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# Innovative Practices of Youth Participation in Media



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A research study on twelve initiatives from around the developing and underdeveloped regions of the world

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## Foreword

A major goal of UNESCO pertains to media education and youth development. Over the last couple of years, numerous programmes and projects have been developed to explore youth involvement in media. Although, journalists and scholars have been talking about the emergence of youth media cultures around the world, young people are increasingly being excluded from participation in media. It is in this context, participation becomes a key notion that needs to be nurtured. UNESCO has identified youth participation in media as a key strategy that needs to be strengthened at various levels – local, regional, national, and international. These principles are articulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other key documents.

The several youth-led initiatives presented in this book offer some good examples of young people's involvement in the media. An assortment of media – newspaper and magazine, radio, television and video, the Internet, and personal digital assistants – are examined, especially in relation to how youth get involved with these. The study explores the various kinds of innovative uses and participation of youth in media in different cultural contexts, and demonstrates that young people, working with a range of media materials, produce innovative content through dialogue and discussions.

UNESCO understands that the role of ICTs and the notion of “media mixes” crucial in elaborating youth participation and involvement in the media that enable learning and education. This study, through detailed sketches of the various initiatives, offers some interesting perspectives on how ICTs and media mixes have become popular with youngsters both in creative engagement and content creation.

This book will be useful as a research and reference guide to community-based media centres, media education practitioners, non governmental organizations, policy-makers, planners, media professionals, social activists, researchers, etc. A direct contribution of the book are the several examples that can be adapted and/or replicated by various initiatives as they embark on building youth media programmes around the world.

I like to invite you all to read and explore the materials presented in the book and to see what young people are capable of doing as they continue their journey into adulthood.

**Abdul Waheed Khan**

*Assistant Director-General for Information and Communication, UNESCO*

# Preface

Scholarship in the field of journalism and mass communication examined youth involvement in the media from a variety of perspectives. A significant number of these studies have explored the emergence of “youth media cultures” in the western as well as non-western contexts that led to productive reformulations of concepts and categories. However, there has been an absence of research on youth experiments from around the world in the area of socially responsible journalism and media related work. Within the area of media education and media literacy, some interesting ideas are being debated and discussed that look at how youth relate and use the media in terms of learning and literacy.

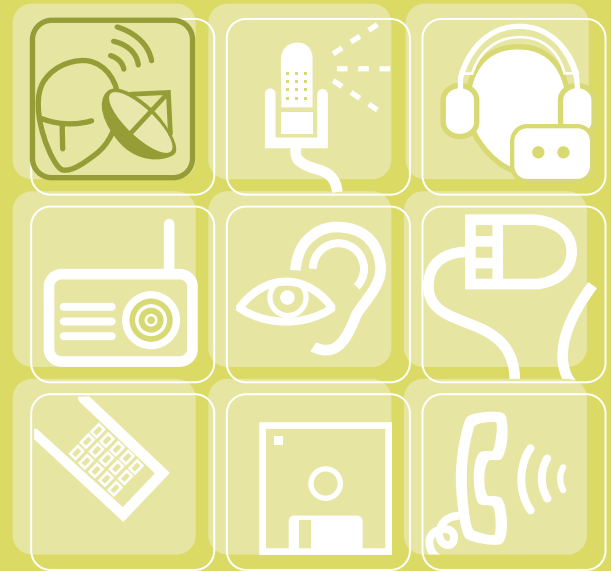
The study presented here by Dr. Sanjay Asthana, on youth participation in media, offers an interesting range of examples from Ghana, Haiti, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, Vietnam, and Zambia that best exemplify innovative approaches and strategies adopted by youth in using the media for social and personal development.

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# 1

## Youth Participation and the Media



### Introduction

The present generation of young people, unlike its predecessors, lives in an increasingly globalizing world that is being transformed by a wide range of technological innovations. Despite these major developments, it is a world that still faces deep socio-economic disparities across various regions. Still, the contemporary developments may hold a promise for creating opportunities in alleviating the inequities. A number of scholars have characterized contemporary globalization in positive as well as negative terms; some argued that the “global media culture” implicates young people as passive consumers, while others pointed to the possibilities opened-up by information and communication technologies (ICTs) and new media. UNESCO considers both positions tenable<sup>1</sup>. UNESCO’s main focus has been young people’s involvement in the media as active participants, rather than passive consumers. To this end, it has been in the forefront of media education and youth development for the past several years<sup>2</sup>. This publication explores and examines several initiatives from developing and underdeveloped regions of the world that represent good practices of youth participation in the media.

Youth involvement in the media spans a wide range of activities – from learning technical, production, writing, and reporting skills to developing and deconstructing media content – and is closely connected to the processes of

media education and literacy. In engaging with the media, young people explore and learn about themselves and the world around them. In doing so they bring their own unique knowledge and perspectives. Several programmes as case studies were identified to explore how the praxis of media education is being carried out, especially among young adults in different regions of the world. Praxis may be understood “as a social or pedagogical process which enlists human efforts to understand the world more accurately in conjunction with a political will to transform social practices and relations” (Sholle and Denski, 1993). The author outlined some major arguments about connecting theory and practice by drawing upon writings pertaining to youth participation in the media and media literacy models. To this end, the author discussed recent work in cultural and media theory, as well as scholarship in the humanities, social sciences, and philosophy to demonstrate the emergence of new models that seek to blend theory with praxis.

### I. Approaches to Media Education: Youth, Learning, & Literacy

The paradigm of media education, as it is generally understood and applied in several contexts,<sup>3</sup> has been critiqued from a variety of theoretical and praxis-oriented angles. A considerable amount of scholarship has opened-up fresh perspectives on youth, learning, and literacy. This emerging work is

<sup>1</sup> See UN World Youth Report: The Global Situation of Young People, 2003. pp. 311-315

<sup>2</sup> Some of this can be glimpsed in the following UNESCO publication, Global Monitoring Report: Education For All, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The acquisition of technical, analytical and creative skills usually applied in classroom situations, curriculum development, and policy related legislations.

more than a revision of the earlier paradigm. It is an attempt in redefining and reorienting categories and concepts to grasp the multiple ways of knowing in the world. For instance, as a social category, 'youth' has been trapped in a universalist definition drawn from western-based epistemology disregarding the multiple ways in which youth actually live in different regions of the world (Besley and Peters, 2005; Soto and Swadener 2002; UN World Youth Report, 2003, and 2005). Along with this singular conceptualization, youth has been characterized as "persons-in-the-making," always in the state of "deficit", plotted along a linear and stagist model. The critiques have also pointed out that this understanding of youth has been produced in social sciences research and numerous governmental and policy-related legislations that view 'youth as a problem' with an increased emphasis on "control within education and training." Further complicating this problem has been the persistent use of terms like "teenagers", "adolescent", "youth", that have been used interchangeably.

Contemporary discussions in critical media literacy (Buckingham, 2003; Feilitzen and Carlsson, 2002; Sefton-Green, 1998; Lankshear and McLaren, 1993) are grappling with what UNESCO had very aptly outlined over two decades ago through this following statement: "We must prepare young people for living in a world of powerful images, words, and sounds" (UNESCO, 1982). With the emergence of new paradigms and models, media literacy among the young adults has become a focus of several institutions and organizations. Recent scholarship on young adults have begun to question the developmental models that view young people as "persons in the making," thereby denying agency. The emerging new paradigms consider youth as protagonists who are capable of making decisions, exercising choices, and more important, as individuals who are active agents

in promoting democratic processes and civic engagement. This is an innovative approach toward inculcating a critical stance among young people about the media world – a world where powerful images, words and sounds create reality. Here youngsters are provided opportunities to learn through their experience of visual images and words. This enables a critical reflection on the media discourse vis-à-vis their everyday lives. Interestingly, most of these contemporary perspectives have looked back to earlier contributions of John Dewey and Paulo Freire – two original thinkers of education, democracy, and human development – to sketch models of learning and literacy. Dewey's theory of education, with its emphasis on interaction, reflection, and experience, and Freire's insights on dialogical education (Frymer, 2005) and developing consciousness has shaped contemporary discussions of media education, learning and literacy. Consequently, it becomes important to pursue this field as a broad rubric where principles and practices are interlinked in terms of a "constellation," that is dynamic and open-ended. A major influence that is driving the discussions is the impact of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) that are playing a significant role in enhancing youth participation and involvement in media. UNESCO's ongoing work, through a variety of programmes and projects, points to the relevance of ICTs in education and youth development. Indeed, the role of ICTs and the notion of "media mixes" have been crucial in elaborating youth participation and involvement in the media that enable learning and education through fun and pleasure.

## II. Methodological Framework: Connecting Theory and Practice

This publication, then, followed contemporary critical approaches to media education, youth, learning, and literacy by considering these as conceptual constellation that remain alert to the really existing social realities and life-worlds of young people and the communities. The

Youth involvement in the media spans a wide range of activities – from learning technical, production, writing, and reporting skills to developing and deconstructing media content – and is closely connected to the processes of media education and literacy



A major influence that is driving the discussions is the impact of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) that are playing a significant role in enhancing youth participation and involvement in media.

twelve initiatives – studies in this publication – are exemplary instances of the mediations across theory and practice and demonstrate that it is *in practice that a theory ought to be anchored*. The wide-ranging examples of youth participation in the media and the dialogical and experiential process of learning that this entails go beyond the instrumental acquisition of skills and techniques. To explore and examine the range of youth involvement in media in the process of learning and literacy as well as the production of various media materials – newspaper and magazine articles, radio broadcasts, television and video programmes, and internet-based materials – the following questions have been outlined:

- What are the various kinds of innovative uses and participation of youth in media?
- How does media participation empower the youth?
- What does youth participation mean in different cultural contexts and settings?
- What role does technologies play in youth participation in media?

To study the various initiatives as studies, the author conducted textual analysis of documents and policy materials; open-ended focused interviews with the youth and young participants from the initiatives; interviews with the project managers; interviews with staff members from these youth media initiatives; and reviews of several youth programme materials. The studies, limited to developing, least developed, and under developed regions of the world, cover various media – newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the new media – particularly the multiple uses of the Internet. After a series of initial discussions with the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research, Nordicom, Göteborg University and the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), a broad-based set of criteria were developed for selecting the twelve initiatives. A sample of forty media and

youth programs, drawn after an exhaustive survey of a range of materials<sup>4</sup>, were carefully studied to determine the good examples of innovative use and youth participation in the media. The rationale for selecting the twelve initiatives was based on the following criteria: The focus was on initiatives that considered youth as active agents, rather than “persons in the making.” The various youth produced initiatives are innovative in terms of content production, media deployment, and practices. The primary focus of the initiatives centered on how young people understand and interpret their own lifeworlds and the social world that they inhabit. In analyzing the initiatives from different regions of the world, the author identified similarities and differences in the various media and geographical regions as well as social and cultural factors specific to those regions. With the awareness that youth has a complicated history, the author primarily use the cognate term “young people.” This has analytic value especially when pursuing comparative study of youth participation in media.

The several youth-led initiatives presented in the following pages offer some good examples of young people’s involvement in the media. This involvement is not a singular act: rather an active and collective process of learning. Within these social settings, young people create and develop their own perspectives and knowledge. Participation provided young people a context and community to explore imaginations and ideas. This process of learning, situating educational activity in the lived experience of young people, is dialogical and open-ended. The various media become more than facilitators and instruments; they enable and mediate learning and literacy. They become “social networks” of learning.

<sup>4</sup> These include journals, books, and web resources. For instance, *What works in Youth Media* by Sheila Kinkade (2003), published by the International Youth Foundation, *A Closer Look: Case Studies in Youth Media Production* edited by Kathleen Tyner (2004), numerous media education-literacy, communication technologies websites like NORDICOM, Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research, MAGIC-UNICEF, TakingITGlobal, Center for Media Literacy, etc.

### III. Chapter Outlines

The following chapters, organised in terms of specific media, through a series of sketches and vignettes drawn from the twelve initiatives, explore key aspects of young people's participation and examine various kinds of innovative uses of media in diverse socio-cultural settings. Throughout this exploration a fine balance has been attempted between theory and practice as young people's voices – dialogue and deliberations – are articulated. UNESCO's study on the links between ICTs and poverty developed through the ictPR project (Information and Communication Technologies for Poverty Reduction) is instructive and useful to understand how media are embedded within a social context. The proposed research shall follow ictPR approach in examining the initiatives. Each chapter will study innovative uses of media in terms of how young people relate and interact with various media in the process of developing content. Young people gain access to tools of media production in a variety of ways; from training and imparting basic to advanced technical skills, using production facilities and equipment to learning about script writing, story boarding, lighting, set design, page design, layout, digital graphics, and computers. The acquisition of media-making, knowledge and skills, embedded in the lived experience of young people, offers unique perspectives, a vision and a voice that need to be examined to understand youth participation in media. The following are the chapter outlines:

#### • Chapter Two

Three initiatives, *Trendsetters*, Zambia, *Young Journalists Group*, Vietnam, and *Timoun ak Medya*, Haiti, are studied that deal with how children and young people report

and write news stories on health issues like HIV/AIDS, social and environmental themes from pollution of rivers to gender equality, and sustainable development. These young people as journalists engage in dialogue and deliberations not only among themselves but also with adults – and policy makers and governmental officers – provide some good practices of media uses and civic engagement.

#### • Chapter Three

Radio is a central media in enabling participatory communication and fostering community. The initiatives selected in the present chapter demonstrate that young people have furthered radio broadcasting in creative ways. *Bush Radio*, South Africa, *Youth Broadcasting*, Somalia, and *Young Journalists Group*, Vietnam are productive examples of participatory community building. The primary focus is on young people's role as radio broadcasters in self and social expression.

#### • Chapter Four

This chapter continues to sketch and study the radio explorations by focusing on the following initiatives: *Mundo Sem Segredos* (World Without Secrets), Mozambique, *Curious Mind*, Ghana, and *Timoun ak Medya*, Haiti. These initiatives exemplify the ongoing debate between democracy and development through the voices of young people.

#### • Chapter Five

*Camara! Ahi Nos Vemos*, Mexico, *Action Health Participatory Video Project*, Nigeria, and *Children's Media Center*, Kyrgyzstan, constitute the main focus of this chapter in giving the youth opportunities to explore a wide range of topics in the areas of

The acquisition of media-making, knowledge and skills, embedded in the lived experience of young people, offers unique perspectives, a vision and a voice that need to be examined to understand youth participation in media.

education, homelessness, youth access to reproductive health information and life planning skills, and social development through television and video production.

#### • Chapter Six

Two initiatives, *Cybermohalla* and *Mapping the Neighbourhood*, India are studied in this chapter. In the *Cybermohalla* project, youngsters work with a range of digital media and produce experimental works instead digital works, computer animation, write texts using graphics and images, publish wall magazines, edit books, etc. The main aim is to give a forum where the youngsters not only explore their creativity, but also comment on the social and moral topics that impact their lives. *Mapping the Neighbourhood* is conceptualized as an alternative learning experience through the use of ICT and community maps in the learning process and is based on participatory learning and collection of relevant information of the locality.

#### • Chapter Seven

The concluding chapter summarizes the main findings of the research. The innovative – creative as well as critical – ways in which young people not only use the media, but also construct their own world. What does youth participation in media, exemplified through the various initiatives,

tell us about new forms of knowledge and understanding?

#### • Chapter Eight

This chapter presents brief profiles of the twelve initiatives along with some background information and context. The primary purpose here is to provide some reference to the ongoing activities.

The various examples of children and youth participation in the media in the chapters that follow clearly demonstrate, what the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) has poignantly argued regarding the urgent need for cross-cultural dialogues:

*We need to develop **habits of coexistence**: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association... **practices and not principles** are what enable us to live together in peace. Conversations across boundaries of identity – whether national, religious, or something else – begin with the sort of **imaginative engagement** you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from some place other than your own<sup>5</sup>.*

It is the imaginative engagement of children and young people – conversations that ask us to co-participate – that we shall glimpse in the following pages of this publication.

<sup>5</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, p. xix and 85, emphasis added.

