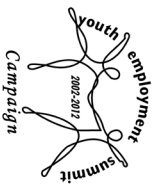


# **Service-Learning: Promoting Employability, Empowerment, and Social Entrepreneurship among Youth**

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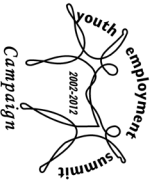
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## Introduction

Unemployment of youth has far-reaching implications on the labour market and the society at large. Youth unemployment contributes to economic exclusion and poverty and increases the probability of future joblessness. Youth unemployment results in the loss of a valuable contribution to economic activity and growth from one of the most productive elements in society. It obstructs the movement of young people from adolescence to adulthood and in turn is a major cause of crime and drug abuse. High levels of youth unemployment can also lead to alienation from society and distrust of democratic political processes. As a result, social cohesion is undermined.<sup>1</sup>

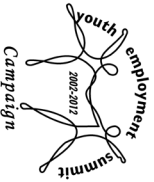
There are a billion youth on the planet, and 850 million of them live in developing countries.<sup>2</sup> While these youth represent a rich resource, most developing countries lack the infrastructure and the sound economic environment necessary to support youths' employment needs. At the United Nations' global conferences in the last decade, governments have recognized that youth unemployment is a growing problem that needs to be addressed, and that placing youth at the center of the development agenda is key for sustainable development.

Many factors contribute to this problem, including these:

1. **Lack of knowledge, technical skills, and experience:** In rural areas youth often lack the knowledge, skills, and experience to engage in highly skilled jobs, especially those that require specialized technical knowledge, such as water harvesting technologies and maintaining specialized equipment.
2. **Lack of entrepreneurial culture, knowledge, and skills:** Rural youth grow up in a culture that does not typically support entrepreneurship. Instead, young people in poor, rural communities often seek employment by migrating to nearby cities and towns. They lack the practical knowledge and skills to create economically rewarding and socially responsible enterprises: preparing a market survey and business plan; budgeting, accounting, and preparing financial reports; developing proposals; and handling legal matters.
3. **Lack of youth involvement:** Young people generally have the energy, vision, and will to get involved with new and innovative projects, especially those aimed at making their communities safer and healthier places in which to live. Yet, in many developing countries and communities, there is a lack of infrastructure to support youth employment projects, and youth are not provided the necessary coaching, trust, and enabling environment to make viable contributions to the local economy and environment.

<sup>1</sup> International Labor Organization (ILO), *World Employment Report*, 1998/99.

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations defines youth as ages 15 to 24.



4. ***Lack of institutional capacity for promoting youth employment:*** Throughout the developing world there are few institutions serving youth that have expertise in training them to carry out socially meaningful and highly skilled work. Those institutions that do exist have an overwhelming task to do and need a great deal of support.

The lack of effective and accessible knowledge resources; inadequate social infrastructure; and poor stakeholder knowledge, commitment, and participation have made it difficult to mitigate the high unemployment rate and extreme poverty among youth in developing countries. Yet empowering youth is critically important to both the youth and the communities in which they live. When youth are marginalized, they lose their sense of belonging and desire to contribute and participate in transforming their communities; instead their energies can get diverted into destructive and disruptive activities.

While the challenge is great, a number of notable initiatives and programs scattered all over the world have proven their effectiveness. Many leading institutions such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have worked on the issue of education and enterprise development. What continues to be missing is a way for all stakeholders to work together to build on existing strengths at the practical, grassroots level.

The YES Campaign aims to focus the world's attention on the growing crisis of youth unemployment, share practical strategies, and facilitate action to establish an enabling environment for youth employment. It is organized to bridge the many gaps in the support offered to diverse stakeholders serving youth in building sustainable livelihoods. One way to fill these gaps is by advocating for and supporting increased opportunities for youth engagement in service-learning.

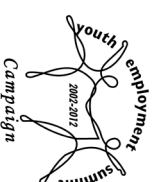
Service-learning enables young people, including students, to engage in a carefully organized, extended period of service in which they learn new knowledge and skills, while also carrying out activities that meet significant needs in their community. Usually the service-learning program is coordinated by an institute of learning in collaboration with one or more community agencies or organizations. Service-learning helps foster civic responsibility and includes structured time for participants to reflect on the service experience. Both advocates and participants attest to the value of service-learning as a powerful tool for employability, empowerment, and social entrepreneurship:

*“Service-learning can help all young people share their strengths, whatever they are, and make a real contribution to the community in which they live.”*

-Buffy Sainte-Marie, Founder Nihevan Foundation,  
Native American singer and song-writer

*“I wish adults would understand that [young people] have innovative, mind-boggling ideas, and that [they] can put those ideas into action. They can make the world a better place.”*

-James, a high school student



## Youth Unemployment: Opportunities in Community Development

It is now universally accepted that one of the most intractable problems facing us in this new millennium is the lack of livelihood and sustainable work for young people around the globe. Communities throughout the world are populated by a growing number of young people who face a lifetime of under-employment, with little hope of ever living a life of meaning and self-fulfillment.

