THE **CHALLENGE** AND **PROMISE** OF YOUTH-LED DEVELOPMENT

UN⊛HABITAT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOREWORD

This report is the first volume the Global Youth-Led Development Series, a collection of themed papers by UN-Habitat created to expand the knowledge in the area of youth-led development. Youth-led development (YLD) is a term first made popular by Peacechild International to reflect a faith in the power of young people to contribute constructively to the good of society.[1] YLD places youth at the centre of their own and their communities' development, moving youth from passive receptors of development, to agents of positive change.

Building on Peacechild's definition, UN-Habitat in 2005 published a report leading up to the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, which looked at YLD as practiced by youth-led agencies. This report was a critical step in building an evidentiary base for YLD, as it focused on self-organized youth, and explored how these YLD agencies can become more than the sum of their parts through collective action.[2] The report's conclusions became part of the basis for UN-Habitat's development of new YLD programmes, supported by the Government of Norway. In 2007, UN-Habitat convened representatives from its four One Stop Resource Youth Resource Centres based in East Africa to identify principles and promising practices for YLD.

From this meeting a series of training manuals was developed for the One Stop Centres based on those principles.

UN-Habitat continued to develop innovative YLD programmes with the launching of the Urban Youth Fund in 2009. The Fund, one of the first of its kind, was created to support youth-led initiatives globally. To inform the Fund's operations a number of research projects were undertaken, further exploring the role of youth-led agencies in development. The most prominent of these studies was the initiation of the Youth-Led Development survey run online from 2008 to 2012. The survey was taken by over 600 youth-led agencies from 64 countries and is the basis for this report.

Together, the Global Youth Led Development series of papers forms a mosaic that sheds light on how youth are positively impacting their community. This report series emphasizes how youth can be assets to their communities, and how local, national and international governments can both engage and support youth and youth-led initiatives. Research for each paper in the series draws on the most cutting edge research in this newly acknowledged area of youth development. Lessons from this series provide a knowledge base from which youth and those interested in working with youth can develop programmes and policies that assure youth's meaningful engagement in decision-making processes and community development. The Series seeks to demonstrate the complexities of youth-led develop-

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1   Woolcombe, D. (2007). *Youth-Led Development - Empowering Youth to Make Poverty History.*
2   Ragan, D. (2005). *Child and Youth Friendly City Dialogue paper*

ment, while as well inspiring people to action. In the end, this series aims to contribute new insights to the emerging global dialogue on youth-led development.

The Challenge and the Promise of Youth-led Development is the first in the series and analyzes both formal and informal youth-led initiatives. The report gives unique insight to how grassroots youth-led projects emerges and what they need to be successful.

The State of the Field in Youth-Led Development report is the second report in the series and takes the cue from the first report in analyzing data derived from UN-Habitat Urban Youth Fund projects. One distinct difference in the data is that in the second report, only registered youth-led groups were included. The report analyses application and monitoring and evaluation data from the Youth Fund applicants. The is youth-led groups that has passed the first test of surviving and being registered.

Case Studies in Youth-led Development is the third report in the series. The report is an anthology of projects supported by the fund done by the Tizai Mauto from the University of Colorado Children, Youth and Environments Centre. .

ICT, Youth and Governance is the fourth report in the series, Prominent in this report as well the analysis of a set of Urban Youth Fund grantees which focused on ICT. This report, authored by Daniella Ben-Attar & Tim Campbell seeks to develop a conceptual framework to accommodate rapidly changing dynamics in three areas of urban development: the demographics of the fastest growing segment of urban populations, youth (ages 15 to 24); information and communications technology (ICT) and particularly mobile phones; and governance, particularly local government in the developing world.,

For interested readers in youth-led development, these four first reports in the series form a must-read sample of research papers.

SECTION 1:
INTRODUCTION

History and Purpose of this Study

In cities and countries throughout the world, young people constitute a majority—as much as 70% in some developing countries. Ironically, although there are over a billion young people in the world, they often remain an under-represented group, in terms of political or socio-economic voice, influence and decision-making power. While they are among those most impacted by a range of social problems, their insight, perspectives, energy and commitment are often not harnessed in ways that would allow them to be involved in constructively addressing these problems.

UN-Habitat, though its mandate, is committed to not only the amelioration of the problems associated with human settlements, but also doing so through programs and operations that are inclusive of marginalized voices, including those of young people. In decision making about program and funding priorities, youth input guides the process. Research and evaluation projects explore the contexts and conditions of young people's lives, and seek to further understanding among agencies and other organizations working with youth of the ways that work *on behalf of* youth can more effectively *involve* youth.

The agency's work is guided by *Five Principles of Youth Led Development.* These are:

1. Youth define their own development goals and objectives;
2. Youth have a social and physical space to participate in development and to be regularly consulted;
3. Adult mentorship and peer-to-peer mentorship are encouraged;
4. Youth act as role models to help other youth engage in development;
5. Youth are integrated into all local and national development programs and frameworks.

UN-Habitat, as one of the UN agencies at the center of youth voice and empowerment, has developed funding, program and research initiatives that aim to support the authentic engagement of young people in youth-led development (YLD), using the above principles as a guide for practice. The study described in this report, the first of the Global Youth-Led Development Series, provides the results of a multi-year, web-based survey launched in 2008 to gather more information about youth-led initiatives and projects. Through the survey, the agency hoped to learn more about how youth-led initiatives function and what they accomplish (with what level of resources).

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"The establishment of [our initiative] in 2008 changed my life fundamentally. Of course it made me work three times more and harder than I used to and for less benefits. Nevertheless I was never sorry for taking this hard step and responsibility. From the very beginning, I have chosen hard goals for us with the confidence that their achievement will be extremely difficult. But even the smallest achievement of the desired result makes me feel stronger and mightier and gives a hope that one day we won't have to look into the future with a fear in our hearts.

Me and my friends strongly believe that by uniting our efforts in the youth field and mobilizing the youth all over the world we can handle global challenges and solve a lot of serious problems, which young people are facing nowadays. Our team is aimed at encouraging and motivating young people around the world to become active citizens, who will participate in community life and/or just find their place in the life. I think the most noticeable evidence of impact of my team's work is the number of campaigns and peer education activities organized by our volunteers during the last 4 months. And each time, activities were initiated by volunteers. We just provided some consultations and minimal financial resources to cover expenses related to the purchase of materials for the activities.

The rest of work is organized, managed and implemented by volunteers. We think that motivation and readiness of volunteers to be an active community member and to become the multiplier of the ideas and beliefs can be the evidence of that change. I hope our example will encourage a lot of young people to act the same way in their communities and countries." (Armenia)

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The focus was on initiatives, rather than organizations, given that youth-led community development work often happens outside of the formal structures of organizations. In fact, the survey set out to include those who are doing the work of development and positive change in communities, but who often fly under the radar, because they are not officially registered, or well-funded, or affiliated with recognized organizations. It was hoped that, by learning more about the work of these youth-led initiatives, along with their challenges and successes, more could be learned about how best to support youth-led community development.

SECTION 2:
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

All over the world, young people are making significant contributions to their communities, leading efforts to clean the environment, address health issues, push for human rights, create jobs for youth, improve community infrastructure, and initiate a wide range of other positive social change efforts. However, because many of these efforts lack significant public visibility, there is much we do not know about how they operate and what they accomplish.

This study set out to learn more about these youth-led initiatives, both those that function within an established organization and those that are more loosely formed, through associations rather than through institutionalization or structures. We use the term, "youth-led development initiatives" to refer to a range of initiatives where young people, defined in this survey as 25 and under, are leading or co-leading efforts to improve their community, country, or world. The term "youth-led" should not imply that adults are excluded or that they do not play significant roles; on the contrary, the survey explored the involvement of adults as well as youth, and the roles that each play, in partnership with each other.

To gather this information, UN-Habitat's Youth Unit, developed a web-based survey in 2008, which asked participants to describe their youth-led initiatives in terms of goals, activities, structures, and supports. The survey was neither an application for funding, nor a promise of future funding opportu-

nities. Because of this, UN-Habitat was able to ask questions about what kinds of support participants saw for youth-led community development, and what kinds of support they would like to see, without concern that participants were framing their answers in ways that would help them win grant awards. Finally, the survey also asked participants to share from their experience why they believed youth-led initiatives were important, and how and why they had become involved.

Data Collection and Analysis

The web-based survey was online from 2008 to 2012, during which a total of 685 surveys from 64 countries were entered. After eliminating duplications and removing "dummy" surveys (those that had nonsensical answers, or that had entered only a project name without other information), a total of 592 validated surveys were included in the analysis process. Surveys with qualitative answers in a language other than English were translated into English for analysis purposes. In June 2012, an external researcher was engaged to analyze these surveys and prepare this report.

The survey consisted of 32 questions, both multiple choice and open-ended, not including questions regarding contact information. Many of the multiple choice questions were followed by the opportunity to clarify or share additional information through an open text field, where participants could

share as much or as little as they chose. Throughout the survey, participants were encouraged to share additional explanations when their work did not fit neatly into one of the pre-determined categories. These explanations and additional descriptions yielded important and interesting understandings about a range of issues.

The data were analyzed using a range of analytic procedures, including statistical analysis for the quantitative questions, and a "ground-up" approach to the qualitative responses. Samples of qualitative data were used to identify potential codes and themes, which were then applied to the remaining data for a particular question or set of questions. In this way, the qualitative analysis was a recursive and iterative process, with each coding process used to test previous themes and patterns. The data were triangulated by comparing quantitative and qualitative responses, where possible, and through negative case analysis. Throughout the analysis process, certain questions guided the investigation:

- What can we learn about how these youth-led initiatives function, what they accomplish (and with what level of resources)?

