CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN ACTION

meeting community and youth development needs worldwide

INNOVATIONS IN CIVIC PARTICIPATION
About Innovations in Civic Participation:
Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) is a non-profit organization supporting the development of innovative high-quality youth civic engagement policies and programs both in the US and around the world. ICP is a leader in the global movement to promote sustainable development and social change through youth civic engagement. We embrace a positive view of young people that recognizes their potential to create beneficial and lasting social change in their communities through active participation in service opportunities.

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This is an exciting era for youth civic participation as countries across the globe in greater numbers are investing in youth and community development by expanding youth civic participation opportunities. As the largest youth generation in history makes the transition to adulthood, they are increasingly mobilized and inspired to create change in their communities through service. It is in this framework that ICP has endeavored to develop a publication highlighting the various ways in which community organizations, governments, universities and schools are working with young people to meet both youth development and community development challenges through civic participation. This report provides brief snapshots of how youth civic participation is taking shape in 101 countries spanning six continents. These snapshots are not intended to be comprehensive, but instead to provide a brief look into the varied ways in which young people are improving their lives and communities, and into the institutions and policies supporting those efforts.

Innovative youth civic participation initiatives are adapting to local nuances and meeting critical community needs throughout the world. This publication includes a broad range of civic participation opportunities, such as medical students meeting health needs in rural Mexico, young people supporting disaster relief efforts in Asia, service programs bolstering social services as an alternative to conscription in Europe, peer mentoring to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa and young people sparking grassroots campaigns for community development in the Middle East. While many of these programs are making important strides, this report also makes it clear that more investment is needed to ensure that every young person is afforded an opportunity to participate in the development of his or her community.

I would like to thank all of ICP’s partners that supplied the information provided in this publication, reviewed and commented on snapshots and have actively shared their stories with us over the years. I would also like to thank the project coordinator, Colleen Hammelman, and the various staff members that contributed to this report including Jean Manney, John Pollock, Elizabeth Babcock, Colleen Bickel, Sarah Budrianas, Sara Danver, Jessica Eckdish, Soren Graae, Andrew Lloyd and Christina Malliet. This was a very collaborative project and continues to be a work in progress. As updated information regarding youth civic participation in these various locations becomes available we will do our best to add those reports to the online publication.

These snapshots serve as a testament to the innovative ways young people are contributing to youth and community development, and we hope that it will inspire more efforts and investment in youth civic participation programs and policies. We invite you to join us in promoting civic participation as an opportunity and expectation for young citizens worldwide.

Susan Stroud
Executive Director
Innovations in Civic Participation
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Introduction

Numbering 1.5 billion people worldwide, young people aged 12-24 represent the largest youth cohort in history to make the transition to adulthood.\(^1\) The majority of this youth population—1.1 billion—live in the world’s least developed countries.\(^2\) Many of these young people are contributing to community development while building their own skills through civic participation, and this publication seeks to highlight those diverse efforts.

Youth civic engagement programs empower young people to play an active role in their communities’ development, while gaining the experience, knowledge, values and life skills necessary for success in careers, education and community life. Young people who are engaged in meaningful service to their communities gain valuable, real-world skills that improve their employability in today’s competitive labor markets, thus combating the high rates of youth unemployment.\(^3\) Community engagement also increases young people’s sense of citizenship and civic pride, and it gives them an increased sense of their efficacy and decreases the likelihood that they will take part in high-risk behaviors. By engaging young people and enhancing their sense of social responsibility, youth civic participation programs strengthen civil society. In addition to the benefits to young people themselves, youth civic participation is a valuable resource for addressing a range of social challenges. As part of government, civil society, university and/or international initiatives, young people can improve literacy and public health, support relief teams after natural disasters, contribute to re-building war-ravaged communities, and help build social cohesion and social capital.

Based on research ICP has conducted and information received from participants in the International Association for National Youth Service (IANYS) 2008 Global Conference, this publication provides brief snapshots of youth civic engagement programs and policies in 101 countries, spanning six continents. Through this publication, ICP attempts to highlight the growing momentum worldwide as more countries embrace youth civic engagement as a strategy for development. The examples provided in this publication show that civic participation can take many different forms and works best when adapted to local systems and needs. There is no one way to “do” service, but instead, guided by best practice, programs and policies should be shaped by the context in which they operate. As such, this publication describes programs ranging from intensive, highly-structured, government programs to infrequent volunteering with community-based organizations; from service-learning integrated into primary, secondary and university curricula to young people creating their own organizations to engage others in addressing issues that matter most to them.

Each country snapshot provides brief information about the current state of youth civic engagement, including descriptions of youth civic participation initiatives, national youth policies, youth ministries, committees or commissions that work on youth-related topics, and movements to create new or improved policies. The snapshots provide an overview of different youth civic engagement program models where information is available. Ultimately, the snapshots seek to provide a glimpse into the overall status of youth civic engagement in each country examined. It is important to note that these snapshots are not meant to be comprehensive. While we believe that each snapshot gives an important and accurate picture of youth civic participation policies and programs in each country represented, we acknowledge that there are other programs and more recent developments in these countries and others that we have not been able to capture. We always welcome suggestions and new information regarding youth civic participation programs and policies.

It is clear that youth civic participation programs are taking different shapes and addressing varied needs throughout the world. In many of the programs described in this publication, the need to enhance youth employment was a recurring theme (and is also a key theme of the IANYS 9th Global Conference on National Youth Service in October 2010, for more information visit www.icicp.org/ianys). In many countries worldwide, young people represent the largest cohort in society, yet experience some of the lowest employment rates. For example, the Middle East/North Africa region has an

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One strategy to improve youth employment embraced by a growing number of governments is providing national service opportunities to young people. These opportunities engage young people in short-term employment opportunities that provide real benefits for a country’s development, while providing participants with valuable, real-world skills that improve their employability in today’s competitive labor markets. As illustrated in ICP’s 2006 report \textit{Service as a Strategy for Combating Youth Unemployment}, young people who participate in organized community engagement programs are better positioned to find gainful employment.\footnote{Aimeé Douglas & Brett Alessi. “Service as a Strategy to Combat Youth Unemployment.” Innovations in Civic Participation, Summer 2006. http://www.icicp.org/ht/d/sp/a/GetDocumentAction/i/1680.} Through service participation, unemployed young people can engage in structured activities that apply their talents and abilities while building skills and habits that transfer to employability. Civic engagement programs of sufficient duration and sophistication can engage young people in addressing critical social needs, while also providing a mechanism for them to build skills like leadership, responsibility, decision-making, self-management, team-building and cooperation.

Various service programs worldwide have been addressing youth workforce development for decades, whereas others are newer. The initiatives range from the National Service Scheme in Ghana, established in 1969, to the Philippines National Youth Service launched in 2009, and from Ruwaad in Palestine to Youth Engagement Services Pakistan. In more recent developments, many long-standing programs have also begun to focus on the success of their programs’ graduates and ways participants can continue to contribute after they have completed their service. For example, in Nigeria, National Youth Service Corps graduates can participate in entrepreneurship training programs, after which they receive grants toward starting their own businesses and hopefully create jobs for other young people. This is just one example of how youth civic participation programs can adjust to local priorities and serve as a strategy for meeting critical national needs.

The enthusiasm for youth civic participation evidenced throughout this publication is promising. However, much more needs to be done. It is important that institutions supporting youth civic participation continue to expand their efforts to ensure young people have an active role in their communities and issues that affect them. At the same time, international organizations and governments need to continue and expand investments in youth civic participation as a social institution in which every young person can participate.

\section*{Methodology}

The information provided in this report was collected from various ICP partners throughout the world. During and following the 8th Global Conference on National Youth Service in 2008, ICP asked conference participants to complete country profiles describing national youth service efforts in their country. ICP added to this information with desk research and posted the country profiles on a growing database of information on the IANYS website (www.icicp.org/ianys). In addition to the information provided by past conference participants, ICP mined its extensive research for various projects including asset mapping studies in East Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia. In countries where we had extensive information, ICP staff conducted desk research to update our data and complete each country snapshot. Finally, where possible, we shared the draft snapshots with youth civic participation experts in the countries represented to confirm the accuracy and relevance of our information.
Throughout this effort we have tried to pay close attention to the legitimacy of our sources and to consult with partners “on the ground” to ensure that we are painting the most accurate picture of youth civic participation possible. That said, limitations in acquiring information remain. First, linguistic and cultural differences inevitably pose a challenge because civic engagement can mean different things in different cultures; it is not always directly translatable. Additionally, as this research was conducted largely in English, organizations with a larger online presence in English are more likely to be represented in this report, while more isolated and localized organizations and activities may not be represented and some government policies may not have been available. The implication of this selection bias is that this report likely includes those organizations that already have the highest degree of exposure to international actors and a global civil society.

Nevertheless, despite limitations, this report remains consistent with its intention of providing brief glances into civic participation programs and policies worldwide. The inferences drawn and conclusions reached here are admittedly more tentative, and the criteria by which it is judged must also vary accordingly. Researchers confined themselves to the goal of identifying the most relevant factors, organizations and institutions affecting youth civic engagement in the countries included in this report. In doing so it aims to begin a conversation about how prior successes and existing strengths can be leveraged through investment and capacity building to create even more opportunities for young people to become engaged in their own development, as well as the social, economic and political development of their community.

Each country snapshot in this publication provides information about the situation of youth civic engagement, including civil society efforts, descriptions of existing national youth policies or plans, established youth ministries, committees or commissions that work on youth-related topics, and movements to create new or improved policies. The publication provides an overview of different youth civic engagement program models, such as fully government-run programs, NGO-run, programs linked with higher education, compulsory service and alternatives to conscription, or combinations of these.

Each snapshot is divided into four brief sections. The first section, Youth Civic Participation Overview, provides an introduction to civic participation in the country and focuses on initiatives that are implemented by civil society, universities and/or international organizations. There are various international volunteering organizations, such as United Nations Volunteers, that are operating in a range of countries throughout the world. In locations where these organizations appear to be one of the main efforts supporting civic participation in the country, they have been included in the snapshot. However, there are instances in which the international volunteering organizations may be operating in a country, but have not been described in the snapshot because other local civil society organizations have a larger presence.

The second section, Policy Overview, focuses on government-based initiatives and policies supporting youth civic participation. Where in existence, the snapshots describe national youth policies, national service schemes and the government ministries responsible for overseeing matters relating to young people and civic participation and efforts to create these institutions and/or policies. The last two sections strive to place the existing initiatives and policies in context. The Rationale/Background section provides the context in which young people live in each country, information on why programs were created, and objectives for meeting critical national needs in the country through youth civic engagement. Finally, the Going Forward section discusses plans to expand existing initiatives or develop new programs to support youth civic participation. Ultimately, the snapshots seek to provide a brief glimpse into the overall status of youth civic engagement in 101 countries.

The snapshots are grouped into eight regions primarily following UNICEF groupings. Each snapshot has an “In Brief” box on the first page that provides bullet points about the key features of youth civic participation programs and policies in that country. It includes information about which institutions implement civic participation programs - government, civil society, universities, primary and secondary schools, and/or international organizations. It provides some of the focus areas that the civic participation programs seek to address, such as environment, education, disease, employment, social cohesion, etc. The box provides information about the youth populations primarily targeted by civic participation programs such as university students, marginalized groups, at-risk young people, etc. Finally, the In Brief box provides the policy frameworks and ministries supporting youth civic participation, which includes the ministry overseeing youth affairs, laws drafted or passed in support of youth civic participation and programs created by policy frameworks.
BASIC DEFINITIONS

The definition of youth or young people can vary widely from country to country and culture to culture. Often, national youth policies define children, adolescents and youth in terms of different age ranges. This report does not provide a definitive age range for young people, but instead relies on specific countries’ definitions for each snapshot.

Civic participation and civic engagement are often used interchangeably, and there are multiple definitions of these terms based on different cultural contexts. For the purposes of this study, civic participation can be defined as individual or collective actions in which young people participate to improve the wellbeing of communities or society in general, and which provide opportunity for reflection (e.g. an organization where young people are recruited, offered leadership opportunities, participate in activities that improve the community, and are trained and mentored). Generally, work is done for minimal or no compensation.

Voluntary service is a subset of civic engagement and takes a variety of forms (i.e. formal long-term, international, episodic/occasional, part-time voluntary service, etc.). ICP has developed a typology for various types of voluntary service that can be found in past publications on its website at www.icicp.org. The terms ‘youth service’ and ‘voluntary service’ are also often used interchangeably with civic engagement, while ICP recognizes that service is only one of numerous forms of civic participation.

Service-learning is a method of teaching and learning that connects education with meaningful service to the community. Participants build academic skills while strengthening communities through service. Benefits include improved academic achievement, increased student engagement and civic skills and stronger communities.

A National Youth Policy, which commonly defines the age range of young people in a particular country, is a public policy established by government “that defines the place and role of youth in society and the responsibility of society to youth... It also encourages youth participation in the mainstream of society and in its decision-making processes.”

A National Youth Service Policy is a government document or public policy that specifically seeks to engage young people in voluntary service or provide opportunities for civic engagement. It can be a standalone document or part of a larger National Youth Policy framework. It can also be public policy created by a national youth council or youth ministry.

Civil society refers to the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that are separate from the state and/or commercial institutions. Although distinctions are sometimes made between civil society and the voluntary sector/non-profit sector/non-governmental sector, the terms are used more or less interchangeably in this paper. Non-governmental organization (NGO), civil society organization (CSO), voluntary organization, non-profit organization (NPO) are all used to refer to the various informal as well as formal associations and organizations that comprise the civil society.

GOING FORWARD

This publication is a work in progress as new youth civic participation programs are often coming online while others change to meet current needs. While the full descriptions available in this publication will likely stay consistent, we hope to update the online space with new reports and news articles as they become available. We invite you to please share with us new information about youth civic participation programs in your community by contacting ICP Program Associate Colleen Hammelman at Hammelman@icicp.org.

For a detailed definition, see Michael Delli Carpini, Director of Public Policy for The Pew Charitable Trusts, on the American Psychological Association website (http://www.apa.org/ed/sle/civicengagement.html), accessed August 2008. “Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official, or voting. Indeed, an underlying principle of our approach is that an engaged citizen should have the ability, agency, and opportunity to move comfortably among these various types of civic acts.”

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Botswana

Botswana is a small, landlocked country in southern Africa with a population of 1.9 million people. Botswana has a GNI of US $12.8 billion and 38% of the population is below the age of 15.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Botswana has an active civil society and organizations within this sphere have developed various youth civic participation opportunities. Young people can be found as members of community organizations such as Ditshwanelo (for human rights), Emang Basadi (for women’s empowerment) and the Botswana Red Cross.² However, limited information is available about their specific activities.

Additionally, organizations such as the Botswana Network of People Living with AIDS (BONEPWA) and the Tirisanyo Catholic Commission provide opportunities for young people in Botswana to volunteer in the HIV/AIDS sector.³ With the country having one of the highest HIV/AIDS rates in the world, HIV/AIDS is a sector in which many young Botswanis choose to participate. Through these programs young people serve as peer educators, volunteer in counseling and guidance centers, and engage in awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the spread of the disease throughout the country.⁴

Finally, the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC) is a semi-governmental organization established in 1974 as a coordinating organization for all youth-focused civil society organizations in Botswana. The BNYC is supported by an Act of Parliament and assists the government in implementing the National Youth Policy. One of the core roles of BNYC is liaise between civil society organizations and government and advocate for youth affairs.⁵

Policy Overview
Botswana has a National Youth Policy that was completed in 1996. The NYP is directed primarily toward males and females between the ages of 12 and 29, and recognizes the qualities and talents of young people, acknowledges their aspirations and needs, and recognizes the resources and programs needed to enable young people to contribute to society.⁶ Botswana also has a more recent National Action Plan for Youth, which is to be written every three years and coordinated in partnership between the Department of Youth Affairs and the Botswana National Youth Council. It provides a snapshot of the current state of the National Youth Policy and its current programs and policy. However, the authors were unable to find details about the current plan.⁷ The Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture is responsible for overseeing the implementation of both policies and youth affairs generally. Botswana also has a National Youth Council, which attempts to bring government, NGOs and businesses together to plan and provide services for young people.⁸

Botswana had a national youth service program called Tirelo Setshaba up until 2000, at which point it was disbanded. Tirelo Setshaba was a program initiated in 1980, designed to integrate young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds into society and the national economy. It shortly evolved into a voluntary community service scheme aimed at senior secondary school leavers and later became mandatory in 1985 as a prerequisite for all citizens for entrance into tertiary and university level institutions as well as employment with the government. The major areas of focus of Tirelo Setshaba

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⁷ Ibid.
⁸ “What is Botswana National Youth Council?”
were agriculture, education, health, local cooperatives, rural industries, and social and community development. In the early 1990s Tirelo Setshaba had approximately 1,600 participants, however following the government's decision to turn the program compulsory, the program had over 6,000 participants. In 2000 the Government of Botswana terminated the program citing it as not cost-effective and therefore unsustainable. No national youth service scheme has been developed to replace the program. However, there is a National Internship Program. Through this initiative, managed by the Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs, graduates of Botswana’s tertiary schools can apply to be placed in one of a variety of internships within government ministries or private sector businesses. The goal of these one year placements is to provide recent graduates with work experience and skill development, leading them to better employment prospects after the program. It is not a required program.

The Government of Botswana has implemented other initiatives aimed at increasing youth civic engagement. The government gives out a yearly National Youth Service Award to individuals and groups that demonstrate exceptional youth service. The government has also implemented the Constituency Competition for the Arts. This program is a yearly competition in which unemployed, out-of-school young people compete in categories such as dance and drama for a financial prize. The aim of the program is to keep unemployed, out-of-school young people engaged in their communities and away from drugs and alcohol.

Finally, the government has installed Principal Youth Ministers in most of its ministries, charged with overseeing youth activities of that ministry. In one example, the Ministry of Agriculture oversees the implementation of the Young Farmers Fund, which provides financial incentives to college graduates who pursue careers in farming. The Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture administers a similar Youth Development Fund, providing grants and loans to young people and youth groups with innovative income generating proposals.

Rationale/Background

During the peak of the Tirelo Setshaba National Service Scheme’s existence in the late 1990’s, as many as 6,000 young people participated in the program. It was terminated in 2000 due to its rising cost structure. The program cost over 10 million in 1997, a level which the government believed was unsustainable. Also, it was felt that the scheme benefited only a small fraction of elite young people (about 17 per cent who had completed secondary education) and was thus not impactful enough for the cost. While Tirelo Setshaba has not been replaced, civic participation continues, especially in the sector of HIV/AIDS. Botswana has the second most severe HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world, after Swaziland, with the national prevalence rate among adults of 15-49 years old estimated at 24%. Thus, this sector remains one of the most urgent in need of youth service and many organizations engage young people in prevention and counseling efforts.

Going Forward

Although the government has implemented many programs aimed toward youth civic engagement, many are still finding their footing. The Ministry of Agriculture’s youth farmer program still needs to attract more participants, while the Constituency Arts Competition has faced delays and other obstacles in its initial years. Youth service leaders have also called for youth programs to be publicized and delivered in rural areas outside the capital. At the same time, several community-based organizations are working with young people to address community needs through civic participation.

References:

9 Rankopo et al.
13 Rankopo et al.
Burkina Faso

Located in western Africa, north of Ghana, Burkina Faso has an estimated population of 15 million people (2008) with approximately 8 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$480.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Youth civic participation in Burkina Faso is primarily promoted through government partnerships with civil society and through independent civil society organization activities. Burkina Faso has some CSOs working with young people to improve development in the country.

One of these is the Programme d’Appui à l’Education et à la Formation des Jeunes Descolarisés et Non-Scolarisés (Support Program for the Education and Formation of Dropout and Uneducated Youth). This program aims to address poverty and education issues through community development work. Youth volunteers are at the forefront of these efforts, with young people involved both in leadership/decision-making capacities and as on-the-ground volunteers, working to organize their communities and rally for better educational and work opportunities.2

Policy Overview
In 2007, the Government of Burkina Faso and various civil society organizations partnered together to establish the National Volunteer Program.3 One of its major supporters was the Ministry of Youth and Employment. The program aims to fight poverty while working toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It was implemented in 2008 with 45 volunteers and plans to expand to about 1,000 participants each year. Participants serve for 45 hours per week for a period of between six months and one year. The minimum age of participants is 18 and they serve with a variety of host organizations. National or international CSOs and urban or regional districts are matched with volunteers to help carry out their work. The programs are located in 13 regions throughout Burkina Faso which are most in need of skilled human resources. The majority of volunteer opportunities take place in the health, education, environmental, economic development and decentralization sectors. Participants gain valuable work experience and receive training in civil service and patriotism. Participants receive €72 every month, as well as insurance for work risk, and housing is provided by the host organization. The Program is a ‘Public Interest Group’ (Groupement d’Intérêt Public), meaning that the government and civil society organizations work together to manage the program.4 In particular, the program works with partners to help it recruit the maximum number of young people to participate in development in Burkina Faso.5

The Burkina Faso government also oversees the Service National de Développement (National Development Service, NDS), a volunteer program geared toward getting young people to participate in social development programs in education and public administration to develop self-confidence and life skills, instill values of tolerance and solidarity, and develop the civic spirit of young people.6 Started in 1984, NDS engages participants for 40 hours per week for one year. The service is defined as obligatory civil service for all Burkinabe aged 18 to 35 years. It has nearly 5,000 young people per year and focuses on military formation, youth organization and youth employment.7

\[5\] Correspondence between Ibrahim Ouedraogo and ICP, 14 October 2010. Information on file with author.
participants divided into four groups. The first group, encompassing about 40% of participants, will be hired on as full
time government civil servants after their year of service. Another 40% will serve as volunteers but are not guaranteed
employment after their service. Around 15% of participants are enrolled in the program to receive professional training,
and the rest are specifically trained and deployed as firemen. Among all groups of volunteers, participants work in the
education, health, and public safety sectors, as well as many other areas of need.

Rationale/Background
Burkina Faso is densely populated and, located in the desert climate of the Sahel, has limited natural resources. As a
result, the people of Burkina Faso face limited economic prospects and many survive on subsistence agriculture. The
economic strife has recently been compounded by unrest in Cote d’Ivoire and northern Ghana, which has hindered the
ability of several hundred thousand seasonal Burkinabe agricultural workers to attain temporary work in neighboring
countries. The youth civic engagement programs listed above provide alternative opportunities for young people
entering the work force, using their resources to help rebuild the country. Young people receive training and experience,
so they are better prepared for and more competitive in the job search. Burkina Faso also faces large child mortality,
sanitation and educational issues. UNICEF is active, with programs in 1,200 villages throughout Burkina Faso, targeting
these issues specifically.

Going Forward
In an effort to achieve poverty reduction and human resource skill building, Burkina Faso has partnered with a number of
civil society organizations to implement service programs that will benefit the country’s development. As the National
Volunteer Corps is a newly implemented program, there exists the opportunity in the upcoming years to engage in
monitoring and evaluation to determine the results of the program and if planned objectives are being achieved. Several
CSOs are also working with young people to meet critical needs and learn important skills through service.

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8 Agnelli.
10 “Social Change and Civic Engagement With Village Relays in Burkina Faso,” UNICEF, Web, 21 October 2010,
Burundi

Burundi is a small, landlocked republic in eastern Africa with an estimated population of 8 million people, nearly half of which is under the age of 18.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Most active youth civic engagement programs in Burundi are implemented by non-profit and other private organizations. Some of these organizations work with the government, but the majority of them conduct their work independently.

The following are a few of these programs although limited information was available about each. The Jeunesse en Réconstruction du Monde en Destruction (JRMD) program, launched in 2004, engages high school and university students around the country to rebuild infrastructure and teach other young people.2 The Reintegrating Youth in Post-Conflict Burundi through Livelihoods Promotion project provides a skills-training package for youth involvement in livelihood production; the package includes a start-up kit for apprentice graduates, access to the Village Savings and Loan Association, and locally relevant skills curriculum.3 Finally, the Youth Intervention for Peace Project (YIPP), started in 2004, focuses on the restoration of relationships among young people of different cultures. YIPP's main initiatives are intercommunity peace dialogues, youth peace clubs and community service, such as the rebuilding of houses in local communities.4

Policy Overview
The Government of Burundi is currently working within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme to develop a national service program. The open-ended potential program would empower young people under the age of 24 with general life skills, professional and technical training, and moral knowledge, through participation in civic associations, social entrepreneurship and youth leadership programs. The main goals of the program are community development, an increase of national solidarity and enhancement of peace and public safety.5

The Minister of Youth, Sport and Culture is charged with youth-related policy in Burundi. In 1998, the department published its National Youth Policy, which recognized challenges in the areas of education and youth enslavement and the necessity to restore peace in the country by promoting social services that ameliorate the physical and mental state of young people.6 According to the policy, the principal objectives of the Ministry are to:

1. Contribute to the complete education and integration of young people
2. Mobilize young people regarding programs of education, human rights, reconciliation and reconstruction of infrastructure
3. Encourage and promote the creation and development of associations and movements for young people.

The policy was revisited in a national forum in 2007, at which the youth minister asserted that the door remains open for involvement of young people in Burundi but indicated no significant policy changes from those outlined in 1998.7

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Rationale/Background
Coming out of civil conflict lasting over 10 years, Burundi is currently trying to escape a recession that has many fiscal and social costs. Much of the country’s youth population has already experienced war and its cruelties, and more continue to be vulnerable to its demands. Young men are at risk for recruitment by armed groups, while young women are at risk of gender-based violence and limited economic opportunities. Moreover, lack of adequate education in Burundi inhibits understanding and peace promotion among young people. Continued power struggles within the government significantly slow progress in the area of youth policy development, while the promotion of youth civic engagement falls to private organizations. Through education, training and civic participation opportunities, like that intended by the government and already implemented by the aforementioned organizations, Burundi’s young people can be equipped to employ a spirit of citizenship and promote peace in the country.

Going Forward
The Government of Burundi intends to implement a voluntary civic service program based on models of successful initiatives in other countries. Through discussion and analysis of the experiences of other countries, Burundi can create more detailed plans for its national service program. The government will also have to look to the example of non-government programs already established in the country. The two sectors can benefit from combining their power and experience to progress to promote youth civic engagement in Burundi.

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8 Louis Nduwimana.
9 “Reintegrating Youth in Post Conflict Burundi through Livelihoods Program.”
10 Louis Nduwimana.
Democratic Republic of Congo

Straddling the equator in central sub-Saharan Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has an approximate population of 67 million people and a GDP per capita of US$ 300.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in the midst of ongoing conflict and humanitarian emergencies, has a number of civil society organizations working on the ground to empower young people and provide civic participation opportunities.

One of these organizations is Youth Entrepreneurship and Sustainability (YES), founded in 2002 at the Alexandria Youth Summit in Alexandria, Egypt. It began with 1,200 delegates from 120 different countries. YES founded a program in the DRC called Youth Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Democratic Republic of the Congo (YES DRC). YES DRC creates green jobs for young people throughout the DRC, reaching about 100 people each year and targeting participants between the ages of 14 and 35 years old. YES specifically reaches out to high school students, out of school boys and girls, child soldiers, refugee children and other vulnerable young people. Some other areas of focus for YES DRC are rural development, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution and peace building, and cultural and bio diversity. In addition to civic participation opportunities in these areas, YES DRC provides loans and training to young entrepreneurs, with the intention that they will then create successful businesses and jobs in the DRC. Young people receiving loans from YES have already started businesses in information technology, poultry farming, cake-making and dress-making.²

Policy Overview
The DRC’s Ministry of Youth and Sports oversees issues affecting youth development.³ The country also has the Consultation Collective des Ong de Jeunesse du Congo (Collective Consultation of Youth NGOs of the Congo, CONAJECO), a federal organization founded in 1995 working as a national umbrella organization for all youth CSOs in the DRC. Currently the Ministry of Youth and Sports is working with CONAJECO to train young people as promoters, developers and managers of economic projects funded by the Conference des Ministres de la Jeunesse et des Sports des Etats et Gouvernements Ayant le Francais en Partage (Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports of French Speaking Countries, CONFES), an organization founded in 1969 working to promote youth activities in French speaking countries.⁴ The authors were unable to identify a comprehensive youth policy.

Rationale/Background
In May 1997, the dictatorial regime that had governed the DRC for decades was toppled, leading to years of internal conflict, ongoing rebellions, fighting among foreign and national troops, and general political instability and recurring changes in leadership. In 2002, warring factions signed a peace agreement agreeing to national unity. After the rule of a transitional government, elections established a permanent government under President Laurent Kabila in 2006.⁵ Many parts of the DRC are still unstable, however, and the country is attempting to emerge from the economic and social destruction of years of civil conflict.

The DRC government and CSOs face many challenges in its post-conflict society such as coping with extreme poverty, displacement, children having been kidnapped and forced to become soldiers, lack of education, etc. Several community-based and international organizations are particularly interested in engaging young people to address these issues and help rebuild the country through civic participation, while the government also focuses on vocational training and employment programs for young people.

Going Forward
Due to years of violence in the DRC, there is limited infrastructure for youth civic engagement. However, various CSOs are actively engaging and empowering young people in the country. Young people face enormous issues, from being repatriated refugees to recovering from being child soldiers. They operate within a weak economy, struggling school system and unstable political atmosphere. Due to these factors, many of the organizations operating in the DRC are local CSOs, religious or international organizations attempting to give young people in the country opportunities for rehabilitation and to contribute to community development through civic participation.
Located in western sub-Saharan Africa, Cote d'Ivoire has an estimated population of 20 million people, with approximately 9.7 million under the age of 18. Cote d'Ivoire's GNI per capita is US$980, with 23% of the population below the international poverty line.\(^1\)

YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

With nearly half of its population under the age of 18, Cote d'Ivoire could benefit by a large and robust network of youth civic participation opportunities and organizations. At the moment, civic participation programs are primarily implemented by international organizations and government.

For example, donor nations are implementing a pilot program in Cote d'Ivoire called the Employment Intensive Investment Programs. Implemented in part by the UNDP and funded by Norway, the program supports public agencies, community groups, CSOs and specialized consultancies that have proven proficient in training and developing income generating activities for young people in society. Each year 1,500 participants will be matched with appropriate organizations, which will provide each participant with vocational training, civic education, mentoring and support. Funds will also be allocated toward micro-projects that are income generating activities for young people.\(^2\)

POLICY OVERVIEW

In 2007 the Government of Cote d'Ivoire instituted a Programme du Service Civique National (National Civic Service Program, PSCN). This program is funded by the European Union and aims to instill civic values in, and curb unemployment among, young people in the country.\(^3\) The program also aims to provide young people formerly involved in conflict with training and technical skills, allowing them to pursue trades and thus assisting in their rehabilitation. The program has four major areas of training: Agro-Pastoral, Handicrafts, Building and Public Works (BTP) and New Information Technologies and Communication (NTIC). In addition to receiving training in the above areas, participants take part in a civic education and citizenship training.\(^4\) The PSCN reports that in 2010 it provided civic and professional training opportunities to over 6,500 young people, formed and managed 3,500 training units and renovated and opened a Centre du Service Civique de Sassandra (Civic Service Center Sassandra).\(^5\)

Cote d'Ivoire also has a Ministère de la Jeunesse, du Deport et des Loisirs (Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation), created in 2007 under Décret n° 2007-508 du 13 juin.\(^6\) The Ministry is responsible for implementation and monitoring youth policy in Cote d'Ivoire. The Ministry’s youth related activities include: education and training of young people, implementation of activities to promote autonomy, civic behavior and responsibility, and implementation of strategies and training in citizenship.\(^7\)

RATIONALE/BACKGROUND

Cote d'Ivoire’s long and brutal civil war ended in 2007, when rebel and government factions joined together to form a new government in which leaders of both sides hold leadership roles. Several thousand UN troops remain in Cote d’Ivoire to maintain the peace and assist with reconstruction and implementation of the peace agreement. Young people in Cote d’Ivoire are suffering the aftermath of conflict struggling with human rights abuses, families dispossessed or displaced,

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\(^4\) Ibid.


\(^7\) “Mission and Vision,” Ibid.
lack of education, protection and nutrition, healthcare, etc.\textsuperscript{8} As a result, the government and international organizations are implementing programs to support youth employment and engage young people in addressing community needs through civic participation.

**Going Forward**
Given its recent history, the main efforts in Cote d'Ivoire concerning young people focus on post-conflict reintegration and absorption into the community and creating employment opportunities, all of which service opportunities could help further. The youth civic participation programs in Cote d'Ivoire are a promising strategy for aiding young people in this process and significantly engaging them in their country's development, although the country could benefit by expanding existing initiatives.

\textsuperscript{8}“Cote d'Ivoire,” UNICEF Info by Country.
The Gambia

Bordering Senegal in Western Africa, the Gambia has a population of approximately 1.6 million people with approximately 811,000 people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$390.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Gambia has a high percentage (almost 50%) of young people,² many of which have a strong desire to participate in the development and advancement of their communities and country, as demonstrated by the support for the National Youth Policy and National Youth Council. While most of Gambia’s youth policy and civic service programs are run by the government, several civil society organizations are also active.

For example, the Gambian Red Cross Society (GRCS) is a branch of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies active in the Gambia. Beginning in 2002, in response to an influx of refugees entering Gambia from Senegal, GRCS mobilized nearly 50 volunteers from their Western Division branch who, in collaboration with the immigration department, assisted in registering refugees in host villages. GRCS is also active in mobilizing volunteers to assist those affected by flooding in Gambia.³

Policy Overview
In keeping with the African Youth Charter of 2006, the Gambia has begun to institute a multitude of policies and organizations to benefit its young people. Gambia has a National Youth Policy 1998-2008, designed to assist young Gambians having difficulty entering the workforce to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to help them find formal employment. One of the main goals of the NYP is the education of young Gambians, with a stipulation that African states should aim to “revitalize vocational education and training” and “encourage youth participation in community work as part of their education to build a sense of civic duty.” A new 10-year version of the National Youth Policy was validated in December 2009.⁴ With the adoption of the policy came the creation of a biennial, week-long National Youth Festival and Conference, which affords participants the opportunity participate in national development through discussion of matters of interest to young people, providing for the government an authoritative source for youth information from young people themselves. The conference also offers the chance for participation in a community service project, about which specific information is limited.⁵

The Gambia also has a National Youth Council (NYC), which was established in 2000 by an act of the National Assembly. The NYC is charged with facilitating youth empowerment, development and involvement in the decision making process at a national level. The NYC coordinates the activities of numerous youth organizations in the country, liaising between the Ministry of Youth and Sports and youth organizations. The Gambia’s Ministry of Youth and Sports has established youth and community centers in all the seven divisions of the Gambia. Local governments also have youth coordinators and youth committees working with them to establish activities for young people in each locality.⁶ Further information on activities of the youth and community centers is limited.

²Ibid.
In addition, Gambia has a National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS). The Scheme was established in 1996 and aims to address youth indiscipline, drug abuse, addiction and unemployment. Participants of the scheme are trained in skills that promote their employment. Participants also gain skills for youth leadership and are deployed to take action in various sectors that will benefit their country. The program focuses on young people between the ages of 13-30, and participants have engaged in activities, such as running an internet cafe and counseling center and participating in agricultural projects around the country. In 2002, the Gambia Arab Islamic Bank agreed to provide up to 80% of funding for NYSS corps members who want to be self-employed. To date, more than D160,247 has been given out to entrepreneurial corps members.

The Gambia's Department of State for Youth and Sport (DOSYS), within the Ministry of Youth and Sports, strives to meet youth policy needs and provide a cooperative resource for youth development programs throughout the Gambia. In a partnership with the National Network of Youth on Population and Reproduction, DOSYS implements a program aimed at tackling the Gambia's issue of AIDS among young people, a problem the DOSYS considers a critical issue facing the Gambia. The policy is primarily aimed at young people ages 13-30, focusing on those already impacted by the disease. One of the major components of the plan is the facilitation of dialogue between young people affected by the disease and their communities, which promotes education surrounding the issue and promotes peace for those living with it.

Finally, the Government of the Gambia is preparing to pilot a national volunteering system in the country’s educational sector. The national volunteer program, in partnership with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, the National Planning Commission, and Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO, UK), will attempt to promote active citizenship while using volunteering as a key method of meeting major development objectives. The authors were unable to find additional information about the proposed pilot date.

**Rationale/Background**

Gambian young people face a multitude of challenges from HIV/AIDS and drug abuse to unemployment and homelessness. Gambia also faces issues with a lack of community participation and incorporation of traditional medicine into the public health system, which contribute to the aforementioned challenges. As a result, various civil society organizations and government initiatives are engaging young people in addressing these critical national concerns while also building their skills for future success through youth civic participation programs. Government programs, like DOSYS, encourage HIV/AIDS awareness and recovery, while others, like NYSS, provide alternative opportunities for employment. International organizations such as the Red Cross also engage young people in addressing major health issues in the country.

**Going Forward**

The Government of Gambia is considering implementing a national volunteer program in the education sector of the country. Feasibility studies were done by both United Nations Volunteers and the Gambian chapter of VSO to determine how such a program could be structured and whether it would be effective in addressing continual shortages of teachers and staff persons within schools around the country. The results of the studies indicated that the spirit of civic participation was already at work in villages and towns throughout the country and could be harnessed into a national program. As a result, the Gambian government is building a framework for the rollout of such a civic participation program and will be implementing a pilot in the future.

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11 Jallow.
Ghana

Located in western Africa, Ghana has a population of approximately 23 million people, of which 10.5 million (approximately 44.5%) are under the age of 18. Ghana has a GNI per capita of US$ 670.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Ghana has an active civil society, with numerous youth and student organizations. Many of these are organized under the Federation of Youth Associations in Ghana (FEDYAG). FEDYAG brings together more than 100 national youth associations, including governmental and non-governmental youth organizations. The federation seeks to represent the common interests of member youth associations to the government, encourage youth leadership and build capacity in the youth development field. FEDYAG and its member organizations mostly promote youth leadership by encouraging young people to raise their voices concerning national and international issues. Young people have the chance to participate in discussions surrounding issues and to inform society about what topics are of interest and importance to them.2

Policy Overview
Ghana’s National Youth Policy was launched in August 2010, which is based off of deliberations about the policy that occurred in 1999.3 This policy defines young people in Ghana as those between the ages of 15 and 35. The theme of the 2010 version of the policy is “towards an empowered youth, impacting positively on national development,” and one of the articles of the policy is on youth, patriotism and volunteerism. The policy states the need to make volunteerism attractive to young people and to inspire patriotism by taking the following measures: allocate resources for youth volunteerism; facilitate private sector support for youth volunteerism; include youth volunteerism in all levels of education; and use volunteerism to develop leadership potential among youth.4

Ghana’s National Service Scheme (NSS) has been in place since 1973 and is overseen by the Ministry of Education. It is currently operating under the guidelines laid out in the National Service Act of 1980, Act 426. It is a mandatory program affecting all college graduates in Ghana. Through the NSS, recent college graduates in Ghana are placed in government posts throughout the country, in sectors such as education, health, agriculture and more. The program annually deploys between 40,000 and 50,000 participants for a duration of one year.6

The goal of the program is to have educated Ghanaians contribute to the country’s social needs while providing them with hands-on training in the sectors most pressing to their country’s development. About 60% of participants are deployed in the education sector, mostly as teachers at all levels of education. A large percentage of service personnel are also posted in the rural health sector, where they engage in activities ranging from ensuring potable water to implementing health education campaigns. New fields are continually being added to the program, including recently in environmental service. Between 5-10% are deployed to work in the private sector, with the aim of expanding private sector development in Ghana.

4 Ibid.
Ghana also has a National Youth Council (NYC), created by the government in 1972. This council is charged with the formation of policies and programs to instill a sense of self-reliance, leadership, discipline, friendship and civic responsibility in young Ghanaians. The Ghanaian NYC encourages participation in an exchange of ideas with youth organizations in other countries in Africa and the world. The NYC has regional youth committees throughout Ghana to facilitate its presence throughout the country. While Ghana’s NYC does not implement wide-scale programs like the NSS or NYEP, it attempts to act as an advocate for youth policies and programs. Among other things, NYC leaders has called for the implementation of Ghana’s National Youth Policy, expanded vocational training among young people, and involved young people in supporting the Ghanaian national soccer team.7

Rationale/Background
The National Youth Policy of Ghana has a section addressing the challenges facing its young people, which include: access to quality education, unemployment, violent conflict and crime, erosion of support systems, hunger and malnutrition, drug abuse, vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and inadequate opportunities for youth participation and involvement.8 With so many issues facing its young people, any number may be addressed through Ghana’s civil society and government organizations. Many of the programs and organizations listed above currently focus on the last of the challenges, lack of opportunity for participation, by giving young people the chance to speak out on things that matter to them.

Going Forward
The NSS has faced numerous criticisms over time. It has been alleged that many service members are underemployed and sit idle during their tenures, due to both lack of work and poor matching between participants and duty posts. Most recently, NSS leadership has caused a stir by announcing that service members will now be deployed in farming and crop cultivation, because Ghana “shouldn’t be importing food when we have an army of youth.”9 Critics have responded that farming should be left to trained farmers possessing the necessary skill for largescale food production.10 In another controversial move, the NSS announced in April 2010 that all NSS participants would now be required to undergo two weeks of military training, intended to “prepare them mentally and physically for their tasks as service persons.”11 Despite the controversy, both programs appear to be on track to be implemented.

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8 National Youth Policy of Ghana.
Kenya is located in eastern Africa, between Somalia and Tanzania. It has an estimated population of 38.7 million people, of which 19.1 million are age 18 or younger. Kenya has a GNI per capita of US$770.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Kenya has an active civil society and therefore multiple opportunities for youth civic participation throughout the country. Two large civic participation organizations operating in Kenya are the Kenya Scouts Association (KSA) and the Slum Information Development and Resource Centres (SIDAREC). Founded in 1910, KSA utilizes the general Scout framework to mobilize young people in addressing needs throughout their communities. Tailoring their major goals toward country needs, KSA focuses much of its activity in the areas of poverty alleviation, emergency response, conflict resolution, drug demand reduction and HIV/AIDS prevention.2 In particular, the Jasiri/Rovers section of KSA, for young people aged 19-30, has a focus motto of service.3 The association has reached over 262,000 young people in Kenya since it was founded.4

SIDAREC began in 1996 as a youth group but quickly grew into a large community-based organization by 1997. It operates centers in underprivileged areas throughout Kenya. Through these centers, it organizes young people in the community to engage in activities aimed at improving health education, providing residents with access to libraries and information technology and generally empowering community members to take action to improve their own welfare, income and child development levels.5 These are just two examples of the vibrant NGO sector in Kenya engaging a wide-range of young people.

Policy Overview
Kenya has a National Youth Policy of 2006 containing goals and objectives of promoting a culture of civic participation among young people, engaging young people in economic development, and ensuring young people have the opportunity (and responsibility) of participating in decisions that affect their lives. The policy specifically mentions that young people in Kenya are responsible for contributing to social and economic development through civic participation, though it does not propose specific programs.6

Kenya’s Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is responsible for overseeing Kenya’s National Youth Service scheme, which was started in 1964.7 The target audience has expanded throughout the course of the program’s existence and today Kenya’s NYS targets unemployed, unmarried young people between the ages of 18-22. The scheme aims to increase young people’s employability by providing them with technical training and experience in projects such as building dams, roads, canals and other infrastructure. The NYS also acts as a reserve force for the Kenya Armed Forces and is deployed to provide assistance during national disasters such as fires, floods and terrorist attacks. The participants also engage in agricultural development, managing farms throughout the country that serve as models for surrounding farmers to learn the newest and most efficient farming practices. As currently structured, the Kenya NYS takes in about 3,500 young men and women each year and has an average of 10,000 active youth participants at any one time. While engaging in national

service projects, NYS members can also receive diplomas and certificates in a number of areas, ranging from one year certificates in auto mechanics to a three-year diploma in public accounting and electrical or mechanical engineering.8

Recently, Kenya made a number of changes to its NYS program. First, it started to incorporate unemployed 'street children' and orphans into the service. In 2003, the service took in its first class of 300 street children, most of which, in an indicator of success, graduated the program and continued with educational courses.9 A second change to the program is updating the machinery and technology used during projects and educational courses. Funded through an agreement with the Government of China, the Kenya NYS inducted 4.3 billion shillings worth of equipment in February 2010, including road construction and earth moving machinery, agricultural machinery, fire fighting engines, generators and more. The new equipment was an especially critical move, as the machinery previously in use by the NYS were commissioned between 1978 and 1982 and were thoroughly out of date for work and training purposes.10 In a final recent change, government ministries were instructed to give priority to NYS graduates when recruiting for positions within their organizations. This was done in an effort to increase the employment rates of graduates of the Kenyan NYS. As a result of the decree, thousands of NYS graduates have been hired into ministries within the public sector, with almost 10,000 being absorbed by Kenya’s police force and armed services.11

Rationale/Background
Young people under the age of 30 make up 70% of Kenya’s population12 and the country has a youth unemployment rate of 75%.13 With these statistics in mind, the National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government and President initiated reforms to the NYS, including appointing a new Director and giving priority to NYS graduates in hiring at government ministries, thus increasing employment prospects for young people participating in the scheme.14 Additionally, many CSOs are engaging young people in meeting critical development needs while improving their skills and employability. Organizations such as SIDAREC and the KSA were created to meet these challenges by tapping into the vast potential that Kenya’s large youth population represents.

Going Forward
Going forward, one of the largest challenges for the Kenya NYS will be its budget. In 2008 – 2009, the NYS had a projected budget of 32,857,143 Kenya Pounds while it only had an approved budget of 25,432,065. Additionally, much of the NYS’s budget goes to administrative overhead and disaster response, and not enough is allocated toward income generating activities.15 Another challenge facing the NYS is ensuring graduates have jobs in the private sector economy after graduation. While the NYS seeks to endow its graduates with skills that will be valued in the job market, a lacking private economy has led to the public sector playing an ever increasing role in providing employment for program participants. The dual challenges of insufficient budget and lack of private sector employment opportunities are constraints faced by many national service schemes in Africa, and Kenya’s NYS is no exception.

10 Mwai Kibaki.
11 Ibid.
12 “Brief about the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs.”
13 Kenya National Youth Policy.
14 “Brief about the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs.”
15 G.K. Somba-Kivalya.
Lesotho

Lesotho is a small country located in an enclave in Southern Africa. It has a GNI per capita of US$1,080, and a population of 2 million people with 954,000 people below the age of 18.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Civil society in Lesotho exists, however due to economic and other socio-political factors, it is largely uncoordinated, lacking a central organizing body and operates in relative isolation from the government. As such, limited information is available about youth civic participation initiatives implemented by civil society organizations in Lesotho. One organization, the OlympAfrica Youth Ambassador Programme (OYAP), is seeking to engage young people in addressing social issues affecting them. Started in 2003 by the Lesotho National Olympic Committee, the Commonwealth Games Canada and UK Sport, OYAP uses sport as a venue to teach youth leadership, disseminate information on critical social issues, and prepare young people to provide peer mentorship to other young people in their communities. OYAP trains young people to develop their own creative, youth-focused programs focusing on issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS and family issues. OYAP hosts 76 youth ambassadors that engage young people throughout the country.² In addition to civil society initiatives such as this, the government and international organizations are expanding youth civic participation opportunities.

Policy Overview
On April 28, 2010, Lesotho officially launched the Youth Volunteer Corp Project (LYVCP). Developed in conjunction with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the program, which is one year in duration, provides unemployed tertiary school graduates with work experiences in an effort to increase their employment success. After receiving training³ in local governance, participants are placed in positions throughout government ministries and public sector organizations.⁴ The project started in 2010 with 153 volunteers. It is a three year project with a cost of about M7 million and it is funded by the Lesotho government and the UNDP, with some assistance from the European Union.

The Youth Volunteer Corps Project is organized under the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation, Lesotho’s primary governing body of youth related issues and programs. Lesotho has a National Health and Social Welfare Policy that incorporates youth issues, but the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive youth policy.⁵ The Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation, in an effort to act under the National Youth Council Act of 2008 and the council’s regulations of 2009, has proposed that elections for a National Youth Council take place in 2011. The government is currently engaging in an educational campaign around the legislation and hopes to have a National Youth Council elected in 2011.⁶

Finally, Lesotho has many other youth employment initiatives under way. The government provides vocational training for young people at locations throughout the country, and it has formulated policy calling for a reduction in youth

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³ Many participants went through training provided by the European Union Local Governance and Non-State Actors Support Programme.
unemployment. The government is currently partnering with organizations such as UNDP and the International Labour Organization to draft and implement an action plan aimed at increasing economic opportunities for young people in the country.

Rationale/Background
In Lesotho, half of the 800 students that graduate tertiary school every year remain unemployed. Overall, Lesotho has a 45 percent unemployment rate. To address this, the Lesotho government has a number of initiatives, such as the Youth Volunteer Corps Project, aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals while also enhancing youth employment prospects. The UNDP and UNV programs in Lesotho are working toward fighting poverty, HIV/AIDS and food security, while also helping the Lesotho government manage environmental change and adopt sustainable practices with regards to its management of natural resources.

Going Forward
Government officials have stated that in the long term, they hope to develop the National Volunteer Youth Corp program as a program in which all Lesotho graduates will participate. As the program expands, the government also hopes to place participants in volunteer positions within the private sector and in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho. The government also seeks to have a National Youth Council elected in 2011, further expanding youth civic participation opportunities. Expanding opportunities in Lesotho such as those described above can help improve youth employment while addressing other critical community and national needs.

8 -“PM to Officially Launch LYVCP.”
10 -“PM to Officially Launch LYVCP.”
Located on the west coast of Africa with the Atlantic Ocean on its western border, Liberia has an estimated population in 2008 of 3.8 million people, of which 1.9 million are under the age of 18. Liberia has a GNI per capita of US$ 170.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Liberia has a large population of young people willing to become involved in the future of their country if opportunities are available. There are many civil society organizations active in Liberia focusing on peace-building, combating HIV/AIDS and poverty, and rebuilding infrastructure.

For example, the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), established in May of 1974, is an umbrella organization of youth organizations in Liberia. FLY organizes and coordinates youth and student activity throughout Liberia. FLY's stated goals are to "direct social change wherever possible and necessary, organize the young people of Liberia into active youth service corps, and to cooperate and work with other agencies and youth groups on a national or international level. FLY is currently engaged in a program called Mapping Up which is a mapping exercise to determine the number of youth organizations in each county in Liberia and their capacity, focus and membership. FLY also conducts regular youth leadership trainings and conferences which provide basic leadership skills and education to young Liberians while also promoting cultural interaction and cultivating new friendships.1

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in partnership with UNDP and USAID, implements the Mano River Union Youth, Peace and Development Forum. The Forum exists to enhance youth participation in reconciliation, stabilization and peace-building throughout the Mano River Union Countries. In 2004, 48 youth representatives from all of the Mano River Union Countries, including Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, were brought together to discuss concerns, needs and priorities in an effort to examine potential cross-border peace-building and reconstruction projects throughout the region. In addition to providing young people with the opportunity to participate in the process, these projects strive to facilitate job creation, rebuilding of houses, training in agriculture, conflict management and peace-building.2

Policy Overview
Liberia’s Ministry of Youth and Sports oversees youth affairs. The Liberian National Youth Policy developed out of the National Youth Consultative Conference in August 2005. This conference brought together government ministers, heads of CSOs and young people from all over Liberia to commit to drafting a National Youth Policy for Liberia.3 The resulting policy emerged four months later, with the Liberian National Youth Policy of 2005.4 The Youth Policy aims to empower its young people “to take initiative and promote the spirit of national service, volunteerism and self-help activities” through equal opportunity, civic responsibility and active participation at all levels.5 The administration of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf formally endorsed the Policy,6 and in 2006 the Minister of Youth and Sports called on the Liberian

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1 Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), Web, 30 September 2010, http://www.flyliberia.org/Programs.html.
legislature to enact the Youth Policy by passing the National Youth Law, which would enforce the National Youth Policy and pave the way for its implementation. However, to date the Liberian legislature has not passed the law enacting the National Youth Policy. It is before the legislature and the government continues to push for its approval.

In June 2007, the Government of Liberia and the United Nations Development Fund signed an agreement establishing the National Youth Volunteer Service (NYVS) program of Liberia. This three-year program is funded by Liberia and UNDP and managed by UN Volunteers (UNV). In this program, about 100 graduates each year from different Liberian universities serve a 12-month term volunteering in locations throughout Liberia. The program began in 2008 with a class of 100 volunteers and in 2009 it had 121 participants. The third class was deployed in 2010, numbering 122 participants. Participants teach in elementary schools and carry out health awareness campaigns against malaria, cholera, STDs, HIV/AIDS and TB. They also organize environment cleaning campaigns to educate the community on environmental issues and develop peace-building campaigns to reduce divisions and polarization after 15 years of civil conflict. UNV is scheduled to turn over the program to the Liberian government at the end of 2010, at which point the government will assume the running and funding of the program.

Rationale/Background
Liberia recently emerged from years of war and civil conflict. As a result, the country's industry and infrastructure are depleted and there exists limited economic opportunities for young people in Liberia. Liberia has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in West Africa, with one in three females aged 15-19 years old having a child. Additionally, unemployed and idle young people are increasingly at risk of drug and substance abuse, further exposing them to HIV/AIDS. As a result, Liberia’s National Youth Policy (NYP, 2005) identifies youth unemployment and idleness as one of the country's most pressing issues, one that exacerbates many other social and economic problems. The NYP calls for access to secondary schools and skills training to be among the nations priorities, along with support programs and services geared toward unemployed young people. Furthermore, the policy recognizes the fact that the Liberian labor market is not producing the necessary number of jobs to sustain additionally trained young people. As a result, government initiatives and civil society are striving to enhance youth employment prospects through civic participation activities that build participant skills while addressing community needs.

Going Forward
The current UNV-managed NYVS is scheduled to be turned over to the Government of Liberia for management, but government officials have stated they are not ready to independently implement the program. One reason is because the UNV program has been paying volunteers based on UNV salary levels, which the Government of Liberia cannot afford. Secondly, the program has been facing challenges in recruitment, and, when participation levels are reached, the government has noted a need to convince participants to serve in rural areas. Despite these challenges, Liberia is still making plans for the future of the program. President Sirleaf stated that individuals will have to go through the service scheme in order to qualify for a civil service post, and going forward Liberia would like to see more volunteers engage in agriculture and farming techniques in order to assist the nation as it faces chronic food shortages and a large urban population that is hesitant to repopulate rural areas and engage in farming.

