding from the government budget. In this way it is easier to have a high impact rate and to reach out to the private sector. The South African Brewery joined the ranks by also sponsoring a Kickstarter programme were innovative ideas are sponsored. This has led to youth offering jobs leading to a reduction of the number of the unemployed people. Therefore, if majority of other governments follow suit most brilliant ideas in IT, agriculture and other fields can become reality.

To add on, programmes like the Young African Leaders Initiative that was started by President Obama have a positive impact in youth entrepreneurship growth because African youth are taught business skills. In order to support this process, the Global Entrepreneurship Summit pledged over US$ 1 billion for youth initiatives. Such initiatives will unequivocally provide the much needed motivation for youth to participate in entrepreneurship.
On a different note, Dickson et al., (2008) stated that a positive relationship between education and entrepreneurship existed. This means that most entrepreneurs are educated or possess some education qualification. Considering that a number of graduates cannot be absorbed in the job market it may be worthwhile to start entrepreneurship at secondary or high schools. This kind of approach may offer Africa the solution it deserves. A study conducted by Peterman and Kennedy (2003) noted that secondary school students enrolled in entrepreneurship had a positive perception towards entrepreneurship growth. This made it easier to support the implementation of entrepreneurship education in secondary schools. Therefore, Africa can learn a lot from such success stories and implement it in high schools. This will reduce the number of learners who cannot think beyond employment. The greatest challenge that is affecting the potential of youth growth is the political will of governments to prioritize youth entrepreneurship.

To conclude, youth entrepreneurship is the solution to unemployment in Africa. If youth are prioritized and given the right support, they may offer viable solutions to community and society problems that are currently affecting a number of nations. The youth is the future, and the future is our business.

REFERENCES:


“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.” - Kofi Annan

Young people worldwide are increasingly disenfranchised from traditional politics: despite the youth population rising, youth voter participation is decreasing rapidly, leading to ‘democratic deficit’. James Sloam states, “if young people do not vote, politicians are less likely to take their interests seriously, so that young people are likely to become the victims rather than the benefactors of public policy” (Sloam, 2011: 5).

In 2012, a group of political science students put together a full-day workshop to ask young people aged 16-24 why they were ‘DisengAGED’ in national and local government elections: they were not particularly interested in aspects of the democratic process. Lack of civic education, internal efficacy and no online electoral presence were the common themes highlighted by students and youth, that gave rise to low voter turnout.

DisengAGED suggests some methods of engaging young people and students in conversations about political participation and encouraging youth-led solutions. Many methods youth described include social media and the internet to simplify complex information through videos, infographics and an interactive forum.

University of Canterbury Political Science Society (UCPols), the group who instigated DisengAGED, used social media to attract attention to the University of Canterbury Students’ Association (UCSA) annual elections, based on results from the workshop. The use of social media as a non-biased central hub for electoral and candidate information increased overall student voter turnout to the Student Association elections by one-third, creating the highest youth voter turnout for any university students’ associations in New Zealand that year.

The three themes highlighted in DisengAGED, and the subsequent success of
the Facebook page, UC Elections, contribute to the existing literature on youth political participation.

Themes from DisengAGEd – Civic education, internal efficacy and an online electoral presence

DisengAGEd attempted to find solutions for the troubling decline in youth political participation. Four open-ended general questions attempted to highlight some key themes from the variety of participant responses. Their responses supported existing literature, and resulted in three identified solution areas – civic education, internal efficacy and an online electoral presence. However, this article focuses predominately on internal efficacy and an online electoral presence.

Internal efficacy – the literature and DisengAGEd findings

A poor sense of internal efficacy, or feeling wanted, as determined by Riker and Ordeshook, leads to non-voting habits (1968). Catt’s ‘internal efficacy’ concept, is a sociological description of the problem, appealing to the logic of Riker and Ordeshook, who claim a vote is made by the equation: reward of voting = the probability of it mattering x the benefit of one candidate winning - time and effort + the feeling of civic duty (1968; Catt, 2005). In a postal survey conducted by Henn et al, 82% of respondents felt that they had no influence whatsoever in the political realm (2005: 566). The comments of these respondents reflected their lack of efficacy, as they felt that it was “a waste of time” to participate in politics as the government was “deaf to their concerns and generally unresponsive” (Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005: 566).