- How do these initiatives operate, survive, or thrive in different contexts? What conditions seem to be most associated with those initiatives that thrive?

- Where do these initiatives get support, and where do they need additional support? What specific kinds of support might provide the most effective leverage points to enhance their outcomes and impact?

Limitations of the Study

This study did face some limitations. First, survey participants were voluntary and self-selected, so the distribution of responses did not allow for reliable regional comparisons (for example, Africa was over-represented, while Latin America was under-represented). Second, the survey was not able to be pilot-tested, and the responses showed that for certain questions, participants had interpreted the questions very differently. Accordingly, some questions had to be discarded. Third, all questions in the survey were optional, so decisions had to be made about which surveys would be classified as incomplete. Because the language of the survey was English, and many of the participants were not English proficient, it was decided that those who had skipped many or most of the open-ended questions would not necessarily be eliminated from the sample. In the end, those surveys that had completed the multiple-choice questions and provided at least minimal written (open-ended) information about their initiative were included. In spite of these limitations, the information provided by participants from 64 countries provided valuable insights about the functioning, challenges, needs, and successes of youth-led development initiatives all over the world.

Reading this Report

The following section, "What We Learned", describes in detail what was learned from the participants about the organization, functioning, and results of the work of their youth-led development initiatives. Throughout the section, the words of the participants themselves are included in the telling of the story, to give voice to their insights and experiences. Sidebar stories throughout this report share some anecdotal examples of the motivations, challenges, and accomplishments of a few of these youth-led development initiatives. Their stories have been edited for readability, and in many cases, the selected quotes are translations of the original. However, every effort was made to stay true to both the writer's intent and his/her style of expression. In addition, due to the fact that, in some cases, survey participants revealed personal information or ex-

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I saw a boy across the road. He was about 14 and stood in front of the hotel waiting for something left from somebody to eat. I understood that he had a problem but I had only 18 Ethiopian Birr in my pocket. I took his hand and entered into a small food-selling house. The boy was so delighted and started to tell me where he came from. He stated, 'Two days are elapsed since I came here. I came from 70 km [away from here]. I do not have family. My mom died a month a go.' I started crying. My tears came and I did not control myself looking into the eyes of the boy. He had become a street boy, as he lost both his mom and dad due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This is why [my initiative] was established in 2008." (Ethiopia)

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pressed opinions that might draw negative attention or create serious consequences for the individual or group, this report has omitted the names of both individuals and project initiatives.

In the final section, "Where to, Next?" the researcher explores what conclusions we might draw from the findings, and how those conclusions might lead us to new policies, programs or further research. The section explores the ways that these findings—in concert with other existing or future research—might help guide policy makers, donors, development agencies, program staff, and NGO's in leveraging their resources and inputs to better support youth-led community development.

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"In our mad rush for development we have forgotten the importance of our environment and exploited it by taking it for granted…Our cities are plagued by various problems, from the air we breathe to the water we drink. All this is the result of our scant regard of our environment and its mismanagement. This led me and my group of friends to start a youth initiative in our college which brings together all environmentally conscious students under one platform and works towards promoting sustainability in everyone's lives. What began as my dream to start a youth network to work on environmental issues has become a passion for many and we have been able to do many remarkable projects since we started. The unique aspect of our initiative is that it is completely run by us and all decisions are taken internally after due consultation with all members. Our main goal is to target youth in all major schools and colleges in the district and then the state, and make them aware about the urgency of the climate change crisis and the need to take action. One of our first activities was conducting a climate leadership training program for school kids and college youth. Then we also worked with a local NGO that is involved in rejuvenation of the major river of my city. I am spearheading a campaign to make my university become carbon neutral in the near future and we observed Earth Week to stress this message, which finally culminated in the Earth Hour on March 28th, 2009. We got our college authorities on board for this campaign and switched off all lights in our hostels and in the main campus building. About 300 students turned up for the event and in the end everyone took a pledge to make their lives more sustainable and individually work to combat climate change. I envision in the near future we will be able to reach out to all youth in my state and make them leaders of change." (India)

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SECTION 3:
WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT YOUTH-LED DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Background Information about the Initiatives: Who (and where) are they?

The 592 participants in the survey came from 64 different countries. An additional 48 participants did not provide the name of the country in which their initiative took place. The majority of participants (62%) were from African countries, with Asia as the second most represented region (21%). The map below shows the representation and distribution of the countries that participated. In addition, a regional breakdown of the initiatives represented, and a country-by-country breakdown can be found in Appendix 1.

Among these initiatives, most survey participants used the survey to describe initiatives that were still being implemented, even though they had the opportunity to also share initiatives that had been completed and were no longer in operation. 492 participants (83%) said that their initiatives were ongoing, with 57 (10%) indicating that the initiative was no longer in operation, and 41 (7%) not responding to the question.

Goals and Activities: What Do the Initiatives Do?

In the survey, participants were asked to give a brief description of their project and to describe their project goals for the upcoming year. Both of these questions were open-ended, with space to write as much or as little as they chose. 572 participants (97%) answered both questions.

Issues. An analysis of the project descriptions and goals found a wide range in both the issues that were the focus of the initiative and the implementation strategies used to address the issues. In most cases, the initiatives used multiple strategies and/or focused on multiple issues; their explanations illustrated a willingness to accept the complexity of the issues and design projects or programs accordingly. While 592 initiatives were presented through the survey, nearly twice that number of issues were described as the focus of the initiatives' work. Some participants even described three or more focus issues. For example, an initiative might be involved in helping youth develop a livelihood, by meeting an environmental need of the community, such as waste collection or recycling plastic.

- The issues ranged greatly; the list below presents the issues described by at least 5% of the participants, in the order of frequency.

- Livelihood (including entrepreneurship, job promotion, and income-generating activities)

- Youth civic engagement (includes youth involvement in politics or policy, and supporting youth activism on a variety of issues)

- Environment (includes both environmental protection and awareness)

Number of Survey Respondants by Country

Number of Respondants

- 1-10
- 11-20
- +20
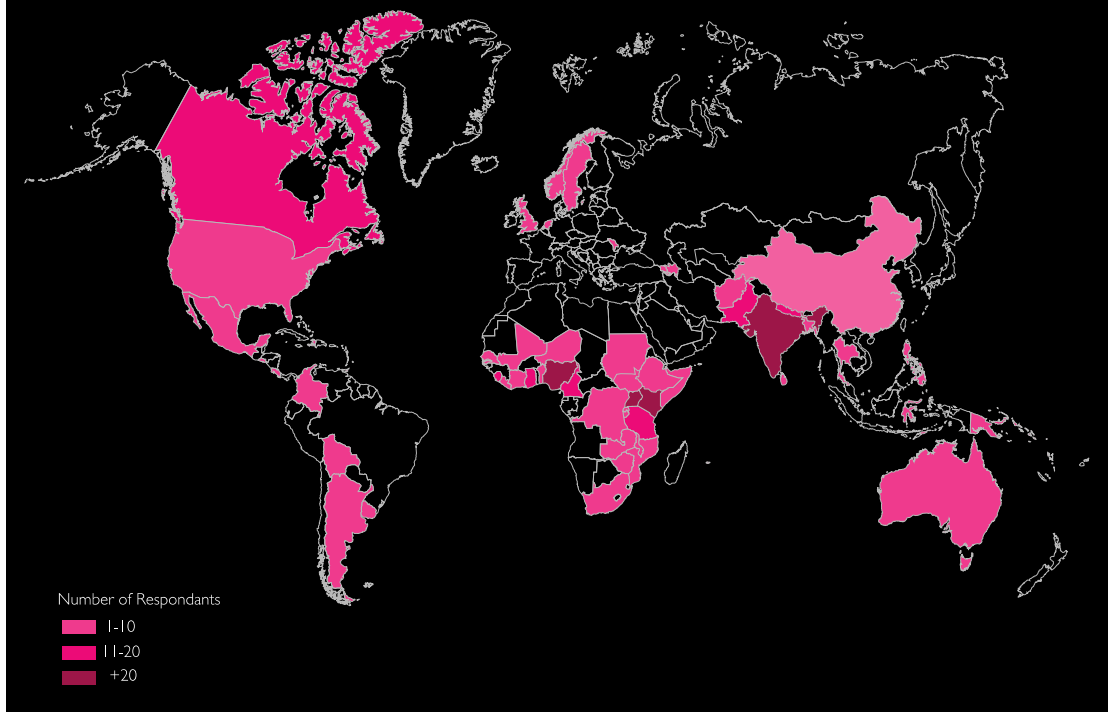
" "[Our] project…involves collection and sale of dirty poly-
thenes from the environment by youth both women and men.
The poor youth are able to turn the waste polythene littering
the environment into money and also help clean the environ-
ment of the plastics menace. The polythenes are recycled into
plastic poles, thus reducing de-forestation and curbing climate
change. They earn a livelihood, creating green jobs." (Kenya)
"

- HIV/AIDS (includes prevention and care for those affected)

- Youth development (includes "life skills" and a holistic approach to supporting youth)

- Education (a focus on formal education, including primary, secondary and tertiary)

- IT (information technology, including training on IT, and projects using IT as a principal strategy in implementation)

- Agriculture (includes all aspects of agriculture and agribusiness, such as farming, animal care, gardening, and getting products to market)

- Arts (includes art education and the use of art as a tool for raising awareness or creating social change)

- Rights (includes a wide range of rights-based initiatives, including those working on child exploitation, abuse, or the promotion of child/human rights)

- Vocational training (refers to initiatives that are focused on training for a specific vocation, such as tailoring, mechanics, etc.)