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8 Conversation between Jean Manney, Innovations in Civic Participation, and Sam Hare, Deputy Youth and Sports Minister for Youth Development, Republic of Liberia, July 2010, On file with author.
11 Manney/Hare, 2010.
12 “UNV Supports New Volunteer Program in Liberia.”
14 “Illustrative Program Description – Youth Service Corps in Liberia Created by EQUIP3 / Youth Trust.”
15 Ibid.
17 Manney/Hare 2010.
18 Ibid.
Malawi

Malawi, a landlocked country in southeastern Africa, had an estimated population in 2008 of 14.8 million people of which 7.9 million are under the age of 18. Malawi has a GNI per capita of US$ 290.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Malawi has a strong civil society with some civil society organizations supporting youth civic participation (CSOs). The National Youth Council of Malawi’s 2006 Directory of Youth Organizations listed 114 registered youth organizations and 135 youth clubs. Indeed, recent studies have indicated that young people in Malawi are more active in civic participation than many of their counterparts in other countries.² Through civil society organizations, young people in Malawi volunteer in sectors such as health, gender equality, environmental conservation and human rights. Working in literacy promotion or providing care for orphans and the elderly are also popular areas of youth civic participation.

One organization providing such opportunities is Banja la Mtsogolo, a donor-funded CSO that operates reproductive health clinics. It recruits young people and trains them to be peer educators, speaking to other young people about AIDS prevention, reproductive health and other relevant issues. Founded in 1987, the program targets out-of-school young people and trains them to distribute sexual and reproductive health information to other young people, thus expanding the organization’s reach.³

Policy Overview
The National Youth Council of Malawi serves as an umbrella organization that registers all youth CSOs and was established in 1996 by Act No. 22. Malawi also has a National Youth Policy adopted in 1999,⁴ which aims to provide a framework guiding youth development and the creation of youth-focused projects.⁵ Within the government structure, Malawi’s Ministry of Youth Development and Sports takes the lead in organizing civic participation opportunities for young people in Malawi. The Ministry of Youth Development and Sports is supported by a number of development organizations in implementing the programs including UNICEF, UNFPA and recently UNDP. Specifically, the Ministry implements four distinct programs for young people.

One is the National Adult Literacy Program, initiated in 1986, in which local volunteers are used to teach basic reading skills to rural villagers. The majority of the 1,000 to 1,200 instructors are 20 years old or older. A second youth development program implemented by the government is the Youth Action Program for Youth Health and Counseling. In this program, young people are organized as peer educators, training other young people on HIV/AIDS and other important health knowledge and skills. Volunteers also organize groups of young people to engage in concerted action addressing local health needs. Participants engage in service activities lasting from one day to two weeks.⁶

In a third initiative, the Youth Participation and Leadership program, 200 young people are selected each year to undergo training in leadership and motivation. They are then deployed to youth centers, clubs and other locations throughout Malawi to serve as peer leaders and motivators. Since 2004 over 5,000 young people have been trained in leadership skills.

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⁶ Ibid.
and deployed through the program. Finally, the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports also implements the Youth Economic Empowerment Program encouraging young people to pursue vocational training by running four centers that offer training to young people in the fields of brick laying, carpentry, tailoring, welding and engineering, among others. Each year 120 young people receive training at these centers and the plan is to expand the program to more districts in the future.7

To implement these programs, the government uses the Youth Action Program. Through this structure, the four programs are mobilized through youth clubs, youth centers and youth networks that already exist at the community level. The National Youth Council of Malawi serves as an organizational hub of the program, with its initiatives trickling to the CSOs through the council.8

Rationale/Background
Young people in Malawi face various challenges including limited secondary education, long-term unemployment, food scarcity and HIV/AIDS. Additionally, many young people are excluded from participating in many programs because of illiteracy and low levels of education. Various government and civil society initiatives are working with young people to address these national challenges through civic participation programs.

Volunteers in Malawi come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Many secondary school and university students participate in civic opportunities as a way to gain work experience and to make themselves more marketable for employment opportunities. Young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds also participate. Many programs deliberately recruit volunteers from the same communities they are targeting, including rural villages and out of school, out of work young people. Regardless of socio-economic background, studies have shown that the motivation for civic participation among most young people in Malawi is the same, namely, the opportunity to work with an organization which may lead to a permanent position in the future, or will position them to receive other job offers.9

Recently there has been a new call to service and in Malawi's new democracy, civil society organizations have begun to flourish with as many as 2,000 on record within the first 10 years.10 These organizations face problems of their own in terms of funding, cooperation and coordination with the government with concerns rising over a lack of policy guidelines framing development strategies in Malawi.11

Going Forward
Malawi's youth development strategy depends on a mix of government, local and international organizations to implement targeted youth engagement programs. With the support of several international organizations, there is an effort to expand government programming for youth civic participation. One of the complications facing youth civic participation in Malawi is the lack of employment opportunities in the country, even after a young person has achieved significant volunteer experience. Many young people in Malawi pursue civic participation opportunities in order to gain experience and seek employment. It has been noted, however, that high turnover among volunteers is often the result of organizations being unable to provide further growth or employment for participants.12

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8 “IANYS Country Profile: Malawi.”
9 Ibid.
10 Catherine M. Moleni and Brenda M. Gallagher
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
Namibia

Namibia is located in southern Africa with the Atlantic Ocean stretching across its western border. Namibia had an estimated population in 2008 of 2.1 million people, of which approximately 946,000 are under the age of 18. Namibia has a GNI per capita of US$ 4,200.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview

Namibia has an active civil society with some youth-focused civil society organizations. For example, the Young Achievers Empowerment Project encourages young Namibians to develop their leadership skills and provides service opportunities such as engaging in environmental cleanup of Namibian parks.2 Additionally, Namibia has an HIV/AIDS rate of 15.3% and the many organizations working on the ground to combat the disease in Namibia provide opportunities for young people to volunteer as peer educators and engage in health education campaigns.

Namibia also has a non-governmental National Youth Council, established in 1994, serving as an umbrella organization to a number of youth-focused community-based groups.3 The NYC implements development projects seeking to encourage the active participation of young people, foster a spirit of national identity and sense of unity, encourage literacy, promote gender equality and to liaise with and advise the Ministry responsible for youth policy.4

Finally, Catholic AIDS Action (CAA) was founded in 1998 as Namibia’s first faith-based response to the country’s battle against HIV/AIDS. Currently CAA is the largest CSO combating HIV/AIDS in Namibia with 14 offices in 9 of Namibia’s 13 regions. CAA works closely with local community organizations and volunteers to focus on home-based family care and counseling, youth education of HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support to orphans and vulnerable children, and voluntary counseling and testing. In 2008, CAA had over 2,000 volunteers assist in carrying out its programming.5

Policy Environment

Namibia’s Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sports and Culture implements many youth-focused programs. One program is the National Youth Service which was piloted in 1999 and fully established by the passage of the National Youth Service Act, Act No. 6 of 2005. The Namibian NYS seeks to engage young people in civic participation activities that contribute to the country’s economic and social development while simultaneously providing participants with skills training, work experience and personal development programs. The NYS is not required, and many of its projects are designed to be profitable undertakings that will contribute to development needs. All young Namibians from the 13 regions of the country are eligible to apply for the NYC. The recruitment process pays special attention to attracting an equal number of males and females and in including marginalized young people, including orphans, out-of-school and unemployed young people.6

The NYS consists of three months of civic education training in which participants learn about the country’s history, Namibian laws and their rights and responsibilities under such laws, human rights and national development programs. Following this, participants are deployed into three months of national service, in which they serve in hospitals, national

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farms, education, community health centers and other assigned responsibilities. Upon completion of their service, participants can apply to be accepted into further skills training courses, covering such fields as nursing, pharmacy, hospitality management, information technology, etc. The length of time participants spend in their training depends on their course of study.

The NYS accepts approximately 1,000 participants each year and provides them with housing, meals, transportation and medical services, in addition to a monthly allowance. The NYS is funded through Parliament but also receives funding from donors, business institutions and from any profit generated by its own activities. According to Namibian officials, the NYS has been successful in preparing participants for work in the private and public sectors. Indeed, many organizations specifically seek to recruit NYS graduates.

Another program under the Ministry of Youth is the Namibia Youth Credit Scheme, a program which lends money to young people in Namibia for use in starting businesses and establishing income generating activities. The program was piloted in 2005 and, as a five year program, is scheduled to end in 2010. The program allocates funds to young people between the ages of 18 and 35, and currently has a loan repayment rate of 90%. A large percentage of participants are young women who have started micro-enterprises that are growing into small businesses.

Rationale/Background
Namibia, like many of its neighbors, faces a large threat from the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Namibia currently has nearly 160,000 orphans and vulnerable children, representing over 30% of the Namibian population under the age of 18. Additionally, Namibia’s rural population suffers from poor infrastructure with only 14% of rural Namibians using improved sanitation facilities. Namibian young people also face issues of high unemployment, which some argue has been largely ignored by the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sports and Culture. Recently, a group of Namibian young people gathered to demonstrate and raise awareness for the issue. Deputy Minister Pohamba Shifeta was quoted as saying “I’ve looked at our economy, and it can’t absorb all these young people unless we create new opportunities.” Organizations like the Youth Achievers Empowerment Project and Catholic Aids Action are helping Namibia combat its HIV/AIDS crisis, while government programs such as the National Youth Service and National Youth Credit Scheme help create job opportunities and foster civically engaged young people.

Going Forward
The challenge facing the Namibian NYS is one that is facing many other service programs, namely, high unemployment among graduates. In 2010, the NYS issued a ‘distress call’ asking public and private institutions to provide employment opportunities for its participants. One organization that responded was the Namibian Police force, which accepted 148 trainees from the NYS for enrollment into training as police constables. The five year pilot of the Namibia Youth Credit Schemes was also implemented as one way to address youth unemployment and, as that program is now coming to an end, Namibia will need to continue in its efforts to create permanent employment solutions for its young people.

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7 Ibid.
Southeast of Algeria in Western Africa, Niger has a population of 14 million people with approximately 8.2 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$330.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
As a country ranking among the lowest in the UN’s Human Development Index, Niger has a presence of many civil society organizations working on poverty reduction. These organizations periodically engage in youth civic participation activities. For example, in 2002, Association Nigerienne des Scouts de L’Environnement (ANSEN), an organization working toward better stewardship of the environment through young people, organized a volunteer event for young people for Global Youth Service Day. Partnering with the Red Cross and other CSO’s, ANSEN organized an event in which 6,000 young people participated. Volunteers in different cities throughout the country engaged in tree planting and sanitation activities, as well as in musical performances and youth empowerment workshops.²

Additionally, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations established in 1977, runs a program called Programme Special National (PSN) dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries. The IFAD works with rural poor people, governments, nongovernment organizations, and many partners to increase rural poor people’s access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources. IFAD engages people in the communities where it works to carry out its projects so that they can gain skills while also contributing to community development. Areas of rural Niger suffer from periods of extreme drought and desertification, IFAD works to provide these areas with irrigation infrastructure and a means to maintain sustainable management of their reservoirs. IFAD organizes local farmers to market their produce, repay loans and save for the future. In areas with consistent rain, IFAD organizes soil conservation programs and community-run natural resource management programs.³

Policy Overview
Niger has a Ministry of Youth and Sports and a National Youth Council (CNJN) which oversee youth affairs for the government. Niger has also drafted two background papers on youth development and protection, the National Policy Statement on Youth and the National Youth Charter.⁴ However, limited information is available regarding the content of these papers.

The Nigerien government, through partnerships with various entities, operates a number of youth civic participation programs. The first is the Service National de Participation (SNP) which became operational in 1990. It is a service scheme run by the government to contribute to Niger’s development efforts through the mobilization of young people in service around the country. The program also aims to strengthen national unity through deploying young people in areas around the country that are different from their home town or village. In addition, the program attempts to provide vocational training to participants in order to enhance their employment prospects upon graduation from the program. The program targets young people 18-22 years old, and participants engage in service projects in sectors such as fighting against desertification, agro-forestry and manufacturing. To address vocational training needs, the SNP operates training

centers throughout the country that provide vocational skills training to young men and women. Additionally, SNP has trained over 1,000 community health workers operational in health huts throughout Niger.

A second government scheme, in partnership with United Nations Volunteers (UNV), is the Volunteers for National Development program. This program was launched in 2008 with 44 volunteers. Over 3,500 individuals applied for the program, and selections were made according to experience, gender balance, spirit of volunteerism and relevant skills. Priority was given to youth applicants. Participants serve in positions working with various host organizations, including towns and cities, CSOs, a health center, a literacy center, a rural radio station and a farmers group, among others. Positions in which participants serve include engineers, agronomists, rural development specialists, teachers, trainers and administrative specialists providing support to towns and municipalities.

Rationale/Background
Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, located in the Sahara desert and featuring an agrarian-based economy that is frequently disrupted by droughts throughout the region. The government in recent years has been characterized by coups and counter coups, resulting in minimal provision of government services and weak economic planning or development. Niger also faces one of the world’s lowest literacy rates due to a lack of primary education. However, the government has instituted two service schemes, alongside civil society and international efforts, to engage young people in addressing these critical needs such as desertification.

Going Forward
Niger’s SNP is facing financial strain, with costs surpassing its allotted budget. Program officials have appealed to the Nigerien government to increase the program’s allocated funds. In the future, program leaders have also indicated a desire to increase the number of CSOs and countries with which it partners. Japan and China are the two countries the SNP has partnered with most closely, and leaders have expressed the opinion that establishing more varied partnerships will lead to acquiring more varied experience and expertise. The Government of Niger has taken steps in the last several decades to engage its young people in society by instituting several broad-reaching civic participation programs. At the same time, some civil society and international organizations are also expanding youth civic participation opportunities, however more investment in this sector could benefit young people and the country as a whole.

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9 Invité : Mme Haïdara Aissata Amadou, Déléguée générale au Service National de Participation.
Nigeria

Nigeria is located on the Gulf of Guinea in western Africa. It had an estimated population of 151.2 million people in 2008 with approximately 74.5 million (49%) people under the age of 18. Nigeria has a GNI per capita of US$ 1160.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview

Nigeria has an active civil society and a number of youth civic participation organizations. Local CSOs such as the Youth Adolescent Reflection and Action Center (YARAC) provide young people with the training and skills to become youth advocates and take an active role in changing their communities,² while international organizations such as the YMCA and Boy and Girl Scouts also play an active role in implementing youth civic participation programs.

Youth Adolescent Reflection and Action Center (YARAC) is an organization working to empower young Nigerians with the information and training necessary to succeed. YARAC works with adolescents and young adults in areas of reproductive health, civic responsibility, confidence building, self discipline, respect and integrity by encouraging “genuine and constructive youth involvement in social, cultural and political events in their immediate environment.”³

Finally, the Network of African Youths for Development (NAYD) was established in 2006 as a network of youth organizations in Africa with the common purpose of promoting youth-led community improvement projects throughout Africa. NAYD offers a way for African young people and youth organizations to communicate and cooperate, providing a common knowledge and activities database. NAYD hopes to encourage the creation of sustainable development projects throughout Africa which involve the participation of young people and advance the causes of social justice, gender equality and education for all.⁴

Policy Overview

Nigeria’s National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program began in 1973, in the aftermath of the country’s civil war. The National Youth Service Corps currently operates under the Service Corps Act of 1993.⁵ The mission of the Corps was to break down ethnic and religious barriers in the country by assigning recent college graduates to one year of service in areas outside their home state. Service in the Corps is mandatory for all college graduates below the age of 30, and participants serve in various areas of the public sector, including schools, health clinics, agriculture and technical outposts. Corps members also work on a community service project designed by their hosting community.² While Corps members are paid N8,500 a month and given transportation and food stipends,⁷ they are not allowed to be posted into their home state, and they are not allowed to choose where they deploy. The NYSC averages 150,000 participants a year⁸ and is projected to deploy around 100,000 members in 2010.⁹

The NYSC has faced a turbulent period over the last two years which began when four corps members were killed in the Jos region of Nigeria in November 2008. This, and other violent incidents around that time, led to public outcry that the NYSC was failing to keep its members safe and that the program had outlived its usefulness.¹⁰ Critics also charged that,

while failing to keep participants safe during the program, the program failed to provide participants with meaningful employment opportunities upon graduation. In response to the criticism, advocates of the program held that while some changes were necessary, the program has long been a valuable national asset and should remain in place.

The new head of the NYSC, appointed in the midst of the crises in 2009 has made it clear that the NYSC will not end but will undergo wide-ranging changes. The agency has conducted inspections of staff housing quarters and provided stipends to improve housing in necessary areas. The agency has also threatened to withdraw corps members from areas of the country that continually experience religious and ethnic violence. Regarding post-graduation employment challenges, the NYSC has instituted new programs aimed at giving graduates the skills and resources to become entrepreneurs. In partnership with organizations like the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, the NYSC launched training programs in entrepreneurship for some corps members, after which they then provide funds that participants can apply toward starting their own businesses. The goal is to have NYSC members become job creators within the Nigerian economy.

Rationale/Background

Following its independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has struggled through several political crises due to fighting between local ethnic groups, of which Nigeria has over 250. For much of the period between 1966 to 1999 Nigeria suffered under multiple brutal military regimes. Nigeria returned to democracy in May 1999 with the inauguration of an elected president. The Nigerian economy has been dramatically affected by its independence and subsequent power struggles, and the collapse of the oil market in the 1980s. The NYSC was created in 1970 to help promote development, reconciliation and tolerance throughout Nigeria. Nigeria is also plagued with many of the problems common to developing countries including poverty, mass illiteracy, a shortage of highly skilled labor, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of housing, water and sewage, roads, healthcare, etc. These issues were also heavy contributing factors to the creation of the NYSC. Several civil society organizations also engage young people in community development as a strategy to address these issues.

Going Forward

The main challenges facing the NYSC going forward will be to ensure safety and job placement activities for graduates of the program. Additionally, there is the need to ensure that participants are not able to obtain preferential postings based on bribery or close associations with officials. Such events, acknowledged to have occurred in the past by current officials, reduce public trust in the program and also played a part in calls for its demise. If such changes can be made, it is possible that Nigeria’s 37 year program can regain the support it has generally enjoyed throughout its existence. Nigeria acknowledges the powerful and positive impact young people can have on the development of a nation and, in doing so, has taken steps to promote the civic engagement of its young people.

11 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
15 Francis C. Enemuo, Youth Mobilisation for Nation Building: The Case of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme in Nigeria, Department of Political Science University of Lagos, 2000, Print. On file with author.
Rwanda is a landlocked country located only a few degrees south of the equator in central and eastern Africa. Rwanda had an estimated population in 2008 of 9.7 million people, of which approximately 4.7 million (49%) are under the age of 18. Rwanda has a GNI per capita of US$410.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
As Rwanda continues to rebuild after years of conflict, the international community has allocated a large amount of resources to ensuring the development of a responsive government and an active civil society. For example, in May 2010, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) launched the Strengthening Civic Participation Project (SCPP), a three-year countrywide project aimed at strengthening community participation in local government and improving the performance of local governance officials in Rwanda. The program will be implemented in two phases with districts receiving grants and local government officials receiving training to be more “accountable to citizens by soliciting, facilitating and encouraging citizen participation in policy formulation, budgeting and service delivery.”2

In an effort to promote youth civic participation, the US-based National Democratic Institute opened a Youth Leadership Political Academy in February 2010. The intention of the academy is to equip Rwandan young people with the tools necessary for them to develop and pick an interest in politics, leading them in generating political parties and groups that would promote an open and diverse government. Forty participants were picked for the pilot project, which includes courses delivered by well known politicians and leaders and which will maintain strict academic and attendance standards.3

Organizations like UNICEF have also funded church-based youth groups, which meet to discuss HIV/AIDS, volunteer to educate their peers on the disease, and provide service and support to those in the community who have the disease.4

Policy Overview
Rwanda’s Ministry of Youth oversees youth affairs. The Ministry was established in 2008 with a mandate to mobilize, build capacity and advocate for youth initiatives leading to economic and social development.5 In 2005, the then-Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports undertook to develop the National Youth Policy in consultation with ministries, civil society and young people. The National Youth Policy was passed and supports civic participation stating “the youth constitute the present: their intervention is a necessity for sustainable development. They have to be taken as serious, reliable partners when it comes to devising, planning and implementing community development policies and programmes.”6 The policy calls for the creation of action plans to achieve its goals and emphasized the need to engage young people in the policy’s implementation.

Additionally, Rwandan authorities are currently considering introducing a national service scheme for some professions, particularly the education and health sectors. The intent is for the government to reap the benefits of work by educated

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Rwandans who would otherwise have entered the private sector. However, limited information is available about what shape the national service scheme would take.

**Rationale/Background**
With the end of civil conflict in Rwanda and the establishment of a stable government under President Kigami, Rwanda has experienced a large amount of international aid and attention. While there are some concerns regarding Kigami’s crackdown on press and civil society groups that he accuses of fomenting ethnic tensions, for the most part the international aid framework is working to promote civil society and good governance in the country. As such, several international organizations working in Rwanda are actively engaging young people in rebuilding efforts and promoting their civic participation.

**Going Forward**
It is promising that the Rwanda government is considering implementing a national service scheme. Given the large presence of international organizations, it could look to some of its counterparts in the region to see examples of international organizations and governments partnering to develop effective national youth service programs and engaging young people in the building and rebuilding of their countries.

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Senegal

Located in western Africa, Senegal has an estimated population of 12 million people, with approximately 6 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$970.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Some international organizations are promoting young civic participation in Senegal, while the majority of initiatives are implemented by government. Many international human rights organizations involve young people in Senegal as volunteers in case studies to promote the creation of other programs. A main focus area is sex education surrounding the HIV/AIDS crisis that affects many African countries. One example of such a program was conducted between 1993 and 2003 by Frontiers Programme, in conjunction with USAID, whose approach involved government agencies, communities and young people to promote change in the process of HIV/AIDS education in Senegal. The program selected 70 at-risk young people to serve as peer-educators who delivered the program in three pilot districts. Over eight years, 28,000 young people in three regions were reached by peer education. Following the pilot phase and collection of feedback from the peer educators and education and health professionals, the government scaled the program to all nine districts. Young people in the program received education, skills training and health care, while making a significant contribution to sexual and reproductive health education.²

UNICEF also promotes programs in Senegal like the Connecting Classrooms technology platform that started in 2010. The program involves high school students, who give their opinions regarding such topics as health and climate change to an online forum. They are then able to read and comment on topics from students around the world. UNICEF says the information will also be highlighted during international conferences to promote understanding of the concerns of young people. UNICEF plans to expand this program to 75 new schools in the coming year.³

Policy Overview
Senegal’s Ministry of Youth, Sports and Leisure oversees several youth-related programs, however the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive youth policy. One of its main programs is a National Civic Service program that was established in 1998. The program aims to train participants in republican values, combat youth unemployment and engage young Senegalese in the work of national construction.⁴ Participants must be young men and women willing to work in the program for two years, during which the government provides them with a monthly stipend and medical reimbursement.⁵ In the first decade of the program, the government positioned nearly 4,000 youth volunteers throughout the country to work with government ministries, health centers, schools or national non-governmental organizations in a variety of initiatives. Participants have served in urban planning and space management, education and training, sanitation and environment initiatives, literacy support, rural and community health, agricultural support and as lifeguards and sports mediators. Its forward-looking plans involve the creation of a network of volunteers for the fishing and environmental sectors.⁶

⁶ Magatte Wade.
Rationale/Background
Although Senegal has a stable political system, its economy is characterized by a high unemployment rate, particularly among young people. Of the estimated 48% of Senegalese unemployed, approximately half are between the ages of 15 and 35, and over half have no education. Many youth civic participation programs, therefore, provide alternative opportunities to work for young people in the country. Organizations benefit from the energy of the young people and young people receive education, healthcare and training. The programs are particularly effective in providing new outlets for at-risk young people and providing education and care, through youth involvement, for the estimated 3,100 children under age 14 living with HIV.

Going Forward
The Government of Senegal has a National Civic Service program that has been in place for over a decade. It has also stated plans for future expansion into new sectors. International organizations have also involved many young people in their goals of educating peers and providing feedback for programs. And some, such as UNICEF’s Connecting Classrooms look to expand. New programs would benefit by involving young people in more direct action and discussion in the country to reap the benefits of their contribution to development.

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7 Private Sector Demand for Youth Labor in Ghana and Senegal Study Findings, 2009, Print, PP 34-53.
9 Rouxanna Lokhat,
Sierra Leone

The Republic of Sierra Leone is a small country on the western coast of Africa. Its total population is 5.5 million, of which approximately 2.75 million people are under the age of 18.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview

Youth civic engagement in Sierra Leone is promoted by various civil society organizations. Many relevant programs are spearheaded by international and humanitarian organizations, such as the United Nations and UNICEF. These organizations often look to the participation and input of sample groups of young people to create stronger and more structured life-improvement programs in Sierra Leone. Most recently, in August 2010, in coalition with the UN, Restless Development (formerly Student Partnerships Worldwide) launched its International Year of Youth in Sierra Leone. The program will be marked by ongoing and year-long dialogues, engaging young people in entrepreneurship discussions.2

Many such co-sponsored projects, along with initiatives by CSOs like the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children and Save the Children, dominate youth civic engagement programs in Sierra Leone. For example, Save the Children Fund supports a grassroots initiative in Daru. Kids’ Club, started by children on their own initiative, helps local children, responding to their needs and putting them in touch with necessary services.3 Also a coalition of Youth Serving Agencies Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA), Youth Alliance for Peace and Development (YAPAD) and Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization (SLYEO) with Support from Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) are currently undertaking a nationwide project supporting youth civic participation in the democratic process in Sierra Leone. The project sets up Youth Action Networks in every district trained to engage in youth-related policy analysis and dialogue.4

Policy Overview

The Government of Sierra Leone is currently in the process of creating a National Youth Commission (NYC), coordinated with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. President Koroma passed legislation for the commission in 2009, and the World Bank made a donation to kick start the initiative in May 2010.5 This ministry will support youth livelihood and governance in the country, promoting civic engagement among young people. In 2009 several consultative youth conferences were held throughout the country.6 In the meantime, youth policy is implemented in accordance with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport’s National Youth Policy, launched in 2003, which expresses the desire to promote the interests and welfare of the country’s young people. With regards to youth civic participation, the policy considers several points. It names one of its main strategic areas as “youth consultation and participation” and expresses a vision of “youth empowerment and the creation of a responsible citizenry.” The policy and the NYC Act also intend to set up District and Chiefdom youth committees (with elected positions), which will be the decision making forums for young people across the country that will relate

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4 Correspondence between ICP and Ngolo Katta, National Coordinator, Centre for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA), 19 October 2010. Information on file with author.
with the National Youth Commission. Finally, the policy repeatedly highlights the intention of strong collaboration between youth organizations, CSOs and all government ministries related to youth. The government intends to rely on such partnerships for the implementation of effective youth engagement programs while it transitions to more self-governance through the NYC. Though it has not yet happened, the policy was to be reviewed after three years in order to address new existing realities facing young people in Sierra Leone and to help design a new institutional framework in line with the NYC.

Rationale/Background
Youth engagement is of critical importance among post-conflict countries like Sierra Leone. As the country comes out of a civil war that ended in 2002, it is important to educate and engage young people and prevent future conflict. In fact, the National Youth Policy directly addresses the government’s “conviction that youth empowerment is the country’s best investment for a prosperous future.” Thus, many programs focus on involving young people in reconstruction, reconciliation and peace dialogue initiatives, which both heal and reintegrate the young people who have experienced war and ensure increased cross-cultural understanding.

Going Forward
Both the government and civil society organizations in Sierra Leone have ideas and plans for programs to actively include young people in the country, especially in the form of dialogue. In particular, the new National Youth Commission recognizes the necessity to address youth needs and involvement. The main concern for such programs is too little funding; although, a recent donation from the World Bank has pushed the NYC forward. Now, as the Commission begins to implement programs, its main concern is proper structuring. Because it is so new, NYC’s initiatives must be well-planned, with careful consideration toward long-term goals, in order to avoid potential problems that may induce failure. The government would benefit by looking to models from civil society programs and successful programs of other countries while it writes those of its own.

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7 ICP/ Katta.
8 Sierra Leone National Youth Policy, June 30, 2003, Print.
9 ICP/ Katta.
10 Sierra Leone National Youth Policy, P 1.
12 “World Bank Denotes Le101 Billion to Kick Start the NYC Education Director.”
South Africa

South Africa, located in the southernmost region of Africa, is a large country with a long coastline surrounded by the Atlantic and Indian oceans. South Africa has an estimated population of 49.6 million people of which approximately 18 million, nearly 37%, are under the age of 18. South Africa has a GNI per capita of US$ 5,820.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview

Several wide-ranging youth civic participation programs are implemented in South Africa through civil society organizations in partnership with government and international organizations.

For example, City Year South Africa, affiliated with City Year in the United States, engages 18 to 25 year olds in one year of community service and leadership development.2 City Year South Africa was created in 2005. Service Leaders obtain accredited training and are then deployed into their communities, where they work with schools and communities to implement various programs. Upon graduation from the program, its participants are assisted with finding full-time jobs, internships or continuing education opportunities. Throughout their year of service, City Year Service Leaders implement three primary programs: After School Program, Positive School Climate and Signature Service Days. The After School Program deploys Service Leaders to primary schools where they tutor, mentor and teach life skills such as HIV/AIDS prevention through music and dancing. Leaders in the Positive School Climate initiative go to designated communities to conduct research to identify critical needs, allowing Service Leaders to gain valuable project implementation skills. Finally, Signature Service Days are one day events in which 100-500 people come together to renovate a park, recreation center or other public space.

Policy Overview

South Africa’s National Youth Development Policy Framework (NYPDF) was drafted in 2002 and guided youth policy in the country for five years until its expiration in 2007. The NYPDF was replaced with the current National Youth Policy 2009-2014. The new policy seeks to improve upon its predecessor by providing more direction to youth initiatives, imbedding youth development into mainstream government processes, and coordinating the work between multiple youth development organizations.3 With these goals in mind, the National Youth Development Act, no. 54 was passed in 2008, establishing the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) by merging two former organizations and making the new entity a national agency within the government structure.

NYDA was launched in June 2009, formed by the merger of the National Youth Commission and the Umsobomvu Youth Fund.4 The organization is mandated with advancing the social and economic development of young people in South Africa. It works across state, business and civil society organizations to generate job, schooling and service prospects for young people.5 NYDA’s target population is young people between the ages of 14 and 35.6 Within that population, the

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organization maintains a focus on young women and young people that are unemployed, out of school, have disabilities and/or are in rural areas. NYDA focuses on a number of core areas: youth economic participation, education and skills development, and policy advocacy and research.

The type, length and compensation of NYDA initiatives vary according to the specific programs in which young people are involved. Programs NYDA has implemented range from distributing 100 bicycles to students in rural areas to mobilizing 27,000 young volunteers during the 2010 World Cup games. Between 2009 and 2010, NYDA disbursed 7,500 micro-loans, valued at R23 million. The agency also allocated R3 million in loans to small and medium enterprises and issued 4,244 business consultancy vouchers worth more than R33 million. NYDA has its headquarters in Cape Town, with 11 offices around the country and plans to eventually expand to every municipality.

Another large national service program for young people is the loveLife groundBREAKERS program. loveLife is the main HIV prevention program for young people in South Africa, and groundBREAKERS is the component of the program that engages young people to serve as peer outreach leaders, educating other young people in HIV prevention. The program was launched in September 1999 by the South African government in partnership with leading public health organizations and a coalition of more than 100 private companies and community-based groups. Through the groundBREAKERS program, young people between the ages of 18 and 25 are trained to engage in HIV education and go on to implement outreach activities at schools, clinics and in community-based centers. Each groundBREAKER is supported by a team of at least five 12 to 17-year-old mpintshis, or ‘friends’, who assist in their efforts. More than 10,000 young people have graduated from the groundBREAKERS program and another 20,000 have served as their mpintshi helpers. A 2008 study demonstrated that graduates of the program often continue to be community leaders and benefit from increased job and education prospects. The study indicated that about 60% of groundBREAKERS graduates found employment or started their own businesses and almost 50% enrolled in tertiary studies, compared with the national average of 30% of young people who continue on to higher level studies.

The South African government has also increased its focus on higher education and is expected to increase funding for its higher education system in 2011-2012 from R2 billion to R2.8 billion. This additional funding, coupled with the government’s attention to promoting community engagement, could offer young South Africans new and unique opportunities to become civically engaged. One of the government’s goals for its higher education system is to “promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes.” The Higher Education Quality Commission, funded by the Department of Education, has mandated “knowledge-based community service” as criterion for accreditation. All South African universities have since established community engagement offices and are working toward incorporating community engagement activities into their curricula. In 2009, the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum was launched to represent university staff responsible for community engagement and facilitate cooperation and cohesion throughout the higher education system.

Rationale/Background
Half of South Africa’s population is under the age of 35, and 65% of those between the ages of 15 and 25 are unemployed. Because of the economic and social costs of having large numbers of the youth population unemployed and out of school, the South African government has stated its prioritization of youth development as part of its ongoing agenda, and NYDA

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6 Ibid.
7 “The Presidency.”
was an outcrop of this renewed focus. The agency was officially launched in June 2009 by President Jacob Zuma. As the president stated, “the agency has a lot of work to do...it must initiate, design...and monitor all programs aimed at integrating the youth into the economy and society in general.”

Going Forward
As it grows, NYDA faces the constraints of a wide mandate and small budget. In fiscal year 2009/2010, NYDA requested a budget of R1 billion but was given a budget of only R320 million. For the 2010/2011 year, NYDA requested over R930 million but received only R369 million. The agency stated that their current levels of funding are “adequate to implement some but not all planned programs” and that increased funding is needed “so we can meet the needs of young people.” In an effort to meet its funding needs, NYDA has reached out to other organizations, both public and private, in order to partner on initiatives and procure additional funds. It is unclear whether NYDA’s share of the government budget will be increased to their stated goals in the long term.

Capitalizing on their success, loveLife plans to incorporate recent groundBREAKERS graduates in a newly launched initiative called Connected! The program will be funded and implemented through a partnership with the German Development Service (DED) and the South African corporation Barloworld. Connected! aims at establishing a network that will support young people with leadership potential and connect them with opportunities to become local innovators. The new initiative will serve as an international and regional model and will absorb young leaders that already served in the groundBREAKERS program to, according to one DED representative, “groom a new generation with a new outlook on life and renewed sense of responsibility.”

There have been suggestions that the next evolution of South Africa’s national youth service program may have a military component. In May 2010, South African Minister of Defense Lindiwe Sisulu announced that she would be seeking to institute national military service among young people, the goal of which would be to teach young people discipline, commitment and patriotism while also being a source of employment. As planned, service in the program would be voluntary and would last up to two years. If a national consensus on the components of the plan can be reached, legislation could be introduced within the next year and implemented within the next two years. While the move has been protested by some civil society groups, it has received the support of NYDA. In its press release in support of the proposition, NYDA CEO Steven Ngubeni stated “we view the Ministry of Defense and Military Veterans as very well placed to undertake such an exercise at a massive scale considering the facilities at their disposal...youth service must be applied in different forms to achieve a wide range of objectives. Service by young people to the country in itself provides a sense of patriotism, a sense of belonging and instills high levels of discipline and love for ones country.” It remains to be seen whether the proposed measure will receive widespread support and how such a program will be structured.

South Africa has a thriving civil society, thanks in part to the adoption of its post-apartheid Constitution in 1996. The creation of South Africa’s Constitution involved heavy participation from the public, with civic society as a key element to its success, declaring itself “committed to the continued inclusion of civil society in governance.” South Africa could benefit by continued investment and expansion of the programs and institutions in place, and continue to provide the necessary support and resources for young people to participate in meeting development needs and gaining skills through service.

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18 “R23m in Loans for Youth Development.”
21 Ibid
22 Patrick Burton.
23 National Youth Development Agency.
Sudan

Sudan has faced conflict between the North and South and in Darfur for many years. Sudan’s GNI in 2008 was $45.7 billion. 1 Sudan has a population of 41 million, with approximately 19 million people under 18 years old.2

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Traditionally Sudan had a fairly strong tradition of civil society, particularly in the north of the country, but civil society was severely damaged by internal conflict and the coup of 1989. There has been a strong growth in the civil society sector in both North and South Sudan recently mainly providing relief services. However, these CSOs are often limited in scope and dependent on support from international organizations and UN agencies. They also face government restrictions on political activity and operate under hazardous conditions in war-torn Darfur.3

Some higher education institutions take an active role in promoting youth civic participation. One strong example of this is Ahfad University for Women, which focuses particularly on improving conditions for women in Sudan. “Ahfad faculty was an early advocate of what American universities call ‘service learning.’ All Ahfad students must participate in research and service activities in communities, and students are encouraged to publish findings of their research and to attempt to implement recommendations in projects.”4 There are also CSOs that focus particularly on involving young people in service. One example is Ana Sudan (I am Sudan), a national student organization involving 200,000 young people across Sudan, however limited information is available about the organization.

Policy Overview
At the national level, youth affairs are the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth (MCSY). The MCSY is currently developing a comprehensive National Youth Policy, primarily focused on decreasing youth unemployment.5 It is unclear whether this policy will include a service component. National service programs in Sudan appear to focus mainly on military service and on promoting unity among various ethnic groups in Sudan.

Rationale/Background
Sudan faces severe development challenges, internal conflict, human rights abuses, ethnic divisions, and a gender gap in access to education and employment opportunities. It also has a large youth population which faces high unemployment rates. Young people will clearly need to be involved in confronting all of these challenges. Ahfad University was founded to improve educational opportunities for women, who face a severe education and employment gap in Sudan. As a result, much of their service-learning activities also focus on creating opportunities women and children.

Going Forward
While young people could be engaged to address an array of critical needs in Sudan, opportunities are limited as political conditions make government involvement in youth service problematic. The NGO sector, although it faces restrictions and challenges, appears to be the best vehicle for enhancing youth engagement. Higher education institutions also have a role to play and Ahfad University is a leading example for implementing service-learning programs.

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Tanzania

Located in eastern Africa between Kenya and Mozambique, Tanzania has an estimated population of 42 million people, with approximately 21 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$430.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
A mix of institutions encompassing Tanzanian universities and local and international CSOs provide the opportunity for civic engagement among Tanzanian youth. For example, the University of Dar es Salaam promotes civic engagement among its students by providing them with opportunities to serve in a number of projects.2 The TUSEME Project empowers girls to voice their concerns in public by using art as a tool for training and encouragement. When it began in the university’s Department of Fine Arts in 1996, students implemented projects among young people in seven secondary schools. By the end of 2006, more than 70 schools had adopted the program, and a festival, newsletter and clubs had been created. The program has also spread into other African countries.3

Additionally, local CSOs such as Maisha na Vijana utilize youth and other volunteers to spread education and awareness of HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, drug and alcohol abuse and other topics through school visits and media campaigns on TV and radio.4 Finally, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has 67 UNV volunteers in Tanzania. They are deployed in projects with many UN agencies, and work on HIV/AIDS initiatives and assisting with repatriation of refugees among other activities.5

Policy Overview
The National Youth Development Policy of the Ministry of Labour and Youth Development was first printed in 1996. The policy cites some of its main objectives as the preparation of young people to assume responsibilities as citizens, parents and leaders in the community, as well as the enabling of young people to participate in national development. It specifically mentions the goal “to establish good plans for preparing and involving youth in national development activities,” with plans to involve young people in economic, social and cultural activities, to prepare them to assume leadership roles. The policy also provides necessary steps for each sector of the government to implement these goals and calls for the creation of youth-based Youth Development Committees.6 Since then, the Government of Tanzania has created the YES Country Network, which is comprised of government and non-government representatives of over 250 organizations.7

Tanzania has a National Service, which was established in 1963, is semi-compulsory and has a large military component. Once in the National Service, participants engage in military training, agricultural work and civic education. The National Service is compulsory for all young people who want to go to a university, work in the public sector or receive vocational training through the program. The National Service consists mostly of young people who serve for two years, though the requirement of the program is only six months. The National Service is also open to volunteers, those interested in serving for reasons other than the attainment of higher education, who are required to sign up for three

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years. The National Service produces about 6,000 to 10,000 recruits annually and they can be mobilized as a reserve force for the army at any time.  

Rationale/Background
Youth civic participation programs in Tanzania aim to address many of the problems among the large population of young people in the country. The greatest of these problems is unemployment, which is characterized by a rate of 60% among young people. According to the Director of Youth Development, unemployment leads to engagement in risky behaviors such as crime, drug abuse and unsafe sex, which in turn lead to other social problems like the spread of HIV/AIDS. In fact, 15% of total HIV cases in the country are young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Because it is perceived by the government that these challenges stem from unemployment, it is the main problem addressed by policies like the National Youth Development Policy. Programs like National Service, and those implemented by other community-based organizations, provide alternative opportunities to finding private jobs or address one of the issues in this cycle afflicting young people.

Going Forward
Tanzania has several youth civic participation programs, both in the government and non-government sectors, and their models are often looked to for the creation of programs in other countries. For example, the National Service has been in place since 1963 and plays an important role as a symbol of national unity and civic pride; it is studied by other governments interested in implementing a similar program within their country. In 2008, Tanzania and Burundi signed an agreement in which Tanzania agreed to assist Burundi in designing training programs for members of its National Service. However, the problems stated above still face young people in the country. These programs have room for and require financial and logistical expansion to continue to meet their goals.

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9 Joyce Shadi.
Located in Eastern Africa, west of Kenya, Uganda has an estimated population of 31 million people, with approximately 17 million people under 18 years old. It has a GNI of US$420.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Uganda has a number of community-based organizations providing civic participation opportunities to young people. For example, the Uganda Youth Forum is a faith based organization, founded in 1992, that implements youth leadership development campaigns and engages young people in service activities such as environmental preservation and preventing the contraction of HIV/AIDS. The Forum organizes annual youth conferences, leadership training, peer-to-peer counseling and support, and performs community and school outreach.²

Another organization, the Uganda Youth Anti-AIDS Association (UYAAS), focuses specifically on fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS. Founded in 1991, UYAAS implements several programs aimed at mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on young people ages 10-35. UYAAS runs capacity building programs, volunteer counseling and testing, peer educational and informational communication programs as well as a radio show geared toward sex education, reproductive health and the prevention of HIV/AIDS among young people. The radio show reaches approximately 2 million young people and adults throughout Uganda.³

Policy Overview
The Ugandan Parliament passed a bill creating a National Youth Council in 1993 to serve as a single body working to promote unity among young people and to give them a platform from which to express their concerns and participate in the country’s development. A representative from the National Youth Council has a place in each of the local councils that constitute Ugandan municipal governance. In the larger councils that span wider areas, the youth council has two representatives. Finally, at the legislative level, Uganda’s National Youth Council has a representative in the Legislative Assembly.⁴

Following the establishment of the National Youth Council, the Ugandan Parliament also passed the National Youth Policy in 2001. The Youth Policy is written as a framework for the development of action programmes and services to facilitate youth civic engagement in national and local activities. The Policy defines a young person as any male or female aged 12 to 30 years. The Policy’s mission is “youth empowerment,” and outlines seven major areas of concentration: respect of cultural, religious and ethical values, equity and accessibility, gender inclusiveness, good governance and national unity, youth participation, and youth empowerment. In terms of youth participation, the Policy calls for advocating for “increased effective youth representation and participation in key positions of decision-making, leadership and management at all levels of government and in the civil society.”⁵ On a national level, the Department of Youth and Children Affairs in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development oversees implementation, with a series of district and sub-county committees overseeing local implementation of the national policy.⁶

⁶ Ibid.
Rationale/Background
Since 1986, Uganda has enjoyed relative political stability and economic growth. However, 30% of the population lives below the poverty line and 50% of Uganda’s population is below the age of 14. Finally, with an HIV/AIDS rate of 5.4%, there are a number of challenges facing the large youth population in Uganda as it seeks to create a future for the country. Additionally, Uganda has faced intermittent internal conflict over the years, especially in its northern region. Because of this, many young people in the area have been out of school, internally displaced or orphaned. In response to these challenges, various community-based organizations are engaging young in meeting needs such as HIV/AIDS awareness and the government is working to give young people a voice in their communities.

Going Forward
There are a number of initiatives underway promoting youth civic participation in Uganda. The president of the country has publically stated that the promotion of youth entrepreneurial and business ventures will play a key part in addressing unemployment in Uganda. One initiative promoting entrepreneurship is the Uganda National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UNCCI) partnership with Tetea Uganda, a local media consultancy firm, to hold the annual Young Achievers Awards (YAA). The Award is given to young people who have achieved in ways that positively affect society. It is intended as a method to encourage and reward entrepreneurship and achieving initiatives that bring opportunity to others. It is important that the Government of Uganda continue to expand its civic participation programs and implementation of the National Youth Policy while also supporting civil society organizations engaging young people in meeting local needs through civic participation.

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10 David Ssempijja.
Zambia

Located in Southern Africa, east of Angola, Zambia has an estimated population of 12 million people with approximately 6 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$950.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Civil society organizations in Zambia typically address major societal problems such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, and unemployment by providing services and support to young people. Some local organizations do, however, get young people actively participating in society and addressing important issues.

For example, the “junior youth” group program, launched in 2007 in Southern Zambia, unites the youth populations of local villages with youth-led weekly meetings that include basic reading and writing training as well as helping out in the community. The program includes young people aged 12 to 15 and has over 2,000 members. Members perform tasks to help the elderly in the village, such as gathering firewood, and maintain public resources such as the clean water source for the village. The program helps young people develop a sense of responsibility and become actively involved in their communities.²

Youth Vision Zambia (YVZ) is a non-governmental advocacy group that is led and implemented by young people. It strives to increase youth awareness and education about sexual and reproductive rights and health.³ YVZ members conduct workshops for politicians and government officials, teach classes in schools, and organize clubs for adolescents to promote the importance of sexual health.

Youth Association of Zambia (YAZ), formed in 1994, seeks to improve standards of living for young people in Zambia and empower young people to develop as creative, dynamic and responsible members of society. They have several objectives: prevent HIV/AIDS and educate about reproductive health; advocate gender equality and promote dialogue on the issue; promote economic and civil rights of young people via more transparent decision-making bodies; create a space for young people to address youth issues through interactive motivational camps and workshops; and support a volunteer culture for young people. Programs are youth-led and target young people ages 6-35. One YAZ program is the Building Local Democracy program, started in 2008, in which young people engage with the government and learn how to take part in the decision-making process.⁴

Policy Overview
The Zambia Ministry of Sports, Youth and Cultural Development oversees matters relating to young people. The Zambia government revised its youth policy most recently in 2006 in a section of the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP). The plan will be implemented from 2006 through 2010 and includes coordinated development strategies across political, economic and social sectors. One major goal for the FNDP is “increased empowerment and participation of children and youth in all areas affecting their well-being and livelihood.”⁵ Planned actions to increase participation include providing an environment that enables young people to participate in matters that affect them, mainstreaming youth participation programs and increasing budget allocations for them, and re-introducing a plan for non-military national service for young people. The FNDP makes provisions to develop young people into responsible citizens by handing out national

⁵ Fifth National Development Plan, Republic of Zambia, Print, P 218.
youth excellence awards, promoting a positive attitude toward community service, and encouraging youth camps and exchange programs. These civic participation programs work to empower young people in coordination with health, education and work training initiatives.б The Ministry of Sports, Youth, and Cultural Development will play the largest role in implementing this plan, in cooperation with other government departments, local and regional governments, CSOs and the private sector.

Rationale/Background
Young people in Zambia experience various socio-economic challenges including lack of safe drinking water, poverty and illiteracy. HIV/AIDS presents a huge challenge, as nearly 90,000 children in Zambia are infected.7 In addition to these basic problems, Zambian youth face constraints such as lack of information, restricted contribution to decision-making, inadequate access to education, and lack of youth rights. Recognizing the need to develop a more comprehensive plan to deal with all of these issues, the government focused on revising and updating its youth policy in the FNDP.

Going Forward
The Zambian government creates implementation plans to encourage civic participation but faces great challenges due to HIV/AIDS, youth unemployment and a high rate of school dropouts. Though no national service policy encompasses all Zambian young people, the government prioritizes improving this area. The implementation of the FNDP ends in 2010. The Zambian government is currently studying the successes and failures of the program as it develops the Sixth National Development Plan for the years 2011 to 2015, which will continue to focus on increased youth participation.

б Ibid.
7 Ibid.
Zimbabwe

Located between South Africa and Zambia in southern Africa, Zimbabwe has an estimated population of 12 million people with approximately 6 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$340.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There is much political, economic and food insecurity in Zimbabwe and it is therefore difficult for young people to engage in the general civic participation opportunities that are available in other countries. Despite this, there are multiple civil society organizations in Zimbabwe that are geared toward securing the rights, and encouraging the participation, of young people in the country.

For example, Youth for Democracy in Zimbabwe (YIDEZ) is one of the most outspoken youth organizations, continually voicing the concerns of Zimbabwean youth to the public and the press. The organization also runs a Youth Leadership Academy, which seeks to develop young leaders as change makers, peace ambassadors and promoters of human rights and democracy.2

Other organizations supporting youth civic participation are the Youth Alliance for Democracy and the Students Solidarity Trust.3 Students Solidarity Trust (SST) was established in 2002 to institute support programs for student victims of human rights abuses. SST works to promote participation and social dialogue among students in Zimbabwe, as well as carry out research and analysis on and advocate for issues important to students lives.4

Policy Overview
Zimbabwe has a Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment, responsible for youth related issues and policy. Zimbabwe has a National Youth Policy5 and a National Youth Service Scheme (NYS), which was created in 2001 to aid in skills enhancement, patriotism and moral education of Zimbabwean young people between 10 to 30 years old. Limited information is available about the details of the youth policy. Between 2001 and 2008, the NYS was known to be a particularly partisan organization, training its young participants to become members of militias controlled by the ruling ZANU-PF party and used in carrying missions of harassment, intimidation and in many cases, torture and murder. In September 2008, after a contested election leading to widespread violence in the country, the ZANU-PF and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC, the opposition party) signed a Global Political Agreement (GPA) that instituted a power sharing government.6 As part of the GPA, Zimbabwe’s NYS was slated to be reformed. The GPA specifically stated that “the National Youth Training Program must be run in a non-partisan manner and shall not include partisan political material advancing the cause of any political party.”7 In December 2009, the government announced that it would suspend the NYS until the agreed upon reforms could be implemented. Continuing youth violence and the recent negative history of the NYS has led civil society groups to call for a postponement in the reinstitution of the

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In April 2010, Minister of Indigenization and Youth Empowerment Saviour Kasukuwere stated that, despite some concerns, he wanted to reinstate the newly apolitical NYS by the middle of 2010. Civil society organizations such as YIDEZ and human rights group ZimRights decried the announcement, calling for a postponement in reinstating the scheme until it could be fully restructured and safeguards put in place ensuring that the program would remain politically neutral and beneficial to youth development once it was reinstated.10

In another opportunity for youth civic engagement, Zimbabwe is currently carrying out a constitutional outreach program in which citizens are invited to attend community meetings where they can voice their thoughts on what should be included in the new Zimbabwe constitution. Young people are especially invited to attend, and this effort is one of the largest opportunities for young people in Zimbabwe to be civically active. Unfortunately, reports are indicating that youth participation in the constitutional outreach meetings is noticeably low. There seem to be many reasons for the lack of youth participation in the meetings. One is the difficulty of getting information regarding meeting dates and how to sign up for participation. Another is the reports of intimidation around those that participate. Finally, further reports of ZANU-PF and MDC parties coaching participants in what to say contribute to widespread disillusionment with the process and leave young people feeling that their opinion would not actually affect the outcome.11

Rationale/Background

Since 2000 Zimbabwe has experienced severe economic and political issues with poverty becoming more prevalent and more people becoming unemployed. Due to its increased isolation, Zimbabwe’s formal sector has shrunk and along with it basic goods and services. Zimbabwe also faces a large obstacle in terms of HIV/AIDS prevention with a HIV prevalence rate of 18.1% among people ages 19-45.12 Zimbabwe’s National Service Scheme was created as an alternative to school for 10-30 year-olds and was intended to be a gateway to national economic and social development. In recent years, however, the function of Zimbabwe’s NYS diverged from its mission resulting in its suspension in 2009.13 Some organizations are working in the limited civil society environment to engage young people in building skills and enhancing their development while also addressing community needs.

Going Forward

While some community-based organizations are creating legitimate youth civic participation opportunities and the government is nominally seeking youth voice in its constitutional development, authentic opportunities remain limited. The future of the NYS in Zimbabwe, and opportunities for youth civic engagement in general, depends on the political stability and openness in the country. The NYS would need to be made completely independent of any political party and engage only in authentic youth civic participation activities with no violent component in order to be a legitimate national service program. In addition to lasting reform of the NYS, a more open society in Zimbabwe will allow civil society groups to flourish, which might lead to more civic participation opportunities for the young people of the country.

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African Regional Initiatives

This snapshot looks at regional initiatives across the continent of Africa, where the population totals over 1 billion people. Nearly 45% of this population is under the age of 15.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
In Africa, youth civic participation programs have been implemented by intergovernmental organizations like the African Union (AU) and the Mano River Union (MRU). These unions unite governments to create cross-border programs promoting youth civic engagement. Their main intention in many such programs is peace promotion.

