



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

How youth drive change

Young people in the world:
so different and so alike

Monique Coleman

Mobile revolution

Gigi Ibrahim

Spring of outrage

Alfredo Trujillo Fernandez

Miracle Weapons

Serge Amisi

When poetry is louder than a bomb

Nate Marshall

Moonlight stars

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A young sughar

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Prescriptions for a sick planet

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Revolution: one of the
great feats of civilization

Khaled Youssef

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International Year of Youth 2010–2011

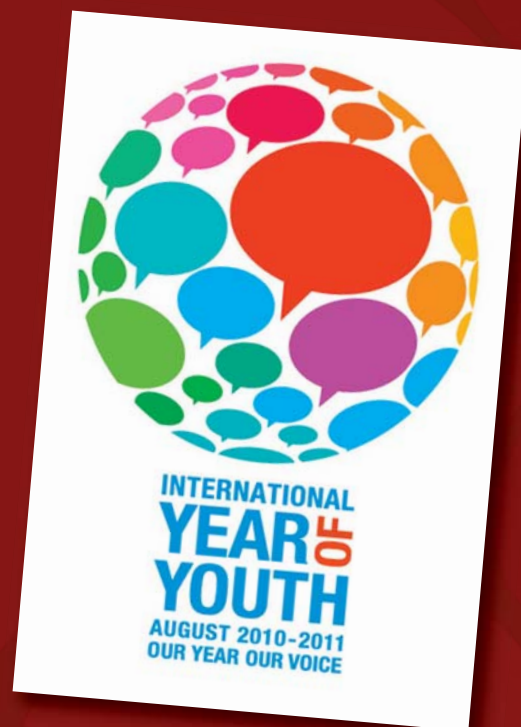
"Five years away from the 2015 target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it is more important than ever to encourage young people to dedicate themselves to achieving a more just and sustainable world," wrote Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, in her message on the occasion of the launch of the International Year of Youth (August 2010 – August 2011) and of International Youth Day (12 August).

Proclaimed in December 2009 by the United Nations General Assembly, the international year puts the accent on dialogue and mutual understanding. It aims to promote the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and solidarity between generations, cultures, religions and civilizations.

During the year a large number of young people have been striving to build a more just world, starting with the "Arab Spring". All over the world, they have been speaking out, demanding a place in their country's future. The 7th UNESCO Youth Forum, "How youth drive change", to be held from 17 to 20 October 2011, will provide them with an opportunity to discuss their experiences, present their projects and exchange ideas.

Since its creation, UNESCO has considered youth a major priority. Its Youth Programme aims to promote opportunities for young people to be given greater responsibilities and to see their role in society recognized.

From February 2010 to February 2011, the Organization jointly chaired the United Nations Interagency Network on Youth Development, alongside the United Nations Programme on Youth. It was in this capacity that UNESCO participated in the coordination of the International Year of Youth.



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"Mordabella",
mixed media,
2009. By
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Ghassan
Halwani.

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In this issue

"Our focus doesn't have to be on changing the whole world, just changing our world," says American actress and singer Monique Coleman, appointed United Nations "Youth Champion" for the International Year of Youth 2010–2011 (pp. 7-8). That is exactly what young people are doing to change the things that need changing.

At the beginning of 2011, they rose up against existing political regimes, first in Tunisia (pp. 9-10) then in Egypt (pp. 11-12), giving the rest of the world a good lesson in democracy. Social networks spread the movement to other countries in the region, also rousing European nations such as Spain (pp. 13-14). Their tools, their slogans and their goals are practically the same everywhere. They are fighting for jobs, social justice, free education and health care, freedom of expression and above all democracy. The inspiring news of the "Arab Spring" went around the world,

held up as a symbol of a peaceful revolution led by youth.

Elsewhere in the world, young people mobilize in different ways, as for example the students in Czechoslovakia who have decided to "chip in" and have their say in their country's affairs (pp. 16-17), or the South African businesswoman who created a social network for disadvantaged schools (pp. 18-19), and the young people who are hopeful they can vanquish racism, xenophobia discrimination and conflict through the "miraculous weapons" of art (pp. 21-30).

One common denominator is solidarity, illustrated in the activities of young volunteers, scouts and athletes, but also in the heartrending stories of the Ugandan "stars" (pp. 34-35) and a young Pakistani *sughar* (pp. 36-38). As for Japanese youth, who displayed great generosity during the March 2011 disaster, they have precipitated radical

changes in the old value system centered on economic growth (pp. 39-40).

Finally, we are not surprised to discover that young people are seriously concerned about the future of the environment. Particularly sensitive to climate change issues, the new generations are capable of waging war against various forms of ecological inertia. From the European Union to China, Mexico and Peru (pp. 40-49), thousands of young people are using their diverse talents to work for a healthier planet.

To conclude this issue produced entirely by young writers we asked Egyptian filmmaker Khaled Youssef to give us his views on "Arab Spring" (pp. 50-52). He shares his vision of the events that rocked his country in the beginning of the year and their impact on the world, society and international politics. ■

Jasmina Šopova

Editorial

Irina Bokova

They number more than a billion and most of them live in developing countries. The world population of 15- to 24-year-olds represents more than a billion hopes for a better future, more than a billion ideas to change the world in constructive ways, more than a billion potential solutions to the problems of today. With or without academic degrees, free or determined to become free, young people are reinventing culture, taking control of the new media, recreating how we relate to each other. Yet few of them are able to enjoy a carefree youth. Most of them are battling every day against the obstacles of poverty, unemployment, climate change, restricted access to education and health care. How to participate fully in creating the future, when one is excluded from the decision-making process? We must help them and support their ambitions by giving them access to the immense resources of education, science, culture, communication and information.

The mighty wind of "Arab Spring" has amazed us with the capacity of young people to widen the horizons of possibility. The year 2011 - proclaimed by the United Nations as International Youth Year (August 2010 – August 2011) – will be remembered as the year young people chose to take up the torch of human dignity.

The Organization immediately mobilized to provide support to these societies in their transformation, at a turning point in their history. In Tunisia and Egypt, UNESCO focuses on training

journalists, distributing educational material, helping to reinforce freedom of expression and media reform in view of upcoming elections. I went there, to Cairo, to hear what the needs were and to reinforce UNESCO's intervention in its areas of competence. The celebration of World Press Freedom Day on May 3 in Tunis, co-organized by UNESCO, opened up debate and led to a major discussion on young people's key issues, such as the role of the internet and social media in the fight against censorship. Last June, our Organization was the first to launch a series of seminars in Egypt as a forum for discussion on civic engagement and democracy

Culture is a strong foundation for the new democratic society. Young Egyptians proved to be particularly concerned with safeguarding their culture during the demonstrations, spontaneously forming a human chain around the Library of Alexandria to protect it from looters. UNESCO wants to encourage this consciousness among young people, the collective maturity they displayed. It will support it in the long term through the "Youth Heritage" initiative, which will allow the heirs to a unique heritage to immerse themselves even more in the ancient values it conveys and to use it as an instrument of social cohesion and innovation.

In the same vein, I will launch a *Heritage and Dialogue* initiative at the next Summit of the Heads of State of South East Europe that will take place in Belgrade next September 2011. The Serb

Scene from "Silent Evolution", underwater installation by British artist Jason deCaires Taylor, shown during the 2010 United Nations climate change conference (COP 16) in Cancun, Mexico. Young divers posing with submerged statues call attention to a climate change threat: rising sea levels.

© Jason de Caires Taylor/Greenpeace

On her first official visit to Croatia on 21-22 May 2011, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova (in white jacket) opened the first South-East Europe World Heritage Youth Forum in Porec, to mark the International Year of Youth 2010-2011.

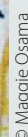
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Youth are a force for progress all over the world. Let us enable them to speak out, to participate fully in social and political life, to raise our awareness and open blocked horizons. This is

UNESCO has always considered young people key partners in creating a world with more justice. Youth is always calling on us to innovate, to invent. Every day brings us more examples of this positive momentum. I hope this issue of the UNESCO Courier will inspire everyone to action. Enjoy reading it! ■

Ismail Serageldin
Director of the
Bibliotheca
Alexandrina
12 February 2011



Young people in the world so different and so alike

MONIQUE COLEMAN was interviewed by Katerina Markelova

April 2011: A convivial moment on Monique Coleman's tour of India. (Photo by Gimmemotalk)



As “Youth Champion” of the United Nations, American singer and actress Monique Coleman, 31, has the mission of bringing to life the themes of the International Year of Youth (August 2010-August 2011), which are dialogue and mutual understanding. She intends to make that mission more than a statement and to give young people the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions.

You were appointed Youth Champion by the UN in November 2010. Three months later you were off on a world tour. What was your goal?

This trip is as much personal as it is for the advancement of the Year. At some point in life it is important to get out of your own comfort zone, the things you are familiar with, and to see something new through the eyes of someone else. Living in America I felt that I had a limited view of the rest of the world. As the Youth Champion and as a human I couldn't ever talk about poverty if I hadn't seen that with my own eyes. I couldn't talk about young people's amazing achievements if I hadn't met young people doing exceptional things.

Our focus doesn't have to be on changing the whole world, our focus can be just on changing our world.

International Year of Youth
<http://social.un.org/youthyear/>

© Gimmemotalk

The role of youth in Arab uprisings is huge. Did it change your vision of your mission?

The first stop on the tour was initially intended to be Tunisia. And the day I was intending to leave was the day the unrest started to break out. But for security reasons we had to modify the itinerary. One of my missions while I am on this trip is to try to give voice to issues before they exacerbate and become an uprising. One thing that I can do right now while traveling is get a sense of what these issues are, bubbling underneath the surface, to bring some light and awareness.

These young people are reacting not only to their lifetime of pain but their families' and their parents' lifetime of pain, war and torment. I don't think they are being destructive. They can't be blamed for reacting in the way that they know how, but I would like to look for new peaceful ways. I'd like to remind us all of Martin Luther King, Gandhi and Nelson Mandela.

I was in the Philippines last February on the day that they celebrated the 25th anniversary of the peaceful revolution (that ended the Marcos dictatorship). They were able to have a revolution with women, pregnant women and

children, who were all standing up for the same thing, and nobody got killed. These are the kind of revolutions I want to start.

In your on-line talk show "Gimme MO", you emphasize the power of the internet to give young people a voice.

"Gimme MO" is indeed a platform for youth. It's a place where I talk about things that people don't bring much attention to and try to give a different angle. I also interview celebrities, experts, people that I meet out in the world.

Young people are reacting not only to their lifetime of pain but their families' and their parents' lifetime of pain, war and torment.

The main purpose of this show is to help young people see that even the people you look up to share similar interests and are basically the same, and to break stereotypes. When I was in Australia I interviewed a young Muslim refugee who is living in public housing in Melbourne. She is 21, she wears a veil, and she completely rejects the stereotype according to which Muslim females are oppressed and don't have their own voices.

Are the young people you meet on your trip all the same, or are they different from one country to another?

Young people are actually very similar. (laughs) The biggest difference is that in developing countries the young people are extremely aware of world issues. They have to be, because those issues live on their doorstep, they approach them on their way to school.

Whereas in developed countries sometimes we can be less aware of the global issues. We sometimes tend to be bogged down in our own personal things.

What are the most pressing issues young people have raised?

In places like Australia the big thing is self-esteem, to help young people feel better about themselves. Suicide is a huge issue.

In Bangladesh it's almost the opposite. I had a student saying: "How do you expect to bring awareness to the people in developed countries who are willing to take their own life while we are struggling here just to survive." And that was really powerful. That said it all.

The thing that remains the same is that every young person is looking for a place in the world. I try to explain to them how limitless the possibilities are, to convince each of them they have so much value and potential, regardless of their state, their social-economic class, their religious background, their level of privilege or disadvantage. We all have obstacles that we have to overcome. It's up to us to overcome those things. And once we have overcome them, it's so important that we liberate our global brothers and sisters.

Our focus doesn't have to be on changing the whole world, our focus can just actually be on changing our world. Because if every person focused on their community or village, then collectively we would change the whole world.

Once the Year is over, do you want to continue to support young people throughout the world?

Absolutely, this is simply the beginning! I intend to put much of my focus in "Gimme MO". I would like to see it move into a television platform, as well as an interactive internet place employing new technologies.

In my acting career I would like to play roles that help enhance and move this movement forward. I think that entertainment and art is an incredible way to deepen any message. Often, when I talk to people about why they decide to make a difference, why they become a part of an organization, why did they become passionate about something, they tend to trace it back to a book or a song or a movie. So, I would like to continue to create such artistic opportunities for inspiration. ■



■ Monique Coleman on the poster for her on-line youth talk show "Gimme MO".

A scene from the
Tunisian revolution.
Tunis. Late January
2011.



An act of survival

In the eyes of student Emna Fitouri, the Tunisian youth uprising in January 2011 was more than just a revolution – it was a matter of life and death for a whole generation.

EMNA FITOURI

On 10 January 2011, I saw on Facebook that people were getting ready to demonstrate in Tunis. My classmates and I arranged to meet outside the Ministry of the Interior on 14 January. We demonstrated for three days, on Avenue Habib Bourguiba and in Place de la Kasbah, in the city centre. We arranged everything on Facebook, like most young Tunisians. That is why a lot of commentators have called ours a “Facebook revolution”. But the reality was much more complex. In fact these social networks were just a tool that young people used to get started, to trigger a change in society, to fight

against unemployment and other forms of humiliation, to stand up for human rights and dignity.

Having said this, it would be wrong to play down the role of internet completely, because it has proved to be an awesome instrument in the democratisation of Arab countries, while reflecting the diversity of their politics and culture. And a powerful weapon against censorship. Now, no one can say “It’s me. I’m in charge.” The internet will stop them, by providing opportunities for constructive debate. It is also teaching us what “debate” really means.

The previous revolution in Tunisia ended with a “revolutionary dictatorship”, with well-known results. Today we are part of a non-violent,

“civilized revolution”, which is heading towards democracy.

But it is not all so civilized – the media and analysts have made a lot of the “peaceful” character of this revolution, because young people took to the streets unarmed. We need to choose our words carefully. Peaceful, for whom? For the people who crouched in fear day after day, as the bullets flew? For the soldiers and policemen who were torn between their professional duty and personal convictions? For the young demonstrators who had never seen so much blood flow? The hell we went through may not have been as deadly as that of our brothers in Libya, Yemen and Syria, but we still went through some terrible moments.

I saw dead bodies; I was terrified; I fainted because of the tear gas... Hundreds of people from Sidi Bouzid – the town where Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire on 4 January, triggering the revolution – came to the Kasbah in Tunis, to join the demonstrations in the capital. Some brought their wives and children. They were cold, hungry and miserable. I helped the scouts bring them food and blankets and assisted the doctor in charge of the scouts' medical service.

But more than anything, I shouted. For days on end. With all my might, I shouted "GET OUT!" until Ben Ali left. I wanted to put an end to a regime that had made youth its most vulnerable victims.

Instead of being the driving force behind the economy, we had become its scapegoat. That explains why we, the young people, were the first to rise up. In fact, we were trapped. On the one hand we were receiving what was


supposed to be one of the best educations in Africa, but, in reality, it was not adapted to the needs of an ever-changing market. Meanwhile, the regime did not allow us to get jobs and keep them. Continuing education, which allows employees to keep their skills up to date, does not exist in Tunisia. For example, in the IT world, when the technology changes, companies simply get new software engineers and technicians! Job insecurity has become a disease, just as oppressive as the impossibility for young graduates to find work in the first place. I wonder if there is a single family in the entire country that doesn't have at least one unemployed graduate at home.

The unstable education system and the extremely cynical economic policy made the younger generation feel abused, exploited and suffocated. Our first uprisings were acts of survival. Our future actions will be part of a process of building a new country. ■

Emna Fitouri, 21-year-old Tunisian, is in her second year at the Preparatory Institute for Literary Studies and Humanities in Tunis, where she is studying French. She is a scout captain in Hammam Lif, a suburb in the south of Tunis.



© Monia Agrebi

 Vox pop. Tunis, 27 January 2011.



© Hamdeddine Bouali

Mobile revolution



The 24 year old young Egyptian activist Gigi Ibrahim during the Egyptian revolution in 2011.
© Al Jazeera English

At the height of the revolution in Egypt in January 2011, a young woman mobilized crowds on Facebook and Twitter, kept the internet community around the world informed, organized street rallies and waved banners, her mobile telephone always within reach. Gigi Ibrahim, 24, is a perfect example of the high tech generation Arab revolutionary. Not all of Gigi's compatriots who marched in the streets had computers at home – far from it – yet social media played a crucial role in organizing this historical event that is changing the world. And not just the Arab world.

GIGI IBRAHIM was interviewed by Khaled Abu Hijleh

You lived in the United States between 2000 and 2008. You returned to Egypt at the age of 22 and you were immediately engaged in the socio-political arena. Had you already been an activist in the U.S.?

Yes, I was much more involved during my stay in the USA in local issues such as immigration laws. I joined a group that was fighting for illegal immigration rights because police officers were enforcing immigration laws which were

discriminatory. I was also involved in many activities that supported the Palestinian cause. So whenever there is a demonstration or an anti-war call, I would be definitely a part of it.

But to be honest, I was far from being involved in what was happening in Egypt at the time due to my rare visits to Egypt. I also was not aware politically enough because I lived abroad from the age of 14 to 22. I was not aware of the Egyptian opposition movement since it

was completely ignored in the mainstream media. So, unless you were living here and being part of it, you would really know nothing about it. Even people living nearby did not know about it. Only close activists, journalists and the political community knew what was going on.