- Women and girls (initiatives that focus on rights or issues that impact women and girls in particular)

- Community development (initiatives that are focused more generally or holistically on community or urban development)

- Peace (includes those doing conflict resolution work, peace awareness education, or anti-violence programs)

- Infrastructure (initiatives that are focused on issues such as sanitation, water quality, roads, school construction, and living conditions in general)

- Health (includes initiatives focused on health in general, or a range of disease prevention efforts, and/or unspecified health work)

- Reproductive health (focused on both education and health care related to a range of reproductive health issues)

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"The main goal of the project was to prevent young women from becoming trafficking victims and create a new livelihood for trafficking victims and young women [at risk of becoming] trafficking victims. The main activities were technical training and apprenticeship in small to medium enterprises. We hope, by training, apprenticeship and advocacy, beneficiaries of the project will get a new job or create an enterprise." (Indonesia)

"

In spite of the wide range of issues, and the clear diversity of issues both among initiatives and even within initiatives, there were still some issues that stood out as more frequent areas of focus. Of the above issues, livelihood was by far the most frequently stated focus issue, with 195 (33%) of the participants listing some aspect of livelihood development as their area of focus.

Youth civic engagement (described in a wide variety of ways) was also a frequent response (129 participants, or 22%). The environment was listed by 15% of participants; HIV/AIDS by 13%; and youth development by 13%. Other issues were listed by 10% or fewer of the participants, and were as diverse

as: drug abuse, refugees, community needs assessments, illiteracy, crime, and homelessness, among others. Given the high proportion of survey participants from Africa, where employment for the burgeoning youth population is of great concern, it is not surprising to see livelihood at the top of the list of issues. What is more enlightening, perhaps, is that even with such major economic pressures, so many youth initiatives are focused on other critical social issues, rather than only those with a direct personal (and economic) benefit. It is a hint of the passion that so many participants expressed for their communities and country, and for making change happen. This was a passion that would emerge throughout the survey.

MDG's. Participants were also asked to link their initiatives, if possible, to one or more of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). If their initiatives did not link specifically to one or more of the MDG's, they were asked to describe in an open-ended question the youth issues on which their initiative was focused. Most of the participants that included information in the open-ended question used the opportunity to clarify their selection of MDG categories, and/or to specify a certain aspect of the MDG on which their initiative was focused. For example, one initiative linked their work to MDG 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases), and used the open-ended question to explain that they focused on youth participation on the issue of AIDS. Another initiative linked their work to MDG 1 (Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger) and then clarified their focus as promoting livelihood opportunities for out of school youth.

The table below summarizes these responses. Percentages refer to the number of initiatives associated with each MDG out of a total possible of 592 surveys.

MDG	Number of Initiatives Linked to the MDG
MDG 1 - **Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**	365 (62%)
MDG 2 - **Achieve Universal Primary Education**	182 (31%)
MDG 3 - **Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**	318 (54%)
MDG 4 - **Reduce Child Mortality**	110 (19%)
MDG 5 - **Improve maternal Health**	101 (17%)
MDG 6 - **Combat HIV AIDS, Malaria and other diseases**	270 (46%)
MDG 7 - **Ensure Environmental Sustainability**	283 (48%)
MDG 8 - **Develop a Global Partnership for Development**	257 (43%)
"Other Issues" (open-ended question)	278 (47%)

Beneficiaries. It is also interesting to note how the survey participants conceptualized and described the "beneficiaries" of their initiatives. The survey asked them to identify the group or groups that benefited the most from their initiative, and allowed them to check as many of the six choices as they felt applied to their initiative. A follow up open-ended question allowed participants to identify other groups benefited by their initiative, besides the groups provided in the check boxes. Of the 100 participants who chose to write in comments, nearly half (43) simply used the space to clarify the group they had named in the check box, or to name a subgroup of one of the categories. When these open-ended answers were factored in with the multiple choice questions, the total number of initiatives that reported benefitting the various groups were as follows:
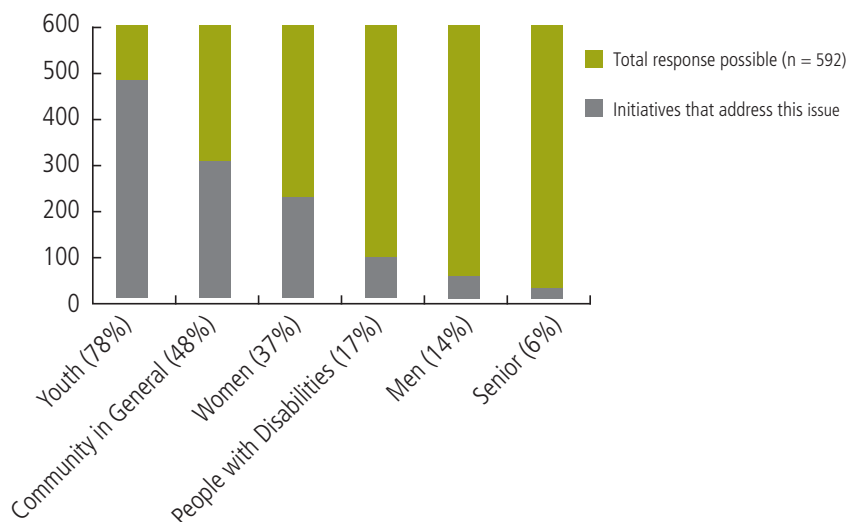
Benefits. In addition to naming the specific groups that their initiatives benefitted, survey respondents were also provided the opportunity to describe the particular benefits that these groups received as a result of participation in the initiative. They had the opportunity to check specific benefits as provided in a limited number of check boxes, and/or to write in additional benefits (or explanations of these benefits) through an open-ended question. Responses to the multiple choice questions are represented in the chart below:

In addition, 327 survey participants added comments to more fully describe the benefits resulting from their initiatives. Among these comments:

• 122 mentioned benefits related to livelihood (for example, vocational training, micro-credit, business management coaching, assistance finding employment, and entrepreneurship).

Benefit	Number of Responses	Percent of total responses / Percent of total surveys
Training	310	61% / 52%
Social service	116	23% / 20%
Recreation/entertainment	19	4% / 3%
Other	64	13% / 11%
No Answer	83	16% / 14%
Total	**592**	**100%**

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"[Our project] inspires students to embark on a journey from ideas to running their 'Dream Enterprises.' [It] guides students through a 2-month action learning program to develop their own social business plans or Corporate Social Responsibility programs for corporate partners." (China)
"

• 158 referred to training or education as a component of the benefits of their work (in some cases, training was the sole focus); this did not include those who described the benefit of their initiative as "awareness-building", since it could not be determined how awareness was raised (i.e., through formal training or education, or through other strategies like experiential education, media production, arts, or sports programs). These 158 initiatives are those that commented explicitly on their activities or outcomes in building skills or knowledge through organized learning events.

• 55 described their benefits in terms of improved health and increased health knowledge (especially on issues such as HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, and drugs).

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"[This initiative] is adopting a multi-pronged strategy, including knowledge building, life skill education, livelihood skills, health education, rights education, collective action, and sensitization; so that stakeholders not only enjoy reduced vulnerability to HIV but live a communitarian life with dignity." (India)
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• 43 initiatives described their benefits in environmental terms: cleaner environment, increased environmental awareness, or knowledge of sustainable practices. Many of these initiatives overlapped with health (clean communities) and livelihood (eco-tourism, garbage recycling for income-generation).

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"The Youth are now empowered and…able to use available resources at their disposal to address and tackle issues affecting them." (Uganda)

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• 51 participants described the benefits of their initiatives in terms of supporting youth's participation in policy development, advocacy, and other political processes. Some were explicit about encouraging citizenship, democracy, and human (or child) rights. Others described the benefits in terms of community leadership development or empowerment of youth to be agents of social change.

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"Although the youth get training alongside recreational activities, by the same coin, the community gets its neighborhood cleared from garbage and the society gets trees for a sustainable future." (Pakistan)

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• 69 participants described the benefits of their initiatives as extending beyond the target audience, to the larger community, the country, or the world. This does not include those whose purpose was, for example, to do community

education or environmental cleanup. Rather, it refers to those who saw a "ripple effect": as the initiative's target audience benefits from the initiative, they in turn become positive change agents for the larger community.

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"We are straight up. It's not politically driven, our motivations as young people are done out of good will and for positive change. We are at that stage where we are learning how to become adults so we are part naive but willing to learn and take the risks at the same time, which is fantastic. Youth led initiatives are so important because half the time we are not eligible to have a proper say particularly in governance…You have to be over 18 to vote but if you're under 18 it sometimes feels that your voice and opinions are not heard. Youth led initiatives are full of energy and passion which I believe is unique to being young." (Australia)

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While the focus of the work and the targeted audiences were diverse, one thing was very consistent throughout: the passion that these participants felt for the work they did, and their belief in its importance to address critical social issues. Survey participants were given the opportunity to share, through an open-ended question, why they thought youth-led initiatives were important. Of 592 participants, 421 chose to write about this topic, one of the highest rates of response for any of the open-ended questions.