# 2

## Young Journalists in Action



As one of the primary forms of communication, writing provides young people with a mode of self-expression that facilitates education and learning. Writing becomes more than an act or a craft of putting down ideas on paper: rather in and through writing youngsters create a sense of identity and being-in-the-world. This self-expression takes many forms – personal, public, social, and creative – and engenders dialogue and participation. To young people the process of writing about their own self and the social world around them is the beginning of a life long journey of learning. The following sections sketch several examples of young people as writers and journalists, who as a community of learners demonstrate the range of possibilities in producing newspapers and magazines. In producing these print-based media, from inception to the finished products, the youngsters perform a wide variety of roles in making numerous micro and macro decisions regarding lay-out, design, graphics, reporting, editorial, advertising, marketing, etc. that gives them a sense of ownership and responsibility. The road to becoming journalists is a process that the youngsters are more than willing to become familiar with. In this regard, the three initiatives, Trendsetters, Zambia, Young Journalists Group, Vietnam, and Timoun ak Medya, Haiti serve as good examples of innovative media use by young people.

### **Learning Reporting Skills, Writing News Stories**

Although writing and reporting are fundamental to journalism, broader skills and training are required to successfully produce and distribute a newspaper or a magazine. The youngsters are trained in the skills of writing, reporting, and editing through numerous seminars conducted by professional journalists. More importantly, the older youth, involved in producing a newspaper and magazine at the initiatives, serve as trainers to younger participants. From their older peers, the youngsters not only learn the day-to-day operations of running a newspaper and/or magazine, but also know to report, edit, and write news stories. An important development in print-based journalism, the increasing presence and use of new media – computers and the internet – have led to changes in how a newspaper and magazine is conceptualised and produced. This combination of different media commonly referred to as “mixed media” has generated excitement among youngsters at the various initiatives. Apart from simplifying the mundane procedures and tasks and enabling quicker learning of skills, the mixed media offers unique innovative possibilities for the youngsters as journalists. Studies have indicated that media mixes not only “nurture the innovative, adventurous and pleasurable ways in which participants can

explore the possibilities of media,”<sup>1</sup> both in content creation as well as bringing together local and indigenous knowledge in dialogue with international and global ones. Some of the topics and themes explored by the young participants – health, environment, and children’s rights – are good examples of this.

The young members of Trendsetters learn valuable journalism training from a variety of sources ranging from professional adult journalists from Zambia to UNICEF’s regular training workshops. According to Mary Phiri-Tembo, one of the founding members of Trendsetters, young members acquire basic skills from in writing and reporting along with graphics and page layout from their peers while in the process of producing the newspaper. Young members consolidate what they learnt at workshops by doing it. Trendsetters follows professional guidelines and other journalistic code of ethics like other commercial or public service oriented media. The day-to-day operations of the newspaper and regular management and editorial meetings inculcate a sense of involvement and participation among all members. Phiri-Tembo asserts that as a youth-led newspaper, Trendsetters provided a unique opportunity for young Zambians in becoming journalists. As a public forum for young members and a credible newspaper, Trendsetters soon began to get noticed by governmental officials and journalistic community in Zambia. With its particular focus on health, especially HIV/AIDS that ravaged Zambian society, Trendsetters gained respect from international community as well. For its journalistic reporting on HIV/AIDS, it was awarded the 1997 “best team reporting” Global Media Award from the Population Institute in the United States.

Although Trendsetters seeks to emulate other professional media organizations to maintain high standards, it distinguished itself from these adult-led and adult-run newspapers in terms of writing style and overall content creation. The writing and reporting is informal, vibrant and direct, frequently employing lively metaphors to connect with young people. According to Phiri-Tembo the adult-run newspapers, alienate youngsters with their didactic, top-down writing, and have boring and dull news reports. These newspapers, Phiri-Tembo opines, write and report on HIV/AIDS in terms of a ‘youth problem,’ and a scourge that needs to be eradicated. “This is all fine, but it is the tone that matters,” Phiri-Tembo adds. Each issue of the newspaper has a couple of themes that are drawn from current popular discussions among the youth in Zambian society. To keep up and be relevant to the present day youngsters, new graphic styles are incorporated.

Young Journalists Group in Vietnam has over a hundred members who come from various regions of Vietnam. About 40-50 primary members participated in the UNICEF sponsored journalism training workshops and also learn journalism training from adult professional journalists before writing and contributing to various mainstream newspapers and magazines. These members, popularly called the “Junior Reporter’s Group,” later visited eight provinces of Hanoi city and other rural areas to train and mentor other youngsters as journalists. For instance, members have trained other youngsters how to write and develop their own story ideas. A monthly newsletter titled, “Voices of the Youth,” and a children’s book, “Children’s Aspirations” have been published. Besides, members contributed hundreds of stories to numerous Vietnamese print publications. The self-expressions of the members of Young Journalists Group through

their own publications as well as in adult-based newspapers provide some unique perspectives on a variety of topics that are personal, political and social. According to Lan Anh, founder of Young Journalists Group, persuading adult newspapers to accept their stories was difficult in the beginning. With their persistence and the gradual recognition in and around Hanoi, Young Journalists Group found newspaper publishers willing to provide space for their writings. It was the ability of Young Journalists Group to demand a forum for self-expression that the professional mainstream news media had to grudgingly accede to. The group had also made its presence felt among local and national Vietnamese government forums.

Timoun ak Medya from Haiti has been engaged in training children so as to build a network of child journalists who articulate basic children's rights to self-expression, education and equal participation. Two sponsors, Plan Haiti and the Panos Institute offer writing and reporting skills to children. These children, writing in Creole, English, French, and Spanish, produce comic books, posters, drawings, news stories, poetry, etc. It is important to note that UNICEF and UNESCO under the broader guidelines of United Nations<sup>1</sup> have been promoting children's rights (that ought to be guaranteed as fundamental rights) by involving the world community, national governments, bureaucracies, non-governmental agencies, and other social actors. The work being carried out at Timoun ak Medya represents a fine model of the kind of involvement UNICEF and UNESCO have been espousing. Here children do not just receive journalism training, but learn from each other as well. Jean-Claude Louis, Director of Panos Haiti says that children go on excursions to gain practical knowledge of reporting in terms of gathering information through interaction with various contacts and sources. The excursion trips also provide



*Two confident girls from the Young Journalists Group at a UNICEF sponsored journalism workshop.*

children opportunities in developing story ideas. For the past several years, Haiti has been going through civil unrest. The child journalists from Timoun ak Medya have written about the political issues in Haiti outlining their views on resolving the political impasse.

### **Health, Environment, and Children's Rights**

Young participants at Trendsetters, Zambia, Young Journalists Group, Vietnam, and Timoun ak Medya, Haiti dialogue, debate, and discuss news stories on health, environmental, and children's rights. Although topics covered seemed specific, the writing and reporting explored deeper underlying social and political causes and relations. For instance, at Trendsetters HIV/AIDS is discussed in terms of poverty as well as lack of knowledge about safe-sex practices. At Young Journalists Group, environment is debated vis-à-vis pollution, sustainable development, and civic responsibility. Children's rights are explored at Timoun ak Medya in relation to equal participation, media responsibility, and programming on children's issues.

**In producing these print-based media, from inception to the finished products, the youngsters perform a wide variety of roles in making numerous micro and macro decisions lay-out, design, graphics, reporting, editorial, advertising, marketing, etc. – that gives them a sense of ownership and responsibility.**

<sup>1</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1999 outlines in articles 12, 13, and 17 refer to Children's Right to free expression, Children's Right to the access of media, and protection against incriminating media materials that exploits children in various ways. Haiti signed the convention in 1990.





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Zambian youth members of Trendsetters. ►

At Trendsetters, some of the health related issues touch a deep chord in Zambian society. For example, abortion is a sensitive subject among the majority Christian population. The Trendsetters newspaper pages directly discussed abortion in one of its issues that generated controversy in Zambia, but was beneficial to the sales of the newspaper. More importantly, it was the ability of the young writers to probe and examine a sensitive topic like abortion not only among the youngsters, but also among parents, church leaders, and governmental officials. Phiri-Tembo suggests that the gradual relaxation of abortion laws under growing pressure of public opinion has been a significant achievement. Trendsetters has also been able to discuss and demand a better reproductive health services for the Zambian youth. Through an interesting approach in conveying serious information via informal and fun-filled writing style, one with which young people directly connect, Trendsetters started a dialogue about sexually transmitted diseases,

young women's sexual rights, sex education, in terms of safe sex, sexual abstinence, use of contraceptives, etc. Another interesting feature of Trendsetters is in bringing international HIV/AIDS related ideas and information in dialogue with local and traditional knowledge about health. Thus, Trendsetters has been successful, in a large measure, to intervene in the debate in bringing about policy changes, not to mention the more crucial consciousness-raising among Zambian youth.

A particularly striking aspect about Trendsetters, apart from the fact that young members not only write stories, and are involved in the production, marketing, and distribution of the newspaper, are the discussions of HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health-related topics that are sketched in terms of their social contexts. While keeping the stories anchored to their underlying social issues, young members develop entertaining formats: combining serious news reportage with a human interest

The newspapers produced by the youngsters from Trendsetters offer some unique insights into how a serious topic is covered in an informal way unlike most adult newspapers.



© Johns Hopkins University, Centre for Communications Program

angle, and mixing a lively, entertaining style of presentation. Namonje Nakayika, involved with Trendsetters since its inception, displays maturity and sensitivity towards the social issues confronting children and youngsters alike from Zambia. She asserts that writing stories for the newspaper has been her passion, and points out that what youngsters like to read are stories involving true-life experiences. "Every time we put the true-life experience on the front page, we get letters saying 'oh, that was so nice because I went through it too and my friend was going through a similar problem' or something like that... They don't want to hear HIV/AIDS if you give it to them straight, they won't listen," Nakayika asserts.<sup>2</sup>

Several other members of Trendsetters, like Nakayika, bring interesting backgrounds and a high level of commitment. Limpo Nicolette Chinika joined Trendsetters in 2001. In addition to writing news stories, she serves as an editorial assistant on the Trendsetters

School edition of the newspaper. She explains that youngsters "have the right to express themselves in any way and they also have the right to information, and since I have the opportunity, I'd like to do that, I'd really like to take the message across if not through my writings then through the figure of speech."<sup>3</sup> Both Nakayika and Chinika offer a glimpse into Trendsetters' overall commitment to children's rights to free expression, and the role of journalism and media in education and learning.

Although environment is the broad theme that is discussed, debated and written by the members of Young Journalists Group, there are other issues that are tackled as well. The members cover topics not only in their own roles as journalists, but also as social activists adds Lan Anh. She asserts that "... we want to be more than youth journalists. We see ourselves as youth activists and youth innovators." In this context, some of the

▲ Front pages of the Trendsetters newspaper

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.africaalive.org/interviews/interview3.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/media/explore\\_899.html](http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/media/explore_899.html)



significant achievements have been several articles on major flooding in Vietnam and pollution in and around Hanoi rivers that caught the attention of governmental officials and prompted action. These articles by the members also led to a wider involvement in community affairs that resulted in raising donations for rebuilding flood ravaged areas and prodded the government to become environmentally conscious. Young Journalists Group's focus on environment has opened-up numerous opportunities in the form of civic engagement and participation involving local officials, governmental leaders, and social workers. In recognition of her leadership abilities and Young Journalists Group's contributions, the founder Lan Anh was invited to the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children in New York in 2002.

As a national organisation, Young Journalists Group has extended the vision of its founding member Lan Anh by expanding its work into a wide variety of community-based initiatives. Although the several hundred members are mainly engaged in writing news stories and essays for publication to various local and regional media outlets, they are also, at the same time, involved in pursuing developmental projects among local communities. These young members bring their journalistic skills in promoting youth involvement in community affairs. Several hundred children and youngsters have been mobilised from rural areas around Hanoi as co-participants in the

developmental activities initiated by the Young Journalists Group. Thus, the Young Journalists Organisation's work has frequently taken its members to community-based activities like training street children in writing articles developing radio stories to actively participating in raising money and support from the general population toward children affected by chemical poisons as a result of the Vietnam war and conflict in 1960s. The members articulate their views on these topics through news articles and argue for urgent social action. Some of these articles have been collected and published in a book form titled, "Children's Aspirations," which presents a glimpse of Young Journalists Organisation's work.

An interesting point to note is that print and radio interventions have been complementary. Children and young participants have drawn on the strengths of each media wherever necessary, and combined the two in producing some sort of a dialogue between the two. Newspaper and magazine articles have been taken-up for radio dialogue and discussions and vice versa. Further, conversations among the young newspaper reporters and radio broadcasters on community-related topics generated a greater sense of participation. In bringing media education and community development in dialogue and by providing concrete and innovative proposals for social change, the members of the group offer an interesting participatory development model not only for other children and youngsters, but also for the adult-world.

Timoun ak Medya's overall strategy is to offer journalistic training and skills to its members with the writing and reporting process as a key aspect of the training. As written forms of expression that combine both creative and social dimensions, writing becomes the main avocation of these youngsters. Along

**Young Journalists Group's focus on environment has opened-up numerous opportunities in the form of civic engagement and participation involving local officials, governmental leaders, and social workers... the members of the group offer an interesting participatory development model not only for other children and youngsters, but also for the adult-world.**

with the elaboration of children's right to expression, and to media access, series of topics are covered. These topics emerge from the conversations between the young participants. The child journalists organise themselves in various groups – based on their mutual interests and the regions they belong to. These groups are then assigned to their respective local centres. Although adult supervision in terms of mentoring is needed, particular care is taken to involve the young members in deliberations and discussions. In order to generate co-participation and dialogue among the young members without any direct "intrusion" of the adults, a web site has been created that not only provides a "forum for the international exchange of ideas, experiences, comments and information among child journalists and interested children's group," but also numerous resources that might be needed. An important feature of this website has been the possibility of "collaboration and partnerships in story production among child journalists across borders" [within the various provinces of Haiti as well as other Caribbean islands]. The availability of computers and the Internet access in Haiti is severely restricted due to widespread poverty. The various local centres of Timoun have computers and the Internet access that young members can use.

An interesting feature of the activities involves regular excursions that young members undertake to different regions of Haiti that offer some practical reporting opportunities. Several hundred news stories and short articles have emerged from these regular excursions trips. These trips offer an element of adventure, challenge, and excitement for the children. More importantly, it builds their self-confidence as they interact and talk with other children

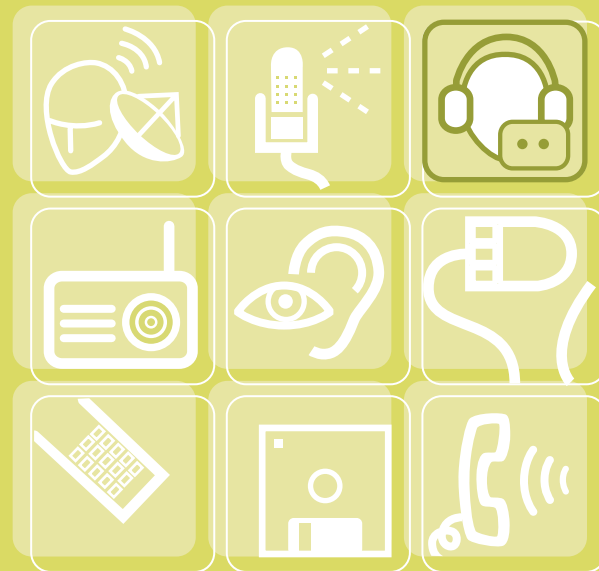
and adults from the local communities. The following quote rightly points out the philosophy of Timoun ak Medya, as the programme "demonstrates the benefits of turning children from objects to subjects in the media"... because children "have a different perspective from adults. Some issues (such as education, play, child abuse) affect children more than they affect adults, so their opinions and experiences are vital."<sup>4</sup>

The initiatives explored in this chapter pointed out to several innovative features with regard to media content creation – from writing news stories with informality and seriousness to developing creative newspaper and magazine graphics design and layout. Although newspaper and magazine journalism offered the children and youngsters several opportunities and possibilities, it was the creative and transformative role played by these youngsters that is innovative and unique.

By combining several media forms into "media mixes" the young people utilized the opportunities provided by media technologies. This generated and sustained excitement among youngsters at the various initiatives. Through their engagement with the media the young members are bringing together local and indigenous knowledge in dialogue with international and global ones. This is visible in the topics and themes explored by the young participants – health, environment, and children's rights. The newspaper and magazine stories that were discussed above reveal some interesting facets of this cross-cultural dialogue. This is a unique instance of extending the notion of participation from their immediate surroundings to far-away places and regions.