Far too many of these young people have not enjoyed the benefits of economic globalization. The global economy has not generated decent work for all those who need or want it, nor is it likely to do so in the near future. According to recent estimates from the International Labor Organization, 160 million individuals are officially unemployed and another billion or more are unemployed or working poor. To make matters worse, 500 million more people will enter the labor force in the next 10 years, mostly women and youth.<sup>1</sup> While communities everywhere face this crisis, it is especially severe in developing countries and poor rural areas.

In 2000, the United Nations convened the Millennium Summit, which brought together heads of state from around the world. As one of their Millennium Development goals, members of the Summit resolved to: “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work.”<sup>2</sup> In the words of the UN Secretary General:

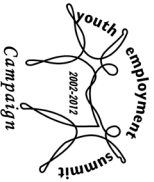
The question before us is how to nurture and cultivate an entrepreneurial culture that promotes social and economic development. By this I mean the kind of development that permits people to realize their aspirations for decent work and engenders just and environmentally sustainable communities throughout our common planet.<sup>3</sup>

There is enough decent and productive work to be done. While many of the world’s young people are sidelined and largely disconnected from the workforce and society as a whole, the communities in which they spend their idle time face serious development challenges that require bold new leadership and broad-based participation of both young and old. If these communities are to have the infrastructure and services necessary for all members to have a life of quality, then they must find new ways to engage unemployed and underemployed youth of these communities as a part of the solution, not a part of the problem. Think how much better off these communities would be if they could harness the energy of young people in such important areas as environmental reclamation, neighborhood clean-up, child and elder care, education and health promotion, AIDS awareness, roads construction, community arts and cultural projects, affordable housing, and food production.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org), International Labor Organization, Report to the International Labor Conference June 2002 on Decent Work and the Informal Economy.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) for a full description of the Millennium Development Conference in 2000 and the agreed goals.

<sup>5</sup> See [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org) for a definition of decent work provided in the Director-General’s Report to the conference as well as numerous speeches.



In short, there is a need to connect the dots between the needs of poor communities in the developing world and the young people who can fill them. Lacking meaningful work, many of these youth are full of resentment and despair, with no clear sense of purpose. In rare cases, they are time bombs ready to explode at the slightest provocation. In all too many cases, they are like Roman candles that fizzle before they have a chance to light up the sky with their brilliance. This is a terrible waste of talent and human potential, especially when poor, underdeveloped communities could benefit so greatly from the innovation, energy, and creativity that young people can provide.

Programs have to be developed that will not only empower and train youth to handle sustainable development work in their communities, but also build their capacity for self-employment. There is ample evidence to suggest that service-learning can nurture and bridge the divide between the disenfranchised youth and the communities that need their dynamism and involvement to thrive. There is also a strong belief that by providing young people with structured opportunities for civic participation and community service, they will learn new knowledge and skills, develop a sense of empowerment, and build a culture that supports both social and economic entrepreneurship.

### **What is Service-Learning?**

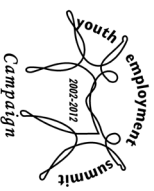
The Global Service Institute defines service as “an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national and world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant.”<sup>1</sup> While this definition is a useful one, it is missing one important element that is in service-learning: a focus on active learning and reflection.

According to the U.S. National Commission on Service Learning, service-learning is a “teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”<sup>2</sup> What distinguishes service-learning from community service is its strong focus on active learning and reflection. Young people not only provide much-needed services to their community, but also learn important concepts—like sustainable development and social justice—and essential skills. Most importantly, they have the opportunity to reflect on their learning with others. This not only reinforces their experiential learning, but also strengthens their capacity to apply what they learn to new situations.

Service-learning can provide young people with a variety of benefits, including leadership skills, workforce skills, self-esteem, and confidence in their ability to make a difference. By contributing to the social good, youth also become valued assets in their communities. Active participation in community life may also generate greater empathy and respect for others, as well as a concern for the environment. In the ideal case, it can lead to a life-long commitment to civic engagement and social responsibility and seed the next generation of social entrepreneurs.

<sup>6</sup> Downloaded from [www.service-engquiry.org.za](http://www.service-engquiry.org.za), October 31, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> National Commission for Service Learning Report, *The Power of Service Learning for American Schools*, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2002, p. 3.



The W.K. Kellogg Foundation created the National Commission on Service-Learning to examine this important approach to education, employment, and civic engagement and make recommendations to the U.S. government, along with educators, parents, and community members. The Commission was comprised of a distinguished group of individuals from a variety of different sectors, including education, government, business, academia, arts, and entertainment. Chaired by former astronaut and Senator John Glenn and staffed by Education Development Center, Inc., the Commission held hearings, visited service-learning programs across the United States, examined the latest research, and engaged in lengthy dialogue.

After two years of hard work, the Commission concluded that “service-learning is a powerful tool for education and human development” and challenged the country “to ensure that every student in kindergarten through high school participates in quality service-learning every year as an integral and essential part of the American education experience.”