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"Young people bring with them new ideas and alternative ways of making social impact. In my experience, from the last years, young people work with accountability, enthusiasm, values, ethics, responsibility and commitment." (Costa Rica)

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Benefits of Youth-Led Initiatives

Recreation 4%

Other 13%

No Answer 16%

Social Service 23%

Training 61%

Training + Education 158 Respondants   Secure Livelihoods 122 Respondants

Programs with Ripple Effects 69 Respondants   Health 55 Respondants

Political Advocacy 51   Environmental 43 Respondants
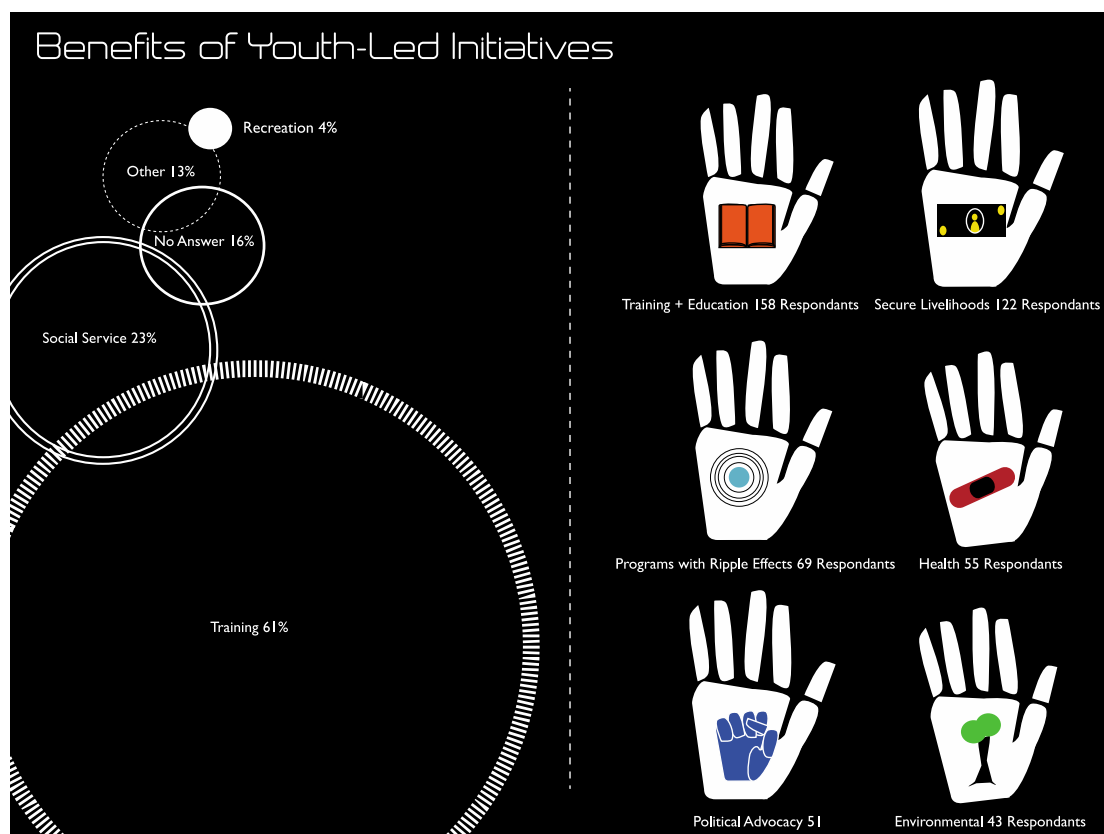
Several important themes emerged from these responses. First, participants described the unique contributions that youth can make through youth-led community development initiatives. 114 of the comments (27%) specifically referred the kinds of things that youth, uniquely, bring to a community initiative: energy, idealism, passion, fresh ideas, unique (youth) experiences, innovative approaches, the ability to reach other youth, and even the fact that they are willing to work at for less pay!

"In an era where most employers want to see relevant working experience as part of their recruitment policy, volunteerism can be a stepping-stone towards meeting some of these demands. The youths involved in youth-led initiatives learn invaluable project management, fund-raising and leadership skills, build self-esteem and self-confidence, all of which hugely boost their future employment chances." (Ghana)

"We often hear our leaders refer to the youth as leaders of tomorrow. How on earth do we think young people will effectively lead our communities and nations tomorrow if they are not given a chance to take initiatives and learn through the processes?" (Cameroon)

Second, participants highlighted the benefits that youth experience when they are involved in youth led development initiatives: life skills, learning, jobs, preparation for future participation, and preventing deviant behaviors by engaging youth in more positive activities. 109 answers (27%) presented a range of benefits to youth.

Third, 108 of the responses (26%) referred to the importance of youth-led initiatives for the future. As youth get older and assume positions of responsibility, said many participants, they will need to know how to lead. Getting them involved now is a capacity-building strategy and an investment for the future of the community and the nation.

> "The generation of youth in Azerbaijan are the main hope for a transition from a post-Soviet mindset to a country skilled in world economics and open business practices. We need to become involved, engaged, and employed in order to rise to the needs of our country." (Azerbaijan)

Fourth, survey participants expressed their belief and experience that young people have important contributions to make in the development of communities, their countries, and society in general. 98 participants (23%) shared that youth–led initiatives are important, not because of what they do for youth, but rather what they do for the rest of the community or society. Related to this reasoning, another 29 participants (7%) suggested that not only *can* youth contribute, but that in fact communities and their countries *need* these youth if they are to address the issues facing society. These respondents emphasized that youth perspective and experience are needed to solve the real issues.

> "The youth are a renewable and sustainable resource, [and] if mobilized, can really change the world." (Haiti)

> "Those who can bring about freedom where it is absent and justice where it is denied are chiefly young people. Freedom and justice is a patient and often-difficult struggle that requires the strength, sacrifice, rigor and fortitude of young people to be attained." (Nigeria)

Fifth, 45 of the responses (11%) referred to the high percentage of youth in the general population, suggesting that it made sense to tap into this resource, and/or suggesting that because youth are the ones dealing with so many of the issues, they have the right to participate in solutions.

> "The youth are the majority population in the world, thus rallying such a strong and usually educated force together can go a long way in aiding the development of a community and the world in general. They are also the leaders not of tomorrow but of today; they need to be actively involved in the world they are supposed to be leading." (South Africa)

While the participants suggested a wide range of reasons that youth-led development makes sense, and while they had experienced a variety of benefits from these initiatives, the patterns that emerged suggested that certain kinds of benefits are possible across a diversity of countries and contexts.

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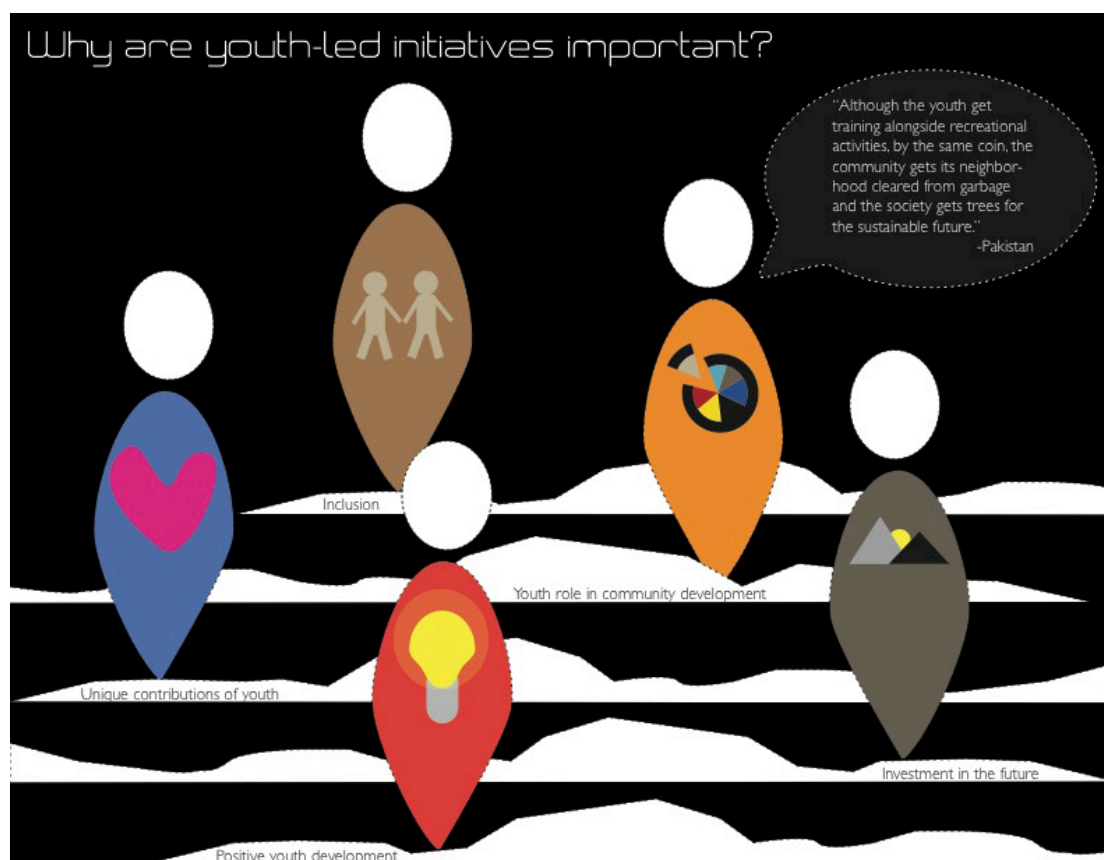
"Like every youth, I dream of being famous, earning a good name and making a difference in the society I live in. But being a girl, I always felt too many limitations stopping me to move towards my goal. Slowly and gradually, however, I started to go against the norms of my society. In spite of being a girl, I started to question all the do's and don'ts of my society; most of my questions remained unanswered. Our elders were following the norms but could not give the reason for the things they were doing. I didn't wanted to be like them. I want to answer all the "why's" of my children, I don't want to answer like, 'we do it because our ancestors have been doing it for years.' But why did our ancestors do it? If we are ready to accept that culture is a way of life, then why aren't we ready to accept the fact that the way of life changes with time? For instance, in our culture when a girl goes through her menstrual cycle, she should not touch anyone or any objects. She is treated as untouchable for 4 days and is considered impure. This culture was logical in the past when people did not wear undergarments and did not use sanitary napkins. During such days they were unhygienic, so were not allowed inside the kitchen and treated like untouchables. But today, there are wide choices of sanitary napkins and people use them. You cannot recognize a girl going through her period cycle and one who is not going through her period cycle. Things have changed. Our way of life has changed. Yet we follow the same old belief and this limits girls from exploring the world to the fullest like her male counterparts. This is just an example; there are many such beliefs that are to be changed if we are to work for the egalitarian development of society. I have been convincing many people. Some think I am logical, whereas there are people who shout at me. But I know I am not wrong and I am confident that the day will come when such old-age, illogical beliefs will be changed into something positive. I know that people will learn to move according to the pace of time. For all these I believe awareness is the strongest means. Creating awareness with logical reasoning will surely change the mindset of the people and then will finally change the society. I know it's not easy and it will take time, but I also am confident that I can do it and it is possible." (Nepal)