The AU has designed two programs that promote youth participation: the Strategy to Revitalize Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) and the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC). The framework for the former was laid in 2007, and a revitalizing workshop was held in 2009. It aims to involve young people in post-conflict reconstruction processes by positioning programs, mobilizing stakeholders, developing a re-integration strategy, and mobilizing partners for cooperation and support. Its strategies for implementation include short-term technical training (6-18 months) and skills curriculum, usually in the form of post-primary education like technical and vocational school. Thus, the program largely addresses young people in their teenage years.2 The AU-YVC program was proposed in 2009. The program aims to empower young people by including them in Africa's development process and harness the power of young people through civic participation. It is specifically aimed at young people ages 15 to 35.3 In August 2010, the AU began facilitating the deployment of young people ages 21-35 for volunteer, internship and junior professional officer positions, in response to requests from civil society, international development and other such organizations. Selected young people serve in assigned positions within these organizations for between three weeks and two years.4

In its programs, the MRU, in conjunction with the UN, organizes forums and promotes dialogue among young people in the western region of the continent. For example, the Mano River Union Youth Forum took place in March 2010 bringing together 120 youth representatives from Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.5 The main theme of this forum was youth-led social entrepreneurship.6 During the Forum, the MRU Youth Platform, a virtual communication tool for information exchange, was launched.7 Since the Forum, the UN has seen encouraging results in young people using this tool, though it has not yet expressed plans to host more forums of its kind.8

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8 Ibid.
Finally, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in early 2010 launched the ECOWAS Youth Volunteer program. Through this program women and men between 18 and 35 years of age from ECOWAS countries will be deployed in selected community-based associations, national and international non-governmental organizations, and specialized agencies that are active in socio-economic, cultural, political and humanitarian work. The volunteers will engage in activities aimed at helping to consolidate peace and promote rehabilitation in crisis-affected communities. The volunteers will also assist local organizations in the development and implementation of their social programs. The pilot phase of the project which is being supported by the African Development Bank, UNV, UNESCO and UNHCR, will cover Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Guinea.9

Policy Overview
The youth civic participation policies in Africa are governed by the charters of such organizations as the African Union and Mano River Union, which are written in cooperation with the governments of each of the member states. Member states of the African Union include all African countries except Morocco, a total of 53.10 Members of the Mano River Union include Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.11 Notably, the African Union’s charter recognizes that “Africa’s greatest resource is its youthful population” and calls for their active and full participation in AU initiatives.12 The charter specifically calls on member states to “institute policy and programmes of youth voluntarism at local, national, regional and international levels as an important form of youth participation and as a means of peer-to-peer training.”13 It is within the framework of this charter that the AU-YVC program will be fully established.

Rationale/Background
With the youth-dominated population across the continent of Africa, governments can hardly ignore the resources of youth energy and talent. Such intergovernmental organizations as the AU and MRU recognize the potential of young people to reinforce and promote their visions of unity and integration. In particular, they view youth participation as a means of promoting peace across borders, especially in the theater of war on which Africa has been staged in recent decades.14 Generally, the programs are designed to encourage multi-national citizenship that can be implemented and enforced through youth engagement.

Going Forward
With such regional proposals backed by the governments of many nations, intergovernmental organizations in Africa are well on their way to the creation of important youth civic participation programs. To ensure that these programs are successful, they must be well-planned and supported financially. The key is to convince each of the member states’ governments to provide funding and means of implementation for each of the unions’ proposed programs. Once they have gained footing on the national level, the programs can take on a larger, international scale.

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13 Ibid.
14 Strategy to Revitalize Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Africa.
East Asia and the Pacific

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**Australia**

Australia has a population of approximately 21 million people.¹ Young people between the ages of 12 and 24 make up 20 percent of the Australian population.²

**Youth Civic Participation Overview**

There are multiple organizations for young people in Australia, many of which are government-based or have government backing. The following organizations illustrate some of the ways young people are involved within their communities in Australia.

Volunteering Australia, created in 1991, is the result of a merger between the Australian Association for Volunteering and the National Association of Volunteer Referral Agencies. It seeks to further the amount of volunteering in Australia as well as promote the act of volunteering in general. Volunteering Australia also provides public policy advice to the government regarding civic participation, maintains an ongoing relationship between national and international volunteer organizations and guarantees proper representation of the volunteer sector.³ One of Volunteering Australia’s major projects is the development and maintenance of GoVolunteer.com.au, a large national on-line facility where volunteers and organizations can connect to one another. Other projects include organizing major events such as National Volunteer Week and the National Conference on Volunteering, which are designed to celebrate and encourage volunteering.⁴

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is a community-based organization that receives funding from the government and which acts as a representative of young people and youth affairs both nationally and internationally. Between the years 2002 and 2008, AYAC did not receive any government funding, due to lack of support from previous ministers. In 2008, Minister for Youth Kate Ellis resumed funding for AYAC and explained that AYAC would be “an independent voice and advocate of young people and the youth sector.”⁵ Aiming to promote the participation of young people in all aspects of society, AYAC develops policies that deal with issues young people face and provides youth policy advice to the government and community. A Board of Directors, consisting of representatives from both state and territory youth sectors and young people, guides AYAC based on the advice of AYAC’s Policy Advisory Council.⁶ AYAC advocates for policy decisions that affect young people and represents the rights of young Australians both on a national and international level.⁷

Australian Volunteers International (AVI) is involved in managing international volunteering programs and projects in multiple countries. AVI primarily focuses on poverty reduction, health and education services, human rights issues, gender equality and environmental protection. It promotes service-learning through its goal of capacity building, social responsibility and community education. AVI has been active for over 50 years and has supported over 6,000 Australians volunteering in developing countries through its programs.⁸

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⁷ Ibid.
The Australian government sponsors multiple community-based youth programs, including the Youth Development and Support Program. This program gives financial support to initiatives that aim to foster youth development through practical and innovative youth-led, community-based projects. Non-profits, companies and non-governmental organizations are all eligible. A total of AUS$500,000 will be made in grants through the Youth Development and Support Program in 2010-2011.9

Finally, the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) is an independent organization that aims to improve the quality of life for young people through research, education initiatives, investments in individual and youth-led organizations, and advocacy on important issues affecting young people. In 2008, FYA allied with the Education Foundation to work together on education reform policies and issues, and ensure youth participation so that there is a strong student core within schools and communities. FYA also focuses on issues that young indigenous Australians face, through support, development and implementation of location-specific programs that explicitly address aboriginal matters.10 With outside help from sponsors, FYA invested over $1 million dollars into the youth sector in 2009.

Policy Overview
The person responsible for youth policy in the Australian government is the Minister for Early Childhood and Youth, who serves in the Office for Youth which is a subdivision of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.11 The current Minister for Early Childhood and Youth is Peter Garrett, who replaced Kate Ellis on 14 September 2010. Current youth policy centers on the National Strategy for Young Australians, which was developed with input from young Australians and released in April 2010.12 The National Strategy aims to prepare young people to become active and included in addressing the major problems they will face in the future, such as climate change and an aging Australian population. To encourage young people to become engaged, the Australian government focuses on empowering young people for active community involvement, teaching them to take responsibility for their actions, teaching them important skills through education, and providing a safe and inclusive environment in which they can develop.13 Specifically targeting young people in disadvantaged areas, the High Resolves Citizenship and Leadership Program provides young people with skills to become active leaders in the community through interactive exercises.14 Furthermore, the creation of five Arts, Business, and Community Centers will help connect young people to employment and networking opportunities. The creation, funding and implementation of supplementary National Strategy programs are in progress.

Additionally, a program for 15-24 year olds called the Australian Youth Forum (AYF) was created by Minister for Youth Kate Ellis in 2008 to promote communication among young people, the government and the youth sector. The AYF uses channels such as websites, forums, events and community activities to bring these groups closer together. One AYF program is The Prime Minister’s Australian Youth Forum Challenge, which empowers young people to play an active role in creating change in their communities by hosting a competition in which the winners get to implement their innovative ideas.15

One other notable government program was the Youth 2020 Summit in April 2008, which allowed for young people to be directly involved in Australia’s national agenda as the beginning of an ongoing dialogue. One hundred youth participants addressed issues such as public health, paid parental leave, investment in a National Broadband Network, voting and participation in democracy, findings of the National Human Rights Consultations and mental healthcare by submitting their own policy proposals to the agenda.16 By involving young people directly in debate and policy formulation, the summit encouraged them to envision the future of their country and to take an active role in shaping that vision. The results of the summit were used as youth input into government decision-making.

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13 “National Strategy for Young Australians.”
14 Ibid.
Rationale/Background
According to reports, only one young Australian out of three is civically engaged and the fraction of those who participate regularly is low. Additionally, Australia struggles to meet the educational needs of young people from lower income brackets. Thus, a main focus of policy is to address how to raise the percentage of youth engagement and education.

Through national studies identifying areas of improvement for the government’s youth policies, young people cited a desire to be able to verbalize the areas of concern most pertinent to them and a need to feel respected. These studies also revealed lack of awareness about or availability of services and support, limited youth leadership skills training and a growing concern about climate change. To address these results, the government has initiated new programs, such as the AYF, to ensure young Australians a voice and funding has been approved to programs which provide youth broader access to support such as the AYAC. Finally, the government has provided additional discretionary funding for community-based organizations through the Youth Development and Support Program to help young people initiate and implement programs that focus on the community.

Going Forward
In the future the government will continue to operate under the auspices of the National Strategy for Young Australians. More programs are to be implemented with the goals of providing young people with skills, encouraging them to create change in their communities and inviting them to play an active role in the future of Australia. Notably, the Australian government places a strong emphasis on listening to the voices of young people through programs such as the Australian Youth Forum and the Youth 2020 Summit. In listening to young Australians and creating new programs, the government intends to become a more responsive, inclusive and effective vehicle for civic engagement.

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18 “National Strategy for Young Australians.”
Brunei Darussalam

Brunei, a predominantly Muslim country in Southeast Asia, has an estimated population of 409,000 (2010). The definition of youth in Brunei is people aged 15-40 years, and young people are estimated to make up over half of the population (as of 2009).

Youth Civic Participation Overview
While there are several government-run programs for young people in Brunei, there is less activity by civil society organizations. The Ministry of Education acknowledges that “despite the support and encouragement from the Government of Brunei to involve youth in NGOs and youth associations in particular, the number of youth actively participating in youth associations is still very low and remains to be desired.”

One civil society organization is the Young Entrepreneurs Association Brunei (YEAB), which “supports the needs of young people in Brunei and around the region as they attempt to build and thrive in both their personal and professional lives.” Established in 2000, YEAB aims to nurture entrepreneurial leadership among young professionals and offers networking opportunities for those within the organization. Its “goal is to open up a whole new world of opportunities, relationships and resources,” while promoting the welfare of all young people—entrepreneurs in particular—in Brunei.

To accomplish this goal, YEAB acts as an umbrella organization for youth groups, supports continuing education, allies with other young entrepreneur organizations worldwide, and holds meetings to promote discussion and education. Although most of YEAB’s activities are focused on developing youth business skills, some also foster civic participation skills. For example, in 2010 the YEAB has hosted a public participation forum and scheduled a environmental/community giving event.

Policy Overview
The National Youth Policy in Brunei was passed in 2004 and is primarily implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. There are six focus areas in the policy: personal development education, employment and training, leadership, enterprise, international understanding, and services to others and the nation. The NYP places emphasis on civic participation by promoting youth development of self-awareness, the need to work in solidarity, appreciation of the need to help others and the community, and an international understanding. The general intent is to create youth of excellence with the vision of creating a highly skilled and educated population by the year 2035.

The National Youth Service Program (NYSP), implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, is in line with the policies and objectives for young people outlined in the National Youth Policy. It promotes service-learning through social consciousness, life skills development, education and capacity building. Created in 2008, the NYSP is a mandatory
program for young people between the ages of 16-18, in accordance with the national philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy. The main components of NYSP are: self development and patriotism, physical training and discipline, and service to the community. Its focus is on social services, education and community development.

In addition to the NYSP, the KAMAS Program is implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports to foster service-learning through community development and social services. The program seeks to promote a sense of belonging to the community for young people through youth civic participation. Through KAMAS, young people renovate houses, donate blood, work on cleaning campaigns, and perform numerous other basic services within their community.

Youth Love the Nation is also implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. Through service-learning initiatives, the program hopes to foster citizenship, community education, and patriotism among young people on the basis of Malay Islamic Monarchy. The program seeks to create a stronger sense of devotion to God among Brunei's youth, along with loyalty to their ruler and love for their country.9

Finally, the Youth Community Service Programme is implemented by the Ministry of Education. It is for all students in primary, secondary, upper secondary levels and higher education institutions. Students are encouraged to participate in the Community Service Programme, while it is mandatory that each student participates in at least one of the following school activities: army cadet, police cadet, the Girl Guide Association of Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam Red Crescent Society, Brunei Darussalam Scout Federation, fire brigade or rescue cadet.

Rationale/Background
Each government program seeks to foster citizenship and social responsibility among young people in Brunei, with the overall goal of bringing the community together on local and national levels. These programs look to combat chronic youth challenges in Brunei such as education deficiencies and drug usage. Additionally, each program seeks to foster a strong sense of belonging for young people within their communities, along with promoting the spirit of civic participation.

Young people in Brunei are also quite active in efforts around climate change and sustainability as evidenced by their involvement in the ASEAN+3 Youth Environment Forum 2010. At the Forum, young people from Brunei, China and Japan produced a paper highlighting their climate-related concerns in their respective countries. Civic participation activities present an important opportunity for young people to continue to address critical issues for their generation.10

Going Forward
While there are some civil society-based youth civic participation programs in Brunei, the more wide-spread efforts are undertaken by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in accordance with the National Youth Policy. Through these efforts, the government is promoting a culture of youth civic participation in Brunei. To improve policy, members of the Ministry recently attended meetings with other Asian youth ministers to discuss programs and initiatives to improve youth development.11 Furthermore, in the future “the evaluation on the effectiveness of the youth service programs will be coordinated and monitored by the Youth and Sports Department of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.”12

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9 Ibid.
11 “Enable Youth to Build Asean Community.”
12 “IANYS National Youth Service Country Profile-Brunei Darussalem.”
Cambodia

Cambodia is a Southeast Asian nation in the Mekong Delta region between Thailand and Vietnam. Young people 15-30 represent 32% of the population of 14.5 million people in Cambodia. The GNI is $27.16 billion PPP dollars. ¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Cambodia has a variety of CSOs that work on both local and national levels. Some of these organizations, described below, reach a wide audience and were included in “Harnessing the Potential to Develop Cambodia,” a report published by Youth Star Cambodia in cooperation with United Nations Volunteers in 2008.²

Youth Star Cambodia is a civic participation organization that has been active since 2005, with the objective “to build a just and peaceful nation through citizen service, civic leadership and social entrepreneurship.” It places university graduates in rural communities for a volunteer period of one to two years. Currently, there are over 70 volunteers who have been or are placed in communities. Volunteers have very few resources aside from their own ideas and whatever they can mobilize in the community where they are placed. This program is particularly effective because it allows volunteers to develop programs on their own, based on the needs which they have observed.³

Khmer Youth Association is an organization that works with young people in the areas of democracy building, conflict resolution and reproductive health. It began in November 1992 and now has over 4,000 individual members. It operates through youth clubs based in Youth Learning Centers (with 10-15 full time volunteers) which have been established in rural communities. It encourages volunteers to make links with other agencies and develop employment skills by serving as administrative support for projects.⁴

The United Nations Volunteers are active in Cambodia. They worked with Youth Star Cambodia to produce “Harnessing the Potential to Develop Cambodia” in June 2008 and have also helped establish VolCom, a centralized website which lists volunteer opportunities in Cambodia.⁵ The World Bank is also active in promoting youth civic engagement in Cambodia through its Civil Society Fund which has provided funding for programs such as KYA and the Commune Research Team, which uses youth volunteers to survey life in communes and encourages citizens to participate in decision making by providing them the opportunity to discuss issues with commune officials.⁶

Policy Overview
Youth policy in Cambodia is the province of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports which has established education programs in HIV/AIDs, non-formal education and strategies for teaching information and communication technology. The Ministry has also established physical education programs and was instrumental in developing the National Youth Policy.⁷

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³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
The third draft of the National Youth Policy was completed in March 2010, with the final draft expected to be completed sometime in 2010. The process began in 2004 with a series of workshops, surveys and consultations with UN organizations, youth-led associations and other development partners. The first draft of the policy was completed in 2006 and the second draft in 2008. Two sections of particular importance are the sections on volunteerism and civic engagement. Strategic objectives for civic engagement include establishing youth centers, promoting youth organizations and increasing youth involvement in the media. The volunteerism section establishes such strategic objectives as strengthening the mechanisms of coordination between volunteers and communities, raising awareness of volunteer opportunities, and improving recognition of young people who participate in volunteer projects and programs. After the final draft is completed, a National Youth Action Plan will be developed to define the implementation process.

Rationale/Background
According to the 2008 census, young people 15-30 represent 32% of the population in Cambodia, thus making them the largest demographic and one of Cambodia’s most vital resources. However, the rate of primary school completion in Cambodia is only 50% while the unemployment rate is high. Most young people live in rural areas and while volunteerism is highly valued, it is difficult for rural residents to have access to programs or opportunities. As such, several NGOs, such as Youth Star Cambodia, particularly focus on engaging young people in volunteer opportunities in rural areas. Cambodia hopes to increase youth contribution to development and democracy by ensuring that young people are not only engaged, but also have a voice in decision making.

Going Forward
A draft of the National Youth Policy has been completed and includes provisions for a Cambodian National Council for Youth Development and the creation of a National Youth Action Plan, although neither of these provisions has been implemented yet. There is some fear that without at least the National Council for Youth, the National Youth Policy will remain solely on paper. Implementation is contingent on the final draft of the National Youth Policy which is expected to be completed by the end of 2010. While the policy progresses, several CSOs are civically engaging young people throughout the country and striving to ensure that young Cambodians have a role in the country’s development.

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9 Draft: Cambodia National Youth Policy.
11 Draft: Cambodia National Youth Policy.
12 Ibid.
China

China has the largest population in the world at 1.3 billion, with an estimated 294 million young people aged 14-29.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
China has numerous youth initiatives at the government and community-based levels. Some of the largest organizations are highlighted in this section, but the authors recognize that there are numerous other civic participation programs in China at this time.

The City Volunteer Program, a civil society initiative created in 2007, focuses on community development, emergency response and preparedness, and public safety primarily through part-time volunteer service and service-learning. The Program seeks to involve the Beijing municipal governments at all levels, as well as universities and communities. The target population consists of anyone between the ages of 9 to 103. There are currently 500 city volunteer stations in Beijing, mainly located in commercial areas to assist with emergency help, translation and other forms of service. The City Volunteer Program was specifically recognized for their assistance with the Beijing Olympics.

Additionally, programs like the Asian Youth Forum and the Beijing International Volunteers Association are youth leadership and civic participation initiatives that receive government funding, but are implemented by civil society organizations. The Asian Youth Forum, formed in 2007, is an Asian youth council aimed toward young people aged 18-35. The Forum’s goal is to maximize participation both inside and outside of the Forum. The Forum gives an annual Asian Youth Organization Award and an Outstanding Asian Youth Award that recognize Asian youth or youth organizations for the contribution and support they have put toward establishing a better Asia, while offering an incentive to participate in the Forum. Funding comes from the government, participation fees, and other sources such as the US government. “Through lectures, group discussions, workshops and group dynamics, the participants are provided the necessary knowledge and skills that will enable them to become leaders.”

The Beijing International Volunteers Association highlights civic participation through domestic and international volunteer programs. The program works with United Nations Volunteers (UNV) toward “both long- and short-term placement of international and Chinese volunteers for work in China and abroad,” while the advocacy programs focus on spreading the “spirit of volunteerism” through all echelons of Chinese society. It is supported by the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges and the UN Development Programme.

There are also multiple organizations and projects that target young people who are of university age, such as the Green Campus Project, Volunteers in Asia, the World Bank’s Youth Engagement program and the Young Practitioner Micro Grant Project program. The Green Campus Project, which is implemented by the China Youth Climate Action Network (CYCAN), is focusing on global-warming issues and the role of Chinese young people. The Project seeks to discover the best energy-efficient solutions at universities, and to be able to provide recommendations for the improvement of the environment.

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2 “China Youth,” All-China Youth Federation, Print, 3-4.
The Young Practitioner Micro Grant Project program was created in 2005, and uses community-based support to encourage young people to join the countryside and help set up local training systems. The overarching goal is to bring the city and the countryside together, and to provide training for young people that will allow them to conduct social analysis and develop social skills. The project targets young people primarily between the ages of 20-24, that are college educated. A participant serves for 40 hours per week for 10 months.5

Finally, Volunteers in Asia (VIA) was created in 1963 and generally targets young people between the ages of 20-24 throughout Asia. There are long-term volunteer programs that last one or two years, as well as short-term opportunities that last 4-8 weeks. Funding comes from individual donors, foundations and program fees. In China specifically, VIA introduces volunteers to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and “one of the most valued aspects of this program is the access it gives participants to Chinese doctors, patients, and medical students.”6

Policy Overview

China’s National Youth Policy can be found in Article 46 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, which states that all Chinese have the duty and right to receive education. Furthermore, the Constitution also specifically states that juveniles have the same rights and obligations that all other citizens do. The National Youth Policies of China include the Compulsory Education Law, Adoption Law, the Law on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, the Law on Disabled People Protection and Marriage Law.

The All-China Youth Federation (ACYF) is a political party that acts as an umbrella organization for all youth groups in China. It is one of the largest youth organizations in the country. The Communist Youth League of China is the core group, and there are 52 different youth organizations also included. Additionally, there are 34 local youth organizations throughout China, with 77,000 members.7 Created in 1949, ACYF focuses on education and training for young people in China. It has a daily newspaper as well as vocational training programs, leadership education, dissemination of information on youth rights, formal and non-formal education, employment and entrepreneurship promotion, voluntary service, environmental protection, culture and sports, science and technology innovations, as well as commendation and awards recognizing outstanding young people. The section involving civic participation through the ACYF offers three different opportunities for university students. The “Go West” Voluntary Service Scheme selects about 20,000 student volunteers to send into poverty stricken areas in the interest of developing education, health care and agriculture. Community Harmony-promoting Voluntary Service Action aims to strengthen the level of organization of the volunteer system, making opportunities for service more effective in involving young people in the community. The Chinese Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Plan encourages friendship and understanding between young people in China and other countries.8

The Chinese Young Volunteers Association (CYVA)’s Poverty Alleviation Relay Project focuses on poverty alleviation in central and western China. Volunteers primarily serve as teachers for primary or secondary schools, to help improve education, health and development. This program targets urban educated young people and university graduates to serve in rural communities. Volunteers donate between 6 months and 2 years of their time to the project. The CYVA was established in 1993 by the Chinese government to engage young people through service and in its first decade over 80 million young people provided over 4.1 billion hours of service through CYVA.9

Finally, the National Western Program of University Students Voluntary Service was created in 2003 and targets university graduates. With around 10,000 volunteers per year, this one to two year service program focuses on social services, public health, education and community development. The service encourages the devotion of young people to the development of remote/underdeveloped areas in China and promotes the improvement of education, health,

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agriculture and anti-poverty work.\textsuperscript{10} The program also provides employment opportunities for university students that may otherwise be out of work.

\textbf{Rationale/Background}

China's large population has experienced rapid economic, structural and social transformation. Rural and urban areas have witnessed decades of extreme poverty that is now being alleviated in many communities. Between 1980 and 2005, the absolute poor population in rural areas declined from 250 million to 26.1 million.\textsuperscript{11} However, much more needs to be done as China continues to face new and complex development and poverty concerns. China is facing significant disparities in poverty and literacy rates between rural and urban areas. The UNDP Human Development Indices in 2005 for urban areas was 0.816 compared to only 0.685 in rural areas.\textsuperscript{12} Various programs in China, such as the CYVA, are engaging young people in addressing these challenges.

There are several challenges that face youth policies in China, from low budget allocations to rural illiteracy imbalances to pressure from social and economic reforms.\textsuperscript{13} The ACYF was established to represent the rights and interests of young people of all ethnic groups, and to guide young people to be active participants in social activities. The ACYF seeks to develop the socialist market economy, while developing social stability and unity in China. The ACYF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security also launched the Entrepreneurship Campaign for Young Laid-Off Workers and China Youth Entrepreneurship Campaign in order to train over 400,000 young people and support 90,000 young entrepreneurs between 1990 and 2004.

\textbf{Going Forward}

More and more recent graduates are continuing to serve in rural areas in the countryside, a trend that has only increased since some provinces have decreed that all graduates who want government jobs must first work in rural villages.\textsuperscript{14} These young people are making important contributions to community development throughout China and, with active community-based organizations and well-established national youth policies, stand poised to continue this effort.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 8.
Fiji

A collection of islands in the South Pacific Ocean, Fiji has an estimated population of 844,000 people, with approximately 319,000 people under 18 years old. Fiji’s GNI per capita is US$3,930.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Oxfam New Zealand reports that in Fiji “due to changing community structures and insufficient employment and livelihood opportunities, young people are particularly vulnerable to social and economic marginalization.”2 However there are few organizations in Fiji that focus on development and community assistance, while the main structures for supporting youth civic participation come from the government.

Several organizations function with financial support from New Zealand Aid’s (NZAID) Civil Society Strategy (CSS), a policy that aims to develop and strengthen strategic partnerships with civil society organizations. Organizations like the Pacific Counselling and Social Services (PCSS), the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises Development (FRIEND), the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre and Save the Children Fiji (SCF) are all examples of CSS supported CSOs. Overall, the only organization the authors were able to identify that specifically caters to young people in particular appears to be Save the Children Fiji, which hopes to improve the country’s educational standards and over time “re-establish livelihoods.”3 Also, United Nations Volunteers has been active in Fiji since 1974, and focus on development and community support within the country.4

Policy Overview
In 2008 the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS) was introduced by the Government of Fiji, and was officially approved by the Cabinet in 2009, with the goal of taking in new civil service recruits and to train all young people interested in a career in civic service.5 The NYSS targets young people between the ages of 15 and 35, and reaches about 2,000 young people annually. Young people involved in NYSS spend 3-6 months devoting time to service that begins with a mandatory two-week training class. After the first three months of NYSS are completed, young people within the program have the option to extend for an additional three months. Entry into the NYSS is voluntary and it is implemented by the Department of Youth & Sports, under the overall umbrella of the Ministry of Education, Heritage, Culture and Arts, Youth & Sports.

Though the government runs the NYSS program and supports non-governmental organizations through the Civil Society Strategy, it has not yet developed an overarching national youth policy. However in March 2010, participants from Fiji attended the Pacific Sports and Youth Conference, which featured representatives from New Zealand’s Ministry of Youth Development who outlined the benefits of active youth engagement on societies in the Pacific region.6 Based on experiences with youth policies in New Zealand, they advocated development of policies targeting all young people in Fiji, who would profit from the creation of a youth council and a youth parliament or similar institutions.

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Rationale/Background
There is a push to increase youth civic participation in Fiji; however there are limited resources available to support an expansion. The government did recently establish the NYSS to create more employment opportunities for young people and to expand the amount of civil servants. Additionally, participants of past conferences, such as the one hosted by New Zealand’s Ministry of Youth Development in March 2010, agree that youth participation is both important and necessary in the country’s society. Many of the challenges that Fiji’s young people face, such as unemployment and social and economic marginalization, can be addressed, in part, by increased civic participation opportunities.  

Going Forward
As of 2009, NYSS was confirmed to be implemented and executed, and at the March 2010 conference it was argued that in the Pacific “youth participation is important, especially because there is a need for change in our society, particularly for parents in our culture – they need to be more aware of our youth.” Overall, there is a movement in Fiji to increase the amount of youth participation, so that by involving the young people of the country, there can be more economic improvement in the future.

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7 “Fiji Country Profile,” Oxfam New Zealand.
8 NZ Ministry of Youth Development Offer Tips.”
Hong Kong

Hong Kong is located in Eastern Asia, bordering China and the South China Sea. The United Kingdom relinquished sovereignty of Hong Kong to China in 1997, though the country operates under distinct economic and political systems from the mainland. The population of Hong Kong is approximately 7 million people of which 25.3% are under the age of 25.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Hong Kong has multiple programs in place that promote youth civic participation. Many of the groups focus on poverty alleviation, civic education, and multiple issue-based movements. The following organizations and programs have been well-documented, and offer a good look into youth service in Hong Kong.

Humanity in Focus (HIF) is a civil society organization founded by a group of university students in Hong Kong in 2006 with the intention of raising awareness of global issues and creating projects to aid children in impoverished countries. HIF encourages youth civic participation by focusing on the ability of young people to take action to alleviate inequality and poverty worldwide. The organization not only promotes youth awareness of global issues, but also supports active participation through service projects. Through its annual Youth Global Citizenship Program, HIF offers opportunities for youth involvement in developing countries and service-learning by organizing trips to underprivileged areas of Cambodia. In 2009 alone, HIF education and development projects reached over 8,000 people in Hong Kong and 500 in Cambodia.2

The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, established in 1960, is a large youth organization in the country and reaches over 5 million participants per year. The organization has a variety of functions including services to young people such as social work, counseling and work skills, as well as civic engagement programs such as Volunteer Youth Network (VNET) and youth publications. VNET includes volunteer opportunities for over 120,000 members, such as the Heart to Heart Project in which participants strive to meet the needs of underprivileged people in their communities.3 The research and publication department engages with young people to hear their ideas and opinions about youth issues and translate them into policy proposals.

The Hong Kong Youths United Association (HKYA) is a non-profit organization founded in 1992 that includes members drawn from the local community, youth group leaders and academic elites. HKYA consists of 10 committees which encourage youth development through advocacy, research, cultural exchange, job training, education and youth service. The Social Affairs Committee organizes social activities to promote exchanges and a sense of responsibility to the greater community. The Youth Virtuous Society Committee encourages young female members to actively participate in organizing activities and engage with the community.4

Policy Overview
The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) coordinates youth development policy in Hong Kong and seeks to promote positive values in young people, enhance their cultural understanding, strengthen their sense of belonging, and encourage their participation in the community. HAB implements policy partly through the Commission on Youth (COY), an affiliated committee that advises the government on youth policy. Made up of young people, academics and youth workers, COY works with civil society organizations to carry out volunteer programs, communicate with young people about policy

and promote cultural exchanges. COY recently worked with the Agency for Volunteer Service and other youth groups to unveil a new volunteer program aimed at moral development. Another civic engagement program was the Youth Summit 2010 held in March. The event incorporated young people from several countries and provided a forum for them to express their views and discover opportunities to actively participate and address challenges in society.5 Aside from COY, HAB collaborates with youth organizations to implement other programs such as summer programs focused on helping the community. HAB has also funded the development of the Youth Square, a building that serves as a central hub for youth development activities and youth organization offices.

Rationale/Background
The Hong Kong Council of Social Service states that “in the coming years, the challenges for social welfare in Hong Kong is to deal with complex political, social and economic consequences arising from fast globalization, macro-economic unpredictability, structural unemployment, cross border movement and (a rapidly) ageing population.”6 These are some of the challenges young people in Hong Kong face as they seek to become active global citizens and participate in their communities. Several of the civil society and governmental initiatives described in this snapshot seek to address these challenges through engaging young people in their own and community development.

Going Forward
Various civil society organizations and government initiatives are promoting civic participation in Hong Kong. In order to deal with the challenges that young people in Hong Kong face, the Council of Social Service states that “maximizing economic and social participation, strengthening family functioning and building community solidarity” are the keys to success and the continuation of the success that previous programs have had. In response, during the summer of 2010, Hong Kong conducted the second HKUST Talented Youth Summer Program. This program serves to help young people reach their “full potential,” and promote global active citizenship.7 In addition to Hong Kong’s longer-running youth service programs, new initiatives such as this one are expanding opportunities for civically engaging young people in Hong Kong.

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Indonesia

Indonesia is an archipelago nation made up of over 17,000 islands in the Pacific Ocean. Indonesia has an estimated population of 231 million people. Young people between 15 and 24 years old make up 17.6% of the population.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Indonesia has multiple civil society programs that are implemented on both a local and international scale. On the community level, the International Youth Conference is an example of a locally-based initiative aimed at youth engagement. Global XChange, VIA and WASH are all examples of initiatives that are backed by international groups.

The International Youth Conference, organized and planned by young people, acts as a forum for young people to voice their opinions. Thirty-three young people aged 15-21 are invited to a youth parliament event to debate current issues and convince the public that youth voices must be taken seriously. The event took place for the first time in July 2010 and also included a festival with workshops and seminars.

Global Xchange has been implemented by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO, UK) since 2005. The program works with young people between the ages of 18 and 25 in teams of no more than 18 people, and volunteers live with host families and work abroad for three months, then an additional three months in the UK. Participants generally serve for 30 hours per week with civil society organizations during the program. Over 70 volunteers have been a part of GlobalXchange in Indonesia since 2003. Funding comes from the government, participation fees, and donors such as the British Council, BAA, City Parochial, and the Scottish Executive.

Volunteers in Asia (VIA) also has a presence in Indonesia and relies on local collaboration. It has both long-term and short-term civic participation opportunities, with long-term opportunities lasting 1-2 years, and short-term lasting 4-8 weeks. Long-term programs focus on language and teaching training, while short-term programs focus more on cultural immersion. Funding mainly comes from individual donors, foundations and program fees. VIA is active throughout Asia. VIA’s scope in Indonesia is in both rural and urban areas, and has been in existence for over 40 years.

Finally, Water, Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH) is a program implemented by UNICEF, that focuses on the improvement of water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in schools, health clubs and households. WASH programs engage 6th grade students to monitor the hygiene of their community. Students are able to develop healthy hygiene practices themselves and in their communities through this school-level hygiene assessment and with the information they find from the monitoring process.

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Policy Overview
Since 1983, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs has determined youth policies and strategies in conjunction with the Indonesia National Youth Council, in order to engage young people in “national development in the fields of economic, social community development, science and technology, culture, religion and politics.” Through this ministry, the Indonesian government aims to empower young people with education, training and opportunities, although the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive youth policy.

A national service-learning program for university students is called Kuliah Kerja Nyata and was established in 1967. Teachers may voluntarily donate their time to the program, which involves the undertaking of projects in rural communities across the country. Through the program students enrolled at technical high schools may participate in civic engagement activities in order to complete requirements for their internships, but it is optional. The students act as facilitators for community empowerment, encouraging community members to exercise their rights and actively engage in the community. Additionally, the Sub-Directorate on the Development of Volunteer Work, which is within the Ministry of Labor, is in charge of volunteering in Indonesia. It establishes volunteer centers in different parts of the country and provides information and training for citizens who wish to volunteer their time and skills.

The government established the Indonesia Youth Employment Network (IYEN) in 2003. The program involves senior policy-makers in tackling problems associated with youth employment. To discuss current issues and create policy recommendations, the IYEN co-sponsored the Youth Employment Conference, organized by the International Labor Organization in April 2010. The conference addressed youth employment, school to work transition programs, and entrepreneurship in order to formulate long-term strategies for youth policy. The conference and the IYEN involve youth policy-makers but young people do not directly participate. There is some hope that these efforts may lead to a new national youth policy and increased youth civic participation.

Rationale/Background
Youth unemployment is one of the largest issues facing Indonesia. In 2009 the number of unemployed young people aged 15 to 24 hit 4.8 million. Unemployment coupled with poverty to create socioeconomic problems and higher rates of crime. Youth programs implemented by the government can help to alleviate some of these problems. Through its youth programming, the Ministry for Youth and Sports particularly hopes to expand “vocational training on agricultural integration, community techniques in attending international forums, HIV/AIDS and anti-drug prevention training, and dialogues among domestic youth on the regional and bilateral levels.”

Additionally, one of the reasons VIA in Indonesia was established was to act as an international voice for a moderate Muslim perspective, since Indonesia has one of the largest Muslim populations. Many organizations have also been successful in engaging young people in relief efforts and rebuilding their communities after natural disasters such as the 2004 Tsunami.

Going Forward
The Indonesian government strives to create and implement policies to engage and empower young people while several local and international organizations implement youth civic participation programs. The Indonesia Youth Employment Network leads a regional effort to increase youth employment. However, there is currently no comprehensive national youth policy. The government faces challenges presented by corruption, which limits the effectiveness of policies.

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11 “Indonesia,” Youth@Asean.
12 “Long-Term Volunteer Program in Indonesia,” VIA.
Lao PDR

Lao PDR is a landlocked country in Southeast Asia with a population of 6 million people, 44% of which are under the age of 15.¹ The GNI per capita is $880 (USD).²

Youth Civic Participation Overview

In Laos, some local programs are promoting youth civic participation, but it appears most efforts come from international organizations. For example, the Huam Jai Asasamak (HJA) program operates under the umbrella of CUSO Laos, a Canadian volunteer organization, with some United Nations Volunteers (UNV) support. Developed in 2007, HJA provides opportunities for young people from rural minority areas to volunteer with local community programs. HJA volunteers are placed with a civil society host organization for 12 months.³ HJA focuses on targeting its recruitment of young people who are marginalized with particular emphasis on including women, people from rural areas and ethnic minorities to become volunteers as well.⁴

UNV has been sending volunteers to Lao PDR since 1973 and has one of the biggest programs in effect in the country. As of 2003, there are 48 international and two national UN Volunteers working in Lao PDR. UNV has cooperated with multiple sectors of the government, including Public Administration and Civic Service Reform, the LYU, Ministry of Education, UXO Lao and the Ministry of Health. UNV works to develop local capacity in order to alleviate poverty, combat HIV/AIDS and to promote democratic governance. Also, many UN Volunteers work as specialists in rural planning and agriculture development within communities.⁵

Policy Overview

The main responsibility for youth affairs falls to the Lao People’s Revolutionary Youth Union (LYU), which was established in 1955 as the youth branch of the Lao People’s Party. The political organization operates at the central, provincial, district, and grassroots levels and holds annual congresses for youth participants at each level. The objectives of the LYU are to mobilize young people to implement national development goals and to encourage youth to contribute on national issues regarding the welfare of the country.⁶ There are approximately 273,000 members nationwide and young people must be between the ages of 15-30 to join. They also must be able to demonstrate their involvement in schools, workplaces and communities, as well as being willing to contribute to national protection.⁷ The LYU implements Party guidelines and policies as well as government regulations by providing young people with education, enhancing knowledge in science and technology, providing young people with vocational training and employment opportunities, supporting young people in maintaining good physical and mental health, strengthening the structure of youth and child organizations, generating income for youth and child development, and cooperating with international young people.⁸

⁴Ibid.
⁸Ibid.
The Lao PDR government has adopted an implementation plan titled National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES). Adopted following several poverty assessments in 2002, the plan sets a course of action to elevate the country’s Least Developed Country designation by 2020. This plan will be carried out with the cooperation of all sectors of government, including the LYU. The plan does not include specific programs to increase youth civic engagement but carries objectives to decrease youth poverty, increase opportunity, and improve youth participation in formal and non-formal education.9

Rationale/Background
Young people face a host of poverty-related issues in Lao PDR that the governmental and civil society programs strive to address. One major problem is limited access to education and vocational training, which minimizes options for employment.10 In agriculture, for example, young farmers are hindered by a lack of knowledge about how to grow new crops, how to increase production and how to sell crops. Impoverished young people have minimal access to credit, which could help them expand production and sales. Human trafficking also represents a major challenge in Lao PDR, as more young people, particularly girls, are frequently targeted by traffickers. International organizations and the LYU have made steps toward meeting these challenges by improving youth participation and education. Poverty continues, however, to be a widespread problem affecting a large youth population. Government initiatives and civil society programs must be strengthened to create more civic participation opportunities for young people.11

Going Forward
A large network of international and civil society organizations operates within Lao PDR. Most organizations, however, work with the government on poverty and health issues. Basic needs problems require more immediate focus and energy. In the future as programs begin to alleviate poverty, organizations would benefit by finding more ways to engage young people and encourage civic participation.

10 “Report of the national rural youth workshop...”
11 Ibid.
Located in Southeast Asia, Malaysia has an estimated population of 27 million people, with approximately 9.6 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$6,970.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
In Malaysia, many of the organizations supporting youth civic participation work with United Nations agencies, while some civil society organizations such as the Malaysian Youth Council and the Junior Chamber Malaysia also work with young people.

The Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) was formed in 1948 and serves as the coordinating body for all youth organizations in Malaysia. The MYC is a civil society organization, but it works closely with the Malaysian government youth agencies to formulate, implement and evaluate youth policy. MYC includes 35 youth organizations, which must operate in 7 of 14 national regions and have at least 2,000 youth members. Objectives of the MYC include strengthening democratic and voluntary participation of young people in organizations, representing youth organizations in government, promoting cooperation and mutual understanding through youth work, and encouraging interest in youth development among interest groups.²

Junior Chamber Malaysia (JCI) was introduced in 1954 as a branch of the United States-based Junior Chamber International. JCI works with young people aged 18-40 who believe in the power of active participation to affect community change and enable self-improvement. JCI encourages active citizenship as an acknowledgement of the shared rights and responsibilities of global citizens. One notable JCI program is Ten Outstanding Young Malaysians, in which the organization hands out awards to 10 young people each year who have had the greatest positive impact on their communities in accordance with JCI principles.³ One of the key categories of consideration includes humanitarian and voluntary service.

Policy Overview
The government body in charge of youth affairs in Malaysia is the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS), which works on youth policy as the chair of the National Youth Consultative Council (NYCC). Formed in 1972, the NYCC incorporates representatives from government branches related to youth, the MYC, local youth councils and experts on youth. The NYCC monitors implementation of the national youth policy, advises the MYS on policy development, acts as a consultative body for youth organizations, and coordinates activities of youth organizations and local youth councils.⁴

The Ninth Malaysia Plan was developed for the years 2006-2010 and encompasses government policy in all aspects of Malaysian society. The chapter titled “Empowering Youths for the Future” analyzes the effectiveness of the previous youth policy and sets strategy for the new policy. The strategies outlined are empowering young people for the future with education and training, increasing youth participation in youth organizations, inculcating young people with competitive spirit, strengthening legal frameworks for youth development, and promoting national unity and inclusion.⁵ Youth development strategies will be implemented through the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act, passed in

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⁴ Ibid.
2007. This act provides the framework for formally organizing and coordinating activities of national youth organizations.⁶

A National Service Program was established in 2003, which uses a computer to randomly select 17-year old citizens to participate in the program on a mandatory basis. Anyone selected serves for 3 months in different communities across Malaysia. Participants go through four training modules during their service: physical, nation building, character building and community service. During the community service module, participants implement community service projects ranging from painting civic halls to visiting rural clinics to cleaning and beautifying the environment. There are multiple incentives to participate in the program, including free tuition, vocational training, guaranteed employment in the industrial sector and solid earnings as a base salary.⁷ Approximately 100,000 young people are selected each year, and this program is a part of the Department of Defense Ministry.⁸

The Malaysian government also promotes civic engagement through universities. The Malaysian Qualifications Agency’s Code of Practice for Institutional Audit of 2009 states that “teaching, research, consultancy services, and community engagement are the core interrelated activities” for higher education institutions.⁹ This government publication also mandates policy and programs for students who wish to be active in the community such as peer counseling, co-curricular activities and community engagement. Universities must also encourage students and faculty to connect with the local community.

**Rationale/Background**

In Malaysia, the lifestyle is described as “becoming more and more modern,” with young people who go out to night clubs and bars, strive to be a “dot com-er” and to live a corporate lifestyle. The Malaysian population is diverse with a majority of Muslims, followed by Chinese and Indian populations and youth organizations are generally divided along ethnic lines.¹⁰ Overall, family values are still extremely important for Malaysian young people, and while many are a part of the corporate world, family values and traditions are still a predominant part of society.¹¹ The various community-based, international and government programs engaging young people in Malaysia are creating opportunities for young people to overcome these challenges and contribute to community development.

**Going Forward**

Malaysia hopes to achieve fully developed country status by 2020 and sees bolstering economic and social youth engagement as a valuable strategy for achieving this goal.¹² The government has placed emphasis on creating effective youth policy by working in cooperation with youth organizations and utilizing input from young people. Overall, young Malaysians have various civil society and government-based opportunities for youth civic participation and many are making important contributions to youth and community development throughout the country.

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¹⁰ Ibid.
**New Zealand**

The population of New Zealand is an estimated 21 million people. Of this number, approximately 3 million people are between the ages of 15 and 24.¹

**Youth Civic Participation Overview**

In New Zealand, the civic participation organizations that primarily concern young people are implemented by the government. However some non-governmental programs, such as Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ), seek to raise support for youth civic participation in New Zealand.

VNZ was established in 2001 through funding by the Department of Internal Affairs’ Support for Volunteers Fund. It is made up of regional volunteer centers and national organizations and is a member of the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE), which is an international NGO that represents volunteering worldwide. VNZ particularly focuses on emergency services, health, welfare, education, sport and recreation, conservation, special interests and advocacy. VNZ targets young people and the baby boomer generation, in order to promote volunteer awareness and youth participation. VNZ claims to be “the only national organization in New Zealand that focuses purely on volunteering.”² VNZ focuses on raising awareness and interest in volunteering, liaising with government, promoting educational programs and volunteer recruitment through volunteer centers, research and publication relevant to civic participation and representing New Zealand volunteer efforts internationally.

The United Nations Youth Association of New Zealand (UNYANZ) was founded in 1999 as the youth arm of the United Nations Association of New Zealand. The youth-led organization aims to educate young people about the United Nations and international issues, facilitate youth involvement in organizations and provide opportunities for youth interaction. The UNYANZ holds events such as the New Zealand Model UN, which included 200 students who gathered to debate world issues.³

**Policy Overview**

The Ministry of Youth Development (MYD)—a subsection of the Ministry of Social Development—has a Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (YDSA) that outlines the strategy and goals that the MYD has for young people in the country. There are six key principles, including the connection of young people to each other, full participation of young people in youth development and the creation of quality relationships.⁴ The 2002 strategy examines how government can work with families, communities and young people to be positive contributors to society. Additionally, the strategy states that the MYD does not intend to establish new initiatives, but to focus on the improvement of the previous ones in existence. A summary of the strategy states that it “provides a policy platform for public sector agencies when developing policy advice and initiatives relating to those aged within the 12 to 24 years inclusive age group.”⁵ The New Zealand government has several initiatives in place to take into account the input of young citizens and allow them to actively participate in politics.

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One of these initiatives is a Youth Parliament, which the Ministry of Youth Development has organized every three years since 1994. On July 6-7, 2010, the most recent Youth Parliament was held, where young people chosen as representatives debated important issues such as youth unemployment, funding, New Zealand’s imprisonment ratio, the rights of indigenous peoples, student achievement, youth awareness in human rights and health care.6

Another Ministry of Youth Development program involves working with local governments to set up youth councils. Youth members represent their age groups in the full local councils, giving them a chance to be involved in planning and developing services, provide a youth perspective, and act as a link between young people and the Council. At least 30 youth councils exist in cities and towns around New Zealand.7

Rationale/Background
The Ministry of Youth Development was created to give voice to young citizens, an age group that had previously been unrepresented in government. Young people are encouraged to voice their opinions and thoughts on issues important to them in public forums set up by the MYD. Some notable issues for New Zealand youth are the prevalence of teenage drinking, drug usage, sexually transmitted diseases and disproportionate unemployment rates. Working through youth programs, MYD gains insight from young people about the best ways to combat these issues.

Youth unemployment has been increasing in recent years in New Zealand. In 2010, youth employment declined by 11,900 and the unemployment rate rose to 18.2 percent.8 Civic participation offers an opportunity to address unemployment problems by equipping young people with skills, knowledge, experience and the value of contributing to society—things they can take with them into careers.

Going Forward
Both the New Zealand government and civil society organizations focus on engaging young people in New Zealand. Several government initiatives seek to give young people a voice in issues that matter to them, while local and international organizations create civic participation opportunities for young people.

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Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is a Pacific Ocean island nation in Southeast Asia. Its estimated population is about 6.6 million people, nearly half of which is under the age of 18.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There are some civil society programs within Papua New Guinea that seek to engage young people in their respective communities. For example, the Community Development Initiative Foundation Trust Fund (CDI) was established in 2001, and targets at-risk youth, out-of-school youth and university students in indigenous communities where oil and gas projects are taking place. CDI engages young people and other community members with a goal of “fostering communities with a strong sense of self-reliance, who actively participate in the development planning process at the local government level.”² CDI works with many other agencies including: CSOs, universities, mission and church groups, development agencies and government departments. HIV/AIDS awareness is a large part of CDI’s focus, and it aims to promote awareness through peer education by targeting at-risk young people and through youth projects within various communities. CDI seeks to engage those in rural communities for about 2 hours each week, and those in universities for 6 months full time. Funding primarily comes from the Joint Venture Partners of the Oil Company and Aus-Aid Donor Projects.³

Youth Against Corruption Association (YACA) and Yu Tok Radio are also two examples of organizations that focus on youth engagement. YACA is a member of Transparency International Papua New Guinea, which was started in 1997, and its goal is to empower young people to express their concerns freely.⁴ YACA held a mock election in 2007 that had over 120 young people attend to learn about democracy, good governance, accountability, corruption, leadership traits and limited preferential voting. In 2008, it held a Youth Democracy Camp, which brought together 50 secondary students and out-of-school young people for 10 days, during which they learned how to promote democracy in their communities.⁵ Yu Tok Radio, started in February 2006, has a daily radio program led by a group of local young people about the challenges they face. Its goal is information distribution throughout communities in order to create better lifestyles for young people.⁶ It is a youth community radio that “aims to motivate young people to speak their mind and to start thinking positively about changes and improvements in their community.” Yu Tok Radio was created by the World Bank’s Youth Outreach Program, but it is now organized and run by a group of young people who wish to make a difference in the lives of other young people in their community. Yu Tok Radio includes 12 volunteers who are educated and unemployed youth, as well as formerly incarcerated young people.⁷

⁵Ibid.
Policy Overview
The National Youth Policy of Papua New Guinea was first created in 1997, and its primary goal is to fully involve young men and women in the social, spiritual, economic, political and cultural development of the country through active participation in family and community life. It states that “while there is no single definition of young men and women that would be appropriate in the Papua New Guinea context, the policy is directed to young people in the age range of 12 to 35 years.”

Its implementation plan includes the facilitation of training, youth enterprise, communication and social services, as well as the development of administration for young people. Administration for young people takes the form of the National Youth Commission, created in 1999, which facilitates representation of youth by youth at all levels of the Papua New Guinea government.

In 2007, the Prime Minister Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare officially endorsed the recent 2007-2017 National Youth Policy that addresses issues concerning unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and delinquency, HIV/AIDS exposure, teen pregnancies and bullying. Key components will seek to improve quality of life for young people, promote youth participation in order to build stronger communities, support research of youth-related issues and to promote safety and peace in communities. These goals are intended to span from 2007 to 2017 and the implementation will be overseen by a team established by the Ministerial Committee on Administration and Social Sector.

Rationale/Background
In general, the main challenges that young people in Papua New Guinea face are crime, poverty, unemployment, lack of basic education and health concerns. Additionally, young people have a lack of access to information about effective outlets for civic participation. As previously mentioned, the community-based Yu Tok Radio aims to bridge this gap, with reports that focus on citizenship, education, employment, law and order, health, music, sports and politics. Other civil society and government initiatives also seek to give young people a voice in their communities and contribute to development through civic participation.

Going Forward
Papua New Guinea already has in place a National Youth Policy that includes a focus on the importance of civic engagement among young people. Additionally, the country’s government provides plans for ongoing updates of this policy to ensure its relevancy for today’s young people. The Minister for Community Development said that the ongoing updates of the policy have provided a clear sense of direction for the young people of Papua New Guinea, as well as for government leaders and other stakeholders, and has a positive outlook on the new development period.

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11 PNG Yu Tok Radio Report
The Philippines

An archipelago east of Vietnam in Southeast Asia, the Philippines has an estimated population of 90 million people, with approximately 36.7 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$1,890.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
The Philippines has been democratic since the end of the Marcos regime in 1986 and civic engagement is prominent on multiple institutional levels.² There are numerous youth civic participation programs in the Philippines and below are just some examples the authors identified.

In February 2010, the Ayala Young Leaders Congress (AYLC) brought together 81 university students from throughout the Philippines for its 12th Congress. The Congress engages student leaders from all over the country in a 3½ day workshop to be a means for change in the Philippines. The Congress targets young people between the ages of 18-25, enrolled in the top universities and demonstrate a strong track record of service to their school and community. According to AYLC program director, the goal of the Congress is “to highlight the tremendous impact that each of these young Filipinos can make, and more importantly, the change we can all make by working together.”³

The Palawan Conservation Corps (PCC) focuses on environmental consciousness and community development and was started in 1999. The 10-month residential program targets young people between the ages of 18-24. Its main goal is to empower out-of-school rural young people to develop conservation skills, a strong work ethic and leadership qualities while serving as volunteers in community development efforts. Young people participate in programs focused on organic agriculture and farming, forestry management and entrepreneurship skills development.⁴

In addition, various university programs engage students in civic participation opportunities. Notre Dame of Marbel University established the Champagnat Community College in 1995 to coordinate civic participation activities and these activities are part of the university curriculum and a requirement for graduation. Its programs aim to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life of Filipinos. Through the university’s programs students participate in extra-curricular service projects, institutional civic participation programs, service-learning courses and community-based learning activities. Over 50% of the student population participates in some form of civic participation activity.⁵

Finally, various international organizations are also supporting youth civic participation in the Philippines. The Adolescent Friendly Reproductive Health Services is a program started by Save the Children which has been operating in the Philippines for 29 years. The program provides civic participation opportunities targeting public health and community development. Through the program young people can serve as peer educators focusing on sexual and reproductive health, health and nutrition advocates, and/or in awareness raising campaigns such as street plays.⁶ The program works with young people in three age categories – 3-5 years old, 6-12 years old and 13-18 years old.

Policy Overview

The Philippines National Youth Commission (NYC) oversees youth affairs in the country. It was established in 1995 by the Youth in Nation-Building Act. This act called for a National Comprehensive and Coordinated Program on Youth Development and the monitoring of youth programs across all government agencies for their “specific role in involving and enabling youth as able partners toward national development.” The NYC implements various programs to advocate for youth affairs, register and facilitate the creation of youth organizations, and monitor youth programs in the country. One NYC program is the National Youth Parliament (NYP) which meets for three days every two years. Established in 1996, the NYP brings together youth leaders to discuss youth development issues and guide the government’s policy formation and program development.