Here are some additional quotes from the Commission’s final report entitled, *The Power of Service Learning for American Schools*:

*“Service-learning is a particularly fertile way of including young people in community service because it ties helping others to what they are learning in the classroom. In the process, it provides a compelling answer to the perennial question: ‘Why do I need to learn this stuff?’”*

-General Colin Powell, founding chairman of America’s Promise and U.S. Secretary of State

*“Service-learning helps [youth] learn skills they will use as learners, workers, and citizens.”*

-James Hunt, Jr., former Governor of North Carolina

*“If we want our students to lead creative, productive, and responsible lives, we must give them opportunities to learn in ways that have consequences for others, as well as for themselves. I know of no better way to invoke the many facets of cognitive development, moral reasoning and social responsibility than to engage students in service-learning opportunities. At its best, a service-learning experience can be transformative. Clearly, learning within a context of responsibility is powerful.”*

-Judith A. Ramaley, Assistant Director, Directorate for Education and Human Resources, National Science Foundation, USA

Not all service-learning programs have such powerful outcomes, however. Figure 1 presents several essential elements of quality service learning that have been excerpted and adapted from the Commission Report for the international sphere.

**Figure 1: Essential Elements of Quality Service Learning**

1. Service projects have clear educational goals that define the knowledge and skills that youth are expected to learn and involve young people in constructing their own knowledge.
2. Projects engage students in challenging tasks that are age appropriate and require them to think critically, make decisions, and solve problems.
3. Service tasks have clear goals, meet genuine community needs, and have significant benefits and consequences for the community.
4. Young people have a voice in selecting, designing, implementing, and evaluating their service project.
5. Service projects engage young women as well as men, and they demonstrate respect for diversity—of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability—through their participants, their practices, and their outcomes.
6. Service projects foster communication, interaction, and partnerships with the local community. While they are embedded in the fabric of community life, they also serve to catalyze change.
7. Youth are prepared for all aspects of their work and receive supervision and support throughout their project.
8. Young people have opportunities to reflect before, during, and after service. Reflection encourages critical thinking and is a central force in the design and fulfillment of both educational and service goals.
9. Multiple methods acknowledge, celebrate, and validate students' service work and their contributions to the local community.
10. Ongoing assessment is used to (a) determine whether individual youth are meeting the program's goals and enhance their learning; (b) document and evaluate the service-learning program as a whole; and (c) foster continuous improvement in the program's design and implementation.<sup>1</sup>

One of the ongoing debates in the world of service-learning, as well as civic service, is who is and is not a volunteer. The debate typically centers on two issues: stipends and compulsion. In reality, both compensation and compulsion are on a continuum, and service-learning may have some elements of both. For example, in the United States, some cities and states have mandated service-learning as a requirement for graduation from high school.<sup>2</sup> And, many national and

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from National Service-Learning Cooperative (April 1999). Essential Elements of Service-Learning. National Youth Leadership Council, St. Paul, Minnesota. As presented in the National Commission for Service Learning Report, The Power of Service Learning for American Schools, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Both Philadelphia and the State of Maryland have made service-learning a mandatory requirement for students attending their public schools.

international programs, including the Peace Corps, provide participants with stipends or other forms of remuneration. What is most important is whether the individual performs an action designed to benefit some group or cause, an action whose goal is to improve living conditions or the general welfare of the community.<sup>1</sup> Another defining feature that separates service-learning (and civic service) from occasional volunteering is that it requires intensive commitment and takes programmatic form.<sup>2</sup>

The Service Learning Think Tank in British Columbia summed it up this way: Service-learning encompasses three major principles or ideals. These three ideals are at the very heart of effective service-learning programs that foster the development of youth and their communities:

**1. Lifelong learning.** Lifelong learning is both a social process and an individual activity that occurs throughout life. Learning can take place in formal, non-formal, or informal settings. All of these settings help individuals develop the knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens, productive workers, effective and loving parents and family members, and creative learners. According to UNESCO, lifelong learning has both life span and life-wide aspects. In this view, learning in the community has equal value with traditional classroom learning. Furthermore, it has a social goal—learning for the broader public good as well as for personal growth or economic gain.

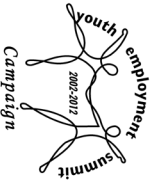
**2. Democratic citizenship.** Democratic government of, for, and by the people requires a responsible and capable citizenry in which community service is valued. A commitment to service can be instilled by formal education, as well as through non-formal learning opportunities in the family, community, and workplace. Involvement in the service creates a greater understanding of the needs of the community. It promotes a concern about community issues and a commitment to being involved that mark an active citizen by awarding effective citizenry skills.

**3. Communitarianism.** The Think Tank defines communitarianism as a set of liberal and social values including:

- ❖ Community capacity-building and empowerment
- ❖ Adding value to the existing social capital (knowledge, shared values, networks, trust in the community)
- ❖ Assuring social inclusion and cohesion
- ❖ Learning a sense of responsibility to others, whether locally or globally
- ❖ Learning and acting for the public good, not just for personal gain

<sup>1</sup> Menon, N., Moore, A.G., and Sherraden, M. (2002). *Understanding Service: Words in the Context of History and Culture*, Working paper no. 02-01. St. Louis, MO: Center for Social Development, Washington University.