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Operations: What are the Institutional Supports for These Initiatives?

This survey also looked at some of the infrastructure and operational supports that are associated with or used by these initiatives, including human resources, financial resources, space, and registration with a government entity.

Human Resources. When asked about the numbers of people involved with delivering the initiative, the majority of participants (56%) indicated that 7 or more people were involved in implementation (a total of 331 participants). Only 6% (38 participants) indicated that 3 or fewer people were involved. The remaining 32% (189 participants) said that their initiative involved 3-7 people.

The survey also explored the role that adults play in these initiatives, defining adults as those above the age of 25.[3] This three-part question asked participants a yes/no question whether adults were involved, followed by a multiple choice question for those who answered "yes" asking them to identify the roles that adults play. The third part of the question was an open-ended question allowing participants to give more detail about these adult roles, if they chose.

56% +7
32% 3-7
6% fewer than 3
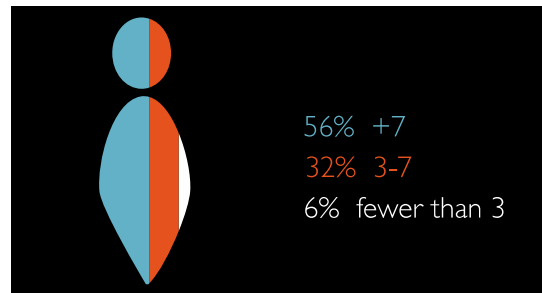
In part one, 534 participants (90%) responded "yes" that those over age 25 were involved. 36 (6%) responded "no", and 22 (4%) did not respond to the question. However, among those who did not respond to the yes/no question, an additional 11 identified roles that adults play in the section part of the question. Thus, a total of 545 participants (92%) indicated in some way that adults are involved in their initiative.

What do these adults do within the initiatives? The second part of the question gave participants several choices of the types of roles that adults might play within the initiative, and they could select as many as applied to their situation. These roles included:

- Administrative

- Program Delivery

- Mentorship

- Fundraiser

- Board Member

- Other

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3   It is important to note that there exist many different definitions of "youth" and "adult," depending on the cultural context, the agency or organizational definitions used, and/or the official definitions used by the country in which the initiative operates. Many of the survey participants used the open-ended question to try to clarify how they define adults and youth. At least 10 different definitions of "youth" were described in this question, with multiple age ranges.

The frequency of each response is represented below.

Role of Adults in the Initiative	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Initiatives
Administrative	312	53%
Program Delivery	224	38%
Mentorship	396	67%
Fundraiser	269	45%
Board Member	345	58%
Other	82	14%

Additionally, participants described the roles of adults in a follow up open-ended question, where most simply clarified the roles checked previously. However, in many of the comments, participants specifically described the advice or counsel they get from adults. In addition, several participants described some very specific roles that adults play, related to their particular expertise or education (accounting, legal assistance, medical treatment, etc.). Thus, in a great number of the youth-led initiatives, adults play a variety of roles, and were seen as contributing in important ways to the success of the initiative.

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"Young people are not only leaders of tomorrow but even for today. The failure of past youth programs can be linked to the fact that they are not only conceived and led by older people [who] in most cases fail to administer the program in package that is youth-friendly. When youth lead their own initiatives, under the guidance/supervision of adults, the probability of success is greatly enhanced." (Cameroon)

"

Beyond playing the above roles, there may be some additional effects of having adult involvement, related to the operations of the initiative. These are explored later in this section.

Financial Resources. Participants were asked a few questions related to the finances of their initiatives, including whether or not they have a bank account, the average monthly cost of the initiative, and the primary sources of funding.

- 438 (74%) participants indicated that the initiative had a bank account associated with it.

- 88 (15%) did not have a bank account

- 12 (2%) indicated that they did not know if the initiative had a bank account

- 54 (9%) did not respond to the question

81% have space
9% no space
10% no response

Space
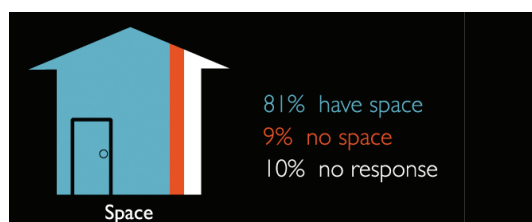
Monthly costs estimated for the initiative ranged greatly, with about one-quarter estimating either above $500, or $250-500 per month. Interestingly, the initiative's budget size was not associated with whether or not the initiative had a bank account. Small budget initiatives and larger budget initiatives were equally likely to have accounts. (However, the question did not ask about initiatives with much larger budget: for example, budgets of $5000/month. This might have changed the degree of association). Self-reported monthly budget sizes were as follows:

What roles do adults play in these programs?

| 53% | 38% | 67% | 45% | 58% | 14% |
| Administrative | Program Delivery | Mentorship | Fundraising | Board Member | Other |

How institutions change with adult involvement

Institutions with adult involvement   Institutions without adult involvement
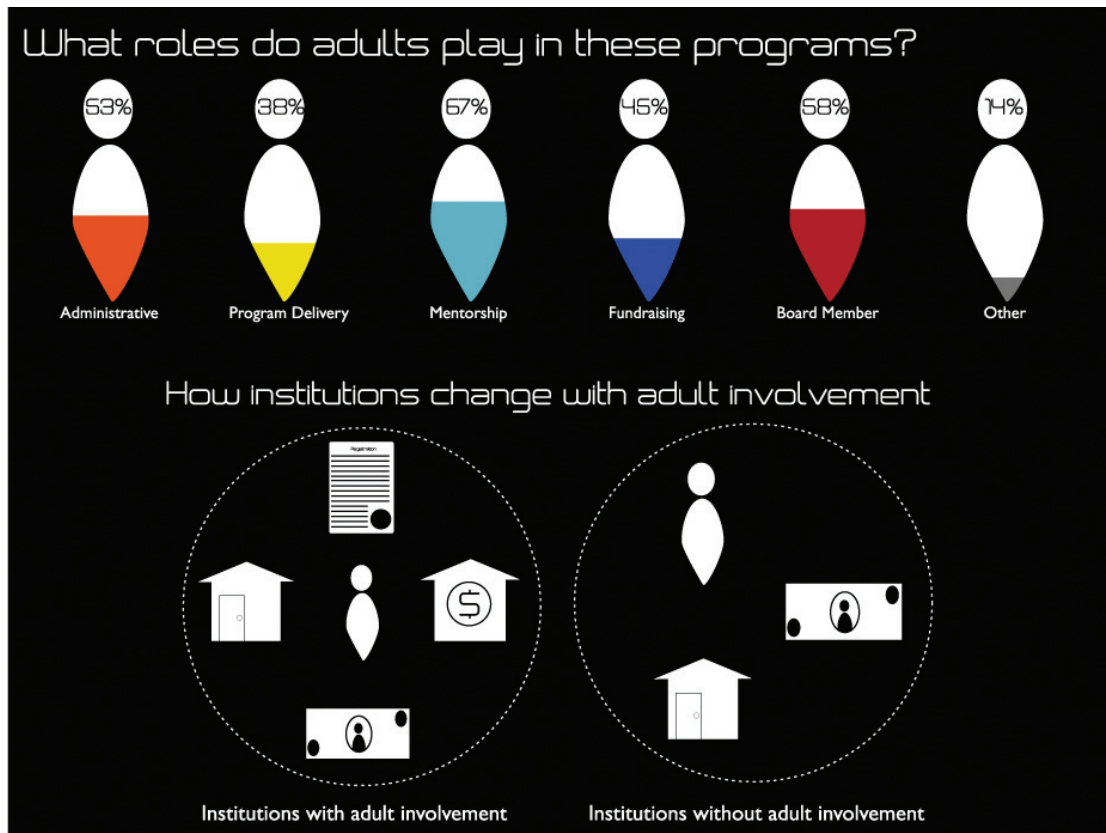
Budget	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Survey Participants
$10-50	49	8%
$50-100	40	7%
$100-250	83	14%
$250-500	152	26%
Above $500	154	26%
No Response	114	19%