Additionally, the NYC implements the Integrated Sangguniang Kabataan Organizational Leadership and Reorientation Program (ISKOLAR) which consists of a two-step training program for Sangguniang Kabataan officials. Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) is a youth government mechanism. Young people between 15-18 years old can be voted into the local governing SK and are given full powers and authority as any other member of the council. The SK enables young people to gain leadership skills by serving as leaders in their communities. There is also a SK-Youth Council, which works to establish community projects and fundraisers, as well as local and national collaboration. The SK-Youth Council has been operational since 1991 and targets those between the ages of 15-21.

Finally, another government initiative engaging young people in the Philippines is the National Service Training Program which is made up of three components: Civic Welfare Training Service (CWTS), Literacy Training Service (LTS) and Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). The CWTS focuses on activities that have social impact and contribute to education, health, environment, safety and other sectors. This component stresses the importance of youth involvement in activities that benefit communities. The similar LTS focuses on teaching literacy to children in and out of school and strengthening the education sector. It was created in 2001 and university students are required to complete at least one component before graduation. Each component lasts for two semesters or one summer program.

Rationale/Background

Some of the main challenges facing young people in the Philippines include unemployment, crime and lack of participation in governance. Many young people state lack of time due to school and work obligations as a barrier to participation. Additionally, in some parts of the country females are less likely to participate than males and family traditions can resist young people’s efforts at leadership and civic participation. As such, various civic participation programs by civil society and government are striving to give young people a leadership role in their communities.

Going Forward

Various civil society, university and government programs are supporting youth civic participation in the Philippines. In the future the NYC hopes to bring reforms to the Sangguniang Kabataan so that it can be a “training ground for young government leaders” and hopes to move forward by promoting the power of young people. The NYC aims to broaden youth participation and offer more employment and training opportunities for young people in the Philippines.

Singapore

A small city-state in Southeast Asia, Singapore’s population in 2008 was estimated at 4.6 million people, with approximately 1 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita in 2008 was US$34,760.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview

The primary support for youth civic participation in Singapore is through the government’s National Youth Council. However, there are also some community-based organizations supporting youth civic participation such as the Halogen Foundation and the People’s Association Youth Movement.

The Halogen Foundation focuses on leadership education and hosts camps to focus on youth leadership development.2 Events are catered toward both students and teachers, and within the foundation there are summits and delegations that convene to provide new insights to youth leadership development. Examples include the National Young Leaders Days, One Degree Asia, the Annual Teachers Summit and the Leader to Leaders Series. Each brings different country representatives or delegates together in Singapore in order to share and learn from each other about new innovations in leadership. Funding comes from attendance fees, leadership development program fees, private donors, corporate sponsors and governmental agencies.3

The People’s Association Youth Movement (PAYM) is a 30-week Service Learning Program that was created in 1971, and targets young people between the ages of 12-35. PAYM has more than 160,000 youth members and is one of the largest youth organizations in Singapore. The Service Learning program consist of two parts: Training & Development, in which students participate in training modules focusing on character development, emergency preparedness, community engagement and outdoor adventure and sport; and Community Engagement through Projects & Activities, in which students put their training to practice by organizing activities in their schools and communities. For example, during 2006-2008 for the President’s Challenge, participants carried out a variety of service projects such as beach and park clean ups and working with the elderly. PAYM also partners with other organizations to promote civic engagement, such as People’s Association (PA), Outward Bound Singapore (OBS), National Community Leadership Institute (NACLI) and the National Youth Council (NYC).4 The Peoples Association (PA), founded in July 1960, coordinates a series of programs, clubs, organizations and councils with the common goal of promoting racial harmony and social cohesion. The National Youth Council is a division of PA created in 1989 as a national coordinating body for youth affairs in Singapore.

The National Community Leadership Institute (NACLI) was founded in 2000 after a reorganization of the National Community Leadership Training Institute. NACLI aims to “develop, align, and inspire leaders in building and bridging communities.”5 It offers programs geared toward various ages, with one particularly focused on leadership programs for young students, to help develop their leadership skills, team building skills and confidence.6

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3 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
Policy Overview
Singapore's primary body implementing youth engagement programs and overseeing youth-related issues is the National Youth Council. "Since 1989 Singapore has had a National Youth Council as the central coordinating body for youth affairs. The mission of this youth council is to 'create opportunities for youth to maximize their potential and contribution to society.'" In 2004, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong, called on young Singaporeans to become engaged in their communities. This sparked a series of programs implemented by the NYC such as the Young ChangeMakers (YCM) program, established in 2005, which provides young people ages 13-35 with funding to support a one-off project benefitting his or her community. Interested young people submit a proposal and project idea, and a panel of young people evaluates the applications.

Additionally, the NYC’s Youth Expedition Project (YEP), established in 2000, provides the resources and support necessary to build sustainable partnerships and youth-led community development initiatives. Its programs last for up to one year and support young people who want to take on service projects within their communities. There are also possibilities to engage others overseas in India and China. Finally, the National Youth Forum was established in 2004 as an opportunity for young Singaporeans to better understand and be involved in the process of making policy.

There is also a mandatory community involvement requirement at schools across all levels, and students must have earned a certificate of completion in order to be eligible for entrance to various universities. Implemented by the Ministry of Education, this program is called the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) through which students must serve at least six hours per year. While the program is overseen by the National Youth Council, schools are given the autonomy to select appropriate activities for its students depending on age and level of schooling. Schools can “adopt” community projects and facilities such as parks or may choose a section of a particular park. It is noted that in order for the program to be successful, help is needed by parents and the community to ensure that the skills and values learned during school are reinforced at home.

Rationale/Background
In Singapore the percentage of young women that engage in civic participation programs is significantly higher than young men. Additionally, many claim a lack of “time, money, interest, and information about community needs and volunteer opportunities,” as the main reasons young people do not participate. In an article about the impacts of social status on adolescents in Singapore, major problems reported by 220 high school-age young people were keeping up with schoolwork and worrying about the future. Significantly larger numbers of lower-class young people reported major problems as being: arguing with their parents, lack of sex education, lack of self esteem, worrying about suitable employment, worrying about the future, difficulty accessing recreation facilities and needing help with homework. As a result, several community-based and government initiatives are seeking to engage young people in their communities through service to address some of these challenges. However, in regards to the CIP, many feel that young people should not be forced into volunteering for their communities, and that it will not inspire them to participate on their own.

Going Forward
The Singapore government, with the implementation and continued support of the National Youth Council, has several active programs reaching its young people. With the encouragement of its Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, young Singaporeans have the access and motivation necessary to become civically engaged citizens. While government initiatives continue to be implemented throughout the country, civil society organizations are also reaching a broad spectrum of young people to contribute to youth and community development.

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11 Innovations Young People’s Civic Engagement in East Asia and the Pacific, P 50.
Solomon Islands

Located east of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands has an estimated population of 511,000 people with approximately 235,000 people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$1,180.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
In the Solomon Islands, young people make up the largest section of the population, yet there remain only a small number of programs dedicated to harnessing their energy through youth civic engagement. The programs that exist focus on incorporating marginalized young people into the community by raising issue awareness, encouraging political participation and providing life skills training.

For example, the Solomon Islands Red Cross (SIRC), an organization with 21 paid employees across five locations, implements programs targeting health awareness, disaster recovery and climate change. The organization recognizes that the “growing population of young, urban people with time on their hands can be an opportunity; by engaging them in its programs and activities they can address some of these issues and improve the lives of Solomon Islanders.”2 The SIRC challenges young people to be program leaders to help them take on responsibility and make their voices heard. One major SIRC program is the Climate Change Program, started in 2007, which trains young people about the concepts behind climate change. These trainees become peer educators and teach outreach programs in schools and around the community. Program volunteers organize climate-focused events and use media to raise awareness, such as the Solomon Islands Youth and Climate Change Forum held in November 2008.3

Save the Children Australia (SCA) established and implemented the Youth Outreach Project (YOP) in the Solomon Islands in 1998 with the goals of promoting sustainable development and youth civic participation. The YOP supports active youth participation and social development, as well as the development of life skills and conflict resolution for marginalized young people. The program promotes healthy lifestyles for skills building, peer education and sport. Its peer education model supports the engagement of volunteers at several provincial levels with a goal of improving young people’s life skills thus leading to broader engagement in community decision making.

The program focuses on 70 communities (approximately 20,000 people) which represents about 30% of the youth population. The target age group is 14-29 years old, with a main focus on those who have been pushed out of the educational system in the Solomon Islands. Participants join the program for one year, with the opportunity to remain in the program for an extra 2-4 years if desired. Overall, the program trains 420 young peer educators to reach out to an estimated 6,000 young people and community members. Using data collected since 1998, an evaluation found that the activities led by the YOP are successful and lead to positive community progress in regards to raising the levels of youth participation. Although the program has reached a limited scope due to insufficient funding and long term sustainability concerns remain due to lowered interest levels.4 Funding comes from current donors and international partners, as well as program costs.5 SCA has been working in the Solomon Islands for over 20 years, and works alongside multiple

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3 Ibid, P 3.

4 Ibid.

government and international agencies such as the National Youth Congress (NYC), Youth Development Division of Ministry of Home Affairs and UNICEF to promote youth participation.

Finally, in March 2009, the Minister for Women, Youth and Children Affairs discussed the importance of developing a clear relationship between the Regional Youth Caucus (RYC) and the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) so that youth participation can be developed and supported with the proper resources. The Regional Youth Caucus is held every three years, and brings together young people and senior officials from the eight Commonwealth Asia countries. The Commonwealth Youth Programme, established in 1973 by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, is an international development agency that aims to work with young people aged 15-29 to develop skills to create a strong sense of self within young people and their communities. CYP also works with other local, regional and international agencies to promote youth civic participation.

Policy Overview
Youth affairs policy in the Solomon Islands is primarily overseen by the Ministry for Women, Youth and Children. Efforts are underway in the Solomon Islands to implement a National Youth Policy. In 2000, the Cabinet endorsed a National Youth Policy, but in 2009, the Ministry undertook efforts to revise the Policy and draft a Plan of Action for implementing the policy. In March 2009, a national youth conference was organized in Honiara to design and review the policy and provide young people with an opportunity to participate in that effort. However, the authors were unable to obtain a copy of the revised draft National Youth Policy or Plan of Action.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) also hosted a workshop in June 2009 to tackle challenges with revising and implementing a national youth policy. The conference was organized by the CYP and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community’s Human Development Program in collaboration with UNICEF and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP). This conference offered training to national youth officers teaching them how to coordinate with international institutions and how to convert a planned policy into actual implementation. UNICEF’s Policy, Advocacy, Planning and Evaluation program assisted with finalizing the Youth Policy and National Plan of Action to be submitted to the Cabinet. The ratification for this renewed National Youth Policy is in progress, awaiting approval by both the Cabinet and Parliament before implementation can occur.

Finally, in 1980 the Solomon Islands National Youth Council (SINYC) was established by Parliament to “encourage young people to participate more fully in the country’s development.” The SINYC coordinates a national youth stakeholders committee, advocates for youth affairs and develops provincial youth policies, action plans and councils. However it is limited by a lack of financial resources and staff to implement its programs.

Rationale/Background
The RYC and CYP seek to promote a higher level of youth engagement, and recognize that additional support and development are needed to promote this goal. One challenge that young people encounter is that adult Solomon Islanders generally perceive youth participation as limited to music and sports. Additionally, the local media often portrays the Island’s young people, including activists, as troublemakers. For these reasons, many adults and government workers discount the ability of young people to contribute to decision-making and development. The younger generation feels marginalized by these attitudes as they are denied the opportunity to actively participate both in politics and in the community. Young adults also face problems stemming from an underdeveloped education system combined with a very high unemployment rate. They therefore find economic opportunity scarce upon looking to enter the workforce, leaving them disempowered and reliant upon family support. Expanding opportunities for active

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participation can afford young people the chance to make meaningful contributions to society, while at the same time shifting adult perceptions of them.

**Going Forward**
Currently, the draft youth policy is awaiting approval by the Cabinet and Parliament. Until then, youth civic participation in the Solomon Islands is limited with few opportunities available through civil society, international organizations and provincial councils. These efforts, such as the Youth Outreach Project, are striving to give young people a voice in their communities and build life skills while contributing to community needs through civic participation.
South Korea

Located on the southern half of the Korean peninsula in East Asia, South Korea has an estimated population of 48 million people, with people under 14 years old making up 17% of the population.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
The South Korean government carries out various policies supporting youth development and participation, while some civil society and higher education initiatives promote youth civic participation at the community level.

For example, at Seoul National University, the Global Inter-Culturing & Volunteering Club (GIV) provides opportunities for students to participate in short-term international service projects. Through this program, in May 2010 students took part in building a school library in Thailand as part of the Global Peacemaker Camp in May 2010. Over two weeks students completed a library for a school village in the Mae Chaem district in Chiang Mai Northern Thailand, as well as another in Nong Khai in Northeast Thailand. The underlying concept is that these projects help to bring peace to a region and to help alleviate social issues.2

The initiative was carried out with Service for Peace Thailand and the Dream Catcher Library Project.

Additionally, the Citizens’ Alliance for Consumer Protection of Korea (CACPK) is an initiative designed to help young Koreans be agents of change in relation to changing consumption patterns. This initiative was started by the Government of the Republic of Korea in 2003. Young people are brought together though Youth Camps that help them critically look at their consumption habits and current lifestyles. From there, young people can return to their communities as agents for change through follow up activities that include: the formation of the Green Youth Consumer Alliance (GYCA), management committees, a small grants program for organizations to conduct sustainable consumption projects, and a national-level YouthXchange website—modeled after UNEP-UNESCO’s YouthXchange.3

Policy Overview
Youth affairs and policies in South Korea are overseen by the National Youth Commission. Established in 2005, the National Youth Commission is directly attached to the Office of the Prime Minister. It also unites the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Youth Protection Commission, which were all previously their own faculties. The National Youth Commission brings youth fostering and youth protection together, and seeks to develop the basic plans of youth policies, activate youth participation, promote training, counseling and guidance, provide support and management for youth welfare, investigate and regulate harmful media sources, protect young people from sexual crimes, support victim rehabilitation and publicize youth issues.

The National Youth Commission developed a five-year youth development plan for 2008-2012, to be implemented both nationally and by local governments. Policy goals include: a safety net for those in crisis, ensuring various opportunities for young people, the promotion of youth participation and the overall improvement of a young person’s environment. The policy provides for implementing shelters for youth in crisis, after-school activities, extending youth rights in regards to youth participation and the creation of a healthy media environment for young people, among others.

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Other laws specifically relating to youth civic participation include the Youth Basic Law and the Youth Activity Promotion Law. The Youth Basic Law has been in effect since 1993 and regulates youth policies and basic functions of youth development. Under this law, youth leaders are trained, facilities are created, and youth-led programs are developed and executed. The Youth Activity Promotion Law was enacted in 2004, and created a policy for international youth exchange activities, and the management of youth encounter centers as well as encouraging volunteering and other cultural activities. Limited information is available regarding the details of these laws.

Rationale/Background
Young South Koreans are civically engaged throughout various parts of the nation, specifically in rural areas lacking in educational and community facilities. Rural areas of South Korea, unlike large cities such as Seoul, still face a lack of access to running water and sewage disposal. As a result, environmental pollution and poor sanitation still pose serious threats to residents in these areas. Additionally, new and less conventional threats, but, according to the South Korean government, still very important public health issues have arisen such as internet addiction. The average South Korean high school student spends over 23 hours each week playing video games. In response to these issues, and support from the government, organizations are creating programs to assist and engage these young people in their communities.

Going Forward
The government continues to support youth civic participation and in February 2010, President Lee Myung-bak called for more civic participation, specifically by attending a ceremony that launched an all-women government monitoring group in the Gyeonggi Province. The group consists of housewives, teachers, self-employed entrepreneurs and other women volunteers who will study transportation, education, employment, taxes and the promotion of civic participation. The President intends to hold regular workshops and have rewards for the group as well. If the South Korean government is to continue to foster civic engagement among its young population it could benefit by staying relevant and reacting to new and changing issues facing its young people.

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Taiwan

Taiwan has an estimated population of 23 million people, with approximately 3.2 million people between 15 and 24 years old.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
In Taiwan, there are some civil society organizations working with young people, but much of the support for civic participation comes from the Taiwanese government.

For example, the Taiwan Youth Citizen’s Forum is “a platform created by youth and for youth with a vision of strengthening youth participation in public affairs and working to promote the development of democratization in Taiwan,” by offering networking opportunities among its members. It focuses on youth social and political involvement, international participation, community development and democratization. It targets all young people to participate in its programs, which seek to network all Taiwanese youth together.²

Policy Overview
The Taiwanese National Youth Commission (NYC) was created in 1966 to serve as an organizing body for young people within Taiwan. There are four sections of the NYC’s programming: youth entrepreneurial guidance and entrepreneurial belief education, youth career guidance and employment service, youth public issue engagement and deliberative democracy, and responsibility for arranging youth volunteering and studying through travel. Through its public issue engagement mandate, NYC hosts regional policy forums throughout the country and implements a Youth Teamwork Policy Research and Development Competition. For the competition young people 18-35 years old develop creative policy ideas and action projects addressing issues in their communities. Competition winners receive a NT$50,000 prize and are invited to a “one day as head of the department” experience. Additionally, through its youth volunteering mandate, NYC calls for young people to volunteer at home and abroad and manages activities for Global Youth Service Day. NYC states that “it is hoped that young people would experience volunteers’ spirit from service action and further profoundly realize the value of voluntary service.”³ NYC has worked on the creation of numerous public policies for young people within Taiwan, such as a start-up loan for young entrepreneurs, however the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive national youth policy for the country.

In November 2009, the Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented service-learning programs in higher education institutions in order to promote community service among those who attend universities. College students create service-learning projects aimed toward working with students in elementary and junior high schools. For instance, university students worked with elementary school children on their communication skills or held health classes with younger students. It is estimated that 80,584 university students joined the program and in turn had an influence on 287,897 young people during the 2009 summer vacation.⁴ The MOE uses school participation in the program as a measurement to evaluate school performance.

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IN BRIEF

Host/Implementing Institution
- Government
- Higher education institutions
- Civil society organizations

Focus Area
- Environment
- Education
- Community development
- Socialization

Target Youth Population
- University students
- School-based
- Primary and Secondary school students

Policy Framework
- National Youth Commission
- Ministry of Education
- University service-learning program
Rationale/Background\(^5\)
According to the NYC, Taiwanese young people are a “highly educated generation with high ideals, but they face a highly competitive playing field; they are highly interested in taking part in public affairs, but lack opportunities and ways to participate; they are a generation that is highly interested in internationalization; a generation highly aware of leisure; a generation that faces new health safety problems; and a generation that is growing up in an age of sexual equality.” As such, the NYC was originally established “in order to coordinate with national economic development as well as to cultivate young people’s professional skills,” because there is a belief that it is the government’s responsibility to help young people.

Going Forward
Taiwan continues to mobilize its young people in the hopes that they can bring change on both national and international levels.\(^6\) The NYC is active in implementing programs to support youth civic participation. Additionally, several civil society initiatives in Taiwan are engaging young people in development and equipping them to be active citizens.

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\(^6\)Ibid.
Thailand

Located in Southeast Asia, Thailand has an estimated population of 67 million people, with approximately 18 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$2,840.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There are a few civil society and international organizations in Thailand that currently work with young people to promote community engagement and youth participation, including the National Council for Child and Youth Development and Global Xchange. There are also programs that have previously been implemented in the country, such as Ashoka, that promoted youth involvement in communities, but are now inactive.²

The National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCYD), which is implemented in partnership with the International Youth Foundation, was created in 1985. NCYD includes 65 children and youth organizations throughout Thailand and is recognized as the national coordinating body for child and youth development efforts. The program targets young people between the ages of 5-20, especially rural young people and street-based children, and seeks to build program effectiveness within new and existing youth initiatives. The Council also deals with information exchange and availability, along with learning promotion. Main focuses include enhancing youth leadership as well as building organizational capacity and distributing information on the needs of young Thais.³

Global Xchange has an initiative in Thailand that connects the country with UK volunteers. It was established in 2005, and targets those between the ages of 18-25. Teams of volunteers usually consist of 18 people from both Thailand and the UK, and the program’s duration is generally 3-6 months. Volunteers live overseas with exchange families, and work approximately 30 hours a week on community projects.

Ashoka had an initiative in Thailand for three years, and mainly focused on social entrepreneurship for young people. Ashoka Fellows create their own projects to address issues within their communities, while acting as role models for others. The target population was between the ages of 20-24 and there were high percentages of male and rural participants in the program. The Social Entrepreneurial program through Ashoka is a three-year project that involved youth participation on multiple workshops, camps and meetings. Funding came from Ashoka headquarters and cooperate offices. This program’s duration was from May 2004-Aug 2007.

Policy Overview
Thailand has various youth policies and youth-focused agencies, however limited recent information is available about these. Some include the National Youth Policy, Child and Youth Development Plan, National Youth Bureau under the Office of the Prime Minister, and National Youth Commission. Additionally, Thailand’s National Youth Policy stipulates that a National Youth Council must be set up in every province.⁴ The ⁵th National Youth Policy was approved in 2000, and incorporated the first long-term development plan that was issued from 1982-2001. This plan originally contained ideas specified in the 1979 National Youth Policy, and addresses issues concerning health and hygiene, values and personality development, student activities, education, culturally different youth and administrative structures.⁵

⁵Youth In Thailand.
More specifically, the National Youth Commission is in charge of policy changes and recommendations that involve youth promotion and development, to consider and evaluate implementation measures of projects and programs concerned with the National Youth Policy and to report about the situation of young people. The National Youth Bureau is in charge of implementing the National Youth Commission’s recommendations and measures, and acts as the main coordinating body for youth issues. It is also involved with compiling studies and research on youth, preventing and addressing youth problems, supporting both government and non-government youth activities, developing youth projects, and providing youth activity support.

One key issue that the Thai government had to focus on was the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country, which began in the 1980s. Beginning in the early 1990s, the government began making sure prevention methods were readily available in schools, in order to end the pandemic among younger generations. The Thai government formed partnerships with NGOs, the business community, and religious and community leaders in a coordinated effort to combat the issue of HIV/AIDS infection. In November of 2005, Thailand was one of the three countries chosen to participate in a UN project in which young people were called upon to contribute to the UN framework, based on their country’s experiences with HIV/AIDS. The project resulted in several recommendations on the necessary steps to combating HIV/AIDS which included incorporating youth call centers, youth-friendly clinics, sex education in schools, peer education, condom promotion, prevention of secondary infections, promoting the role of parents, strengthening youth capacity and participation, and finally raising public awareness for the issue.

Rationale/Background
There are numerous challenges for young people in Thailand, including having access to social services in rural areas, gender inequalities and risk of HIV/AIDS. Community-based and National Youth Policy efforts have been made to address these issues through local level initiatives encouraging youth participation in partnership with the National Youth Commission. However, much more could be done to engage young people in addressing these critical needs.

Going Forward
In order to better engage its young population, Thailand’s policy, plans and programmes require better support and cooperation among both public and private institutions. The establishment of a more comprehensive and accessible network of NGOs and public institutions could assist in supporting cooperation. Finally, the Government of Thailand could improve upon its recognition and financial support of CSOs, allowing them to better engage young people and contribute to communities throughout Thailand.

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8 Youth In Thailand.
Timor-Leste

Located on the eastern half of the Indonesian island of Timor, Timor-Leste has an estimated population of 1 million people with approximately 572,000 people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$2,460.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
In late April 2006, violence erupted in the country that originally stemmed from the discharge of almost 600 soldiers from the FALINTIL-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste (F-FDTL). Many argue that the disagreements and arguments that resulted from this, combined with institutional weaknesses, led to the violence that broke in the country. Because of this, all infrastructure was severely shaken up, and only recently has Timor-Leste begun to rebuild the youth sector of government.2

All of the organizations that involve youth engagement that the authors could identify are government or UN-based. Generally, there is some sort of collaboration between the two, and the authors were unable to identify any prominent community-based programs currently operating in Timor-Leste. There are some community-based resource centers for young people that are supported by Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee and the Christian Children's Fund.3

Policy Overview
In 2007, a National Youth Policy was approved in Timor-Leste by the Council of Ministers, with the intention of accelerating youth participation and improving the overall well-being of Timorese young people. It is administered by the National Youth Council (CNJTL). In general, Timor-Leste's National Youth Policy aims to “apply a cross-sector approach, encouraging ministries to work together to plan youth community service programs in areas such as agriculture, health, education and industry.”4

In January 2010, a Timor-Leste Youth Parliament was established by UNICEF and the Secretary of State of Youth and Sports. The Youth Parliament is a first in the history of Timor-Leste, with the main goal of promoting civic participation among young people in the country by providing a forum for them to raise their voices and become a part of nation-building, as well as serve as a unique “school” for future leaders.5

Rationale/Background
There is a great amount of frustration on the part of Timor-Leste young people, due to lack of education or employment resources, with approximately 40% of the population between the ages of 15-29. The unemployment rate is 24% for those between the ages of 15-19 and only 22% of young people between the ages of 15-24 have completed any sort of schooling.6 Because of this, there is a high risk of gang violence among young people. The hopes are that the implementation of a National Youth Policy that addresses youth violence will circumvent this issue, by “regulating and registering specific groups and their leadership, mapping gang territories, monitoring linkages between politicians and gang leaders, and

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4 Ibid, P 52.
establishing gang liaison officers in key villages.” Additionally, efforts from the government and international organizations to expand civic participation opportunities in Timor-Leste can help address many of these opportunities, giving young people a stake in their communities and skills for school and career success.

**Going Forward**
The National Youth Policy that was implemented in 2007 continues to be executed, with the government and international organizations working to promote youth civic participation. These programs can engage young people in meeting critical needs and addressing issues of unemployment, low education and violence. The government should continue to invest in these programs and create more youth civic participation opportunities.

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An archipelago in the South Pacific Ocean, Tonga has an estimated population of 104,000 people with approximately 45,000 people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$2,560.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
In Tonga, youth civic participation programs are run through various civil society organizations (CSOs). The government promotes the efforts of CSOs by partnering with the Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT). CSFT, established in 2001, wants to “ensure that community development is recognised and supported as a powerful way of tackling inequality and achieving social justice.”2 Following are examples of community-based youth organizations that are members of CSFT. The Salvation Army – New Zealand, Fiji & Tonga Territory implements many programs for young people in Tonga. These programs aim to help participants “realise their potential and face the challenges of the world with confidence” by providing social and leadership development opportunities. Programs are for youth of all ages and include early childhood education centers, preschool groups and youth programs (for young adults).3 On The Spot Arts Initiative is a youth-led non-profit founded in 2006 that uses arts to create a sense of social responsibility and encourage local action.4 As of 2008, its Youth Empowering Youth Action (YEYA) initiative had trained 10 young people in social media and online literacy, and young people went on to create blogs and social networking groups, as well as short films for change.5

In addition, the Tonga National Youth Congress was founded in 1991, and it coordinates youth activities for member village groups. The Congress prints Voice of the Future magazine, which encourages young people to get involved by voicing their opinions about youth issues.6 It also oversees the Tonga National Volunteer Service (TNVS). In 2005, service members were working on each of the Tongan islands, running youth centers from remote locations. Limited information is available about specific programs from TNVS.7 Though it is not a government organization, the Tonga National Youth Congress also works with the new government ministry in developing youth policy.8

Policy Overview9
The Government of Tonga did not have a ministry devoted solely to youth issues until the creation of the Ministry of Training, Employment, Youth and Sports in 2006. Before it was created, a policy framework for youth issues was drafted, starting in 2004, in partnership between the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Tonga National Youth Congress. The government had limited programming focused on young people prior to the new Ministry’s operations in 2007. The Ministry adopted a final draft of the Tonga National Youth Strategy in late 2007. The most widely covered of

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9 Ibid.
the five broad components of the strategy is community service. Specific areas of interests for service include environment, culture and life skills. Because it is so new, limited information was available regarding specific programs, but the Ministry intends to strengthen all aspects of this strategy by 2012.

**Rationale/Background**

Some of the challenges facing young people in Tonga involve the lack of educational opportunities and resources, lack of access to information and communication technology, poor economic conditions, lack of employment policies and training, lack of work experience and limited support systems. The TNYC was established to overcome these obstacles by engaging young people in civic participation opportunities to build their skills and contribute to community development. In addition, with the creation of the Ministry of Training, Employment, Youth and Sports, and the Tonga National Youth Strategy, “the government is now expecting a better focus on youth,” specifically as they can address these challenges.

**Going Forward**

CSO programs for youth civic participation are well-established in Tonga, and the government is working to create effective programs under its new youth strategy. Additionally, the government has created a Youth Stakeholders Forum for discussion of programs, although limited information is available about its activities. Through continued collaboration and partnership, the Government of Tonga will hopefully be able to implement specific youth civic participation programs and address the challenges facing young people in the country.

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11 Fusimalohi.  
12 Ibid.
Vietnam

Vietnam is an Indochinese country in Southeast Asia, bordering the China Sea. The total population is 88.5 million people with nearly 29 million people under age 18.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
A varied mix of governmental and civil society programs is providing opportunities for youth civic participation in Vietnam, usually in the form of umbrella organizations which implement a number of programs. One of the main organizations is Volunteers for Peace Vietnam (VPV), a non-profit founded in 2005, which promotes volunteer service as a means of non-formal education. Volunteers for Peace began in 2005 and has about 300 young people involved annually. Its goal is to encourage young people to participate actively in intercultural environments by hosting international camps, welcoming international volunteers and sending Vietnamese volunteers to other countries.2
Its Vietnamese Volunteer Club program, started in 2006 and made up of 45% of young people aged 15 to 19, supports young people in running their own programs, which last for about 6 months.3 Such programs include the INDIGO Project for intercultural learning and the Helmet Campaign for life safety promotion.4

A second example is the Vietnam Youth Federation, started in 1956, which coordinates three main organizations among its 3.6 million members nationwide.5 The National Council of Young Entrepreneurs hosts meetings and exchanges and trains entrepreneurs under the age of 40, enabling them to participate in social activity.6 The Vietnam Association of Students links university students with the Communist Party of Vietnam and the government to induce their participation in politics and encourage coordination with the community.7 Finally, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union provides education to young people aged 15 to 30, hoping to advance culture and national identity.8 This union is also linked, separately from the other members of the Youth Federation, with the youth government policy of Vietnam (below).

Policy Overview
The ministry charged with youth-related policy in Vietnam is the National Committee on Youth of Vietnam, which shapes and monitors youth-related policies and their implementation and executes cross-sector youth programs. Its Law on Youth of Vietnam, first drafted in 1981, addresses people aged 15 to 35 and includes a law recognizing and supporting youth volunteering.9 Limited information is available regarding the details of this policy.

In 2008, the Committee began its “Green Summer” Youth Volunteer Program, which mobilizes young people to participate in service in areas such as mountainous and remote regions. It involves about 500,000 young people per year for one month each.10 Students participate in activities such as anti-illiteracy work, improving the environment and

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3 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
10 Don.
building ‘gratitude’ houses for poor and disadvantaged residents.\(^{11}\) The Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union (mentioned above) is in charge of implementing this program. The Committee is also charged with the presentation of a youth action plan, including plans on youth civic participation, to the National Assembly every five years, the next of which is expected in 2012.\(^{12}\)

**Rationale/Background**

Because many of the civic engagement programs for young people in Vietnam are backed by the state and the Communist Party, they focus mainly on the emphasis of civic duties and the delivery of social programs. In order to back up the mission of the Party, programs focus on nationalism and society over sensitive local issues.\(^{13}\) The Vietnam Youth Federation website cites young people as the key in the development of economy and culture and the building up of socialism, as well as the source to turn to “wherever there is need.”\(^{14}\) Due to restrictions set on the development of external and non-government organizations, many non-state programs have difficulty starting up; however, it is usually programs of this sort that address non-state issues.\(^{15}\)

**Going Forward**

The Government of Vietnam requires a youth action plan to be developed every five years to support youth affairs including civic participation. While some civil society organizations are active, more non-state organizations could benefit by expanding opportunities for young people to address local issues that may be unrelated to state priorities. CSOs like Volunteers for Peace Vietnam have gained a foothold with their internationally-based programs, and they continue to gain momentum.

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13. *Young People’s Civic Engagement in East Asia and the Pacific: A Regional Study Conducted by Innovations in Civic Participation.*
15. *Young People’s Civic Engagement in East Asia and the Pacific: A Regional Study Conducted by Innovations in Civic Participation.*
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Albania

As of 2009, young people between the ages of 15-29 years old in Albania made up 26.7% of the total population, which was estimated to be approximately 3 million people.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Prior to 1992, “volunteer work” was sometimes forced and used as punishment in Albania, according to a report by the United Nations Volunteers. As a result, there remains a large amount of apathy and limited youth action in the country.² The organizations that are active in Albania appear to be primarily internationally-based. However, recently the government has begun to develop more directorates and sections primarily focused on young people, with a few locally-based programs gaining recognition.

One major organization beginning to make an impact is the MJAFT! Movement. Established in 2003, MJAFT! promotes “active citizenship, democracy, the attainability of change, strong communities, equal opportunities, solidarity, volunteerism and the irrefutable power of debate” by encouraging citizen participation on both a local and national level and by rehabilitating the concept of protestation.³ It is Albania’s largest civic engagement movement with branches in 18 cities nation-wide advocating for change on a local level, and has over 8,000 members organizing and participating in MJAFT! events and over 1,000 volunteers who form the backbone of the organization.⁴

Projekte Vullnetare Nderkombetare (International Volunteer Projects, PVN) is a civil society organization that focuses on environmental issues, integration of migrated communities from rural areas, raising awareness about youth issues and working with socially disadvantaged young people. PVN is affiliated with Service Civil International (SCI), a large international volunteer organization, which aims to promote civic engagement in order to create a thriving society. PVN accomplishes its goals by offering a series of workshops and training sessions and the organization of several types of volunteer camps including: environmental/agricultural restoration, social work with people/children with disabilities and a work/study program.⁵

Strengthening Student Participation in Southeast Europe operates one organization in Albania aimed at promoting a student network within Southeast Europe and to increase student participation within universities by advocating for student needs, academic preparation, improved student mobility inside the country, and improved student cultural and entertainment life. In Albania, the organization focuses on increasing the availability of services for students at universities to allow them to build their knowledge and improve student life. There are six departments: Professional Department, Student Concerns Department, Activities Department, Student Housing Department, Public and International Department, Information Department.⁶

Finally, UNICEF works with the Albanian government to develop and implement youth-friendly social policy, advocacy, and research and information distribution. A new program called the Child-Led Environmental Education Initiative (CLEEN) is being developed in order to teach primary school children about sustainability and the environment, as well

² Ibid.
as working with the government to protect young people from abuse and human trafficking. Children will participate in a "teaching-learning environment which promotes active learning" and encourages child-led environmental action. Overall, UNICEF is working to protect and empower young people in Albania by aiming to eliminate youth discrimination.\(^7\) UNDP is also active in Albania, with the main goal of sustaining human development with a particular focus on young people born between the years of 1980-1994, as well as to accomplish Albania’s MDGs by 2015.\(^8\)

**Policy Overview**

Since the collapse of the communist government in 1992, the Albanian governmental structure has gone through a series of changes. In 2005 the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports became the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, and, in 2007, five main General Directorates were established with programs focusing on young people being overseen by the General Directorate for Policies for Art, Culture and Youth. The General Directorate contains three subsections: the Directorate for Arts & Literature with a Section for Literature and a Section for Visual Arts, Music and Performing Arts; the Directorate for Sports, with a Section for Sports for All and a Section for Qualitative Sport; and the Directorate for the Coordination of Youth Policies.\(^9\) The authors were unable to identify a comprehensive national youth policy in Albania or provisions in these agencies that mandates support of civic participation.

Additionally, there is an Albanian Youth Parliament that contains 200 young people between the ages of 14-18 who aim to bridge the gap between the young people of Albania and the country's decision makers.\(^10\) Those on the Albanian Youth Parliament directly participate in debate and development of "civic and social plans of action" in the country.\(^11\)

**Rationale/Background**

There are various challenges facing young people in Albania, including unemployment, mobility issues, lack of updated educational resources, low living standards, corruption, juvenile delinquency and a lack of consistent youth policies or programs. According to a UNV report, “young people often feel excluded from most of the societal and political processes in Albania, even though they make up a large group of the population.”\(^12\) The report goes on to say that even though many in the country understand the benefits of civic engagement, there are still mental ties of volunteerism to the communist regime, thus the older generation does not encourage young people to volunteer or become involved at a local or national level.\(^13\) In order to combat the negative stigma surrounding civic participation among young people in Albania, the UN suggests several methods of mobilization which they feel would elicit positive reactions: peer-to-peer get-togethers in which young people of similar ages see their peers working together, civil society organizations as a source of civic participation possibilities, school activities, and finally political parties and leaders calling for civic engagement.\(^14\) Several organizations in Albania are using these methods to expand youth civic participation.

**Going Forward**

A cohesive national youth policy and programs to address the needs and issues of young people in Albania today could help to better promote civic engagement in the country. According to UNV, 14% of Albanian young people are “dubious about the benefits of volunteerism,” while 15% refuse to participate in volunteer activities. Thus, in order for Albania to move forward, organizations on both the local and national levels must work together to raise awareness for youth civic engagement. In order to create a “culture of citizenship participation”, UNV recommend that civic engagement be included in school curriculum, campaigns be formed to promote the importance and benefits of civic participation, and finally the creation of a national network or committee of volunteer organizations and NGOs to serve as a consulting and advocating body on civic participation issues in the country.\(^15\)

VIP released a report in June 2008, which examined a seminar that was held in Bosnia and Herzegovina about promoting local and international youth volunteerism post-conflict in Europe. The seminar had an estimated 50 participants from 18 countries.

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8 Gjeka.
12 Gjeka, P 24.
different countries, and international organizations such as UNV, the Croatian Council of NGOs, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Soros Foundation. The seminar examined the barriers that prevent civic participation from completely engaging young people who are living in a post-conflict country in the Balkan region like Albania. VIP concluded that in order to have a successful culture of civic engagement, a country must build and support civic participation infrastructure, never allow volunteers to be misused, recognize the economic value of volunteering, introduce the values of civic engagement in schools, make national policies both youth and volunteer friendly and create a dedicated government organized office for NGOs.16

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bordering the Adriatic Sea and Croatia in Southeastern Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina had an estimated 950,330 young people aged 15–30 in 2000. This represents approximately 24% percent of the overall population.1 Bosnia and Herzegovina has an estimated national GDP of $16.5 million.2

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There are multiple community-based organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina that focus on sustainability and the reunification of ethnically and religiously divided groups in the nation. For example, founded in 1996, the Association for Psychosocial Help and Development of Voluntary Work (OSMIJEH) is an organization that reaches about 6,000 young people, and helps reconstruct villages, care for disabled children and organize public events through an organized service program. With the goal of bringing people divided by ethnicity and religion together, OSMIJEH incorporates volunteerism and youth engagement into fostering the bonds of trust within a post-conflict society.3

In addition, the Youth Center was established in 1997 by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and the UN. The organization aims to provide a safe space for young people, and offers multiple educational and artistic activities to empower and engage young people in the community. These activities are also “aimed at promoting a multi-ethnic dialogue within civil society, tolerance, constructive conflict resolution, leadership and the ultimate reunification of the two communities.” The underlying goal is to create the foundation for democracy to flourish and be sustained, which the Youth Center does through community service and educational programs and classes.4

The Peace Building Project is a Youth Center program located in a small town found on the main road between Central Bosnia and Herzegovina that is divided into two ethnic communities. The communities were supposed to converge in 2001, but remain divided, directly affecting all youth institutions. The Peace Project targets refugees, returnees, children with social needs and orphans, between the ages of 5-18 in this town in an effort to remove prejudice and reunite the community. Through educational activities, seminars, civic initiatives and networking with other organizations, the Youth Center hopes it can help young people become “the bearers of essential democratic change, civic awareness, and global action.”5

Finally, an association known as Education Builds Bosnia and Herzegovina was established in 1994 focusing on providing children victims of war with moral and material support. The goals of Education Builds BiH is to provide children with European standards of education, develop an awareness of civic society and improvement of youth involvement, material assistance and scholarships, and to exert an influence on the public through lectures, seminars, workshops, media, publishing, etc.6 Other civil society organizations and associations exist as well, for example, the Peace School and the Peace Education Institute were created because teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina felt a need for a participatory, student-based method of helping children deal with the issues of war.7

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5 Ibid, P 15.
6 “Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”
Policy Overview
The Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport reported in April 2010 that, “the government institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina take actions towards the overall improvement of the life of young people in the country and it is promising that some first steps have been taken to include youth participation in youth policy-making.” A resolution involving young people and including provisions of the National Youth Policy was adopted by the government for the first time in 2002, however the authors were unable to find the specifics of the resolution. In 2004 a Commission for the Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH (CCYI BiH) was formed providing a standing body to address youth-related issues. CCYI consists of 10 youth associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and eight representatives from the state level. From 2006-2009, CCYI worked to establish and adopt “several key strategic documents containing guidelines for the Youth,” which brings the young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina one step closer to an established National Youth Policy in the future.8 An obstacle to the creation of a youth policy is divisions between government bodies and, according to the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport, a lack of implementation of activities adopted at the entity level.9

Rationale/Background
Bosnia and Herzegovina struggles with divisions between ethnic and religious communities which can have a lasting impact on young people. As such, organizations such as OSMIJEH seek to use service as a strategy for bridging societal divides. Some of the challenges in promoting youth civic participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina are discussed in a report released by the European Volunteer Center in 2008. The report examined a seminar in Bosnia and Herzegovina about promoting local and international youth volunteerism in post-conflict Europe. The seminar had an estimated 50 participants from 18 different countries, and international organizations such as UNV, the Croatian Council of NGOs, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Soros Foundation. The seminar examined the barriers that prevent volunteerism from completely engaging young people who are living in a post-conflict country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some of these barriers are prejudice, hostility, lack of information about how to become involved, financial problems, legislative and administrative obstacles, and many countries in South Eastern Europe must combat the negative connotations of volunteerism due to its history in the region.10

Going Forward
The European Volunteer Center’s Seminar in 2008 concluded that in order to change a community and promote peace building, young people will be one of the key factors to bring about this change. Additionally, participants argued that the most success will come from creating projects from the bottom-up, by engaging the local people and “directly addressing the needs of respective communities.” Overall, the seminar recommended the creation of long-term projects that could be sustained, so that young people could continue being engaged in their communities and build important knowledge and skills.11

The CCYI of Bosnia and Herzegovina plans to continue work on developing a National Youth Policy, as well as to “establish goals, priorities and measures with clear guidelines for their implementation.”12 A youth policy and efforts to promote civic engagement are important to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s development and can build on promising youth civic participation efforts in civil society.

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8 “Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”
9 Ibid.
10 Seminar on the Promotion of Local and International Youth Volunteering for Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Europe.
11 Ibid.
12 “Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”
As of 2006, Kosovo had the youngest population in Europe, with over 50% of the population under the age of 25, and 21% of the population between the ages of 15-25.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview

Many of the organizations that promote youth participation in Kosovo are CSOs that implement the government’s Youth Department’s programs and receive funding through the Kosovo Consolidated Budget. An estimated 70.8% of organizations for young people in Kosovo are CSOs, compared to just 25.8% of governmental organizations.2

For example, the Kosovar Youth Council (KYC) emerged in 1999 in order to empower young people in the region during a tumultuous time. With the help of the Albanian Youth Council, the KYC emerged from a group of young people in refugee camps who came together to improve camp conditions, organize sporting and music events, distribute landmine-awareness information and provide psychological counseling. Once many of these young people returned home, they continued their efforts, and continued to act as a voice for young people while the country began its reconstruction phase. Today, KYC continues to operate in several cities, with a main office in Pristina, promoting youth advocacy, development and education. KYC currently has six full time staff members and over 60 volunteers.3

The Youth of Prizren program was established in 1999 by the International Rescue Committee, with the goal of providing a safe environment for learning, vocalizing ideas and youth participation within communities. The program reaches approximately 200 young people each day, who come to the Prizren Youth Center. The Youth Center targets all young people in Kosovo, “regardless of nationality, religion or race.” By hosting regular social events, the Youth Center hopes to enhance youth engagement and discussion through the comfort of a safe and open environment.4

The Post-Pessimists of Prishtina was established in 1995 by two 15-year olds, a Kosovo Serb and a Kosovo Albanian. The organization targets those between the ages of 8-16 years old, to demonstrate youth engagement across ethnic boundaries. The Post-Pessimists of Prishtina’s projects focus on inter-ethnic cooperation and nonviolent communication. For example, in one project to work together to rebuild the Culture and Sports Center in 1999, over 600 young Albanians and Serbians joined together to help out.5 Today the Post-Pessimists of Prishtina has over 1,000 members and 19 active groups.6

The UNDP has implemented the Youth Post-Conflict Participation Project (YPCPP) that was executed by the International Rescue Committee. The UNDP’s target is young people, which generally constitutes anyone between the ages of 15-24, and aims to “mobilize young people to research, prioritize and initiate development sub-projects at the regional level.” The project reaches 5,000 young people directly and 20,000 indirectly. The YPCPP worked with multiple

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CSOs in Kosovo, including the Kosovo Youth Council, the Scouting Movement, Youth of Prizren, Post-Pessimists, youth forums and schools and youth organizations. However, the authors were only able to find limited information about its specific activities.

Policy Overview
In Kosovo, the Youth Department is found within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS), and is responsible for the regulation of youth CSOs, youth networks and youth centers. The Youth Department’s goal is to empower young people and create a “solid foundation for social and individual development.” It aims to do this by creating development opportunities for young people to participate and stimulate their own social lives, as well as providing services for social skill development. However, youth centers lack the funding and support they need in order to properly execute these goals, and require donations and funding from outside sources in order to survive, such as from the World Bank.

The Kosovo Strategy and Development Plan 2007–2013 involved three different groups working to draft the strategy: the Civil Society Network Group, the Macroeconomy Group and the Technical Group. The strategy focuses on challenges that young people face in Kosovo, and how to circumvent them, such as health, culture, human rights and infrastructure just to name a few. However, the authors were unable to find information about how the three groups will carry out this plan. The Kosovo Youth Policy has been drafted as well, which contains a section specific to youth participation in the country, and how to develop and implement a strong capacity for youth civic participation. The policy aims to provide “institutional mechanisms for the participation of youth in decision-making processes, ensure access to information and increase public institutions’ transparency in regards to issues affecting young people, provide support for the youth sector at local levels, increase young peoples’ interaction with youth throughout the region, Europe and beyond, strengthen the capacities of youth networks and NGOs, and stimulate and recognize the volunteer work of youth.”

Additionally, the draft Law on Youth Strengthening and Participation plans to address the basic idea of participation and the importance of youth involvement in government. This law states that the government is responsible for maintaining youth organization regulations, which includes their funding. Overall, the goal is to increase the dialogue between decision-makers and young people in Kosovo, thus promoting youth participation and the implementation of youth organizations.

In 2009, the Local Youth Action Council was adopted by the Assembly in Kosovo and created the grounds for a National Youth Action Council to represent youth non-profits centrally. This would increase the ability of young people to be a part of decision-making within the country, and allow for more youth centers. As of June 2010, the specifics of the bylaws were still in the draft process. There is currently a Youth Assembly that consists of 20-30 young people, and aims to promote youth participation in Kosovo. They are located within 10 different municipalities within the country and usually meet usually twice a month.

Finally, as of June 2010, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports has also drafted the “Kosovo Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2010-2012, which will address youth participation, education, employment, healthcare, safety, culture, and sport and recreation” matters among young people. This plan would also establish the National Youth Action Council, as well as a co-managing council called the Interministerial Council. The plan also accounts for the financial commitment to young people in Kosovo during the 2010-2012 period of €1,047,000 (2010), €1,230,500 (2011) and €1,245,700 (2012).

Rationale/Background
Within Kosovo, there are two main ethnic groups: Albanians and Serbs. According to UNDP, each group has differing majority opinions of youth participation in the country and which measures would make young people more effective. For example, the majority of K-Albanian young people believe that the media in Kosovo is fairly credible, while the majority of K-Serbs think just the opposite. In general, Albanians are the majority ethnicity in Kosovo.

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8 Youth A New Generation for Kosovo.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Bejko, P 8.
13 Bejko
14 Youth A New Generation for Kosovo.
Some of the challenges that face youth policy in Kosovo are that over 90% of the youth population does not want to voluntarily be involved in politics. A lot of the apathy stems from a belief that young people are not adequately represented in politics, and that there is no way to be a part of the decision-making in the country. As such, several civil society and government initiatives are working to bridge the gap between young people and decision makers.

**Going Forward**
UNDP recommends that young people become more involved within the country’s decision-making processes and that youth organizations become more active in order to achieve this. If there were more young people involved in youth programs, the hope is that corruption could be alleviated and transparency in government would be increased.

However, many youth organizations in Kosovo lack financial support in order to adequately promote the well-being of young people in the country. The government has drafted several documents to further support youth organizations, yet implementation of many of these initiatives is pending. The Government of Kosovo and various CSOs are working toward unity and peace among the various ethnic groups in the region, one of the most important issues facing the country. The new draft Kosovo Youth Strategy and Action Plan also embodies a solid dedication to youth engagement and development in Kosovo.

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15 Youth Kosovars Help Themselves, *The Kosovar Youth Council*, P 1
16 *Youth: A New Generation for Kosovo*, P 83.
18 Bejko, P 24.
Covering a large landmass in eastern Europe and northern Asia, Russia has a population of 141 million people with approximately 26 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$9,620.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
With the end of the Cold War, Russia experienced a growth in non-profit organizations, as well as new programs and policies for civically engaging young people.2 An example of a community-based initiative in Russia is the Great Baikal Trail association (GBT) established in 2002, which maintains “environmentally friendly trails that are safe and enjoyable for hikers of all ages and levels of experience.” Participants are both local and international, and work for two weeks to maintain the popular trail. The association was created from the original goal to build a trail that circled Lake Baikal - approximately 2,000 km long—and connecting seven national parks and reserves. GBT focuses on environmental education, social responsibility, restoration and leadership. It also aims to improve the well-being and livelihoods of the local people that live in trail areas. In addition, “GBT is creating an infrastructure that will support sustainable development in the entire Baikal region. By providing new economic incentives for local populations to preserve their environment, GBT is offering a viable alternative to industrial development.” GBT has had over 2,300 volunteers since 2002 and over 500 km of trail has been built as a result.3

In addition, the Sozidanie Foundation and the Centre for the Development of Volunteering in Russia have been working together since 2003 to develop programs to involve “young people actively in community service to ameliorate their local social and economic situation.”4 Sozidanie works with organizations from over 30 regions throughout Russia to develop information centers for professionals from various sectors to access information about involving young people in community service. In 2005, Sozidanie started a service-learning program for secondary school students. The program was piloted in 10 schools, reaching approximately 400 students across five regions of Russia. Through this program, Sozidanie has developed training tools for teachers including nine service-learning lessons. The teachers are then expected to take the methodology back to their classrooms and implement them in local curricula.5

Policy Overview
The Russian Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy is responsible for overseeing matters relating to youth policy in Russia. As of May 2010, it was reported that Russia would invest in a “national youth identity” in order to “encourage youth innovation.” This national youth policy will be drafted from 2011-2015, and if approved will be funded by the government in order to promote career training, research and “social advertising campaigns.” The evolution of a national youth policy will also seek to raise youth participation in elections and lower the percentage of unemployed young people.6

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Russia currently institutes a mandatory 12-month draft for Russians 18 years of age. However, in 2002, President Vladimir Putin signed an initiative that decreed civil service as a viable alternative to military service for young men, which had theoretically existed in the constitution since 1993—but never really had been utilized. Under the law, called On Alternative Civil Service (ACS), young men can participate in “a specific type of work for the benefit of society and state performed by the citizens as a substitute for military service by conscription.” However, the law has been challenged by NGOs as punitive and not in accordance with the Council of Europe’s standards for alternative service. In order to qualify for ACS, a citizen “must prove that military duties are in conflict with their convictions or religious beliefs, or that they are members of small indigenous populations that follow a traditional lifestyle, practice traditional economic activities, and engage in traditional trades and crafts.” If a young man qualifies for ACS, he must serve for 21 months, but the process is very difficult and less than 1% choose to volunteer instead of serving in the military.

Rationale/Background
The break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 is a contributing factor to the challenges that young people in Russia face today. These challenges are mainly that there is a lack of effort to promote youth-related programs or initiatives in the country, as well as a “lack of financial support for volunteer organizations, the lack of coordination in volunteer activities, the need for positive public opinion of volunteerism and the lack of leadership and training.” Young Russians, especially those living in rural areas, also face issues of poverty and a lack of social services. As a result, some community-based, international and government initiatives are seeking to expand youth civic participation and engage young people in addressing some of these challenges, although they could improve this effort by investing more in youth civic participation.

Going Forward
The Russian government is working to engage its young population through its adoption of a civil service alternative to military service. However, the government has created a restrictive process in which a young person must qualify for civil service, creating significant obstacles for interest in and the success of this program. From 2011-2015 Russia plans to undertake drafting of a national youth policy. One of the main goals the Russian government has for the policy development is to drive innovation among young people, so that the younger generation is given the resources to build a “new identity” and to stimulate young people that have struggled since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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9 Ed. Helene Perold et al.
10 Ibid. 26.
13 “Russian Government to Invest in ‘National Youth Identity.’"
Located in southeastern Europe, Serbia has an estimated population of 7.3 million people, with approximately 1.5 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29.2

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Serbia has a national youth strategy directing policy toward young people, while much of the effort for promoting youth civic participation occurs in civil society. For example, Group MOST was one of the first Serbian CSOs, established in 1993. Group MOST consists of 20 professionals—primarily psychologists—who aim to empower young people in Serbia so they are active participants in society. The program targets individuals of all ages and backgrounds, and promotes positive communication and dialogue among them. In particular, Group MOST seeks to promote interethnic dialogue and prevent xenophobia.