<sup>2</sup> Sherraden, M. (2000). *Civic Service: Issues, Outlook, and Institution Building*. Perspective. St. Louis, MO: Center for Social Development, Washington University.



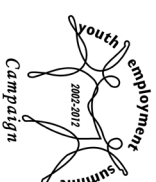
## Scope of Service: Service-Learning Projects Around The World

The Global Service Institute recently conducted a first-of-its kind survey of organized civic service programs around the world.<sup>1</sup> The institute focused on formal, organized programs that require intensive commitments of time—at least full time for one month—on the part of the server. After searching through written publications and the Internet, the researchers identified 210 programs in 57 countries and surveyed them. Here is a summary of what they found:

- ❖ **Location** Thirty-three percent of these programs are based in North America, 27 percent are in Europe and Central Asia, 12 percent are in Sub-Saharan Africa, 10 percent are in East Asia and the Pacific. The rest are scattered throughout Latin America, Caribbean, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. In general, countries with a highly evolved voluntary sector and greater levels of development are more likely to have formal, institutionalized service programs.
- ❖ **Scope of service** International service is the most common form of service (49%), followed by national service (35%), and transnational service (10%). Only a handful of programs are local in nature.
- ❖ **Age and other characteristics of servers** Only 40 percent of these programs call themselves youth service programs.<sup>2</sup> Yet, nearly 77 percent of the programs surveyed engage youth as servers, and, across all programs, youth serve more than any other age group. Almost all programs accept both women and men as servers, and some include people with disabilities, those of low income, and college students.
- ❖ **Voluntary nature of the service** Nearly all of the programs (92%) are voluntary in nature. The few compulsory programs tend to be national youth service programs in Africa and the Middle East. Somewhat surprisingly, nearly one-third of the programs require that the server pay some portion or the entire cost of the service experience, which might include airfare, room and board, or, in some cases, contributions to overall program operations.
- ❖ **Goals for the server** While the programs have a variety of goals, most of them focus on the server. Eighty-one percent of the programs say that one of their major goals is “increasing the server’s motivation to volunteer.” The two other most prevalent goals are “increasing the server’s skill acquisition” (76%) and “increasing the server’s social skills (68%).”
- ❖ **Goals for the group or community served** The most common is “promoting cultural understanding” (66%). This is especially important in the transnational and international programs.

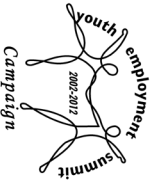
<sup>12</sup> See Sherradan, M. and Moore, A. (2002) *Global Assessment of Civic Service : Research Report*. St. Louis, M.O.: Global Service Institute, Center for Social Development, Washington University

<sup>13</sup> It is not clear how many of these could be characterized as service-learning programs.



Other frequently cited goals are “creating or improving public facilities” (55%) and “promoting sustainable land use” (50%).

- ❖ ***Areas of service*** The two most common areas are human and social services (81%) and education (80%). Community development (77%) and personal development activities (76%) are the next most frequent, followed by environmental protection (67%), cultural integration (60%), and health (59%). Roughly half of the programs also focus on employment and economic development, infrastructure development, arts and culture, and/or peace and human rights.
- ❖ ***Target audience*** Nearly two thirds of the programs serve children, and 71 percent serve youth. Adults are targeted by 61 percent of the programs, and 49 percent serve seniors aged 60 and above.
- ❖ ***Intensity of service*** In general, service roles are intensive. Eighty-one percent of the programs require the server to commit to the service on a full-time basis, 40 hours a week. The average amount of time that a participant serves is 7.3 months, although this figure ranges from one week to three years. National service programs require the longest term of service, an average commitment of 10 months. Local programs are typically eight months in duration, and international service lasts about seven months.
- ❖ ***Incentives*** Programs offer a variety of incentives to the servers in return for their participation, including academic credit (12%); scholarships (8%); grants and other monetary awards (7%); or some type of award, certificate, or community recognition (22%).
- ❖ ***Training and supervision*** Two-thirds of the programs provide training to the participants, 70 percent offer supervision, 49 percent provide reflection sessions, and 41 percent offer some form of mentoring.
- ❖ ***Other logistical supports*** The majority of transnational and international providers provide housing stipends or subsidies (62% and 70%, respectively). Nearly a third of the programs also offer transportation stipends or assistance and another 29 percent pay for health care costs or insurance, and the transnational and international programs are more likely to do so. Twenty-eight percent of the programs provide the server with a stipend or living allowance. This is more prevalent among the national service programs.
- ❖ ***Program sponsors*** Of the 210 programs surveyed, 75 percent are administered by NGOs and 22 percent by government agencies.



## Role of Service-Learning in the YES Campaign

Based on the survey of current service-learning programs it is clear that only a handful focus on locally developed, grassroots service projects designed to engage rural youth. Most are international and multi-national programs that seek to bring “outside help” to local communities, rather than to empower those young people that are already there. Yet, both research and experience suggest that service-learning offers unprecedented promise for engaging rural and peri-urban youth in community development, while also training them as workers, community leaders, and enterprise developers.