You can follow Gigi Ibrahim on Twitter at:
<http://twitter.com/Gsquare86>

I got in touch with the Egyptian activists the first time when I got back from the USA in 2008. Then, I took a course on social mobilization under the authoritarian regime at the American University of Cairo (AUC). I started learning politics and participated in the protests in 2009 - 2010 where I met many activists. This is how I got involved in the framework of the revolutionary socialists.



© Hossam El Hamalawy

The mobile phone has become an essential tool in the struggle for democracy in Egypt

Could you describe your role in the 25 January protests?

I had joined a handful of political movement groups who called for mass demonstrations on 25 January. We coordinated the timing, place and the content of the demands.

Our major demand at that point was the arrest of Habib Al-Adly, the Minister of the Interior. We were calling for this because of the death of Khaled Said on 6 June 2010 (Note, the young man was beaten to death by police.) Other demands were to dissolve the Parliament, elected at the end of 2010, and to establish a minimum wage. Street protests were our way of bringing those demands to the popular front.

After the Tunisian uprising, Arab people started to believe in their ability to bring changes through street protests and through a peaceful revolution. This was also our intention: to promote our movement from just a

social youth group or a political group to a popular movement with political and economic demands.

We started with 100 people, then we became thousands and thousands of people chanting against the regime. People kept going in increasing numbers to Al-Tahreer Square in the city center.

When we arrived in the square, people were chanting the same chants the Tunisian people chanted, "People demand the removal of the regime". We did not necessarily plan for this though we hoped it would happen.

Sometimes, we made fun of what we were doing, saying, "ooh, we are planning for a revolution on Facebook!" Nobody believed it would turn out the way it did. But thankfully it did, because people were fed up and so oppressed they would do anything to get their freedom.

What was the role of the social media in these events in Egypt, and what was the role of the young citizen journalists?

Before the revolution, social networks played a really important role. They were not the means of the revolution but they were definitely the tools that were used to communicate.

Under an authoritarian regime, every piece of news, every newspaper and every mass media is of crucial importance. Citizen journalism becomes activism. Sorting out the truth, providing information about the subjects that the State tries to censor, was very important.

It was our only means, before the revolution, to expose and explain what was happening on the ground. Many people never heard of protests or strikes that were going on. It was only through the social networks, that stories reached the independent media and the international press like Aljazeera. These tools were important to expose the torture cases at the police stations. Many of them were videoed by cell phones. All these abuses were disclosed by the means of Flickr, Facebook and Twitter because they were uncensored until the government began shutting them down.

It should be said that the people who went into the streets and carried out the revolution did not have access to tools such as Facebook and Twitter or

even a computer. They went into the streets and risked their lives to get good healthcare, good education and a better future for their children.

Although the people who carried out the revolution had nothing to do with these tools, social networks were essential in mobilizing people and in getting the attention of the independent and international media.

As a young Arab woman, don't you think Egyptian women's participation in the 25 January uprising started breaking down the wall of Arab traditions?

I disagree. Women have always been a part of any mobilization or revolution whether in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world.

This time in Egypt, women were leading strikes, chants and protests and getting arrested and being tortured. In my experience in the Egyptian uprising, there was no difference between men and women within the mobilization process or protests.

However, women struggle also for their rights as women. But then they are faced with a counterattack by people saying this is not the right moment. But when is the right moment then? This is not so unique to the Middle East: in the United States, United Kingdom and everywhere else, women struggle for their rights too.

Do you think young people in other countries may be inspired by the Arab revolutions as a model of a peaceful popular struggle to bring about changes in their own homelands?

We have already seen such youth movements not only within the region but also in other countries. There were big marches in London on 26 March this year. There were banners and slogans similar to the Egyptian ones.

The Arab world has always been stereotyped and defined as a backward and violent region and a home of terrorism. This time the Arab world was held up as an example of democracy that comes from the bottom up and brings about real change through the power of the people exerted in a peaceful way. ■

* See our article on this topic, "Now or Never", about the Italian demonstrations of 13 February 2011 in the April-June 2011 issue of the Courier, "Women conquering new expanses of freedom".

The Spring of Outrage

Since 15 May, Spain has been living in a climate of demonstrations and protests that have taken most of the world by surprise. This “Movimiento 15-M” – or more simply, these “*indignados*” – have left us wondering what exactly they might want? Isn’t Spain an advanced, democratic country, not to be compared with Tunisia and Egypt? Yet on a closer look, many Spaniards feel no one is listening to them and the established system is simply denying them a future. And it is for this future that young Spaniards have decided to fight.

ALFREDO TRUJILLO FERNANDEZ

The protests broke out spontaneously. “No one saw it coming”, admitted Cristóbal Ramírez, a 27-year-old Madrid-based journalist, born in Cadiz. It all started on 15 May, with a demonstration in Madrid organized by the *Democracia Real Ya* (True Democracy Now) and *Jovenes Sin Futuro* (Youth with No Future) movements. Then they started to put up tents, which spread across the country. As the days went by, the demonstrators, who called themselves the *indignados* (indignant ones), saw their essentially young numbers swelled by pensioners, workers of every sort, cleaners, granddads with their grandsons and families with toddlers.

This indignation is the direct result of the serious economic crisis hitting the country. Unemployment in Spain has reached record rates for Western Europe: 20.6 % in the first quarter of 2011. And among the young, the figure has skyrocketed to 44.3 %. In 2007, before the crisis, just 8.3 % of the population were unemployed.

Nevertheless, even in the years of economic prosperity, there were some

© “Spring”, collage and gouache, 2011, by Slobodan K. Bijeljic, French painter born in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Created specially for this issue of the UNESCO Courier. Visit his website: <http://bijeljic2.free.fr/>



warning signs that the machine was grinding to a halt. In August 2005, in a letter to the editor published in the daily newspaper, *El País*, a young woman from Barcelona coined the word “*mileurista*”. It refers to the young Spanish graduate, bristling with diplomas, multilingual, usually with a Master’s degree, and yet barely earning 1000 euros a month – the stigma of a whole generation, better qualified than ever before, that feels exploited in the workplace and neglected by the system.

In politics, before and after the 2008 economic crisis, the past few years have been peppered with cases of corruption involving members of the majority parties. But almost none of them were brought to trial. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in a survey carried out in 2009 by the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS), six out of ten Spaniards felt that corruption was somewhat or very common among both Federal and local politicians. And, in the same poll, the majority of the sample admitted they had little confidence in the political classes or the system.

Economic crisis, political corruption, loss of confidence in the democratic system – these are the main ingredients of the cocktail that led tens of thousands of *indignados* to take to the streets across the country.

At last, my country is waking up

On 15 May, Miriam Blanco, a 30-year-old woman from Madrid, heard of the first protest at the Puerta del Sol. “At last”, she thought, “my country is waking up!” With several degrees and speaking four languages or more, Miriam has since the very beginning been a member of the committees that were formed. “They told us: ‘you are the future’. But we are neither the future nor the present,” she says heatedly, trying to explain the reasons for their indignation. “We are no longer afraid. We have nothing left to lose, as we have no future, and neither do our children,” she adds.

“People have had enough,” says Cristóbal, who over these past weeks has joined many of the *indignado* demonstrations in the Puerta del Sol. “We want a change in the system, so that power comes from the citizens – a true, more participative democracy,” he says. And, every day, Olivia Waters, a 27-year-old English woman who has been living in the capital for five years, walks

through the forest of tents and tarpaulins that have sprung up in the city centre. “I am shocked to see how hard it has become for citizens to get themselves heard,” she says. “In my view, all they want is to be listened to and taken seriously...”

Vitor Peiteado, a 32-year-old political commentator from La Corogne, sees the anger behind the wave of protests. “There is a reaction of indignation at the crisis, which the workers did not cause, and yet, oddly, they are the ones paying the price.” Vitor, like hundreds of other young Spaniards over the past few years, had to go abroad to look for opportunities and a salary he cannot get in his own country. He is delighted at what is happening: “For the first time, people are saying that the problem is to be found in the system itself, and that this democracy, where we only get to vote every four years, like the existing economic system, just isn’t working.”

Miriam also emphasises that the main objective is to obtain “better citizen participation, which could be encouraged using the new technologies.” Everywhere, in all the meetings and debates, people are also repeatedly saying that the politicians have to represent the interests of the people, not those of the banks and large corporations. The movement is also determined to keep the parties and traditional unions away from their protests, reinforcing their popular, grassroots and, in a sense, “anti-system” character.

It is the first time, for almost half a century, that a movement this big questions the legitimacy of the liberal democracy founded on participacy

The future will tell

But there has been no clear formulation of the movement’s objectives, or of how to go about meeting them. For Miriam, this is because the process is still in its early stages. “The question of ‘how’ is still being worked out. We are in the phase of realising that things have to change, the reflection phase. By discussing and debating the issues, we will end by knowing what we have to do,” she explains. Cristóbal thinks that it



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Spanish journalist Alfredo Trujillo Fernandez, 31, works on the editorial team of UNESCO’s website

is time to change a system, which at present “is doing nothing about the problems facing the poor.” Vitor admits that many of the ideas are still “very general” and that the demands remain “vague”. But, he adds, “it is the first time, for almost half a century, that a movement this big questions the legitimacy of the liberal partisan democracy.” Olivia thinks that the absence of detail and clarity is a reflection of the crisis itself and the scale of the problems facing Spain. And, she concludes, “There are so many problems to solve that we don’t know where to start.”

In a sense, it is possible this lack of definition is the outline of a movement that will, in the near future, have clear objectives and a well-traced roadmap for reaching them. And, who knows, will perhaps serve as an example for ‘*indignados*’ to follow in other European countries also suffering from the crisis, and sharing the same democratic spirit as Spain. But if the energy of the first weeks starts to fade, the *Movimiento 15-M* could be lost in the sands of time, and just become another anecdote in this spring of hope and indignation, 2011. ■

Youth, once upon a time...

One year after May 1968, the UNESCO Courier devoted an issue to "Youth 1969"*; this "youth in ferment", an "angry generation" of dissent and enthusiasm, and the "malaise" of young people in different parts of the world. In many ways, "the wave of protest and dissent from world youth" in 1968 resembled the events of "Arab Spring" 2011. The following brief excerpts from the article "The crisis of modern society" prove the point.

“ With their need for absolutes, the young are less than ever able to tolerate the injustices and disorder of the world. ”

René Maheu, Director-General of UNESCO

“ Youth have now achieved the status of a distinct community. This has led to the most basic conflict of all: it stems from youth's determination to win from society the status and esteem they deem to be their right. ”

“ Modern information media familiarize youth with different cultures while ignoring frontiers. On a world scale, a sort of international "youth culture" seems to have sprung up. ”

*Find this issue in our archives:
www.unesco.org/courier



Photo © Snark International - Grazie Neri

**" We asked to be heard – You refused
We asked for justice – You called it anarchy
We asked for freedom – You called it licence. "**

(See article page 15)

“ We asked to be heard. You refused....” This excerpt from the special issue "Youth 1969" was the caption for the photograph on the back cover, reprinted here..

“ Young people display their disapproval of racial segregation and linguistic discrimination, they protest against the paternalism and the living conditions they must endure, they have risen up against social conformity, they have denounced the myths of 'production for production's sake' and 'consumption for consumption's sake'. ”

“ They want freer, franker and warmer human relations than what they get from us. They are afraid that the national and international system into which they are being driven contains grave injustices to which they do not want to be party. ”

Young Czechs want to have their say

***"Kecejme do toho!"* [Let's chip in!] is a project started by three young Czechs. Their idea is to give fellow citizens aged 16 to 26 the chance to express their opinion on matters affecting them directly. It's a lab for new ideas and a real step forward for democracy for Czech youth.**

MATHIEU PONNARD

Their names are Jan, Jana and Jirka and they are in their early twenties. They were all at one time or another involved in Czech youth NGOs. This meant they could express their opinions on a range of subjects, either within their organizations, in their town or – why not – Europe-wide. Until reality caught up with them... It was practically impossible for them to be heard at national level! "So we decided to change things," explains Jan Husak, 23, studying European affairs in Brno, the country's second largest city, and coordinator of a project that began in 2010. "Until then, only active members of an institution like the national children's and youth parliament – in other words, young people already involved in the democratic process – could express their opinion," he adds. But other young people were left out...

Obviously, Czech youth does not face the same problems as those in a country like Uganda, but this does not mean they are not discriminated against. "There were a few bad

experiences..." says Jan. "Some young people sent round a petition and demonstrated against a decision that affected them directly – the introduction of a new national baccalaureate. But, even though one of the priorities of the Czech Republic's youth policy is to involve them, the politicians didn't even have the grace to accept the petition! To paraphrase Shakespeare, I concluded there was "something rotten in the State of Denmark" – except it was the Czech Republic!" It was this incident that led to the creation of *Kecejme do toho* – its founders wanted to show that politicians can and must accept, at least out of courtesy, young people's right to express their opinion nationally, in accordance with the principles of democracy.

Since then, Czech youth has been asked its opinion on a number of issues concerning their age-group, their problems and expectations – ranging from higher education fees, the right to vote at 16, hazing and bullying at school, the legalisation of cannabis, sex education and jobs for teenagers, to controversial "baby drop boxes". Since

2005, Statim, a foundation for abandoned children, has been installing these boxes around the Czech Republic so that desperate mothers can leave their unwanted babies safely and discreetly.

Like everywhere else, these young people, whether unemployed, students or those with regular jobs, use Facebook, Twitter and the internet to communicate and act collectively.

How does it work?

In practical terms, the young people first of all vote on a given topic, using internet and social networks. *Kecejme do toho!* then looks at the arguments "for" and "against" and gathers information that will be useful later on in discussions as part of public debates held all over the country.

During this second stage, the organizers are happy just to facilitate the discussion until a common position is agreed. Through *Kecejme do toho!* young volunteers are also invited to organize these workshops and discussion groups themselves, in their classrooms, youth clubs or simply in a café.





Poster for European Youth Week, 15 to 21 May 2011

given direction... But that would not be democracy. Compromise is compromise." Jan is categorical. "Personally, I see our organization as a very good school for democracy with the creation of this compromise position and its subsequent progress. But we are still only at an experimental stage! My original commitment was based on a theory that made sense... And I wanted to see if this theory actually worked in reality. The main thing is to prove that we live in a democratic country, that if we do something, we can obtain results, educate and prove through positive example it can work, and we can raise the level of youth involvement in national issues."

A laboratory for democracy

Kecejme do toho! is an independent organization that receives no funding from private sponsors or political parties. It is supported by a platform of youth NGOs and the Czech Council for Children and Youth. The organization has received a promise from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport that the results of its final conferences will be taken into account just like an internal report on youth opinion. "This is exactly what we wanted," says Jan, enthusiastically. "We wanted young people using the principles of democracy to be heard by the official political system and for their opinion to be considered alongside other points of view."

The *Kecejme do toho!* experiment is receiving support from the European "Youth in Action" programme and by the European Commission representatives in the Czech Republic – a European dimension that its coordinator does not disown. "We are also part of the European Union 'Structured Dialogue with Young People' initiative," he says, "which extends over 18 months and three presidencies (Spain, Belgium and Hungary), on the theme of youth employment. We held a discussion on this subject and prepared a report with the Ministry to present to the EU. It was gratifying to see most of the results of our discussions being used within the European political process. Similarly, our results are now being discussed by the Commission, the



Jan Husak, 23, founder of "Kecejme do toho!"

European Parliament, and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)... This is a great source of satisfaction!"

For the time being, *Kecejme do toho!* is still unique, in a country where youth has always stood up to those in power and tried to change things. So far, the organization has linked up only with partners in Slovakia, to create points of reference in a neighbouring country. But this original initiative, involving a country's entire youth population, deserves to be replicated everywhere, so that a nation's young people can have their say on issues that concern them. ■

Mathieu Ponnard, 34, is a French journalist currently living in Prague.



© DR

In a third stage, those young people who are interested are invited to a public discussion, alongside politicians involved in the issue, as well as the head of a secondary school. Having discussed the issue with these experts, the young people are then able to finalize a common position, which is then put to the vote over the internet.

In the final phase, the results of the vote are presented to the media, politicians and specialists in a concluding conference, where the young people once again have an opportunity to question the decision makers. The results are then passed onto government, members of parliament and senators.

The main thing is to prove that we live in a democratic country, that if we do something, we can obtain results.

"On quite a few issues, my personal position is not very different to the final position adopted at the end, and which is often fairly wide-ranging. Sometimes I would like to nudge a position in a

In 2008, the young South African Barbara Mallinson, created Obami, which has since become the best friend of pupils in schools around her country. Neither black nor white, Obami is virtual; it is helping to improve the quality of education and thus the quality of life. Obami's creator tells her story.

BARBARA MALLINSON

I grew up in the leafy suburbs of Johannesburg, and had the privilege of receiving a private education. Being a young white learner at a private school meant that I was somewhat sheltered from the pain that South Africa was going through towards the end of Apartheid, but I cherish, as dearly as all my fellow South Africans, moments like Mandela's release and inauguration and the World Cup in 2010, that have defined our new democracy as well as our national spirit ever since.

I had always imagined starting my own business, but it wasn't until after completing my Bachelor of Business Science at the University of Cape Town and spending five years in London's corporate world, that Obami was born. Back then (2007), Obami was an open and generic social networking site, but after Facebook opened up beyond its college networks, I decided to target Obami to schools.

Obami is now a social learning network that provides a communication and learning platform for teachers, learners and their parents. It combines networking tools similar to those found on sites like Facebook with comprehensive learning management tools like those found on Moodle (an open source learning platform), all from within a safe environment – it is intended in large part for children.


The platform was originally built in London, but on a trip back to South

My best friend. Obami



© UNESCO/Darryl Evans

Africa in 2008, I made the decision to move Obami home – if it could work in Africa, it could (theoretically) work anywhere. And more importantly, if it did work, it would make an enormous social impact in a place that needs it most.