In 2002, Group MOST established the Democracy Learning—Youth Participation program to equip youth CSOs with basic training, knowledge, values, and skills to successfully engage young people in their communities. The targeted age group is any male or female between the ages of 19–30. There are 10 training sessions that take place during a three-day seminar with 10 different youth NGOs. To date, the program has reached approximately 160 young people through 13 seminars. The Democracy Learning—Youth Participation program strives to promote diversity and acceptance of others’ differences by making young people aware of their existing prejudices and equipping them with skills to act on issues that matter to them.3

In addition, the Belgrade PostPessimists, launched in 2002, are a group of young people that have been active in promoting social activism for young people in the Balkan region. Members are young people who already have experience in NGO work and aim to actively be a part of the country’s decision-making process. There are “training of trainer” sessions, idea sharing and joint actions organized through the Belgrade PostPessimists in “youth activism, human rights, conflict resolution and non-violent communication.”4

Policy Overview
In 2007, the Ministry of Youth and Sport began the authorization process of executing a National Youth Strategy (NYS) in Serbia that failed to gain support in earlier years. The NYS was officially adopted in 2008 with development and implementation under way since 2009. The NYS pays special attention to disabled young people in Serbia, and also focuses on promoting civic participation activities to “foster active participation of young people in the society.” The NYS proposes to accomplish these goals through national, regional and international cooperation, youth organizations’ participation in debates and working groups focusing on state policies affecting young people, better access to information, and by providing better support for youth organizations through funding, technical support and facilitation of their activities. Primarily, the NYS will focus on education, employment, active youth participation, health, security and social protection, leisure time, environment and sustainable development.

Finally, there is a Belgrade Youth Office in Serbia that opened in May 2009, “thereby concluding a process which commenced with the adoption of the National Youth Strategy.” The Youth Office is responsible for implementing youth

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policy in Serbia on the local level, and acts as a liaison for the young people of Belgrade and the city’s administration. And
the office focuses on providing information, support and other resources for young people. Overall, the Youth Office aims
to empower young Serbs through youth civic engagement.5

Rationale/Background
Some of the challenges facing young people in Serbia are ethnic cleavages, poverty and displacement/refugee issues.
Poverty is a particularly multi-faceted issue in the country, and causes exclusion from the population. Several civil society
organizations are working with young people to address these issues and meet community needs through service.
UNICEF notes that “social and cultural exclusion has become a special concern, and measures have been taken to help
children in remote areas to come to school, and help children with disabilities to be included in various social activities.” 6

Going Forward
For the time being, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has called for all “relevant stakeholders” to collect data based on their
experiences and success with implementing the NYS on local, regional and national levels.7 Serbia celebrated the UN’s
International Youth Day on August 12, 2010, and the Minister of Youth and Sport announced that the first draft of a law
on youth would be done by the end of 2010, with a primary goal of bringing young people who left during the 1990’s back
to Serbia.8 Serbia is working hard to become a more enticing and inclusive country for its young people, with government
and CSOs aiming to end poverty and promote peace, unity and participation.

8 “Serbia joins the International Youth Day celebrations,” UNDP, Web, 22 October 2010,
Europe

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Austria

Austria is a parliamentary representative democracy located in the European Union with an estimated population of 8 million people, 22.3% of which is aged 13 and 30.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Austria has not yet implemented a national youth participation program of scale. However, various programs exist that support youth civic participation.

The Bundesjugendvertretung (Austrian National Youth Council, BJV) was inaugurated on January 1, 2001, and serves as a representative body for all youth organizations in Austria.² As an umbrella organization, it essentially gives youth organizations with various goals and backgrounds a voice in policymaking at all levels. The BJV has now extended membership to 43 youth organizations and represents almost all relevant youth organizations.³ These organizations range from youth subdivisions of political and trade union organizations, to faith-based organizations, minority ethnic groups or the Scouts.

Policy Overview
The Ministry charged with youth policy is the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth, or the BMWFJ.⁴ The department specifically devoted to youth consists of units which, at the national level, address national youth policy, youth welfare and international youth policy. The department fulfills a multitude of tasks including coordinating, guiding and providing stimulus for youth programs and extracurricular activities. The BMWFJ coordinates the actions of various working committees, including representatives of federal states, social partners, the National Youth Council, experts and NGOs. Regional public authorities are also involved in youth policy. A department for youth affairs and a department for youth welfare exist in each state government of Austria. The national government and federal states effectively coordinate measures and activities, which are voted on in Provincial Youth Counsellors meetings and produce joint initiatives such as study groups on participation and youth information.⁵

The National Action Plan for the Rights of Children and Youth was passed by the National Council of Austria in 2004. This plan gives essential guidelines and direction for future implementation of a child and youth policy. It follows the goals of the Convention of the Rights of the Child of protection, provision and participation. Specifically, the “Demokratie-Initiative,” or the initiative for democracy, aims to raise young peoples’ awareness of democracy and active civic participation. This initiative is executed by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts, and Culture as well as the Federal Ministry of Science and Research.⁶

Additionally, the Austrian Volunteer Passport was created by the Austrian Government in 2005 as a means of promoting voluntary engagement. While this program is open to all sectors of the population, it specifically targets young people. The passport allows volunteers to document all voluntary engagements they have conducted during their life. In addition, the passport documents the skills gained through each voluntary work program. In this way, the passport effectively

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⁶ Ibid.
promotes employment and is therefore supported by the Austrian Economic Chamber and the Austrian Employment Service. The Passport also increases interest in volunteering among job seekers as volunteering is seen as portal through which one can gain invaluable skills.

Rationale/Background
According to the Central Statistics Office, the percentage of young people in the Austrian population is declining. At the end of 1993, 21% of the population was below the age of 18. However, a projected decline in birth rate signifies that this percentage will greatly decrease, perhaps to 16.9% by 2030. Dr. Henriette Naber, head of the Department of Child, Youth, Men and Senior Citizen Policy of the Federal Ministry of Social Security and Generations views this decline with concern for young people's stake in the political process. She argues that this demographic situation calls for a strengthening of the youth voice in order to ensure that their interests are safeguarded. Thus, while in many countries it is an excessively large youth population that drives the motivation for civic engagement, in Austria, youth civic engagement can serve as a means of mobilizing the group in the face of diminishing influence.

Going Forward
A number of working groups exist with the mandate of expanding youth programs and policy. For example, the study group on participation (ARGE Partizipation) works with the national government and federal states on measures for youth participation. In addition, the study group on open youth work (ARGE Offene Jugendarbeit) works toward the establishment of an umbrella organization for open youth work in Austria. Lastly, the strategy group on national youth policy discusses the development of youth policy in Austria and the development of a National Youth Plan. Thus, the existence of these groups offers the expectation that further youth policy and perhaps a wide-scale program for youth civic participation could be developed. Ultimately, while volunteerism is generally increasing in Austria, young people between 16 and 29 years of age are the least involved actors in civic participation, representing only 30% of those volunteering.

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7 "Extracurricular Youth Policy in Austria," Federal Ministry of Social Security and Generations, Vienna, Austria, Print.
8 Ibid.
Belgium

Belgium is located in Western Europe between France and the Netherlands. In 2010, the estimated population was approximately 10.8 million people. As of 2006, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 accounted for 12.1 percent of the population. Belgium had a GDP worth 339.2 billion Euros for 2009.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Various civil society organizations specialize in youth civic participation in Belgium. For example, the International Movement of Agricultural Rural Youth (MIJARC) was founded in 1954 by a faith-based NGO. MIJARC emphasizes civic participation and social entrepreneurship as a means of building capacity, educating about the community, increasing employability and developing life skills. MIJARC organizes training among young people from 12 to 30 years of age in order to supplement local initiatives in areas such as income generating projects in agriculture, cooperatives or microenterprises.

La Plate-forme pour le Service Citoyen (Platform voor de Burgerdienst), or the Platform for Civil Service, gathers 28 organizations with the common goal of creating a Belgian national civic service for young people aged 18-25. Each organization is actively involved with youth civic participation and seeks to further this involvement on a national level. Ultimately, La Plate-forme advocates for passage of legislation that officially establishes a government civic service policy. The platform acts as an advocacy group as well as a leader in research and communication about the project in the media and the non-profit sector.

Policy Overview
As a federalized state, Belgium’s governmental power is divided into federal, community and regional levels with no hierarchy. Each level of government executes part of the national youth policy. The federal ministry responsible for young people is the Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Brussels Affairs. The youth divisions of the ministry are the Department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media and the Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults Agency, Youth Division. Youth work refers to non-formal learning experiences such as youth exchange, voluntary service or group training. The tasks of the Youth Division with regard to youth civic participation involve accreditation, funding, counseling, inspection and assessment of nationally organized youth work, experiential youth work and other actors. It is also responsible for monitoring and assessing various youth work policies.

In compliance with the Flemish Parliament Act of February 2003, each local authority must have a local youth council. Young people as well as representatives of local youth work initiatives comprise these councils. Local councils advise

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7. Ibid.
their government in any policy relating to youth work or youth issues. In 2001, there were 282 youth councils in Flanders.10 Belgium also has five regional youth councils located in West Flanders, East Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg and Flemish Brabant. These councils maintain the same advisory roles as the local youth councils. The Flemish Youth Council, or Vlaamse Jeugdraad, serves as Belgium’s National Youth Council and advises the Flemish Government on all youth-related policy issues. The General Assembly, which brings the interests of young people into policy-making, consists of 24 members, 10 of which are young people.11 One of the primary tasks of the youth council is to design a three-year youth work policy plan.12

Finally, Belgium’s Flemish Youth Policy Plan focuses on young people, youth policy and children’s rights. In accordance with the 2008 Act on Flemish Youth and Children’s Rights, the Flemish Government must submit a Flemish youth policy plan to the Flemish Parliament. This plan is a collaborative effort between the Flemish Youth Council, experts on youth affairs, various associations, local and provincial authorities and the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels. One of the goals emphasized in the current governmental period is an increase of participation in social life, both formally and informally in addition to goals of increasing the equality and reach of opportunities for youth development.13

Rationale/Background
One key issue prompting the need for youth civic engagement in Belgium is its high youth unemployment rate. According to a study conducted at Columbia University in 2004, youth unemployment rates for women and men were 26 and 18 percent, respectively.14 In addition, an IMF report indicated that unemployment had increased from 15% in 2000 to 20% in 2005 for both sexes. This unemployment rate is about three times greater than that of adult unemployment.15 The IMF indicated that Belgian youth unemployment can be partly attributed to an excess in unskilled workers.16 The education system in Belgium does not put a great emphasis on internships or other similar programs, but rather focuses on full-time study. As a result, students may find themselves under-qualified for the workforce. An emphasis on youth civic engagement in government and civil society seeks to ameliorate this issue.

In addition, certain policies have been implemented to target specific subsets of the youth population, such as immigrants, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, disabled and low-skilled young people. These groups of young people are seen as at-risk of dropping out of education or disengaging from society and policy is therefore adapted in order to meet their specific needs and civically engage them.17

Going Forward
Youth civic participation in Belgium faces a number of challenges. Education for young people is very demanding and often impedes on their leisure time. According to a report by the European Commission, this reduces the ability of young people to engage in civic participation activities.18 In addition, young people may not be knowledgeable about civic participation and its social value. Some programs are trying to address these issues, but funding for youth civic participation initiatives is severely lacking.

A significant change in youth policy may occur with the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which began on July 1, 2010. The presidency has announced a program in which youth civic participation will be a significant priority. It has also stated an objective of adopting a Council Resolution on Youth Work. The Government of Belgium has therefore committed to promoting youth civic participation which may lead to expanding opportunities in the near future.

11 “National Situation of Youth in Belgium.”
12 “Questionnaire ‘Participation’: Belgium-Flanders,” YouthPartnership, Council of Europe, European Commission, Strasbourg Cedex, France, Print.
13 “Country Sheet on Youth Policy – Belgium.”
15 Alain Jousten, et al., The Effects of Early Retirement on Youth Unemployment: The Case of Belgium, Internation Monetary Fund: 2008, Print.
16 Ibid.
17 “Questionnaire ‘Participation’: Belgium-Flanders.”
18 “Study on Volunteering in the European Union – Country Report Belgium,” Web, 20 July 2010,
Cyprus

Cyprus, an island south of Turkey in the Mediterranean Sea, joined the European Union in May 2004. Cyprus has a population of 778,684, with a GDP per capita of US$21,663. The population of people aged 15-24 is approximately 133,000.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Several community-based organizations are civically engaging young people in Cyprus. One of these is the Youth Activism Project, implemented by the Cyprus Network for Youth Development. The project, funded by the UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust (ACT), will be implemented on a national scale for two years, May 2009-July 2011. Through its various initiatives, the Cyprus Network for Youth Development aims to bring together organizations and individuals from all parts of the country and to engage young people in becoming active citizens. The organization addresses three forms of civic participation: advocacy/campaigning, participation in civic associations and youth leadership. The Youth Activism Project specifically seeks to engage young people in peace building over a two year period and to provide them with the necessary skills to remain active citizens.

In addition, Young Volunteers Cyprus is an organization consisting of children aged 4-18 who engage in civic activities with their parents. These activities consist of both fundraising through charity events and community service projects aimed to serve those in need. The group began five years ago with only 20 young people from five different schools and now engages over 1,200 young people from schools throughout Cyprus. Young Volunteers Cyprus is a registered charity organization and is approved and supported by the Ministry of Education.

Finally, the Cyprus Youth Council for International Cooperation (CyCIC) was founded in 1997 in order to enable young people in Cyprus to participate in the European Youth Forum. The council has about 40 youth-related NGOs as members and is funded by the Cyprus Youth Board (see below for more on this). While the council is often described as a National Youth Council, some argue that it does not meet the criteria to fulfill this role. The primary areas of concern include its lack of provisions for elections, the limited level of state funding available, its closed membership, and its lack of social and political recognition. The Cyprus Youth Board itself claims that the role of a National Youth Council is played by the Youth Board through its consultative committees, not by the CyCIC.

Policy Overview
The primary government body responsible for youth policy in Cyprus is the Cyprus Youth Board, which was established by law in April 1994. The Cyprus Youth Board is governed by seven members, including a representative of each youth organization of political parties represented in the House of Representatives as well as three members appointed directly by the Council of Ministers. The Cyprus Youth Board is a semi-governmental organization, funded by state subsidy, independent of civil service, and with its own structure and staff. The board holds as a primary objective promoting “the active participation of youth, in the social economic and cultural development of the country.” More specifically, it encourages youth participation in economic life and decision-making processes, education and economic integration, and youth entrepreneurship.

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5 Youth Policy in Cyprus, Council of Europe, Strasbourg Cedex: 2007, Print.
6 Ibid.
To achieve these objectives, the Youth Board funds numerous initiatives including youth clubs, the healthy and creative occupation of young people, and the European YOUTH program, in which Cyprus has been involved since 2001.\(^7\) The Board subsidizes existing youth organizations, holds conferences and seminars, and builds municipal youth councils, youth parliament, and voluntary programs and campaigns. A subset of the Cyprus Youth Board’s Administrative Board is the General Advisory Body, which consists of the Political Committee, the Student Committee, the Trade Union Committee, and about 40 other non-aligned youth organizations. The General Advisory Body is considered by the Board to be an umbrella body for all youth organizations involved in its activities. The Cyprus Youth Board addresses many key areas of youth policy, such as education, training, employment, housing and health. However, it has not developed substantial national policies in these fields.

Finally, a Pan-Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council, founded in 1973, addresses the need in Cyprus for coordination of civic participation efforts, development of policy for the civic participation sector and cooperation with the government.\(^8\) The Council aims to give voice to the civic participation sector, address organizational needs, provide opportunities for increased member capacity and build cooperation between members. Representing more than 380 organizations, the Council takes action by bringing the concerns of civic participation organizations directly to government, capacity building through training services and organizing national conferences for members.

**Rationale/Background**

The unique demographic situation of Cyprus lends rationale supporting expansion of youth civic engagement. Significant tension exists between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Many organizations look to youth civic participation as a possible means of attaining cultural understanding and promoting peace-building in the country. Youth organizations can provide young people with opportunities to contribute to peace-building activities and the development of their communities. By working together, young people of both Greek and Turkish descent can successfully respond to their needs.\(^9\) In addition, young people face a number of other challenges that could be addressed through civic participation. For example, young people are disproportionately represented within the unemployed population. In addition, youth crime in Cyprus is understood to be increasing.\(^10\) Engaging young people in their communities may be a means of alleviating these problems.

**Going Forward**

Several youth organizations have proposed the creation of a National Youth Council in conjunction with a “Joint Youth Council on Youth Questions,” which would comprise both governmental bodies and civil society youth organizations. However, the government has not yet accepted this proposal and moved forward with creating such a council. Currently Cyprus requires all male citizens to serve in the National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus for a period of 25 months. Suggestions have been made for implementing a social service policy in lieu of serving in the military. Those who are able to participate in military service, but prove unwilling, could be required to carry out social work for two years under the army’s supervision instead. A group of 5,000 people, mostly parents of conscripts, publicly supports this idea, but it has not yet received government support.\(^11\) Finally, the infrastructure for youth civic participation in general remains fragile. The topic is generally absent from official discourse and often refers only to coaching courses and individual activity during leisure time.

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\(^7\) *Ibid.*


\(^9\) “Youth Activism Project.”

\(^10\) *Youth Policy in Cyprus.*

Czech Republic

Located in central Europe, the Czech Republic has been a member of the European Union since 2004. It has an estimated population of 10.3 million people, of which 1.8 million are under the age of 18. The Czech Republic has a GNI per capita US$16,600.1

Youth Civic Engagement Overview

Civic engagement is still looked upon with skepticism stemming from the compulsory nature of voluntary work during the communist regime in the Czech Republic. The communist ideology stated that each citizen be actively involved in his or her community and contribute to its improvement for society. This non-voluntary “volunteer” work left civic engagement tainted in the eyes of many citizens. However, attitudes are changing thanks in part to a law on volunteerism passed in 2002 as well as the impact volunteers made in response to major flooding throughout a large part of the Czech Republic in 2002.

One civil society organization supporting youth civic participation in the Czech Republic is HESTIA. Founded in 1993, HESTIA implements a variety of programs for both children and adults tackling issues related to the environment, children with disabilities, and the promotion and awareness of civic engagement. HESTIA also operates as a national and international network base for other organizations and individuals to find information about local programs. In 1998 HESTIA founded the National Volunteer Center, which hosts seminars and training sessions for organizations and volunteers and houses a database of volunteer organizations across the country.2

Policy Environment

The Czech Republic’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is responsible for developing educational, youth and sport policies and maintaining international cooperation in these fields. The Ministry has been in existence in various capacities and under various government structures since 1848, but has grown in its influence since the fall of the communist regime.3 The Ministry runs a program called Národní institut dětí a mládeže (National Institute of Youth and Children, NIDM), charged with the protection and support of Czech young people. NIDM supplies educational and business school facilities to train and support young people as well as the teachers looking after them. NIDM offers support to CSOs throughout the Czech Republic and is involved in implementing the European program Youth in Action.4

In 2002, the Czech Republic passed its Volunteer Services Act, which defines the forms of voluntary activity and specifies the conditions under which the Czech state will support them.5 In tandem with the Volunteer Services Act passed in 2002, the Department of Volunteer Services was also established in the Ministry of the Interior. The Department oversees the accreditation of NGOs, granting them official legal status as a voluntary organization, as well as overseeing the public funding allocated to these organizations.6 The Czech Republic’s law on volunteerism states that in order for an organization to be designated as a volunteer organization, its activities must be focused on at least one of the following

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6 Ibid.
areas: domestic violence, care of children during leisure time, elderly people, disabled persons, drug addiction, ethnic minorities, immigrants, poor people, disaster response or the organization of charitable collections.7

Dobrovolnictví nezaměstnaných (Volunteering of Unemployed People) is a program implemented by the Ministry of Labor to encourage and assist unemployed Czech citizens to become active in service projects. Through this program an unemployed citizen will have a chance to work with a program based on his or her interests and motivation. Participants benefit from gaining experience in the host organization, acquiring new skills, maintaining social and work habits, and the opportunity to meet critical needs in their community.8 The Czech Republic also participates in the European Voluntary Service, a regional initiative engaging people ages 18-30 in civic participation opportunities (more information about this program is available in the snapshot discussing European regional initiatives).

Finally, the Agency for the Non-profit Sector (AGNES) was founded in 1998 to support the development of the NGO sector in the Czech Republic. AGNES implements many programs throughout the Czech Republic ranging from educational and skills training to the promotion of the NGO sector through cultural and social activities. Over the last seven years, AGNES has instituted eight yearly educational courses for NGO managers, four nationwide studies of NGOs, published II publiciations, and formed a library and archive of NGOs in the Czech Republic. AGNES supports youth civic participation through a program called Civil Society at School which aims to inform young people ages 14-20 about the NGO sector and to empower them to actively participate and influence the society in which they live.9

Rationale/Background
The peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the Czech Republic breaking its ties with communism offered a unique opportunity for CSOs to develop and create opportunities to engage Czech citizens in community service. The Czech Republic is one of the most financially stable of the post-communist states with an annual growth rate from 2005-2007 of around 6%.10 Historically, the Czech Republic represents a very large number of people which do not currently have the access to or infrastructure capable of allowing them to engage in service on a large scale. It is important that these organizations be supported both financially and politically to allow the CSO sector to thrive. As such, the Czech government has implemented programs, such as AGNES, to support civil society and encourage civic participation.11

Going Forward
Civic participation is gaining some momentum in the Czech Republic after a long period of negative sentiments. With the passing of the Volunteer Services Act in 2002, the number of civil society organizations supporting civic participation has been growing; in 2007 there were 27 organizations given volunteer accreditation. According to surveys carried out in 2000 and 2004, the number of citizens engaging in civic participation activities doubled, from 16% in 2000 to 32% in 2004.12 As civil society and support for civic participation continues to grow, the Czech government could benefit by encouraging greater youth participation in these efforts.

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7 "Volunteering in the Czech Republic: Facts and Figures."
12 Ibid.
Finland

A Scandinavian country in northern Europe, Finland’s population is an estimated 5 million people and the median age is 41.8 years old. As of 2007, young people aged 13-30 made up about 22.5 percent of the population.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Finland has an active civil society with over 100,000 registered civic organizations and associations. Many of these organizations focus on youth service, such as the Scouts and the Finnish Red Cross. Though too many civic participation organizations exist to summarize, the following are descriptions of some key organizations in Finland.

The number of organizations devoted to youth service became so great that in 1993, they united to create the Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi to serve as an umbrella organization for the field. Allianssi, a non-governmental organization, not only organizes nearly 100 member groups but also provides a variety of services. Allianssi offers education services to youth workers and organizations, runs a Youth Policy Library, provides web-based resources, provides information and training to young people, and manages youth exchanges among many other functions. Allianssi also works with the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs on youth policy, and has been highly involved in the long-term development of youth work strategy.

The Finnish Youth Association, founded in 1897, ties together over 900 youth societies and 80,000 youth members. The independent organization encompasses a wide variety of youth societies including both recreation and community involvement. Those focused on engagement are active in developing their local communities and international relations.

Policy Overview
The Finnish government has a comprehensive government structure in place for formulating and implementing youth policy. Within the Ministry of Education’s Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy operate the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs and the Youth Organization Subsidy Committee, which work in conjunction implementing the Youth Act. The Advisory Council addresses matters of youth policy, while the Subsidy Committee focuses on youth engagement.

Finland first developed legislation for youth affairs in 1972 and the most recent youth policy iteration is the Youth Act, which passed in 2006. The stated purpose of the Youth Act is to “support young people’s growth and independence, to promote young people’s active citizenship and empowerment and to improve young people’s growth and living conditions.” The Youth Act primarily functions as a mechanism for funding youth programs at various levels. These

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7 Ibid.
include funding for discretionary grants for youth organizations and local authorities to implement programs, investment in national youth centers, grants for facilities and funding for youth research. One of the Youth Act programs, the International Award Programme for Young People, was launched in 1999 and operates at 50 locations within Finland. Accepting participants aged 14 to 25, the program allows participants to choose from four paths—one of which is focused on service. The service path teaches how to serve others and instills a sense of responsibility to the community. Participants work toward awards that are handed out based on age and length of service.8 The Youth Act of 2006 also put in place a requirement that each new government (elected every four years) create a Programme for Child and Youth Policy for the duration of its term.

The current Programme for Child and Youth Policy, adopted in December 2007, aims to make Finland a friendlier place for young people and improve their well-being. Developed with input from young people, the implementation involves providing local municipalities with guidelines and models for youth programs relating to education, employment, health, livelihood, active citizenship and social empowerment.9 The goal for increasing youth participation is to expand opportunities for young people to voice opinions and influence decision-making. The government works with local authorities and youth organizations to improve the system for listening to the opinions of young people. One project to accomplish greater input from young people is eDemocracy, which is an online feedback tool used in schools. Another new program will be an optional voluntary activity program offered in schools, which is designed to provide concrete opportunities for young people to serve in their communities.10

Finally, young people in Finland are required to serve 245-330 days of military service, for which they are permitted to substitute 395 days of civilian service if they refuse military service on religious or ethical grounds. This non-military service system may include work for government, municipal, inter-municipal, and church institutions or alternatively for organizations such as the Red Cross and Amnesty International.11

**Rationale/Background**

The Finnish government has focused on the changing structure of the country’s population as a reason for its emphasis on youth programs. As the population shifts toward older demographics, the government seeks to optimize health, opportunities, support networks and education for young people from all backgrounds.12 Recommendations for the government’s Programme for Child and Youth Policy stemmed from a year-long research study conducted by a committee from the Department of Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy. Drawing on the experience and knowledge of a broad group of researchers and organizers as well as youth councils, the committee collected information, proposals and recommendations regarding youth affairs. One finding in particular showed that participation in organizations is linked with higher education levels.13 The problems and areas for improvement found in the study were directly addressed with Programme for Child and Youth Policy of 2007.

**Going Forward**

At the end of the current government’s set term in 2011, a new Programme for Child and Youth Policy must be drafted, in accordance with the Youth Act. The new act will be based on the results of a comprehensive report on the success of the previous program, prepared by the Ministry of Education. The results will be prepared with regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and will attempt to fill gaps in information about child welfare.14 By analyzing and improving upon the previous program, the Finnish government hopes to increase participation and opportunities for young people to contribute to national development.

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10 Ibid.
11 Olli Saarela.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
France

France is located in Western Europe and borders the Bay of Biscay, the English Channel and the Mediterranean Sea. It has a population of approximately 64 million people, nearly 21% of which are under the age of 18. France has a GNI per capita of US$ 42,250.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Several civil society and regional initiatives support youth civic participation in France, while the government has also implemented national youth service programs. Unis-Cité is a pioneer of civic service in France, created in 1994 as a program bringing together young people from all social, cultural and educational backgrounds for one year. For 15 years, Unis-Cité has mobilized young people between the ages of 18 and 25 and currently has 900 young people in civic participation programs in 24 cities throughout France.² Participants serve full time for six to nine months and are organized into teams of eight. Unis-Cité engages young people in improving their community through projects ranging from fighting social exclusion to promoting the environment. It seeks to benefit a range of people including children, unemployed youth and adults, immigrants, refugees, elderly and disabled people. In addition, participants devote a portion of their time to civic education and professional development. Participants receive a monthly stipend averaging around US$730 to enable them to meet personal needs during their year of service.³

France participates in several programs on the European level as well, including the European Union Jeunes en Action (Youth in Action) program. This program is managed by the national agency Jeunes en Action, which is part of the National Institute for Youth and Public Education. This program aims to increase the number of young people active in society by increasing their sense of belonging to Europe. Jeunes en Action provides opportunities for young people, and the organizations representing them, to participate in society and the EU in order to increase mobility in Europe, develop intercultural learning, promote the values of the EU, encourage a spirit of initiative enterprise and creativity, care for disadvantaged and disabled young people and promote the principals of equality.⁴

France is also involved in a European Council initiative called the Lifelong Learning Programme. The European Council began this program in 2007 by integrating various educational and training initiatives in a single program. The objective of the program is to enable individuals of all stages in life to participate in meaningful and stimulating learning opportunities throughout Europe. While the European Council is in charge of the program as a whole, the Education, Audiovisual, & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is responsible managing certain aspects of the education and training programs.⁵

Policy Overview
France’s Ministere de la Juenesse (Ministry of Youth) is responsible for preparing and implementing the government’s policy toward youth development and community life. Its focus is to develop public service programs to fight against poverty.⁶ One program implemented by the Ministry is called Service Civique (Civic Service), in which young people ages 16-25 serve their communities for periods of 6-12 months. In 2010 Service Civique had over 10,000 young volunteers, and

³Ibid.
aims to mobilize 75,000 young people by 2015. France's president Nicolas Sarkozy announced an investment of 1.3 billion Euros “in employment and training to help more than 50,000 youth,” promising companies “zero expenses” if they hire a trainee.

The Ministère de la Santé, de la Jeunesse et des Sports (Ministry of National Health, Youth and Sports) oversees issues and policy relating to young people. The Youth Department in the Ministry deals with many different issues, such as youth information, youth participation and youth councils. Other national public bodies that are directly involved in youth policies are the departments of foreign and European affairs, justice, agriculture and fisheries, employment, social affairs and solidarity, education, housing and city, and culture and communication. Finally, offices responsible for youth policy are the L’Institut National de la Jeunesse et de l’Éducation Populaire (INJEP, National Institute for Youth and Public Education) and the Public Institute under the authority of the Department for National Health, Youth and Sports.

There are two youth councils in France, the Conseil National de la Jeunesse (CNJ, National Council for Youth) and the Comité pour les relations Nationales et Internationales des Associations de Jeunesse et d’Éducation Populaire (CNAJEP, Committee for National and International Relations of Youth Associations and Public Education). The CNJ, chaired by the Secretary of State for Youth, Sports and Associations, is made up of approximately 180 members from departmental councils for youth, associative and political structures, and trade unions. The CNAJEP, founded in 1968, is made up of 74 national associations and federations for youth issues and public education. CNAJEP aims to provide a forum for discussion with public authorities and the majority of youth organizations in France are part of the CNAJEP.

France has one national program on youth, entitled the “Youth and Voluntary Organizations Program.” This program seeks to promote voluntary organizations, actions targeted at young people, actions geared toward non-formal education (popular education), youth protection, and training for youth workers and voluntary organization managers. The program aims to train and employ young people, attempt to guarantee prospects for young people, change social and tax devices to benefit young people, enable young people to participate in meaningful initiatives, and to form stronger relationships between state and social partners. Recently, the organization has set aside funding to create experimental programs aimed at improving social and professional insertion of young people ages 16-25.

**Rationale/Background**

In 2010, the French unemployment rate rose to 10% and in the last quarter of 2009 over 25% of men under the age of 25 were unemployed. This rate increased by 3.9% during 2009. The left-leaning National Union of Students (UNEF) says the situation is alarming: “over the last year, unemployment among young people, already almost three times that of the 25 - 49 year-old age group, has increased by 28%.” For France’s largest student union, “the young have been largely forgotten in the government’s anti-crisis measures.” Programs such as Unis-Cite and Service Civique are striving to improve youth employment by providing civic participation opportunities in line with the participants’ future career goals.

**Going Forward**

The French government has increased efforts to engage its youth population in meaningful civic participation opportunities, while civil society organizations also continue to engage with young people to address critical community needs throughout France. However, these programs require more resources and support in order to meet their goals for expansion in the future and the country could benefit by further investments in expanding youth civic participation opportunities.

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
13 “Sarkozy Reaches out to Disillusioned Youth.”
Germany

Germany is a federal republic in Europe with a Gross National Income of $3.5 trillion in 2008.1 Germany has a population of 82 million, of whom approximately 25% are below the age of 25.2

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Social welfare services in Germany are generally provided by non-profit organizations (NPOs). These organizations generally receive government funding and fall under the umbrella of six “peak” associations of NPOs which arose in West Germany after World War II. In turn, these associations fall under the broad umbrella of the Federal Association of the Voluntary Welfare Organizations.3 In 1995, NPOs accounted for about 3.6% of the German workforce and about 4% of its GDP.4 These NPOs are heavily dependent on conscientious objectors from the conscription of 18-year-old males, who are permitted under the Alternative Civilian Service Act (2005) to work for NPOs instead of serving in the military to fulfill their service requirement.

Policy Overview
Germany has a federal system, under which government responsibility for youth affairs is at both the federal and the state levels. At the federal level, this responsibility mainly falls on the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). In addition, there are Youth Councils, federal and state Agencies for Civic Education, and a Federal Youth Board which advises the government on issues related to children and youth.

As cited above, federal law includes a draft for 18-year-old males who are allowed, as conscientious objectors, to fulfill their service in the Zivildienst (Civil Service), working for NPOs while being paid by the state. NPOs have become heavily dependent on this source of labor. The young people receive a stipend and other social benefits and often can use their service a stepping stone to a career in social service. As of 2005, approximately 90,000 young men under 23 are completing their service through Zivildienst.5

Two federal laws have also created ‘years of service.’ The Law on the Promotion of a Voluntary Year of Social Service (1964) allows young people to take a year to work in social service NPOs, mainly funded by the host NPOs. The Law on the Promotion of a Voluntary Year of Ecological Service (1994) allows young people to take a year working in environmental protection, primarily funded by the states.6 “The Voluntary Social Year has now acquired the profile of a social educational year; the bodies responsible (host organizations) are now placing major emphasis on the pedagogical support aspect.”7 Through Zivildienst and the Voluntary Social Year, young people spend between six and 18 months addressing social needs ranging from preserving the environment to delivering food to providing daily assistance to high needs seniors. Enrollment for the years of service is growing, but remains small – about 11,000 in the Voluntary Social Year and 1,700 in the Voluntary Ecological Year as of 2000.8

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6 “Voluntary Action in Germany: Facts and Figures.”
7 Ursula Mathieu, Germany Country Update, prepared for the 5th Global Conference on National Youth Service, 2000, Print.
8 Ibid.
Rationale/Background

In the aftermath of World War II, the principle of subsidiarity led to the domination of social services by NPOs, funded and regulated by the government. In East Germany, voluntary efforts were co-opted by the state, and rates of civic participation in the former East Germany are still somewhat lower than in the former West Germany. The year of service concept cited above was formulated by Lutheran Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger, who in 1954 called on young Germans, particularly young women, to give one year of service to society.9 These years of social service have also taken on a strong educational component and are intended “to link volunteer activities with concrete practical experience in a professional area,”10 thus improving job skills and career opportunities. This is especially important given the increase in unemployment of those aged 25 and under in Germany over the past two decades, from 4% in 1990 to 12% in 2007.11

Going Forward

Germany has a strong youth policy infrastructure and active public encouragement of youth civic engagement. However, challenges remain. For example, public debate about ending mandatory military service “has been met with great concern because of the impact this would have on how social services would continue to be delivered, since many welfare organizations are almost totally dependent on the labor of conscientious objectors.”12

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9 Ibid.
10 “Voluntary Action in Germany: Facts and Figures.”
Hungary

Located inland in Central Europe, Hungary is a small country consisting mostly of flat rolling plains. Hungary had an estimated population in 2008 of 10.1 million people, of which approximately 1.9 million are under the age of 18. Hungary has a GNI per capita of USD 12,810.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Hungary’s end of communism and transition toward democracy has given way to a new interest in civic engagement. By 1996 nearly one third of Hungary’s CSOs relied on volunteers to carry out their work. In 2000, over 400,000 Hungarian volunteers provided nearly 35.5 hours of work to Hungary’s nonprofit organizations. Currently, there are many organizations in Hungary serving young Hungarians, but less in which young Hungarians are serving.2

The Demokratikus Ifjúsági Alapítvány (Democratic Youth Foundation, DIA), established in 1999, engages young Hungarians ages 14-25 in service projects throughout Hungary. DIA also works to direct the attention of policy makers and professionals to the issues facing young people in Hungary. DIA focuses primarily on civic education and community service projects, service learning, teacher training, advocacy and youth employment. The majority of service programs organized by DIA are in rural areas, reaching young people in over 50 towns throughout Hungary. In 2010, DIA will celebrate the 10th anniversary of its National Youth Service Programme, noting that over the past 10 years it has reached over 70,000 young people ages 14-25.3

Policy Overview
To help support the work of Hungary’s local civil society organizations, Parliament passed a “1% Law” in 1996, allowing tax-payers to designate 1% of their personal income tax payments as a donation to a registered CSO. In 2003, donations from the “1% Law” totaled US$26.5 million, and have been steadily increasing. In 2005, a Law on Public Interest Volunteer Activities was passed which defines volunteering and includes language to ensure the safe working conditions of volunteers. In 2005, the National Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities was recognized to oversee both youth policy and initiatives to combat Hungary’s growing drug problem.4

Initiated in 2005, OTLET (“Idea” also an acronym for Volunteer, Activity, Opportunity, Employment, Experience) is a national youth service program, implemented by the Hungarian Ministry of Employment and the National Employment Fund, to engage young Hungarians in the service of their country. Its main focus is to address the issue of high youth unemployment, which it does by enrolling Hungarians ages 18–26 in 10-month-long service projects. Participants carry out local and national service projects with civil society organizations throughout Hungary, allowing them to gain professional experience, build skills and become engaged in community issues.5

Finally, Mobilitas is the state controlled and financed agency tasked with implementing the European Commission’s Youth Programme in Hungary. Beginning in 2000, the European Youth Programme engages young people ages 15-25 years old to create opportunities for active participation in the progress and integration of Europe. The Programme, through the European Volunteer Service (EVS), offers young people the opportunity to serve in another country for up to one year.6

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4 “Country Profile: Hungary.”
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
year, working on a variety of community issues including: environment, social, cultural, technological or educational needs. Mobilitas implements this program in Hungary for young people ages 18-26 and has published many large-scale surveys on youth issues in Hungary.6

Rationale/Background
Despite Hungary’s new interest in civic engagement generally, youth civic engagement remains limited. This is likely due to negative sentiments lingering from the compulsory participation in youth organizations such as the Little Drummers or the Pioneers and the Communist Youth Party during the communist regime. In studies conducted in Hungary, many young people cite a lack of interest and a lack of time as factors for non-participation. The unemployment rate among young men aged 15-24 in Hungary in 2008 reached 19.1% with an overall unemployment rate for young people of 13.4%.7 Young people also face problems of drug abuse in Hungary, while also not being appropriately recognized as contributing members of society. Efforts such as OTLET and Mobilitas are working to assist unemployed or idle young Hungarians become active citizens through service.

Going Forward
The dissolution of the communist party and adoption of a democratic government and open civil society has contributed significantly to the strides Hungary has made to better engage its young citizens in civic education and participation. While the 2005 Law on Public Interest Volunteer Activities is a critical step in securing the rights of volunteers, efforts could be made to extend more of the rights given to paid employees to volunteers as well. The Government of Hungary will need to continue to improve and expand its programs in order to raise interest in civic participation and expand opportunities for youth civic participation in particular.

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6 Ibid.
Located in northwest Europe, Ireland has an estimated population of 4.4 million people with approximately 1 million people under 18 years old. Ireland has a GNI per capita of US$49,590.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
According to the Centre for Non-Profit Management at Trinity College Dublin, there are about 25,000 non-profit organizations in Ireland, focusing particularly on education, community development, advocacy, medical services and family support. NPOs account for about 64,000 employees and 2.14% of Ireland’s GDP.2 Represented nationally by Volunteer Centres Ireland, 22 local Volunteer Centres support these organizations by connecting those interested in volunteering with service opportunities.3

Age is a major factor in civic participation frequency in Ireland. A 1998 survey by the European Volunteer Centre showed that although volunteering rates among young people and students rose during the 1990s, only 31.1% of those between 18-29 volunteer while 47.8% of those aged 50-59 volunteer.4 However, there are a number of youth organizations promoting youth civic participation opportunities, represented at the national level by the National Youth Council Ireland, which counts 54 organizations as members.5

In addition, there has been a recent push in the higher education sector to increase community engagement. With three years of funding from the government’s Strategic Innovation Fund, five universities, led by the National University of Ireland, Galway, launched Campus Engage to support integration of civic engagement into their core university functions. These five universities, as well as other higher education institutions in Ireland, have begun to implement service-learning courses, community-based research and various civic participation opportunities for their students.6

Policy Overview
The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) is responsible for youth policy in Ireland. There is not currently a formal youth service policy in Ireland, although the National Youth Council of Ireland is lobbying the government: “NYCI calls on all parties to commit to setting up and funding a National Youth Participation Programme to support and promote greater participation, active citizenship and volunteering among young people, with a specific emphasis on young people aged 18 – 25.”7 However, the OMCYA states, “it is Government policy to promote the participation of children and young people in civic society.”8

In addition, the Taskforce on Active Citizenship was created by Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern in April 2006. In 2007, it recommended a number of concrete steps relevant to youth service, such as improving citizenship education and providing opportunities for civic participation through the Transition Year Programme which gives students an opportunity to develop a wide range of transferable critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills between their junior and senior cycles. The Taskforce also recommended “that the Higher Education Authority should lead an initiative

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with appropriate resources to promote, support and link together citizenship initiatives across the Higher Education sector, including ‘service learning’ and volunteering by students.”

Rationale/Background
Much of the recent increased focus on promoting youth service opportunities and active citizenship was motivated by a concern that Ireland’s rapid economic growth was being accompanied by increased selfishness and decline in civic involvement. This potential challenge can be confronted by providing increased opportunities for young people to get involved in and serve their communities, and by connecting these opportunities with structured learning. Several organizations, universities and government initiatives are striving to do just that.

Going Forward
One of the largest constraints on promoting greater youth civic participation is the current economic recession and the lack of financial resources to support these efforts. Volunteer Centres Ireland reports a lack of public funds to support new volunteer centers, and universities facing public funding cuts will need to find alternative funding streams and innovative approaches to sustain their recent efforts in the field of civic engagement. While there are civil society organizations, universities and government support for youth civic participation in Ireland, more investment is necessary to ensure expanded opportunities for young people to enhance their skills and contribute to community development.

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Italy

Italy is a republic in southern Europe with a Gross National Income of $2.1 trillion in 2008. Italy has an estimated population of 59 million people with approximately 10 million people under 18 years old. 

Youth Civic Participation Overview

Civil society in Italy was relatively weak until the 1970s when the number of non-civil society organizations began to expand. According to the Italian National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT), at the end of 2003 there were 21,021 officially registered organizations, a 152% increase over 1995. In 1999, civil society organizations accounted for 2.3% of employment in Italy. From 1995 to 2003 young people (under 30 years old) as a percentage of volunteers dropped from 30.4% to 22.1%. However, many organizations work to include young people in civic participation opportunities.

For example, Arci Servizio Civile (ASC) is a nonprofit association which promotes the creation of an international network of civic service experiences and the active engagement of young people in their communities throughout Italy. Started in 1986, ASC engages volunteers in service projects focusing on: social services (working with children and the elderly, helping abused women, fighting drug and alcohol abuse), inclusion of immigrants, environmental preservation, emergency response (e.g. earthquake of Abruzzo April 2009), cultural work (music, arts and sports), and evaluation of historic heritage. ASC works with young men and women between 18 and 28 years old on projects throughout Italy.

Policy Overview

For decades Italian government policy has supported youth service opportunities. The Italian Ministry for Youth Policies and Sport oversees policies relating to youth affairs and implements a National Youth Plan. The Plan, in part, seeks to expand participation and representation of young people in public life, however it does not have provisions for how to achieve this goal.

Since 1972, Italy offered civil service as an alternative for conscientious objectors to the military draft, and about 500,000 Italian men took this option until the draft was phased out in 2005. The large growth in civic participation organizations over this period was largely fueled by these conscientious objectors. In preparation for the end of the draft, Italy created a voluntary national youth service program in 2001 called Servizio Civile Nazionale (SCN) for Italians aged 18-28 and received funds to support 25,000 participants in 2009. Volunteers in the program are subsidized by the government to work for both public agencies and CSOs. “The service intends to enhance solidarity and cooperation at a national and international level, with special regard to the promotion of social rights and personal services, the education to peace among young people, and the preservation of national cultural heritage and the environment. The service experience is also supposed to develop the youth’s civic, social, cultural and professional conscience.”

5 “Voluntary Action Italy: Facts and Figures.”
6 Innovations in Civic Participation interview with Licio Palazzini, President of Arci Servizio Civile, June 2009. On file with author.
9 Interview with Licio Palazzini.
Challenges facing the SCN include limited and unstable funding, as well as conflict between the national and regional governments. “The national office establishes the goals for the program, liaises with central government entities and national service organizations, manages the national budget for the program, and approves the service projects. Regions are responsible for training national service personnel, conducting outreach to volunteers, and establishing associations of social service placement agencies. They have limited budgetary authority and retain only enough authority to approve social service organization projects at the regional level.”

Rationale/Background
As noted above, civilian national service began as an alternative to military service for conscientious objectors. A large number of voluntary organizations were formed to provide social services that government lacked the capacity to provide, utilizing the large pool of labor created by conscientious objectors. With the end of the draft, the voluntary SCN was created to tackle social challenges and to instill a sense of solidarity and social consciousness in young people.

Going Forward
The decline in young people as a percentage of volunteers is a worrying trend that must be confronted by both civil society organizations and the government. Furthermore, with the current economic problems and the need for austerity measures, the funding to the Servizio Civile Nazionale dropped from funding 50,000 volunteers in 2006 to 25,000 in 2009. The government would do well to continue investing in the Servizio Civile Nazionale and expanding youth civic participation opportunities to address critical needs throughout the country.

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10 H Perold et al.
Malta is a small European nation located on an archipelago in the Mediterranean, south of Sicily. Out of a total population of about 412,970, approximately 13.8% are between the ages of 15 and 24.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Malta has many organizations devoted to youth civic participation. These programs operate at the local, national and international levels, often in conjunction with the Maltese government or European organizations. The following organizations play a role in promoting youth civic engagement.

The National Youth Council (KNZ) is a civil society organization founded in the 1980s with the intent of providing a forum for young people to discuss issues and voice their concerns as well as serving as a conduit between young people and the government. The KNZ aims to influence youth policy at national and international levels, increase participation of young people in organizations and decision-making, and promote the exchange of ideas. Membership in KNZ is open to non-profit, non-governmental youth organizations with over 100 members and currently includes over 30 groups. KNZ supports civic participation through many avenues. It plays a critical role in the regular revisions of Maltese National Youth Policy. The Local Youth Council project, started by KNZ, engages 14-17 year olds (who cannot yet vote) in local political decision-making by having them write proposals on issues important to them. The KNZ also created the National Youth Parliament, an event which brings young people into Parliament to debate important political issues.²

Another civil society organization active in Malta is Youth View. Youth View was developed by young people and focuses on getting young people active in solving the problems of their communities. The organization believes young people can positively affect their communities and should be encouraged to develop their own initiatives, learn about other cultures and be knowledgeable about issues throughout Europe. Objectives of Youth View include encouraging young people to partake in NGO work, promoting active participation, and educating young people about civic opportunities and current issues.³ For example, Youth View currently works with the European Union Programmes Unit on a project in which young people produce short educational films to raise awareness about media influence in society.

The Youth in Action Program, a European Union initiative, is active in Malta. The organization encourages cultural exchange and provides a way for young people to empower themselves and take an active role in society. The program hopes to promote mutual understanding, combat racism and xenophobia, increase levels of equality, and allow free expression for young people. One Youth in Action project in Malta is Youth Initiative, in which a group of young people actively participates in a project that they have devised to address an issue of interest to them. Finally, another program is the European Voluntary Service, in which young people aged 18 to 30 spend two months to a year abroad helping with local community projects (please see the European Regional Initiatives snapshot for more information).⁴

Policy Overview
Youth policy for Malta falls under the direction of the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. In particular, a subdivision called the Youth Section assists civil society organizations and encourages youth civic participation by developing youth activities, initiatives and programs at the regional and national level. The Youth Section also acts as a

hub of information for young people who wish to actively participate in society.\textsuperscript{5} The Maltese government has a National Youth Policy that supports civic participation, but no mandatory service requirement.

The National Youth Policy of Malta was revised in 2008 by a council that included government policy experts, youth workers and a panel of young people. Recommendations from young people and youth organizations were taken into account for the final document. Key themes of the policy are family, education, employment, health, culture, community, sport, leisure, volunteering, youth justice, environment, information society, transitions and vulnerability. To improve these areas, the council chose to follow strategies involving participation and engagement, youth information, social inclusion, family and mobility. In terms of implementation, the policy dictates the development of action plans, monitoring of plan execution, and coordination of programs focused on youth empowerment, but does not identify specific programs. Strategies outlined in the program will be implemented from 2010 to 2013.\textsuperscript{6}

An example of the National Youth Policy in action can be found in the Youth Empowerment Program, a community-based interactive program. In this program youth workers and young people collaborate to identify community needs and encourage young people to exercise responsible citizenship and actively participate in society in response to the identified needs. Participants work in one of eight Empowerment Centres, where they can access information, take part in community initiatives and experience non-formal learning opportunities.\textsuperscript{7}

**Rationale/Background**

Youth employment is one of the major challenges Malta currently faces. Young Maltese between the ages of 16 and 27 account for nearly half of the unemployment rate. Since joining the EU in 2004, unemployed Maltese face competition for jobs from other Europeans, who are now free to enter the country seeking work.\textsuperscript{8} Pressure from youth unemployment led to the Maltese government revising the youth policy to focus more on youth development and non-formal education.

The most recent revision of youth policy reflects a shift in government attitude toward young people. Rather than taking the traditional view of the young population as a problem area, the government now focuses on the value of young people as an asset for improving the future of the nation. The new version of the National Youth Policy represents a collaborative effort that takes into account the stated needs and assets of Maltese youth.\textsuperscript{9}

**Going Forward**

The major constraint facing youth policy in Malta is the successful funding and implementation of action plans. Though the current policy is well-formulated, it will prove useful only if effectively put into practice. The Maltese government must provide adequate resources to insures the success of the National Youth Policy. Continued focus and investment in community-based and government initiatives supporting youth civic participation can increase inclusion and active participation among Maltese young people and contribute positively to community development.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{9} *National Youth Policy 2010-2013*.
Portugal

Portugal is a republic in southwestern Europe with a Gross National Income of $220 billion in 2008.1 Italy has a population of 10.7 million people, of whom 27.4% are under the age of 25.2

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Civil society in Portugal was stunted for much of the 20th century by dictatorship, but CSOs began increasing after the dictatorship fell in 1974. A study in 2000 revealed that civil society represented about 100,000 jobs, approximately 2.2% of the economically active population. Traditionally volunteerism was associated with religious charities. While this attitude has slowly been changing, volunteerism remains weak in Portugal. In 2001 just 12.7% of the population engaged in volunteering.3 While some CSOs are implementing youth civic participation programs in Portugal, the most prevalent initiatives are implemented by government.

Policy Overview
The National Council for Volunteering Promotion (CNPV) is responsible for promoting volunteerism, including through the creation of local volunteer centers across the country. “The State is the main actor engaged in promoting and supporting voluntary work and the idea of voluntarism across Portugal. However, its initiatives and campaigns are more directed to young people than to other age groups.”4

Article 70 of the Portuguese Constitution addresses youth policy, including encouraging young people to acquire a sense of social responsibility. Youth policy is under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport. The primary responsibility for youth service opportunities falls on the Portuguese Youth Institute, which organizes civic participation programs for those aged 12-30 in areas like forest preservation and community health. In addition, youth organizations are represented at the national level by the National Youth Council created in 1985. The Council primarily works to promote dialogue among youth organizations, leverage the strength of youth organizations in influencing public policymakers and conduct research. Law 23 of 2006 allows these youth organizations to seek funding support from the Portuguese Youth Institute.5

Major youth service programs promoted by the national government include the Young Volunteers for Solidarity and the Lusíadas, both established by the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport in 1996. Young Volunteers for Solidarity utilizes young people aged 15-30 to fight poverty, social exclusion and drug abuse. Lusíadas engages young people aged 18-30 for development projects in former Portuguese colonies in Africa in sectors such as health, education, professional training and humanitarian relief. Volunteers may serve between two months and two years.6

Rationale/Background
Given the very low rates of civic participation in Portugal, the government has sought to increase social engagement, especially by focusing on young people. For example, the aim of the Young Volunteers for Solidarity program is to “encourage the development of and participation in voluntary work by the young, to contribute to their social and

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
cultural training by giving them the opportunity to participate in activities and projects useful to both society and the local communities.\textsuperscript{7} Through government initiatives such as this and Lusíadas, as well as civil society initiatives, young people are meeting critical needs in Portugal and internationally through service.

**Going Forward**

The Portuguese government has focused considerable attention on promoting civic participation, particularly through youth service programs. At the same time, some community-based organizations and religious charities are promoting youth civic participation. However, the low rates of volunteering in Portugal and the gap between government commitment and social commitment present major challenges to the growth in a culture of service in Portugal.

\textsuperscript{7} “Country Report on the Legal Status of Volunteers in Portugal.”
United Kingdom

Located in Western Europe, the United Kingdom has an estimated population of 61 million people, with approximately 13 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$45,390.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Most young civic engagement programs in the United Kingdom are carried out by civil society organizations, although the government cooperates with many organizations and financially supports their efforts. The largest of these organizations focus on providing young people opportunities to volunteer or to engage in political dialogue.