In keeping with the goals of the YES Campaign of providing “what is missing” for promoting youth employment, we propose to develop a local Youth Service-Learning Model in which young people will provide community service while learning the knowledge and skills needed for productive employment and for establishing their own enterprises that achieve the twin objectives of enterprise and community development. Young people will be paid a modest stipend for their efforts and will receive a small “scholarship” to pursue further education, employment training, or entrepreneurship at the completion of their term of service.

This model will focus on training youth for three mutually reinforcing activities:

1. To be productive workers who can apply their new knowledge and skills in a wide range of meaningful, socially responsible employment settings
2. To be leaders and problem solvers, with a strong commitment to making their community a better place in which to live, work, and raise a family
3. To create entrepreneurial solutions to identified community needs

Through this model, youth will engage in development efforts to help build economically and socially sustainable communities. The notion that someone will come and fix the problems of poor countries and communities is not feasible and has led to unsustainable programs. Building local capacity for innovation and change and a culture of self-reliance and social responsibility is essential in order to create lasting solutions to seemingly intransigent community problems. The best demographic group for this kind of capacity building is youth—today’s and tomorrow’s leaders. The Youth Service-Learning Model will build this capacity through training, mentoring, and provision of business development services for young people in rural communities around the globe. In doing so, it will move the youth (and their elders) out of the resignation that surrounds them and provide them with meaningful, hands-on projects where they learn by doing.

Three phases are envisaged:

1. Creating a **vision** for what is possible for young people to accomplish in their communities and asking them to make a **commitment**.
2. Developing and implementing an **action plan**. Helping participants develop individual projects

where they identify a local problem, design a solution, create an action plan, enroll other team members, implement the program, and complete the project. In the process, they will learn essential business management skills, problem solving, maintaining timelines, starting and completing projects, and other skills related to employment and entrepreneurship.

3. Identifying a **plan for the future** that encompasses education, employment, and/or entrepreneurship, along with some form of community service. At this point, the young people will be matched up with a training institution, a mentor, and/or financial institutions to develop their plans for the future.

In the ideal case, youth who complete their service-learning project will be able to find meaningful work that provides a real service to the community or to create a new enterprise that addresses an identified community need. Not every job has the potential for “doing good,” however. Another desirable outcome would be for the service-learning graduate to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for sustainable employment, while at the same time finding significant ways to contribute to his/her community outside the regular job.

One key component of the model will be the use of transformational technologies, providing a language and vocabulary that are designed to promote self-empowerment and growth in leadership skills. This training is called transformational because it aims to redefine the relationship of the individual to his/her world. Through the training, it is expected that the young people will learn to see themselves as change agents, as actors responsible for shaping outcomes, not merely passive players and victims of circumstances. The training develops the concepts of vision, intention, commitment, and ‘taking a stand’ for something in such a way as to lead to breakthroughs in what is thought possible and what is actually achieved.

For example, training in phase one focuses on *intention* as a critical factor in shaping the world. Young people can listen passively to a discussion or workshop, much like they would if they were watching a movie or overhearing someone’s conversation. Or they can listen with *intention*, in which their mind is focused on a goal to which they are committed. The quality of listening and of participation is completely different in the two situations. When intention is present, transforming the world is possible. The transformation must first occur internally—a shift in one’s perception of the world, the uncovering of possibilities that were previously invisible, the realization that one can be a dynamic actor who can induce change. It then extends beyond the individual to the family and community, as the intention is translated to visible change.

The youth enrolled in the program will be in trained to engage in transformational planning: action, and reflection so that they can (1) develop a vision of what is possible, (2) identify specific opportunities to help realize that vision, (3) commit to specific action plans with measurable milestones, and (4) be accountable for their own commitments and for achieving results. The training assumes that there will

be setbacks and breakdowns along the way, and it provides ways of using these to refocus on the underlying vision, renew the commitment, and return to the process of identifying opportunities and committing to action plans.

The schematic below was used in a transformational training workshop conducted by EDC in Peru. This workshop resulted in a major breakthrough: the founding of a local organization dedicated to advancing workforce development issues as part of the national agenda.

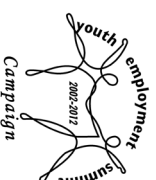
**Figure 1: Schematic of the steps involved for creating a breakthrough in what is possible.**  
*After aligning behind a common vision, workshop participants divide into thematic or geographic groups in order to (1) determine the opportunities (2) identify strategies (3) identify available and new resources, and (4) agree on a work plan with specific milestones for which each individual can be held accountable.*



The process described above, if well facilitated, leads to extraordinary levels of participation and commitment in diverse groups of people. The participants in the service-learning program will use this process, and other elements of transformational training, to create the space in which they develop self-empowerment. The vision and specific opportunities will be shaped around the issues that youth themselves identify—those issues of greatest importance to themselves, their families, and their communities. These may include issues of reproductive health, child care, economic development, education, and the environment, among many others. The training will include role models as mentors and coaches and examples of projects completed in other communities, such as establishing health clinics, classes on birth control, literacy classes, AIDS awareness programs, micro-enterprises, and community clean-ups.

## **Integrating the Youth Service-Learning Model with the 6 “Es” of the YES Campaign**

The Youth Service-Learning Model fits perfectly within the YES Campaign’s framework for youth development. It addresses all six “Es” that are at the heart of promoting meaningful, sustainable employment for young people all around the world.