Funding for these projects came from a variety of sources; these were identified through a multiple choice question asking participants about their primary source of funding, followed by an open-ended question to identify additional sources. The most common response was that programs were self-funded, with 193 responses (33%); international funders were also listed by 148 participants (25%), and money raised through entrepreneurial activities (the selling of services or goods) followed, with 125 responses (21% of survey participants). The full breakdown of primary funding source is as follows:

Primary Source of Funding	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Survey Participants
Self-funded	193	33%
International Funders	148	25%
Money raised through entrepreneurial activities	125	21%
Local government	17	3%
National government	14	2%
The Church	11	2%
No response	84	14%

25% International Funders
21% Entrepreneurial Activities
3% Local Government
2% National Government
2% Church
14% No Response
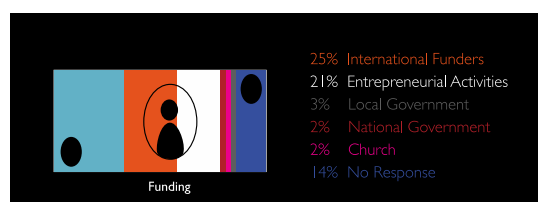
Funding

In the follow up question, which allowed for more description about funding sources, 160 survey participants provided additional sources of funding in response. Many of these responses described getting their funding through individuals: "friends," "well-wishers", community members, and other personal connections. A variety of partners were also included in this list, including other NGOs and private sector partners. Finally, a number of participants used this question to reinforce the point that they had multiple funding sources (where the multiple choice question only allowed for one response).

When responses regarding the average monthly cost were compared against the primary source of funding, the data showed that as budgets went up, so did the numbers of initiatives funded by international donors. This association could understood in either direction: first, that as budgets went up, the need to pursue international (and generally larger) funding also went up. Or, in the other direction, it could be suggested that international funding allowed for initiatives to expand their scope and therefore their budget. While this survey cannot determine causality, it is reasonable to assume that either or both directions of association are at play.

For those initiatives that list "self-funded" as the primary funding source, larger budgets (those greater than $500 per month) were associated with decreased numbers of initiatives. That is, among initiatives that had a budget of $250 to $500 per month, 61 % named "self-funded" as the primary funding source; but for those with a monthly budget of more than $500, only 35% said that self-funding was the primary funding source. Again, directionality cannot be confidently determined, but one can assume that larger budgets require additional funding sources, and likewise, that additional funding sources mean less dependence on the individuals working on the initiative.

The distribution of budget size compared to funding source is illustrated below:

Average Monthly Cost of project/ Funding Sources	$10-50 (49 Projects)		$50-100 (40 projects)		$100-250 (83 projects)		$250-500 (152 projects)		>$500 (154 projects)	
Self Funded	28	57%	19	48%	37	45%	61	40%	35	23%
International Funders	5	10%	7	18%	16	19%	36	24%	66	43%
Entrepreneurial Activities	13	27%	11	28%	21	25%	36	24%	33	21%
Local Government	1	2%	0	0%	3	4%	3	2%	6	4%
National Gov't	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	4	3%	5	3%
The Church	2	4%	0	0%	1	1%	2	1%	4	3%

Space. A strong majority of the participants—482 initiatives (81%)—indicated that they do have a space from which they operate their initiatives. Only 53 participants (9%) said that they did not have a space in which to operate. Fifty-seven partici-pants (10%) did not respond to the question.

Of those that have a space, the type of space varied greatly, from multiple spaces to borrowed space, as the table below illustrates:

Type of Space	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Survey Participants
Their own space	173	29%
Shared space with another organization	154	26%
Borrowed space (from a church or other organization)	126	21%
Many spaces (wherever they can find it)	40	7%
No space	21	4%
No response	78	13%

81% have space
9% no space
10% no response
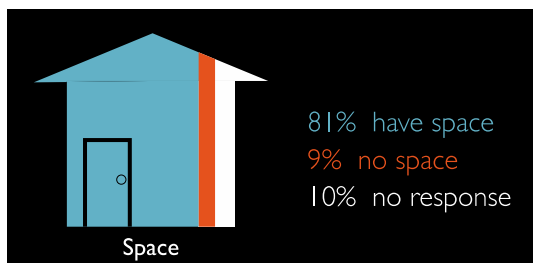
Space

For the majority of participants (55%, or 324 par-ticipants), there is a cost associated with this space. Thirty-two percent, or 192 participants, reported that there was no cost to use the space, and the re-maining 13 % (76 participants) did not respond to the question.

Participants reported that they used the space for a variety of purposes. In a multiple choice question, they were asked to identify how they use the space, followed by an open-ended question to provide ad-ditional information about this or other uses of the space. More than 500 of the participants answered this question, and 145 of those added information through the open-ended question. In fact, 94 of the write-in responses listed one or more of the un-checked responses from part 1, which highlighted that their spaces were commonly used for multiple purposes. Additionally, 21 participants (4%) listed training specifically as another use for their space.

The summary of responses about the use of their initiative's space is outlined in the chart below:

How the Space is Used	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Survey Participants
Project Activities	325	55%
Meetings	151	26%
Events	25	4%
No response	91	15%

Government Registration. Participants were also asked about whether their initiative was registered with any level of government. Of the 539 that answered the question, 409 (69%) indicated that they were registered. 134 (23%) responded that they were not registered, and 48 (8%) did not respond to the question.

For those who indicated that they were registered with the government, they were asked to indicate which level of government had registered them. More than one-third of the initiatives were registered at the national level. The summary of responses is below.

Level of Government	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Survey Participants
Local Council	51	9%
Local Government	89	15%
Regional Government (Province or State)	69	12%
National Government	203	34%
No response	180	30%

69% registered
23% no space
8% no response

Registration

Registration was also loosely associated with higher numbers of people involved, although the differences were not strong. Among those registered, 68% had more than seven people involved, while among those not registered, 55% had more than seven people involved. This may suggest that as initiatives grow, they increase both the numbers

of people and the level of institutionalization (as measured by government registration). It may also, and simultaneously, mean that initiatives organized enough to become registered are better positioned to attract additional "recruits." Either of these possible associations would have to be explored in future research.

Survey responses about the involvement of adults in these initiatives indicated that higher levels of adult involvement are associated with higher levels of government registration and with frequency of having a bank account. While 73% of those who said adults were involved also said they were registered with the government, only 47% of those that did not involve adults were registered with the gov-

ernment. 77% of those involving adults had bank accounts, while only 50% of those that did not include adults had bank accounts.

In contrast, the involvement of adults in these initiatives did not have a strong association with either space or numbers of people involved. 84% of those initiatives with adults had their own space; 71% of those without adults had their own space. Likewise, 57% of initiatives with adults involved more than 7 people; 50% of initiatives without adults involved more than 7 people.

These patterns suggest that while adults may bring certain resources—or predispositions—toward operationalization of initiatives (such as the process of registration or establishing bank accounts), there are operational factors on which the presence of adults has less impact (recruiting other people to join the initiative, and finding space).

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"The youth need to learn to take responsibility and initiative at a young age. This will better prepare them for their future pursuits, and help set them on the right path. It also provides trainings and builds a skilled generation that is ready to take on whatever challenges may face them. This is especially important in terms of environmental work, seeing as climate change along with other rising problems continue to build momentum, and we need to work collectively to combat these changes, and ensure a sustainable future." (Norway)

"

Participants in this survey were clear that adults added value, in one or more ways, to the success of the initiative, whether it was through the variety of organizational operations they brought (accounting, registration, etc.), through the mentoring and advice they shared, or through the specific roles they played (board member, fundraiser, etc.).

The Environment for Youth-Led Initiatives

What is the environment for youth-led initiatives, as perceived by the youth participants in this research project? The survey asked participants to state whether or not they felt that there was support—broadly defined—in their country for youth-led development initiatives. More than half (52%) stated that they believed there was support in their country (see chart below).

Depending on their response, survey participants were asked to complete a follow up question, either focused on what kinds of support they observe, or what kinds of support they would like to have. Those who answered that they felt there was support in their country were asked to describe this support in an open-ended question. Nearly 300 participants responded (n=297) by sharing their perspectives on the types of support they'd experienced. Of these, the most common types of support described related to:

Is there support for youth-led development issues in your country?	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Survey Participants
Yes	306	52%
No	147	25%
No response	139	23%

- Support of government funding or other initiatives, such as training or official recognition (120 responses)

- Financial support from NGO's, corporations, and international aid agencies (117 responses)

- Funding in general (no source specified) (67 responses)

- Support for entrepreneurship activities (67 responses)

- Training and/or education support (31 responses)

Other types of existing support described by the participants included a range of material supports (such as space, land, equipment), practical, task-oriented supports (technical assistance, marketing, administration, assistance with project implementation), and non-tangible supports (such as moral support, visibility, advice or coaching, networks, and supportive communities).

In response to the initial question, "Is there support for youth-led development initiatives in your country?" 147 participants answered "no." In the follow up question, "If no, please describe what support you would like to have in your country," 195 participants added comments (meaning that some of those who had answered "yes" still chose to add comments about what additional support they'd like to see). Many of those who had answered "yes," in fact, had described the support as minimal or insufficient, and then added more comments about what additional support was needed.