Community Service Volunteers (CSV), founded in 1962, is a national organization that creates opportunities for young people between 16 and 24 years old, among other cohorts, to play an active role in their community. CSV focuses on service-learning and formal long-term service with specific goals of life skills development, employability, citizenship and social responsibility, and capacity building. CSV addresses issues of public health, disease prevention, the environment, education and community development. The organization offers hundreds of volunteer opportunities throughout the UK with tasks ranging from helping someone access leisure facilities to befriending a young person or serving meals to people who are homeless. CSV involves over 150,000 volunteers each year and their length of service ranges from 2 hours to 24 months.2

In 2004, the Russell Commission was created by the government to develop a new framework for youth action and engagement. The Commission recommended the creation of an independent implementation body that would take the lead in delivering the new framework in England. This body was launched in May 2006 as V and serves as a youth-led national organization that seeks to inspire a new generation of young people aged 16 to 25 to participate in their communities and to enable a lasting change in the quality, quantity and diversity of youth civic participation. V provides grants and accessibility to programs that offer formal long-term service, international volunteer service, occasional volunteering and part-time volunteer service with the goal of increasing citizenship and social responsibility and strengthening social capital among participants.3 The organization recently received government funding to implement a National Youth Volunteering Programme and given a target of 1 million volunteers by 2010.4

ProjectScotland, created in 2005, is a local organization intended to help young people between the ages of 16-25 realize their potential through civic participation. ProjectScotland works in partnership with over 300 charities and civil society organizations across Scotland. Each project is intended to develop a young person’s skills while simultaneously benefiting the community. The program’s main goals for young people are to develop communication and team-building skills, increase confidence, raise aspirations for the future and develop a sense of community participation. Programs generally last from 3 to 12 months, 30 hours per week. Young people involved in the program receive support and training from the organizations with which they serve, as well as a mentor who spends an hour each week supporting him or her in setting and reviewing goals. ProjectScotland has yielded significant results, providing 1.6 million hours of service during 2005-2008. In addition, 450 adult volunteers have been recruited as mentors to young people.5

UK Youth began in 1911 as the National Organization of Girls Clubs and after many transformations has become focused on the lives and interests of young people in the UK. Working with a network of 40 member associations, UK Youth supports over 150,000 young people and 40,000 adult volunteers. The organizational mission is to encourage young people to become active citizens and take responsibility in their communities. Two key UK Youth programs are the Youth Challenge and Youth Achievement Awards scheme, which are designed to “help develop more effective participative practice by encouraging young people to progressively take more responsibility in selecting, planning and leading activities that are based on their interests.”

The United Kingdom has two youth council organizations. The first is the British Youth Council (BYC), which works across the UK to empower people under the age of 25 to be active citizens and have their voices heard. Started in 1948, the council now involves up to 19,800 people between the ages of 11 and 17 as youth councilors. Young people participate in local youth councils and affect local governments by campaigning about issues, scrutinizing authorities, increasing youth participation and raising community awareness about youth contributions. The second youth council is the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP), which aims to provide “opportunities for 11-18 year olds to use their voice in creative ways to bring about social change.” Young people within the target age range can vote for Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs), which organize events and projects and serve as advocates on youth matters to decision-makers. UKYP is youth-led and each year 600 young people are elected to serve in the UKYP.

Policy Overview
The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)’ Joint International Unit has overall responsibility for representing UK youth policy within Europe and abroad. “This department leads work across government to ensure that all children and young people stay healthy and safe, secure an excellent education and the highest possible standards of achievement, enjoy their childhood, make a positive contribution to society and the economy, and have lives full of opportunity, free from the effects of poverty.” DCSF provides grants to various non-governmental civic participation organizations such as the British Youth Council and the UK Youth Parliament. In England, DCSF works with other governmental departments including the Cabinet Office of the Third Sector which oversees matters relating to volunteering. Additionally, various local government agencies oversee issues relating to young people and implement local youth policies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This includes the Looked After Children and Youth Work Division of the Education Department in Scotland; the Extending Entitlement policy for youth support in Wales; and the Children and Young People’s Unit within the Good Relations and Reconciliation Unit of the Office of the First Minister in Northern Ireland.

Rationale/Background
Young people in the UK, like their counterparts in many other parts of the world, are facing significant employment obstacles. The class of 2009 was reportedly the most debt-ridden group of college graduates in Britain’s history and is the least likely to find a job with unemployment rates among young people aged 18-24 rising to 17.3% during 2009. In 2009, surveyed 1,997 young people aged 16-25 regarding their civic participation activities. The survey found that 68% of young people had volunteered either formally or informally during the previous year. The young people surveyed were interested in a variety of civic participation opportunities and gaining work experience seems to be the key attraction to full-time volunteering.

Going Forward
David Cameron assumed office as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on May 11, 2010. Part of his and the Conservative Party’s platform emphasizes the creation of a national youth service program by 2013. This program, to be

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11 “Information on Youth in the United Kingdom.”
13 Will Heaven, “Class of 2009: This year's graduate's have been hung out to dry,” Telegraph Blog, Web, 29 July 2010, http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/willheaven/100003706/class-of-2009-this-years-graduates-have-been-hung-out-to-dry/.
15 “Young People Speak Out: Attitudes to, and perceptions of, full-time volunteering,” June 2009, Print.
European Regional Initiatives

The estimated population of the European Union for 2010 is 501 million people. In the 27 member states of the European Union, young people aged 15-24 make up 12.5% of the population as of 2008.

Youth Civic Participation Overview

International organizations can be found in abundance in the European Union and its member states. At the regional level these groups have in many cases joined together in large umbrella organizations for the purpose of information and resource sharing as well as cooperative efforts.

The Youth Forum Jeunesse (YFJ, European Youth Forum) is an independent, non-governmental organization founded in 1996 that represents over 90 national youth councils and international youth organizations from Europe. This organization aims to empower young people to actively participate by representing their interests and needs. To accomplish this, the YFJ advocates positive policies for young people in partnerships with international institutions such as the EU, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. It also promotes development of effective organizations at the national level by helping to ensure funding. Finally, the YFJ seeks to spread information and raise awareness about youth policies, bringing them into the mainstream at every level of political organization. A current YFJ campaign is called “2010 Building a Europe for All” and advocates increased opportunity for young adults in the interest of alleviating social exclusion and poverty.

Another example of a youth organization operating at the regional level is the European Youth Press (EYP). Founded in 2002, the EYP is comprised of young journalists throughout Europe and boasts over 48,000 members under the age of 30 through its national member organizations. Through coordination and planning of discussion forums, events and projects for young European journalists, the EYP encourages young people to actively participate in civil society by thinking critically and voicing their opinions.

Finally, the European Youth Parliament, founded in 1987, is an independent organization that encourages socio-political initiative in young people. Consisting of a network of 34 national organizations, EYP serves as a platform to over 20,000 young people for political debate, intercultural encounters and exchange of ideas. Participants take part in regional, national and international events where they work in committees to create resolutions, which will later be voted on in a mock European Parliament.

Policy Overview
The Council of the European Union, which represents EU member states, adopted the “Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)” in November 2009 based on the recommendations of the European Commission. This new youth policy plan aims to meet the challenges facing the European youth population by creating more and equal opportunities for all young people and promoting active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity.8 Member states and the European Commission will encourage youth civic participation by developing mechanisms for dialogue with young people on national youth policies, politically and financially supporting youth organizations as well as local councils, promoting greater and more diverse participation of young people in youth organizations, and supporting a “learning to participate” agenda in formal and non-formal education.9 They will encourage youth civic participation by promoting recognition of skills acquired in service activities, increasing mobility for young volunteers, raising awareness about the value of civic participation and ensuring quality volunteer activities.10 Member states and the EC will also promote youth participation in debating international issues and engaging with decision-makers.

A major youth policy program to support the Council Resolution is the Youth in Action Programme, which began in 2007 and runs through 2013. Youth in Action, which includes young people aged 15-28, aims to inspire active European citizenship, encourage tolerance and boost participation in democratic life. The program funds many activities to support its goals that are categorized into five main actions. Youth for Europe encourages young people to participate in democratic life. European Voluntary Service (EVS) encourages tolerance by sending young people to work on projects abroad for two to 12 months. Young people aged 18 to 30 participate in voluntary activities for EVS which not only benefit local communities but also improve their professional, educational and personal development. Youth in the World promotes international exchanges and friendships between young people worldwide. Youth Support Systems helps support and improve the initiatives of youth workers and their youth organizations. European Co-operation in the Youth Field enhances cooperation between youth organizations through dialogue.11

Rationale/Background
The 2010 Council Resolution which dictates youth policy drew on the recommendations of experts, member states, youth councils and youth organizations. A large issue facing European young people is a lack of opportunity. Young people, particularly those that are disadvantaged, are sometimes excluded from opportunities to participate in society. Low educational attainment and dropout rates are problematic and young people have trouble breaking into the labor market. Additionally, 20% of young people aged 16-24 were at risk of poverty as recently as 2006.12 While various European initiatives are seeking to engage young people in addressing these issues, the European Commission sees room for improvement regarding objectives for greater participation.

Going Forward
The European Union has a framework for youth policy in place in both civil society and governmental capacities as well as various regional civic participation programs. Implementation of the newest iteration of EU youth policy began in 2010 and will last until 2018, at which point it will be evaluated and revised. The policy requires collaborative efforts between the EU, member state governments, international organizations and local organizations as it seeks, in part, to expand youth civic participation opportunities in the region.

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
# Latin America and the Caribbean

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Argentina

In 2008, the Argentinean population was estimated at 39.8 million people with 12 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$7,200.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Argentina has a long history of civic engagement. Institutions such as the church and various well established clubs and civil society organizations have provided Argentinians with service opportunities promoting a culture of civic engagement.

For example, the Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD), an international organization founded in 1995, has various programs geared toward young people. FSD’s programs include an organic vegetable garden project to train marginalized youth how to create sustainable food sources, a program to develop athletic education programs for vulnerable children and adolescents, and a recruitment campaign to draw young adults to volunteer as mentors for students ages 4-12. These programs involve mostly marginalized youth from the La Plata area.2 While organizations such as these are working with young people in Argentina, the main youth service efforts come from government.

Policy Overview
Argentina has a National Youth Bureau located within the Ministry of Social Development. The National Youth Bureau implements a number of youth civic engagement programs, however the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive national youth policy. The Bureau operates Youth Cooperatives in which young people operate their own cooperatives as a tool for skill building. Administratively, the Bureau registers all youth-focused civil society organizations operating in the country in an effort to develop common policies and plans among all organizations and to coordinate their youth efforts on the local level.

In addition, the Bureau funds youth-focused projects and programs that are carried out locally by civil society organizations. Funding takes the form of monetary grants or the provision of tools, machines and training courses and materials in support of the program. The Bureau specifically seeks to fund projects that meet a community need and which build youth skills, leading them to further employment opportunities in the future, and which foster youth entrepreneurial skills and social development.

Argentina’s Presidential Decree 377 established the Presidential Award for “Escuelas Solidarias.”3 Administered each year by the Ministry of Education, beginning in 2000, the Presidential Award is given to primary and secondary school-based programs that show promise in implementing effective service-learning programs. Presidential Awards provide government recognition and financial resources to schools to further the implementation and growth of their service-learning programs.

Finally, Argentina’s 2004 Law on Social Volunteerism4 was passed after the economic crises that began in 1998 and led to an upswell in civic participation. The law calls for the promotion of volunteerism through the provision of support and assistance to volunteer programs, while also calling for increased support, training and recognition of civil society organizations that make volunteer opportunities available to the public. Although the law was passed by the legislature

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in 2004, no follow up implementing law has been passed, with the result that the provisions of the law have generally not been enacted.  

Rationale/Background
With valuable natural resources and a highly literate population, Argentina has traditionally been one of the more prosperous countries in Latin America. While the 1998 economic crises shook the country to the core, one positive effect was the resulting increase in community service and the subsequent passage of the Law on Social Volunteerism. This Law does not specify youth volunteerism, however, and the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive national youth policy. The Argentinean Ministry of Social Development currently has programs focused on strengthening personal and social skills, access to basic public goods, reconstruction of social networks and food security, however, these programs are not specifically targeted toward young people.

Going Forward
Civic participation among the general Argentinean population and young people is promoted in Argentina through civil society programs and long-standing laws and government-supported programs. Argentina could benefit by passing implementing legislation in support of the 2004 Law on Social Volunteerism and further expand its support for civic engagement. The passage of such legislation could provide much needed support to civil society organizations throughout the country and enable them to reach increasing numbers of young people to engage them in valuable service activities.

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6 Ibid.
The Bahamas

The Bahamas, a nation consisting of a group of islands in the Caribbean, has a population estimated to be around 346,000 with approximately 59,000 people between the ages of 15 and 24 years old.  

Youth Civic Participation Overview

Civil society organizations play a major role in encouraging youth participation in the Bahamas. The most prominent of these organizations are supported and run by religious or international groups. In the absence of strong government involvement in youth civic engagement, the following organizations are engaging young people as active citizens.

The Girl Guides organization, originally founded in England in 1910, was brought to the Bahamas just five years later. The Bahamas Girl Guides currently boasts 2,300 members and promotes service to God, country and other people. Parts of the guide program specifically involve civic engagement—particularly the “Giving Service” portion, which mandates that guides must engage with the elderly and perform service in the form of peer outreach, tutoring and mentoring. The guides program has been an important outlet for the engagement and development of young Bahamian girls.

Additionally, in conjunction with the original Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme in the UK, the Governor General’s Award Programme (GGYA) was established in the Bahamas in 1987. Following the principles of the original program, the GGYA has reached over 8,000 Bahamians who engage in community service, physical recreation, and apprenticeship of a new skill or hobby. Among the program’s objectives are to help participants develop an independent and self-motivating attitude, a sense of responsibility to others, a connection to broader society and team skills. Achieving an award through GGYA requires completing requirements in four areas: skills, physical recreation, community service and adventurous journeys. The community service portion can be completed in a variety of ways including teaching children, repairing homes, doing conservation work or fundraising for charity.

Policy Overview

Within the Bahamian government, the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture holds responsibility for youth policy. In June 2010, Charles Maynard, Minister of Youth, Sport and Culture, unveiled a new plan for a youth program called the GOLD initiative. Maynard developed the GOLD plan—which is an acronym for Greatness Opportunities Leadership and Development—after consultation with the National Youth Advisory Council. GOLD will be an all-inclusive plan that reaches every Bahamian between the ages of 14 and 25 based off the model created by the Governor General’s Award Program. Utilizing a $350,000 budget, the GOLD initiative incorporates all parts of society into the youth program—government agencies, local officials, corporate partners and youth organizations. Up to 12,000 young people will be engaged through this program in its first three years of operation. Those involved will participate in service activities that instill a sense of responsibility and hard work, including national events and national projects. GOLD was scheduled to begin implementation in September 2010.

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Rationale/Background
The GOLD Plan has been developed by the government to address critical needs among the youth population in the Bahamas. Drug and gang related violence remains a challenge and young males are losing their lives at increasing rates—of 57 males killed this year, 21 were under the age of 25. Past government plans have been unsuccessful in addressing the need for effective youth programs. From 2002-2009, the government sponsored the National Youth Service Restorative Policy, which used boot-camp style training to reach troubled young males. Though the program succeeded in helping participants become better citizens, its success was tempered by lack of scope. Despite utilizing a budget of around $1 million in 2008, the program included less than 100 participants per year. In order to more effectively use government funds, the NYSRP has been replaced by the GOLD initiative, which reaches many more young people at a lower cost. In addition to government initiatives, various civil society organizations are engaging young people in service opportunities in their communities to prevent risky behaviors and equip young people with skills for success.

Going Forward
The GOLD program represents a new phase in Bahamian government commitment to youth civic participation. Implementing the program will require overcoming adversity in the form of school dropouts and youth gangs, which rose in number by 58% in the past 8 years. If the program succeeds in its first three years, the government may decide to expand funding for youth civic participation to reach more of the population. The government could benefit from continuing to invest resources in important youth civic participation opportunities that can contribute to youth and community development throughout the country.

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**Barbados**

An island nation in the eastern Caribbean Sea, the Barbados population was estimated at 255,000 people in 2008. Approximately 56,000 people are under 18 years old.

**Youth Civic Participation Overview**

Barbados has an open society with a thriving civic culture. One example of a community-based youth civic participation organization is the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN), whose Caribbean Youth Program for Action on Climate Change, created in 1993, promotes youth awareness of the impacts of climate change by providing youth leadership training and conducting youth consultations on climate change, advocacy and research. While there are other youth groups, clubs and organizations, the major national youth service movement is occurring through new government initiatives seeking to implement a widespread service scheme.

**Policy Environment**

The Division of Youth Affairs, a department of the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Sports, was founded in 1995 with the “responsibility of fulfilling the Government’s mandate relative to youth development.” The Division’s goal is “to facilitate the development of confident, proud, self-reliant and creative individuals through (youth) involvement in productive activity that contributes to personal, community and national development.” Some organizations created by the Division of Youth Affairs include the Barbados Youth Service (BYS), the Youth Development Program (YDP), Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) and the Youth Mainstreaming Program (YMP).

All of these programs provide services for youth, focusing on their education, skills training and employment.

Barbados is currently creating a National Youth Service (NYS) scheme. The new NYS will target young people ages 11 to 21, and will provide them with education and training in social and civic engagement. Once students reach school leaving age, they will be required to perform 250 hours of community service over the course of two years. The new scheme will also make concerted efforts to enroll and deploy unemployed, out-of-school young people and young criminal offenders. The NYS is expected to be introduced in phases beginning in the 2010/2011 school year.

Finally, Barbados is planning to draft and implement a National Youth Policy for Barbados. The Minister of Youth, Family and Sports said about the new National Youth Policy, we must “try to get more out of what we are doing, so that our programmes are not just short term, but can make a difference in the lives and thinking of our young people and have that sustained for many years to come.” Officials from the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports have held National Youth Forums where they sought input from young people regarding their needs and what they would like to see included in a National Youth Policy. The National Youth Forums have been unique in that multiple forums have been held throughout Barbados, effectively bringing the forum to young people in the country instead of making them come to the forum. Officials have stated that they expect to have the policy drafted and begin implementing parts of the National Youth Policy by early 2011.

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4 Ibid.
Rationale/Background
The Division of Youth Affairs and the Community Development Department is attempting to reinvigorate the spirit of civic engagement found in communities in Barbados. The Division explains that youth and community groups face declining membership, financial concerns, a lack of community/organizational support and inadequate facilities. Hally Hayes, the Director of Youth at the Division of Youth Affairs, writes “it is therefore imperative that the Division and other agencies lend the necessary assistance and guidance to ensure the sustainability and longevity of these organizations.”

The NYS will expand the age range of targeted participants, seeking to intervene with young people at an earlier age. The Minister of Youth says that the program will move away from the government’s focus on marginalized young people to instead include every Barbadian young people.

Going Forward
The Barbados government is showing a commitment to supporting youth civic participation through the creation of several dedicated organizations, including the Division of Youth Affairs (DYA) and the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sports. The DYA has instituted several programs geared toward mentoring and teaching young people in Barbados important values through specialized programs, while simultaneously contributing to personal, community and national development. The Barbados government has also been working toward a National Youth Policy and after much consultation and deliberation, approval is expected in 2011 and implementation soon after.

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8 Sharon Austin.
Bermuda

A group of islands in the north Atlantic Ocean, Bermuda’s population was estimated at 64,000 in 2008.\(^1\) There were approximately 6,300 young people between 15 and 24 years old in 2000.\(^2\)

**Youth Civic Participation Overview**

Bermuda has an active society, with several organizations working toward youth and community development. While religious, community and national civil society organizations all provide some form of short-term civic participation opportunities for young people, the main developments in the field are occurring in the public sphere through developing government initiatives.

For example, the Centre for Philanthropy promotes civic participation and a culture of giving in Bermuda. Founded in 1991 by a group of volunteers, the Centre houses the Bermuda Volunteer Centre, an online volunteer matching platform. In addition, the Centre implements programs, events and workshops to provide training to its members in support of expanding civic participation opportunities. Currently over 260 individuals, corporations and civil society organizations are members of the Centre.\(^3\)

**Policy Environment**

Bermuda has a Ministry of the Environment and Sports and the Department of Youth, Sports and Recreation which, together, are responsible for many programs that “enrich the lives and development of our young people and prepare them for service to the community.”\(^4\) Some of the mechanisms in place to accomplish these goals are programs to facilitate leadership through training, promoting youth service initiatives, encouraging community service initiatives by young people, and facilitating participation in international youth exchanges and training.\(^5\) The Department of Youth, Sport, and Recreation offers qualifying youth organizations Youth Development Grants for programs and initiatives that promote positive youth development.\(^6\) The Department of Youth is guided by its Youth Policy Framework, which is the first broad-based policy document on youth with their aspirations, needs and conditions formally recognized in a policy initiative in Bermuda.

In February 2010, Bermuda Premier Ewart Brown announced plans for the establishment of a National Service Program in Bermuda. The service will be a voluntary program open to young people between the ages of 24 to 30. Participants will serve for 16 hours each month for two years. Activities will include: tutoring in core subjects in the education system, young adults providing professional advice based on their expertise, coaching young people or holding an office in sports programs, serving on private government boards related to youth or seniors, serving as a volunteer to youth-related organizations/agencies and assuming leadership responsibilities as delegated by the Department of National Service. A number of incentives will be provided to encourage young people to join the service, including free public transportation, low interest bank loans, discounts at various retailers, public recognition for completed service and ongoing support from organization and alumni networks.\(^7\) The National Service Program will be headquartered in the Department for National Services.

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Service, which will be a part of the Ministry of Labor, Home Affairs and Housing. The Department of National Service will be headed by a Director who would answer directly to the Permanent Secretary.

**Rationale/Background**
Bermudian officials have cited recent increases in violence, anti-social behavior and feelings of entitlement among young people in the country as reasons for establishing the National Service Program. The government feels that engaging young people in service activities will encourage feelings of responsibility and civic engagement among participants, while also providing young people with the opportunity to develop skills that can be applied toward fulfilling careers. Bermudian officials have recognized that young Bermudians are disconnected from society and participating in behavior that puts their safety at risk. Additionally, these at-risk young people may be alienated from their parents and not learning the skills to become successful positive members of society. The National Service Program and other civil society organizations are trying to address issues such as these by expanding opportunities for young people to be engaged in their communities through service.

**Going Forward**
The Government of Bermuda is still in the process of finalizing its National Service Program and is beginning the process of publicizing and explaining the program to its citizens. Through the implementation of the programs and policy currently underway, and the participation of young Bermudians, the Government of Bermuda has recognized the importance of its young citizens as well as the significant positive impact they can achieve when engaged in community development.

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8 Ruth O’Kelly –Lynch and Tim Smith.
Bolivia

Located in central South America, Bolivia had a population of approximately 9.8 million people in 2007. As of 2006, approximately 2.9 million Bolivians were between 10 and 24 years old. In 2009 Bolivia’s GDP reached US$17.5 billion with an annual growth rate of 3.7%.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Like other countries in Latin America, there are numerous civil society organizations in Bolivia that provide services to young people but do not necessarily engage them in service projects. Many often provide opportunities for young people to volunteer on a short term basis such as the Bolivian Red Cross. Others focus on poverty reduction along with civic engagement.

For example, the Arco Iris Foundation began its work in 1994 as a CSO under the principles of the Roman Catholic Church. AIF’s core goal is to fight the discrimination and social exclusion of poor and homeless children, teens and young adults living and working on the streets of La Paz. AIF attempts to achieve its goals through the empowerment of young people to become leaders in their community by providing financial and social assistance, training, and support to lift them out of poverty and engage them in productive activities.

Additionally, Eco-Jovenes Bolivia was founded in 1997 to promote the rights of children and young people and encourage their participation in society. It promotes active citizenship through providing spaces for young people where they can express their opinions on issues that matter to them.

Policy Overview
Bolivia has a Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sport, a National Youth Policy (NYP) passed in 1998 and a Presidential Youth Decree of 1999 (PYD). Both of these documents outline the rights of the country’s young people and calls on the government to develop policies and programs specifically tailored toward promoting youth development. Civic engagement has been identified in the NYP, PYD, and successive youth-related policies as an effective method for promoting youth development and the government has implemented programs to require or encourage youth civic engagement.

One effort to encourage youth civic participation is the Youth Fortification Program. This initiative promotes coordination among organizations that provide youth civic participation opportunities in Bolivia. Through this program, organizations receive training on different methods of coordinating efforts related to promoting youth civic participation and the program maintains a database of organizations providing youth service opportunities. Through this database, young people can be matched up with civic participation opportunities of varied duration and frequency provided by local organizations in various sectors. The government provides annual funding for the Youth Fortification Program, covering basic costs including salaries, training and/or supplies.

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Rationale/Background
Bolivia is one of the poorest and least developed countries in Latin America, with 70 percent of its population living in poverty. The country’s unemployment rate is 8.5% in urban areas, and there is widespread underemployment. Approximately 40% of the population works in the agricultural sector. Given its low development status, young people in the country encounter many challenges, including high teen pregnancy, lack of employment, and general lack of opportunities. Bolivia’s National Youth Policy was implemented amidst rising concern regarding the state of youth development in the country, and the policies and program formed thereafter are an attempt to reduce the marginalization of young people in the country.

Going Forward
While Bolivia has made some effort to address youth development, its weak economy has prevented it not only from providing jobs to its young people but also from fully funding and implementing stronger, wider reaching youth programs. Compared to other countries in Latin America, Bolivian efforts to build a strong infrastructure of youth policies and programs is still in its early stages and in the future Bolivia would benefit by making stronger investments in youth civic participation.

Brazil

Brazil is the largest country in South America with a population of approximately 192 million people in 2008. Approximately 60 million people are under 18 years old and the GNI per capita is US$7,350.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Brazil has an active civil society, with organizations such as the church and various international organizations providing services to young people and engaging them in short-term civic participation activities. For example, UNICEF and its partners in Brazil have organized cooperation among developing countries to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices in order to “mobilize government and society in support of the rights of children and adolescents living in ‘comunidades populares.’”2 In particular, UNICEF and its partners organize the Platform of Urban Centres, launched in 2009, which provides young people in their pre-teens and teens the opportunity to raise their voices and have contact with public managers. The program currently reaches 126 low-income communities in Brazil. In June 2010, boys and girls on the platform met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and they spoke with him about challenges facing young people in the country’s poor urban districts.3

In addition, many institutions for higher education in Brazil implement youth civic participation projects. For example, the Universidade Federal de São Paolo (UNIFESP) manages the Family Health Program, in which university students provide healthcare to indigenous people and others of low economic means.4 The Universidade Estudal de Maringa has a program in the Cytogenetics Clinic of its Biological Sciences Center, in which students offer genetic examination and counseling to help patients and family members diagnose genetic disorders.5 In both of these cases, students provide services to the community and gain valuable academic experience.

Policy Overview
Brazil has a Civilian Volunteer Service Policy (Serviço Civil Voluntário, SCV) which was passed in 1996 and began being implemented throughout Brazil in 2001. The policy allows young people between the ages of 18–21 to perform community service as an alternative to military service, with the intent being to strengthen the civic engagement and pride of Brazilian young people.6 The SCV has a duration of 600 hours over six months, and consists of three basic activities: the improvement of education, professional skills and community service. In 1999, the SCV expanded to more than 14 states and served over 8,000 young people.7

Besides the SCV, Brazil also has a National Council of Youth, a National Secretariat of Youth and a National Youth Policy (2005). These institutions, created and overseen by the Office of the President, are charged with advocating for youth policy within the government through representation of young people and research of youth status in society. The main youth issues that these ministries address are unemployment, lack of education, crime and drugs. In particular, the

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National Youth Policy has a provision for the National Youth Inclusion Program (ProJovem), which began in 2005. ProJovem has programs in every state/district in Brazil and is provided for young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years. The program provides a one year basic education course for unemployed young people who have not completed primary education. In addition to education, it provides participants with employment skills and a monthly stipend. Finally, information on ProJovem states that the program specifically stresses civic engagement among the young people involved, though limited information was available regarding the methodology.8

Rationale/Background
Approximately 80 percent of the population of Brazil lives in urban areas where inequity is common. The urban poor suffer significantly higher rates of health problems, violence, neonatal and child deaths, and frequently lack access to quality education unlike their more affluent peers.9 Brazil has a large youth population that presents an important resource for the country’s development. As Brazil struggles with unemployment, drug use and violent crime, the youth population is at risk for falling into criminal activity and poverty.10 As such, the Office of the President implemented a comprehensive youth policy to address these issues and expand opportunities for young people to be engaged in the country’s development.11 The SCV, for instance, was instituted in 1996 in order to capitalize on the large portion of young people in Brazil not chosen for military service.

Going Forward
Programs by international and higher education institutions are addressing the needs of marginalized young people and those without healthcare in Brazil through youth civic participation. In addition, due to a growing state of unease with regard to the disconnect between young people and democratic participation, Brazil is working to improve and advance programs focused on youth civic engagement.12 At the same time, the government initiative, SCV, has been active for multiple years, and while experts from the region state that it has been effective in introducing marginalized young people to community service, it has been weakened by recent budget cuts.13

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9 Sobreira.
10 Amorim.
11 “Política Nacional de Juventude.”
13 Metz et al.
Cayman Islands

Made up of three islands in the western Caribbean, the Cayman Islands has a population of approximately 54,000 people. According to 2000 estimates, 19.5% of the population was under 15 years old.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
The Cayman Islands has an active civil society sector that provides multiple activities and opportunities for youth civic participation including churches, clubs, associations and community groups. Many provide short-term civic participation opportunities, in sectors as varied as environmental conservation to working with the very young and the elderly. Some of these organizations include the Commonwealth Youth Club of the Cayman Islands, Big Brother Big Sister of the Cayman Islands and the Cayman Islands Reading Aids.

The Commonwealth Youth Club of the Cayman Islands works with young people 15-35 years old to empower young people to “develop their potential, creativity and skills as productive and dynamic members of society.” Founded in 2001, the Commonwealth Youth Club engages young people in community service projects such as planting trees, preventing drug use and collecting basic supplies for the Red Cross.

Big Brother Big Sister of the Cayman Islands has been operational in the Cayman Islands for over 25 years and provides weekly school and community-based peer mentors for young people aged 5-14 years. Young men and women in the community donate about two hours of their time to mentor their “brothers” or “sisters” each week. Finally, Cayman Islands Reading Aids, works with educated young people, age 7 and up, to provide literacy education for motivated adults. Participants also participate in one-on-one reading programs with prison inmates to help improve literacy rates for those in the criminal justice system.

Policy Overview
The Cayman Islands has a National Youth Policy of September 2000 and a Ministry of Health, Environment, Youth, Sports and Culture. Some of the goals set forth in the National Youth Policy include: training and employment for all young people, sustainable social/economic/physical development of the Cayman Islands and encouraging/facilitating the participation of young people in decision making forums. The Ministry has a Youth Services Unit, which engages in a number of activities aimed at promoting youth development in the country and carrying out the youth policy. The Youth Services Unit targets young people ages 10 to 25, and seeks to provide resources for them to connect with government and civil society actors providing youth services, programs and engagement. One of the main actions of the Youth Services Unit is to regularly publish a Youth Service Providers Directory. This directory lists youth programs and summer

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8 Ibid.
activities available to young people in the country and provides contact information and resources enabling young people to sign up to participate in programs carried out by organizations of their choosing. This directory furthers the goals of youth civic engagement by effectively linking civil society actors, including some of the civic participation programs described above, with their youth constituents.

The Youth Services Unit operates a number of other programs for young people in the country that provide civic engagement opportunities. These programs include the Cayman Islands Youth Assembly (CIYA), the Youth Flex Radio Show, the Sizzling Summer Series Camps and the Cayman Island Scouts. CIYA is a three-year-old organization that acts as a youth advocacy group, working to bring the opinions of young people to the attention of government leaders and ministers. The YouthFlex program partners with the private sector Radio Cayman One to broadcast a daily youth interest program, whereby young people act as journalists, commentators and speakers, discussing issues of concern to them. Finally, the Sizzling Summer Series Camps and the Cayman Island Scouts are both programs that organize young people to engage with their community and carry out service projects as a method of character development and continuing education.

Rationale/Background
In 1995, the Government of the Cayman Islands began a five year process of examining the state of young people within the country. Through that process, it was determined that while many of the young people of the Cayman Islands appeared to be well adjusted and successfully transitioning from adolescence into adulthood, there was a component of the youth population that suffered from broken families, poverty and other challenges and failed to realize their full potential. In the end, the government decided that the country was failing its young people by not having a dedicated youth policy and youth specific programs and policies. Thus, the National Youth Policy of the Cayman Islands was created in 2000. In the following years, the Youth Services Unit was created to carry out the implementation of the programs called for in the youth policy, and the results are the program and policies described above.

Going Forward
The Cayman Islands has a comprehensive youth policy, dedicated government agency charged with carrying out its initiatives and an active civil society promoting youth civic participation. Due to the accountability resting with the Youth Services Unit, a number of programs have been implemented in a relatively short period since its inception. Going forward, the government, youth agencies and civil society could benefit by continuing to work together to grow their connection with the youth population and the implementation of youth civic engagement opportunities that involve even larger portions of the youth population.

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11 Cayman Islands National Youth Policy.
Chile

Bordering the South Pacific Ocean in South America, Chile has an estimated population of 16.8 million people (2008). Approximately 4.7 million Chileans are under 18 years old and the GNI per capita is US$9,400.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Chile has a strong civil society with a number of organizations that provide civic participation opportunities for young people in the country. The Catholic Church provides a number of opportunities, as well as multiple local civil society organizations. One prominent program is Un Techo para Chile (A roof for Chile). Founded in 1997, Un Techo para Chile works nationally with 2,500 volunteers and 120 permanent staff. This program seeks to combat homelessness by utilizing youth and adult volunteers to build housing for needy individuals and communities.²

Un Techo para mi Pais, founded in 1997 by a group of university students, is working with over 20,000 young people each year in Chile. The vision of Un Techo para mi Pais is to create a Latin America free from poverty, where families have decent housing and real opportunities to improve their quality of life. Un Techo para mi Pais works toward this goal by building transitional housing for families with the help of volunteers.³

The Fundacion Superacion de la Pobreza (FSP, the Poverty Eradication Foundation) is a nonprofit institution founded in 1994 whose mission is to help overcome poverty by promoting greater equity and social integration in Chile. Servicio Pais (Country Service), a program run by the FSP, aims at overcoming poverty in vulnerable communities in Chile by working with 450 businesses and 1,200 volunteers each year. The program is a year in length and involves four specific “strands” of work: education, work, habitability and health.⁴

Another FSP program is Servicio País Rural (Rural Country Service). Through the program, young professionals in Chile volunteer to serve in rural communities throughout the country, utilizing their knowledge and technical skills to pursue development goals. Young people work for 13 months in sectors such as education and health, law centers, tourism, local economic development and economic planning, housing, community planning and environmental preservation. Participants receive a monthly stipend of US $480 and housing support.

The YMCA in Chile also provides youth civic participation opportunities. In one program, the YMCA trains young women from low income neighborhoods in preventing teen pregnancy and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The program aims to empower the young women to become youth leaders in their communities and to spread sexual health education. Training occurs bi-weekly over four months. After completion, the youth leaders then hold awareness raising activities in their communities, under the guidance of a certified social worker.⁵

In addition to local community organizations, many universities in Chile have youth civic participation opportunities. The Universidad de los Lagos (the University of Lagos) operates the Centro de Cooperacion al Desarrollo Service mi Tierra, which provides a space for meeting and cooperation between the university and its surrounding community, specifically as it relates to green and ecological issues. Through the center, students are connected with local

⁵“Youth and The Development Goals: Challenges & Opportunities for Implementation,” Ad Hoc Working Group for Youth & the MDG’s, Print.
organizations and community groups that could use their support as volunteers. Some areas in which young people serve include recycling, organic farming, promoting school farms, fundraising and more. In another program, the Catholic University of Chile operates the Center for Sustainable Development, in which upper level students engage with international and national professionals in receiving training in ecological management and preparing to positively affect their communities through environmental conservation.

Policy Overview
Chile has the Division de Organizaciones Sociales (Social Organizations Division) which is a government institution responsible for coordinating and implementing public policy in matters of civic participation and strengthening civil society. Chile also has a Ministry of Sports and Youth, which oversees youth affairs, and the government operates a number of programs spurring youth civic participation. One such program is the Fortalecimientos de Alianzas entre Sociedad Civil y Estado (Strengthening Alliances between State and Civil Society). Started in 2000, this program provides opportunities for young people ages 15 to 24 to perform community service through public and private organizations in order to increase civic engagement among young people. The program, financed in part by the Inter-American Development Bank, connects young people with civic participation activities, while also connecting various community groups that support civic participation in order to build their capacity and strengthen their ability to achieve important youth policies and programs. Going forward, the program is looking toward designing, implementing and evaluating a widespread youth civic participation pilot program and to propose a national strategy for volunteering with the goal of increasing the participants’ level of civic engagement.

Rational/Background
During the 1990’s, after a 17 year military dictatorship from 1973-1990, Chile began to restore its democracy with special attention given to Chile’s “social debt,” that is, the outstanding commitment of the state to those citizens who experienced especially high social and economic costs. Despite being one of the more prosperous countries in South America, the Government of Chile faces many issues critical to its citizens: poverty, poor quality of education, inadequate healthcare, and housing shortages among other areas and its youth civic participation programs as well as the efforts of various civil society organizations are a tool for combating such issues.

Going Forward
Chile is one of the most stable countries in Latin America. As such, it has a healthy civil society and government institutions that promote youth civic participation. The government and civil society organizations have implemented various initiatives to engage young people on wide scales to meet various community needs and gain skills through civic participation.

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7 “Catholic University of Temulco (Chile),” The Talloires Network, Print.
Colombia

Bordering the Caribbean Sea and the north Pacific Ocean, Colombia has a population of approximately 45 million people (2008). Approximately 16 million Colombians are under 18 and the GNI per capita is US$4,660.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Colombia has an active civil society with many organizations focused on promoting youth development. Through churches, clubs, universities and other civil society actors, young people can find multiple short-term civic participation opportunities in their communities.

One organization that provides civic participation opportunities is the Corporacion Grupo Tayrona. Formally established in 1999, this organization operates the Training School for Youth and the Environment, which provides knowledge and skill-building for young people ages 14 to 30, in an effort to encourage their involvement in environmental and sustainable development efforts. The Corporacion also operates the Volunteers in Action Program, another platform through which young people participate in conservation efforts.2

Policy Overview
Colombia’s main governmental institution governing youth affairs is Colombia Joven and is operated out of the Office of the President. Created in 2000, this agency implements programs and policies that encourage Colombian youth development. Its initiatives are diverse, ranging from partnering with private sector actors to fund and encourage youth entrepreneurship to spearheading anti-violence training and learning programs.3

Like its non-governmental counterparts, Colombia Joven is tasked with simultaneously addressing a number of pressing concerns afflicting young people in the country and civic participation is generally considered a positive development for Colombian youth, along with other programming meant to address youth concerns. Colombia’s Ley General de Educación (General Law of Education), passed in 1994, requires 10th and 11th grade high school students to participate in community service in order to graduate.4

Rationale/Background
Colombia has experienced instability due to continued conflict between the government and armed insurgent groups for the last 40 years. This, plus high levels of violence in urban areas and consistent gang activity, present the most pressing issues for promoting youth civic participation.5 Additionally, Colombia has a 12% unemployment rate and almost 50% of individuals live below the poverty line. As youth groups and policies target their efforts to combating these issues, youth civic participation is not often highlighted as a specific method of youth development. However, the programs described in this snapshot are actively working to support youth civic participation enabling young people to contribute to their development and to improve their communities by addressing critical needs such as these.

References:
Going Forward
Some civil society programs promote youth civic participation, while the government is implementing limited programs for engaging young people in Colombia. However, given the pressing need to involve Colombian youth in constructive activities, large scale youth civic participation initiatives should be considered more strongly as an opportunity to capture the energy of young people to contribute to development in the country.
**Costa Rica**

Located between Nicaragua and Panama in Central America, Costa Rica has a population of approximately 4.5 million people with approximately 1.45 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$6,060.1

**Youth Civic Participation Overview**

Costa Rica has a strong civil society with multiple opportunities for youth civic engagement. Through churches, clubs and civil society organizations, young people in the country can engage in a variety of short-term civic participation projects such as helping the elderly or engaging in environmental conservation efforts. However, the main formal, long-term service initiatives in the country are found within the education system.

For example, the University of Costa Rica maintains a program called Trabajo Comunal Universitario (TCU, University Community Work). This program aims to mobilize students into action to contribute to national development and community well-being and bring students into contact with pressing national issues. Under TCU, all undergraduate students perform 300 hours of community work, chosen from a variety of projects and programs available. Students often work in groups and have a professor assigned to supervise their work and engage students in discussions around the learning they are taking away from the project.2

**Policy Overview**

Costa Rica has a Ley General de la Persona Joven (General Youth Law) of 2002, aimed at ensuring access to services and resources and allowing young people opportunities to fully exercise their citizenship. Additionally, a Ministerio de Cultura, Joventud y Deportes (Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports) oversees youth policies and programming. Costa Rica also has a Consejo de la Persona Joven (National Council of Young Persons), which works with both CSOs and government to promote youth policies and services through inter-agency support, cooperation and access to information.3 Consejo de la Persona Joven was created in May 2002 by the Ley General de la Persona Joven, No. 8261. Consejo de la Persona Joven works with young Costa Ricans to promote civic participation and formulate and implement the national policy.4

While the TCU program (described above) is one of the most well-established education-based service programs in Costa Rica, the government has also implemented other education-based civic participation initiatives. The Comisión del Servicio Social Obligatorio (Mandatory Social Service Commission) instituted the Servicio Social Obligatorio para los Profesionales en Ciencias de la Salud (Mandatory Social Service for Professionals in Health Sciences) program in which medical students are required to serve one year working with disadvantaged populations in urban and rural areas. At the high school level, a newly implemented program requires high school students to complete community service hours as a pre-requisite for graduation.5 However, limited information about the program is available.

Besides education-based civic participation programs, the government, through the Consejo de la Persona Joven, initiates a variety of other civic participation projects, some of which are in the environmental conservation sector. An example of

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one such initiative is Isla del Coco Voluntary Service (Cocos Island Voluntary Service) program. This program brings young people between the ages of 18 and 35 to the Cocos Island for one month, during which they engage in environmental conservation service projects. The intent is to engage young people in productive activity while developing their affinity and appreciation for the environment and conservation efforts.6

Rationale/Background
Costa Rica is a stable, relatively prosperous Latin American country. Though the country is still primarily agricultural in nature, land ownership is high and it has developed a thriving tourism, especially eco-tourism, industry. Given this, civic participation opportunities for young people, especially in the environment, abound. In 2002, the Consejo de la Persona Joven performed a demographic analysis of young people living in Costa Rica, documenting many of the needs and issues they face; poverty, lack of education, housing, etc. As a result, the policies set forward by the council seek to create new experiences for young people in Costa Rica, allowing them to become involved in economic, political and social strategies working toward sustainable human development in the region.7

Going Forward
In a departure from its education-based civic participation programs, Costa Rica is implementing a new youth entrepreneurship program. Called the PROJOVEM Program for Young Entrepreneurs, the program provides training to young people who want to start their own businesses, advice and training on developing business plans, and information, technical tools and funding to launch their enterprises. The program is managed by the Department of Youth and the Consejo de la Persona Joven, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. It is funded by the government and organizations in the private sector, including the Banco Popular. This is another effort to engage young people on the margins of society to be involved citizens.8

Youth civic participation in Costa Rica primarily manifests in the education sector through university and government programs, while some other civil society initiatives also seek to engage young people on a more limited basis. It is important that the Government of Costa Rica continue to expand the resources allocated to these programs which provide some of the necessary encouragement and initial resources needed to meet critical needs through youth civic participation.

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Dominican Republic

Sharing the island of Hispaniola with Haiti in the Caribbean Sea, the Dominican Republic has an estimated population of 9.95 million people with approximately 3.7 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$4,390.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
The Dominican Republic has a number of civil society organizations working for poverty reduction and youth development in the country. For example, in 2009, the United Nations Volunteers program (UNV) worked with Alianza ONG and the Sirve Quisqueya Network to support the creation of a law on volunteerism in the Dominican Republic. Alianza ONG is a membership association founded in 1996 to promote participation and investment in social and economic development by supporting collaboration between institutions in both the public and private sectors. Alianza ONG develops projects in social responsibility, volunteerism and institutional strengthening.2

In addition, the Sirve Quisqueya Network is a coalition of agencies working to create civic participation opportunities for Dominican youth through the implementation of community teaching projects and youth groups. One example of a group started by the Sirve Quisqueya Network is the Brigada Verde (Green Brigade). Founded in 2004, Brigada Verde seeks to strengthen the Dominican democracy by engaging Dominican youth in activities directed at environmental protection.3

Finally, some organizations seek to empower young people with the specific intent that they will go out and further empower their communities. Organizations such as Fundacion Sur Adelante (Forward South Foundation) and the Callejera-Action Educational Foundation work with the youth population living in extreme poverty. They mobilize young people to become change agents in their communities, instilling in them the importance of health and education while also providing them with access to libraries, computers and law services. The intent is to develop young people to be aware of their rights and abilities, so that they can better organize themselves and develop their communities.4

Policy Overview
The Dominican Republic has a Ministro de la Juventud (Ministry of Youth) as well as a Ley 49-2000, Ley General de Juventude (General Youth Law of 2000).5 The law pinpoints youth civic participation as an important part of promoting youth development and well being. Young people in the Dominican Republic are those between the ages of 15 and 35, and the General Youth Law outlines the rights of young people and provides for the creation of, and guidelines for, Municipal, Regional and National Youth Councils to promote youth participation in communities through civic participation activities. The youth councils coordinate with local CSOs to promote youth development, involvement and activities, as well as advocating the government for pro-

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youth policies. Despite its written support of civic participation, this component of the law does not receive any special funds beyond what is normally allocated to fund youth policy.\(^6\)

The Dominican Republic’s Ministro de la Juventud (Ministry of Youth), created by a law passed in July 2000,\(^7\) targets young people ages 15-35 through its framework of effective coordination and implementation of youth policies and involvement in the decision making process. In December of 1993, a law was passed declaring January 31st of each year, Fiesta de San Juan Bosco Day (Feast of Saint Juan Bosco), as Dia Nacional de la Juventud (National Youth Day). Also created under this law was the National Youth Award, which recognizes the 10 most outstanding young people of the Dominican Republic.\(^8\)

In addition to its Youth Law, the Dominican Republic has a national education-based policy that requires high school students to complete 60 hours of service as a prerequisite of graduation. Students can perform any type of service to complete the requirement, provided the service addresses a community need. Like the service component of the general youth law, the education-based service requirement receives no government funding and teachers do not receive any formal training or support under the policy as their involvement in delivering the program is considered a part of the normal workload. The quality of the service under these policies depends entirely on the school that implements the policy and on the individual students who serve, as programs vary from school to school and students perform the different types of service with varying degrees of motivation.\(^9\)

**Rationale/Background**

The average unemployment rate in the Dominican Republic is very high, reaching 16% in 2007.\(^{10}\) Additionally, HIV/AIDS rates in the Dominican Republic are among the highest in Latin America, and young people in the country are regularly challenged not to fall into drug use, violence or criminal activity.\(^{11}\) It is for these reasons that the many state and non-state actors in the country are concerned with youth development and poverty reduction. Several civil society organizations work to significantly engage young people in their communities and the government supports, at least in policy, greater youth civic participation.

**Going Forward**

Many civil society organizations are active throughout the Dominican Republic, engaging young Dominicans in civic participation. The Government of the Dominican Republic has made some strides toward better youth civic engagement with its creation of the Ministro de la Juventud and Dia Nacional de la Juventud. However, the Dominican government is not as active in supporting these efforts as it could be. The Dominican government should invest more resources toward youth civic engagement in order to help expand opportunities for young people to positively contribute to their and community development.

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\(^7\) “Ley 49-2000, Ley General de Juventud, Republica Dominicana.”


\(^9\) Edward Metz, Ph.D. et al.


Guatemala

Located in Central America, Guatemala has a population of approximately 13.6 million people, with an estimated 6.7 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$2,680.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
While the main youth civic participation program in Guatemala stems from the Ley de Servicio Civil (Civic Service Law) implemented by the public sector, there are also many civil society and international organizations active in Guatemala.

One civil society organization focusing on civic participation is the Institute of Cultural Affairs Guatemala (ICA). Founded in 1978 as an integrated rural development project in the village of San Miguel Conacaste, ICA Guatemala offers advice and training primarily on rural infrastructure and the support of women. ICA Guatemala has programs throughout Guatemala, from Guatemala City to the indigenous Western Highlands. ICA Guatemala works to empower local communities by facilitating participation and enabling Guatemalans to utilize their personal skills to plan and develop their futures.2 For example, ICA’s new Global Education and Youth Leadership Program combines curricular and extra-curricular activities to involve students and prepare them to contribute meaningfully to society. Students have the opportunity to learn about international development in classrooms, while also directly engaging in such development by raising money, visiting the UN and contributing to a development issues magazine.3

Another organization active in Guatemala is the International Youth Federation (IYF). Founded in 1990, IYF assists youth organizations around the world by providing information, resources and support with the mission of preparing young people to become healthy, engaged citizens of the world. IYF operates a program in Guatemala called YouthActionNet, its flagship program, aimed at supporting young community leaders through skill-building as well as better access to resources. Another program, launched in 2008, is called Youth:Work, targeting young people ages 15-29. In partnership with USAID, Youth:Work offers employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, by enabling access to vocational, technical and life-skills training.4

Policy Overview
Guatemala’s Ley de Servicio Civil (Civic Service Law) requires citizens between the ages of 18 and 24 to serve either in the armed forces or in social service projects. High school students can complete their service requirement early by participating in community service at the age of 16. Under the law, participants are required to engage in community service for 18 months or 728 hours. Those who engage in military service must be men between the ages of 18 and 30, and service must last 30 months. Participants of both programs under the Civic Service Law will be paid, and if individuals fail to volunteer for either program, they will be placed in one of the programs according to the needs of the National Civic Service.5 Limited information is available regarding how many young people serve in each program and the social service projects participants carry out. Additionally, the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive national youth policy.

Rational/Background
Guatemala is one of the most iniquitous societies in South America. Poverty is widespread throughout Guatemala’s countryside and indigenous people. Guatemala’s infant mortality rates, illiteracy and malnutrition are also some of the highest in the region. The country faces large problems in terms of organized crime and the existence of violent street gangs, as well as being a major corridor for drug smuggling into the United States. Guatemala’s Civic Service Law was implemented as an alternative from compulsory military service and engaged young people in addressing many of these national challenges.

Going Forward
After the signing of the 2006 peace agreements, bringing a 36-year-long civil war that killed over 200,000 Guatemalans to an end, a new atmosphere of cooperation among social organizations and state institutions emerged. The Civic Service Law offers an alternative to serving in the military while also providing communities and organizations throughout Guatemala with manpower and support they did not have, thus allowing them to more successfully improve and engage communities. Additionally, various civil society and international organizations are working with young people to build their skills while addressing important community needs through civic participation.

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Honduras

Located in Central America, Honduras has an estimated population of 7.3 million people with approximately 3.2 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$1,800.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Honduras, as one of the least developed countries in Latin America, has a presence of many local and international civil society organizations operating in the country. Many focus on poverty and crime reduction, though some do provide short-term youth civic participation opportunities. One example is the Honduras Conservation Corps (HCC), which began in 1998 to deploy youth volunteers to carry out environmental conservation projects. In its first two years, HCC trained over 300 young people, aged 16 and up, to work on specific environmental projects. These volunteers then contributed to the reconstruction of areas of Honduras that were damaged by natural disasters.²

Mercy Corps is an international organization with 3,700 professionals working in over 40 countries worldwide. In Honduras, Mercy Corps is working with Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG) as a local partner to help institute programs to strengthen civil society in Honduras. These programs help to train young people in Honduras on three important civil society principles: participation in decision making, accountability and peaceful avenues for conflict resolution.³

Policy Overview
High school and college students in Honduras are required by law to perform community service as a provision for graduation. The Ministry of Education law was passed in the 1980s with the aim of building solidarity among young people and increasing their collaboration in community development.⁴ Students must serve at least 100 hours of service, and may do so in a number of sectors according to their interest and community needs. Due to a lack of strict guidelines defining what constitutes service, the quality of service and learning received depends on the school and the young people themselves, varying according to the motivation and monitoring of the program.⁵

The Government of Honduras is also seeking to implement a national youth program called Honduras Joven (Honduras Youth). The program is being planned by the Office of the President, and a National Youth Institute was specifically created in order to implement the program. Honduras Joven is attempting to implement two main programs. The first is the National Volunteer Program, which seeks to encourage national unity and trust among citizens, as well as youth development, by facilitating volunteer activity in the sectors of youth and elder care, health and environmental conservation, among others. The program facilitates this by creating a national network of youth organizations and service providers. Through this network, the program connects volunteers with service opportunities and to coordinate government action with the efforts of civil society actors in order to continually expand youth civic participation.⁶ A second program being deployed by Honduras Joven is the Youth Entrepreneurship Project. This program seeks to

⁵ Ibid.
promote entrepreneurial ventures by rural youth by providing business loans to participants, as well as training in entrepreneurial skills and leadership.  

**Rationale/Background**

Honduras is the second poorest country in Latin America, with 36% of the population being either unemployed or underemployed and with 59% of the population living below the poverty line. Additionally, the country has high crime rates and gang and drug violence abounds. It is this extreme poverty and violence that the Honduras Joven program seeks to address. The Youth Entrepreneurship Project seeks to turn unemployed young people into income and job producing entrepreneurs. The National Volunteer program seeks to build youth skills for employment while deploying them in activities to meet community needs.

**Going Forward**

The Government of Honduras is increasing its focus on youth participation which is evident from its plans for programs like Honduras Joven. The Honduras Joven program is still working on gaining full scale traction in the country, having yet to fully implement its programs and become integrated with all aspects of government. As the program progresses, it will need to be monitored to measure the results as they relate to increasing youth civic engagement and meeting national needs.

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7 “Project Jovenes Emprendedores: Programa Honduras Joven,” Powerpoint presentation by the Honduras Joven program, Print.
Jamaica

Located south of Cuba in the Caribbean Sea, Jamaica has an estimated population of 2.7 million people with approximately 981,000 people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$4,850.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Numerous organizations in Jamaica are working with young people on issues from poverty reduction to curbing widespread violence and criminal activity. However, the bulk of these organizations provide services to young people, rather than engaging young people to address issues in their communities.

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), established in 1991, is a civil society organization in Jamaica working to “empower adolescents, families and communities with life-changing mentoring & other support programs.” The YOU programs target at-risk secondary and high school students, offering activities, programs and mentoring. YOU engages adult volunteers in mentoring programs and young people in peer mentoring programs in schools across the country. Currently, over 2,000 students are registered in one or more YOU programs, while their communities and thousands more benefit indirectly from the program’s advocacy and educational outreach.2

Policy Overview
The Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture implements a National Youth Policy 2003 and a National Youth Service (NYS). The policy states Jamaica’s vision for young people as “realising our full potential, through access to opportunities, to develop, participate and contribute as responsible citizens, to a peaceful, prosperous and caring society.”3 One of six main points in the policy includes participation and empowerment and seeks to “foster a culture that allows for the full participation of youth in the social, spiritual, economic and political processes of the society.”4 The policy does not include specific activities for meeting these goals and is intended to be complemented by a National Strategic Plan for Youth Development which guides its implementation. However, the authors have been unable to find the National Strategic Plan for Youth Development.