- ❖ **Employability:** Service-learning provides youth with education and training in real-world settings, with support from adult mentors. Young people learn marketable skills, along with building self-esteem and confidence in their ability to make a contribution to their community. By finding creative and collaborative solutions to difficult social and environmental problems, young people also learn a new world-view that embraces innovation, teaches respect for others, challenges what is, and envisions what might be.
- ❖ **Employment Creation:** While the primary goal of service-learning is not employment creation, it can lead to new business ventures that address real needs in the community. For example, in Moldova, one young person created a new service in response to an identified community need: delivering business correspondence throughout the city on an old motorcycle. Now his service is becoming more successful as companies are starting to value what this service brings to them. In the end, what started as a volunteer service has turned into a viable business employing more young people.
- ❖ **Equity:** Service-learning promotes equity in two important ways. First, it can provide an equal opportunity for all young people to realize their full potential, including the disabled, the rural, young women who still suffer from discriminatory barriers, and other marginalized groups in society. Many of these individuals have a difficult time entering the labor force for the first time. Service-learning provides an opportunity for them to learn new skills, contribute to their community, and demonstrate their worth in a low-risk, non-competitive environment.  
  
Second, many service-learning projects promote education, health, and nutrition for those who are most in need. By tutoring special education students; promoting health education in poor, rural communities; or providing literacy training to young girls, youth engaged in service-learning can help ensure that everyone has access to these fundamental human rights. No society has truly advanced by depriving itself of the talents and abilities of half of its population.
- ❖ **Entrepreneurship:** Service-learning is the precursor to social entrepreneurship. Through their community service projects, young people learn to become youthful entrepreneurs who see social and economic opportunities where others only see problems. Entrepreneurs, whether they are working in the villages or in the capital markets, are the visionaries who generate livelihoods for themselves and for others. Service-learning encourages, nurtures, and supports their quest for the new and the untried, while also promoting a deep sense of social responsibility.
- ❖ **Environmental Sustainability:** Service-learning can contribute to both environmental sustainability and other social causes. Many of the most successful service-learning projects focus on water, land, energy, the atmosphere, biodiversity, and ecosystem management. These projects can lead to sustainable employment as well as employment creation, as communities see what is possible. It would be shortsighted to destroy our environment in the quest for transient employment opportunities.

- ❖ **Empowerment:** The primary goal of service-learning is empowerment, to harness the untapped talents of unemployed youth, and to provide them with a set of real-world experiences that not only serve their community but also help them in their quest for sustainable livelihoods. Youth are empowered in a number of ways. Certainly they learn new knowledge and workforce skills that can serve them well as they seek future employment. But, they also learn that they have the capacity to make a real difference in the world around them, exercise leadership, cooperate with others in achieving common goals, and reflect on their own learning and accomplishments. As a result of their experiences, they are empowered to pursue further education and training, find meaningful employment, or create jobs for themselves and others.

Most importantly, service-learning opens new horizons for those young people who currently have little or no livelihood and little hope for a bright future. All too often, these are the same young people who turn to alcohol, drugs, and other risky behaviors because they have too much time on their hands and too little constructive work to do. Service-learning provides a much-needed alternative that engages youth in active learning, strengthens their knowledge and skills, builds their leadership capacity, and allows them to contribute meaningfully to society. In the ideal case, service-learning can pave the way for social entrepreneurship.

### **Social entrepreneurship**

The concept of entrepreneurship has evolved over time and has a number of different meanings. Traditionally, it has been associated with launching a new business, particularly a for-profit business. It also carries with it such notions as creativity, seeing and seizing opportunities, and facilitating change. At the heart of entrepreneurship is innovation, stimulating the economy by finding new and better ways of doing things.<sup>1</sup> Not-for-profit organizations can also be classified as entrepreneurial if they are characterized by innovation and foster change.<sup>2</sup>

Another key element of entrepreneurship, which Harvard Business School's Howard Stevenson used to distinguish between entrepreneurial and administrative managers, is resourcefulness. Entrepreneurial managers are not constrained by the resources they have in hand or by their current job descriptions. Rather they identify and seize upon opportunities to expand their existing resources, work hard to mobilize the resources of others, and do whatever else it takes to achieve their objectives.

William Drayton, founder of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, is credited with coining the term "social entrepreneur" several decades ago. In his words:

Social entrepreneurs have the same core temperament as their industry—creating, business entrepreneur peers but instead use their talents to solve social problems on a society-wide scale—why children are not learning, why technology is not accessed equally, why pollution is increasing, etc. The essence, however, is the same. Both types of entrepreneur recognize when a part of society is stuck and how to get it unstuck. Each type of entrepreneur envisages a systemic change, identifies the jujitsu points that will allow him or her to tip the whole society onto this new path, and then persists until the job is done.<sup>16</sup>

- According to Dees, social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector by:
- Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value
  - Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission
  - Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning
  - Acting boldly without being limited by the resources currently in hand
  - Establishing a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and the outcomes<sup>17</sup>