DisengAGEd organisers did not believe that youth are disengaged or disillusioned; rather they are actively dissuaded from engaging in politics and have a poor sense of internal efficacy. Participants believed that politicians saw youth as apathetic and ignored them - “[politicians] do not take youth seriously”, efforts to involve them being perceived as token gestures rather than a genuine interest in their views. There was a belief that the media and politicians see their ideas as idealistic and vague rather than important views from concerned citizens. One participant stated politicians have “different values because they were older”. Other participants believed politics is portrayed by older members of society as an “adult” topic and that youth should “stay out of it”. Participants believed that when they engaged in non-traditional means of political participation their efforts were ignored and/or belittled by the media: such as the negative media attention surrounding the Occupy movement.
Participants perceived youth branches of political parties as distanced from their ‘adult’ counterparts, and believed that there was a negative stigma associated with joining any party - “parties killed individualism”. This stigma is perhaps due to the current social situation where it is becoming the norm to be disconnected from traditional party-dominated politics - “voting for an all-in-one policy manifesto is off-putting to us”. Youth (both at DisengAGED within and within the literature) appear to be “sceptical of political parties, frustrated with the political process, and distrustful of politicians”; young people are not disengaged from politics, rather disenfranchised (Strama, 1998: 71; Paul, 2010: 29-30).

**An online electoral presence – the literature and DisengAGED findings**

Social media sites are extremely popular, and addictively used by young people (Echeburúa E, de Corral P., 2010). They are designed for sharing, discussing and interacting with the latest news, trends and products, rather than traditional, organised political discourse (Macnamara, 2012: 79).

DisengAGED participants believed that wider youth participation in democracy had to be youth-led, and social media was a key mechanism. Two-way engagement was important to them, rather than having information “dumped” on them via traditional media sources. They believed that social media is a good way to access information for youth of all socio-economic backgrounds, as the majority of educational institutions in New Zealand provide free computers and internet access for their students.

Online engagement can make traditional political processes easier. Participants wanted to make submissions online, particularly those that have submissions pre-written for a “copy and paste” email to politicians. However, politicians generally regard this communication as “spam”.

**‘UC Elections’ – Trialling DisengAGED solutions**

DisengAGED highlighted that there are viable solutions to the low youth voter turnout problem, and that voter engagement could be encouraged on campus through social media. The Facebook page “UC Election Coverage” was set up and run by students with no political bias for the nine-day lead-up to the UCSA elections in 2012 and 2013: after the candidates were announced, and before voting started. The profile picture of the page had a visual countdown to voting day.

The UC Elections page needed to remain relevant, interesting, and promote
new ways of presenting information to student voters. The page posted some form of information to students daily, and was widely publicised within the student community. UC Elections was unique, in that it was not publicising one candidate or party, but ways to engage and participate. It acted as a central hub of information about all candidates, with no opinion or bias this saved students time and effort associated with searching for each candidate on many platforms. At DisengAGED, participants discussed how searching extensively for information was very off-putting, and how, if they felt uninformed they were less likely to vote. It was ease of information and use of one social media page as a central hub linking candidates’ social media which made UC Elections effective and unique.

In prior student body elections student voters had access to 150-word summaries in the student magazine, and candidates’ dispersed social media pages. A comprehensive list of candidates and the position they were standing for was not previously available, which had made searching for candidate information difficult. The magazine summaries were bound by election rules; therefore, they were short and consequently uninformative for student voters. The main offline form of campaigning was chalking onto footpaths, which provided little information to voters (particularly distance students or those not based on the central campus), and was weather-dependent. Users of the page commented that the interviews and debates were more informative than the scarce information previously available.

Based on DisengAGED participants’ suggestions, varied multimedia items were posted daily. Simplified information included infographics, covering the full spectrum of electoral process and why elections are important, candidates and issues. Infographics simplify complex information and UC Elections survey participants highlighted these as something they really liked about the page. Skilled graphics design and technology students cooperating with political science students were needed be able to produce simple and effective infographics. They also took a large amount of time to prepare; however, based on the positive feedback received, it was an effective use of time and resources. Post-election surveys suggested that students appreciated the candidate interviews posted on the page as they felt they could get to know what the candidates were like as people, and could see how they managed tough questions. Student voters did not want long interviews or videos calling for quick-fire questions; a user commented, “I wanted to see what their opinions were like in a quick manner, I don’t have much time for making a decision”.
In the second year of the UC Elections project, several debates were held by UCPols, for all candidates to meet the constituents. There were separate debates held for separate positions, such as President, Vice-President and Finance Officer. The General Executive debate was held as a town hall-style “meet and greet”. There was pressure for “real debates rather than online ones” from eligible voters during the first year of the UC Elections project. In the 2013 post-election survey students felt that Facebook comments were off-putting, as they can get personal; a dislike of online debates was reflected by 51% of respondents. The dislike of online debate mechanisms for psychological reasons reflects the culture of voter participation, particularly in New Zealand. DisengAGED participants had voiced concerns that they and their friends do not wish to be engaged in politics due to possible disagreements, long-winded messages, and the potential for cyber-bullying.