4 <http://www.vvatimounyo.org/eng/rationale.php>

# 3 Children and Youth-Led Radio Programming I



The year 2004 marked fifty years of the transistor radio. Although the anniversary was celebrated by various institutions and organisations involved in social change, the mainstream, commercially dominant media took little notice of the event. Unquestionably, radio has had a powerful symbolic value in the everyday lives of the poor and labouring communities in the underdeveloped and developing regions of the world. As a broadcast media, radio has inherent advantages over print and visual-based media forms. Radio is best suited to enable participation and provide opportunities for an equal exchange of ideas, information and knowledge sharing. More importantly, radio is cost-effective, easily accessible and portable, which makes it a very popular media. As someone aptly remarked, “radios... do not rely on electricity or literacy. They can be used by anyone anywhere, unlike other communications media such as telephones, the internet, television and printed media.”<sup>1</sup> This assertion regarding other communications media is indeed correct, as there exists deep disparities and questions of access to the ICTs, particularly among the poor and working classes. If these issues can be addressed, radio can indeed become a medium that is not only available via the internet on computers, but can join people and communities from different nations into cross-cultural dialogues.

This is something unique about radio to be local and global simultaneously. One important aspect of this can be glimpsed from the many community radio initiatives in several regions of the world. The concept of the “community radio,” popularized by UNESCO’s efforts in several low-income regions of the world during the 1960s, has been successful in tackling poverty, ill health, malnutrition and a number of social issues. UNESCO’s community radio experiments demonstrated that by involving people and local communities and creating a sense of belonging and participation could effect social change. Historically, radio as a broadcast medium, embedded as part of the state-controlled network in several underdeveloped and developing countries of the world, has been effective in a range of developmental activities like agricultural and farm practices, health and hygiene related programmes, not to mention the enormous role as an entertainment medium.

Within the larger body of media studies, the role of radio in social change has not been theorized: rather, a grudging acknowledgement at best. Although there has been a recent increase in community radio initiatives, scholarship has not kept up with it. It is important to note that radio exemplifies connections between theory and practice and could illuminate what philosophers like Bertolt

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.planinternational.org/action/participation/radio/lifeline>, Radio: A Voice for Children.

Brecht and Walter Benjamin believed radio as a participatory media was capable of doing. Reminding us about some of the failures of radio, Benjamin points out to the possibilities:

*The crucial failing of this institution [radio] has been to perpetuate the fundamental separation between practitioners and the public, a separation that is at odds with its technological basis. A child can see that it is in the spirit of radio to put as many people as possible in front of a microphone on every possible occasion (Benjamin, 1999).*

The various radio initiatives taken up for study in this and the following chapter are good examples of what UNESCO and Benjamin have outlined as the social responsibility of the radio toward children and young people. Indeed the three initiatives explored here, Bush Radio, South Africa, Youth Broadcasting, Somalia, and Young Journalists Group, Vietnam, share a common thematic: rights of children and young people to broadcast and use radio, and its important role in education, learning, and literacy.

### Broadcasting and Civic Engagement

Bush radio has been at the forefront of community radio movement not only in Cape Town in South Africa, but in several regions of the world where it provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and knowledge in building effective partnerships. An important contribution here has been in sketching a radio manifesto<sup>2</sup> – a declaration of children’s right to free expression, through the annual convention, popularly known as Radio Kidocracy – by children from various parts of the world. Through a series of discussions, spread over three years involving hundreds of children and young people from all over the world, a radio manifesto was drafted. It is an articulation of basic rights of children and



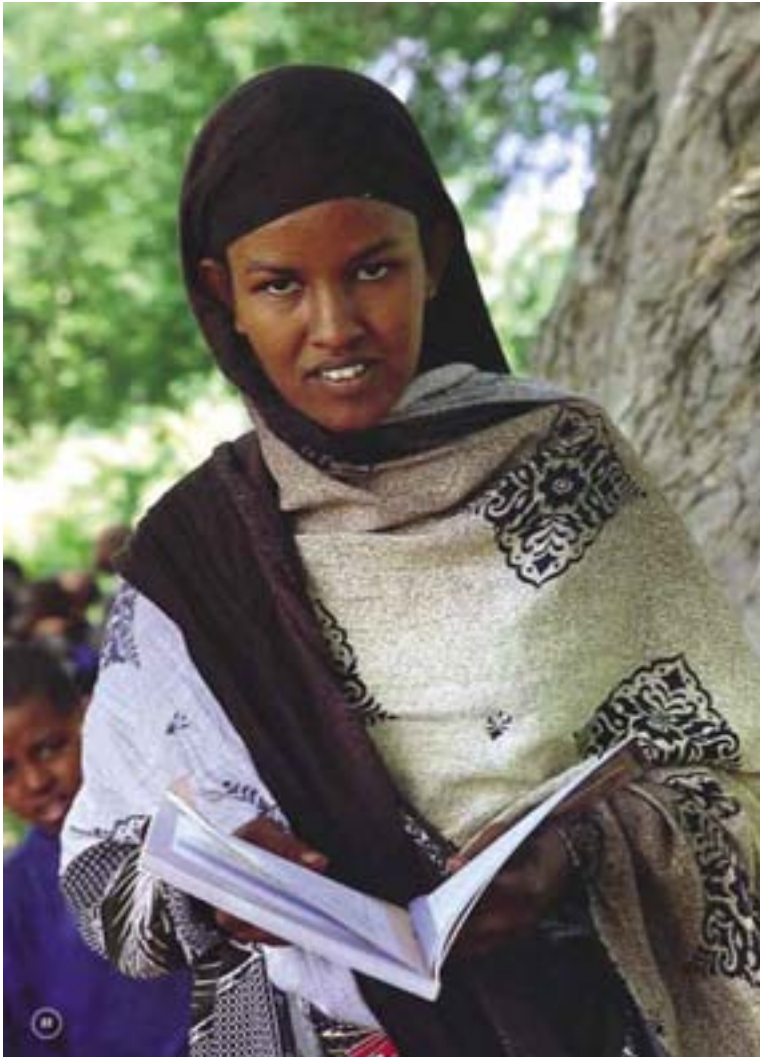
© Bush Radio

young people in expressing ideas via media, call to professional broadcasters and media to integrate children’s and youth perspectives in their programming, and more importantly, radio as the central medium for the expression of children’s voices.

▲ Young broadcasters from Bush Radio, South Africa.

Central to Bush radio’s philosophy is the notion that children and young people ought to be equal partners in building a better world through radio. An important idea is to enable and empower children and young people by providing them opportunities for self-expression and freedom to imagine the world in their own ways. Bush radio’s overall philosophy is articulated through the radio’s structure: institutional, policy related, programme production, and distribution. The beginnings of Bush Radio is one of struggle against all odds: from fighting for the basic rights to set-up a community radio network to the broader legacy of decades of apartheid

<sup>2</sup> The radio manifesto has become a central document for many radio experiments around the world and can be accessed at: [www.worldradioforum.org/manifesto/RadioManifesto.pdf](http://www.worldradioforum.org/manifesto/RadioManifesto.pdf)



© UNICEF

▲  
A young Somali girl  
member of the Youth  
broadcasting initiative

▶  
Bush Radio reporter  
at work

and poverty and other forms of injustices have given Bush Radio an urgency that Zane Ibrahim, the founder of Bush Radio argues needed to be confronted. The civic nature and democratic participation that is encouraged can be glimpsed from the mission statement of Bush Radio, where anyone living in the areas of broadcast coverage – mainly the Western Cape region, a historic black neighbourhood of poor people – can become members. Bush radio argues that "... communities who have been denied access to resources, take part in producing ethical, creative and responsible



© Bush Radio

radio that encourages them to communicate with each other, to take part in decisions that effect their lives, and to celebrate their own cultures" (from <http://www.bushradio.co.za/about/about.htm>).

The community-based strategies developed by UNICEF and other local partners in Somalia under the Youth Broadcasting Initiative, like Bush radio in South Africa, strives to provide children free access to radio. To this end, training in radio production is made available to children and young Somalis. Local youth media groups that are organised periodically to impart basic radio skills. These youth groups are recruited by UNICEF and constitute the core members of the initiative. Through a series of interactive workshop, UNICEF works with the young people in the various aspects of radio broadcasting – developing story ideas, writing scripts, reporting, and technical radio skills. The Hargeisa broadcasting pilot project of 2002 has been successful. It has since been replicated in several other areas of Somalia. Around 20 youth groups have been trained in radio broadcasting. Robert Kihara, Communications officer, UNICEF Somalia indicated that young Somalis develop the radio content. The main task is to enable participation of these youngsters in various developmental topics that they want to pursue via radio. The process is entirely driven by





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◀ *Bush participants discussing programming strategies.*

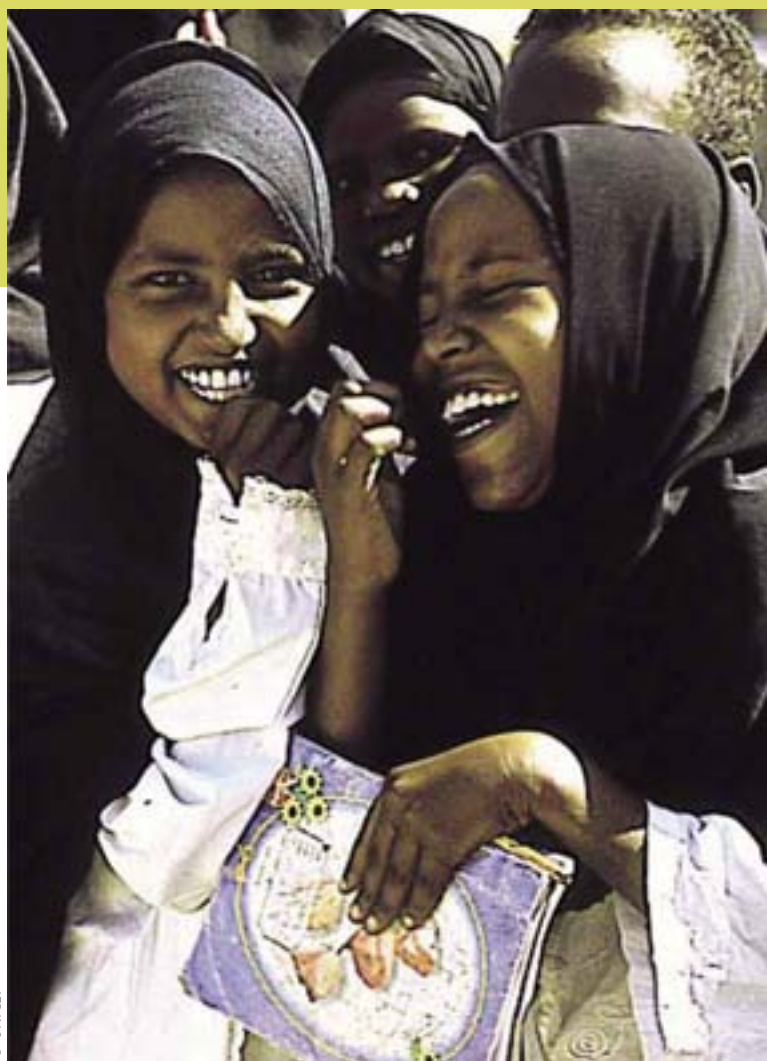
young people with some outside professional advice and support. As a broadcast media, radio is an important and widely popular among Somalis, and is particularly well suited to the oral-based forms of expressions. The UNICEF background report explains, “Somalia remains a strongly oral culture so the importance of mass media as a conduit of the spoken word by radio or video is fundamental. Drama, debate, traditional songs and poetry are still a means of entertainment that Somali people enjoy at community events, weddings and during a night out” (p. 2, UNICEF Somalia Youth Broadcasting Initiative). Tapping into the everyday modes of communication, UNICEF argues, is central to building community-based projects. Somalia has been ravaged by wars and has had long-term effects on children growing up in violent conditions. The lack of civic and political institutions, including a well develop media, has been a debilitating influence on developmental activities. Youth Broadcasting Initiative is structured to address these larger social and political issues as well as to bring about a change in attitudes and behaviours on various health issues through radio programming to rural and urban areas of Somalia. These are some exemplary instances of young people’s quest for changing the conditions of their lives via democratic and civic participation. The Youth Broadcasting Initiative covers numerous regions of Somalia

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– Hargeisa, Marka, Kismayo, Galkayo, Bossaso, and Mogadishu – in building local radio networks with the active involvement of youngsters from these regions. With support from Somaliland ministry of Information, UNICEF has been able to build local radio production centres across these regions. In addition several local children and youth-led organisations are involved in deliberating larger social topics. By bringing these youngsters as equal partners in the discussions, and in offering them opportunities in producing radio programmes, Youth Broadcasting Initiative has been serving as a viable model of community-based radio that could be emulated by other regions in Africa and elsewhere.

The Young Journalist Group of Vietnam has been producing youth-led radio programmes, popularly called, “Children’s Aspirations,” on the “Voice of Vietnam,” state-run radio network for the past several years. It has

Young people from Somalia demonstrated remarkable courage in building coalitions among themselves and the larger community and to participate in developmental activities through an involvement with media.



© UNICEF

▲  
*Youth broadcasting initiative youngsters in a cheerful mood*

already produced over 500 radio programmes. The formation of the group has interesting radio beginnings when journalists from local Vietnamese government's radio network visited a school to enlist students to read stories on the radio. A young student Lan Anh was selected to read the stories. After a brief stint, Lan Anh became aware that children's own stories had to be told rather than reading out adult produced radio materials for children. Lan Anh's singular determination led to the formation of Young Journalists Group that now involved hundreds of Vietnamese children

producing and presenting radio programmes in a wide variety of topics that directly relate to their lives. The members of the group receive training from a variety of institutions: UNICEF's regular workshops, professional radio broadcasters, and non-governmental organisations.

The motivation to become radio broadcasters points out that children seek to go beyond merely using media to voice their opinions. Rather, the abiding interest in radio has led to numerous children going out to pursue professional careers as civic broadcast journalists. The ability to speak and write, free expression of their ideas in an adult-centred world brings about a major transformation. This passion for pursuing journalism as career – from childhood to adulthood – is a life-changing experience for the members of Young Journalists Group.

### **Health, Crime, Gender, and Sustainable Development**

Some of the projects of Bush radio include: Children's Radio Education Workshop (CREW), Annual Radio Kidocracy Conference, Schools AIDS Education Project (SAEP), Township Heroes, and the HIV Hop Project. CREW is involved in training radio presentation and production skills to children – writing scripts, interviewing skills, and learning about technical radio equipment. Programmes are broadcast in local languages Xhosa, Afrikaans, and English. The CREW project broadcasts radio

programmes in the following segments that have been very popular with different age groups: BushTots, for ages 6 to 9, BushKidz, for ages 10 to 12, and BusTeens, for ages 13 to 18 years. This is an innovative programming strategy that encourages children of different age groups to produce and present programmes on their own. To curb and reduce crime and to build opportunities for young people involved in criminal activities, Bush radio developed a unique programme called, "Township Heroes." This is a multi-pronged approach and involves several social actors. Rather than attacking young people who are prone to get involved in crime for a variety of reasons, Bush radio, through Township Heroes seeks to bring the youngsters into dialogue with each other and the larger community. It is a socially responsible strategy in not only in tackling crime, but discussing the underlying causes that lead to it in the first place. A young person from the local townships of Cape Flats, a neighbourhood in Western Cape, is selected as a hero. This youngster talks to young people through several radio discussions and open phone line conversations about his own life. The programming is open-ended and participatory and does not stigmatise young people prone to crime. Township Heroes also sensitizes listeners – youngsters as well as adults – to the complicated nature of the issue. The dialogues between young people and also some elder listeners from the community who participate in the phone-in conversations leads to a recognition of different points of view and understanding of the issue. Township Heroes enables young people to take charge of their own lives and the media.

The Youth Against Aids (YAA 2000) project began to involve young people from several regions of Cape Town. The idea was to allow young people take ownership of the issue and talk about it in ways they deem suitable and

convenient. This made YAA 2000 go beyond generating awareness, but toward making social change. The Youth Against Aids led to the evolution of the HIV Hop project.