 A young girl doing school work outside her home in a South African shanty town.

South Africa, a beautiful nation with a remarkable mix of rich cultures, still struggles with socio-political challenges a full 17 years after the birth of its new democracy. HIV/AIDS, crime, weak infrastructure and maladministration are just some of the reasons why South Africa is one of the world's poorest performing nations with regards to education standards. In 2010, only 23.5% of leavers qualify for further education, according to an official report in January 2011.

At 0.68, South Africa's Gini Coefficient is one of the highest in the world (the figure was published by Bloomberg agency on 25 February 2011). As this coefficient can vary from 0 to 1 with 0 representing perfect equality of incomes, the figure is an alarming sign reflecting a nation of great extremes. Unskilled labour is in abundance, while skilled labour – especially in the medical, engineering, IT, financial and technical fields – is in severe shortage due to major underperformance of mathematics and science within the education sector. This has only been further amplified by South Africa's "Brain Drain" endemic, where a sizeable proportion of the country's professional workers have emigrated over the past two decades.

Using Obami

It's an ominous situation, one that can only be resolved from the bottom up. My vision was, and still is, to use Obami in bringing about social change, starting with education.

Obami supports three critical areas of education: resource distribution, teaching and learning practices, as well as performance measurement. Teachers can create, share and access educational resources using rich media content tools, while the latest web 2.0 enhanced interfaces (using Ajax technologies, for instance) facilitate interaction and collaboration between and amongst them, the learners and the learners' parents, using the model of blogs and social media. The system also incorporates an assessment application for the continual measurement of a learner's performance.

I have striven to offer Obami to schools for free. My motivation for doing so? So that each and every child can one day access a quality education through Obami, no matter what

background they come from. Costs are currently being supported through private funding, and I have been fortunate to receive valuable support in the form of free hosting from the country's biggest Internet Service Provider, Internet Solutions. I am also collaborating with existing NGOs in the schools sector – Edunova, who provide Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training to underprivileged communities, and Siyavula, who create high quality educational resources.

Challenges

However, I am also very aware of the challenges I am taking on. Besides the personal sacrifices that my husband (who now works alongside me) and I have made in running our own business, Obami faces significant external factors. The very market that stands to benefit the most from Obami lacks infrastructure and internet accessibility. In 2009, only 23% of South Africa's 25,000 government schools had a computer centre, and it is estimated that today, less than 20% of all public schools are connected to the internet.

In stark contrast, nearly all of South Africa's 2,000 private schools were set up with connected computer facilities. It made natural sense for me to target Obami's offering to the independent education sector at first. My strategy: to capture the small, but highly connected group of schools, here and abroad, and leverage their competitive advantages (i.e. skilled teachers, quality educational resources, etc) for the good of all. Already, less privileged schools have been able to quickly access quality educational resources created by others through the platform.

But even in reaching the most connected of schools, Obami has faced difficulties. Schools are yet to embrace the web 2.0 revolution like social, business and niche communities have, perhaps because of online safety concerns – school decision makers have a responsibility to act as gatekeepers to what is unknown territory. It has taken me time to convince them of Obami's social learning relevance and its commitment to providing a safe environment. Now that the product is proving itself, with more than 40 registered schools, things have become easier.

As for connectivity, change is happening within the continent. SEACOM, Main One, EASSy, and WACS, all undersea cable systems connecting Africa to the digital highway, are set to exponentially boost Africa's connectivity and bring internet access costs down. Mobile currently dominates Africa's internet access mediums, and will continue as such – it is a giant developing consumer market. For schools though, falling hardware costs (through increased cloud computing services), will provide a real chance of being able to set up technology centres and bridge the digital (and educational) gap.

Obami was awarded a spot as one of the world's Top 10 Most Innovative Technologies for 2011 by French organisation Netexplorateur, in partnership with UNESCO, Air France, Deloitte, Orange and a number of other large organisations, and I was pleased to have been selected as one of the "Top 200 Young People to Take to Lunch" in 2010 by one of South Africa's newspapers, the Mail & Guardian. It's always an honour to receive recognition for Obami – even though it still has so much further to go. Every milestone that Obami reaches will only aid in the quest to improve education standards and connect more schools across the continent with rest of the world. ■

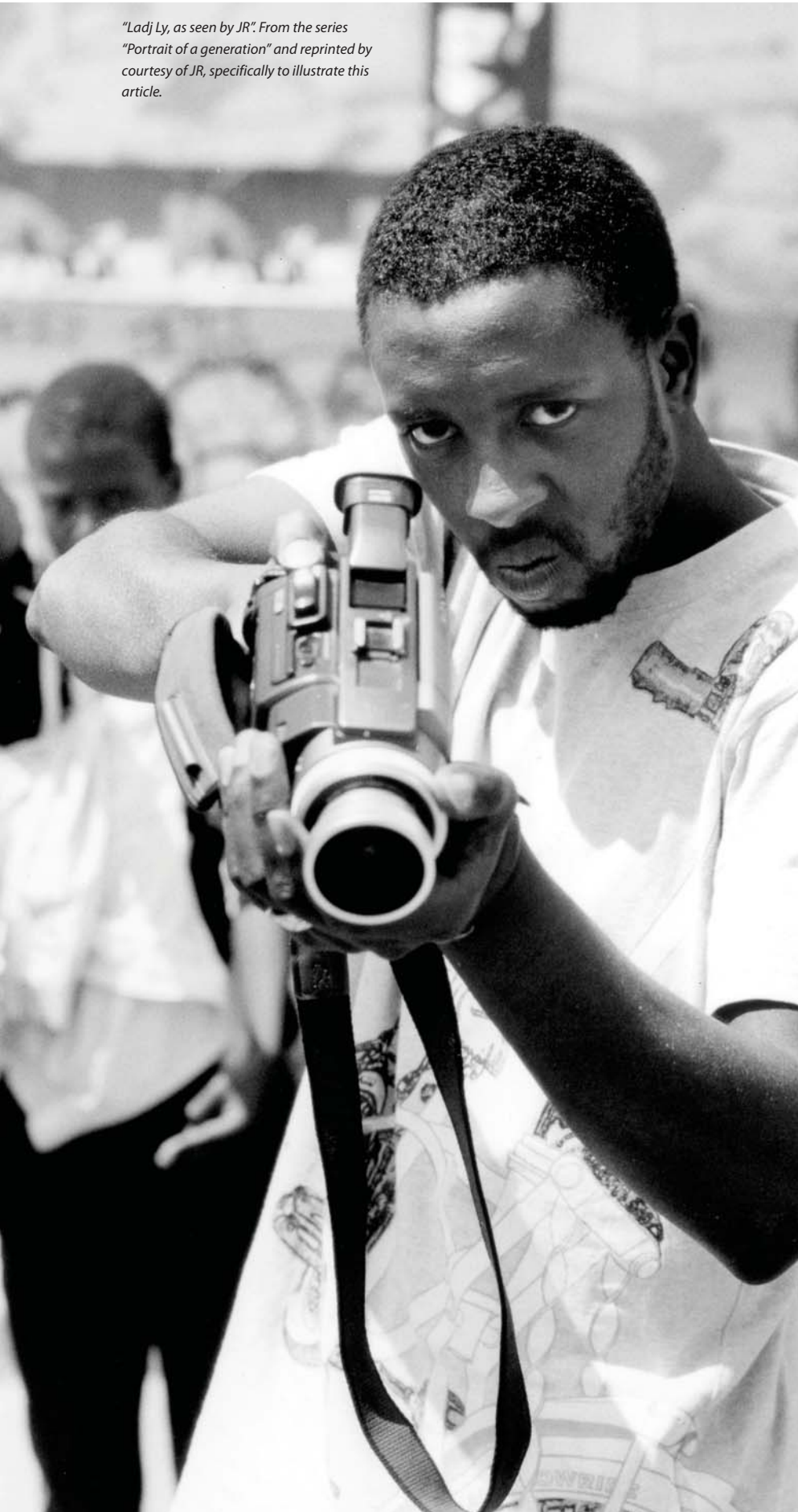
Barbara Manlinson, now 30, is the creator of Obami, a networking platform for South African schools.



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Serge Amisi and his

"Ladj Ly, as seen by JR". From the series "Portrait of a generation" and reprinted by courtesy of JR, specifically to illustrate this article.



SERGE AMISI was interviewed by Selen Demir

It is 1997 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A young boy is working in the fields alongside his brothers. Armed men appear out of nowhere. His brothers run faster than he does. He is taken away. He is made to wear a uniform and smoke cannabis; he is given a gun and ordered to shoot. He obeys, as if playing a game of war. His name is Serge Amisi, and, today, he is a young man of about 25 – he doesn't know the exact year he was born. Demobilized in 2001, on the death of DRC president Laurent-Désiré Kabila, Serge felt lost. It was hard to get back into civilian life, but, luckily, he discovered his talents as an artist. He was able to regain his inner freedom. He started a new life. Today, Serge wants to help the 200,000 – 300,000 child soldiers worldwide to do the same. He dances with his puppets, makes sculptures and writes – for himself, for them and for us all.

You were not even 10 years old when you were taken away and forced to fight with Laurent-Désiré Kabila's army. Up until 2001 you were a child soldier, a kadogo. How do you look back on this period?

The image I have of the war is nothing like the way I saw it at the time. When I was taken away, I was scared. We were separated from our families and I soon understood that they would not let us see our loved ones again. Although we were children, we were expected to give our lives for the nation. I got into the rhythm of the army and got used to the people and the life there.

We didn't know anything about politics. We were simply taught warfare and to obey orders. We became soldiers. We saw ourselves as belonging to the same family and had a lot of fun.

* *Les armes miraculeuses* (Miracle weapons) is the title of a collection of poetry by the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire (1913 – 2008).

miracle weapons

You had fun! Weren't you afraid you would be killed?

We knew we were going to die, but sometimes we thought death was for the dying, not for us. We smoked joints and saw ourselves as actors in a Schwarzenegger film, as if death weren't real. We were the stars of the army, because the adults found the child-soldiers very entertaining.

But we missed being able to play. They paid my wages, but I had nothing to spend it on, except maybe some toy soldiers. [And when the war started again I put my uniform back on and got ready to play at fighting for real.

I learned to live without fear or humility. I couldn't live like that today. When I see myself in the army, it's as if I am looking from the outside. I don't recognize that child, because I am so different now.

Did you have dreams, or did you stop yourself from even thinking about them?

We didn't have time to think. We didn't think about the future. We didn't even think we might grow up one day. We were there to fight in the war, and that's all there was to it.

🔴 Scene from a performance of "Congo my body" at the Parc de la Villette in Paris (France), in 2010

What do you think about the soldiers who forced you to fight and who continue to do the same thing to other children today?

At the time we thought we were helping the nation and were fans of President Kabila. He was like a father for us and we liked him a lot. We didn't particularly blame the soldiers, as they had given us a power over adults that children do not usually have. We were always competing to see who was the strongest. The civilian world was unknown to us. We had power, why let it go?

I still don't know enough about politics to understand why the war started and why these soldiers took us away. But I do know that if you love your country, you have to protect the children. Who will free the country from war if the children spend all their time in the army? I am not angry, but I do not agree with the soldiers either. I feel sorry for them, more than anything. They don't know what they are doing.

"People say we are war children, child-soldiers, kadogos, but we were children in the war. I didn't want to be in the war, I was made to carry a gun, and I no longer had my parents or my family, I only had the army and my gun, my gun that I was told was my mother and father."

Serge Amisi, *Souvenez-vous de moi, l'enfant de demain*, Vents d'ailleurs, 2011

Today you can see that you were being manipulated. Do you feel you've freed yourself from this military programming?

I found it hard to get back into civilian life. I was demobilized in 2001 and became a civilian again. But I still thought like a soldier. It is thanks to the *Espace Masolo* [a resource centre for artists and craftspeople, set up in Kinshasa in 2003, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, by the Congolese artists Malvine Velo, Hubert Mahela and Lamber Mousseka] that I learned how to get along better with other people. That's where I discovered art and found my freedom and independence again.

During the war you were a musical entertainer much appreciated by your comrades. Did singing help you put up with the situation?

Yes, I loved to sing and make people laugh. Before the army, my elder brothers used to sing me songs and tell



stories. In the army, some of the soldiers had children that they missed. They used to call on me to lift their spirits. My little voice and child's size made them laugh. I was a kind of mini-star all on my own, which made some of the other child soldiers jealous. I loved to act and could imagine myself as an artist.

What art forms do you use today?

I am a dancer, puppeteer and sculptor. I have an idea for a solo project where I combine all three art forms. Meanwhile, I put on a play [*Congo My Body*] with my friend Yaoundé Mulamba, who I knew before the army and who was a child soldier with me. In the past few years we have played in different places in Europe and DRC. I still can't earn a living from art, but I hope to find a studio where I can work. I also have other projects, simply as an artist, not as an ex-child-soldier, and I am in contact with youth groups in Mozambique and Germany.

How did you feel about performing in front of other people when you first started as an artist? Were you afraid?

I was afraid I would shock people and not be able to deal with that. I was even afraid I'd be threatened or judged. When I came to France at the end of 2008, I suddenly felt shocked by my own past and I started to think about it a lot. I had the impression I was reliving everything in my head. Now I feel more at peace and avoid thinking too much about it so that I can move on. If I could have, I wouldn't have gone to fight in the war. I try not to feel guilty, by telling myself that it was not my fault, that the adults forced me to go and drugged me. I have managed to distance myself from all of that with the help of a few people who have given me a lot of support. One day I was given some notebooks and I started to write my life story, just for myself.

Last March, your book, *Souvenez-vous de moi, l'enfant de demain* [Remember me, tomorrow's child], came out in France, published by Vents d'ailleurs. What message do you want to pass on to today's young people?

I published this book [using the notes he wrote in Lingala in the notebooks between 2004 and 2008] to leave a record of what happened and to show young people what I went through as a child and what others went through or are still going through in other parts of the world. This could be useful to them. ■



Serge Amisi was interviewed in April 2011 in the *Courier* office by Selen Demir, 18, a French-Turkish student at the University of Paris IV (France). This is her first magazine interview.

© UNESCO/Danica Bijeljic

Locked in the cycle of violence

Some 28 million children are deprived of education because of armed conflict around the world. "Armed conflict remains a major roadblock to human development in many parts of the world, yet its impact on education is widely neglected," said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. War destroys not only schools and educational infrastructure, but also the hope and ambitions of whole generations.

The 2011 Education for All Global Monitoring Report "The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education" points out that the problem is not only the conflict itself, but also what comes along with it.

Children drop out of school or their parents forbid them to go. There are constant threats to children and teachers in and outside school boundaries. The younger generation is terrorized, raped and kidnapped. Many abducted children are put into the armed forces to fight. If they want to live and see their families again, they have to go and kill. Rape is often used as a war tactic and in certain countries the young are particularly targeted because they are defenseless.

"I was just coming back home from the river to fetch water," says Minova, 15, South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo. "Two soldiers came up to me and told me that if I refuse to sleep with them, they will kill me. They beat me and ripped my clothes. One of the soldiers raped me. ...My parents spoke to a commander and he said that his soldiers do not rape, and that I am lying. I recognized the two soldiers, and I know that one of them is called Edouard." (*Human Rights Watch*, 2009).

While it is evident that armed conflicts undermine education, it is less obvious that the failures of education can fuel conflicts. Yet an educational system that fails to provide young people with the knowledge and skills to avoid unemployment and poverty, as well as the requisite tools to learn "living together" and respect for other people, becomes an underground source of hatred and discord.

Mila Zourleva, 22, Bulgarian student and intern, UNESCO Division of Public Information

Poet, rapper and essayist Nate Marshall, 21, reciting his work at the poetry slam "Louder Than a Bomb" in Chicago (USA).
© Siskel/Jacobs Productions



When poetry is louder than a bomb

Creating community in a city notorious in the past for segregation, elevating the visibility of young people's art and voice, filling the silence of misunderstanding.... These are a few of the achievements of the poetry slam with the resounding name of Louder Than a Bomb, where Chicago's budding poets get together.

NATE MARSHALL

It isn't a place exactly. Technically it would be defined as an event. More accurately it could be described as a community. Perhaps though it would be best characterized as a spirit that for almost three weeks at the close of winter each year inhabits a growing number of educators, students, poets, and spectators throughout the Chicagoland area. It's Louder Than a Bomb, the Chicago Youth Poetry Festival.

Louder Than a Bomb (LTaB) started in 2001 as a poetry slam of 8 high schools in what co-founder Kevin Coval can only describe as a "rat-infested basement." By the time I began competing in Louder Than a Bomb as a 13 year old the competition had grown to 15 teams (mine being the only team representing a middle school). It was in

2003 and I vividly remember walking into the opening event of the weekend, an event known as "Crossing the Street" and seeing a life-altering scene. Inside the dark room I saw teenagers of all colors gathered around in celebration of themselves. The air was filled with the smell of free pizza and the thump of hip-hop music and I was mesmerized by the energy in the room.

The part of the scene that most drew me was a large and growing circle of students in the background. As I bordered on the outskirts of the group I heard the voices of young people rhyming. More than simply reciting memorized lyrics they were spontaneously composing raps, songs, and chants. As I watched this freestyle cipher for a few minutes, I was struck by the radical democracy of the circle. Everybody who wanted an opportunity to rhyme got one. Skill was the only measure by which everyone was judged.

The marquee event of LTaB is still the poetry slam. A poetry slam is an Olympic-style poetry contest where writers present original work without the aid of music or props. The slam is, by nature, ridiculously subjective in its judging and there is a saying at LTaB that the best poets never win. While to many outside of the community this sounds like an egregious injustice, the secret of the slam is that it is a gimmick. Slam uses the ruse of competition to elevate the visibility of the art and voice of young people.