The NYS is a government agency that develops and implements programs and policies leading to youth development and promotion. The organization was established in 1973 and was reintroduced in 1995 after a 12 year break. The program was reintroduced in an effort to address high levels of youth unemployment, academic underachievement, and escalating violence and crime among Jamaica’s youth population. Through its Corps Programme, the NYS attempts to rehabilitate young people between the ages of 17-24 by offering them career training for a period of four weeks. Upon completion of the training, participants are placed in public service jobs for six months in one of 13 sectors, depending on local and national development needs. These areas include positions as clerical and administrative professionals, teachers’ aides, education, emergency and health facilitators, peace advocates, uniform, environmental, agricultural and tourism officers, and micro-entrepreneurship, sales and information technology professionals. Since 2001, Jamaica has spent J$2,428,367,463.30 on the program, benefitting over 20,000 participants. Each participant receives a stipend of J$12,800 per month and is reimbursed for 80% of their medical costs. They also have access to other benefits such as payment of 22% of their tuition fee if they apply to an educational institutional within two years of completing their service. A study commissioned by the International Development Bank (IDB) in 2003 revealed that 60.1% of program graduates either

4 Ibid.
gained full-time employment or continued their studies at colleges and universities, as compared to 34% from a control group.\(^5\)

Another program operated by the Jamaica NYS is called the Jamaica Values and Attitudes Programme (JAMVAT). JAMVAT seeks to ensure that all qualified Jamaican students have access to tertiary education irrespective of their social status. The program assists students with financial need by paying 30% of their tuition fee and a stipend in exchange for 200 hours of volunteer service in the public sector. To date the program has assisted over 7,000 students.\(^6\)

**Rational Background**

Young people in Jamaica face a number of challenges including high unemployment rates, school dropouts, and crime and violence. The NYS attempts to address these challenges by helping young people gain work experience and providing programs that encourage a sense of responsibility, self respect and service, and to promote discipline, democracy, citizenship and cooperation among participants.\(^7\) However, NYS leaders have stated that challenges remain and despite their and other agencies’ efforts, the numbers of unemployed, out-of-school young people continues to increase.\(^8\)

**Going Forward**

The Jamaican government and civil society organizations are making important strides toward more participation of its young people. Jamaica has had a National Youth Policy since 2003 as well as a National Youth Service, helping to engage young Jamaicans and encourage community participation. In February 2010, the NYS announced a number of new changes coming to the agency and its programs. Citing the fact that there are 60,000 unemployed, out-of-school young people in Jamaica, the agency announced plans to change its programs and manner of operations to more effectively engage those young people in productive activities. The main plan of the program is to decentralize agency activities so that it can more effectively meet local needs. For example, for parishes that are predominantly agricultural, the NYS is partnering with the Ministry of Agriculture to develop programs that can absorb young people from those communities.

The NYS also plans to open training facilities in every parish in the country, allowing the agency to swiftly deal with the needs and issues of each parish on a customized, local level. Also, by implementing training on a local basis, replacing the month-long centralized training in which participants stay in dorms away from home, the organization anticipates cutting costs by almost 50%. The NYS is also attempting to establish certification of achievement in the program. While there is a certificate of participation, it does not identify the level of achievement the participant garnered within the program and it does not guarantee a level of skill or education achieved. Thus, the NYS has brought in the HEART Trust/NTA (National Training Agency) to help in developing programs that will ensure graduates of the program are competent in their fields and able to perform in their professional duties. The NYS is also examining ways to generate income and become self-sustaining. The NYS is also going into new spheres of activity, including agriculture, aquaculture and engaging students while they are in school under the Career Advancement Program.\(^9\)

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\(^9\)Ibid.
Panama

Located between Colombia and Costa Rica in Latin America, Panama has a population of 3.4 million people with approximately 1.2 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$6,180.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Although the largest and most formal civic participation programs in the country are found in the education and other public sectors, there are various international civic participation organizations operating in Panama. These organizations often provide short-term opportunities for young people in the country.

For example, Panama Verde, founded in 1996 under the umbrella of Peace Corps and independently registered in 2004, implements a national environmental network of young volunteers from the provinces and rural areas. Through the program, young people aged 12-29 participate in citizenship education and sustainable development projects based on the local needs of their communities. These projects focus on reforestation, environmental education, HIV/AIDS prevention and human rights. Over 500 young people have participated in Panama Verde’s programs through 33 environmental groups across the country. Panama Verde receives funding from the Government of Panama and private foundations such as Kellogg and SAB Miller.2

Asociacion Nacional de Scouts de Panama (National Scout Association of Panama), founded in 1914, is a member of the World Organization of the Scouts Movement and has nearly 2,000 members in the country. The World Organization of the Scouts Movement aims to involve young people in their communities, specifically in country development, by providing opportunities to scout groups. In August 2010, Scouts de Panama hosted the XXIV InterAmerican Scout Conference in which scouting organizations from over 28 countries were in attendance.3

Policy Environment
Many initiatives supporting youth civic participation in Panama are implemented by government and schools. Panama has a Students Social Service Law of 1995, which requires that high school students in the country complete 80 hours of service as a condition of graduation. There is little restriction as what constitutes service, with the result that the effectiveness of the services provided and the learning derived on the part of the student vary from school to school and according to the motivations of each student.4

Panama has a Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) that implements its youth development policies. In 2006 it initiated a National Service program deployed via three pilot programs in different areas of the country. In the program, individuals aged 15 and older can serve in various community service and national development projects in marginalized parts of the country. The intent of the program is to deploy Panamanians from around the country to work together, building responsibility, solidarity and civic engagement, while engaging in poverty reduction projects that are essential for national development.5 About 800 young people are currently serving at the national level as permanent volunteers working throughout the year, while during the school year 400 young people are registered as available to meet service needs, which will be counted toward the completion of the 80 hours service required in order to graduate.6 In a specific

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program in February 2010, 70 young people between the ages of 15 and 17 participated in first aid, aquatic security and artistic expression training, where they learned skills to vocally tackle local issues and provide for other local needs.7

Rationale/Background
Panama has a strong economy based on revenues from the Panama Canal and a healthy service sector consisting of banking, insurance and tourism, among other industries. The wealth from these productive industries has been consolidated among the top tier of the population, however, and Panama has one of the worst income distributions in Latin America, with about 10% of the population living below the international poverty line of US$ 1.25 per day.8 The Panamanian government has declared that poverty reduction is one of its main priorities and implementation of the civic participation programs above addresses those concerns. Through civic participation programs, young Panamanians can build skills while specifically being deployed in marginal communities to engage in community development and provide critical services.

Going Forward
Panama’s current national service scheme is gaining a foothold as a youth civic participation option in the country, with nearly 1,000 young people serving annually. The private sector is also creating youth civic participation opportunities, albeit on a limited scale. The government, international organizations and civil society could benefit by investing more in expanding avenues for young people to contribute to their communities while building skills through civic participation.

8 “Panama,” UNICEF Info by Country.
Saint Lucia

Located in the Caribbean Sea north of Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia has an estimated population of 170,000 people.\(^1\) Approximately 40% of St. Lucia’s population is comprised of young people between the ages of 15-35 years old.\(^2\)

**Youth Civic Engagement Overview**

St. Lucia has a number of civil society organizations that offer short-term volunteer programs to young people, such as churches, clubs and other community groups. In terms of large scale civic engagement programs and movement toward a NYS, however, most activity is in the public sector.

Project St. Lucia is a youth-focused and youth-run program designed to empower young people in St. Lucia and spark interest in community involvement and volunteer work. The work done by Project St. Lucia is a direct response to trends outlined in a study by the World Bank, which found an upward trend among young people in the Caribbean in drug trafficking, HIV/AIDS infection, adolescent pregnancies and other risky behavior.\(^3\) Project St. Lucia is attempting to harness the energy and vitality of its young people and channel it toward civic engagement activities to address these issues.\(^4\)

Another organization active in the development of healthy young people in St. Lucia is RISE St. Lucia Inc. (Respect, Reality, Initiative, Industry, Social Health, Society Building, Education, Enterprise and Empowerment). Founded in 2007, RISE functions as a link to assist in better cooperation between public and private agencies and individuals by providing advocacy support, resource mobilization, and identifying gaps and areas of concern. RISE works with young people interested in positive development to become agents of change in their communities. In June 2010, RISE launched a program called Tomorrow Starts Now (TSN), which is a youth-driven movement working toward getting all young people engaged in community development projects. TSN functions under the principles of three words: “Engage, become an equal partner, provide and grow your skill; Empower, lead and co-lead among yourselves with adults; and Energize, be creative and make youth participation real.”\(^5\)

**Policy Environment**

St. Lucia has a National Youth Policy of 2000 and a Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports.\(^6\) The National Youth Policy of 2000 defines a young person as anyone ages 15-35, but recognizes that “youth” is a complicated term which might have a broader definition. The Policy outlines six major areas of concern: youth participation, responsiveness, gender sensitivity, the benefits of the policy, access to services and integrated development. The policy’s goal is engage young people in national development, reflect the needs and aspirations of young people, encourage self esteem and capacity building, facilitate the holistic development of young people socially, educationally, economically and spiritually, guarantee equal opportunity for all young persons, and finally to support the self development and autonomy of the youth movement.\(^7\) The country also has National Youth Council, which seeks to work with the Ministry to promote youth policy and programs.

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\(^6\) National Youth Policy

\(^7\) Ibid.
The Government of St. Lucia implements a number of civic engagement programs for young people in the country. One is the St. Lucia Cadet Corps, which aims to “inspire young people to achieve success in life, with a spirit of service to country and their local community, and to develop in them qualities required of a good citizen.” The Corps was established in 1929 and aims to recruit about 180 students each year into its ranks, where it provides military and adventure training to participants in order to develop their powers of leadership and instill in them the value of civic engagement and volunteerism. Another program run by the government involves annual summer camps, deployed around the island, which engage young participants in sports, service and civic engagement activities. The 2009-2010 camps run by the government attracted over 900 youth participants.

Rationale/Background
St. Lucia’s economy revolves around tourism, with the industry being the largest employer on the island. Agriculture and exporting tropical commodity crops provide another source of income in the country, but despite the development of tourism and agriculture industries, unemployment on the island hovers around 20%, a statistic which provides great challenges to the youth population. Youth civic participation could be utilized to promote youth skill development leading to increased employment options and as a path toward receiving funds to promote entrepreneurial ventures in an effort to lower the unemployment rate and turn young people into income generators. Some organizations and government initiatives in St. Lucia are doing just that.

Going Forward
There has been movement toward a national youth service in St. Lucia. The youth advocacy group RISE Inc has been advocating for the creation of a national youth service in St. Lucia since 2008. RISE, in conjunction with the British High Commission, sponsored a study examining the feasibility and desirability of implementing a national youth service within St. Lucia and through consultation with multiple youth, government and non-governmental stakeholders, a cooperative effort was launched to consider designing an NYS scheme. Since the initial meeting, no further action has been taken in an official capacity to launch a National Youth Scheme, although the St. Lucia Labour Party has officially incorporated a desire to launch an NYS into its platform on Youth, Sports and Culture. A NYS would go a long way toward offering young citizens of St. Lucia a means to participate in their society.

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Trinidad and Tobago

Located northeast of Venezuela in the Caribbean Sea, Trinidad and Tobago has an estimated population of 1.3 million people with approximately 345,000 people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$16,540.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
While the government operates several youth civic participation programs, Trinidad and Tobago also has a number of civil society organizations that work with young people, providing services such as health and education counseling, working for young women’s empowerment, promoting poverty reduction and more. Organizations such as the Boys Scouts, Girl Guides, St. John’s Ambulance Brigade and other organizations also provide civic participation opportunities.2

Boy Scouts began implementing programs for empowering young people in Trinidad and Tobago in 1911.3 The first division of the St. John’s Ambulance Brigade was launched in 1954 as “a uniformed voluntary first aid group to help the injured and the sick.” Brigade volunteers operate many ambulances donated by local businesses and attend major public events to provide first aid care to the public.4

Policy Overview
Youth affairs in Trinidad and Tobago are primarily overseen by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and guided by the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2004. The NYP was developed in consultation with various youth development stakeholders and provides a broad framework for the government’s youth policy initiatives. One of the policy’s three main goals is “an empowered young person with positive values who can use acquired knowledge and skills to make informed choices while meaningfully participating in problem solving and decision making at family, community and national levels.”5 The policy does not describe a set of programs, but instead serves as a flexible framework from which projects can emerge.

Additionally, the Ministry of National Security in Trinidad and Tobago operates a number of youth civic engagement programs. The first is the National Youth Service, which is designed to improve the quality of life of young professionals between 18 and 30 years old through community service and civic education. The program was developed in 2005 and began with an initial $11 million investment. It aims to train about 1,000 participants per year to serve in their communities and become youth leaders. Young people volunteer at schools, camps and other locations throughout the country, learning leadership skills and developing civic skills.

Another program implemented by the Ministry of National Security is the Civilian Conservation Corps, which aims to equip young people between the ages of 15-25 with vocational and social skills that will improve their prospects for employability and instill discipline and civic engagement. The program was reintroduced in 2002 after some changes and plays a major role in skills provision to young people within the country. In 2005, 1,843 young people benefited from this program. Out of this, 751 were males and 1,092 were females. The target population of the program is young people that are out of school and unemployed, serving as an intervention mechanism that provides a structured environment and stimulates behavioral changes to keep young people away from risky behaviors. Participants in the Corps are involved in_____

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the rehabilitation and beautification of parks, community facilities and schools, forestry projects, restoration and soil conservation projects. Trainees in this program are given exposure to job training while meeting community needs.6

Rationale/Background
Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most prosperous countries in the Caribbean due to its petroleum, natural gas and tourism industries. A relatively strong economy and open political system has led to a strong civil society and government that is implementing large scale youth civic participation programs. Despite these positives, the country has seen a rise in violent crime in certain parts of its territory, and there is concern that more and more young people are joining gangs and engaging in criminal activity.7 Trinidad and Tobago’s national service schemes and civil society organizations are engaging young people in initiatives that give them a stake in their communities and preventing these risky behaviors, while equipping them with skills for school and career success.

Going Forward
In late 2009, there were calls for the institution of a Compulsory National Service. Citadel Limited, a major broadcasting institution in Trinidad and Tobago, led the effort, calling for a Compulsory National Service for men between the ages of 15-25, specifically at-risk young people that are unemployed and not in school. As outlined, the program would initially be implemented in high crime areas, seeking to engage young men that would otherwise become involved in gangs and criminal activities. The program would run for two years and participants would learn skills such as English, math and computer literacy, among others.8 However, the proposed program has been dismissed by East Indian and Hindu leaders, stating that the program is not necessary when only a small fraction of the population is committing crimes and that it would be discriminatory toward the East Indian populations, and the national service schemes remain voluntary.9

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8 Ibid.
Venezuela

Located between Colombia and Guyana in northern South America, Venezuela has an estimated population of 28 million people, with approximately 10 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$9,230.1

Youth Civic Engagement Overview
There are many private and public organizations creating civic participation opportunities for young people in Venezuela. Established organizations such as the Catholic Church, the Scouts Association of Venezuela and the YMCA continually provide short-term civic participation opportunities for young people in the country, while local organizations targeting specific social ills such as the Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz (Support Network for Justice and Peace) engage young people in carrying out education campaigns and issue awareness. Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz is a civil society organization established in 1985 to address human rights in Venezuela and it engaged young people in carrying out its activities.2 Additionally, international organizations, such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), are working with local organizations to support youth civic participation. NED recently invested US$50,000 to support “greater youth commitment to civic participation, democratic values and community service.”3 It does this through weekly meetings and workshops on civic values and periodic retreats providing opportunities to participate in community service projects.

In addition to local and international organizations, universities in Venezuela provide civic participation opportunities to their young people. Recently, under the government of President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela’s funding of its higher education institutions has increased. The Catholic University Andres Bello and the Universidad Metropolitana both maintain popular civic participation programs that deploy their students in local service projects throughout their communities.4 The Catholic University Andres Bello runs a community outreach program aimed at improving the quality of life of the surrounding communities and the universities connection to the neighborhood.

Policy Overview
The Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports) and the Instituto Nacional de la Juventud (National Institute of Youth) oversee youth affairs in Venezuela. Venezuela’s Article 27 of the Reglamento General de la Ley Orgánica de Educación 1940 (Regulation of the Law of Education) requires public and private high school students to perform 40 to 60 hours of community service as a requirement for graduation. This mandatory civic participation program is overseen by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports. The government provides no funds for the completion of service and schools and students pay for any necessary costs themselves. The regulation specifically requires that the service must benefit the surrounding community and meet a community need.5

In December 2006, the Venezuelan National Assembly approved a Ley de Servicio Social Obligatorio (Law on Mandatory Social Service), which requires individuals between the ages of 15-50 years old to carry out five hours of social service.

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every month for two years. Individuals not complying with the law will be required to pay a 15 boliviar fine. Despite its approval, the law has not yet been implemented.\(^6\)

**Rationale/Background**

Venezuela is facing many pressing domestic issues, all of which exacerbate the plight of the country's young people. There is drug-related violence on the border with Colombia, an economy that is dependent on an oil sector experiencing frequent price fluctuations and, in the eyes of many western observers, a weakening of democratic institutions. The country has an unemployment rate of 7.9% and almost 40% of the population lives below the poverty line.\(^7\) It is in this environment that civil society organizations are seeking to promote poverty reduction among young people and marginalized populations, and youth civic participation programs are often an outcrop, although not always the primary focus, of such poverty reducing programs. In an effort to harness what Hugo Chavez believes to be one of the country's most valuable assets, its young people, Venezuela's government has instituted many school-based service programs aimed at having young people engaged in service activities to benefit their communities.

**Going Forward**

While the Mandatory Social Service law was passed in 2006, it still has not been implemented. A highly politicized atmosphere at home and abroad continues to be an obstacle to promoting youth civic participation in Venezuela compared to some of its neighbors in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the government continues to support policies promoting youth civic participation and civil society organizations continue to develop innovative approaches for giving young people a voice and working with them to address critical needs in the country.

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\(^7\) “Venezuela,” UNICEF Info by Country.
Middle East and North Africa

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Algeria

Algeria is a large Arab/Amazigh republic in Northern Africa which achieved independence from France in 1962. Young people represent approximately 30% of a population of 34.4 million.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Algeria is moving toward a more open and supported network of civil society organizations, which are more closely integrated in communities than the government, however it does not appear to have a comprehensive program supporting youth civic engagement. Below are some examples of CSOs predominantly supporting youth civic participation in Algeria.

PCPA Algeria (Programme Concerté Pluri-Acteurs Algérie) is a program of cooperation that exists between 40 French and Algerian associations to help develop projects and programs for the support of youth and children in Algeria.1 Algerian Muslim Scouts collaborated with United Nations Volunteers recently on an International Volunteer Day project entitled “Volunteering for our Planet.” Scouts also participate in projects like distributing hot meals to impoverished families during Ramadan and cultural partnerships with French Scouts. They have also partnered with the National Democratic Institute on a civic education program that allowed hundreds of Algerian students to discuss voting rights and democratic practices. 2

Finally, Algeria Youth Forum coordinated Global Youth Service Day activities in 2002. For this program, it collaborated with several other youth organizations such as Jeunesse Musicale in Algeria, the African Youth Network for Sustainable Development and the Algerian Association for Youth Employment to coordinate 1,000 volunteers in 2002.3

Policy Overview
The policy of the Algerian government in the youth sector is focused on education reform and fighting unemployment and the rapid spread of drug use. While the Ministry of Youth and Sports was established in 1964 to give focus to young people’s issues in Algeria, the perception on the part of most people is that the ministry has focused predominantly on the sports aspect of its domain.4 Issues that are particularly relevant to the youth sector are mostly run out of other departments, including the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Crime and Justice, the Ministry of Employment and the Higher Council of Youth,5 with no comprehensive, cross-ministry initiatives. There is no information available on a national youth service policy aside from a profile completed for IANYS in 2009 by Mokrane Medani Secretary General, Tarwa N Gaya. The profile reports the existence of a cultural exchange program called Tarwa Ngaya Cultural Association of Tizi Ouzou for which the authors were unable to find recent information.

Rationale/Background
Despite the lack of a comprehensive national youth policy or a national youth service program, the Algerian government has recognized some of the challenges that its young people face on a daily basis. It is this acknowledgement that serves as the rationale for the current set of youth policies aimed at fighting unemployment, drug use and political violence. Education is also clearly a high priority, given that the Algerian Constitution establishes free, compulsory education until the age of 16. Primary schools have an enrollment rate of 95%.6

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1 Kamal Rarrbo, Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries, European Union, 2009, Print.
4 Kamal Rarrbo.
5 While mentioned on most websites about the Algerian government, the authors were unable to find a website or other sources from which to gain detailed information about this council.
6 Kamal Rarrbo.
Going Forward
The Algerian government is implementing some initiatives to address issues faced by young people, however most of the
information available focuses on services provided to young people. As a result, much of the civic participation programs
are implemented by civil society organizations. The government and civil society could benefit by investing more in
expanding civic participation opportunities for young people in Algeria.
Bahrain is an island country in the Middle East with an estimated population of 807,000. Of this number, about 155,000 are between the ages of 15 and 24.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Some civil society organizations in Bahrain are engaging young people in community development and building their skills through service opportunities. For example, the youth-led Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR) aims to raise international awareness of human rights issues in Bahrain, particularly regarding torture, arbitrary arrest and unjust trials. Started in 2005, BYSHR engages young people in advocacy efforts in support of human rights.

On Side Bahrain, a volunteer-based organization founded in June 2010, cites promoting youth engagement, leadership and active citizenship as its primary objectives. Campaigns for achieving these goals center on youth development and training, volunteerism, female empowerment, healthcare and environmental welfare. These activities are all initiated and implemented by young people. Finally, InJaz Bahrain, a CSO, provides young people with the business skills and knowledge they need to become contributing members of Bahrain’s economy and to take advantage of globalization. Though InJaz Bahrain programs generally focus on teaching good business practices to young people, they also strive to instill recognition of the importance of education, business ethics, and social and environmental issues.

Policy Overview
In 2004, the Bahraini Government Department of Youth and Sport (GOYS) undertook a study to address youth issues and greater civic engagement for young people. Conducted by 100 young people over a period of 18 months with funding from the United Nations Development Programme, the study included approximately 16,000 respondents (8.9 percent of the youth population). Using the results, the Department developed a comprehensive National Youth Action Plan for the years 2005-2009. The implementation action plan incorporated 96 of the 136 recommendations that were made at the conclusion of the study, although the entire implementation plan has yet to go into effect.

The National Youth Action Plan for 2005-2009 proposes five youth programs to be implemented in Bahrain—three of which promote youth civic engagement. First, a National Youth Information Center provides ICT training and youth-oriented culture services. Second, the Young Bahraini Citizenship Initiative seeks to encourage young people to actively participate in their communities and increase awareness of responsible citizenship. Lastly, the Exploring Youth Culture and Leisure Options Initiative aims to develop and improve programs providing youth recreational and culture-oriented services. There is little information available regarding the implementation of these programs.

Finally, in partnership with international organizations, the Bahraini government has launched programs such as the Youth Peer Education Network, which sends trained young people into their communities to educate peers through formal and informal means on the perils of substance abuse and the necessity of HIV/AIDS prevention. In line with Bahrain’s generalized goals for young people, these initiatives seek to ensure that all young people are civically engaged in

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their country. These programs also seek to ensure that young people feel valued and respected as citizens of Bahrain, and that their ideas and issues are an important part of national policy.\(^7\)

**Rationale/Background**

In 2002, Bahraini’s voted in their first parliamentary election of the new constitutional monarchy. This governmental change came as the result of a variety of political reforms that had started in the previous decade. Much of the rationale behind the new youth strategy was to ensure that young people’s voices and issues were being heard in the new government, while several civil society organizations also attempt to engage young people in the development of their communities. Additionally, the Bahrain government felt it was important to make sure the expectations and needs of young people were being fulfilled, which it attempts to do through its policies.\(^8\)

**Going Forward**

While several community-based organizations and the National Youth Action Plan have created opportunities for youth civic participation, new initiatives are expanding this effort. In September 2009, the UN Development Program and the General Organization for Youth and Sport established a partnership to evaluate the National Youth Strategy from 2005-2009 and develop an implementation plan for the years 2010-2014. This evaluation and implementation will allow for greater comprehension and participation on the part of national stakeholders, with the goal of aligning the National Youth Strategy with Bahrain’s economic action plan for 2030 and the UN Millennium Development Goals.\(^9\)

Finally, the Arab Leadership Forum has announced a five year initiative to teach 1,000 Bahraini young people the skills essential for strong leadership during the years 2009-2014.\(^10\) To encourage innovation among young people, Bahrain’s GOYS, in cooperation with TAMKEEN: The Center for Arab American Empowerment and Bahrain’s Economic Development Board (EDB), has announced Youth City, a facility which is designed to encourage and facilitate youth innovation in the subjects of entrepreneurship, science, art and literature among many others.\(^11\) These are all promising initiatives as Bahrain seeks to expand civic engagement among young people.

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7 Ibid.
11 GOYS, TAMKEEN and EDB Launch Youth City 2030, Kingdom of Bahrain, 2010, Print.
Egypt is an Arab country in North Africa with a GNI of $445.7 billion. Young people 15-29 represent 29% of the population of 81.5 million people.1

**Youth Civic Participation Overview**

Egypt has witnessed an increase in youth civic participation in the past 10 years from increasing numbers of community-based organizations to use of social media tools for engagement.2 However, UNDP recently released a report noting that certain government policies continue to limit youth civic participation. Egypt hosts a variety of civil society organizations which either cater to young people or are youth-led, though they represent a small percentage of the overall amount of CSOs in the country.3

For example, the Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs, which was established in January 2006, is a non-governmental organization coordinating between CSOs and the government on issues related to youth organizations. The Federation seeks to ameliorate the problems created by a lack of training and strategic planning in youth organizations by hosting workshops and partnering with other organizations such as the National Council for Youth and UNDP.4

In addition, the Egypt Federation for Scouts and Girl Guides were founded in 1914 and 1913, respectively. Most troops are associated with schools, clubs, mosques or churches and work on environment and health projects. Through this program participants also learn about community development and involvement.5 United Nations Volunteers are also active in Egypt and in 2009 facilitated a variety of events related to the Millennium Development Goals with a special goal of raising awareness about the environment, health, literacy and volunteerism among young people.6 Religion-based youth organizations have also become more prominent in all Arab countries, including Egypt, and are contributing to community development.7

Alashanek ya Balady Association (AYB-SD) is a youth-run CSO, started by a high-school student in 2005, which works on improving poor neighborhoods by including every member of society in the process. The program’s philosophy includes four approaches to development: family-based development, integration of training and employment, changing stereotypes, and community participation and inclusion. In particular, women and young people are trained and offered opportunities for employment, and young people are asked to participate in a community council that acts as a consultant for other programs.8

Finally, Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM), founded in 2002, actively engages young people in the country’s development, public work and decision-making arenas through programs like Incubator of Innovative Social Enterprises. This program helps build projects in areas such as youth development, arts and culture development, health services, the environment and linking education to employment, by empowering educated, young Egyptian professionals.9

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Policy Overview
Youth issues are managed through a variety of departments in the Egyptian government – the ministries of employment, education and higher education as well as the National Council for Youth (NCY) which is the formal governing body for youth policy in the Egyptian government. Over the past decade, these departments have produced several papers outlining issues that pertain to young people and related responses such as the National Plan for Preparing Youth for the Millennium (2000) and the National Youth Policy (2003/2004). The National Plan was a compilation of papers and workshops, and it called for a comprehensive vision, strategy and policy for youth development. These efforts, in part, lead to the creation of the NCY.

The NCY was established in December 2005 after the abolishment of the Ministry for Youth and Sport. Article III of the Presidential Decree creating the NCY encourages youth participation, while one of the Council’s stated objectives is to “expand participation of youth in public life.” One of the policies listed under this goal is to “promote the participation of young people in public service activities and volunteer activities, and link them to comprehensive development objectives in the framework of programs such as literacy, environmental protection, family planning, health awareness, and donating blood.” To this end, one of 11 committees of the NCY, made up of experts in the field, focuses on civil society and volunteer work. However, information about activities carried out by this committee is limited.

Finally, the National Democratic Party of Egypt recently released its proposal for a National Youth Policy, which places priority on social activities and volunteer work as a means for young people to improve their communities. Its ideas for improving civic engagement include encouraging young people to hold positions in CSOs, improving health care, promoting volunteer work and social responsibility, and encouraging the government to work with CSOs to put youth programs into action.

Rationale/Background
Egyptian young people are facing many of the same problems as other young people in the Arab world, particularly in the area of unemployment, which hinders their abilities to learn new skills, make use of their education, and feel connected and invested in their country and its economy. Despite the National Youth Policy proposal, the UN recently released a report which criticizes Egypt for policies and practices that have hindered civic engagement. Egypt’s state of emergency allows imprisonment for an undetermined length of time and prohibits peaceful assemblies or protests. According to the report, this, in addition to police torture, has contributed heavily to the lack of youth participation in civic affairs and has prevented the current generation of young people from having the confidence, experience and maturity to create effective political and social movements. However, several civil society organizations continue to create opportunities for young people to be engaged in their communities.

Going Forward
The focus on youth employment in Egypt extends beyond the NCY to a National Plan for Youth Employment for the years 2010-2015, which was launched in May 2009. The Egyptian government also announced several initiatives to combat youth unemployment and the housing shortage faced by young people. These efforts and youth civic participation opportunities could help Egypt address high rates of youth unemployment. In addition to limited government efforts to support youth civic participation, an increasing number of civil society organizations are expanding avenues for young people in Egypt to be involved in their communities and gain skills through service.

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10 Tohami Abdelhay.
Israel is an industrialized Middle Eastern country with a GNI of $200.63 Billion PPP dollars. Young people comprise approximately 22% of the population of 7.3 million people.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Israel’s National Civic Service program, also known as Sherut Ezrachi – Le’umi, began as an alternative to the mandatory Israeli Defense Force service for Orthodox Jewish women in 1970. It now serves as an alternative to all those who are exempt from military service with the IDF and is operated by four placement NGOs who coordinate service programs and projects - Agudah LeHitnadvut (lit. Volunteering Union) which works in schools;2 Shlomit, which works in healthcare and daycare centers;3 Aminadav, which places female volunteers in education roles;4 and Bat Ami, which works with disabled children and young people. In addition to Sherut Ezrachi-Le’umi, there are several other volunteer service schemes for young people that are government-mandated and/or implemented by civil society organizations in Israel.5

Other organizations such as OneVoice, a grassroots organization for people working toward peace between Israel and Palestine,6 and an Interfaith Delegation of Israelis and Palestinians, which visited DC in July/August 2010 (Tomorrow’s Leaders: Youth Realities and Peacebuilding Initiatives in Palestine and Israel),7 work toward promoting peace and cooperation between Israel and Palestine in part through civic participation.

Policy Overview
Youth policy in Israel is overseen by multiple government departments depending on the issue at hand. For example, the Anti-Drug Administration focuses on preventing drug addiction among young people, while the Ministry of Education focuses on preventing school drop-outs and military service for young people is overseen by the Ministry for Defense. These are just a few examples however, as youth policies stretch across approximately 11 ministries and offices. The National Service program is mostly funded by the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Education, and various civil society organizations. In 2007 a resolution was passed as the beginning steps to a program which would provide support for at-risk children and young people. The Ministry of Education has also begun a program called “Youth in the Center of Things” which calls for municipal roundtable discussions with young people, organizations and government officers being among the participants. The discussions would help determine the needs of the community and opportunities for youth civic participation.8

The following programs are government-funded and mandated programs that are implemented through partnership with civil society organizations.

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1. Pre-Army Service Year (Shnat Sherut) is a program for high school graduates who wish to defer their IDF service for a year to participate in a service program. Participants serve in education networks such as public schools and residential schools for at-risk young people. The application process is competitive because there are only about 1,200 IDF deferments available.

2. Personal Commitment (Mechuyavut Ishit) is a program for secondary school students in the 10th grade. It was created in 1981 to encourage youth participation in Israeli democracy. It requires students to perform two hours of service a week during the school year for a total of 60 hours. It includes school discussion, academic credit and a final project.

3. Volunteer Service (Perach) is a program for university students through which they mentor younger students, especially in the peripheral communities like Druze and Arab. Volunteers put in four hours of service per week and can receive scholarships and academic credit for their work.

Rationale/Background

Israel is in a unique position in the Middle East. Not only is it made up of a mostly immigrant population with a different religious make-up than many of its neighbors, it exists in a state of conflict with most of the surrounding Arab countries. As a result, Israel’s population has always been and remains fragmented. Though they are exempt from military service, only 6% of Arab Israelis participate in the national service program. Much of the rationale behind the youth service programs lies in providing a way for young people in Israel who are exempt from military service to be engaged and involved in their country. The goals of the national youth service scheme are to strengthen ties to the community and country, and to develop professional abilities.

Going Forward

Israel has a well-developed youth service scheme with a variety of opportunities for young people to participate in their communities and in the future of their country. However it is clear that youth programming in the region is going to have to focus not just on specific youth issues such as education and employment, but on the ongoing conflict and peace process as well. Through continued collaboration and engagement with young people, Israel can continue to improve the lives of its citizens and its communities.

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Jordan is a Middle Eastern country whose young people aged 12-30 comprise approximately 40% of the population of nearly 5.9 million people. The GNI is $33.75 billion PPP.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
With its relatively young monarchy and a youth population (12-30) that makes up approximately 40% of the overall population, youth strategy has become an integral part of development policy in Jordan. As such, several civic participation initiatives in Jordan are engaging young people.

The Jordan Youth Innovative Forum is a community-based service program that was launched in 2004 and has since recruited over 1,500 volunteers. Its mission statement calls for youth participation and integration into the development process through national and international conversations, as well as through service in a variety of projects in community development. The organization is located in Madaba but recruits project participants from across the country.

The Jordan River Foundation was started in 1995 and is an NGO chaired by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah. It works on a variety of projects, including the “Fit for Life” initiative, which is a program that helps young people learn to balance health of body and mind. Through this program, the Jordan River Foundation sponsors the Youth Summer Voluntary program, which seeks to increase youth civic engagement by integrating youth volunteers from East and West Amman in community-based service projects.

Finally, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) engaged in a variety of projects in Jordan in 2009. These include the e-Village program, which helps communities acquire and build the skills necessary for their own development. Each participant is responsible for training volunteer workers within the community to ensure that these skills remain in the community even after UNV has left.

Policy Overview
Jordan’s King Abdullah II and Queen Rania are very involved with youth policy and with youth work in general. The Queen Rania Family and Child Center sponsors several initiatives directed at young people in conjunction with the Jordan River Foundation. The Queen was also part of the Youth: Work Jordan launch in February 2010. Queen Rania has also given several speeches in support of youth participation, saying “we need more students to recognize the value of civic engagement- both in terms of what it can do to our communities and also what it can do for each one of you.”

Youth policy is addressed by the Higher Council of Youth, Youth and Sport Fund, and UNDP. UNDP, UNICEF and other institutions collaborated with the Jordanian Higher Council of Youth on the development and implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2010-2015 using data and information collected by Department of Statistics/Jordan. This is a continuation of the original project launched in 2005, for the years 2005-2009. This strategy incorporated several

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7 “Queen inaugurates youth development programme,” Jordan Times, 24 February 2010, Print.
8 “Queen Rania urges more civic engagement in an address at American University in Cairo (AUC),” 1 March 2010, Rania Al Abdullah: Queen of Jordan, Print.
9 Correspondence between ICP and Salah Alhadidi, 18 October 2010. Information on file with author.
initiatives to increase civic engagement, education opportunities, employability and health for young people throughout Jordan. Strategic directives of this plan include “institutionalize democracy through strengthening youth political participation” and “development of young people who are well aware of their rights, obligations and responsibilities, and who are active participants in democratic life in Jordan.”

UNICEF lists successes in the area of youth civic participation as the hosting of 16 workshops on leadership skills and citizenship for young men and women. The most recent phase of the Strategy focuses less on participation and more on increasing employment opportunities for young people.

Rationale
Over 70% of the population of Jordan is under 30, with young people 15-24 making up 23%. Because of their demographic dominance, young people bear the heaviest burdens in terms of unemployment and conflict. Jordan is located in a heavily conflicted area. With very little natural resources and being heavily reliant on surrounding nations for economic opportunities, Jordan’s young people lack opportunities for employment. To combat this, the National Youth Strategy contains strategic objectives regarding information and technology training, more accessible education and reconciling that education with training needed to enter the job market. In addition, various civil society organizations are working with young people to address these needs through civic participation.

Going Forward
In addition to helping the Jordanian government to develop its National Youth Strategy for 2010-2015, UNICEF will also help the Higher Council of Youth in developing their Life-Based Skills Education program, making youth centers more friendly and accessible to young people and developing methods of enhancing communication between young people and their parents. According to UNICEF, “government, non-government and civil society commitment is achieving what is best for their children, and their willingness to create a healthy environment for their youngsters to grow up in is a major contributing factor to the work of UNICEF in Jordan.” Continued collaboration between young people, CSOs and the government will help further community development and the implementation of the National Youth Strategy, providing young people in Jordan with the opportunity to advance themselves and their communities through civic participation.


12 Studies on Youth Policies in Mediterranean Partner Countries: Jordan, European Union. 2009, Print.

Kuwait

Kuwait is a Middle Eastern country located on the Persian Gulf with a GNI of $142.29 billion PPP dollars.1 Young people represent approximately 25% of the population of 2.7 million.2

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There are a variety of civil society and international organizations providing opportunities for young people to participate in service projects in Kuwait. Through involvement with CSOs, the United Nations Development Program and programs hosted by the Public Authority for Youth and Sport, young people can become more actively engaged. The following organizations engage young Kuwaitis across the country and provide a wide range of information on their activities.

The Kuwait Voluntary Work Center hosts a variety of campaigns and programs available to all Kuwaitis who want to volunteer. These include, but are not limited to, campaigns on protection of marine environments, water conservation and protection of the national flag. The Center also serves as an umbrella organization for other programs such as Abeer2, a program dedicated to service for children with special needs.3

Injaz Kuwait, which is part of a larger network of NGOs dedicated to youth achievement, was launched in 2005. Through its programs, it encourages entrepreneurship and helps Kuwaiti young people develop the economic and personal skills that they will need to succeed in a global economy. These include programs that council career choices and teach financial literacy.4 With over 30 volunteers and support from companies such as HSBC, it reached over 6,000 students in grades k-12 in 2008-2009.5

Finally, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) engages Kuwait’s young people in partnership with local organizations. In August 2009, it hosted a youth leadership development initiative with Jusoor Arabiya, an organization dedicated to corporate responsibility. It hosted 50 participating young people at the program launch, providing an opportunity to network with other participants and government officials. At the event, UNDP introduced its country program for Kuwait with a youth strategy aimed at “youth empowerment through capacity building, active participation, engagement and volunteerism.”6

Policy Overview
The Public Authority for Youth and Sport in Kuwait is responsible for much of the country’s youth policy, though matters such as education have their own ministry. According to the Country Program Action Plan between the Government of Kuwait and UNDP (2009-2013), “government policies focus mainly on sport rather than on any other youth development measures. The Public Authority for Youth and Sports in Kuwait has a very limited capacity and does not have any notable access to the youth in the country.”7

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2 “Middle East Youth Initiative Fact Sheet: Kuwait,” The Middle East Youth Initiative, June 2010, Web.
This is in part due to the lack of a national youth policy or service scheme. However, in the Country Program Action Plan (2009-2013), young people are given attention. This plan was developed to provide a comprehensive list of the programs being established to address the country’s needs and the desired outcomes. The plan involves cross-cutting issues such as gender discrimination, young people, unemployment and technological advancement in plan and project design. The Action Plan outlines the specific goal of defining the role of young people in development through a strategy of empowerment and capacity-building. This includes increasing civic participation, technological training and entrepreneurship skills.\(^8\)

**Rationale/Background**

The situational analysis section of the Action Plan highlights how Kuwait’s welfare programs have led its citizens to expect government hand-outs that require little effort in return. This includes youth expectations regarding unemployment benefits, which imbed this reliance on welfare at a young age.\(^9\) There is also lack of civic engagement among young people, in part due to a dearth of government support. Young people in Kuwait are unlikely to give their attention to issues such as human rights, international volunteering or long-term education reform because they perceive these things as unlikely to directly affect their own lives. According to some reports, young people are also less likely to participate in sports which have become politicized, making it impossible to choose a team without choosing a party or a political stance.\(^10\)

**Going Forward**

The youth section of the Action Plan details the necessity of overcoming a lack of involvement by engaging young people more fully so that they might better their own futures as well as contribute to national development. Though the Action Plan does not outline any specific programs or initiatives to accomplish this goal, it does define some specific desirable outcomes that will help to get young people more engaged as well as what the results of that engagement will be. These outcomes involve cross-cutting across demographics to make sure young people feel the benefits of programs and have the opportunity to participate in their development. Another desirable outcome is the creation of a Youth Strategy. While acknowledging the challenges young people face and the role they can play in national development, Kuwait can also continue to engage young people by giving them the opportunity help their country succeed.

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\(^8\) Ibid, Pg 13.  
\(^9\) Ibid, Pg 6.  
Lebanon

Lebanon is a Middle Eastern country located on the Mediterranean Sea. Young people make up 35% of its population of 4.2 million people, and it has a GNI of $49.22 Billion PPP dollars.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There has been research and documentation to support the development of a comprehensive youth policy in Lebanon. However, that policy has not yet been developed and the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive national youth service program. As such, youth programs and initiatives in Lebanon are primarily implemented by CSOs, universities and international organizations. The following examples represent high profile organizations attracting youth participants.

The Youth Shadow Government is a youth organization that mimics the Government of Lebanon. It is made up of approximately 30 students, each of whom serves as the shadow minister for the corresponding ministry in the actual government. The Shadow government conducts studies, makes policy recommendations and meets with the adult ministers. The Government of Lebanon recognizes the institution in place of a Higher Council of Youth and implemented a lower voting age (18 years old) at the recommendation of the shadow government.

Universities in Lebanon are also engaging students in civic participation opportunities. For example, Université Saint-Joseph’s Opération 7ème Jour (Operation 7th Day) program engaged university students, faculty and staff in service activities providing immediate assistance to the population of South Lebanon following the 2006 war. Since 2006, Opération 7ème Jour has transformed from an emergency relief effort to a large-scale development program with activities across Lebanon. Working closely with CSOs, government agencies and local authorities, the program has continued and expanded its solidarity activities, managing development and health care initiatives in an even larger geographic area, with contributions from faculty and students from every academic discipline. The program received a second-place award from the Talloires Network MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship in 2009.

In addition, the Youth and Municipalities project was funded by USAID and was implemented by the Green Hand Organization. A one-time project, it provided young people from 10 villages in the Aley region of Lebanon with training in good governance and civic skills such as lobbying, transparency and accountability. After the young people received training they created 10 projects addressing needs in their communities.

Finally, the United Nations Volunteers and the United Nations Development Program are very active in Lebanon. They established a phone bank where citizens and officials can call and get clear, truthful information about the democratic
Policy Overview
Youth policy in Lebanon is a collaborative effort between the Department of National Education, the Department of Social Affairs and the Youth and Sports Department, the last of which has been recognized as the main representative for young people since 2000. The Department of Social Affairs established seven youth voluntary work camps in 2001 which recruited 499 young people who helped to implement community development projects in partnership with local CSOs. The projects were funded by the Department. Through these camps Lebanese young people improved their communication and collaboration, in addition to spreading the idea of civic participation and meeting community development needs.

Additionally, the Lebanese Youth Participation and Empowerment Project is an initiative sponsored by the Youth and Sports Department in conjunction with several UN task force agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO. The purpose of the project is to increase youth participation in all spheres of life, and support the decision making and policy objectives of a national youth policy. The project is split into three parts, the first of which – Research and Documentation – was completed in 2008. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding, there has been little progress on two final phases of the project, consensus-building and lobbying for adoption of a national youth policy.

Rationale/Background
Lebanon endured a civil war from the years 1975-1990 and a war with Israel in 2006. The conflict with Hezbollah has also put enormous strain on the government. In addition, the plethora of religious communities has created a fragmented society that has left young people without any demographic representation of their own. Young people in Lebanon also face many of the issues faced by young people throughout the Middle East such as unemployment and many young people in Lebanon express the desire to immigrate. Those who succeed are often wealthier and have better access to education. This creates a drain on those best able to further their country's development. The state has also not set up any support schemes for youth housing or employment which has produced a feeling of distance between government and young people. As a result, civil society organizations, universities and international organizations, along with limited government support, have been implementing projects throughout Lebanon that get young people involved in community development while building skills for education and career success.

Going Forward
General Michael Suleiman, elected president in 2008, promised to make youth policy a priority during his presidency, though substantial strides haven't yet been made. With the Participation and Empowerment program in progress and several youth civic engagement organizations that are committed to the development of youth policy, there is certainly hope for youth policy in the future. However, Lebanon must overcome budget and policy constraints to complete this initiative and develop a comprehensive youth policy. By increasing youth participation and utilizing young people as a resource in development, Lebanon could make important strides in meeting community and national development goals.

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9 “Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Lebanon.”
12 “Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Lebanon,” P 7.
13 Ibid, P 15.
14 Ibid, P 7.
Morocco is a North African country located on the Mediterranean Sea with young people ages 15-29 representing 29% of the population of 31.6 million people. Morocco has a GNI of $134.34 Billion PPP dollars.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Many civil society organizations in Morocco implement youth civic participation programs. Both domestic organizations and international organizations such as USAID have initiatives to support young people in being more politically and socially active. Listed below are some of the most prominent youth organizations and programs.

The Forum of Moroccan Youth for the Third Millennium is an independent organization, founded in 1999, that invites all Moroccan youth to participate. The Forum works with other youth organizations to engage and capitalize on the talents of young people through programs emphasizing leadership, environmental protection, education, human rights, and mutual self-help and solidarity between young people. The organization acts as a space to encourage cooperation, create new projects and organize youth events. In August 2007, the Forum coordinated a meeting between 250 young people from the north and south to discuss the role of young people in the decision-making process and how to improve mechanisms for youth integration into participative democracy. In February 2009, the Forum played an instrumental role in the development of a youth parliament designed to promote the positive and responsible participation of young people in the political scene. In August 2010 the organization launched the Ambassadors of Hope project, which sends 30 trained young men and women on a trip around Morocco to research youth issues and create a plan to address these issues. The program will “train young people to take decisions and shoulder responsibility, to involve them in local development, and to understand the values of citizenship.”

USAID also implements several programs in Morocco to increase youth participation in society. The Country Assistance Strategy for Morocco places mitigating drivers of youth disaffection and marginalizing as the top priority. One USAID program aimed at improving youth participation in community affairs is Jamaat Al Ghad (Tomorrow’s Commune). From 2010 to 2014 this program will support local governments cooperating with youth associations and helping young people become more actively involved in local affairs. Program grants will go to youth engagement projects such as youth centers and after-school programs. In August 2010, USAID held the Ramadan Youth Outreach Conference, which engaged 160 young people between the ages of 18 and 35 in discussions about how they can actively participate in society and turn ideas into real projects.

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Policy Overview
The main framework for youth policy in Morocco, called the New National Youth Policy (NPNJ), was created in 2003. The NPNJ outlines overarching youth strategies which aim to stimulate creativity and initiative and incite participation. Multiple departments of government execute plans and programs following the NPNJ. For example, the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS) administers a network of 510 youth centers where young people engage with each other in activities, learning tolerance and democratic values. MYS also runs the National Institute of Youth and Democracy, where young people meet in conferences to learn about political leadership and democratic participation. Finally, the MYS provides information through the National Center for Youth Information and Documentation, which serves as a resource for young people to conduct research, find information and learn about opportunities such as internships.

The State Bureau in charge of youth (SECJ) follows its 2007/8 action plan, which aims to increase civic engagement. To achieve this goal, the SECJ partners with other youth organizations and encourages members at youth centers to create and execute their own programs. One important SECJ program aims to extend services to young people in rural areas with limited access to information about opportunities.

Rationale/Background
Moroccan young people face a host of challenges including unemployment, poverty, illness, limited access to education and lack of political participation. Young people tend not to participate in political parties or civil society organization due to the absence of civic education, a perception of widespread corruption and undemocratic practices in organizations. Lack of economic and political opportunities can lead young people to become disaffected and turn to crime or extremism. The efforts of government ministries, USAID and civil society organizations have been developed to engage young people in a positive manner to address these and other challenges in their communities.

Going Forward
Civil society, international and governmental organizations all provide opportunities for young people to actively participate in Moroccan society. Programs generally focus on increasing political participation for the youth population. In the future, the government could benefit by investing in expanding programs for young people to address community needs through service.

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12 Sylvie Floris.
13 “Morocco Country Assistance Strategy.”
Palestine

There are approximately 1.2 million young people 15-29 years old in Palestine, out of a population of just under 4 million people. The country’s GNI per capita is US $1,230.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Palestine operates under unique circumstances and the political situation makes youth organizations and CSOs all the more necessary as they provide opportunities for young people where the government is unable. The following organizations represent some of the more prominent youth organizations in Palestine.

Ruwwad, or the Palestinian Youth Empowerment Project, is a civil society youth service program in Palestine which was launched in 2006 in partnership with the Education Development Center. With grassroots campaigns led by young people in their communities it seeks to spark community engagement and involvement among its participants while providing skills and experience important for future employment. According to a USAID evaluation, Ruwwad reaches over 20,000 youth participants and affects 50,000 community members. In a recent initiative called Al Om Madrasa, 25 young people provided one-on-one training for mothers of children with learning disabilities, so the mothers will be able to promote their children’s education.

The Sharek Youth Forum is an organization of young people who work to create initiatives and programs for other Palestinian young people in both the West Bank and Gaza. It was started in 1996 with aid from the UNDP and several other countries. Its Bridge program, which is one of its core initiatives, seeks to close the gap between children and young people by having young people plan children’s programs. It strives to give both children and youth skills for the future by providing them with communications, planning and IT skills. It works in over 20 centers across Palestine.

Because of Palestine’s unique political situation, there is a large international presence in the country. For example, the Arab-AmeriCare organization set up a leadership pilot program in 2009 which provides internships and mentors to Palestinian young people. The European Union is active through its Euromed program which provides research and development support for youth policy and programming. Finally, the United Nations Volunteers provides entrepreneurship and technology training for women.

In addition, all universities in Palestine require 120 hours of community service from students in order to receive their degrees. At Al-Quds University, a Student Volunteer Bureau was created in order to help students achieve this goal. The Bureau was created to provide training, coordinate volunteer groups and build community partnerships to ensure that participants have an effective and empowering experience. The university also released a Human Rights Clinic in 2006.

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1 “Middle East Youth Initiative Fact Sheet: West Bank and Gaza,” The Middle East Youth Initiative, June 2010, Web.
Students in the program are law students who gain practical experience while both providing legal services to the community and help local CSOs advocate for human rights.\textsuperscript{11}

**Policy Overview**\textsuperscript{12}

Youth policy is determined by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Currently, its program implementation is limited to summer camps which provide short-term recreational and leisure activities for young people, and building sports clubs and stadiums which serve the same purpose. After the second Intifada ended, the Palestinian Authority received funding and international support from UNICEF for the development of a youth policy. It was completed under the name National Youth and Adolescent Policy in 2005, but has not yet been fully implemented. This is in part because of the split between Hamas and Fatah which lead to different governments in the West Bank and Gaza. The policy was originally created in part from a survey of over 20,000 young people from West Bank and Gaza. It considers seven main areas of interest: education and training; health and environment; poverty, labor and unemployment; family relations; participation (political, social, economic, cultural and spiritual); culture, arts and media; and entertainment.

In the West Bank there has been an additional initiative to begin incorporating youth councils into the municipal governments. The youth representatives, elected from each age group from local schools, are meant to give a voice to young people in each of the 107 municipalities. Essentially, young people are integrated into the government activities of municipalities and are given the right to speak out during relevant proceedings. This program has received financial support from the World Bank and the German Technical Corporation. However, limited information is available about the impact youth participation through these councils has on municipal policy.

**Rationale/Background**

Young people in Palestine are in a unique position. Every aspect of their lives is unavoidably politicized. The conflict with Israel and Israel’s conflict with its Arab neighbors permeates all organizations and policy in the area. Since over 70% of the population is under the age of 29, young people and children are the most affected group.\textsuperscript{13} Unable to seek employment in Israel with an economy crippled by Israel’s blockade and trade that is restricted by violence and lack of opportunity, the availability of jobs is very limited. In addition, young people are becoming less and less engaged in their communities because of their disillusionment with the political conflicts and factionalism which is very prevalent in Palestinian politics. These circumstances make youth involvement and development a high priority in Palestinian development and conflict resolution.\textsuperscript{14} As a result, programs such as Ruwaad are implementing civic activities to engage young people in their communities while building skills for future employment.

**Going Forward**

Conflict resolution, peace and statehood are continuing objectives for Palestine and are a component of all policy. This poses certain unique problems for Palestine’s young people, including continued politicization that can turn to violence. The factionalism between Hamas and Fatah, as well as the recent Israeli intrusions against relief efforts are important considerations for future policy. But with the continued work of youth organizations and implementation of the youth policy programs that emerged from the 2005 youth policy document, there is hope that Palestine can tap into its young people’s abilities and contributions.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Friederike Hartl and Katrin Jaschinski.
\textsuperscript{13} Youth Exclusion in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: The Impact of Social, Economic and Political Forces, Wolfensohn Center for Development, Dubai School of Government, 2010, Print.
\textsuperscript{14} Friederike Hartl and Katrin Jaschinski.
Saudi Arabia

Bordering the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia had an estimated population of 25 million people in 2008. In 2006 it was estimated that 60% of the population was under the age of 21.