The HIV Hop project, called HIV Hop on-air campaign, is a creative and innovative approach that utilizes rap music as a medium to communicate and connect with youngsters in providing HIV/AIDS related education. Although, radio is an integral part of this project, there are several other media forms like print, movies, music videos, and video games, and the Internet through which the campaign is carried out. This combination of various "media mixes" ensures that the message can be effectively communicated. More importantly, Bush radio is aware that young people are now becoming familiar with multiple media and the best way to reach them is to involve these media forms. Madunia, an independent social communication organization in close discussions with Bush radio, developed the HIV Hop project. Rap music is popular with youngsters. Rap lyrics have a special effect on young minds. It was decided to build social communication messages via rap music. After discussions with a number of health professionals a series of HIV/AIDS messages were crafted that were then provided to several local rap artists to write lyrics and develop songs on the topic. A wide variety of expressions – rap, poetry, graffiti, slang humour – were used to involve

**The recognition of children's rights through radio use has a deep impact for both the participants and larger community. These can be construed as best examples of creative and socially responsible radio journalism. The young members showed that radio could indeed become a powerful dialogic apparatus for communicating messages and building solidarity among members of the community at the local level.**



young people as partners. For Bush radio, HIV Hop is more than broadcasting of AIDS related messages, it is about placing the topic in a broader social context to which young people can relate. Bush radio states that:

*We cannot look at the lack of education and not examine the complex social hierarchy that existed during apartheid and now post apartheid South Africa. With HIV Hop project Bush radio is trying to alert young people to some of the larger issues of culture, tradition, existing socio-economic trends and conditions – and the socialisation of men and women in South African society in an effort to encourage the employment of critical thought when analyzing issues such as HIV and AIDS and contextualizing it (from <http://www.bushradio.co.za>)*

Instead of a patronizing tone, HIV Hop seeks to engage young people through entertainment. In 2004 rappers from Cape Town and Amsterdam participated in a HIV Hop concert that generated excitement among young people in both countries. Defending the use of popular entertainment for social causes, Zane Ibrahim, founder and director of Bush radio asserts that, “there’s no way you can keep out the entertainment completely, because the record companies are just blasting it out, but the spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down – we let them play their music, but there’s got to be a message in there. If it’s not educational or informative, we don’t want it on

Bush Radio. But if that music is going to be informative or educational, great!” (Michaud, 2003).

In terms of community radio programming, Bush radio has been successful in creating and sustaining several innovative programme formats. Other formats like Community Law, Taxi Talk, Prison Radio are permeated with innovative strategies. Bush radio structured its programming around community concerns that are local and particular to the region of South Africa it serves. On closer examination, these local causes, it turns out, are indeed global as well.

Some interesting developments in Bush radio include the utilization of various ICT’s in its structures of programming. The programmes of Bush radio can be heard online via the Internet. In order to create a sense of participation among the young producers of the various programme genres – and the “cross pollination of creative and critical ideas” – the Bush website serves as an online facilitator for the dialogues and discussions. A more recent addition includes the Bush radio “blogs”<sup>3</sup> that are becoming increasingly popular not only with its primary members, but also with the larger community. The Bush radio news “blogspot” offers a range of diverse perspectives and voices on topics from the local to the global. These “blogs,” unlike the many commercial “blogs” can be viewed as some sort of an emerging “community blog media” that are integrated with radio, and also extend radio’s potential and scope in imaginative ways. For instance, one feature of the “blog” is to provide visibility to the newsroom, the programming, and the radio hosts. This interactive communication with other “bloggers” opens-up the “spaces of dialogue” hitherto restricted on the radio medium. Another important feature of the “blogs” is its

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Blogs’ or ‘Weblogs’ are personal and public websites consisting of regularly updated entries displayed in reverse chronological order. They read like a diary or journal, but with the most recent entry at the top. See the Bush Radio Blogspot at: <http://www.bushradionews.blogspot.com/>

ability to extend the “life” of radio programmes – whether a critical documentary concerning the environment, health, or poverty – via the Internet. A cursory glance at the Bush radio blogspot exemplifies this quite well. A “blog” discussion of HIV/AIDS and environmental pollution indicates an interesting “co-presence” of both radio and the “blog” – that is, as interesting instances of “media mixes.”

Radio programmes of the Youth Broadcasting Initiative in Somalia are typically produced by local youth. The localised nature of broadcasting and the creation of content – from the incipient ideas to finished programmes – by young people ensure that their voices get articulated. A sensitive dialogue on politics with rebel leaders in Burundi to debates on female genital mutilation and HIV/AIDS in Hargeisa and Mogadishu point out that young people are not only involved in consciousness-raising via radio, but seeking social change as well. The topics are approached through specific themes and broken down into several programmes. For instance, a program on female genital mutilation will discuss it in terms of women’s rights and violence against women, but is also sensitive to the ritualized nature of the social practice that is ingrained in local customs and traditions. Arguing about female genital mutilation from a western perspective could be counter productive, hence the programmes strive to bring differences into dialogue. UNICEF’s Somalia Communication officer, Robert Kihara considers that the programmes produced through the Youth Broadcasting Initiative are successful in carrying the dialogue forward by young Somalis.

In a situation where radio has been a monopoly of the government, and its development hampered due to an extended civil strife for the past several decades, the media landscape

in Somalia can be described as woefully underdeveloped. But still, radio remains the singular media resource for most Somalis. In recent years, however, Somalia has witnessed a proliferation of video centres around major urban centres of Mogadishu and elsewhere. UNICEF and other partners involved with the Youth broadcasting initiative have begun to take notice of these developments. The important task, however, is to strengthen the radio roots all around the various regions. The main strategy has been to promote localised radio broadcasting. The young members from various locations have successfully produced programmes on topics of immediate attention. For instance, UNICEF’s own work in Somalia is integrated with the radio programming. Thus, “the synergistic relationship between youth productions and UNICEF programming ensures that programmes are relevant to the Somali communities where they are broadcast. During the season where malaria is a greater threat the youth broadcast programmes about prevention measures... However, the youth determine the plans for programmes, the person’s they will interview and the questions they will ask.”<sup>4</sup> UNICEF’s approaches to problems confronting Somalia have provided critical help and support. By involving the youngsters in local communities in programming production, UNICEF has moved away from the standard “developmental models” of most non-western societies that perceived people as objects of development. Through their radio work, the youngsters engage with a range of social and political issues: access to education, violence and abuse as a consequence of the civil war,

**A sensitive dialogue on politics with rebel leaders in Burundi to debates on female genital mutilation and HIV/AIDS in Hargeisa and Mogadishu point out that young people are not only involved in consciousness-raising via radio, but seeking social change as well.**

4 UNICEF Somalia (2005) Youth Broadcasting Initiative.

poor access to health care, and widespread poverty. The youth broadcasting programmes have not only created the initial awareness of these issues among the large populace, but also led to some level of discussion of the problems confronting the local regions of Somalia. It is hoped that these discussions will lead to a greater participation and mobilisation among the people – young and old – in addressing the issues.

The Young Journalists Group from Vietnam are involved in two weekly radio broadcasts from the state-owned Voice of Vietnam network. The programmes broadcast to over 30 million listeners feature two presenters who discuss a specific theme per week. Some of the topics that were featured included environmental and developmental issues and the rights of the child. Discussions on pollution in Hanoi rivers to gender equity have generated popularity with the audiences. The radio programmes were made with sensitivity and understanding

that brought recognition from the United Nations and Vietnamese government. Some of the programmes on environment have prompted the Vietnamese government to initiate new set of policies. The ability of the young members to shape public policy on matters pertaining to sustainable development through radio broadcasting points to two things: one innovatively produced programmes can bring attention to topics that went unheeded in the past, and two, children's and young people's voices have tremendous impact in the public domain.

As the studies in this chapter demonstrate the struggle for the recognition of children's rights through radio use has a deep impact for both the participants and larger community. These can be construed as good examples of creative and socially responsible radio journalism. The young members showed that radio could indeed become a powerful dialogic apparatus for communicating messages and building solidarity among members of the community at the local level.

# 4

## Children and Youth-Led Radio Programming II



In chapter three, the community-based radio experiments of South Africa, Somalia and Vietnam demonstrated how links could be forged between democratic participation and youth development. In the pursuit of a better life, both individual and collective, dialogue, democracy, and development have become key practices of human societies, whether organised at the local, regional, national, or international level, that have the potential to take us out of social and historical quagmires. As we saw in the preceding chapters, children and young people are central to the articulation of democracy and development. Drawing upon radio's dialogic potential, their unique voices and perspectives have started a conversation about peaceful co-existence between communities and cultures. This chapter carries forward the discussions from the preceding chapter by exploring innovative and participatory uses of radio by children and youngsters from Mozambique, Ghana, and Haiti.

### **Dialogue, Democracy, and Development**

Mundo Sem Segredos (World Without Secrets) from Mozambique is a weekly radio broadcast produced in a wide variety of programme formats like interviews, live reporting, testimonials, dramatic elements, and musical features conceived by children. The broadcasts

are spread across three regions of Mozambique: Zambezia, Tete, and Cabo Delgado. Children in the ages between 10 and 15 years are recruited and trained in all aspects of radio journalism. An initial workshop for children is conducted to identify those who display interest and keenness in radio broadcasting. After the initial recruiting various organisations get involved and provide mentoring and ongoing training on various facets of radio journalism along with information and background on HIV/AIDS and other health topics. Children are grouped as teams of radio journalists who independently develop and produce radio programmes. Salvatore Fiorito of the non-governmental organisation, Media Support Partnership, as the project manager of Mundo Sem Segredos, who leads a dedicated team of social communicators and professional broadcasters from Radio Mozambique, argues that Mundo Sem Segredos is uniquely positioned to tackle health and educational issues facing teenagers in Mozambique today. Fiorito suggests that quite early in the training, children display great sensitivity toward collective informal conversations on how to develop programming ideas. Evidence of children's ability to understand and develop media content can be glimpsed from the manner in which an important and serious topic like HIV/AIDS is discussed. All these result in weekly 30-minute radio broadcasts, produced by children's radio teams in Portuguese, and the local popular languages of respective provinces,

Chaubo and Macua. In addition to the radio programmes, the government of Mozambique and the Media Support Partnership produce information on various aspects of HIV/AIDS in the form of a basic kit for teachers to integrate in school curriculum. What is important about Mundo Sem Segredos is its ability to deploy radio in fostering a sense of participation among children and young people, whether they are members or the listeners. The young members are engaged in building alliances and networks across the various regions of Mozambique through the radio broadcasts.

Curious Minds, name of the children's and youth radio programme, on Ghana's national radio is about children's rights. With this focus, the radio programmes explore a variety of educational and developmental topics pertaining to children. Curious Minds has provided young members a rare opportunity to gain self-confidence and assertiveness while participating on the radio programmes. Here is a young girl's experience:

*I feared a little when I was asked to join the group. I thought it would never happen for my voice to be on radio. I won't even see a studio, let alone be on air. Yet I started after the training as a presenter sometimes feeling the butterflies in the pit of my belly. Now it is all gone.<sup>1</sup>*

What this indicates is that young members, like the girl quoted above, become not only successful in expressing their own ideas, but becoming full participants in the community activities. Radio plays a central role in their lives. The various programmes of Curious Minds, broadcast in English and the local language Ga, span several regions of Ghana. Children and young members of Curious Minds participate in a variety of community activities: visiting rural areas to talk about

the importance of education and health, and discussions with local adult community leaders and governmental officials on the importance of including children's voices in developmental activities. Kingsley Obeng-Kyereh, producer of Curious Minds states that children not only manage and run the day-to-day affairs of radio, but generate new ideas as well. Curious Minds started as a half-hour recorded programme, but later went live on air. As the children took control of the programming, they developed the content independently without any help from adult broadcasters. In a couple of years the children, Kyereh points out, even extended the broadcast time to one hour and began collaborating with other local radio networks. Kyereh asserts, "those [children] who took the lead in the group were now acting trainers to younger members who joined. The programmes was finally extended to one hour and the group had a new programme on OBONU FM a community station that used a local language. Collectively, we chose the name of the new programme. It was called "Momlikoo" (Let's Partner)." This involvement and expansion of Curious Minds also received adequate support from UNICEF. An interesting and innovative live programme that was presented by the children drew upon the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to persuade Ghana's adults on the need to implement policies that promote children's rights and interests. Kyereh suggests that the children who participated in the radio programme were like little legal experts and made an innovative use of radio in advocating their rights.

Like Curious Minds, the young members of Timoun ak Medya from Haiti through the radio programme, "Our Own Voice," have been involved in promoting children's rights against the backdrop of some stark statistics, which indicate that more than 40 percent

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Kingsley Obeng-Kyereh, *Young People on Radio: The Joy, Challenges and Possibilities*



A *Mundo Sem Segredos* presenter getting ready for a programme

of population is under 15 years, and around 250,000 children live on the streets in Haiti. The Timoun ak Medya statement explains:

*Our Own Voice encourages children's involvement and even their control over some media. It provides children with skills and means to voice their issues... Through this programme, groups of child journalists in various local communities produce regular radio magazines, which are being broadcast through local radio.*

Timoun ak Medya, sponsored by Plan Haiti and Radio Nederland Training Centre, and the Panos Institute, is in the forefront of advancing children's right through radio. Upon receiving training in radio reporting from the sponsors, children form several radio groups and tour across various regions of Haiti to develop story ideas. The young radio journalists develop the radio programmes broadcast twice every week over the local radio network, Radio Gamma.

Taking up these issues in the conflict-ridden country with a weakly developed civil society makes it difficult, but all the more urgent. It is within this nebulous space that children and young broadcasters can play a major role. According to Jean-Claude Louis of Panos Institute, and director of Programme Haiti, Timoun ak Medya, "children, based on their own experience are the ones who can speak more convincingly and persuasively about how their rights are being fulfilled or not, communicate these to the other children and adults, and propose and demand solutions." Apart from promoting their own rights, children and young people have been involved in discussing the virtues of democratic participation in resolving deep-seated differences. Besides, radio programmes like "Our Own Voice" have been instrumental in changing attitudes of adults towards children.





Young members of  
Mundo Sem Segredos ▶

### Children's Rights, Health, and Homelessness

The Mundo Sem Segredos radio programmes on HIV/AIDS are informal, amusing, and playful without being judgmental. The young members are aware that HIV/AIDS is a serious subject matter and give it the utmost attention and are sensitive while incorporating information and entertainment. The magazine formats of the radio broadcasts employ a range of innovative strategies in conceptualizing and delivering the serious messages. Live reports and interviews are combined with testimonials, mini-drama, poetry, music, etc. For instance, the widely popular animal character Pangolim, featured in a programme titled, "Cresca Com Pangolim," is the lovable ant-eating animal. This animal character Pangolim involves all kinds of listeners – children, youth, and adults – in a conversation around HIV/AIDS. Serious topics are raised in a playful banter. Although, this strategy has been used before in devising social messages, what is interesting is the active involvement of children and young

people in producing the programme. Mundo Sem Segredos has become popular in the three provinces where it is broadcast. The Media Support Partnership report explained that programming would be expanded to other rural and urban provinces of Mozambique in 2006.

*The potential of this form of participatory radio to channel life-saving HIV/AIDS information to young Mozambicans is just starting to be realised as the programmes grow in popularity...the magazine format used has proven to be a flexible and entertaining format for message delivery.*

While the magazine format of radio enables the possibility of using different creative elements, it also is a useful strategy in diversifying the programme content. Frequently, child broadcasters employ musical spots, songs and lyrics to communicate with the audiences. A signature tune has been created that is played at the beginning and end

At Curious Minds, young participants become familiar and learn the various aspects of radio production from each other. Programmes are conceptualised, scripted, and produced in active collaboration and dialogue.

© Media Support Partnership



Broadcasters working  
at the Mundo Sem  
Segredos studio

of each programme and has become popular with listeners. In an engaging and informal manner the young radio broadcasters explore various aspects of radio medium to express their creativity. This leads to innovative content creation and builds the confidence of children and young people in pursuing professional media careers if they so desire. The involvement and participation in radio becomes a life-changing experience for many young people.