Poetry against segregation

This work would be important in any place but in the city of Chicago it is an essential labor. Chicago is a remarkably segregated city. In the city Dr. Martin Luther King once called "the northern most racist city" there is still a culture that rarely puts people of different racial or socioeconomic backgrounds in the same

room. LTaB's demographic is so bizarre because it defies the tendency towards the monolith that is ever present in Chicago. LTaB does important work every year bringing students from all different types of backgrounds to gather, listen, and learn from themselves and each other.

Chicago's literary legacy is an enviable one and that is evident in the work of the students. To hear a student like Kush Thompson from the troubled Orr High School on the West Side of Chicago speak passionately about the unfair body images that a "Mattel branded" (makers of the Barbie doll, notably) society propagates is an amazing thing. It's even more amazing to see her share the stage with students from marquee magnet schools and wealthy suburban schools that can identify with her story. This discovery of commonality among students is creating a new culture in the city.

Even as Chicago in the past few years has experienced a rash of youth violence LTaB has remained an amazing example of safe space. In 10 years of operation LTaB has never experienced a violent incident, even as they draw students from across the invisible yet very real lines that separate different neighborhoods and gang territories. Despite the increasingly steep competition, which now includes over 70 teams and 30 individual poets, the spirit of community remains intact at LTaB. The cipher is still one of the most common occurrences at LTaB and it is not uncommon after a bout to see the competing teams trading notes and laughs at a local fried chicken restaurant.

Bomb debris

In 2007 US filmmakers Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel noticed this spirit. During the next year they followed three individuals and one team on their journey in preparation for LTaB. I was lucky to be among those they decided to follow. From the hundreds of hours of footage they built a documentary film to offer a glimpse into the lives of a few students and the way in which the slam has been a life-shifting experience for the young people involved.

The documentary has garnered positive reviews from famed film critic Roger Ebert, Variety Magazine, and the LA Times among others. Film festivals across the U.S. and Canada have selected "Louder Than a Bomb" and it has won

© Courtesy of Siskel/Jacobs Productions



Scene from the film "Louder Than a Bomb".

"If you're not here during the first week of May, then you're not in best place. Louder Than a Bomb is the coolest place on the planet."

Adam Gottlieb, contestant from 2005 to 2008



Poster from the latest Louder Than a Bomb event.

awards at many, including Palm Springs, Chicago, and Austin. The film will be aired in the fall of 2011 nationally on the Oprah Winfrey Network as a part of her documentary of the month club. The LTaB film has even inspired an offshoot event in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In April of 2011 I was able to travel to Tulsa with Kevin Coval to help organize the first annual LTaB Tulsa.

Erika Dickerson, 2009 LTaB All-Star, loves the platform of the festival as an opportunity to "build community and network with one another as well as professional artists." Cydney Edwards, a two-time LTaB All-Star, said "Louder Than a Bomb was a venue for me to align

myself with peers of mine from all over Chicago and mold my craft." These students, some of the champions of the slam, represent the small section of the participants who will pursue their literary art as a career. For so many other students, there is less focus on craft, but that is perfectly fine. Louder Than a Bomb produces great art, and elevates that art in ways that it would not be otherwise, but the most pressing work that LTaB does is elevate young people. By empowering them to use their words and listen to each other, LTaB empowers students to analyze and challenge the world that they live in and its injustices and shortcomings. As 2011 LTaB Indy Slam Champion Malcolm London said about the work of the festival, "this doesn't stop at LTaB." These students create community where segregation existed for their parents. They fill the dangerous silence of misunderstanding with a symphony of stories.

The power of LTaB is that sense of the story, that sense of imagination, and student using it to tell a willing audience about the world they live while empowering them to build the world they dream. ■

Nate Marshall, 21, is a poet, rapper and essayist. Main character in the award-winning feature-length documentary "Louder Than a Bomb", he was a finalist of the Chicago Literary Guild's Gwendolyn Brooks Open Mic Award 2010. His work has been published in several poetry anthologies. He is finishing his BA in English and Afro-American studies at Vanderbilt University in Nashville (USA).

View of the Morro da Providencia favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with photos from JR's August 2008 project "Women are Heroes" covering walls.
© Courtesy of JR:
<http://jr-art.net/>



Different dreams, yet...

They come from different countries, have different occupations, speak different languages, yet they have much in common: youth, art, a desire to connect with other cultures. Until recently, they'd never even met: UNESCO brought them together. They were awarded the title of "Young Artist for Intercultural Dialogue between Arab and Western Worlds". Among them, Betty Shamieh (USA/Occupied Palestinian Territory), Merlijn Twaalfhoven (Netherlands) and two members of the Talent 2008 project, Ingebjørg Bratland (Norway) and Majd Shahin (Occupied Palestinian Territory) answered our questions to share their convictions, projects and passions with our readers.

Interview conducted by Iris Julia Bührle and Khaled Abu Hijleh

How can the artist contribute to building peace and mutual understanding between people around the world?

Betty Shamieh: Artists illuminate the common humanity that we all share. What is wonderful about theatre is that it shows us how similar we are, not only across the globe but throughout generations. It shows us not only how we should coexist peacefully, but also why. When one sees a work of art, particularly a work of theatre where a story that was written in the time of the Greeks still has resonance today, it becomes clear that we do have a recognizable but indefinable human essence.

Ingebjørg Bratland: I think that music is the language of the heart and when we do not speak the same language, we can communicate through music. The world can sometimes seem very violent, so it is great to come together and play music, which is something that we are passionate about. It is a break from the world that we are living in, a kind of free space.

Majd Shahin: Music is the language of the nations. I think music is the way to make other people understand what you are and what you feel.

Merlijn Twaalfhoven: In my projects, I usually avoid to use the word "peace" because the term is surrounded by many expectations, but also by moments of disappointment or even frustration. However, you can reflect about what are conditions for peace. In my opinion, one condition for peace is contact between people. Therefore, I wanted to stimulate contact and make people curious. Art is an excellent way to make people curious, not to give answers but to create openings. When something is open, when something is not exactly fixed, people want to continue because they want to learn more and look for the truth. And that is what I believe can be a condition for a road to peace and understanding. I am happy when I leave a place and people have many questions.

What kind of difficulties you have faced in your projects? How did you overcome them?

B.S.: One difficulty when you deal with challenging subjects is that you need to be able to not fully articulate your

perspective. Sometimes artists avoid controversial issues because they think they have to have answers or that they have to be able to speak in a way that no one can find fault with. I think that artists should feel free to be wrong from time to time.

The other thing that I often face is that people just assume that they know my politics. My dream is that one day the Middle East will look like the European Union. Of course most people immediately say that this is impossible and then I remind them of the situation in Europe one hundred years ago – within the last century, Europe has had two World Wars and countries were occupying each other and tearing each other apart. I want to challenge the belief that we cannot change in the Middle East.

I.B.: The only problem for me was the language. Some of the artists from Egypt and Palestine did not speak much English, and it can be a bit tough to come together and make music when you cannot communicate with words. So we just had to use the music and play!

M.S.: I did not have any problems with the language and to cooperate with musicians from other parts of the world, but the music was a challenge. I am a percussionist and for me it is difficult to play a Norwegian song because the beats are totally different from the Oriental beats I usually play. But it has been a very good experience!

I think that artists should feel free to be wrong from time to time.

Betty Shamieh

M.T.: The difficulty in my work is that when you want to do something unconventional and you want to convince others to go with you to an unknown territory, then people do not have the same idea in their minds as you. In Cyprus, for example, I talked a lot about the unity of the island and about connecting both sides (north and south, which are separate states) by music and people did not know what I wanted and what was my political agenda... So finally I abandoned all my theories and I just said: let's go on the rooftop and play music and listen to the other side.

And by doing that it became clear. But I made many mistakes on the road by making it too complex and by expecting others to have the same dreams. Everyone has different dreams but once you start realizing, once you just start doing, then people get inspired and feel connections.

How do you define your role as an artist in the social and political life of your own country?

B.S.: I think the role of the artist in any society is to inspire. What I hope to inspire in the people in the country where I live, which is America, is a real desire to be a citizen of the world, a desire to know about other cultures and to see different perspectives.

When you live between two cultures, it is also very important to show the similarities between them. Many works of Western artists about the Middle East, for instance, focus on the plight of women. I live in America where women also have little political, economic and artistic power. Therefore, I feel that one of the things I need to do as an artist is to talk about how women's situations across the globe are similar because it is very easy to look at other cultures, but people sometimes forget to look at their own. As I live in two worlds, it makes me question how different cultures really are at their base.

M.S.: My country, Palestine, has a lot of messages and a lot of dreams that we want to send to the whole world. I think that in my music I can do this. Of course the messages are different inside and outside Palestine. Outside, you have to clarify a lot of things about your country; inside, you have to support the people. The reactions to this have been quite different, but I feel proud of my country's cultural richness which I can show to the world.

I.B.: Outside we only hear about Palestine in connection to war, and it is great that we see that there is music also and that people are living lives in Palestine. I myself as a folk musician in Norway think that it is important that there are young people continuing the tradition of Norwegian folk music because folk music has to be kept alive.

M.T.: As an artist, I hope to confuse and to break the surface. People have a

strong need to make the world around them very clear and to put labels, and after that it is very hard to change their minds. So I believe confusion is needed so that people realize that the labels do not always fit and start looking what is behind them.

It is a privilege that I can go to places about which I am curious, but it is also important that I let others follow me. If I travel to Syria it is a great experience for me, but I try to find ways that through my projects people in the Western world can also travel a bit to Syria. I feel that I have to share this curiosity; it is not only for myself.

I meet many artists in Holland who are very focused just on the quality of making music, but most people do not ask whether they could use their quality as a tool for making the world better. Thanks to UNESCO, I have met more people who think not only about art, but also about art inside the world and what it might change.

*As an artist, I hope to confuse
and to break the surface.*

Merlijn Twaalfhoven

What are your plans in the near future, after having won the UNESCO award?

M.T.: This recognition is very important for me because my work takes place outside concert halls or festivals or programmes of orchestras. I do it on my own with a small organization or with freelancers, and with hardly any budget. Sometimes I obtain media attention and that is important, but as it is not inside the infrastructure of culture my work is hard to label, and therefore it is difficult to find support and partners. Such a title gives some clarity to the fact that I am doing this type of work and that it has some positive results. I also hope that the next years I can follow up on the projects that I started – for instance Al Quds Underground in East Jerusalem. What I have done so far is just a beginning!

B.S.: This title was incredibly meaningful for me. It was the first time in my life that I felt that both my Palestinian and American origin were recognized; thus, UNESCO has acknowledged the complexity of identity. In addition to continuing to develop as an artist, I would like to support the efforts of the late Juliano Mer Khamis (Israeli actor and

UNESCO's young artists

Twenty-four artists aged under 35 were awarded the title of "Young Artist for Intercultural Dialogue between Arab and Western Worlds" by UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova, at a ceremony held at the Organization's headquarters on 13 April 2011. This honour recognizes the exceptional contribution to dialogue and exchange between Arab and Western cultures made by:

Ruti Sela and Mayaan Amir (Israel), artists and curators, designed the 'Exterritory' project as a way to bring together artists and intellectuals living in conflict zones, especially Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (Belgium/Morocco), dancer and choreographer, has produced performances that illustrate the meeting of cultures and explorations of identity.

Federico Ferrone (Italy), filmmaker, has produced several films on immigration, suburbs and the contribution of immigrant communities to a country's culture.

Faïza Guène (France/Algeria), novelist, whose highly acclaimed writings portray reality for those of North African descent living in French suburbs, and counter clichés and prejudice.

JR (France), photographer, is behind the 'Face2Face' project, which consists of posting photographs side by side of Israelis and Palestinians doing the same jobs.

Ibrahim Maalouf (Lebanon), trumpeter, mixes Western and Eastern musical styles and works with artists from all over the world.

'Massar Egbari' (Egypt), musicians, launched the 'Music as a means of intercultural dialogue' project, inviting Western artists to share the stage in concerts.

Betty Shamieh (USA/ Occupied Palestinian Territory), playwright, has written plays that highlight intercultural relations, especially between Arabs and Americans.

Zuhair Sultan (Iraq), pianist, who, at the age of 17, founded the National Youth Orchestra of Iraq, which works with several Western artists.

The 'Talent 2008' project brings together nine young musicians playing traditional European and Arab music (Occupied Palestinian Territory, Egypt, Norway).

Merlijn Twaalfhoven (Netherlands), composer and musician, has started some exceptional projects in Jordan, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and the Netherlands, using music to create links and thus serving as a symbol of peace.

📷 Group photo taken at the nomination ceremony for "Young Artists for Intercultural Dialogue between Arab and Western Worlds" on 13 April 2011 at UNESCO.



© UNESCO/Michel Ravassard





*An imam, a minister and a rabbi strike playful poses,
as part of the 2007 "Face 2 Face" project by
JR and Marco, who covered walls with portraits of
Israelis and Palestinians working at the
same jobs. © Courtesy of JR: <http://jr-art.net/>*

theatre director, assassinated on 4 April 2011) who did wonderful work in Jenin. We must not allow violence to scare us away from continuing to do work and continuing to aspire for the kind of future that everybody deserves.

I.B.: I would love to visit other countries and learn about their folk music. I think that traditional music is a particularly good way to learn about other cultures, even better than classical music which has become more universal. And in my opinion, you have to visit the country and to see how people live there and how they play and use their folk music. I also use some of the things that I have learned from Arabic music and make them a part of my own music. Furthermore, as we have been in Egypt and in Norway with the Talent project, it would be great to visit Palestine as well and do concerts there!

M.S.: I will also continue my path as a Palestinian folk musician inside and outside my country. The UNESCO title encourages me and gives me a push to take a step forward in my music life. It is great to find people that understand and appreciate your art. I was so surprised when I met the other artists who were attributed the title and saw the other projects – you feel you are not alone! There are people from everywhere trying to do what you do. ■

Iris Julia Bührle, 29, is a German art historian and also a specialist in comparative literature. She has written numerous articles and scholarly papers on dance, literature and history (including a thesis on France and UNESCO from 1945 to 1958).

📍 Staircase in the Morro da Providencia favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, covered with a photo from JR's August 2008 "Women are Heroes" project.



JR, Art and the Impossible

JR, who took the photographs illustrating this article, is a member of the UNESCO young artists group. This 28-year-old French 'urban activist' (sic) claims to have the largest gallery in the world – the street!

In 2001, JR began clandestinely pasting onto the facades of Parisian buildings photocopies of the snapshots he was taking of his friends doing graffiti on the rooftops. His subjects quickly became more diverse while the images grew bigger, reaching 6 x 8 metres in 2004 with his "Portrait of a Generation", which made him famous. That year he also exhibited in the streets of New York, Los Angeles, Paris and the *Cité des Bosquets* social housing estate in Montfermeil, a disadvantaged Paris suburb.

In March 2007, with Marco, he staged *Face 2 Face*, "the biggest photo exhibition ever". They posted, side by side, giant portraits of Israelis and Palestinians doing the same jobs in several towns in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. "*Face 2 Face* demonstrated that what we thought impossible was possible, even easy," he said on 2 March 2011 at the TED prize awards ceremony in Long Beach (USA) (www.tedprize.org).

In 2008 and 2009 his *Women Are Heroes* project took him to Kenya, Brazil, India and Cambodia. In spring 2011, he rushed to Tunisia to cover police stations and political party headquarters with photos, as part of the *Inside Out* project. In 10 years, he has achieved what we thought was impossible. And he makes it all seem so easy! – **J. Šopova**

See JR's website: [www.jr-art.net](http://jr-art.net)

The world can sometimes seem very violent, so it is great to come together and play music, which is something that we are passionate about.

Ingebjørg Bratland

Patrimonito in Togo



Patrimonito, a cartoon character representing a young guardian of world heritage, made his appearance in 1995. He is the mascot of World Heritage volunteers, taking his young companions to Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. The young volunteers take part in the preservation and appreciation of emblematic World Heritage sites, under the supervision of the World Heritage Centre and the CCIVS*.

KATERINA MARKELOVA

If the hundred-year-old tata mud houses of Togo had arms, they would reach out to hug these young people, just like grandmothers hugging their grandchildren. For the past four years volunteers from Togo, Sweden, Japan, and South Korea have been meeting up in Koutammakou, a World Heritage site in northeast Togo, to look after these fragile old ladies.

The tatas – traditional, tower-flanked mud houses – seem to embody all the wisdom of the Batammariba people. But they are crumbling under the weight of modernisation, with its quick and easy building codes. And Nature is not helping them either, leaving a sad scene of collapsed houses after the rainy season in August and September. And even the Nere tree, whose bark is used to make whitewash for the walls of the tatas, is becoming scarce.

That is where the young volunteers decided to start. Just like the tree, whose symbolic name means “it is good” in Bambara, and whose roots sometimes reach 60 feet underground to find water and provide a harvest of fruits packed with goodness, these young people also went to the source.

What could be better than to plant a tree that feeds the villagers while, at the same time, it provides the material to waterproof the tatas?