In the 2013 post-election survey of students who used the page, over 40% of users stated that they looked at the page every day, 20% stated they looked at it more than once a day, and another 20% stated they looked at it once every few days. Moreover, 80% of students who used the page decided to vote and how to vote based on the information that they accessed on the UC Elections page. All respondents said they would like to see the page in action again for the next student body election.

### Table 1: University of Canterbury Students’ Association Election Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Eligible Voters</th>
<th>Voter Turnout</th>
<th>Voter Turnout (%)</th>
<th>Annual Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>14,800</td>
<td>2,812</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>14,853</td>
<td>3,772</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>+33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>12,544</td>
<td>4,181</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>+31.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first year of the project, 2012, student voter turnout grew 33.6% from the previous year as shown in Table 1, to the highest voter turnout in New Zealand student body elections that year. In the second year, 2013, student voter turnout increased by another 31.2%. Student numbers were declining during this period due to the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquakes; however, the actual number of students voting increased as well as the percentage. While the overall figures of student voter turnout are still not particularly high (as shown in Table 1), the percentage increase demonstrates that simple actions and an online presence by election organisers can increase voter turnout, even in this ‘disengaged’ demographic.
Conclusion

DisengAGEd provided some solutions to low youth voter turnout in New Zealand; however, the added value came from using participant-posed solutions on low voter turnout and successfully testing them at the UCSA student body elections. It showed that simple online mechanisms for increasing voter turnout are achievable and effective. A key feature of both DisengAGEd and UC Elections was that these projects were both student-led, with organisers listening and acting upon concerns of participants. Further research is encouraged on youth-led civic education opportunities, which UCPols could not undertake due to limited resources and curriculum constraints.

Replicating DisengAGEd could be beneficial for the creation of locally-tailored nation-, municipality- or university-wide solutions to low voter turnout elsewhere. The conference activities could be rearranged and used for a survey (online or offline), or in their original format or reinvented into another format that attends to the needs and interests of the young people and students in the specific locality. DisengAGEd was an inexpensive process that was heavily reliant on sufficient interest by youth in the problem of low youth voter turnout to choose to attend a conference on the subject. DisengAGEd reinvigorates the essence of democracy: people asking the people what they want and collectively making decisions on important aspects of society.

UC Elections success was largely based on the local information provided at DisengAGEd, and the ease of usability for students in informing their voting decisions. As a student-led project, it remained relevant to voters and took into account feedback for users. The use of one social media page as a central hub of information in future elections is highly encouraged to promote informed decision-making, and overall political participation.

While civic education, internal efficacy and online electoral presence are general themes, and of high importance to youth and students in Christchurch, New Zealand, other themes may be of higher importance in other areas. It is important to engage young people in the solutions, to provide knowledge and youth-led solutions that are applicable to the local setting. Technology is constantly evolving, as is citizenship; therefore, problems and solutions will continue to change over time, and it is imperative to keep reimagining new ways of engaging youth and students in political participation.
REFERENCES:


YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

PRIYA VERMA (INDIA)

Youth participation starts from home. Child learns the first lesson of cleanliness, water and power consumption, gardening and other issues from home. It is the responsibility of the parents/family to inculcate good habits in children’s and teach them cleanliness and wise use of natural resources such as electricity, water and other resources according to need to reduce wastage to enable them to become more responsible for the protection of environment and natural resources. School and Universities can play and important role towards environmental sustainability and should emphasis more importance to environment education. Young people constitute a large part of the world’s population and young people will have to live longer with the consequences of current environmental decisions than will their elders. Future generations will also be affected by these decisions and the extent to which they have addressed concerns such as the depletion of resources, biodiversity loss, and long-lived radioactive wastes.

Young people can play an active role in protecting and improving the environment. They can change their lifestyle and how it affects the environment. They can make their homes, schools and youth organizations more environmentally friendly by adopting environmentally friendly practices, recycling of different materials as well as preserving resources such as water and electricity. Engaging youth in environmental protection not only creates direct impact on changing youth behaviours and attitudes, but possibly influence their parents, relatives and parents.