The “participatory” radio programmes, as they are commonly referred to, draw upon the elements of popular culture in their programme materials that hold an appeal with the youngsters in Mozambique. The well-known Mozambican musician Fernando Luis has recorded some songs with interesting lyrics – combining entertainment with social information – for a series of programmes on HIV/AIDS. A Fernando Luis composition is also being used as a signature tune for the programmes broadcast in three provinces. Mundo Sem Segredos has begun a second

phase of the project this year that seeks to engage with and reach out to the rural areas of Mozambique. These rural areas offer unique challenges unlike the urban regions. A combination of strategies, with radio as a focus, has been developed that seek to build partnerships with other local community radio stations.

The radio broadcasts of Curious Minds are divided into several segments. Each of the segment has a specific programme format. A pilot programme called “Yen Adwen,” (Our Opinion) became popular. This led to others like the “Letters to the One Who Cares,” and “Facts Corner.” Curious Minds produced a six-part radio series called “Digital Diaries,” where

**Children and young people are central to the articulation of democracy and development. Drawing upon radio’s dialogic potential, their unique voices and perspectives have started a conversation about peaceful co-existence between communities and cultures.**





Participants attending a radio training workshop organised by Curious Minds ►

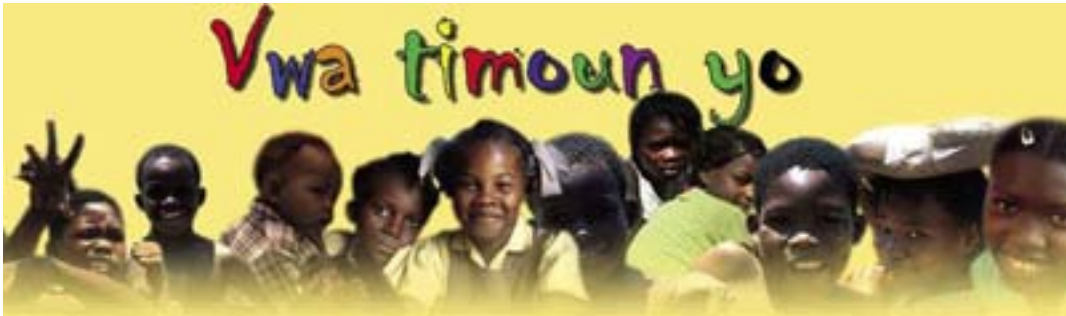
young people talk about their own lives in the context of rights. Berenice, a young member talked about how the advocacy of children's rights left an indelible impression on her mind and made her a confident youngster. For many audiences, listening to Berenice's story on "Digital Diaries," provides hope and inspiration. Having grown-up as a member of Curious Minds, Berenice has become not only become conscious of her rights, but an advocate and activist as well.

*Her concern about issues of poverty, child labour, regional violence, and gender discrimination comes through clearly as she takes us through the intimate workings of the day: to the local market, to the offices of Curious Minds, and eventually to her first weeks at the University of Ghana in Accra.*

In one episode of "Digital Diaries," Jovia, a 15-year old from a small village from North East Ghana talked about how his day begins

and ends: working from early morning, doing household chores to trekking miles to attend school. While another member, Samuel, a 16-year-old presenter of programmes on Curious Minds says that raising awareness about child rights is the first step in building consciousness. For him radio is a crucial medium of creating and sustaining the awareness. These are powerful examples of how radio can be effectively harnessed by children and young people in changing their lives and creating a better world. The dialogues that children and young people create within their own selves and others around them via radio are exemplary instances of learning and non-formal education. Kingsley Obeng-Kyreh points out that in Ghana radio is not only an effective and popular media, but can be integrated with other ICTs:

*Personally, it was my argument that those who say the ICT era and the convergence criteria have made radio obsolete did not have a firm*



Youngsters from the  
Timoun ak Medya  
radio broadcast

grasp of the situation in developing countries. Thankfully, we are having this summit in a developing country that shares the ICT and convergence aspirations but still knows the developmental value of radio. Radio for developing countries still serves as a point of mobilization for development. Apart from serving its well-known purpose of educating, informing and also entertaining its audience, radio also inspires a large segment of the populace to hold firmly to their developmental aspirations. It is not surprising in my country to still see people crowded around radio sets listening to some programmes.

Curious Minds has steadily grown during the past ten years in terms of its members as well as the number of radio stations – with more than 200 children as active members and eight radio stations spread across Ghana. Among the several initiatives being discussed in this publication, Curious Minds is one of the oldest in existence, but its growth has been staggered. In a rather upbeat mood, Obeng-Kyerh asserts “it has been ten years of giving children a chance to experience real participation, but we are just getting ready to roll our sleeves to reach more children with the message about their rights... Curious Minds will still be the place where child rights receive the best of attention, for the children who matter are directly involved.”

An argument for the relevance of Curious Minds can be made in terms of the self-confidence of its young members. Although the main aim of the radio programmes is in advancing children’s rights, these programmes have also explored an interesting set of issues from the personal to the political and social. For instance, “Yen Adwen” (“Our Opinion”) is about children’s rights. On most occasions, child members bring creative ideas regarding their view of the world that is, then, joined together, with their right to expression. Interestingly, the child broadcasters do not conceive their listeners as passive receivers; rather, in an uncanny way, they seem to dissolve the perceived separation between speaker and listener, what Walter Benjamin had termed as the major flaw in the makings of the institution of radio (see the Benjamin quote along with the brief discussion in chapter one). It is here that Curious Minds offers us an interesting perspective: one that critiques the institutional epistemology of radio, and the other which offers a potential for creating “spaces for dialogue” that give rise to empowering and enabling communication.

The year 2006 marks the tenth year of Curious Minds. Obeng-Kyerh says that the radio programme is on the verge of expansion to many more rural areas of Ghana. She is rightly confident that more children and young people will join and more lives are going to change.

Timoun ak Medya's radio broadcast from Port-au-Prince, Haiti includes a range of programmes that offer an interesting blend of topics. By mixing Haitian rap music with interviews, testimonials, commentary, and live reports on social issues, the radio seeks to engage the listeners. Children's rights are explored and explained via testimonials and appeals to adult citizens, political and social institutions to participate in promoting children's rights. In a programme titled, "All Children have the Right to Education," Through a song, "a la yon gwo pwoblem" (What a big problem), child journalists from the Trou-du-Nord town in the North of Haiti explore why over eighty percent of children are unable to attend school. The lyrics of the song are written in a manner of an ongoing dialogue with the listeners. The lyrics are constructed not to invoke the sympathy of the listeners, but rather a clarion call to action. The line, "An nou lonje men bay o, pou ya pa fin peri, timoun yo se inosan bay a edikasyon," translates as "Let us extend our hands to the children so they don't perish, children are innocent, give them an education," and is sung to a melodious tune. This is followed by a story told by a 13-year old girl Lourdina Pierre about little Zoubouta whose parents cannot read or write. The story goes onto sketch an interesting account of what happens when one is not educated and why it is important for children to demand education as a basic human right. The creative approach to communicating important messages about education and other topics through short narrative accounts using music and songs is not only effective, but a powerful

way to share ideas and imaginations with other children and adult listeners. The narrative strategy employed by the young journalists considers radio as a two-way communicative medium, where listeners and broadcasters engage in a conversation. This is reminiscent of what Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht argued through their writings on radio. The experimental children's narratives are unique to Timoun ak Medya's radio broadcasts. In the Fort-Liberte region of Haiti some children narrated a series of stories weaving a common theme around a few other interlinked ideas. Using poetry, music and songs, the young journalists talk about children who are orphaned, homeless, and in domestic servitude. The overall programme strategy was in advocating equal rights of children. These are creative ways through which the children and young journalists not only empower themselves and their listeners, but also point to the emancipatory possibilities of radio.

Democracy and development acquire newer meanings in the hands of young people. The conversations between young participants revealed that they are not only capable of understand complex issues, but also can act on these. The powerful mediations via radio provide exemplary instances of democratic participation. It is the curiosity, creativity and motivation of the young people that not only taps the potential of radio, but also shows to the adult world how to deploy radio for pursuing a sensible all round development for our collective futures.

# 5

## Television and Video: Constructing Images of Self and Community



We live in a world inundated with images of all kinds. From the mundane everyday activities to politics, economy, globalization, and youth cultures, images define our realities to an ever-greater extent than before. The French philosopher Guy Dubord appropriately remarked that ours is a “society of spectacle,” largely shaped by the culture of consumerism and entertainment, driven by media forms of cinema, television, and the video, whether in the postmodern west or the underdeveloped and the developing rest. While, on the one hand, media images celebrating consumerism, fashion and glamour offer visions of happiness and prosperity, on the other, images can also lend themselves to social transformation. Thus, images have the power to empower as well as entrap.

With the idea that images hold a special fascination for children and young people and have the potential to spur their imaginations, the present chapter explored three initiatives from Mexico, Nigeria, and Kyrgyzstan engaged in bringing about social change through films, television, and video. These youth-led initiatives are involved in constructing images that speak about how personal and social identities can work in tandem with television and video.

### **Youth as Media Makers and Producers**

The Cámara ahí nos vemos project in Mexico provides opportunities for economically and socially disadvantaged children from Mexico City, Puebla and Reynosa in producing documentaries and short films on a variety of topics that relate to their lives. The project operates in a unique manner. First, the project encourages young people to join as primary members and participate in imparting training to disadvantaged children. Some of the young people come from middle class and university backgrounds. After these youngsters join the initiative, several informal meetings are held where the young people discuss with their peers and adult members of the Cámara their own lives and how they like to participate. From these initial meetings, the members get a better sense of Cámara’s activities. These members are referred to as young leaders who travel around the neighbourhoods of Mexico City, Puebla, and Reynosa to talk to socially and economically disadvantaged children. The youth leaders convince the disadvantaged children to become part of the project and explore their lives and other issues through video production. Gradually the youth leaders team up with these new members and begin a conversation. Through several workshops on video production and the art of documentary making, new members begin to learn and

grasp the nuances of video production –from the basic television and video techniques like storyboarding, screenplay, camerawork, editing, etc. The workshops are in the nature of interactive sessions where new members learn from the youth leaders how to plan, conceptualise and shoot videos. Learning video production through dialogue and discussions is enabling to the new members. Another purpose of the meetings is in discussing what particular topics are of interest to the new members. Topics are chosen that have in some way or the other impacted the lives of the members. The members, old and the new, join together as video teams and start working on various aspects of their films and videos. The conversations and collaborations between youth leaders and disadvantaged children have led to the production of some interesting documentaries –topics included drug use, family violence, family values, corruption, poverty, street children, etc. Around two hundred young leaders have worked with over five hundred children.

Several local non-governmental organisations like *Fundacion Vamos* and *Rostros y Voces*, with Nokia's commitment and support, have shaped Cámara into a successful project that now has over three hundred young leader members working in different areas of video production. Numerous documentaries and short films produced have begun to impact not only the lives of the members, but also the thousands of viewers who watch the programmes. An important aspect of the Cámara is in building the confidence of the disadvantaged youth through self-expression and education. In providing access to media making, Cámara enables these youngsters to talk about their own lives in the context of the family and community. Pilar Angulo, Manager of Global Community Involvement at Nokia, asserts that the Cámara initiative of Nokia

has been instrumental in transforming the lives of hundreds of youngsters. Giving these youngsters the means of television and video production, she further adds, enables them to express their ideas and thoughts in imaginative and effective ways: the world that is revealed through their eyes via the images is one of survival and hope. More important, Angulo suggests, are the solutions offered by the youngsters to the various issues that confront us are enlightening. Media making has an empowering effect on the members of Cámara.

The Participatory Video Project brings together young people from Lagos in Nigeria to explore issues surrounding reproductive health and life planning skills via films and video. Like the Cámara strategies in Mexico, access to video and film equipment and training in various departments of production is the primary goal. There has been a looming crisis around HIV/AIDS issue in Nigeria that needed urgent attention of the national government and the international community. As an important component of the Action Health Information, a non-governmental organisation from United States, the Participatory Video Project has been in the forefront of not only spreading information about HIV/AIDS among the Nigerian youth, but has gradually evolved into a broader project that considers exploring the underlying social causes of health issues in the country. The project sponsors and other organisations involved quickly became aware of the great potential of media making by the youth that could create social change. Several teen video teams, comprising Nigerian youth, are trained in video production. The teams are also sensitized on various aspects of HIV/AIDS, and other interlinked issues like teen pregnancies, sex education, abstinence, safe sex methods, and parent-child communication are discussed. Several youngsters as members of the team video teams learn video production

techniques from professionals and other senior member in the initiative. The overall goals and strategy is summed-up in the background paper of the Participatory Video Project:

*Unlike the professional filmmaker whose work is done once he/she files the story or when he/she hands over the finished/edited tape, making the tape is just the beginning in participatory video communication. It involves facilitating discussions after a playback of the tape in order to build on the knowledge the tape may have provided to the viewer.*

In distinguishing itself from professional filmmaker, the Participatory Video Project defines its own work in terms of activism and continued consciousness-raising of the viewers as well as those involved in the making of the videos. The engagement with media is an ongoing process of knowledge sharing. With over 30 youth trained in video production, the project has further expanded to other regions of Nigeria.

Children's Media Centre, Kyrgyzstan combines television, video and short film production in promoting children's rights, gender issues, and HIV/AIDS related topics. Video production is almost entirely handled by children and young people. The Centre recruits youngsters in the ages between 13-20 as full members. After receiving training in video production, the young members develop scripts, write screenplays, and television story plots on a number of topics of interest to them. Adult professional help and support in video production is provided through a series of short workshops on camera techniques, editing, and other post production work. Although media production is accorded importance by the center, it is to be seen in conjunction with the basic mission of the center in espousing children's rights, fighting against gender-based

discrimination, and working to highlight issues around HIV/AIDS. The young members become familiar with these social issues confronting Kyrgyzstan. In unique and interesting ways, the members explore these issues through television and video and produce materials.

Media education at the Centre provides young members opportunities to explore various facets of video journalism. A young member, Bektour Syykov, who has been at the Centre for several months, says that he has learnt how to write for television and develop a storyboard independently. There are several other examples of young members who have become successful video producers. The video training is more than an acquisition of skills and techniques: rather, it broadens their experience. A 17-year old member, Anton Efromev has become confident and asserts that he has not only learnt how to use a camera, but also in developing his ideas through video stories. Clearly the Children's Media Centre offers these youngsters media education opportunities not found elsewhere in Kyrgyzstan.

### **Reproductive Health and Life Planning Skills**

The Cámara ahí nos vemos project's overall goal is to enable the Mexican disadvantaged children and young people to overcome barriers to their personal growth. The idea of life planning skills becomes concrete as the

**Pilar Angulo, Manager of Global Community Involvement at Nokia, asserts that the Cámara initiative of Nokia has been instrumental in transforming the lives of hundreds of youngsters. Giving these youngsters the means of television and video production, she further adds, enables them to express their ideas and thoughts in imaginative and effective ways: the world that is revealed through their eyes via the images is one of survival and hope.**



Children and youngsters from Mexico offer some powerful modes of visual expressions.



▲  
"Cámara ahí nos vemos" crew of Mexico shooting a documentary (Top)

▶  
A young boy from a poor neighbourhood being trained (Top Right)

children and young people begin to reflect on the familial and social realities impeding their development. Through conversations and media education, children and young people begin to learn the values of respect, tolerance, camaraderie, and leadership. A young member, Karina Monroy Kaparia, joined the Cámara project at 22-years of age to become a youth leader. The numerous interactions and conversations with children have taught her how she could work together and make videos that can communicate issues confronting children and young people alike. The following account shows Karina's commitment:

*Fostering connections between young people and their communities is a key goal of the program [Cámara project]. Karina lives in an area of Mexico City called Presidentes, where she says young people can feel alienated due to a lack of jobs, few recreational opportunities, and a decline in family values. Through the program she and her peers find an outlet for their creativity<sup>1</sup>. ...*

Indeed the role of media education is central in not only building Karina's confidence, but also moving her toward bringing about social change. One of her short films titled "Zero Tolerance: A Solution to Crime?" won



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recognition at the 2004 Ibero-American Film Festival. The documentary dealt with how Mexico's new law about driving under the influence of alcohol punishes young people. In a moving discussion, Karina points out that the law and its application by the legal authorities and compares this with a similar one in New York City. Rather than taking positions, Karina argues, she provided youth perspectives on the law, about drinking alcohol and driving, and the notion of crime in this context. Today, Karina is pursuing a career in youth and social media and plans to work for other non-governmental organizations as well.