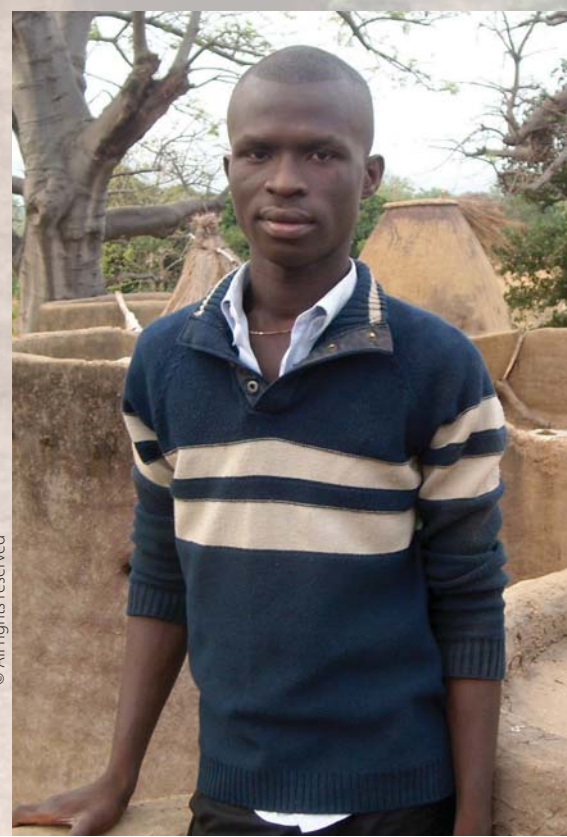
Working under the umbrella of the Togolese NGO FAGAD (*Frères agriculteurs et artisans pour le développement*) and supported by the Patrimonito project and CCIVS, these young World Heritage volunteers have identified and planted various endangered plant species used in the construction of the tatas. Within two years, the site acquired 1,050 new trees in a 2000 m² area. A first step, providing the necessary materials to restore the tatas using traditional methods.

But besides the tangible aspects of Tamberma culture – another name for the Batammariba – the volunteers wanted to help preserve its intangible aspects too, by becoming associated with the first Tamberma Festival, from 26 to 30 March 2011. “This is the first year the Festamber festival has been held,” explains Atti Y. Tata, a 23-year-old Togolese man who runs a camp that hosted seven volunteers this year. “We were very excited at the idea of taking part in this new initiative, which showcases the richness of our local

culture, languages, crafts and farm products.” These jewels, along with the tatas, make Togo a stop not to be missed on a cultural tourist’s itinerary in West Africa. “For people who do not know anything about this culture, which was my case, this festival is a very good way to get immersed in it in just a week,” enthuses Linda Gustafssona, 24-year-old Swedish volunteer. “I really hope it will keep going, because it also gives the Tamberma an opportunity to appreciate the wealth of the Koutammakou site in a new way.”

Based in Adeta, the young volunteers were not daunted by the 400 km journey to Koutammakou. With no vehicle at their disposal, they did the best they could: “We travelled by taxi, bus or motorbike, depending on the state of the roads,” says Atti. Indeed, the project is still a work in progress. “We were supposed to help with preparations for the festival, but by the time we got there, there was hardly anything left to do,” says Linda. But even if it takes time to build up momentum, what counts is the will to discover and simply to get involved. ■

Att Y. Tata, in Koutammakou (Togo).



Wonders of Creativity

Youth volunteering can achieve so much. Offer young people role models and inspire them with a new outlook, and their creativity pays dividends. Take youth seriously, give them responsibility and a place in society based on trust, and they excel.

Volunteering empowers young people to act and change the world around them. In 2010, the United Nations volunteering programme deployed in 132 countries nearly 8,000 people from 158 countries. It

mobilized another 10,000 volunteers who contributed to development through the on-line volunteering service. About 62% of them were from developing countries and 80% were young people between the ages of 18 and 35.

The year 2011 marks the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers. It is also the European Year of Volunteering- yet another reason for young people to exercise their right to community participation. ■

United Nations Volunteers site: <http://www.unv.org/en.html>

🔴 Opening of the Scouts' 13th World Moot in Kenya, on 27 July 2010.



©WSB Inc. / Victor Ortega

Building citizenship. That's how I define my experience as a United Nations volunteer. I recently participated in the campaign "Unite to end violence against women" launched by the United Nations Secretary-General. I helped set up discussions on several social networks to make Bolivians more aware of this serious problem. One lesson I learned from this recent six-month experience - young volunteers are extremely committed and professional. We are young professionals who are eager to learn and to help build social justice.

Volunteering is perfect for tapping into the idealism and drive of young people. Despite appearances, our lack of experience due to our young age is an easily overcome obstacle. In addition to its social value, community participation through volunteering can be a means for us young people to get our first experience in the ethical principles on which the dignity of individuals and societies depend. This kind of participation turns us into solution makers, a force for development instead of a vulnerable group. ■

Silvia Bellón, Spanish student, 23

Kenyan Scout Josephat Gitonga, 28, takes community service very seriously. He treats it almost as a "sacred duty", which has earned him recognition from the Kenya Scouts Association and the job of director of the Scout centre in his town, Embu, located about 120 km northeast of Nairobi. Passionate and hardworking, Josephat threw himself into this adventure by reaching 200% of the objectives! With the support of his Norwegian counterparts, he succeeded in opening the centre to the community and making it practically autonomous financially, though a hostel and restaurant micro-project that also created jobs.

Initially the centre planned to hold only occasional scouting activities. But Josephat dreamed of turning Embu into a global village. Never had the international Moots – the big meetings of the oldest group of Scouts, age 18 to 25 – been organized in Africa. It was time to take action.

Relying on the experience that built his reputation among Scouts all the way to Asia and Latin America, Josephat quickly persuaded the Kenya Scouts Association to nominate his town as one of the three Kenyan locations for the 13th World Scout Moot (27 July-7 August 2010). The dream became reality: more than 1,000 young world citizens arrived in Embu, which had never known so much friendship, laughter and brotherhood as well as discussion on today's major challenges. ■

Pierre Arlaud, Swiss student, 25; Representative, External Relations at the World Organization of the Scout Movement. worldbureau@scout.org

Sport: only a starting point

While the greatest players in football were competing in Johannesburg (South Africa) for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, 32 teams of young people were coming together from around the world

for a more unusual tournament, the Football for Hope Festival 2010.

Organized by *streetfootballworld*, FIFA, the 2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee South Africa and the City of

Johannesburg, the festival brought together for two weeks more than 250 boys and girls from disadvantaged communities—from tiny rural villages in Cambodia to the inner cities of the United States, the slums of India to the favelas of Rio. Conquering cultural barriers, they came together through the language of the game. They broadened their horizons and gained the confidence they needed to return to their homes and shape not only their own destinies, but those of their communities as well.

Empowering disadvantaged youth to improve their lives is the goal of the *streetfootballworld* network. It unites over 80 organizations with a special approach to tackling social challenges like HIV/Aids, crime and homelessness: they use football to bring young people into social development programmes—and keep them there. Working with the network and partners, *streetfootballworld* aims to reach out to 2,000,000 young people worldwide every year until 2015.

Football can help find solutions to problems too complex to be solved by conventional methods. The game is only the starting point. ■

www.streetfootballworld.org

Empowering disadvantaged youth to improve their lives is the goal of the streetfootballworld network.



© Football's Hidden Stories – Peter Dench

Youth Olympic Games

The International Year of Youth (IYY) coincides with the creation of a new Olympic tradition. The Youth Olympic Games (YOG) were inaugurated by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)* last August, just days after the start of the UN Year. The Youth Games combine sport, education and cultural activities in a unique format for young people between the ages of 15 and 18. At the games, young people learn from athlete role

models and from each other in a setting that encourages lasting friendships.

The first YOG, held in Singapore, drew about 3,500 young people from around the world. The results exceeded expectations on every level. The participants offered their assessment of the inaugural YOG in December at the 7th World Conference on Sport, Education and Culture in Durban, South Africa, cosponsored by the IOC and UNESCO.

In keeping with the theme of the conference, "Giving a Voice to Youth," teenage delegates took an active role at

the meeting. Delegates also urged the IOC to keep the spirit of the YOG alive in the period between Games.

That spirit is certainly alive and well in Innsbruck, Austria, where organizers are in the final countdown to the first Winter Youth Olympic Games in January 2012. Meanwhile, Nanjing, China, is preparing for the second Youth Olympic Summer Games in 2014. ■

International Olympic Committee
www.olympic.org

* In late 2009, the IOC received official UN Observer status.

Moonlight stars

CAROL NATUKUNDA

Africa, unemployment, slums: a lethal combination leading Ugandan adolescent girls to prostitution and ruin. Until a group of young people decided to take things in hand.

From a distance, Kawempe division in Kampala (Uganda) looks like any shanty town: a sea of tiny shacks with mud and wattle walls. But getting closer, the stench of disease and despair hangs about like the angel of death. Children's eyes glint warily as they peer at a visitor walking past. But gallantly, they play about joyfully. They have probably never used toothpaste in their short lives, but that is of no consequence. Their haunting voices echo in the distance as you move further into the swampy slums. Kawempe is characterized by swampy slums where most people are not sure of their next meal.

Unemployment rates are high, with low family incomes and high dependence on those who can earn, increasing levels of poverty and the inability to afford health services. Most women here are involved in prostitution or commercial sex to make a living. Such is the condition that a few years ago moved James Tumusiime, a young psychologist now 30, to tears. A recent graduate, James was working as a volunteer counselor at a local clinic in Kawempe when he met the 19-year-old mother. "She looked frail, and she said her children were always falling sick. She thought it was malaria. I advised her to test for HIV," James recounts and pauses. The pause is so long that you are afraid the interview is over. "The test was positive. I felt bad. She cried so hard. Although I tried to counsel her to live with a positive mind, I never saw her again. I tried to reach her on her cell number in vain...I pray she did not commit suicide," he says. Even now as James tells the story, his face darkens.

But that incident was the turning point for this psychology graduate. Together with seven other young people, he set out to "break the ice" and reach out to such vulnerable single mothers in the area, most of whom were making a living through commercial sex. Despite the fact that in Uganda, commercial sex is illegal under the constitution.

Getting the project going

Another 30-year-old man, who prefers anonymity, recalls that he was also a community worker when James approached him. "There had been a project before by Plan UK, a charity organization which was only catering for children. But in most cases when you met children and asked who their parents were, they did not know. So we felt we needed a project targeting sex workers that could help them live responsibly." Another young man in his late 20s tells heartrending stories of prostitutes fighting over "clients." Once, he says, his sister was beaten by a prostitute who thought she too was competing with her.

"I remember the day we started the 'breaking the ice' project. We went there for a week, every night, to see for ourselves. It was sad seeing even policemen on night patrol demanding sex from the girls. That strengthened our will to do something to change lives," he says. "There were so many teen mothers with children whose fathers they did not know. Some of them were as young as 13. And most of them were in the age group of 13 to 25. Some of them were students, others barmaids and waitresses," James recalls.

In 2007, the 'breaking the ice' project was launched. "We began with a group of about 10 mothers we had interacted with who had told us they were sex workers. We asked them to identify others," says James, the project coordinator. "We wanted the girls to protect themselves from HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases. (STDs) We finally got 60 mothers whom we trained as peer educators. It is easy for the mothers to be listened to from their experiences. Even for the men involved in prostitution, they tend to listen to a woman demonstrating the use of a condom, for instance, rather than to another man," James says.


By 2009, the number of beneficiaries had swelled to 3,000 sex workers. At this point, Reproductive Health Uganda came in with financial support from the Japanese government to set up Moonlight Stars Clinic, which offers free counseling and testing services for HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted infections. "We called our clients Moonlight Stars because we did not want a name that would marginalize them," James says. The beneficiaries are given cards for identification, to avoid having non-beneficiaries storm the clinic for free treatment.

A call for donations

Florence Kyeswa, head of the clinic, says they receive on average about 70 clients in a week from the slums in Kawempe Division, most of them suffering from STDs. The funds from the Japanese government have also been used to train the "moonlight stars" in tailoring, bakery, arts, crafts and mechanical work.



© Patrick Lagès

 Solitude, light and shadow, somewhere in Africa.

James says the beneficiaries are divided in groups of about 20, and each group given 5 million shillings (about US \$2,500 dollars) as start up capital. And the majority of those who have been equipped have a story to tell. "I am now able to fend for my children, without having to give in to sex. I feel confident and happy that I am laying a good foundation for my daughter," says a 17-year-old mother of one, who bakes pancakes for a living. Another 21-year-old HIV-positive mother chips in: "There was a time I felt I wanted to die. I did not see any point facing the next day because of my status. But now, I have access to treatment and condoms, and a sewing machine. I make about 5 dollars on a good day from tailoring." The one challenge, according to James, is that some sex workers are tempted to fall back on vice. Also, he says, they rely on donor funds, and the Japanese funding is now finished. The moonlight stars are looking for new donors. The project has drawn several partners including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which has identified sex workers as a high risk group in the spread of HIV. and hence is calling for more attention to be paid to the group. "HIV is not only spread through

married couples, as we tend to think. Commercial sex workers are a forgotten lot," observes James.

Other partners are Uganda Youth Development Link, an organization which provides guidance and counseling to street children and other young people, and Beads for Life Uganda, a non-profit organization that empowers Ugandan women who make handcrafted beads from recycled paper and turn them into necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. The two organizations are

Carol Natukunda, 28, is a Ugandan journalist and the 2008 laureate for the prestigious African education journalism award organised every year by the Association for the Development of Education (ADEA).



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now actively involved in sensitizing young people across the country in responsible living. ■

Uniting against AIDS

World leaders gathered at a High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS at the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 8-10 June 2011.

The meeting focused on the gains made 30 years into the epidemic and on the renewed commitment required to achieve zero new infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths.

Member States promised "bold and decisive action". They adopted a new Declaration that will guide a sustained response to HIV and AIDS based on change management rather than crisis management, emphasizing country- and people-owned strategies.

As a UNAIDS cosponsor, UNESCO will continue to lead efforts to engage young people and the education sector in the response to HIV and AIDS and to support prevention through sexuality education, gender equality and human rights. ■

Khalida Brohi's conviction comes across instantly from behind her bright eyes and inimitable warm smile. Yet who could imagine that this petite young woman from a conservative tribal community in Balochistan, southwestern province of Pakistan, has been a change maker since age 16, when she first took a stand against the centuries-old tradition of honour killing?

Noshan Abbas meets
KHALIDA BROHI



The young sughar from Balochistan

It all began the day Khalida Brohi, now 22 years old, learned about the custom of karo kari, or honour killing. Honour killing is the murder of a woman or an act of extreme violence against her perpetrated by her male relatives when she is perceived as having brought dishonour upon her family. Horrified, Khalida vowed to fight this heinous tradition. Unable to take direct action to oppose violence against women, she began writing poems about karo kari and within her community she launched an aggressive awareness raising campaign against honour killing.

But in a religious, conservative community whose underpinnings are encapsulated in the common proverb 'zar, zan, zameen' (women, gold and land) - the three main possessions directly linked to man's honour - trying to incite local community leaders to make the distinction between ancestral custom and religious practice was much more dangerous than Khalida imagined.

According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPP) chairperson I. A Rehman, "Honour killing used to be practiced only in remote districts but now it happens in

metropolitan cities, in Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar, for example. The settled districts have acquired this evil too. It's one of the biggest problems women face. Honour killings are not always reported, although since the women's act of 2006, cases have started being brought to the attention of authorities. We have only an approximate figure, which amounts to 800 to 1,000 killings a year- there may be marginal variations in the number from year to year but the situation remains the same."

Despite challenges of all kinds, Khalida helped found in 2004 the



© UN Photo/John Isaac

organization Participatory Development Initiatives (PDI). It has established innovative ideas such as the Sughar (which means skilled and confident woman in the local language) Programme to end honour killing by enabling economic empowerment among tribal women.

"Over time I realized that most of the honour killings were of those women who were sitting at home. Those who bring in income every month are considered of value to the family, and this also builds their capacities for decision making and contribution in their households and lives," says Khalida, zeroing in on the power of making money. But she also understood the challenge of changing mindsets: "There are three main reasons why honour killing happens. First is our bad policies at the government level, second is the negative perception of women's status and third, probably the biggest reason, is that women accept customs as their fate." But before Khalida embarked on the challenge of changing

mindsets, she faced the wrath of the traditional patriarchal status quo. Her life was threatened and she was ultimately expelled from her community.

Tradition versus tradition

"In 2008 our organization faced several threats against our safety," recalls Khalida. "We faced opposition from religious leaders and community tribal leaders. The time came when we had to leave everything and flee." At that point Khalida's father took her to Karachi to safety so that she could finish her studies.

But Khalida wasn't about to give up on this crucial issue. "While everything had come to a halt, I kept on thinking about what had gone wrong in the programme. 'I respect tradition,' I thought to myself. Suddenly I realized we had to promote positive traditions that could help end honour killing. And that was how we came to work with locals as our allies."

Turning this inclusive strategy into action still required perseverance from Khalida and her team of 40 young

people. "We advocated the same cause but less aggressively," says Khalida, who used local traditions to her advantage and confronted the tribal leaders who had previously threatened her. "In our culture, you do not kick someone out of your house - it's not done." Khalida showed up with her team at the house of one of the leaders, who was thus forced against his will to listen and talk to the group of persistent youths. "We spoke in the local language and explained how we wanted to promote local traditions such as embroidery, music and poetry." Three leaders were responsive and even clerics started giving sermons about women's rights in accordance to Islam.

Promoting positive local traditions by producing embroidery that is later marketed through PDI, Sughar centres have also provided a female friendly platform for women to create financial elbow room. In addition they receive value added training and basic education training in areas such as math, writing and reproductive health. For Khalida, this has meant a window of opportunity to raise awareness against honour killing. "Women's attitude towards honour killing is that of acceptance. We are working to change that by explaining the status and rights of women as stated in Islam...they of course become receptive to that," she says. Convinced women's effacement in the face of honour killing is a prime cause for its continuation, Khalida has targeted women but without neglecting the involvement of men. Through creative avenues such as cricket tournaments, interactive theater, SMS, FM radio, info-activism and digital advocacy, PDI advocates for the rights of women by educating men. With the consent of tribal leaders, discussions with men using the Islamic argument of women's rights are also organized.