Youth are back bone of the nation. They can change the future of the society with their wellbeing and courageous behaviour. Unfortunately today we find the youth those who are more interested in other places which are not useful to them as well as nationally. They choose to spend their days doing drugs and playing video games. They spend their nights partying and living it up, so to speak. More and more young men of this age group are sitting at home in front of their televisions playing games all day instead of bettering themselves or going to work. They have no vision and if they do have dreams they do not have the drive to make any attempt at achieving them by applying the greening knowledge at home and schools, we can help to market city, a greener city. Discarding computers, electrical appliances and rechargeable batteries can seriously harm the environment. Youth role is to implement recycling programs
for used computers and electrical appliances. You can arrange for collection services with them. There are also many collection points for recycling of rechargeable batteries, so do not simply throw them away. Youth have a role to play in environmental and conservation efforts that will improve livelihoods.

The earth provides all the necessary resources for human beings to survive and prosper. But as the global population grows and develops, the demand for energy and consumer goods increases. This has led to increased pollution and misuse of natural resources, causing great damage to the environment. In turn, people's health, food supplies and livelihoods are increasingly threatened. The release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere that contribute to climate change, the overuse of agricultural soil that deteriorates the ground and often leads to deforestation, the contamination of water through bacteria and chemicals or the loss of biodiversity - environmental challenges are plentiful.

Today, many people speak about “sustainability” when highlighting an alternative model of how human beings can develop economically and socially without putting too much strain on the environment. Sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This clearly shows that youth are at the heart of the sustainability debate. As politicians sometimes lack the necessary long-term thinking that is needed to effectively address pressing environmental issues, it’s key that global youth have a say in environmental policies, which have a direct impact on the current and future environment they live in.

Present day youth know that this is not the time to sit back and expect things to change themselves. Therefore almost every day we hear about a new movement or story of youth participation ranging from deforestation, disaster management or discouraging animal ill treatment. Engaging youth in organised effort to promote environmental sustainability has implications for youngsters themselves as well as for their communities. It is high time for youth to analyse their needs and decide what are their true priorities are. We have plenty of resources. But the demand is increasing day by day. It is the responsibility of the youth to manage it efficiently.

Youth participation should be increased for the environment protection. The participation of youth can be sought at all levels ranging from grass root activism to policy bodies to non-Governmental organizations (NGOs). Their
role can be institutionalised in policy making through advisory bodies such as Youth councils. The deterioration of the natural environment is one of the principal concerns of young people worldwide as it has direct implications for their well-being both now and in the future. The natural environment must be maintained and preserved for both present and future generations. The causes of environmental degradation must be addressed. The environmentally friendly use of natural resources and environmentally sustainable economic growth will improve human life. Sustainable development has become a key element in the programmes of youth organizations throughout the world. While every segment of society is responsible for maintaining the environmental integrity of the community, young people have a special interest in maintaining a healthy environment because they will be the ones to inherit it.

Human beings are joined in the most intimate of relationships with the outside world from the day they are born. The irony is that very little time is spent thinking and caring about one of the most important ones! Obviously, I am talking about our connection with the environment. This lack of attention is a major cause of concern because rapidly growing world population and the increased use of energy are placing unprecedented pressures on earth and hence our environment. Solutions will have to be found out which are truly global in scope. The nation’s youth have special responsibilities in relation to protection of the environment. This is mainly due to the fact that young people have to live for an extended period with the deteriorating environment bequeathed by earlier generations and there are a lot of risks and health hazards involved in this. Young people will be forced to engage in improvised and effective forms of action and activism; thereby generating effective responses to ecological challenges.

In order to turn your backs to such corporate, consumer boycotts and protests can be the most effective, eventually causing polluting companies to rethink their corporate strategy. Apart from having a greater stake in the more distant future, young people are properly poised to promote environmental awareness simply due to the fact that they often have better access to information about the environment than their elders. The youth have lived all their lives in an era in which environmental issues have loomed large. They can introduce fresh ideas and outlook to environment-related issues because anti-ecological ways of thinking and behaving are not ingrained in them. A major reason why the youth ought to take the lead in protecting the environment is stronger awareness of the issues and a greater stake in long-term sustainability. They will obviously face challenges as pressures are brought to bear in the opposite direction.
Commercialization in every aspect of life is severely affecting the youth of today. In addition to these effects, on the whole, technologies that increasingly distance people from the environmental effects of their consumption decisions are growing with globalization, acting as an impediment to environmental awareness.