Here is another story that shows how media education can change a youngster's life. Javier, now 15, spent most of his childhood in Islas Marias, a Mexican prison where prisoner's families live with them. Javier's father accidentally killed his youngest son while drunk and playing with a gun. "Life was bad and my father made it worse," says Javier. "When he would come home he would hit my mother, throw food at us, and kick us out of the house at night<sup>2</sup>."

After his father was released from the prison, Javier was unable to integrate into the community of Martin Carrera, the

1 Educating the Public Through Film: Karina's Story. From Nokia's Make a Connection resource website.

2 From Loneliness to Feeling Part of a Group: Javier's Story. The materials here are drawn from Nokia: Make a Connection resources website.

neighbourhood in Northern Mexico. Javier's mother learnt about the Cámara project and decided that Javier should become a member. The first few months at the project were difficult for both Javier and the project members. Eventually, through the conversations Javier began to identify with other child members and youngsters from the group. This had a positive influence on Javier. For the first time, he was able to relate to other children and youngsters. These young people had a dream and Javier began to share the dream and explore things on his own. Thus, from a violent home, Javier was able to develop confidence and became tolerant. "These children made me feel useful, valuable", he says. "They made me feel that I was a positive influence on them."

The earlier story of Karina is about how media education changed the life of a young leader. In Javier's account, we learnt how his violent home and growing up in a prison affected him. The subsequent experience at the Cámara, his conversations with other members opened-up a new world to him. Being a part of a caring community, sharing and learning from other children's experiences made a powerful impact on young Javier's mind. Gradually, he became more confident and now begun to imagine ideas for video documentaries. Javier has a new purpose in life. Another youth leader, Maria Irlanda Austria Garcia<sup>3</sup>, a 22-year old working with children for several years refers to her video experience and says, "we can produce an image that reflects the reality of our communities." She further argues that video documentaries provided her a new meaning in life and gave opportunities to explore the topics that are closer to heart. Austria Garcia's commitment to children's development is unflinching. Through the Cámara project she is able to carry forward her aspirations.



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◀ *Two inquisitive boys from the Cámara ahí nos vemos project in Mexico exploring a video camera*

The various profiles explain how children and young people have been successfully participating in the media education project in Mexico. By providing them access to video production and giving them opportunities to create and construct images of self and community, gives them a feeling of empowerment. The various documentaries produced together by children and young people combine unique perspectives worth exploring. The video documentaries produced reflect these values in interesting ways. The innovativeness here is not only in media use, but also the dialogues that take place between young people without any adult interference. The images and narratives that are constructed approach various social problems in unique ways that adults and policy makers have much to learn from. For instance, a short documentary, jointly made by a child from Puebla along with a young leader, is about how children are bribed by their parents from a very early age. By juxtaposing several images in a montage form, the youngsters build an interesting narrative that has no words and a minimum music that tells us all that what parents consider as "rewarding" a child indeed is understood and internalized by the child as a bribe. The short video begins showing an interior of an old apartment with a boy, around

<sup>3</sup> Using the Power of Video to Promote Social Change and Personal Awareness. From Nokia: Make a Connection website.



Young people in Mexico document local issues through the "Cámara ahí nos vemos" program. ►



© Hugo Guadalupe Armenta Fernández

8-9 years of age watching television. His mother with a small baby girl in arms enters her apartment returning from a shopping trip. She drops the bags and sits down on the sofa. The boy peeks into the shopping bags and takes out an expensive wristwatch. The mother snatches this from his hands and takes a DVD out of the bag and hands it over to the boy. Through interesting gestures both the boy and the mother communicate that what is handed out, as a reward is indeed a form of bribing and corruption. Abruptly the scene shifts to a nightclub where people are dancing. The next scene shows an adult male entering the apartment late at night. As the boy wakes up in his bed, quietly the man places a little gift in his hand. The movie ends here. Another short video explains how narcotics and drugs can damage a youngster's life. It takes us through a day in the life of a drug addict from Mexico City. It not only ends with a strong message highlighting the dangers of drug use, but also suggests that

it is possible to get out of the habit. Unlike many of the adult produced public service videos on the harmful effects of drug use, this one is refreshing and offers some genuine possibilities of overcoming drug dependence. A powerful documentary titled, "Corrupcion: Una de la desigualdad," is an ethical critique of the various forms of institutional corruption. It begins with a background voice of a young man who talks about the various faces of corruption in Mexico City. A series of images of public places; corporate headquarters, political institutions, street children, toiling women and working classes make up the visual narrative. In the end, it tells the viewers that whether it is part of capitalism or socialism, corruption hurts children and young people from poor backgrounds.

The video productions by children and young people – groups of children working with clay and other materials to develop figures for the animation series and teams of young



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© Communication for Change

"Cámara ahí nos vemos"  
crew of Mexico shooting a  
documentary (left)

Exploring HIV/AIDS related  
issues. A member of the  
Participatory Video Project  
from Nigeria talking with a  
youngster (right)

people using interesting camera techniques and montage effect – demonstrate the importance of media education to child and youth development. The innovative uses of the media by the young people also provide refreshing and unique perspectives to the issues and topics of the adult world. Indeed, as can be seen from the various video productions, children and young people are seeking a conversation with the adult world of individuals and institutions in addressing the social concerns that confront us all.

The video productions at the Participatory Video Project in Nigeria on a range of topics around HIV/AIDS – sexual health of youth, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse, abortion, family planning, etc. – incorporate several interesting program formats and techniques like dramas, mini-documentaries, music-based programmes, live interviews, etc. These programmes are broadcast using mobile video units in and around Lagos. The videos are also meant for use at the various workshops on HIV/AIDS. The video productions by the Teen Video Teams are good examples of innovative media use. Here is a description of what the video teams accomplish:

*The teen participants quickly become adept in operating the Hi-8 equipment. During the*

*15-day workshop, they gained further skills in production planning and storyboarding, researching, interviewing, and working as part of a team while shooting. By the end of the training, each participant had produced his or her own program. Although several emulated the style of popular TV talk show hosts, they tackled issues unlikely to be addressed in the mainstream media.*

The above passage reveals several interesting things about the young participants and the work being carried out. First, the youngsters, working on basic video equipment, are able to not only emulate the mainstream media television format, but also in the process develop this further toward a socially oriented direction. By combining elements of education and entertainment through the video programmes, it is shown that information about the serious subjects like HIV/AIDS can be effectively communicated. For this reason, Action Health considers, video project as a central plank for the Nigerian youth as beneficial for sharing knowledge to the larger community. More importantly, it enables young people to gain leadership in the society. According to the video coordinators, Emmanuel Ehinmero and Ljeoma Okerere, "...the video programme has engendered in us teens on the team a lot of confidence,

solidarity and greater ability to communicate effectively with others our needs as teenagers.”

The video documentaries on HIV/AIDS, conceived and produced by the young members of the Participatory Video Communication, deploy informal personal narratives in exploring the sensitive subject. A background paper on the PVC initiative states that “operating video production equipment is exciting, while appearing on tape can also be tremendously motivating. It helps young people to communicate their needs and concerns better to people at all levels.” Communicating HIV/AIDS related information while creating a socially-responsible documentaries on a range of topics – sexual decision making, teenage pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, etc. – can be not only daunting, but potentially be confusing. Apart from the sensitive nature of the topics, a better grasp and understanding of the subject matter is required. A detailed scientific knowledge on the subject of HIV/AIDS is provided to young members through a series of workshops involving various experts. This knowledge and understanding is, then, combined with their own experience of the local and regional contexts within which HIV/AIDS is embedded. The PVC’s members do not approach the subject as “experts” who typically communicate HIV/AIDS messages in terms of various negative connotations attached to it; that is, a scourge that needs to be eradicated. Rather, the members seek to demystify the hype surrounding HIV/AIDS and offer interesting approaches in how to prevent

and cope with several aspects of HIV/AIDS. The short video documentaries simplify the complex information through a number of innovative strategies. The seriousness of the ‘cold’ statistics are ‘humanised’ and put in the context of the lives of youngsters. Without trivializing either the information or the data, the documentaries offer concrete suggestions in the form of first person oral testimonies. The on-camera conversations between the young people, their personal experiences regarding HIV/AIDS, or the several sex education topics, fosters openness and sensitivity without any fear of societal reprisal or taboo. The video documentaries have become popular with teenagers who visit the Action Health Incorporated [the parent organisation of PVC in Nigeria] centres for additional health information about the documentaries.

“Because the video tapes feature young people whose experiences are similar to their own – because, as one group of students put it, the videos are ‘of the teens, by the teens, and for the teens’ – viewers feel encouraged to discuss issues important to their well being.” Here is a transcription of the opening segment from one of the documentary:

A young woman wearing a crisp, white blouse and a brightly colored skirt stands attentive; microphone in hand, she looks to the camera. At her side is a lanky man, ready and waiting. After a few minutes she begins the interview. “Yes, my name is Ijeoma Okereke and we are talking about unwanted pregnancy,” She says borrowing the style of a news anchorwoman. “What is your name, sir?” “ My name is Ibrahim Mustafa,” he says, “What is your age?” “Twenty-two years...” “Are you a father, sir? Asks the young woman. “Yes,” responds the man. “How do you feel about that?” I regret being a father at age 22. I hope that others can learn from my experience that it is better to wait until you are ready to

**Rather than merely seeing the television and video media as facilitators for self-expression of the children, one must consider them in terms social networks that are crucial to human development.**

have a family," he says over the crowing of a nearby rooster. "Thank you, sir," says the young woman. "My pleasure," the man replies.<sup>4</sup> Although the above exchange does not capture the full evocative power of the unfolding personal testimonial, it does point to the range of possibilities that can become available to a visual narrative. PVC's video documentaries serve as good examples of such an approach.

The work of the teen video teams at the Action Health Project serves as a fine example for bringing media-based activities in dialogue with serious issues like HIV/AIDS. In breaking down the broad topic into specific issues that hamper the development of the youngster and the larger community, the youth members develop participatory video projects that are creative and relevant to the needs of the local regions of Nigeria. It is through the video project that youth participation becomes an ongoing process in some of the most pressing reproductive health related issues in Nigeria.

The visual media productions at the Children's Media Centre are meant for diverse audiences: from local and national television networks in Bishkek to international media like CNN. With a clear focus on promotion of children's rights, gender issues, HIV/AIDS, and in imparting life-planning skills through the use of media, the Centre is involved in bringing numerous children and young people into the television and video production. Several innovative programmes have been produced in the past with the support of UNICEF and other organizations. A documentary titled, "Children of the Underground," about homeless children on the streets won recognition from Kyrgyzstan national television network. The children's production team was invited to participate in a discussion that was broadcast on the television network. The documentary also

won recognition at international documentary festivals. Another documentary, "A Day of Water and Earth," is about how children from the orphanages of Bishkek cleaned up the river Alamedin. There are other programmes that cover topics like gender discrimination and children's rights that were made in engaging and innovative ways by the child video makers. In addition, children had worked at the children's television unit of the mainstream American television network CNN in Atlanta. The training here led to some interesting short television films called "video stories." A couple of the stories were shown on the CNN network. In addition, a few interactive video-albums have been produced.

The children's media centre, with sponsorship and support from UNICEF and the Democratic committee of US Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic, has involved children and young people – ages 13-20 years – in the production of a monthly television newsmagazine, "Neboscreb," (Skyscraper) that is produced in Kyrgyz and Russian languages. Although adults provide coordination and support, the youngsters take the lead in editorial matters and production discussions. Some of the topics featured in "Neboscreb" included: children's right to schooling, homeless kids, child abuse, mountain climbing, wonders of nature, children's health, etc. A cursory look at the topics indicates that these are not unique to the Kyrgyz children and youngsters, but appear in other case studies being discussed here. What is unique, however, to the Kyrgyz children (as one might expect for other countries as well) is that their commentaries and critiques are not ideological and coloured by politics: rather, the problems posed and solutions offered have moral and ethical appeal. The television and video productions of the Centre are broadcast over the state-run

4 <http://www.c4c.org/gallery.html>

Children Media Centre participants involved in Media work in Kyrgyzstan. ►



© UNICEF



© UNICEF

Kyrgyz television network. To carry forward the conversations from television and video, the Centre has printed some of these materials in the form of booklets for distribution among various schools. This strategy enables a long-term dialogue and enlists the support and participation of school children as well. More importantly, it brings these concrete issues as part of education and learning in schools. Thus, by carefully combining its advocacy and activists concerns with educational and pedagogic objectives, the Children's Media Centre, like so many other initiatives provides an innovative media education model.

An important strategy of the initiatives is the ability to generate ongoing dialogues and conversations that go beyond the "workshops" and has the potential to foster a sense of community and create numerous alliances not among the young participants,

but also between and among the members of the community. In an age where mediated forms of communication have become the primary means of delivering information and knowledge, what is, perhaps, needed is to extend dialogic forms of communication and conversation across cross-cultural boundaries. The video programmes produced by the children and young people are best examples of what can be achieved by these youngsters while working with the television and video media. Rather than merely seeing the television and video media as facilitators for self-expression of the children, one must consider them in terms social networks that are crucial to human development. The unique ways through which children and young people bring the media into conversations and dialogue is a remarkable achievement that is worth emulating by adult-run commercial media institutions.



# 6

## New Media Explorations: Computers and Personal Digital Assistants



That increasing technological convergence and innovations are reshaping the media in content creation and distribution is a point that we need not belabor. Indeed, this publication itself is an outcome of some of the developments in images graphics and book design. Print, electronic and digital forms overlap and become simultaneously available, thereby providing an interesting mélange of older information and communication technologies (ICTs) with the newer ones. The emergence of computers, Internet, the World Wide Web, and various mobile communication devices has raised optimism among developmental agencies and media education practitioners. There are two responses: one celebratory and euphoric and the other cautious, but optimistic. UNESCO has been engaged in developing policies and programmes that are cautious and optimistic. Consequently, questions are asked and discussions carried-out on the transformative potential of these emergent ICTs for children and young people. In this context, it is appropriate to ask whether these technologies could enable enhanced participation and help overcome barriers to education. In what ways, if at all, children and young people interact with these technologies? In the following chapter, I looked at two initiatives from India where children and young people are exploring new media

technologies for informal learning and personal development.

### **ICTs and the Learning Experience**

Cybermohalla (Cyber-Neighbourhood) is an experimental project designed to enable democratic access to information and communication technologies among poor young women and men in Delhi, India. These young participants (ages of 15 and 23), mostly school dropouts visit the Compughar (literally, a house of computers, in Hindi), a media lab with several low-cost desktop computers and free software, to freely express their ideas and imaginations from the mundane to the serious. Working at the media lab these participants write, draw and sketch a range of interesting verbal and visual narratives and texts published as books, diaries, magazines, and wallpaper that become available in print as well as digitized formats. The following account describes the philosophy of the project:

*One can approach the Cybermohalla project from many directions. One can begin with a critique of the technological imagination and the excessive universe of the dominant mediascape, and then go on to map a counter strategy which grounds itself on access, sharing and democratic extensibility. One can see it as an experiment to engage with*



*media technologies and software 'tactically', and create multiple local media contexts emerging within the larger media network that the Internet seems to engender. Still one can see it as an engagement with local history, experiences, modes of expressions and creativity (<http://www.sarai.net/community/saraicomm.htm>).*

From this description, it is clear that Cybermohalla is about adopting alternative strategies to explore and engage the ICTs so as to provide young people opportunities for learning and education. The Hindi-Urdu words that are combined with English to produce terms like "Cybermohalla" and "Compughar," capture the evocative and open-ended features of new media technologies. These technologies are not rooted in a singular space and place, but as de-territorialised forms offer unique possibilities for informal learning that can be actualized in non-linear ways. For instance, reflections of young participants on the everyday life in the city are sprinkled with personal experiences, creative self-expressions, and commentaries that offer some concrete suggestions on social and political issues. The ICTs also open up "spaces of dialogue" for the young participants: conversations and discussions lead to collective participation in a variety of multimedia experimental works. "What binds them together is their experimentation and play with diverse media forms (photography, animation, sound recording, text, etc.) to improvise and create cross-media works – texts, collages, posters, print publications, videos, installations." These multimedia projects – involving new ICTs and "media mixes" – not only generate excitement among the youngsters, but also overcome the deficiencies of the older and traditional models of education and learning, particularly in the formal systems of education.