Some of the caveats that participants mentioned included the following: that the support (especially financial) doesn't always get to the intended beneficiary, due to restrictions in accessing the resources; that there is partisanship in how resources are disseminated; or that the amounts available are too limited. Other participants mentioned that much

of the support was too focused on one particular issue or one particular population, making it inaccessible to them. Many complained that the support, particularly funding support, could be very difficult to access because of application procedures, bureaucracy, and regulations.

The 195 participants who responded to the question regarding what support they'd like to have focused on funding more than any other single type of support. Nearly 100 participants (98 responses) mentioned some kind of financial support. The second most frequent type of support listed was related to skill development or training, with more than 50 responses. Materials and equipment related to their initiatives was also a common theme, with 26 responses. The remaining responses varied greatly, from the intangible (wanting the perception of youth to change, needing a more enabling environment, and more moral support), to relationship-based supports (mentors, partners, and more volunteerism), to very concrete resources (space, technical assistance, and help getting jobs).

Supporting the Initiatives

Obviously, the need for financial support is great. This need came through in multiple ways throughout the survey: in descriptions of budgets, in responses to questions about support needed (in general), and even in descriptions about what the initiatives do and who they reach.

Participants were asked to estimate how much funding they would need over the upcoming year in order to achieve the main goal of their initiative. While some (15%) suggested that they might be successful with $500 - $1000, most participants felt that more funding was needed to accomplish what they intended. 24% felt that $100-2500 would achieve their goals; 37% felt that $2500-5000 was needed; 41% felt that $5000 would achieve their

goals; and 44% responded that more than $5000 was needed.

Those who answered that more than $5000 was needed were asked to explain why in an open-ended question. Among the 261 responses to this question, the most frequent reasons related to:

- The basic costs of implementing project activities (74 responses)

- A desire or need to expand the reach and scope of their initiative (66 responses);

- The need for essential equipment (such as computers) in order to implement their initiative (52 responses)

- The costs of hiring staff (26 responses)

- A building or a space in which to operate (24 responses)

- Expenses related to infrastructure and operating costs, such as getting electricity, water, and an internet connection (19 responses)

- Travel or transportation expenses, especially in places where the geographic reach of the program is extensive (17 responses)

- Training costs (13 responses)

However, the survey also specifically asked participants to share their opinions about what kinds of support, *besides financial*, would be most beneficial. Participants were asked to select one type of support among the following choices: training, accreditation, mentorship/advice, equipment, or marketing support.

In response, participants identified the following types of support that were most needed or desirable:

Type of Support	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Survey Participants
Training	209	35%
Accreditation	24	4%
Mentorship/advice	79	13%
Equipment	169	29%
Marketing support	46	8%
No response	65	11%

When training and mentorship are combined, they account for nearly half of the participants' responses about their highest priority for support (48%). This suggests that capacity-building is an important issue for youth-led initiatives. Earlier data about the benefits of youth-led initiatives suggest that this capacity building is seen as being valuable to the individuals, for their own personal and professional growth, as well as for the strength and sustainability of the initiatives. While the data from this survey suggest that many different kinds of support are important, they also suggest that some types of support could make the difference between surviving and thriving. In the discussions moving forward, these questions of how to create enabling environments for youth-led development initiatives, along with questions of the appropriate and most effective roles for adults (that is, how adults can support youth-led initiatives without taking them over), will need further exploration and discussion…in partnership with the youth themselves.

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"Youth led initiatives are important because…they (WE) are the catalysts for change. Thus, orienting them to the social realities of human settlement issues and combining the enhancement of their skills with their desire to help other people, they will be able elevate their self-esteem, empower themselves and act as role models to their peers. I believe that with enough guidance and support from other established organizations, projects or activities initiated by the youth have greater chances for success since they have the energy and they have fresher ideas that would help rebuild our world." (Philippines)

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SECTION 4:
IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The nearly 600 youth-led development initiatives shared by participants in this survey revealed some interesting patterns and trends, and at the same time, raised additional questions that can only be answered with more dialogue and exploration. Stepping back from the findings described in the previous section, there are certainly some lessons that can be taken away, along with recommendations for continued learning about the best ways to harness the power of youth-led initiatives and to more effectively support their work on behalf of communities.[4]

Lesson #1: Complexity is good.

Based on the youth-led development initiatives represented in this research project, certain issues appear throughout the world to be common issues of concern among youth: livelihood, youth civic engagement, the environment, and HIV/AIDS. The need for jobs for the ever-increasing youth population was by far the greatest concern, and how youth approached the issue of preparation for employment and ultimately securing a job often showed creativity and innovation. Many saw other social issues as opportunities to get engaged in community and simultaneously create work for themselves (whether paid work, or in some cases, unpaid work experience that would lead to paying work later).

It was not uncommon to see groups working to address an issue that, clearly, they were passionate about, or that had personally affected their lives (for example, environmental protection or HIV/AIDS), while building in an entrepreneurial component that would create opportunities for income. Likewise, responses regarding the connection between initiatives and the Millennium Development Goals reflected the same creativity; the youth-led initiatives did not always fit neatly into one category of MDG; on average, survey participants checked 3

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"The idea started when I decided to work on my final thesis at the university in environmental engineering…I wanted to have an impact on our local community. I gathered some friends around the purpose and we found a perfect community, where there was already a micro credit bank, forums, etc. Our idea was to connect university know-how on clean technologies to the community's needs and improve their quality of life. The project is becoming sustainable in terms of its impact because we partnered with a local NGO that runs the credits in the community bank, so that we created a specific program to support people who want to take money to improve their homes. We give them support and money for it. The first loan came from a competition for young entrepreneurs, which I joined and got 1,000 dollars. Now we have already another partner, which is a local health company that gives us around 750 dollars a month. We dream everyone one in the community must have access to a better life and we are working for this purpose." (Brazil)

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4 The recommendations made in this section are the opinion of the researcher, not UN-Habitat or any other UN agency, and should be interpreted as possible next steps, needing further discussion and exploration.

or more different MDGs that their initiatives addressed, and nearly half of participants also wrote in additional information to clarify their connection to MDG's. Again, this reflected the participants' ability to see the connections and inter-dependencies among a range of issues facing their generation and their communities.

What was not clear was the genesis: did young people get involved in social issues, and then try to create the work opportunity? Or did they try to create a work opportunity and then tie it to an issue of concern? Whichever direction, the evidence showed that these youth were not afraid of complexity; it was not uncommon to see multiple goals, or to see initiatives with both an issue focus (for example, environmental protection) and an implementation focus (for example, income-generating schemes).

Looking at who benefits from these initiatives, the most frequent beneficiary listed was "youth", with 78% of the initiatives identifying a youth focus. Given that this was a survey for youth-led development initiatives, it is not surprisingly that the young people leading the initiatives chose issues that impact their generation. What is interesting about the data on beneficiaries, however, is that the same trend toward complexity showed up in an analysis of the groups that benefited from the youth-led development initiatives. Often these initiatives were not focused on benefiting a single demographic group (such as women, youth, people with disabilities, etc.). Instead, participants explained how multiple groups benefit, either through a ripple effect (for example, initiatives that train youth to do something that benefits the wider community), or through an intentional integration of different demographics (for example, addressing women's rights by both working with girls and women, and simultaneously working on community traditions and norms that undermine the rights of women). Participants listed an average of two different groups that directly benefited from their initiatives.

While funding mechanisms often focus on specific "deliverables"—focus on a particular issue, or focus on a specific demographic group—the work being done in communities by young people suggest that the support for their initiatives needs to be flexible and more integrative or holistic. Further, donors and partner agencies might learn from the strategic approach adopted by many of these youth-led development initiatives, and think creatively about the development of multi-prong funding opportunities to support these kinds of dual or triple focus initiatives, balanced by the need for accountability in the use of funds and in program outcomes and impacts.

Lesson #2: (Some) Support is Necessary.

Youth-led initiatives do not operate in a vacuum, nor do they operate without at least some kinds of outside supports. For the initiatives that participated in this survey, the need for financial support was a common theme. Some described initiatives in the very early stages, suggesting that financial support was needed to fully launch; others had been in operation for longer, but talked about the need for funding to expand their scope and scale. The range of monthly costs varied, with the majority (more than 50%) being greater than $250 per month. The largest percentage of survey participants (33%) identified "self-funding" as the principal funding source, reflecting the level of commitment and passion that was evidenced elsewhere throughout the survey.

While the survey showed that higher initiative budgets were associated with different primary funding sources, it could not explain the reasons for this association. Further, because participants were asked to identify their primary source of funding, there is no way to fully understand from these data how the initiatives combine funding sources to reach their budgets. New research could help us understand the creative strategies that initiatives use in funding

their work, and perhaps lend insight into how and where new sources of funding could have the greatest leverage.