Dees identifies five essential ingredients for a social entrepreneur: (1) a powerful, new system change idea; (2) creativity; (3) potential for widespread impact; (4) entrepreneurial quality; and (5) strong ethical fiber.<sup>18</sup> While the idea itself is extremely important to Dees, he also considers its potential replicability and impact. Among the questions he asks are these: “Is the new idea, once demonstrated in one place, sufficiently new, practical, and attractive for practitioners in the field to want to copy it? And assuming that it does spread, how big and beneficial will its impact be?”<sup>19</sup>

In sum, what sets social entrepreneurs apart from others is their vision, creativity, moral fiber, and ability to mobilize the community and garner resources for social change. They take initiative and tap undeveloped human and economic resources and use them to pursue a social mission: to enrich learning, protect the environment, promote public health, advance human rights, and spark economic development.

In Drayton’s view, social entrepreneurs are extremely rare because they must possess several characteristics and skills that are not often found in the same person. He asserts:

There are many creative, altruistic, ethically good people with innovative ideas. However, only one in many thousands of such good people also has the entrepreneurial quality to lead, to administer, or to get things done; there are millions of people who can do these things. Instead [social entrepreneur] refers to someone who has a very special trait—someone who in the core of her/his personality, absolutely must change an important pattern across his/her whole society. Exceedingly few people have this driving motivation. Most scholars and artists come to rest when they express an idea; many managers relax when they solve the problem of only their company or institution; and most professionals are happy when they satisfy a client. It is only the [social] entrepreneur who literally cannot stop until he or she has changed the whole society.<sup>20</sup>

While this may be true without any intervention, it is the firm belief of the YES Campaign that through the Youth Service-Learning Model, many more such individuals can and will be created. While not everyone has the potential to become a social entrepreneur, they are far more likely to emerge in a social

<sup>16</sup>William Drayton, “The Citizen Sector: Becoming as Competitive and Entrepreneurial as Business in *california management Journal*, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

milieu that encourages entrepreneurship and places great value on service to the community. Providing the right set of training and real-world experiences can also help ensure that young people's initiative, creativity, and sense of civic responsibility flourish. With the right set of knowledge and skills developed in a collaborative and supportive environment, there is no telling just how many social entrepreneurs can be created. Below are just a few examples from Ashoka and from our own YES Networks.

### **Ashoka Fellows: Social Entrepreneurship in Action**

Founded two decades ago by William Drayton, Ashoka has become one of the largest organizations in the world dedicated to social entrepreneurship. The organization's birthplace is Asia, and the very first Fellows were selected in India in 1982. Over the past 20 years, Ashoka has identified more than 400 social entrepreneurs in Asia alone, many of whom have received national and international recognition for their creative and practical solutions to challenging social and environmental problems. Here, as in other regions, social entrepreneurs work with partners in other sectors like business, government, media, and academia. Each day, they serve as a powerful force for community development and social change, motivating and enabling others to contribute their time and effort for the common good. Most of the Ashoka fellows, like Hosne Ara, are mature women and men with degrees in higher education and years of related work experience.

In the early 1990s, Hosne Ara, who was herself a victim of gender discrimination and abuse, launched a grassroots movement led by poor women, that spread rapidly across Bangladesh. Her goal was an ambitious one: to change how both men and women perceived women and also the traditional behavior of men toward women that both genders routinely accepted.

To do this, she knew that she had to empower the mass of poor, almost entirely illiterate Bangladeshi women to change their own situation. She also realized that they would not succeed unless they first came together. Only as a united group could they encourage each other to face up to their situation, change their own long-held perceptions, and confront a society that was comfortable with existing norms. By joining forces, they could press steadily for deep and lasting change.

Consequently, Hosne Ara launched a grassroots-run movement of, not just for, poor women. She founded the Thengamala Mohila Sabut Sangha, which provides the organizational framework for the movement, and learned through years of hard work how to make such a grassroots movement run practically. It has succeeded because it unleashes and channels the energy and motivation of the Bangladeshi women who have been the victims of terrible abuse.

Like the YES Networks around the world, this grassroots movement is creative and powerful because it draws ideas, strategies, and programs directly from its members. For example, one of the local chapters suggested that the organization press the Bangladeshi government for the right to build some of the local roads. They won! Suddenly poor women were managing significant local public works skillfully, honestly, and at low cost.

The leadership, which comes from the local women, is very strong and resilient. Hosne Ara does not hire professionals to train the local women as paraprofessionals. Instead, she builds local capacity by identifying talented women in the local community and developing their leadership skills. Since she hopes for the day when men and women will work together as equal partners, she includes a few men, but only a few, in the education and development process.<sup>21</sup>

Hosne Ara is just one of hundreds of Ashoka Fellows who are working in Asia, Africa, Central Europe, Latin America, and North America to bring about social change. Another is Camilo Soares Machado of Paraguay.

In April 1996, Paraguay's shaky democracy faced its greatest test when Paraguay's president Juan Carlos Wasmosy dismissed army commander Gen. Lino Oviedo for conducting illegal political activities. Rumors of another impending coup d'état spread widely. Suddenly, it seemed, the social gains achieved after 1989—the constitutional reforms, expansion of civil liberties, emergence of citizens' organizations, and birth of new political parties—could be wiped out in a matter of hours.