One example where ICTs are being incorporated into the formal school learning settings is the Mapping the Neighbourhood Project in India. The project, conceptualized and developed by the Centre for Spatial Database Management and Solution (CSDMS), an independent organisation with support from the Department of Science and Technology of Government of India, involves school children from the rural and urban regions of Almora and Nainital of Uttaranchal province of North India. The basic approach to community mapping has been to visually construct a "map" of the places and spaces in the community. It has been widely used as a tool for planning and development of various projects. The Mapping the Neighbourhood project extends the concept by involving school children in the process. The main purpose of the project is to provide school children opportunities to learn about their regional geography and landscape and share this with other members of the community. The school children learn about global information system through workshops organised at their respective schools. The students work with personal digital assistants (PDAs) and global positioning systems (GPS) technologies to map their neighbourhoods. Another goal is to bring students in dialogue with local and rural communities about the integrating mapping technologies for local development. An important aspect of learning here, one that goes beyond the formal schooling, is in active participation of school children in community development. The notion of participation takes on a whole new meaning in the activities of the school children. ICTs provide a context for social networking and ongoing conversations among children and adult members of the rural communities.

Commenting on the innovative work, Rumi Mallick and Himanshu Kalra point out “that young people learn about participation and democracy while in school where they not only spend considerable proportion of their lives and undertake a formal education, it is also a place where many of their views and perspectives on life are developed and shaped.” Although the idea behind the project is referred to as “an alternative learning experience,” the primary intent is to integrate ICTs into formal education. Mallick and Kalra explain that “with an aim to create an enabling context for the youth to live, grow, learn, participate, decide, analyze, and change, the programme empowered the youth of the mountain areas by exposing them to technology tools in this case Geo-ICT tools.” These are innovative ideas, extending the traditional community mapping through technologies and bringing school children as stakeholders in the development process. More important, it is aimed at transforming the idea of education from classroom settings to the field. These strategies enable learning, and as Mallick and Kalra rightly point out, provide knowledge as well as raise the consciousness of the school children.

### **Working Class Neighbourhoods and Community Mapping**

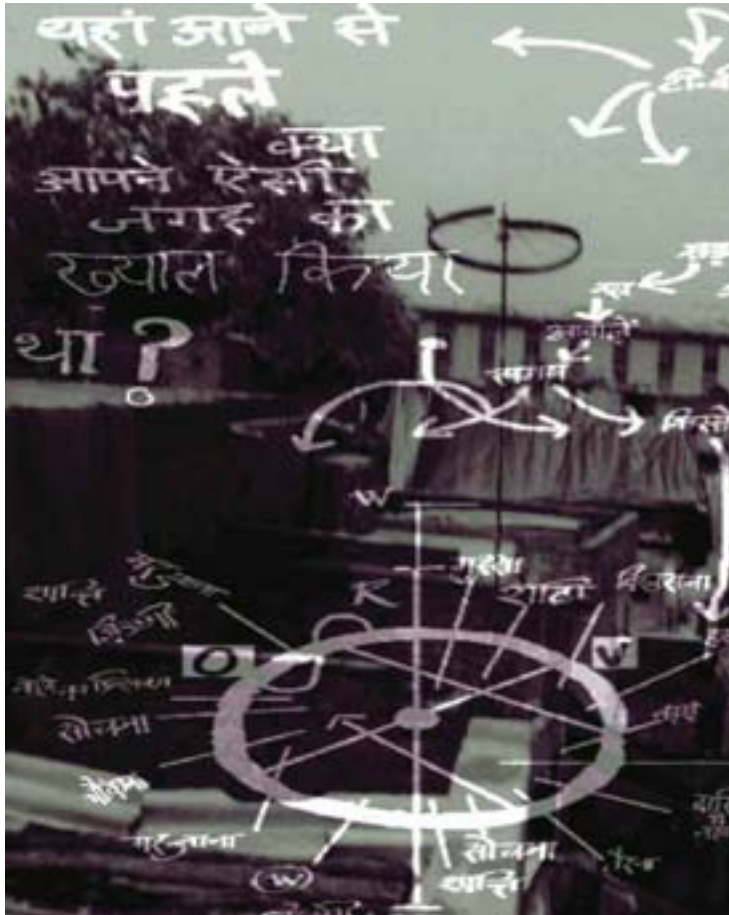
The three media labs of Cybermohalla are located in different parts of Delhi – an illegal working class settlement in central part of the city and a poor colony in south Delhi – and provide opportunities to young people to work individually and collectively. The idea of a “mohalla,” as a neighbourhood, exceeds the semantic connotations implied by the English term. As a social space, mohalla, with “its sense of alleys and corners,” can be conceived as “dense nodes” where young

people from economically deprived and marginalized communities negotiate their lives and subjectivities. Formal schooling is out of reach or unaffordable for the youngsters. They visit the lab out of curiosity, but soon get absorbed in the creative possibilities offered by computers and other media. Gradually, the young members, mostly women, begin to express themselves via the computer screens. A bi-monthly magazine “Ibarat” explored various meanings of work in women’s lives. The magazine in Hindi and English is made available in digital and printed forms. A series of creative writings as diaries has been published into a book called, “Galiyon Se” (By Lanes). These are a bunch of reflections and thoughts on the everyday life in the city. Here is one such reflection on streets and by lanes:

*For the last one year now, I have been in regular conversation with the group of young people in Compughar. Amongst other things streets and lanes were discussed many times, Streets make for great conversations. Streets would lead us to think about the harsh and aggressive behaviour of men towards each other and towards women in particular, the total lack of pedestrian pathways or respect towards them, the absence of street lighting, noisy traffic and its uncaring behaviour, or the near-total inaccessibility for disabled people or elder people. Also being amidst strangers, in crowds and moving with crowds.*

This young women’s narrative account of the streets of Delhi offer some unique insights into what has become of the public places and spaces. Although this reads as a political

**The ICTs also open up “spaces of dialogue” for the young participants: conversations and discussions lead to collective participation in a variety of multimedia experimental works**



© Sarai/Cybermohalla

▲  
This Cybermohalla poster visually demonstrates the multiple nodes and networks of the new media.

critique, there are many more writings that offer some interesting solutions to civic life and public infrastructure in the city. Some participants write about streets, some draw and sketch using graphics software presenting multiple perspectives on the topic. The materials produced become available to all participants and distributed in the neighbourhoods for further commentary and reflections.

Shveta Sarda, coordinator at the Cybermohalla project, suggests that linking the broader environments of our digital worlds with the conversational worlds that we live with in our localities is central in understanding “publicness”:

*The world of the digital surrounds us. In our lanes and by-lanes we live through a dense palimpsest of images, texts and sounds, increasingly accessed and accelerated through the digital – VCDs, CDs, Cable, PCOs, DTP operations (pamphlets, stickers, sign boards), etc. Through our own practice, we are trying to work out an interface between this density and our concerns. We use the digital to create for us a networked platform in our own explorations with texts, images and sounds.*

Sixty young participants from three different labs – 20 from each – have been involved in sketching ideas around “publicness.” Working with a range of multimedia forms like animations, booklets, broadsheets, HTML, typed and formatted texts, sound scape, photo stories, written word, audio and visual juxtapositions or narratives, storyboards, etc. members develop innovative perspectives on alleys, corners, mohallas, and locality – important metaphors for “publicness.” Visiting the city alleys and corners, meeting disadvantaged children and other dwellers in the poor and working class neighbourhoods, young participant begin conversations with a young girl child working in a factory, an old woman sweeping the streets of Delhi, to a middle aged man who runs a photo studio, a shop keeper, a tea stall owner, etc. Several young members have produced a collage called “Hamari Dilli” (Our Delhi) texts.

The “Walls” project draws upon ideas of publicness and locality to talk about how walls interact with and shape human experience. The experimental multimedia work being carried-out by young participants connect ideas of dwelling and experience. “Dwellings are made of walls. Our lived experience shows these walls are testimonies of fractured, fragile, contested stories of the everyday struggle to make life in the city. Walls are demolished. Walls get

Mapping the Neighbourhood best exemplifies the idea of community mapping. Students from various schools work with PDA's and GPS navigation software to create interesting maps of their localities and regions.



- ▲ A young girl student involved in the Mapping project showing off her work!
- ◀ A group of smiling children on the Mapping the Neighbourhood poster.

hardened. Fragile lives build themselves and reside along walls. Women gather around walls to share experience, youngsters lean against them to recount the day's stories from other parts of the city, infants rest in their shade." The Cybermohalla project provides opportunities of self-expression and exploration for the young under privileged people from Delhi. The new and old ICTs not only enable an enhanced participation in media, but also allow young participants a creative range of possibilities for commentary, critique, and dialogue.

In recognition of the contributions in media education through ICTs for young people, Sarai, the parent organisation of Cybermohalla was awarded the UNESCO Digital Art Award in 2004. The approach to cyberspace and the new media as open-ended and globalised forms of communication with the ability to connect with localised forms of communication as embodied in the "mohalla" is an innovative feature that provided inspiration to several groups in different parts of the world. Several youth members from Cybermohalla were invited to Hamburg, Germany for a workshop on innovative uses of new media.

Although the Cybermohalla project is organised around a set of inter-related objectives, its main focus is in making available ICTs, and the emerging technologies to poor working class youngsters. Consequently, the long-term new media explorations undertaken by these youngsters lead to some interesting and unexpected outcomes. The individual diaries, commonly known as “Compughar Diaries,” as a record of creative and critical ideas in several formats that include written texts, still and moving images, graphics, and audio bytes, contain mundane observations on the flow of the city life to the serious social and political reflections. These begin to take on new meanings as the conversation proceeds among the members via hyperlink notes. The juxtaposition of personal experiences with the social and political realities produces a series of questions. Thus, what begins as an individual idea evolves into a collective engagement. The ideas, observations, questions, generated in the media labs are taken into the neighbourhoods, the “bastis,” to which these young members belong for an extended dialogue with the community.

In important ways, then, the computers and the new media function as more than mere technological artifacts: rather these ICTs are “demystified” and provide a context for the young participants from the poor neighbourhoods to express and explore their creative and interpretative ideas. Although the urban areas in India (as well as the many other

developing and underdeveloped regions of the world) have a high density of information and communication-based technologies in the form of the presence of printing presses (old and new), photographic studios, radio, cinema, television, cable television operator’s, internet kiosks, etc., these have not been made particularly relevant to youth development or as enablers of media education. Commenting on the dynamics of the urban public culture, within which the old and new ICTs are embedded, Shuddhabrata Sengupta articulates the general idea behind the project: “We were interested in the way in which we could see the urban space we were located in, begin to reveal itself to us as a dense communicative network. As a matrix (as crowded as the streets of the old quarters of our city) within which, new and old technologies and the practices of communication, ranging from print to photography to film and the Internet were able to constantly renew a dynamic media ecology.”<sup>1</sup> It is precisely this “media ecology” – constituted by the co-presence of the old and new ICTs – that offers a context for developing innovative media education models that not only overcome the deficiencies of traditional approaches to education, but also shift the focus of media from commercial considerations to its pedagogic role. As discussed in chapter one, some of the emerging media education models, drawing insights from the work of Dewey and Freire, have identified the innovative uses of ICTs. Both the Cybermohalla and Mapping the Neighbourhood projects serve as good examples of these emerging models of media education.

The main goal of Mapping the Neighbourhood is to make computer-based education attractive to young learners. Although ICTs are understood to enhance learning and participation, the project integrated the uses of several technologies like personal digital

**Working with a range of multimedia forms like animations, booklets, broadsheets, HTML, typed and formatted texts, sound scape, photo stories, written word, audio and visual juxtapositions or narratives, storyboards, etc. members develop innovative perspectives on alleys, corners, mohallas, and locality – important metaphors for “publicness.”**



Young women from Cybermohalla are exploring new media not only for self-expression and informal learning, but also as interventions into the cultural politics of the neighbourhoods and city.



◀ Multimedia work from Cybermohalla

© Sarai-Cybermohalla

assistants and global positioning systems to local developmental needs. This itself is an innovative approach. The involvement of school students makes it a unique exercise. First, it seeks to transform the traditional education process with learning that now takes place in the community, outside the classroom.

It is through “doing” that students acquire knowledge. Second, the idea of development itself is transformed. Community participation provides the student learners opportunities and training in citizenship. The convergence of ICTs, development and education can be glimpsed in the work being carried out



School girls from Mapping  
the Neighbourhood in the  
field.

School boys from Mapping  
the Neighbourhood  
exploring the PDAs



© CSDMS



© CSDMS

by students in Almora and Nainital area in Hawalbag. Here community mapping goes beyond territories and landscape; rather, the visual representations of their regions gives the people knowledge and understanding of how communities live in the social and material world. Mullick, Dhar, and Satyaprakash (2004) conclude that the use of ICT as an alternative form of education in rural and urban areas has demonstrated that this form of education can have a positive affect on the community at large... Innovative use of technology change the way development takes place and ensures that the issues of general public are addressed. Taking the children as 'agents of change', this project has tried to evolve an alternative form of education as well as developmental process."

**Referring to the feasibility of the project, Siva Kumar points out that the initial fears about the ability of rural school children to adapt to technologies like GIS, GPS, and PDA's proved wrong as these experiments became successful. Gradually the concept of community mapping has been integrated into the curriculum of several schools.**

The creation of community maps – of basic socio-economic, cultural, and ecological resources – by the school children in their respective neighbourhoods provides a new learning experience that is not only free from the formalized classroom education, but takes them into the 'real' world where learning and knowledge become complementary. In other words, as Siva Kumar asserts, "instead of learning geography, history, and environmental sciences and the textbooks, the children will learn by producing knowledge of relevance for their community." Further, referring to the feasibility of the project, Siva Kumar points out that the initial fears about the ability of rural school children to adapt to technologies like GIS, GPS, and PDA's proved wrong as these experiments became successful. Gradually the concept of community mapping has been integrated into the curriculum of several schools. An excerpt from "Mapping of Water Resources with PDA and GPS," provides a concrete example on why school children find these experiments challenging and useful: With the help of PDA coupled with GPS (running on an indigenously developed GIS software called Todermal) the students with assistance from the community created base maps for villages. Other than the patwari maps

[traditional revenue maps in India, outdated and unavailable to the community], no village map exists. The students generated the village maps, collected and marked GPS locations of all water resource points (natural and man-made). The location of each house was marked and linked to GIS in order to be able to reassess the water need and supply situation. Other built structures (temples, roads and pathways, shops, community centers, health centers, other infrastructures etc) were also mapped.<sup>2</sup>

This involvement of the students in community mapping, the ongoing conversations with rural citizens, the engagement with their environment, the coming together of local forms of knowledge and modern information

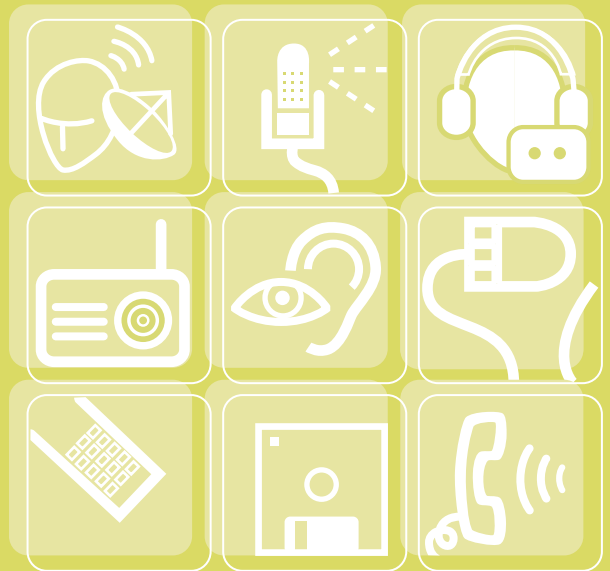
and communication technologies, points to an innovative exercise in social development that can be adapted and replicated in other underdeveloped and developing regions of the world. This form of the local-global engagement is more productive than the one that is visible in commercial and popular media around the world, and is an interesting social communication and development model articulated by young people. The conversations between student teams and local community members is an exercise in decentralized planning and rural development. As a form of “direct education” it emulates what Paulo Freire had outlined through his philosophy of education: dialogical education through interaction with a focus on practice (or praxis).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.csdms.in/NM/studentinitives/Pages/mapping%20resources.htm>

# 7

## Conclusions



The various media practices undertaken by children and young people discussed in the various chapters of this publication explored innovative uses, role of technology, particularly the old and new ICTs, and youth participation in cross-cultural settings. These questions provided a baseline for a detailed exploration of how young people engage the various media forms – newspapers, magazines, radio, television/video, computers and personal digital assistants. The initiatives offered a broad range of approaches to the media education, literacy, and learning. Developing basic media materials in the form of graphics, text, page design and layout, television/video design aesthetics, and digital constructions offered interesting opportunities to the young participants to become media makers.