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"The youth of Sierra Leone have been victims of unspeakably violent and harsh circumstances. Many of these kids were made to join combat as child soldiers. They were torn from their homes and forced to commit horrible acts while systematically brainwashed, severely abused and forcibly drugged. Most of these children cannot imagine what a peaceful existence would entail. They have been left without families, direction, or hope. They've become known as Sierra Leone's 'Lost Generation'.   In the East, in a District famed for diamonds, youth are going through a new reawakening of exploitations from former fighters in the war to cheap hands and labour in the diamond field. One of the youth representatives there is a former combatant who had a good experience of ICT training and is currently working with his colleagues on all fours to replicate the ICT programs so that youth can be drifted away from the mining fields. This is indeed a huge challenge in a community that values only wealth and where children and youth have been so brainwashed that money can solve all their problems. With [this initiative], there is a semblance for hope for these kids as they are using technology to empower and employ themselves in big towns and are moving away from the mines." (Sierra Leone)

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One of the important ways that participants want to be supported—by both adults and by more experienced peers—is through training and ongoing learning. When participants identified their highest priority for additional support, nearly half (48%) listed either training or mentorship. When they described the benefits they or others experienced from the initiative, more listed training or education than any other benefit (62% of participants). This took a number of different forms, including formal education, vocational training, workshops, skills-building sessions, and others. It is important to note that the benefits are not measured through any standard impact evaluation; they are based on participants' perceptions. The frequent identification of training

and education as a benefit, then, should not be used to imply a certain level of knowledge or skill gain; rather, it reflects the value that participants place on learning and development of new skills, which they see benefiting them in their lives and livelihoods.

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"Youth-led initiatives are important because [they] give a voice to a critical, marginalized, and vulnerable group that could drive development if given the right information, resources, opportunities, and platforms." (Nigeria)

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A space in which to run project activities, and people to help implement those activities, are two other important supports in the operation of these youth-led development initiatives, as identified in this survey. Only 6% of participants indicated that they had three or fewer people involved, with the rest answering that they had between 3 and 7 people (32%) or over 7 people involved (56%). Only 4% of participants responded that they did not have a space from which to operate, with the 83% describing a variety of types of space they used for their initiative, such as borrowed, shared, owned space, etc. When compared with the involvement of adults, the data suggested that these were supports that youth were able to identify on their own; that is, adult involvement in the initiative did not reflect a higher level of involvement of people, nor a greater likelihood of having space. By contrast, other types of operational support, such as having a bank account or being registered with the government, were associated with adult involvement. Registration and bank accounts could be important operational resources for these initiatives, particularly in response to the need for additional funding as articulated by the initiatives themselves. The question remains: did the involvement of adults lead to these supports, or were adults more likely to get involved in youth-

led initiatives that had these supports? If these are, indeed, important supports, it would be useful to do additional research in order to more fully understand how youth-led initiatives might obtain them.

The role of adults was not limited to operational functions. The survey showed that adults have a variety of important roles to play in youth-led initiatives. On average, participants listed 2-3 different roles that adults play in their initiatives. One of the more frequent roles reported was mentorship, which reinforces the importance that participants placed on training and education, as discussed above. These participants, while clearly expressing a range of rationales for youth-led initiatives, were not suggesting that these initiatives should exclude adults; rather, they articulated why (and how) adults could or should be involved. This adult involvement, however, has to be balanced against the strategic advantage that youth bring to the initiative. That is, what adults have to offer must be balanced against what youth have to offer. Given the power differences between adults and youth in most communities, this balancing of roles and contributions will need to be intentional, well thought out, and carefully monitored, toward the creation of a strong partnership model, rather than the traditional mentorship model. Mentorship models support the learning of one through the experience of the other, rather than reciprocal learning; the mentor is the leader, and the one being mentored is a follower. Mentors expect respect; respect toward the one being mentored is sometimes considered optional. Partnerships, by contrast, allow for reciprocal learning and shared leadership, and require mutual respect. This is a new model for many adults and communities; making such a distinct paradigm shift will need support and time.

Lesson #3: Youth-led initiatives make strategic sense.

Survey participants were very clear in articulating the reasons that they believed youth-led initiatives were important. Responding to the question, "why do you think are youth-led initiatives important?" was not required, yet 71% of the survey participants chose to do so. Responses to a variety questions, in fact, consistently reflected a passion and logic behind the concept of youth-led development initiatives.

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"Youth led initiatives are good for society. Youth work provides opportunities for young people to contribute to their own communities, to grow in themselves, to create a better society. This happens every day of the year in every part of the country." (India)

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What these responses clearly showed was that the reasons for supporting youth-led initiatives are both varied and convincing. As this discussion outlined in the previous section, the benefits of youth-led initiatives are multi-faceted (from skills building to addressing real needs, to building democracy and social justice). Further, the beneficiaries of youth-led development initiatives are also varied. Clearly, young people benefit, particularly from the real-world skills building, leadership development and preparation for work that they saw themselves receiving as a result of their participation. As noted earlier, training is highly valued; the fact that youth-led initiatives provide this opportunity was frequently mentioned. However, it was equally clear that survey participants recognized the benefits of youth-led initiatives for others, both for specific segments of the population (according to the initiative's focus) and for the

community in general (as they observe the ripple effects of their work). In fact, many suggested that the community's needs were so great that solving them would only be possible by the inclusion of the community's largest demographic, the youth themselves. Rather than the idea that "youth can help" (that is, youth can contribute to what adults are accomplishing), participants suggested that the community cannot do it without youth (that is, adults cannot be successful without the involvement of young people).

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"Youthfulness by its nature has the fortitude to embrace change in an ever changing world; youthfulness has the courage to hope against any obstacle; youthful energy if properly harnessed has the power to drive the economic engine; youthful anger has the power to defeat and defy oppression." (Kenya)

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Youth-led initiatives also make strategic sense because of what youth are uniquely capable of bringing to the table, from energy and idealism, to specific knowledge and experience that adults lack, to abundant passion for the work, and for their communities. If for no other reason—and the other reasons are compelling, too—this passion alone is a strong enough argument for supporting youth-led initiatives. Social change requires passion; the youth generation has it in abundance. Quite simply, why *wouldn't* community development initiatives try to tap into this resource?

Conclusion

The billion young people in the world can be seen either as a cause for concern, a call for increased attention to youth needs, a resource for community development, or some combination of the above.

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"Youth comprise of a significant proportion of the world's population, and many of them in developing countries. Young people have their own problems and their own way of looking at things, and it's time that development organizations paid attention that goes beyond tokenism." (Sri Lanka)

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Much of the research on youth—in both "developed" and "developing" countries focuses on the developmental needs of young people (that is, the process of supporting young people in developing into capable, contributing adults), rather than on focusing on the resources and assets that youth bring into a community development context.

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"The youths of our world are the most energetic and active people, who are going to lead us to our tomorrow. The resources of the youths mobilized in a positive or negative way will determine the future of our society." (India)

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Focusing solely on the developmental needs of youth in communities, without also acknowledging the assets that youth bring to those contexts is missing half the story. With increased globalization, along with issues of infrastructure, food security, health and safety, education, and livelihood opportunities, the need is greater than ever for citizen engagement and collective problem solving. Youth, as one of the largest demographics, are—or can be—a community's greatest asset.

"Youth" is often seen as an issue to be addressed, rather than an asset to be included in the process of creating solutions for the issues facing communities. Language such as "youth bulge" or "youth at risk" focus on the deficits of young people. By contrast, the youth who shared their stories of engagement and initiatives through this survey clearly show "youth at promise," actively engaged citizens, making a positive difference in their communities.

APPENDIX 1: **BREAKDOWN OF COUNTRIES REPRESENTED IN THE SURVEY REPRESENTATION BY REGION AND INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES**

Region	Number	Percent Total
Africa	367	62
Asia	123	21
Caribbean	4	<1.7%
Eastern Europe	5	1
Europe	4	<1.7%
Latin America	10	2
MENA	2	<1.3%
Micronesia	1	<1.2%
North America	21	4
Oceania	2	<1.3%
South Pacific	5	1
None	48	8

Country	# of Surveys	Region
Benin	1	Africa
Burundi	1	Africa
Cameroon	14	Africa
Cote d'Ivoire	3	Africa
Democratic Republic of Congo	7	Africa
Ethiopia	6	Africa
Gambia	1	Africa
Ghana	18	Africa
Kenya	124	Africa
Liberia	4	Africa
Malawi	10	Africa

Country	# of Surveys	Region
Mali	1	Africa
Mauritius	1	Africa
Mozambique	2	Africa
Niger	1	Africa
Nigeria	44	Africa
Rwanda	4	Africa
Senegal	5	Africa
Sierra Leone	14	Africa
Somalia (inc. Puntaland, Somaliland)	4	Africa
South Africa	9	Africa
South Sudan	1	Africa
Sudan	2	Africa
Tanzania	18	Africa
Uganda	57	Africa
Zambia	8	Africa
Zimbabwe	7	Africa
Afghanistan	2	Asia
Bangladesh	8	Asia
China	3	Asia
East Timor	1	Asia
India	55	Asia
Indonesia	6	Asia
Nepal	14	Asia
Pakistan	19	Asia
Philippines	10	Asia
Sri Lanka	4	Asia
Thailand	1	Asia

Country	# of Surveys	Region
Haiti	3	Caribbean
Trinidad/Tobago	1	Caribbean
Armenia	1	Eastern Europe
Azerbaijan	3	Eastern Europe
Republic of Moldova	1	Eastern Europe
Netherlands	1	Europe
Norway	1	Europe
Sweden	1	Europe
UK	1	Europe
Argentina	2	Latin America
Bolivia	1	Latin America
Brazil	1	Latin America
Colombia	3	Latin America
Costa Rica	1	Latin America
El Salvador	1	Latin America
Uruguay	1	Latin America
Egypt	1	MENA
Tunisia	1	MENA
Guam	1	Micronesia
Canada	12	North America
Mexico	3	North America
United States	6	North America

Country	# of Surveys	Region
Papua New Guinea	1	Oceania
Solomon Islands	1	Oceania
Australia	2	South Pacific
Vanuatu	3	South Pacific
No country listed	48	NONE
TOTAL	**592**	