The United Nations Environment Programme is requested to continue its efforts to disseminate information to and exchange information with youth organizations. Governments should encourage and assist youth organizations to initiate and develop youth-to-youth contacts through town-twinning and similar programmes in order to share the experience gained in different countries. Governments and youth organizations should initiate programmes to promote participation in tree planting, forestry, combating desert creep, waste reduction, recycling and other sound environmental practices. The participation of young people and their organizations in such programmes can provide good training and encourage awareness and action. Waste management programmes may represent potential income-generating activities which provide opportunities for employment.

Recognizing that they will bear the consequences of current environmental policies, young people continue to have a strong interest in protecting and preserving the planet’s resources. As demonstrated through their contributions to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, young people are strong advocates for environmental preservation. Accordingly, the Plan of Implementation adopted at the Summit indicated the need to promote and support youth participation in programmes and activities relating to sustainable development. The mobilization and support of local youth organizations will be critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental sustainability.

Throughout the Summit process, young people also advocated for renewed commitment to education for sustainable development. The General Assembly proclaimed the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development beginning 1 January 2005. The draft International Implementation Scheme sets out a broad framework for all partners, including youth, to contribute to the Decade. Environmental education has grown steadily in the last decade and is strengthened by several regional and national professional associations of environmental educators. Young people are increasingly disseminating information on environmental issues via their own channels.
The difficulty in achieving effective environmental education remains in translating environmental values into action of any kind, be it in terms of lifestyle adjustments or political action. This highlights the need for information on environmental issues to lead to functional and action-orientated outcomes. One such example is the clean up the world campaign that inspires more than 40 million volunteers in over 100 countries each year to take action to improve their local environment. These volunteers include millions of young people, and the campaign represents a practical way for youth to take responsibility for their immediate environment in a voluntary setting.

Youth continues to be involved in implementing environmental projects, and the experience they have gained qualifies them for increased participation in decision-making about environmental policies. Youth participation in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development set the pace for participation by youth groups in other global conferences, culminating in their relatively high profile in the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Increasing the participation of youth in environmental protection depends on strengthening opportunities for young people to participate in the decision-making of government-supported organizations and NGOs. As recognized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the involvement of youth in environment and development decision making is critical to the implementation of policies of sustainable development. Young people should be involved in designing and implementing appropriate environmental policies. Women and children’s are the worst suffers of climate change and pollution in many countries of the world. Women should be encouraged to fight climate change and pollution and their active participation is necessary to make the world a better place to live in. With the use of digital technology such as internet, mobile and social media youth can bring revolution in the world and protect environment with youth power. Commonwealth is also doing a lot for the participation of youth under its various programs. Commonwealth youth award itself is a proof that how youth are aware of the social, environmental and global issues and are taking actions and bringing positive change in the world.

Today youths are instrumental in contributing towards environmental protection and sustainable development in many ways and bringing positive change in the world. We should acknowledge their efforts and encourage them. As a youth advocate on sustainable development, I am a strong supporter of youth power and women empowerment and hope youth will definitely bring a change to make the world a better place to live in.
REFERENCES:
Youth Participation In Effective Environmental Protection – Youth ki Awaaz By Sh. Gururaj Rao/ (2010)

YOUTH ENVIRONMENT - the United Nations report 2006

Environment WPAY - Social Policy and Development

Role of Youth for A Cleaner and Greener Environment

Voices of youth-Environment website
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The Commonwealth Youth Council being the most diverse youth-led organisation in the world has at its best taken to the ideas of youth not simply because it is the youth powering the organization, but also because there is merit in what young people around the world are doing. The expression ‘Nothing about us without us’ has never been so widely conceived as the date at present, whereby we they young people of today have taken ownership of our destination inevitable taking charge of our own journey.

The Commonwealth Young Achiever’s Book (CYAB) is a manifestation of dreams, hard work and perseverance whereby youths have committed themselves to their passion. There has been, definitely struggles, and hardships, but the fact remains today for those who are featured, that continuity is the key. This book sets apart nothing and no-one, but recognises those who have gone further. It is therefore ideal that the knowledge, skill and vision is shared. From a small island nation, Seychelles, to the Commonwealth Youth Council and then, to the world.

At this juncture the Commonwealth Youth Council changes, but it remains continue the good works for the youth. The hopes for the next Commonwealth Youth Council may well be found in this book, as the success of the current one has been found. The Council will continue to support the initiative of young people and the CYAB is no exception, this is the first of more to come. We yet call the CYAB a series and this is the very first episode of many seasons. Young people who have featured in this book will have to continue the goods works and with the support of the Commonwealth Youth Council.