When asked how she measures the effect of her work, Khalida answers, "We started with 14 girls on our team and now we have 40 both male and female members so I feel attitudes are changing. I have heard of cases of honour killing in neighbouring areas, but not in my community for the past three years."

Brave Role Model

With the help of savings and the support of funding from various organizations, Khalida Brohi has set up Sughar centres in several districts of



✶ Khalida Brodi (front, left) with some of the "Sughar" programme participants. © Participatory Development Initiatives (PDI)

Balochistan, becoming a fellow of the Unreasonable Institute as well as winning the Young Champion Award and YouthActionNet fellowship award. She has a 'Wake Up Campaign Against Honour Killing' on Facebook that updates members on honour killing cases and other relevant information. But Khalida is conscious that despite the support from family, international organizations and her team, naysayers still exist: "Those who are against what we do in our community are in minority, so they don't speak about it publicly, but I know they're waiting for us to slip and make a mistake. That is why I am so particular about making sure we try to make no mistakes whatsoever."

Expanding its outreach to women, PDI was active in a 2008 national programme, the Benazir Bhutto Government Land Distribution to landless Sindhi peasant women. It came up with the programme Land for Women and took responsibility for monitoring the process. When major discrepancies were detected, however, PDI launched a support program for women with the help of Oxfam. Through the local radio, they highlighted the land programme in far

flung areas; they provided help for filling in forms, transport to open legal courts and legal support to women who faced land issue problems. "Within three years the land for women programme provided land for 50% of the 3000 women participants," says Khalida.

Shuttling between Balochistan and Karachi where she is finishing her undergraduate studies in international relations, sociology and economics, Khalida has also worked to help flood victims in the area of Sindh. Receiving support from Oxfam and the Rockdale foundation, she raised funds for 25,000 families in nearby areas, provided relief for 12,000 people and helped establish homes in the recovery phase.

Looking back, Khalida identifies her biggest struggle: maintaining the culturally defined concept of a good reputation, a sacred and often life determining notion in her society. "The issue of being or not being a 'decent' girl becomes an issue as soon as you step out of your house". Even though Khalida's parents have been pillars of strength and inspiration for her, Khalida remembers even her mother being upset when she was first invited to Sydney for an Oxfam launch of a youth

partnership. Khalida laughs as she recalls her mother's words: "You will not find a husband!"

But Khalida is willing to brave the risks and continue her battle to inspire women to demand and protect their basic human right to life. ■

Noshan Abbas, 26, is a journalist from Islamabad, Pakistan. She works for Al Jazeera, BBC Urdu and BBC South Asia online. For Plan International and Rutgers WPF, she created Pakistan's first Framework Policy for Adolescents.



© Numair Abbas

➡ Shibuya district in Tokyo is a symbol of Japan's consumer society.

For a number of years, young people in Japan have been questioning the benefits of a society obsessed by economic growth. When the earthquake and tsunami struck the country last March, voices were heard calling for a radical shift in the value system, to give priority to social well-being and solidarity.

© Zsófia Illosvay



An undeclared revolution

HIROKI YANAGISAWA

On March 11, 2011, Japan experienced an earthquake of a scale unprecedented in the modern age, resulting in more than 14,000 deaths and leaving 10,000 more people missing. Just 15 hours after the quake, a 32-year-old web director, Hironori Nakahara, and his friends launched a website, *buji.me*, to collect and display victims' safety status and location information, city by city. *Buji* means "safety" in Japanese.

"The first thing that came to me was what I can do to save victims' lives. In a situation like this, a prompt reaction is necessary to save as many people as possible," said Hironori.

He walked three hours from his apartment in central Tokyo to his girlfriend's home near the trendy district of Shibuya. He and his friends met there to discuss what they could do to help and take action. The idea of *buji.me* emerged from their brainstorming.

"I began writing the first line of code at 6:00 p.m., five hours after the quake, and the site was up by 6:00 a.m. the

next morning. I spent the next five days without much sleep, determined to improve the website to accommodate as much 'buji' information as possible."

Had Hironori and his team ever planned to charge a fee for this project, he estimates the figure at around US \$50,000. But the reward they received cannot be calculated in financial terms.

"Through this project, I have received many warm messages, thanking us for helping them find their loved ones," Hironori recalls. His attitude to work and money has changed as a result. "Ever since this moment, for every project that I work on, I ask — is this project going to help someone? I have realized the importance of a project is judged by its impact on society, rather than the size of its budget."

Gross National Happiness

Back in 1968, in his famous 18 March speech, American politician Robert Kennedy had already mentioned the flaws of money-driven benchmarks to measure prosperity:

"Our Gross National Product, now, is over \$800 billion dollars a year, but that

Gross National Product ... counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage.... Yet the Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

Subsequently, in 1972, Bhutan's former King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, came up with an alternative benchmark index that measures a country's prosperity based on people's happiness and wellbeing — the idea of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

Much has been written on the subject since and in today's Japan, GDP is no longer synonymous with prosperity. In the last 10 years, and therefore long before the earthquake, a shift in values has occurred in Japanese society, primarily among young people, who tend to view Japan's present economic stagnation as a good sign.

"Our economic activity has been too big and out of control. Plus, ever since I was small, I have felt surrounded by an excess of everything," said Youki Amagai, a 23-year-old university student from Chiba. "Though I admit money is necessary to keep my day-to-day life going, it is not something that fulfills my internal needs. Instead of going out shopping, I would rather go out and chat with older people and share thoughts. My main interest is to discuss what we can do to improve our society, especially the environment, and mobilize for action."

Ever since the non-profit organization law was enacted in 1998, Japan's non-profit sector has flourished. Many active and socially-oriented people have begun engaging in volunteer activities. "In terms of materialistic needs, Japan has reached heights that would be difficult to surpass. But when we look at Japan's social system, it is incomplete and dysfunctional. Many active youngsters and non-profit sectors have been focusing and working on this gap," said Ikuma Saga, the founder of *Service Grant*, Japan's leading pro bono worker and non-profit organization matching agency.

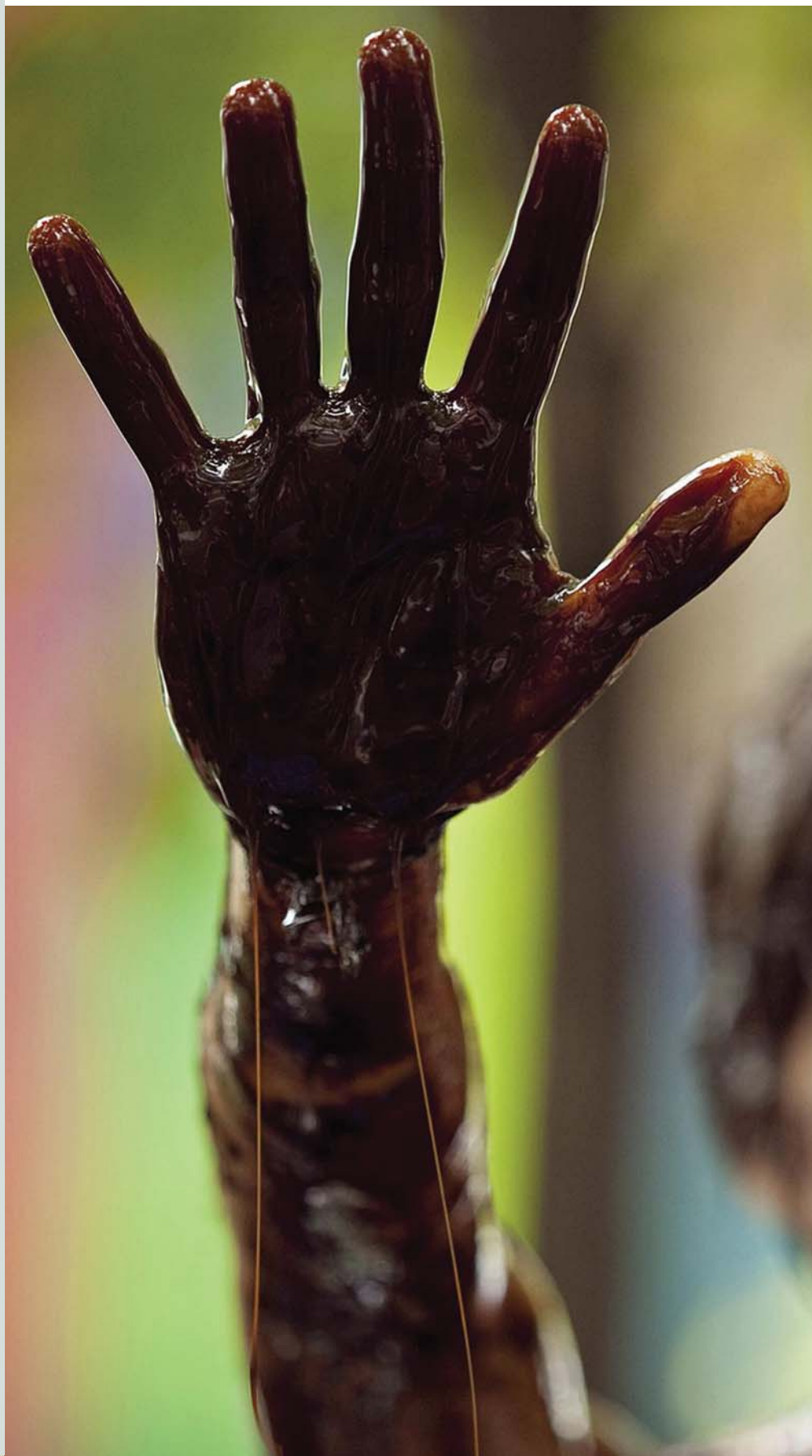
With Japan's population decreasing continuously, there is a possibility that a growing number of countries will surpass the country's GDP in the near future. Not to worry: Japan is surely becoming happier and stronger, thanks to its youth. ■

Hiroki Yanagisawa, 33, is a freelance journalist and the founder of EDGY JAPAN (edgyjapan.jp), a web media featuring and connecting edgy creative talents, products, and locations from Japan. He is currently based in Tokyo and Hong Kong.



© Terrie Sato

They're young, connected and want to join the debate – young people from all over the world have set up the International Youth Climate Movement so that they, too, can have a say at conferences on climate change. After all, it's their future that is being discussed.



Rebels

with a cause

*Demonstration against the oil and mining industry
at the September 2010 World Energy Congress in
Montreal (Canada).*

© François Pesant / Greenpeace

JENS LUBBADEH

"I'm only a child and I don't have all the solutions, but I want you to realize, neither do you!"

In 1992, Severn Cullis-Suzuki was only 12 years old when she gave her now famous speech at the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. "You don't know how to fix the holes in our ozone layer," she said. "You don't know how to bring salmon back up a dead stream. You don't know how to bring back an animal now extinct. And you can't bring back forests that once grew where there is now desert. If you don't know how to fix it, please stop breaking it!"

Nearly 20 years later, her words have not been forgotten. Her YouTube clip, *The Girl Who Silenced the World for Six Minutes*, has become a hit, and still brings a lump to the throat.

Severn Cullis-Suzuki is Canadian but she was speaking for all of the world's children and youth, especially those who are not as fortunate to have grown up in a rich country like hers. Young people make up one third of mankind – 2 billion people who for the most part have no say in politics. Yet it is their future that adults are debating. "You are deciding what kind of world we will grow up in," said Severn.

A mortgaged inheritance

This conflict is serious – young people have realized that the older generation

is leaving them with an economic and ecological debt. In 2010, the 27 Member States of the European Union (EU) owed some €8.7 billion. And we find it hard even to imagine what one billion represents. It is one thousand million, or '1' followed by twelve zeros. Every child on the planet is born with a deficit of about €17,000 in its account. This debt is the result of a form of political cowardice that dumps the burden onto those who cannot defend themselves because they are too young or not yet born.

The ecological debt that generation after generation has been accumulating for nearly a century is colossal. We are now consuming more energy and fossil resources than the planet can bear. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, mankind has been releasing more and more CO₂ into the air. Because of the greenhouse effect, the planet is getting warmer – the average temperature of the Earth has risen by 0.74 degrees Celsius since 1905. The first decade of the 21st century has been by far the hottest since records began. And the effects of climate change are already being felt – the Arctic ice sheet is receding, the frequency of climate-related disasters is increasing, sea level is rising, glaciers are melting.

"We did not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrowed it from our grandchildren," it says on the International Youth Climate Movement

website (<http://youthclimate.org/>). This American Indian proverb clearly sums up the issue – it is the youth of today who will end up having to pay for our wasteful lifestyle. “As we move towards a carbon-constrained world, it is the youth that will fully experience the future consequences of today’s actions of humanity,” says the website.

The International Youth Climate Movement brings together young people from all over the world, with branches in countries on every continent. Since the 2005 climate summit in Montreal (Canada), each national Member has been sending delegates to the world climate meetings.

“This generation understands that everyone across the world will be affected by climate change and so it is the responsibility of us all to take action,” explains 29-year-old Neva Frecheville, who is International Engagement Coordinator for the British coalition. The youth of today does not want to look on passively as adults decide their future. “We are starting to show we won’t stand for it. We will create our own change,” adds Neva.

In 2009, the national branches of the Movement set up YOUNGO, which represents all Youth NGOs and is lobbying for an 85% reduction in CO₂ emissions worldwide by 2050 (compared to 1990 levels). YOUNGO has been officially recognized as a Constituency representing the interests of youth within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This status is still provisional, but should change. “2011 is an exciting year for the YOUNGO constituency of the UNFCCC,” explains Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, “as this is the year in which their status will be considered for formalization. The formalization does not mean a ‘start’ of engagement, since children and young people have been participating in UNFCCC meetings since the year 2000.”

At the climate conferences in Copenhagen (Denmark) and Cancún (Mexico), young people were able to speak for the first time with a common political voice. “Like the other constituencies to the UNFCCC, YOUNGO’s constituency function is limited to observer status,” explains Neva. “In essence, we can’t take part in the negotiations but rather watch and

try to influence through lobbying and actions. Being recognized as having a legitimate stake in the proceedings means that young people have more access to the process, to the negotiators and the secretariat.” Christiana Figueres agrees: “The constituency status provides a conduit for the exchange of information between young people and the secretariat, and helps to orchestrate the active participation of youth representatives in UNFCCC meetings.” And, adds Neva, “Young people are also invited to make interventions which

give voice to young people across the world at the highest level of the UNFCCC.”

Notably, for the past six years, these young activists have regularly been holding their own conference a few days before the world climate summit.

Not that apolitical

We often say that young people today are not political. But on closer examination, things are more complex. It is true that young people are not very interested in traditional politics, and

© Jason de Caires Taylor/Greenpeace



“Silent Evolution”, underwater installation by British artist Jason deCaires Taylor, shown during the 2010 United Nations climate change conference (COP 16) in Cancun, Mexico. Young divers swam among 400 submerged statues to highlight the threat of rising sea levels.

have little regard for politicians and their parties – only around one third of Europeans aged 16 to 29 trust them. However, it should be pointed out that this proportion is also low among older people. Cécile Lecomte, a 29-year-old Frenchwoman, campaigns for the environment. She lives in Lüneburg, in northern Germany and has attracted attention for her spectacular stunts to stop trains transporting nuclear waste by hanging above the railway lines. For her, “a lack of political interest is not just the preserve of young people.”

The now familiar lack of political commitment by young people does seem to be linked to this loss of confidence in politicians. According to Eurostat*, only 4% of young Europeans are members of a political party. And only 16% believe that parliament is the best place to make oneself heard.

In reality, their involvement in politics takes a different form: “We’re hugely political, and that’s increasing as we become more disenfranchised and disillusioned,” says Neva. Young Europeans feel that non-parliamentary political engagement is even more effective – holding debates (30%), taking part in demonstrations (13%) or supporting a petition or NGO (11%). Cécile agrees. She believes that there has been an enormous increase in protest actions by young people.

This trend may be seen worldwide, especially in countries where access to traditional politics is tightly controlled, in the absence of democracy. “As well as the recent protests in the United Kingdom over tuition fees, we also have mostly youth-led movements in places like Egypt and Tunisia,” says Neva. “And youth in Europe are coming together to bypass the ‘adult’ NGOs and get together to influence EU policy.”

For Christiana Figueres, it is even more important for young people to become involved at national level than internationally. “I have constantly encouraged youth to be actively involved in the development of negotiating positions and climate friendly policies at home, at the domestic level,” she says. “That is where they can have the highest impact to influence governments to take a long

© Boy Scouts of the Philippines



➤ A Boy Scout, under the *Ticket to Life Project*, helps clean Manila Bay, Philippines

term view in full recognition that it is precisely the next generation that will be most affected by climate change.”

It is interesting to see that young people are more willing to trust political institutions, like Parliament, than the politicians themselves. And supra-national institutions attract even more support – 70% of young people have respect for the European Parliament and the United Nations. On this point, young people set themselves clearly apart from older people. They probably no longer think in terms of national frontiers and see networking and cooperation as positive factors that inspire confidence. Neva agrees: “Young people have shown that it is possible to place national interests to one side to work together on a common good.”

The internet has certainly had an influence. In 2008, 70% of young people used the Web every day, and this figure has increased in recent years. And there is a real generation gap here, too – young people have much greater mastery of the possibilities of the internet than older people. Social networks, Twitter and chat rooms are used much more and represent a new style of relationships and contact. “Compared to ‘older’ delegates at the UNFCCC, we use new and social media

much more effectively,” explains Neva. “We are more creative, innovative and fun because we are not blinkered by old campaigning styles and habits; we are still setting the scene when it comes to approaches. Our communications are often much more positive – more ‘pro’ than ‘anti’ – because basically we are trying to vision the future that we want to live in.” ■

Jens Lubbadah, 36, is a journalist for Greenpeace Magazine, Germany. He has been a correspondent for the UNESCO Courier since 2009.