As President Wasmosy sought refuge in the U.S. embassy, government, church and business leaders speculated about who would win the coup, Camilo Soares Machado, a leader in the Paraguayan youth movement, recalled: "Neither the church, nor the political parties, nor the traditional structures had any idea how to respond to the threat of the coup. Everyone retreated for safety." Everyone that is, except for the nation's youth.



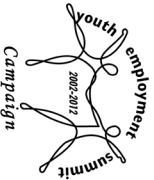
"We sent out a call through the media," explained Soares. "And before you knew it the streets of Asunción began to fill with youth groups. We called youth to go into the streets—not in defense of the current government—but in defense of the right to live in an open and democratic society. We thought twenty or thirty people would turn out, but within a week there were demonstrations twenty-four hours a day in the squares of Asunción with twenty or thirty thousand young people. People felt joyful; they saw there was an alternative. And they led the way—the participation of young people stopped the coup d'état."

When President Wasmosy emerged from shelter, he acknowledged the courage of the young demonstrators. Newspapers celebrated the "kids of democracy"—"faces painted, wrapped in flags, singing songs and dancing." While articles appeared with headlines trumpeting: "Our Youth Have Given Us a Lesson in Dignity," General Oviedo was charged with insurrection, arrested, and placed in jail.

The emergence of Paraguay's young citizens as key actors in the country's political life can be traced, in large measure, to the high school organizing efforts led by Camilo Soares in the early 1990s, as well as to Soares's leadership of Paraguay's first nationwide inter-secondary school organization, and to his work, in 1995, establishing the *Casa de la Juventud* ("Youth House") in Asunción, which has become the epicenter of the national youth movement in Paraguay: a two-story house, filled with music and colorful murals that serves as a meeting place and a center for training, research, strategizing, and communications for youth groups across Paraguay and from other countries. At 22, Soares calls himself the "grandfather" of the house.<sup>22</sup> Since he was 15, when he had organized the first high school student council in Paraguay, Soares had played a central role galvanizing the country's youth movement and helping to formulate its strategy.

Source: Ashoka Innovators Website

<sup>21</sup>Downloaded from [www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org)



The challenge for the YES Campaign and for those of us here today, is to create early opportunities for young people ages 15 to 24 to engage in service-learning and to build a culture that supports civic and social responsibility. What these young people may lack in higher education or a lengthy work history, they can more than make up for through their youthful energy and enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to hard work. By enlisting their help in tackling enduring social problems, we can strengthen local communities while also giving young people the knowledge, skills, and confidence to pursue further education, obtain meaningful employment, become responsible citizens and community leaders, and, in many cases, entrepreneurs with social commitment.

### **Evidence of Youth Social entrepreneurship in the YES Campaign**

YES Country Networks, an innovation of the YES Campaign, have also been successful in promoting social entrepreneurship among youth. They are youth-led national-level coalitions focused on promoting youth employment in their countries. Their primary aim is to work with diverse stakeholders to develop programs and projects for youth employment in their countries. Membership in the YES Networks is diverse, including government officials, development agencies, business groups, and youth-serving civil society organizations. What makes the Networks really thrive, however, is the energy and commitment of the participating youth.

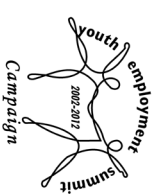
Here are just a few of the successes of the YES Networks:

#### ***YES Angola***

The Network has launched Job Bank, a project at the Vida Abundante School in Luanda, Angola (where 4,500 students study in shipping containers) in partnership with the Shirley Ann Sullivan Educational Foundation. Job Bank provides peer mentoring, job search, work placement, and scholarship opportunities to students at Vida Abundante School. The scheme includes a self-sustaining mechanism where students who have successfully found work through the program will contribute their skills as mentors to younger students.

#### ***YES Egypt***

The Network launched the Knowledge Cafe in August 2002 in Alexandria, a technology center offering employment advisory services and Internet communications. Knowing that engaging the private sector is critical to achieving the YES Campaign goals, YES Egypt in partnership with Virgitech Corps is sponsoring over 2,000 computer scholarships for underprivileged youth. Also, all thematic papers developed for the Alexandria Summit were translated into Arabic, enabling the YES Campaign to communicate with the entire Arab world.



### ***YES Pakistan***

On August 13, 2003, about 100 YES volunteers, ages 15 to 29, dedicated one year to community service as a way of demonstrating their capacity for involvement in societal change and development. This was done as part of the ceremony to launch the Pakistani National Youth Service (PNYS) in—Lahore. This youth volunteer program will later be launched in three other provinces. In April 2003, YES Pakistan joined a consortium of organizations working to address the plight of street children. YES Pakistan will lead the activities of this consortium in Lahore.

### ***YES Uganda:***

Through the efforts of YES Uganda, an HIV/AIDS and Human Rights counseling center was launched by Marjke Mooij, HIVOS Programme Officer for East Africa. In January 2003, a Community Technology Centre (CTC) was also opened—as of March 2003, 48 youth had been trained in computer and office skills.