The media experiments revealed some interesting findings with respect to the questions outlined. The idea of learning through content creation also includes designing the messages in creative and expressive ways. Although the idea of content creation is an obvious first step in media making, it serves an important purpose for the children and young people. It provided a sense of accomplishment and ownership, both individual and collective. The conversations and dialogue between the young people as well as between these youngsters and their peers, with the adults within the

initiatives and larger community pointed to aspects of participation and involvement that otherwise would not have been possible in other media and educational settings. This was a common feature across the various initiatives explored in this publication. The notion of “media mixes” have been crucial in elaborating youth participation and involvement in the media that enabled learning and education through fun and pleasure. The combinations of media forms enabled the young people to creatively build media materials on a range of personal and social topics. In addition to simplifying the mundane procedures and tasks and enabling quicker learning of skills, the mixed media offered unique innovative possibilities for the youngsters as journalists and media producers. The struggle for the recognition of children’s rights through print-based media, radio, television/video, and computers has a deep impact for both the participants and larger community. These can be construed as good examples of creative and socially responsible journalism through which the children and young journalists sought to empower themselves and their listeners.

Whether it is through their newspaper and magazine writings, radio broadcasts, television/video narratives, or digital explorations, the children and young people converted abstract concepts into meaningful ideas relevant to

their lives. The powerful mediations via various media provide exemplary instances of how notions like civic engagement, participatory democracy and development acquired a concrete immediacy in the hands of young people. The conversations between young participants revealed that they are not only capable of understanding complex issues, but can act on these as well. It is the curiosity, creativity and motivation of the young people that not only taps the potential of these media, but also shows to the adult world how to deploy these for child and youth development.

The initiatives pointed out to several innovative features with regard to media content creation – from writing news stories with informality and seriousness to developing creative newspaper and magazine graphics design and layout. Although media journalism offered the children and youngsters several opportunities and possibilities, it was the creative and transformative role played by these youngsters that is innovative and unique. Further, the newspaper/magazine

articles, radio programmes, television/video production, and digital stories revealed interesting facets of a cross-cultural dialogue. This was a unique instance of extending the notion of participation from their immediate surroundings to far-away places and regions.

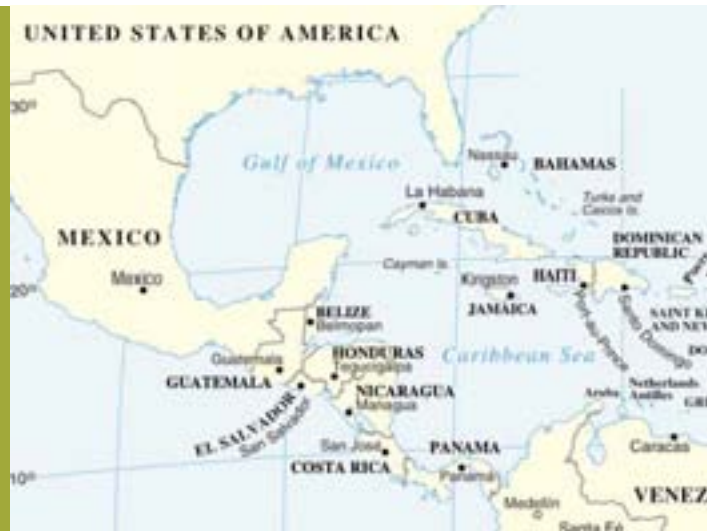
Although the conclusions offered here are provisional, the author noticed transformative possibilities of media in the hands of young people. The various initiatives discussed have faced sustainability issues – more particularly financial sustainability. The lack of adequate funding had in the past led to the threat of closure and discontinuance of the projects. The various project partners, sponsors and funding agencies have demonstrated a willingness to help and continue their support even in the face of serious political and social conflicts. With the continued support of organisations like UNICEF and others, particularly various non-governmental agencies, these initiatives have been able to successfully face the challenges. For the children and young people of the various initiatives the journey continues.

# 8

## Twelve Initiatives: Brief Profiles



## Cámara Ahí Nos Vemos Mexico



### Background and Mission

The programme was launched in 2001 as part of "Make a Connection," a global youth initiative of Nokia and the International Youth Foundation (IYF). The *Cámara* programme is supported and coordinated by a major NGO in Mexico, Fundación Vamos. *Cámara* is also supported by the Mexican Educational Television Center, Centro de Entrenamiento de Televisión Educativa (CETE). The main focus is giving the youth opportunities to explore a wide range of topics in the areas of educational and social development through video production.

### Activities and Context

*Cámara* was established to promote positive development of economically and socially disadvantaged children and young people living in and around Mexico City. Upon receiving practical skills in television and video, these children and young members, working within the local communities, produce documentaries and videos on a variety of topics. Themes ranged from unemployment, corruption, drugs use, the rights of children, and family and street violence issues.

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## Trendsetters Zambia

### Background and Mission

A monthly magazine, started in 1995 by Youth Media, a Zambian youth NGO, a youth-led and youth-run initiative that not only creates awareness about HIV/AIDS and other critical health issues that impact the lives of young people, but a forum of discussion and debate with adults and other policy makers in Zambia. The initial funding was provided by the Johns Hopkins University, Center for Communications Programs. In 2001, UNICEF signed an agreement with the Youth Media NGO to carry out and develop the “Say Yes for Children Communication Campaign” in Zambia. For its innovative uses of media, it received the Global Media Award from the U.S. –based Population Institute in 1997, and the Radio Phoenix Millennium Pacesetters Award in 2000.

### Activities and Context

The primary purpose of *Trendsetters* is in improving health and educational standards in Zambia, particularly knowledge on sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. A monthly newspaper, brochures and posters are developed by young people drawn from poor and working class neighbourhoods of Zambia. The articles and perspectives of the young members place the issues in their social context even while providing specific HIV/AIDS related information.

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## Cybermohalla India



### Background and Mission

The initiative began in 2001 through an experimental collaborative project between Sarai project of the Centre for the study of Developing Societies and Ankur, an NGO from Delhi involving young people living in slums settlements and working class neighbourhoods in Delhi. The main aim is to give a forum where the young people not only explore their creativity, but also comment on the social and moral topics that impact their lives. This is an interesting innovative use and participation of youth in the new media.

### Activities and context

At the three media labs, located in the slums and poor working class neighbourhoods, youngsters work with a range of digital media and produce experimental works – digital works, computer animation, write texts using graphics and images, publish wall magazines, edit books, etc. The youngsters take their experimental works into their “mohallas” – alleys and neighbourhoods – for ongoing conversations and dialogues.

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## Young Journalists Group Vietnam

### Background and Mission

A youth-led radio program with adult journalists as mentors started in 1998 as YOJO (Young Journalists Group) with the support of UNICEF and the Vietnamese National Radio. It is organised as “Junior Reporters Club,” where young members develop several media outlets for expressing their ideas. The primary mission is to develop and inculcate children’s rights via print-based and radio media. In recognition of its activities, the members of YOJO were invited to the UN Special Session on Children held in New York in 2001.

### Activities and context

The popular YOJO produces “Children’s Aspirations,” a radio programme broadcast twice weekly, “Voices of the Youth,” a monthly newsletter, and also published a book named, “Children’s Aspirations” that contains children’s writings on social themes from pollution of rivers to gender equality, and sustainable development topics. Over the last several years, YOJO has produced some 500-radio programs, published hundreds of articles in various print media outlets, thus making it an innovative and participatory media initiative.

## Bush Radio South Africa



### Background and Mission

*Bush Radio* is a community radio initiative in Western Cape of South Africa, covering several poor townships from areas surrounding the city of Cape Town. Founded by Zane Ibrahim in 1992, *Bush Radio* has grown over the years. Topics covered include crime, HIV/AIDS, and children's rights. *Bush Radio* is popularly referred as the "Mother of Community Radio" in South Africa. *Bush Radio* initiated an annual workshop called that came to be known as "Radio Kidocracy, a young broadcasters convention aimed at bringing together groups of children and young people between the ages of 13 to 18 to talk about the Africa Charter on Children's Broadcasting. Young people created the kidocracy name to denote a form of society characterized by social equality and acceptance of young people with representation for and by young people."

### Activities and context

The radio programmes, produced by children and young people from black and "mixed" neighbourhoods of Western Cape near Cape Town, deal with issues of crime, health, and education. The members are all trained in community radio journalism at the radio station. One set of programmes, the Children's Radio Education Workshop (CREW), produced by children in various age groups are about children's rights. A series of youth produced programmes on education, crime, and health issues span range of innovative radio formats.

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## Youth Broadcasting Initiative Somalia

### Background and Mission

This initiative is funded by UNICEF with support from Somaliland Ministry of Information, and other local NGOs. The radio content created is localized and deals with specific topics and community concerns like HIV/AIDS, gender issues, and youth leadership. The main focus is building a network of youth radio broadcasting in Somalia so as to provide young people access and opportunities to produce their own radio content. UNICEF has involved a variety of local agencies and NGO's in implementing the project in Northern regions of Somalia.

### Activities and context

Several radio programmes have been produced and broadcast from the Somali's government's radio stations in the Northern regions of the country, particularly Bossaso, Mogadishu, Galkayo, Marka, Kismayo, and Hargeisa provinces. Training to the youngsters is provided at the local radio stations as well as at the UNICEF sponsored workshops. A total of twenty youth groups have developed and produced local radio content drawing from their own experiences.

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## Mundo Sem Segredos Mozambique



### Background and Mission

The *Mundo Sem Segredos* was developed in 2004 to educate children aged between 10 and 15 years about HIV/AIDS using a strategy of peer education through entertaining participatory radio programmes produced and presented by children. The main aim is to encourage open dialogue among members and others in the community. The initiative is funded by the Danish Government (DANIDA), organised by the British non-governmental organization, Media Support Partnership along with the Mozambique Ministry of Education. Links with numerous other local and international agencies have also been established in implementing the project.

### Activities and context

The weekly radio programmes produced by youngsters in the ages of 12 to 15 years are broadcast in the local language and Portuguese through Radio Mozambique. *Mundo Sem Segredos* referred to as a "World Without Secrets," covers a range of health related concerns within the rubric of HIV/AIDS. Programmes are broadcast in the provinces of Zambezia, Tete, and Cabo Delgado. Complementing the radio programmes, a basic HIV/AIDS kit is produced and distributed among school teachers to be used in teaching and imparting knowledge to school children on the health issues around HIV/AIDS.

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## Action Health Participatory Video Project Nigeria

### Background and Mission

The first *Action Health Participatory Video* Workshop began in 1992 and derives its name from the Action Health Incorporated (AHI), a non-governmental organization based in Lagos. Since then it has developed into a full-fledged initiative. It is funded and supported by a variety of organizations like the UNICEF, United Nations International Drugs Control Programme (UNDCP), MacArthur Foundation, Communication for Change, and Martha Stuart Communication. The project's main focus is to provide Nigerian youth a forum to express their thoughts on pressing social and personal issues via video production. Some important topics identified were youth access to reproductive health information and life planning skills through video and film.

### Activities and context

The video productions at the Participatory Video Project in Nigeria on a range of topics around HIV/AIDS – sexual health of youth, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse, abortion, family planning, etc. – incorporate several interesting program formats and techniques like dramas, mini-documentaries, music-based programmes, live interviews, etc. These programmes are broadcast using mobile video units in and around Lagos. The videos are also meant for use at the various workshops on HIV/AIDS.

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## Curious Minds Ghana



### Background and Mission

*Curious Minds* began in 1996 – and is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2006 – by an independent group, Women-in-Broadcasting. It went through several name changes before the organizers settled on “Curious Minds,” suggesting the inquisitive and curious nature of children. Over the years, several organizations like Plan Ghana and UNICEF joined as supporters of the broadcasting initiative. The following quote aptly describes the main focus of the initiative: “A group of young people ages 8 to 18 who are part of the Children and Youth in Broadcasting/Child Survival and Development (CYIB/CSD) Action Club have organized a radio programme called Curious Mind, Children’s act as presenters and producers of the show under the supervision of a professional journalist, who coordinates the activities of the group. The purpose of the programme is to make Ghana’s citizens aware of issues related to children’s rights.”

### Activities and context

*Curious Minds*, name of the children’s and youth radio programme, on Ghana’s national radio is about children’s rights. With this focus, the radio programmes explore a variety of educational and developmental topics pertaining to children. Children and young members of *Curious Minds* participate in a variety of community activities: visiting rural areas to talk about the importance of education and health, and discussions with local adult community leaders and governmental officials on the importance of including children’s voices in developmental activities.

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## Mapping the Neighbourhood India

### Background and Mission

*Mapping the Neighbourhood*, funded by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India is an initiative of the NGO, Centre for Science Development and Media Studies (CSDMS). It was introduced in 2002, and “conceptualized as an alternative learning experience, has attempted to move from a ‘strategy-structure-systems’ approach to a ‘purpose-people-process’ approach through the use of ICT and community maps in the learning process. The programme has aimed to install a new kind of imparting education on the aspects of neighbourhood level development that is based on participatory learning and collection of relevant information of the locality.” The project is spread over several schools in Northern India.

### Activities and context

The *Mapping the Neighbourhood* project extends the concept by involving school children in the process. The main purpose of the project is to provide school children opportunities to learn about their regional geography and landscape and share this with other members of the community. The school children learn about global information system through workshops organised at their respective schools. The students work with personal digital assistants (PDAs) and global positioning systems (GPS) technologies to map their neighbourhoods.

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## Timoun ak Medya Haiti



### Background and Mission

Launched in 2000, it is part of a larger programme, 'Child Rights and Participatory Media in Civil Society' that spans projects in the following countries: Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Dominican Republic. The programmes aim to provide children with the skills and competencies required for effective participation in community development activities using radio broadcasting. Radio Netherlands Training Centre (RNTC) and the Panos Institute are the sponsors of the programme.

### Activities and context

Children are trained as journalists and encouraged to write newspaper stories, produce radio programmes called, "Our Own Voice," and create videos on a diverse range of issues from the personal to the public and social topics. Children form several radio groups and tour across various regions of Haiti to develop story ideas. The young radio journalists develop the radio programmes broadcast twice every week over the local radio network, Radio Gamma.

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## Children's Media Center Kyrgyzstan

### Background and Mission

The project, created in 1999, funded by UNICEF and the Democracy Commission of the United States Embassy, Bishkek, is carried out by children and young people who discuss a wide gamut of issues like child rights, gender, health, homeless children, etc. These topics are then produced either in the print or audio-visual media formats. The primary focus is on young people's self-expression.

### Activities and context

*Children's Media Centre*, Kyrgyzstan combines television, video and short film production in promoting children's rights, gender issues, and HIV/AIDS related topics. Video production is almost entirely handled by children and young people. The Centre recruits youngsters in the ages between 13-20 as full members. After receiving training in video production, the young members develop scripts, write screenplays, and television story plots on a number of topics of interest to them.

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Cybermohalla,  
<http://www.sarai.net/community/saraicomm.htm>

Informal Education,  
<http://www.infed.org>

Mapping the Neighbourhood,  
<http://www.csdms.in>

Media Activities and Good Ideas (MAGIC),  
<http://www.unicef.org/magic>

NORDICOM,  
<http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse.php>

TakingITGlobal,  
<http://www.takingitglobal.org>

The Communication Initiative,  
<http://www.comminit.com>

Timoun ak Medya,  
<http://www.vwatimounya.org>

Voices of Youth,  
<http://www.unicef.org/voy>

World Radio Forum,  
<http://www.worldradioforum.org>

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