© Claudia Wüstenhagen

*The figures on youth in Europe cited in this article are taken from *Youth in Europe, A statistical portrait*, 2009 edition, Eurostat, European Commission.

Prescriptions for a sick planet

In December 2009, in Copenhagen, Denmark, strange doctors accosted people on the street, offering them check-ups and prescriptions. Their comportment was at odds with the image of wise old Chinese physicians, whose traditional garb they wore.

No wonder: they were no more doctors than the people they accosted were patients. Yet their diagnosis of the planet's condition was all too accurate.

ZHAO YING

Zhan Yufeng works 12 hours a day, seven days a week. The 24-year-old is leading the non-profit China Youth Climate Action Network (CYCAN). "I'm quite busy, managing climate-focused activities, training volunteers, fundraising, and meeting program partners," he says. "Sometimes I stay overnight in my office."

Zhan earned his degree in art and design from the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology last year. He had few ideas about climate change until he was invited to help the CYCAN prepare a campaign for United Nations Day, Oct. 24, 2009.

Zhan designed the logo, posters and brochures for this campaign that attracted student groups from 200 universities from across the country and some 50 NGOs. It reached an estimated population of more than 5 million. "I worked hard for a month along with many volunteers. I got addicted to the work. It was like love at first sight," Zhan says.

More than 30,000 young people directly participated in the campaign, which was supported by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other organizations. There were various performance techniques: youngsters used fans to melt mountains of snow, they painted their upper bodies blue to remind people of the rising sea levels due to global warming, they traveled by bicycle and skates instead of driving, etc.

"My peers were devoted and energetic. I felt their passion, perseverance, and power," Zhan says, adding that the opportunity showed him another side of a commercialized society, a side where young people are working hard for a greener planet and a cleaner future.

Upon the completion of this campaign, CYCAN leaders began to recruit candidates to attend the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference COP15 in December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark. This would be the first time a delegation of Chinese youth participated in international climate talks.

Chinese CYCAN got the idea when they noticed that only one young Chinese participated in the climate negotiations in 2008 at Poznan, Poland. Hundreds of youth leaders from the United States, Europe, and countries from other parts of the world participated in the talks.

Zhan had hesitated: "My English was not good enough for an international

conference. I was afraid I could not help the team on such an important occasion." But finally he joined the delegation, working as photographer and program planner.

In addition to designing slogans, T-shirts, and posters and photographing events, Zhan and his partners managed performances such as "Diagnosis for a sick globe", for example. Dressed as traditional Chinese doctors, they gave check-ups to participants. Those who signed petitions against global warming got "prescriptions" for fighting climate problems.

The team also talked to Chinese and international officers, media reporters and climate negotiators, including China's Vice Minister of the State Development and Reform Commission, Xie Zhenhua, and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke.

Their slogan was *No Other Way* (NOW), calling for immediate action on cutting carbon emissions to save the world from global warming.

Listening is not enough

COP15 showed Zhan the limits of the Chinese young people's capabilities. Language was the main challenge. Most of Zhan's peers understood the speeches, but only a few were able to articulate opinions in fluent English. Zhan was deeply impressed by the professionalism of foreign young delegates at the meeting. "They were experienced, fully aware of the



📍 Zhan Yufeng demonstrating at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen (Denmark), holding up the banner of his organization..
© Courtesy of Zhan Yufeng

mechanisms and policies of the conference. They came up with illuminating proposals and we listened," Zhan says.

Few courses specializing in climate issues are available at Chinese universities, nor do young people have frequent opportunities to exchange relative information with their foreign peers.

In 2009, the CYCAN arranged training programs before COP15 on mechanisms of the talks, climate change issues, fundraising, public relations and event management. This was not enough, Zhan points out. It is necessary to arrange constant training to update young people's knowledge and skills. Soon after he returned to China, he joined the CYCAN as a full-time employee.

The NGO, founded in 2007 by seven Chinese youth groups, now has just three full-time workers, and a large portion of its operation relies on 51 volunteers in Beijing and nine core members living or studying abroad.

Zhan became head of the organization after being responsible for a series of large-scale campaigns including the International Youth Summit on

Energy and Climate Change held in July 2010 in Shanghai, and the clean energy competition of Great Power Race that attracted some 1,000 universities from China, India and the United States.

Zhan, a native of the coastal province of Guangdong in southern China, used to roam Beijing's art galleries, watch stage shows and movies, or play billiards with friends after school. But his new work schedule will not allow such habits.

If he had chosen to be a professional designer after his graduation, his income could have tripled, but "I'm not in a hurry to make money," he says. "At my age, the priority is to improve my overall abilities and the CYCAN is a place where I keep learning things by meeting people from all walks of life."

What worries him are fundraising and training volunteers. For three months last year, the CYCAN workers did not get paid due to lack of funds. "It was hard but we managed to survive by presenting constructive plans to foundations and sponsors," Zhan says.

Additionally, some leaders left the CYCAN to start new careers or study abroad, forcing the organization to recruit new members and train

amateurs. "There are many youth organizations active in China, but it's a pressing task to improve their expertise so that their voice will get heard," Zhan says. ■

Zhao Ying, 34, covering Shanghai's 2010 World Expo for Xinhua News Agency, which she joined in 1999. She is a journalist for China Features, part of Xinhua's network.



© DR



© Gerardo Montes de Oca Valadez (Guadalajara)

Life in the

Early one fine morning at the beginning of 2011, a group of 30 young people invade the Avenue Santa Margarita in Zapopan, a town in Mexico's Jalisco state. They attach a line-marking device to a tricycle cart and off they go! By noon, a five-kilometre stretch of the avenue is bordered by a white stripe, bicycle pictographs are painted on the tarmac and road signs are attached to poles.

RUTH PÉREZ LÓPEZ

Photographer Gerardo Montes de Oca Valadez, 33, is a Mexican psychologist and artist and a member of Ciudad Para Todos. See also: <http://gmove.wordpress.com/>

The newly-created route is immediately given its name: *ciclovia ciudadana*, or citizens' bike lane. The cost of the installation, about US\$1000, came out of the young activists' pockets. Though traced without permission, the new bike lane does not remain illegal for long. By the very next day, Jalisco state's transport authority rules in favour of the initiative. It pledges not only to improve the bike lane and enforce respect for it but also to recognize all such citizens' initiatives in future, as long as they conform to the Non-motorized Mobility Master Plan.

What Master Plan? The story begins in 2007, in Guadalajara, second largest city in Mexico and capital of Jalisco state. Citizens organized a protest against a municipal decision to turn López Mateos Avenue into an expressway. Paulina drives to her classes at the university and could have benefited, but she felt the decision, made without consulting the local community, was against her interests. It happened to be the subject she was studying at the time, governance and transparency in public action. As for Jesús, a philosophy student and avid cyclist, he could only be against an urban development project that favoured the use of

automobiles. Today, at age 24 and 27 respectively, they have become full-fledged experts in urban planning and sustainable development. They speak like professionals, negotiate with authorities and give interviews to the media. "We had to learn how to debate and present our arguments to political decision-makers," explains Jesús. All the more because their first protest concerning López Mateos Avenue did not have the results anticipated. But it did make a lasting contribution to the community by creating the citizens' group *Ciudad Para Todos* (City for all).

Dialogue had thus been ongoing for several years between the young members of *Ciudad Para Todos* and the Jalisco state authorities, with the former doing their best to persuade the latter of the importance of establishing a network of bike lanes in the urban area of Guadalajara, which comprises eight municipalities including Zapopan. The dialogue produced a Non-motorized Mobility Master Plan, a document of nearly a thousand pages written by a firm of consultants with the participation of civil society. But just as the battle seemed to be won, a new government came to power, one less sensitive to the issue. Patiently, the



bike lane

young people started again from zero. They approached the new government with requests to allocate funds to implement the Plan. To no avail. So they decided to take matters into their own hands and trace their own bike lane. "We had no legal means to force them to put the Plan into action," recalls Jesús. "So we decided we had to take charge." Having received a thumbs-up from authorities, they created another bike lane in Zapopan last March, using the same method.

Conviviality and safety combined

But the battle waged by the young members of *Ciudad Para Todos* does not end there. In the last few years, they have started numerous projects aimed at reclaiming public space in different city districts. Opposed to the construction of an expressway on Inglaterra Avenue, they launched, with community support, the project "Linear park" to make the central strip that divides the avenue's two lanes into something beautiful. They transformed it into a park and meet there every Saturday to participate in all kinds of activities, planting trees, designing flower beds and putting on shows for children. "Nomadic park" is another

project, which consists of occupying space that is normally reserved for cars by taking over one or two traffic lanes and setting up games, playing music, organizing races or football matches. The object is not to block car traffic but to slow it down and make up for the lack of recreational space in the city. At night, they organize open-air screenings of films and documentaries.

In other words, these young people do not simply protest. Brimming with enthusiasm, they propose alternative forms of urban development in a dynamic and playful way. According to Gerardo, a *Ciudad Para Todos* activist who took the photos for this article, public space must be laid out so it encourages people to interact. It should "be an invitation to conviviality, reinforce community ties and preserve the identity of neighbourhoods". As Gerardo also underlines, the group's attempts to transform the city and modes of social interaction in public space help reduce urban crime. On top of that, they contribute to good citizenship and the development of participative decision-making. The young people's actions thus not only have an impact on public space and residents' lifestyles, they also influence the city's politics. ■

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving."

Attributed to Albert Einstein

Ruth Pérez López, 34, is a Spanish socio-anthropologist and member of Bicitekas A.C., a group that champions bicycles and sustainable transportation in Mexico. She is the author of several books and articles on poverty, youth, public space and social change. <http://bicitekas.org/>



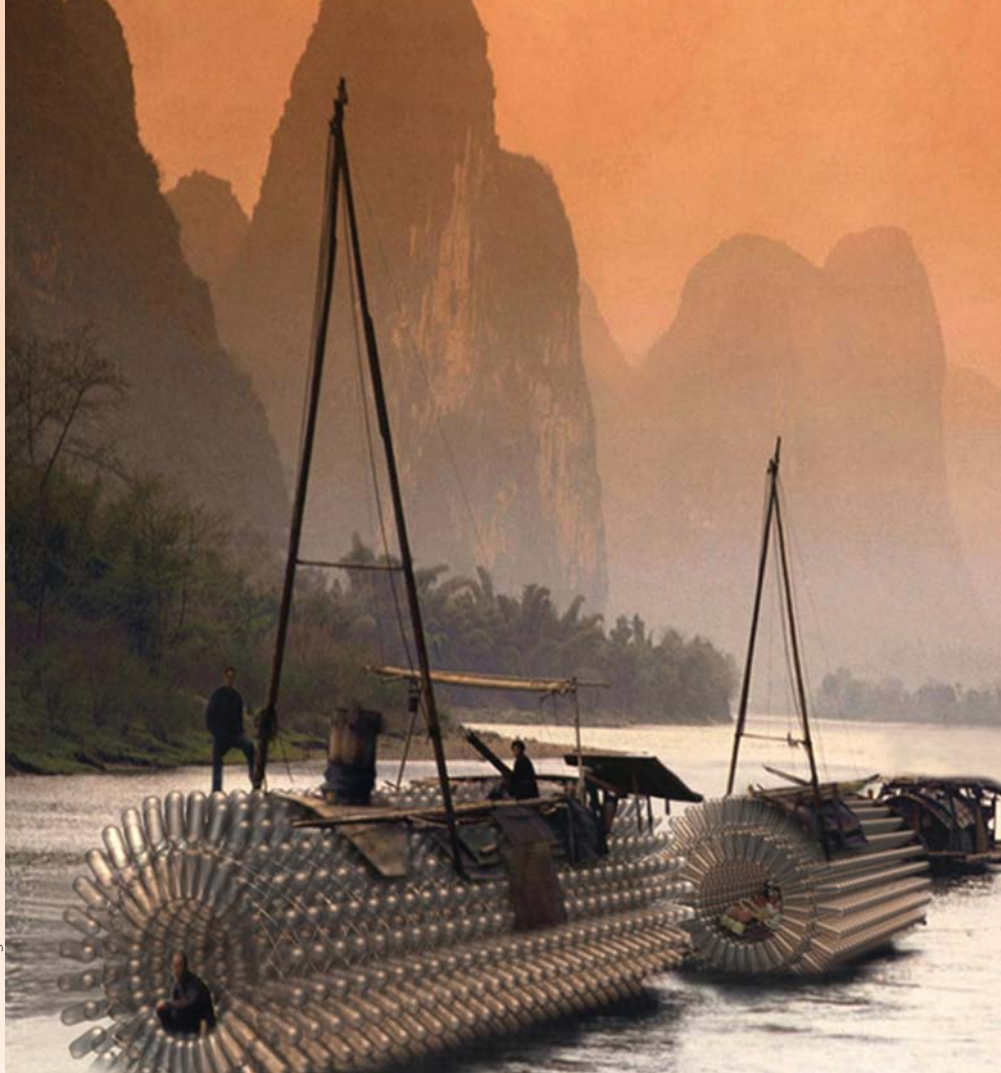
© Annika Borm, Mexico

What can be used to store water, for overwintering, as a shelter, an igloo, a water mill, canoe or a raft? Hard to find an answer? Yet the object exists. It is made out of recycled plastic bottles and steel cables and is called an 'ecocylinder'. Its inventor, the 26-year-old architect Carlos Bartesaghi Koc, explains why he created this object and many others.

CARLOS BARTESAGHI KOC

Green architecture

© Carlos Bartesaghi Koc



We often wonder what takes our lives in one direction or another. In my case, it was a serious illness as a child that kept me bedridden for several months, hovering between life and death. During this long period of solitude, my reading and meditation turned into arduous lessons that strengthened my spirit and my personality.

After several years of struggle, I got well again. I felt that I had to use the second chance I had been given and devote my life and work to achieving change and progress for the poorest of the poor.

The vocation I had chosen as a child – architecture – is usually seen as being far removed from the disadvantaged members of society. It is most often

linked in peoples' minds to the prestige and fame of a few architects and their spectacular, extravagant buildings. I wanted to change this old-fashioned and obsolete image of the impact architects can have on society. That is why I wanted to devote myself entirely to the development of projects and research in sustainable architecture, new technologies, climate change and the response of architecture to mitigating natural disaster risks.

After years of hard work, I graduated at the top of my class from San Agustín d'Arequipa national university, in my home town in Peru. This was my first leg up the ladder. Then, a few months later, I had the opportunity to participate in an international competition on environmental initiatives. With the support of my mentors, I prepared a project to rehabilitate the Arequipa river basin, with the aim of preserving farming there, while encouraging

participatory tourism in the agricultural areas.

My project won an award and I was given a trip to Germany to attend an environment conference for young adults, organized by Bayer. I was one of about 100 young environmentalists,

📍 Panoramic view of "Systemic Agrotourism" project with "self-built shelters", 2009

© Carlos Bartesaghi Koc



This article was written in collaboration with Tunza, the youth magazine produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). See: <http://tunza.mobi/>

gathered together to discuss scientific and cultural means to combat climate change effectively.

It was thanks to this trip that I also started to write for *Tunza*, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) youth magazine. And that is how I was able to exchange opinions and experiences with many other young people around the world, which turned out to be a fantastic source of inspiration and motivation.

I went on to organize exhibitions, events and campaigns; I gave lectures and was taken on as an assistant at the university. Working with a local NGO, I was able to design some larger-scale social and environmental projects. These led to me to travel throughout the Peruvian sierra, where I saw the poverty and social disintegration that are increasing daily in our country.

Innovative technologies

This experience confirmed my long-standing conviction: in emerging countries like mine, we must use very low-cost technologies that can be adapted to different social, cultural and economic contexts. This is how the idea for the 'ecocylinder' came about, for example – a multifunction shelter made out of recycled plastic bottles and steel cables, fitted together into sheets and stuck on top of one another. This cylinder can be used and adapted in a thousand different ways, according to local needs and weather conditions. It can be used to store water, for overwintering, as a shelter, an igloo, water mill, canoe or raft.

Other projects, like Systemic Agrotourism and Quarry Ecotourism, are part of the same original idea of linking



Peruvian architect Carlos Bartesaghi Koc making presentation as a "Young environmental envoy" for Bayer in 2007 in Leverkusen (Copyright Bayer AG)



The ecocylinder invented by Carlos can be used and adapted in multiple ways according to location, need and climate conditions.



farming with participatory tourism. In the former case, local inhabitants provide free accommodation for tourists who, in exchange, help out and learn ancestral farming methods. The project also calls for "self-built shelters", which are buildings made by farmers using recycled materials and refuse produced in urban areas. The second project is an urban design for new tourist circuits inside the famous *sillar* (volcanic rock) quarries in Arequipa. Once they are set up, these circuits will create new jobs, while protecting and improving health and safety conditions for quarry workers, who risk illegal expropriation.

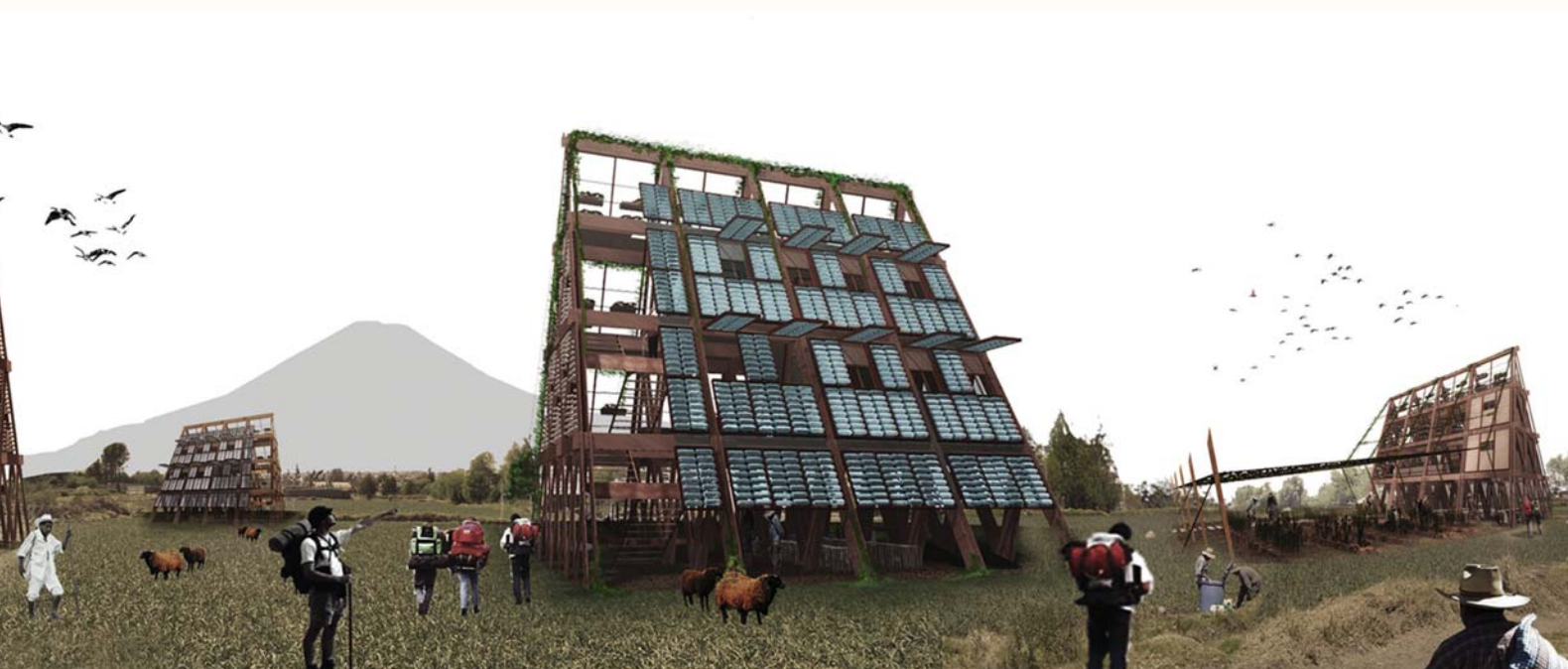
At the moment I am working on a project for an urban waste treatment plant for Arequipa (for my qualifying thesis), which will include a proposal for a controlled landfill site and its eventual landscaping into a park. The project includes a plant for sorting inorganic waste and a compost production unit. The workers who are there now informally will get official contracts along with better health, hygiene and safety conditions. They will be offered training opportunities, childcare and leisure facilities on the same site. Children and young people will be able to visit a waste dump museum and use educational materials inside the factory.

In the near future, I hope to continue teaching and to develop low-cost, environment-friendly architecture. I would like to help bring more justice to the world and make it a place more fit for humans and nature. ■

Carlos Bartesaghi Koc's websites:

<http://www.wix.com/carlosbartesaghikoc/cbk>

http://issuu.com/carlosbartesaghikoc/docs/architecture_portfolio_2005-2011



*Every generation
played a role in
this revolution,
even those that
are no longer
with us.*



*Khaled Youssef at
UNESCO for the
screening of his
film "Chaos", 13
April 2011.
© UNESCO/Michel
Ravassard*

Revolution

one of the great feats of
civilization

He does not deny the accusation that his films helped to incite the January 2011 Egyptian revolution, but he does not claim any of the credit. For Khaled Youssef, co-director, with Youssef Chahine, of "Chaos" (2007), the "Arab Spring" extends across generations and borders. In this interview he offers his vision of the events and their consequences for the arts, society and international politics.

KHALED YOUSSEF was interviewed by Khaled Abu Hijleh

You are one of the eminent people who supported the demands made by protestors during the 25 January revolution in Egypt, in which you also participated. What were your motivations?

I think my involvement was a foregone conclusion. I took part in the great majority of demonstrations against the regime since the 1980s, as president of the students' union. Then in the 1990s, we opposed government decisions, especially on the Gulf War, but also domestic policies that perpetuated oppression and social injustices.

So, when young people used Facebook to call for demonstrations (in the first place against the repressive practices of the police), it was quite natural for me to be involved, from day one.

When we arrived in Tahrir Square to demonstrate on 25 January 2011 there were about 20,000 - 25,000 of us. The number of demonstrators kept increasing all the time, reaching about 80,000 by the middle of the night. That was when the authorities ordered the use of force to disperse the demonstrators. I saw a determination in the eyes of the younger generation that I didn't find in my generation. These young people stood up against the police with a

tenacity I've never seen before in demonstrations. I thought then it was a sign there could be a revolution. And I was sure of this by Friday 28 January, when we took to the streets, divided into three groups. One went to the Moustafa Mahmoud mosque, in the Mohandessin quarter, another to the al-Istiqama mosque, in Giza, and the third to the al-Nour mosque, in the Abbassiya quarter, all of them near Tahrir Square, in the city centre. I was in the Moustafa Mahmoud mosque group. As I couldn't see the size of the procession behind us, I climbed onto the back of a pick-up truck. The crowd stretched out before my eyes was so big I couldn't see where it ended. That's when I said, it's a revolution.

Do you think the films you made with the great Egyptian director Youssef Chahine, like "Chaos" in 2007, helped raise political awareness among Egyptian youth?

I can't claim any of the credit for starting this revolution. That is both an accusation – which I don't deny – and an honour I do not deserve. But it is true that some people think our films, some of them made in the 1980s, played an important role in shaping the consciousness of the younger generations who spearheaded the revolution.

The youth of a country is not a "spontaneous generation". This kind of realization by young people is the result of influences coming from all forms of human

expression, from poetry to politics, music, theatre and cinema. It would be quite right then to say every generation has played a role in this revolution, even those that are no longer with us. So, for me, the director Atef al Tayeb [1947-1995] played a part, as did Youssef Chahine [1926-2008] and all those who believed in the will of the people and sided with the ordinary people.

Do you think the 25 January revolution will influence your next films, in the sense that it marks the beginning of a new era?

There is absolutely no doubt this revolution will change not only the nature of films, but also all other art forms and literature. I think the social renaissance we are hoping for will be accompanied by a cultural renaissance. There will be new ideas as well as new ways of representing them, reflecting the dialectic interaction between political climate and artistic production.

If we go back to the revolution of 23 July 1952 [which led to the declaration of the Republic of Egypt], it also marked a turning point in cinema history. It even influenced love stories. Public and private worlds intermingled. It makes me think of the great Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani [1923-1998] who, in his poetry, wondered if two lovers could meet on the banks of the Nile or the Euphrates without seeing planes overhead on their way to kill Palestinians, Iraqis or Lebanese.

But having said this, I think we are going to witness a great renaissance in the arts and literature, perhaps not

Scene from the Egyptian revolution, January 2011.



immediately, because human expression takes a while to mature.

We are heading for some major changes, and anyone who is not able to keep pace with the new Egypt currently being created will find themselves alone and isolated.

Cinema is, in the first instance, a vision. But a vision with no image of the future remains sterile. So cinema has to be firmly rooted in reality in order to reflect it faithfully, while also being visionary.

It is too early to draw any firm conclusions about the 25 January revolution, but do you feel the outcomes are satisfactory for the time being?

I am absolutely satisfied with what this revolution has achieved, and very optimistic about the future. Revolution is a science of change. First of all it has led to a change in the political system. There was the symbolic fall of the ruling regime, which we are in the process of replacing with a new one based on the principles of liberty, equality, democracy and social justice – all key demands of the revolution. I think these principles, held aloft by the protestors, will be the basis for changes in the very model of Egyptian society. After the revolution of 23 July 1952, the middle classes, that made up 5% of society, increased to 90 %. At the time, this represented a radical change for Egyptian society. So I believe the recent revolution will, soon and in the same way, transform the established social order, as well as the nature and very structure of society. It is not possible to go against the will of the Egyptians who carried out this revolution.

The youth of a country is not a "spontaneous generation". This kind of realization by young people is the result of influences coming from all forms of human expression, from poetry to politics, music, theatre and cinema.

I have always thought that the will of the people carries the will of God within it, which no one can defeat. Egyptians took matters into their own hands through this initiative and I am talking about this great revolution that constitutes one of the great achievements of civilization. It seems to me very unlikely that the coming

changes will be superficial, or that the new government will be built on a repressive form of state control like the previous regime.

You have said that we are moving towards a more multi-polar world in which the Arab world, led by Egypt, will have a prominent place. Can we expect a global transformation in the Arab world that confirms this vision of things?

[Laughs] It doesn't surprise me the whole world is talking about the "Spring" of Arab revolutions. Everyone has noticed it, so it is not an illusion. It was possible to see the current wave of revolutionary dynamism coming. And when a regional power like Egypt goes through a revolution, we can be sure that it is real. This is not a form of patriotic chauvinism, but historical and geographical fact. A change in Egypt has consequences for the entire Arab world. Just as, over the past forty years, when Egypt turned in on itself and refused to play its true role, the whole Arab world was weakened and Egypt's importance was undermined, too. But when Egypt takes up its true place as a leader, the Arab world will experience a second renaissance, you can be sure about that.

The revolutions in other Arab countries will not necessarily take the same form as ours. Each Arab society has its own ways of working, but each will, of necessity, evolve and the different regimes will no doubt make room for



© UNESCO/Michel Ravassard

French version of the poster for Youssef Chahine's film "Chaos".

citizen participation, for democracy and freedom of speech, as well as an equitable sharing of national wealth.

As for a multi-polar world, this has been demonstrated throughout history. When one single nation exercises its power and directs the world, it can only be a transition phase between two stages in the progress of mankind. It is obvious that the USA will retain its role as a super-power, but it will be alongside others, like Russia, Japan, China, Europe, led by Germany or France, and the Arab world, led by Egypt. In this way, the Arab world will enter into the alliance of nations as a sixth force, putting its own cards on the table alongside other leaders, when the interests of the major powers are at stake. ■

Because of Youssef Chahine, I started making films

"After the will of God, Youssef Chahine is the reason I became a film-maker. Not only because he trained me in film-making and gave me the opportunity to exercise my vocation, but really because, without him, I would never have worked in this field. I met Youssef Chahine when I was studying to be an engineer. I never imagined that one day I would make films. Youssef Chahine discovered in me a talent that I was not even aware of and constantly denied. After three years he ended up by telling me that there is no harm in trying. It was only then that I realised he was right. That is why I feel I owe all of my success to him.

The first ten years, when I worked with Youssef Chahine as co-screenwriter on his films and as assistant director, represented the most important stage of my career. That is when I learned the trade. My first full-length feature "The Storm", which was made in 2000, opened the way to the second stage, which was the real beginning of my life as a film-maker. Since then and up to 2011, I have made 11 films, one a year on average. Some of these films are important steps in themselves, like "Chaos", *Hina Maysara* (Until Things Get Better) and *Dokkan Shehata* (Shehata's Shop). These films have attracted the most interest within Egyptian society and won greater recognition either in terms of the reviews or in festivals. The critics, in fact, agree that these films have helped to change Egyptian public opinion on questions of politics, society and art."

Khaled Youssef



© 2007 Nigel Parry/CPI



© UNESCO/Anja Freindorf

Forest Whitaker, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador

In recognition of his artistic and humanitarian commitment, American actor Forest Whitaker was named a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation on 21 June 2011 at Organization headquarters.

Born in 1951 in Texas (United States), Mr. Whitaker has played a variety of memorable film roles including Ugandan despot Idi Amin in Kevin Macdonald's "Last King of Scotland", for which he received an Academy Award in 2006. He is currently directing the film entitled "Better Angels" – the title is taken from Abraham Lincoln's inaugural speech – about child soldiers in Uganda.

Forest Whitaker is also known for his humanitarian projects, which have earned him the Humanitas Prize, an award for film and television writing that promotes human dignity and freedom, and the Hope of Los Angeles Award.

As a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker will lend his support primarily to youth programmes, particularly those concerned with peace education and human rights. He will participate in the 7th Youth Forum at UNESCO next October. ■

New global partnership for girls' and women's education

United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon were the special guests of UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova on 26 May 2011 at the launch of the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education. The new partnership will focus mainly on secondary education and adult literacy, especially in Africa and Asia.

Two Prime Ministers, Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé of Mali and Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, participated in the High-Level Forum held the same day at UNESCO. Also present were the

Aga Khan, founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network Foundation, and representatives of several corporate giants participating in the partnership including Nokia, Procter & Gamble, GEMS Education, Microsoft, Apple and the Packard Foundation.

Globally, some 39 million girls of lower secondary age are currently not enrolled in either primary or secondary education, while two thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate adults are women. Only about one third of countries have achieved gender parity at secondary level. ■

The future of books

"The Book Tomorrow, the Future of the Written Word" was the theme of the second UNESCO World Forum on Culture and Cultural Industries (FOCUS 2011), which was held from 6 to 8 June at the Villa Reale in Monza (Italy).

Issues surrounding the rise of E-books were discussed at the event, organized by UNESCO and bringing together some 200 authors, publishers, scientists, media professionals, librarians, sociologists, bloggers, researchers and decision-makers from about 40 countries.

"Today, the book is facing the most profound changes in its history," said the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, at the opening. "No single company or library can pretend to have the keys to the future. This World Forum perfectly embodies the spirit of openness we must maintain."

Some 800 students were able to follow the Forum proceedings, which were streamed to secondary schools in the area. ■

ERRATUM: In the printed version of the English-language April-June UNESCO Courier, in the photo caption on page 11, President of Argentina Cristina Fernández de Kirchner is incorrectly identified as "Prime Minister".



© UNESCO/Bruno Cottacorda

MAB's 40th anniversary

To celebrate its creation 40 years ago, UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) organized an international conference, "For life, for the future. Biosphere Reserves and climate change" on 27 and 28 June in Dresden, Germany.

The conference assessed the pioneering achievements of the programme, which seeks to promote a harmonious balance between environmental preservation and human activity. Topics on the agenda included Biosphere Reserves as implementing instruments for climate change policy.

Biosphere Reserves seek to reconcile biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development. Local communities are active in management, research, education and training projects in the Biosphere Reserves, making them sites of excellence for experimentation in sustainable development.

With 18 new sites added in 2011, the Network now numbers 580 sites in 114 countries. For the first time, Biosphere Reserves were inscribed in Lithuania, Maldives, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Togo. ■



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Social media according to Shashi Tharoor

The first Indian politician to use Twitter in a professional context gave a lecture at UNESCO on 7 June 2011. Shashi Tharoor is a Member of Parliament in India and a former Under-Secretary-General of the UN, as well as the author of numerous books in English and a columnist for India's three best-known English language newspapers. To his UNESCO audience, he underlined the increasing significance of social media in democratization (including the Arab Spring uprisings), disaster management (as in Haiti or Japan) and public diplomacy.

Dr Tharoor used the example of US President Barack Obama's visit to Ghana shortly after his election. After the White House announced his trip, President Obama received over 250,000 questions from Africans across the continent via Facebook and Twitter.

"Social media is here to stay," he said. "We have to live with it. So let's make the most of it."

Dr Tharoor is certainly making the most of it. His use of his political website (www.tharoor.in) and new media like Twitter made him famous in India. He went on to become the first Indian celebrity to get 100,000 followers on Twitter. ■

Memory of the World: spotlight on Australia

While stone, paper and parchment are the guardians of the memory of our past, films, multimedia and the internet are the guardians of the present for future generations. Inspired by this idea, UNESCO launched the Memory of the World programme in 1992 to safeguard humanity's documentary heritage.

Every two years, new documents enrich the Memory of the World collection, and a person or institution is awarded the UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World Prize in recognition for their contribution to preserving documentary heritage and making it accessible.

In 2011, 45 new documents and collections from all over the world

were added to the Memory of the World Register, which now numbers 238 items. The US\$ 30,000 Prize, wholly funded by the Republic of Korea, was awarded this year to the National Archives of Australia (NAA). The award ceremony will be held in September.

Established in 1960, the National Archives shares its professional know-how with experts and interested members of the public and makes available open source tools for digital preservation. The NAA has also demonstrated innovation on the preservation of documents written in iron gall ink (a corrosive ink containing iron salts, in use in Europe for many centuries). ■

Discovering the world

In just a few pages you can find all you need to know on various subjects related to UNESCO and its programmes, including: world heritage sites, oceans, biosphere reserves, the climate, the Earth, the slave trade, crafts and "About UNESCO". The *Discovering the World Series* is a collection in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian that makes subjects accessible to young readers (from age 10 on).

To order volumes from the collection:
www.unesco.org/publishing





Vestiges of prehistoric stilt houses in Lake Ledro, Italy

© ph Romano Magrone / Trento Alto Adige



Môtsû-ji, garden representing the Pure Land (Buddhist paradise), Japan

© Kawashima Printing Company



The Persian garden Bagh e Shahzadeh, Iran

© Masoud Ghadiri



Pink flamingos on Lake Nakuru, Kenya

© UNESCO

World Heritage

In June 2011, 25 new sites were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

A selection:

Prehistoric Pile dwellings around the Alps
(Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Slovenia)

Hiraizumi – Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land (Japan)

The Persian Garden (Iran)

Lake System in the Great Rift Valley (Kenya)

Ningaloo Coast (Australia)



Ningaloo Reef, Australia

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