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There are various organizations supporting youth civic participation in Saudi Arabia and these efforts generally receive support from Saudi Arabia’s leadership. Specifically during the month of Ramadan as well as during Umrah and Haj seasons service opportunities expand. For example, organizations such as the Red Crescent, the Directorate of Civil Defense and the Boy Scouts provide free meals to worshippers for fast breaking at mosques as well as at traffic signals. Participants support “pilgrims coming from different corners of the world” and also help clean mosques.

The Jeddah Friends Program (JFP) is another example of a community-based organization engaging young people, and focuses on repairing and maintaining houses that belong to poor Saudi citizens from the Jeddah area. JFP director acknowledged the importance of these programs, stating that “voluntary work has become a growing trend for developed societies to invest the energies of their youth.”

In addition, in 2006 UNDP developed a country program document to outline its plan for 2007-2011 in collaboration with the Saudi government, which includes training workshops for young people and capacity building and forging partnerships with donors to increase youth development funding. The plan emphasizes a commitment to promoting youth participation and ensuring their “full inclusion in development policies, strategies and programmes.” UNDP also hopes to increase the representation of Saudi young people internationally.

Finally, the National Center for Youth Research was established, with its headquarters located at King Saud University, in order to promote youth participation at all levels of development in the country. It provides research and collaboration opportunities for young people between 15-30 years old. The Center offers conferences, symposia and workshops for young people, conducts research and studies for various public and private bodies in the civil service arena, and is working to set up a central information database for researchers and specialists in the youth sector. The center is also said to “care for the youth and their protection from intellectual and social perversion and direct their energy to whatever will benefit the development and well-being of their community.”

Policy Overview
The General Presidency of Youth Welfare (GPYW) was established in 1974, originally “in part with the aim of fostering boys’ interest in sports, and by 1994 it reportedly had established strong programs in 18,000 schools throughout the Kingdom.” While GPYW still has a major focus on sports within the country, it also sponsors arts and crafts, literary,
drama and folklore clubs, as well as playing a role in national and international cultural events like art exhibitions, calligraphy, and poetry and essay competitions.9

Furthermore, in 2009 UNDP and Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Economy and Planning formed a partnership to create and implement a National Youth Strategy (NYS) that will strive to enhance the participation of young people in national development.10 The NYS “represents a declaration and commitment of the priorities, directions and practical support that (the) country intends to give to the development of its young men and women. As a statement, it raises the profile and understanding of young people and acts as a national vision, framework, and consensus regarding their involvement in community and national life.”11 The Strategy will target young people between the ages of 15-24, and will involve five phases in order to receive approval. These five phases include: planning and preparation, analyzing data and resources, organizing data and drafting NYS, finalization of the NYS document, and finally government approval of the NYS document.12 It is not clear where in this process the strategy currently stands.

Rationale/Background

Saudi Arabia has made strides toward meeting the MDGs of 2015 with a poverty rate below 1.6% and a primary school enrollment rate of 93% for girls. Saudi Arabia has also experienced rapid urbanization due to economic growth in the last several decades, which has increased the risk of possible social isolation of some of the rural and remote areas where employment creation has lagged.13 Some challenges that young Saudis face involve balancing Islamic guidelines and regulations with western changes that have been occurring throughout the country. This involves shifting social standards away from traditional practices, to include more freedom of the press and lessening of gender marginalization.14 Various organizations in Saudi Arabia are working with young people to address these issues.

Going Forward

The UNDP and the Ministry of Economy and Planning program document cite that ongoing goals for Saudi Arabia consist of increasing the percentage of youth participation in the workforce, to produce a National Youth Strategy, and establish a Youth Development Fund.15 Once the Strategy is drafted and receives approval, it can go into effect and begin to address the needs of young Saudis.16 Saudi Arabia is also nearing its goal of meeting the Millennium Development Goals of 2015, many of which address issues directly related to young people including education, health and the environment.17 The government and international organizations could benefit from further investment in expanding youth civic participation opportunities in Saudi Arabia.

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12 Ibid.
14 “Young and Restless.”
16 Ibid.
Tunisia

Tunisia is a North African country bordering the Mediterranean Sea between Algeria and Libya. Young people represent approximately 20% of the 11.4 million Tunisians.¹ The GNI in Tunisia is $76.99 billion PPP dollars.²

Youth Civic Participation Overview
With its recent demographic swell of young people born in the 1970s and 1980s, the Government of Tunisia has recognized the need for attention to youth development and engagement within the community. As a result there is not only a variety of youth associations and CSOs, but also some youth centers, information points and camps engaging young people.³ The following organizations appear to be fairly prominent in the Tunisian youth community.

The Tunisian Scouts is an organization which focuses on education for all young people to prepare them to be active and engaged citizens. The scouting organizations emerged in 1924, uniting under one name in 1933.⁴ The Tunisian Scouts seeks to teach and guide young people to serve and be integrated in society. It has a membership of over 19,000 young people across Tunisia.⁵

Additionally, the Tunisian Union of Youth Organizations is an independent association of youth organizations founded in 1971. It serves as an advocate for the youth associative network and has a seat on the Higher Youth Council. The Tunisian Union of Youth Organizations serves as an umbrella group for youth organizations and partners with various organizations in Tunisia and internationally to support efforts such as the third Euro-Arab Coordination Meeting for youth organizations in 2010 in which young people led discussions about the sources of migration from the Middle East/North Africa to Europe.⁶

Policy Overview
Though Tunisia has a Ministry of Youth, Sport and Physical Education, there is not one overarching youth policy, but it is instead the result of strategies from a variety of different ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women, Children and Family and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. In 2002, a National Youth Observatory was established to keep track of the progress of youth initiatives and development plans across ministries. It also carries out studies on the challenges and successes of young people in Tunisia.⁷

In addition, President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali decreed that 2010 was the Year of Dialogue with Youth, which was preceded by three extended national youth consultations designed to “anchor traditions of dialogue with youth, take into account their problems and keep on lending a listening ear to their concerns.”⁸ As a result of these initiatives, young people in Tunisia produced the Tunisian Youth Pact which acknowledged the necessity of youth participation and outlined general goals to that effect. A draft of the document was further developed at the National Youth Forum in October 2008 which provided an open dialogue for young people to discuss their concerns. As a result of this dialogue, the minimum age for participation in municipal and federal councils was reduced to 23 to allow for greater youth engagement.

² “GNI, PPP (current international $),” The World Bank, Web, 27 July 2010.
³ Studies on Youth Policies in Mediterranean Partner Countries: Tunisia.
⁷ Studies on Youth Policies in Mediterranean Partner Countries: Tunisia.
participation. The Higher Youth Council was also created under direction from President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali which includes a representative from each district in addition to seats for prominent youth organizations. Positions in the higher youth council are elected by non-governmental organizations and associations; however information about the duties of the Council is limited.

Rationale/Background
Tunisia has a very large youth demographic facing high rates of unemployment and illiteracy. The current generation of young people is not relied on as the force for development and change in the way that previous generations were during the years following independence. In addition, young people have felt themselves unable to express their opinions for fear of censorship. They expressed a great deal of surprise at the ease of which their views were heard during the National Youth Forum. As such, the Government of Tunisia has recognized the need for engaging young people through things such as the Year of Dialogue with Youth and supporting youth organizations, while several civil society organizations strive to implement programs engaging young people in community development.

Going Forward
Tunisia has taken strides toward engaging young people in the past 10 years. In addition to the other moves made by the government and young people in Tunisia, the participants of the Symposium of Youth and the Future: Current Challenges, Capacity Building and Participation Mechanisms (hosted jointly by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Arab Maghreb Union) in January 2010 released a document entitled “Tunis Declaration for a Better Future for the Youth.” This document outlines some of the necessities for future development, including the need to sponsor joint North-South projects between young people from different regions and increasing the availability for appropriate resources to ease the transition from education to the labor market. While young people have been able to engage in a variety of methods of discourse and produce documents outlining the challenges they face and the solutions necessary, many of these projects haven’t yet been implemented. Going forward, it is important for government to invest in implementing youth civic participation programs throughout the country.

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10 Studies on Youth Policies in Mediterranean Partner Countries: Tunisia.
11 Mona Yahia.
Turkey

As of 2007, there were approximately 12 million young people between the ages of 15-24 in Turkey, which is 17.6% of the total population. In 15 years, it is expected that 70% of Turkey’s population will be of working age, while a 10% unemployment rate is still in existence.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There are a few civil society and international organizations that currently operate in Turkey engaging young people. Some CSOs include Community Volunteers and the Educational Volunteers Foundation, while the Sustainable Energy Education Project is implemented by Youth for Habitat, a UN initiative.

Toplum Gönüllüleri (Community Volunteers, TOG) provides short-term opportunities in civic associations for young people. It focuses on local and national social service projects and has reached over 14,105 young people. It has over 284 local and national projects, four Youth Service Centers and four Coordination Centers.2 TOG was established in 2002 with the goal of addressing the needs for a “new civil youth movement.” A TOG Youth Council was organized, orientation trainings began for adult volunteers and the foundation was officially established. Local projects are primarily performed through student clubs at universities and aim to promote peace, solidarity and progress by young people. National projects differ slightly depending on the participants, and can vary from targeting young people between the ages of 18-30 and secondary school children between the ages of 12-15. Various projects promote volunteerism, awareness of social policies, advocacy, conflict resolution and campaigns. Also, there are youth councils held twice a year to brainstorm and exchange ideas on projects.3

Türkiye Eğitim Gönüllüleri Vakfı (The Educational Volunteers Foundation, TEGV) engages young people in the education field. It is an NGO that was established in 1995 and provides short-term civic participation opportunities in education. TEGV’s goals involve social responsibility and life skills development, with a particular focus on community development and education. In 2009 TEGV provided educational support to 148,200 children and has over 10,000 volunteers between the ages of 18-26. Overall, the Foundation’s main goal is to provide non-formal educational opportunities for young people in need throughout Turkey.4

Finally, the Sustainable Energy Education Project is implemented by Youth for Habitat, and takes the form of advocacy and campaigning in order to increase youth awareness about sustainability and clean energy. It also aims to increase youth participation in international events hosted by the United Nations or European Union in order to improve networking and connections and facilitate training programs to increase youth participation in decision-making processes. Youth for Habitat was established in 1995 during the Copenhagen Social Development Summit, in which 300 different youth organizations participated.5

Policy Overview
Turkey has a Gençlik ve Spor Genel Mudurlugu (Youth and Sports General Directorate) which, in partnership with the Council of Europe, has been working toward developing a National Youth Policy in Turkey. The Council of Europe stated that “strengthening youth participation is therefore a permanent concern of any youth policy authority, be it at the local, national or European level. Participation is key to democracy and youth participation is arguably the key to the future of democracy.”6 In 2009, a Training course on youth participation and youth policy development in Turkey was held by the

5 “Search Results- Turkey.”
European Youth Centre Budapest, where 20 out of the 30 total participants were from Turkey, between the ages of 18-35. 

Rationale/Background
Some of the challenges facing young people in Turkey include unemployment, lack of a national youth policy and social unrest. Overall, there is an interest in engaging young people and going forward with the creation of a national youth policy but at the moment the main efforts are at the community level. A survey, published on UNDP’s website and supported by many NGOs, 30 public institutions and more than 30 academics called “Youth in Turkey” was given to 3,000 young people between the ages of 15-24 in 2008 about the “ideals, ambitions and problems of young people,” with the hopes that once young people specifically identify what issues face them, they will take the steps to come up with ways to address them and “actively participate in the solutions to their problems.” However, the authors were unable to find the results of this survey.

Going Forward
A report written by the UNDP stated that “Turkey has a 15-year window of opportunity to prepare today’s youth for the challenges ahead. After 15 years, about 70% of Turkey’s population will be of working age and the working-age population will be increasing, though at a decreasing rate, until 2040.” Thus it is quickly becoming more and more important to solidify a national youth policy for the country and develop strategies for greater youth civic participation. While civil society organizations such as TOG and TEGV have been implemented, the lack of government participation in this effort remains an obstacle.

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United Arab Emirates

Young people 15-29 make up approximately a quarter of the UAE population of 7.5 million people. The GNI of the UAE is $179.62 Billion PPP dollars.  

Youth Civic Participation Overview
There are a variety of civic engagement opportunities for young people in the United Arab Emirates through international organizations and civil society organizations at both the national and emirate level. The following organizations represent a cross section of these opportunities for civic engagement.

Takatof is a civic participation organization founded by the Emirates Foundation in April 2007. Its goal is to embed civic participation into the way of life in the Emirates by connecting people with volunteer projects and providing training and resources. The organization’s flagship program is the School Renovations Program, in which volunteers revitalize schools by painting, gardening and cleaning. Another youth program is the Al Khawi (brother in Arabic), which brings together youth groups from different Emirates and classes to promote friendship, enhance feelings of social responsibility and encourage exchange of experiences between diverse young people. Other programs focus on health care, house renovations and international volunteering.

International organizations are also collaborating with local initiatives to support youth civic participation. For example, the IMF has worked with the American University of Sharjah to host a series of round tables with groups of 15 young people to discuss economic issues specific to young people such as entrepreneurship and unemployment.

Organizations specific to each of the Emirates also provide civic participation opportunities for young people. For example, Dubai Cares provides volunteers and funds to help establish primary schools in poor countries and the Environmental Agency in Abu Dhabi recruits volunteers for clean-up events and programs it hosts. The Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum Foundation, founded in 2007 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, seeks to give future generations the skills, knowledge and experience that they need in order to develop solutions to the problems facing the modern Arab world.

Policy Overview
Youth policy in the United Arab Emirates is directed by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development, which hosted its third National Youth Forum in April 2010 at Sharjah University. The event hosted over 2,000 students and sought to promote cultural awareness and creativity among young Emirati citizens. Events ranged from cultural and historical displays and presentations and also featured discussions led by young leaders and those who have contributed greatly to society.

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5 “IMF holds Middle East Youth Roundtable UAE,” Business Intelligence: Middle East, 11 Mar 2010, Web.
9 “Second youth Forum Organized by Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development attracts over 2,000 students,” United Arab Emirates, 22 April 2010, Web.
Though it appears that the UAE does not have an overarching national youth policy, each of the Emirates has a youth policy that is specific to its youth population. In Dubai, for example, youth policy is executed by the General Authority of Youth and Sports Welfare (GAYSW) through programs such as Summer of My Country. This program engages young people in 40 days of cultural programming to better acquaint them with the Dubai culture and to instill patriotism and the desire to continue to work for their country and their communities.\textsuperscript{10} By placing emphasis on values of participation and commitment, and by supporting institutions, education, youth centers, and programs such as girl guides, the GAYSW seeks to create a youth sector that is confident, creative and committed to furthering community development.

**Rationale/Background**
Due to rapid oil production, the United Arab Emirates is one of the wealthier nations in the Middle East, but young Emirati citizens still face a variety of challenges, some of which are regional and some of which are more country-specific. The Emirates face the same unemployment challenges and lack of entrepreneurship that most of their neighbors face. Part of this is due to an influx of foreign nationals that the Emirates have seen over the past few decades which have reduced Emirati participation in their own economy. As such, many youth programs are meant to overcome a sense of youth exclusion in the UAE, from both economic and social development sectors.\textsuperscript{11}

**Going Forward**
The consistency with which the UAE has hosted the National Youth Forum and the development plans that both Abu Dhabi and Dubai have in place indicate that as the UAE moves forward, it may continue to recognize and address the challenges faced by its young people. Though the UAE has not developed a comprehensive national policy, opportunities for youth engagement are widespread. Civil society organizations play a key role with diverse programs for young people and individual emirates engage their youth populations through independently developed policies. At the same time, the government could benefit by developing more programs and initiatives specifically designed to increase the civic participation of young people.

\textsuperscript{11} “Minister urges youth to brace for challenges,” *UAE Interact*, 22 April 2007, Web.
Yemen

Yemen is a Middle Eastern country located where the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea meet. Over 75% of the population of 22.9 million people is under the age of 25. The GNI is $50.88 billion PPP dollars.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview

Youth organizations are prevalent in Yemeni society and though they have the capacity to provide services they have low levels of youth involvement in planning and implementing programs. Additionally, many youth programs rely heavily on volunteers, with only a few paid employees.²

For example, the Media Youth Forum, located in Sana’a City, uses its five full time members to increase awareness of the challenges young people face and prepare them to meet those challenges. Its target audience is young people aged 15-32. It implements training programs and radio broadcasting, and collaborates with the Red Crescent, Yemen Youth Union, Journalists without Borders, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and others.³ In 2008, Media Youth Forum worked with UNV to celebrate International Youth Day with a day-long event highlighting the role of volunteerism in development. Among various discussions and workshops about how young Yemeni’s can get involved, individuals and groups also presented their own projects that had made an impact on their communities.⁴

Established in 2007, the Youth Leadership Development Foundation seeks to enable young people to identify their own and community needs and put forward solutions to address those needs. YLDF targets young people between 18 and 25 years old with a particular focus on women and underprivileged young people. YLDF’s Youth Civic Engagement Project provides a year-long course with a focus on “experiential learning, networking, leadership and skill building, which is mainly focused on preparing young women and men for their next endeavors, especially as a catalyst for changing and developing a better civil society.”⁵ YLDF receives funding from various international organizations including the British Council, the National Endowment for Democracy (US) and UNIFEM.

Several UN agencies also promote youth civic participation in Yemen. As referenced above, UNV is active in Yemen encouraging volunteerism⁶ and working with Somali refugees.⁷ The United Nations Development Program works with the Yemen government to achieve Millennium Development Goals. Part of its aid includes establishing Youth Community Access Centers to increase youth participation through technology training.⁸ Finally, USAID implements a variety of programs which work to increase youth civic participation such as the Youth Empowerment Project which targets frustrated rural citizens by providing training and media activities.⁹

³ Ibid. P 50.
⁶ “UNV encourages volunteerism among Yemeni youth.”
Policy Overview
Youth policy in Yemen is determined by the Ministry of Youth and Sports which has worked on establishing rehabilitation centers and working with UN organizations to help Yemeni youth contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Yemen has also developed the National Children and Youth Strategy of the Republic of Yemen for 2006-2015. It is the result of three years of research and collaboration and creates a national framework based on the Life-Cycle Framework which recognizes the need for a holistic approach to the challenges faced by young people as well as their opportunities for development and contribution to the country. For young people aged 15-24 it seeks to establish a national employment plan, increase civic engagement, create youth-friendly urban planning and improve reproductive health. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, the plan has not yet been implemented.

Rationale/Background
Yemen is one of the world's poorest countries, ranking at number 138 out of 179 on UNDP's Human Development Index. Young people represent a huge portion of the population, with approximately 75% of the population under the age of 25. Yemen has the highest fertility rate in the Middle East and North Africa region, with over six children per family. This indicates that the youth demographic bulge is not going to decrease in the near future.

In addition, Yemen has a natural resource deficit that dramatically impoverishes people in all age groups. Yemen has only one-tenth the natural water sources to develop self-sufficiency in food production. Oil production is consistently declining and will be depleted in 10 years. As the population grows, the availability of land goes down. In addition, one-fifth of the population never enters school and the unemployment rate hovered between 30-40% over the past 10 years. As such, CSOs and international organizations are working to civically engage young people and prepare them to meet these challenges while government is developing policy to expand civic engagement opportunities for young people.

Going Forward
Though the Yemeni government has produced its National Children and Youth Strategy of the Republic of Yemen, four years later it has yet to be fully implemented. In order to improve the situation of young people, Yemen will have to address issues that have prevented the youth strategy from being enacted. As CSOs, youth organizations and international organizations continue to support development and improve infrastructure in Yemen, attention to young people’s challenges and the perception that young people can be a vital and impressive resource for the country will hopefully become more embedded in society.

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10 “Yemen, Ministry of Youth and Sport, San’a Rehabilitation Centre,” EN Projects, Web, 4 August 2010.
North America

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Canada

Occupying a large portion of Northern America, Canada is the second largest nation in the world, with its borders stretching across three oceans. Canada’s population of approximately 32 million people is small in proportion to its landmass with one of the lowest population densities in the world. Approximately 21% (6.9 million people) of Canada’s population are under the age of 18. Canada’s GNI per capita in 2008 was US$ 41,730.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Canada maintains a long tradition of relying on private, nonprofit and voluntary organizations to address the needs of its citizens. The nonprofit sector accounts for 6.8% of the nation’s GDP and employs 12% of Canada’s economically active population. Many of Canada’s civil society organizations (about 74%) focus on the delivery of direct services such as education, health and housing. However, recently many youth civic participation initiatives have begun to focus on the environment/climate change and unemployment/skill-building.2

In 1960, the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa (YSB) was founded to meet the needs of local communities by providing shelters and mental health support. Today, YSB helps the youth of Ottawa find jobs and become involved in their communities through career counseling, interview preparation, job fairs and job placements. YSB also supports issues related to poverty, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and abuse, and creates youth advisory committees to foster leadership and participation. For instance, the Breaking Barriers program is run through YSB by young people to help young immigrants better integrate into Canadian society. YSB currently has over 350 professionals providing services in 20 locations throughout Ottawa. Its funding comes from the Canadian government as well as nonprofit organizations such as the United Way.3

Another organization and resource for young Canadians is an organization called Katimavik (meeting place in the Inuktitut language). Founded in 1977 with help from Canada’s Prime Minister, Katimavik’s goal is to educate young Canadians through civic engagement. In 1986 the government cut much of the budget funding the organization, and it became an outdoor recreational and training center. In 1994, with new funding from the government, Katimavik formed six projects in communities throughout Canada. Katimavik offers Canadians between the ages of 17 and 21 the opportunity to participate in six-month-long civic participation programs in communities throughout Canada. Katimavik offers programs in cultural discovery and civic engagement, eco-citizenship and active living, and second language and cultural identity. Today, nearly 1,000 young adults serve each year, working with over 800 partner organizations.4

Finally, founded in 1971, Canada World Youth is a national nonprofit organization that provides young Canadians under the age of 30 (most of whom are between 17-20 years old) the opportunity to participate in international educational programs for a period of 6-7 months. Participants will have opportunities to do farm work, teach French or English, participate in tree-planting and ecotourism projects, develop and hold workstations to raise awareness for basic healthcare in Ghana, and organize marches and seminars.5 Through participation in these programs, Canadian young people gain valuable work experience, develop language and intercultural skills, and learn about community and

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international development. Canada World Youth operates 5 regional offices throughout Canada with 54 partner organizations from 25 countries around the world.  

Policy Overview
Youth civic participation in Canada is primarily supported by civil society organizations, many of which receive support from the government. However, organizations in Canada are facing a difficult atmosphere, reporting that government funding is becoming more short term, more competitive and less reliable. Furthermore, the struggle to locate funding is driving up administrative costs at many organizations, straining organizations and those who work for them. In the 1960’s, innovative youth programs in the United States like the Peace Corps served as examples of how public programs could successfully engage young people in meaningful community development projects. Inspired by such programs, Canada began to experiment with youth programs of its own and in 1961 founded the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), engaging university students in community service projects in developing countries.  

In 2008, CUSO merged with a domestic service program called Volunteer Service Overseas Canada (VSO) to form CUSO-VSO. Combined, CUSO-VSO has placed over 15,000 volunteers worldwide and, as a member of the VSO Federation, now works in over 40 countries with a collective base of 45,000 volunteers worldwide. Currently, organizations such as Canadian World Youth, Canadian Crossroads International, Katimavik and Youth Challenge International form the backbone of the national service opportunities for young Canadians supported by the Canadian government.

Rationale/Background
Young people in Canada face many challenges today, including unemployment, homelessness, risky behavior and rising cases of HIV. Canadian youth face an unemployment rate of 20% for those ages 15-19. The labor market in Canada is also changing as an increasing number of jobs (an estimated 35%) will require employees to have attained a university degree. Conversely, the number of jobs requiring few skills has slowed significantly. As a result, several civil society and government-supported initiatives focus on equipping young people with the skills to find employment and to address critical needs in their communities through civic participation.

Going Forward
In Canada, the main initiatives promoting youth civic participation are implemented by non-governmental organizations, while government provides some resources to support these programs. A lack of coherent policy framework for its nonprofit sector may be one of Canada’s biggest hurdles in the development of its service programs. With rates of civic participation declining in recent years in Canada, and smaller volunteer-run organizations struggling to stay alive, Canada must work to create a stronger environment for youth civic participation. It is important that the Canadian government expand investment in these organizations, and through both funding and access to information, create more opportunities for its citizens to become civically engaged.

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7 Ibid.
10 Cath W. Barr et al.
Mexico

Sharing a long border with the United States in the Western Hemisphere, Mexico has an estimated population of 108 million people with approximately 37 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$9,980.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview
As one of the largest and most economically and politically important countries in Latin America, Mexico has the presence of many international and local organizations. Organizations such as Boy Scouts and YMCA all provide short-term civic participation opportunities to Mexican youth. The Catholic Church also plays a critical role in mobilizing young people for community service.

For example, AYUSA Global Youth Exchange, established in 1980, is a non-profit exchange organization with programs geared towards high school students. AYUSA recently was awarded a grant from the US Department of State to run an initiative in Mexico called Jóvenes en Acción (Mexico Youth Leadership Program). The program is a partnership between the US Embassy in Mexico and Mexican Ministry of Education as well as other private sector companies in Mexico. The program is aimed at young Mexicans from communities plagued with unemployment, drugs, violence and a lack of education. The program will have Mexican youth participating in service projects, cultural enrichment activities, and global skills training to develop civic responsibility and commitment to communities.2

Policy Overview
The main agency addressing issues relating to young people within the Mexican government is the Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud (Mexican Youth Institute or IMJUVE). IMJUVE was established in 1999 and focuses its efforts on individuals between the ages of 12 and 29 years old. IMJUVE develops and promotes youth policies and programs and advises the Government of Mexico and private civil society actors on youth programming and development. The organization also acts as a government representative when consulting with non-state actors.3

IMJUVE operates a number of programs to promote civic engagement among Mexico’s young people. One such program is the Poder Joven (Youth Power) radio show. Through this program, young people have access to a national radio broadcast in which they can discuss issues and themes that are important to them. IMJUVE also promotes youth civic engagement by distributing prizes and awards to high achieving young people in Mexico, highlighting their civic and social contributions.4

Despite these activities, IMJUVE recognizes that it can do more to promote youth civic participation. In a recently released monitoring report by the IMJUVE board of advisors, the board recommended that the organization take three steps in order to strengthen its promotion of youth civic participation in Mexico. The board recommended that IMJUVE build an updated database of youth organizations within Mexico so that they can be easily contacted and partnered with on an ongoing basis. The board also suggested that civic participation opportunities within civil society organizations be better publicized by IMJUVE, suggesting that the agency engage in events to highlight youth volunteering, its benefits, and existing service opportunities available to young people in the country. Finally, the board suggested that IMJUVE keep a database of youth volunteers so that they can continually be informed of new volunteer activities, as well as implementing a system of putting young people in contact with organizations that provide service opportunities in which they are interested.5

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4 Ibid.
5 Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud (IMJUVE).
Aside from IMJUVE, the Mexican government has an educational policy that requires youth civic engagement. Mexico’s Servicio Social legislation, passed in 1937, requires that university students that have completed 70% of their course work engage in 480 hours of community service within six months in order to graduate. The program was initially focused on medical students deploying to rural areas to help meet chronic needs for medical professionals and resources. The initial success of the program resulted in the government doubling its expenditures on public health and expanding the program in 1947 to include mandatory requirements for all students. The Mexican government does provide annual funding for the basic costs of implementing the program, including covering certain salaries, training costs and supplies, however outside the public health sector, resources have been more limited. The government also provides training to professors in charge of implementing or being involved in the program.

Rationale/Background
Mexico has an estimated underemployment rate of 25% and has recently experienced a surge in drug violence and related crime. As such, national service and community-based efforts have been implemented to engage young people in meeting needs in their communities. In particular, Mexico, like many other countries, experiences a chronic lack of medical professionals and resources in its rural areas. Many trained doctors look for better-paying employment in urban areas or outside of Mexico. According to the World Health Organization, Mexico had 195,897 physicians out of a population of approximately 97 million in 2000. To respond to this need, the Mexican government implemented its Servicio Social program in 1937 which enabled students to fill a critical need in the shortage of medical services, while also engaging in valuable experiential learning experiences. The students also sent reports back to universities detailing the general conditions, the state of sanitation and disease rates where they were serving and the program was very successful in providing health services to rural areas.

Going Forward
A long-standing national service scheme has been implemented engaging university students in Mexico to address critical needs throughout the country, while civil society organizations are also striving to create opportunities for youth civic participation. At the same time, the government recognizes that it could be doing more to support youth civic participation through IMJUVE and hopefully if it acts on recent recommendations, it will be able to further expand opportunities for youth civic participation across the country.

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United States of America

The United States of America is one of the largest countries in the world, with a population of approximately 304 million people (2008) approximately 75 million of whom are under the age of 18. The GDP per capita in the United States in 2008 was US$38,262.¹

Youth Civic Participation Overview
The United States is home to the largest number of youth civic participation organizations in the world. These organizations are active both domestically and internationally and the following provides just a few examples. The Points of Light Institute, in response to a call to action from President George H.W. Bush, was founded in 1990 as an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit organization to encourage and empower the spirit of service. The Points of Light Institute operates three organizations, the HandsOn Network, MissionFish and the Civic Incubator. The HandsOn Network is the largest volunteer network in the nation, with more than 250 'Action Centers' reaching 83% of the nation's population, and more than 70,000 corporate, faith and nonprofit organizations. In 2008, the network delivered approximately 30 million hours of volunteer service in various social sectors.²

Be the Change, Inc. creates national public awareness campaigns to help raise awareness and momentum for service as a solution to problems facing communities in the United States. Through the use of active coalitions, collaborative policy making, bipartisan advocacy, and the engagement and participation of well-known voices in entertainment, government, retail, etc., Be the Change, Inc. reaches Americans of all ages and backgrounds.³ The first campaign launched by Be the Change, Inc., called ServiceNation, focused on increasing service opportunities and elevating service as a core ideal and problem solving strategy throughout America. With a network of over 200 member groups, ServiceNation’s goals are to engage 100 million Americans per year in community service and 1 million Americans per year in full and part-time stipended national service by 2020.⁴

Established in 1983, the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) works to “link young people, educators and communities together in an effort to redefine young people’s role in society.”⁵ NYLC implements a yearly National Service-Learning Conference in which over 3,000 attendees from around the world participate in workshops, lectures and networking events. NYLC assisted in the writing of the National Community Service Act and advised President Clinton’s team on the creation of the Learn and Serve America grant program (see below). Among NYLC’s programs are the National Youth Leadership Training program in which high school students attend leadership training programs, and the Youth Advisory Council which is a team of young people ages 14-21 recognized for their efforts in promoting youth civic engagement.⁶

Founded in 1985, Campus Compact is a national coalition of over 1,000 college and university presidents throughout the United States “committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education.” Campus Compact works to develop students’ citizenship skills, helps build partnerships between communities and campuses, and provides resources to teachers looking to incorporate civic and community-based learning into their curriculum.

Finally, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), founded in 2001, performs research on the civic and political engagement of young Americans. CIRCLE is aiming to change the public discourse and press coverage associated with young people as citizens, show that it is cost effective to mobilize young people between the ages of 18 and 30, and provide data, training and technical assistance to organizations geared toward the civic engagement of young people. Several other large organizations in the US use youth volunteers to carry out their programming and/or develop initiatives to promote youth leadership. These include the American Red Cross, Save the Children, Boy Scouts of America, Girls Scouts of the USA, and more.

Policy Overview
In 1990, the National and Community Service Act of 1990 was signed into law, creating a new independent federal agency known as the Commission for National and Community Service. Then in 1993, the National and Community Service Trust Act was passed which merged the National Civilian Community Corps and the Commission into the present-day Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The CNCS became the primary governing body in charge of youth service in the United States, offering a powerful unifying resource with which young people across the country could more easily find information on service programs and become more civically involved in their communities. As a partner to and resource for national, state and local organizations, the CNCS is an independent federal agency with over 600 employees operating throughout the United States and its territories. CNCS aims to “improve lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.” CNCS accomplishes its mission by supporting a wide variety of programs and organizations meeting community needs through service. CNCS helps them obtain access to public and private resources and partner with national, local and state organizations.

The legislation authorizing the CNCS must be reauthorized periodically by Congress, providing an opportunity to revisit the original purposes and design of the legislation. In April 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which reauthorizes and expands the service programs administered by the CNCS. The Serve America Act proposes to substantially increase national service opportunities. This act provides opportunities for millions of Americans to serve their communities in improving education, helping America’s veterans, helping America achieve energy independence and helping those most affected by the current economic crisis.

CNCS oversees three main national programs – AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America and Senior Corps. AmeriCorps is comprised of three main programs, AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps). AmeriCorps was designed to work from the bottom up and as such, through its State and National programs, channels most of its funds to state service commissions, appointed by Governors, which award grants to groups meeting locally-determined needs in locally-determined ways. AmeriCorps members help expand these groups’ reach and impact, but they don’t dictate how to provide services or achieve the organization’s mission. AmeriCorps also sought to strengthen communities and to improve the lives of members themselves, in part by offering AmeriCorps Education Awards to help those who serve pay for college or to pay off college loans. Over the years, grants have been made to thousands of organizations in every state of the union, as well as to Native American tribes and to groups in US territories. Each year AmeriCorps engages more than 70,000 Americans through service to more than 3,000 community-based organizations and public agencies. A study of the impacts of national service on members’ civic engagement, education, employment and life skills in 2007 revealed that AmeriCorps Alumni are more connected to their communities, knowledgeable about problems facing their communities, more likely to participate in community activities, and also more likely to choose careers in public service.

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AmeriCorps VISTA is a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. VISTA started in 1965, was incorporated into AmeriCorps in 1993 and in 2007, 8,852 VISTAs provided 11.4 million hours of service. VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local government agency, working to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses and strengthen community groups, etc. Finally, AmeriCorps NCCC is an intensive 10 month program for young adults ages 18-24 in which participants complete a series of service projects approximately six weeks in length addressing issues such as rehabilitating low-income housing, disaster response, urban and rural development and cleaning up the environment, among other local needs. AmeriCorps NCCC members team with local nonprofit, community and faith-based organizations to complete service projects in a particular region.

Teach for America, launched by a graduate student as a grassroots campaign in 1990, allows top college students the opportunity to teach in low-income communities throughout the United States and is an example of a program supported by AmeriCorps. Teach for America’s goal is to eliminate educational inequity by providing a critical source of well-trained teachers to help break the cycle of educational inequity. Teach for America provides its members with intensive training and support to assist them in leading their students to make substantial academic progress. Its members consist of outstanding recent college graduates who commit two years to teach in urban and rural public schools. Teach for America has nearly 28,000 individuals participating, and has become one of the United States’ largest providers of teachers for low-income communities. It is supported in part by CNCS through AmeriCorps.

Founded in 1988, City Year is an AmeriCorps program in which young people ages 17-24 commit to 12 months of service. Each year City Year brings together 1,750 young Americans to complete community service, leadership development and civic engagement programs. Participants are involved in tutoring and mentoring young children, reclaiming public spaces, organizing after-school programs and the Young Heroes and City Heroes Programs (weekend programs for children in grades 6-8 to learn about and solve social issues in their community). City Year seeks to be a catalyst to engage young people and institutions in the citizen service movement—revitalizing communities and fostering a spirit of civic engagement.

CNCS also oversees Learn and Serve America, a program supporting schools (primary, secondary and tertiary) and civil society organizations in efforts to engage students and teachers in service-learning. Learn and Serve gives grants to schools and CSOs to support implementation of service-learning projects and provides training and technical assistance through the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse which is an online library of lesson plans, research and project examples to support service-learning. Through its programming, Learn and Serve enables over one million young people to take part in service-learning projects.

Finally, the Peace Corps, founded in 1960, is an organization dedicated to assisting developing countries. Since its creation in 1960, the Peace Corps has sent nearly 200,000 volunteers to 139 countries to assist with issues like HIV/AIDS prevention, education, environmental preservation, agriculture and youth development. Peace Corps has over 7,500 volunteers and trainees that are an average age of 28 years old. The largest concentration of Peace Corps programs are in Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe/Central Asia.

Rationale/Background
Over the past several decades, the United States has experienced profound political, economic and social transformations. The population of the US is becoming increasingly diverse. After a booming economy in the late 1990’s, the labor force of the United States has been undergoing a shift away from manufacturing jobs in favor of high-tech and intellectual industries. Only 6% of new jobs created in 2001 did not require a postsecondary education, of which only approximately 30% of the United States population possesses. The recent recession has given rise to a record number of unemployed young people in the US. A report by the Joint Economic Committee’s found that one in five workers

15 Ibid
between the ages of 16 and 24 were unemployed in April 2010, and that the US had a youth unemployment rate of 19.6%, the highest rate since the government began tracking such data. As a result, many civic participation programs in the US are striving to equip young people with the skills they need to find jobs and/or success in college.

The United States Census Bureau found the poverty rate in the US has increased 3% in the last decade from 11.3% in 2000 to 14.3% in 2010. This, according to the article, was not unexpected since the US had been undergoing a recession with unemployment rates jumping from 7.7% at the beginning of 2009 to 10.1% by October 2010. In response to the recession and growing community needs, more organizations have stepped up to engage young people in addressing needs such as poverty reduction through service.

Going Forward
Initiatives like AmeriCorps, funded by CNCS and implemented by community-based organizations, provide the resources and man-power necessary to address critical community needs through the country. Under the Obama Administration, national service has seen a significant increase in support through the passage of the 2009 Kennedy Service America Act, the implementation of United We Serve and several days of service each year with the White House Office on Social Innovation and Civic Participation, and supportive rhetoric from local, state and federal government offices. As a result, civic participation continues to be an important part of American culture with nearly 60% of Americans in 2008 and 2009 engaging in their community to meet neighborhood and community needs.

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South Asia

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Afghanistan

As of April 2009, Afghanistan’s total population was estimated at 29 million people, with 68% of the population is below the age of 25.\(^1\) Afghanistan has a GNI per capita of US$250.\(^2\)

Youth Civic Participation Overview
Due to a lack of government stability, many youth engagement programs in Afghanistan are either implemented by civil society organizations on a local scale or implemented by UN agencies. There are numerous local civil society organizations established primarily to engage women and young people. Some of these include the National Islamic Society of Afghan Youth, Afghan Youth Civil and Cultural Association (AYCCA), the Youth in Action Association (YIAA) and the Afghan Youth Initiatives (AYI).

Each is independently established and focuses on youth empowerment in Afghanistan. AYCCA specifically focuses on volunteer work and collaboration with other Afghan civil society organizations to promote human rights.\(^3\) YIAA is a youth-led association dedicated to promoting peace and sustainable development throughout Afghanistan.\(^4\) AYI is a new initiative that aims to support youth-led community projects and to provide the “leadership and educational skills necessary to rebuild Afghanistan.” AYI trains young people to become “active global citizens,” and to create a “peaceful and sustainable Afghanistan” through youth-led community improvement projects, employment opportunities and workshops to offer educational and global experiences.\(^5\) The authors were unable to obtain a great detail of information about each organization.

In addition to civil society organizations, several UN agencies support youth programs. From 2007-2008, UNDP ran a National Joint Youth Programme (NJYP) in Afghanistan, with the help of other UN organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO and UNV. The UN agencies developed a joint program consisting of multiple ministries within the Afghan government in order to engage young people in the country. The program’s goals were to strengthen government capacity with regard to responding to young people’s needs, the promotion of non-formal education in order to increase literacy and leadership, promote youth engagement in governance and socio-political processes in a democratic way, and to promote “volunteerism for peace and development and establishing a youth volunteer corps for Afghanistan.” While UNDP made strides on several of its goals, it continues to look for adequate resources to fully establish the proposed youth volunteer corps.\(^6\)

Finally, UN-HABITAT implemented a program called the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), which focuses on engaging young people in the reconstruction and advancement of their country. YEP established a network of male and female youth groups throughout Afghanistan, which are actively involved in the social, cultural, sporting and economic lives of their communities and linked to similar youth networks around the world. YEP has worked with 2,600 men and women between the ages of 14-25 in both rural and urban communities. YEP participants attend workshops and training classes in order to learn, plan and implement community advancement programs. As a result of YEP, 120 Youth Councils were established in the provinces of Farah, Bamyan, Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar and Nangarhar, along with 150 youth

6. “National Joint Youth Programme (NJYP),”
development plans and projects for the councils. Also, YEP also provided support for youth policy-making; however the authors were unable to identify a comprehensive national youth policy in Afghanistan.⁷

Policy Overview
There is a Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs, which cites itself as “under-resourced, lack(ing) youth policy and strategy, and (lacking capacity) to provide strategic guidance to mainstream youth issues across ministries.” The Ministry recognizes that Afghanistan’s young people were an afterthought when it came to drafting policy, in addition to a weak government that does not have the resources to support youth initiatives. In May 2010, the Ministry was seeking to engage an international consultant on volunteerism, using the UNDP’s NJYP from 2007-2008 as a resource. The Ministry continues to explore opportunities for Afghan youth civic participation, and aims to create a comprehensive report complete with recommendations for how to strengthen the level of youth civic engagement in the country.⁸ The Ministry indicated that the National Youth Volunteer Service program was to be implemented in 2009 with 2,000 young people from various provinces. However ICP was unable to locate documents that state if the program was successfully executed in 2009. The program stems from the volunteer corps goals of the UNDP from 2007-2008.⁹

Rationale/Background
There are many challenges facing Afghan young people such as unemployment, oppression, induction into the narcotics industry or other insurgent groups and being surrounded by conflict for much of their lives. As such, programs in Afghanistan such as AYI and YEP are actively providing opportunities for young people to be engaged in the rebuilding of their communities and their own development through civic participation. There is an elevated amount of concern for young Afghan girls, since gender discrimination is a significant issue facing the country. Literacy rates are extremely low for Afghan girls. UNDP’s NJYP specifically targeted these issues with multiple objectives stipulating gender equality and female involvement, as well as advocating for the protection of young people against negative influences.

Going Forward
UNDP released a country program document for 2010-2013, analyzing the degree of success that has been achieved in Afghanistan, and evaluating how to add to it in the upcoming years. In this report, UNDP noted that while progress has been made since the United States entered post-Taliban rule in 2001, there is still a high level of violence, corruption and drug-trafficking. Thus, “UNDP proposes to increase and strengthen its presence at sub-national levels and to significantly improve coordination with other development partners, and build stronger partnership with United Nations organizations, government counterparts, bilateral donors, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the private sector and civil society organizations, among others.”¹⁰ This will hopefully enable UNDP to expand its programming for civically engaging young people in Afghanistan and to work with civil society organizations already engaging young people. Through stabilization and peacebuilding, strengthening democratic governance, livelihoods, natural resource management and disaster risk reduction and poverty reduction, UNDP hopes to continue making progress in the country with regards to nation-building and sustainability and also to work toward achieving MDGs for Afghanistan.

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Bangladesh

Bangladesh’s total population in 2008 was estimated at 160 million people, with approximately 61.3 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$520.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview2
While some inroads have been made in terms of policy to support youth civic engagement, a large amount of civic participation programs in Bangladesh are implemented through a range of NGOs and INGOs. Various organizations in Bangladesh seek to build the capacity of young people through civic participation and some of these are described below. The program areas range from ICT training and development and disaster relief services to advocacy regarding youth issues. Many focus on leadership development as a key program area.

The Bangladesh Education and Research Network (bEARN)3 is seeking to become the lead research, resource development and support body for youth-focused and youth-led development projects in Bangladesh. bEARN is youth-led and run with 75 staff between the ages of 18 and 30. It provides needs-based capacity building training to youth-led and youth-focused organizations. It is developing a network that will connect a range of youth-oriented organizations and the Department of Youth Development in six metropolitan areas in order to create a database of collaborating organizations. It is also working to provide technical assistance and to build capacity among youth CSOs across the country. During 2006, bEARN engaged 300 participants in its activities. bEARN is partially funded through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the US Department of State and the US Embassy in Bangladesh and is closely linked with iEARN, a global network using information/communications technology to enable teachers and young people to collaborate on service-learning projects.

In addition to bEARN, several other local organizations collaborate with INGOs to support youth civic participation. One such program is Youth Power in Social Action (YPSA) which began in 1985 and is partnered with Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) from the UK, Global Xchange Bangladesh4 and the British Council.

Although a major feature of the program involves international volunteering, recently VSO began to expand its efforts to build local volunteer capacity and promote national volunteer movements through reciprocal volunteer programs. Under the program 18 volunteers ages 18-25 from Bangladesh and the UK are paired together to work for three months in local CSOs in Bangladesh and the UK. The program targets a geographic, gender and ethnically diverse range of volunteers. The volunteers live with host families and work with their assigned organization on issues ranging from HIV/AIDS, primary health care, sanitation, human rights, ICT training, micro credit and local governance. The volunteers perform a variety of functions for their local organizations including fundraising, advocacy and awareness campaigns. While the work that volunteers perform helps them acquire new skills, abilities and knowledge; the duration and intensity of their service also affords them the opportunity to undertake substantive projects that are more likely to make a lasting impact on local communities.

Finally, NationPulse grew out of a project by DemocracyWatch funded by the British Council in 2004. DemocracyWatch is a development and educational institution working to promote and strengthen democracy and good governance by creating awareness about rights and values through research, training for leadership, advocacy and media mobilization to fight against injustice and human rights violation. It provides training to a variety of groups including young people to build careers and leadership qualities. NationPulse provides similar civic education and leadership development programs. Its objective is to promote leadership qualities and team spirit among young people; to bring youth together from diverse backgrounds and introduce them to different points of view, ideas and philosophies; and to build a sense of citizenship among young people. It does this through providing field trips, workshops, teambuilding and group projects. The projects are initiated, planned and implemented entirely by young people. NationPulse primarily works with educated and motivated young people. It has experienced challenges in terms of financial resources and logistical support for carrying out its programming.

Policy Overview

Despite official recognition of the role young people have played in Bangladesh’s independence movement, opportunities for their participation in the decision-making processes since then have often fallen short. Nevertheless two policy frameworks exist that could be harnessed to provide greater opportunities for youth civic engagement – the National Youth Policy and a National Service Scheme.

The Bangladesh National Youth Policy (NYP) was passed in 2003 and, if fully implemented, could significantly expand the opportunities for young people to become socially, economically and politically engaged in Bangladesh. The policy identifies seven issues or areas it seeks to address, including education, employment, training, health, environment, amusement, and sports and games. Noticeably absent from this list is civic engagement. Nevertheless, among 14 objectives listed in the policy, several pertain explicitly to civic engagement. These include:

- fostering understanding and respect for democratic principles and social justice as enshrined in the constitution;
- motivation and encouragement of young people to participate in social development through voluntary organizations;
- assistance to youth organizations; and
- the encouragement of youth participation in all aspects of national development.6

However, the policy lacks concrete steps for achieving these goals and has been plagued by a lack of implementation. The result has been continued “exclusion [of youth] from the democratic and development process at all levels.”7 The Ministry of Youth, Department of Youth Development, and National Youth Council are charged with reviewing and revising the policy every five years, although the institutional arrangements between these bodies, and their commitment to issues pertaining to youth development, are not clear.

In addition to the NYP, the government established a new program in 2009, the National Service Scheme (NSS), which aims to help 2,000 young people develop skills through national service.8 In the first year (2010), young people between the ages of 24 and 28 in 14 upazilas (sub-districts) of the Barguna and Kurigram Districts, identified by the Department of Youth Development, are to participate in a three-month training program focusing on various modules for skill development (including subjects such as disaster management, health service, self-employment, etc). After completing the training, the young people work in public service in the fields of agriculture, education, social welfare, and housing and public work for a period of 18 months. This introduces a lack of clarity about whether this is in fact a service scheme or a youth employment scheme since the participants do receive a wage of Taka 100 during training and Taka 200 per day once they start working for government.

Finally, affiliated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the National Federation of Youth Organizations Bangladesh (NFYOB) serves as the national coordinating council of youth organizations throughout the country. Founded in 1983,

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6 National Youth Policy of Bangladesh, Copy provided by Dulal Biswas, National Federation of Youth Organizations of Bangladesh, 30 November 2007.
NFYOB is actively involved in youth development programs throughout the country and serves as the lead agency for Global Youth Service Day and the Youth Employment Summit in Bangladesh.

Rationale/Background
Bangladesh is a small country that nevertheless is one of the most densely populated in the world. Bangladesh’s per capita income has doubled since 1975 and it is listed as one of the “Next Eleven” emerging economies. Youth civic engagement, as is the case in many countries in South Asia, was intimately tied to the history of the struggle for national liberation in which young people played a major part.10 The NYP introduction, which provides some of the background and rationale for the policy, states:

In the interests of national solidarity youths should be properly encouraged by motivation, providing skill developed training and giving productive education. It is urged of the time to create constructive mentality amongst the youth for their participation in the mainstream of national development (sic).11

Since the 1970s there has been tremendous growth in the number of civil society organizations and an expansion of the fields of activity in which they operate. According to a report by the Asian Development Bank (1999) there are more than 20,000 NGOs operating across the country of every conceivable type.12 Despite a rich tradition of charity,13 today a very large share of the funding for NGOs comes from foreign sources and while the NGO sector in Bangladesh is large, it remains in many ways poorly organized, regulated and financed.

Going Forward
There are a number of important organizations in addition to the National Youth Policy and the National Service Scheme promoting youth development and civic engagement in Bangladesh. However, political instability and poverty remain major obstacles to a more robust youth civic engagement movement. Additional investment in social and economic development programs that encourage civic engagement can help young people engage their local communities and effect real change. Opportunities for more formal long-term service will likely remain limited without substantial investment by the government in larger national youth service programs. By working together, the government, international donors, INGOs, community-based organizations and young people can mobilize existing assets and incorporate international best practices to leverage their overall impact on youth development through civic engagement.

10 National Youth Policy of Bangladesh. Note: When Bangladesh was East Pakistan the official language was Urdu. As the movement for independence gained strength, political leaders in Bangladesh began to demand that Bangla be recognized as the official language of East Pakistan.
11 Ibid.
India

India's population was estimated at 1.18 billion people in 2008, of which 446 million were under 18 years old. India has the largest population and largest economy in South Asia with a GNI per capita of $1,070.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview

India has developed a robust and sophisticated civil society with diverse civil society organizations providing opportunities for youth civic participation as well as strong governmental frameworks supporting youth policies and youth civic participation. There are a number of Indian CSOs and institutions providing opportunities for young people to engage with social issues in a variety of areas. These organizations' strategies range from preparing young people for participation in local governance, to training them to run youth development organizations, to setting up youth resource centers.2

A key form of youth active citizenship is youth involvement in local government. Organizations such as the Community Development Center in Madhya Pradesh and the Shri Bhuvneshwari Mahila Ashram in Uttarakhand, are working to strengthen local panchayat institutions and involve young people in the process of community development programs and decision making. Additionally, organizations such as YUVA in Mumbai and Yuva Janaagraha in Bangalore are supporting youth participation in political processes by engaging young people in monitoring elections, helping young people identify civic and social issues that matter to them and equipping them to create change. Finally, Project Citizen gives students a chance to be competent and responsible participants in local and state government by implementing projects whereby students select an issue that matters to them, study the issue, meet with relevant government officials and devise an action plan or alternative policy aimed at addressing the issue.

Another approach to youth civic engagement taken by organizations in India is preparing young people to become citizens through citizenship education, opportunities for exposure to social issues through volunteering, rural camps, internships, action projects and campaigns. For example, Delhi-based Pravah works with adolescents to build youth leadership for social change. It focuses on processes that build self awareness and critical thinking, and that inspire young people to understand social issues and take ownership for common spaces. Many educational institutions have also started programs to encourage student civic participation. St. Stephen's College in Delhi University for example, has an active Social Service League. Its activities include sending volunteers to Bihar for flood relief, organizing blood donation camps, evening classes for poor children, reading for the visually impaired, etc.

A further form is the development of youth resource centers. These centers are friendly, non-threatening spaces – often youth led – where young people can meet, discuss social issues, build skills, organize and implement collective action around an issue they feel strongly about. The Thoughtshop Foundation in Kolkata for instance has transformed traditional neighborhood clubs into youth resource centers. Additionally, the media, arts and communications have huge

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appeal for young people. Drishti puts media in the hands of young people in grassroots communities and presents them with the opportunity to tell their stories, from their perspectives.

Finally, there are a range of international NGOs, whose involvement is also important in the development of youth civic engagement opportunities. International volunteer agencies such as Volunteer Service Overseas, Peace Corps and United Nations Volunteers work to build national volunteer capacity into their programs. The Commonwealth Youth Program also partners with Restless Development (formerly Student Partnerships Worldwide) to run its HIV/AIDS awareness program.3

There are a number of Indian CSOs and institutions providing opportunities for young people to engage with social issues in a variety of areas. They use different strategies and approaches as they support youth civic participation throughout the country. Given the large amount of CSOs working with young people in India, it is not possible to capture them all in detail here. For more information about the initiatives in this snapshot and many others, please see the ICP report Youth development through Civic Participation: Mapping Assets in South Asia.4

Policy Overview
The Government of India’s two primary youth civic participation policies are the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector 2007 and the National Youth Policy 2003. Both of these policies seek to promote young people in the growth and development of communities, through recognition and encouragement of innovative youth civic participation.

The National Policy on the Voluntary Sector seeks to “encourage, enable, and empower an independent creative and effective voluntary sector with diversity in form and function, so that it can contribute to the social, cultural and economic advancement of the people of India.”5 The policy clearly states that a multi-sectoral approach involving voluntary organizations is needed to address many of the nation’s problems including poverty alleviation, skill promotion, entrepreneurship, empowerment of women, population stabilization, combating HIV/AIDS, managing water resources, elementary education and forest management. The government seeks to encourage innovation and recognize pioneering work by CSOs; develop a database of CSOs working in different fields and levels to enhance communication within civil society and between the voluntary sector and the government; and commits to encourage volunteer’s involvement in public service delivery such as family welfare centers, primary health care facilities, vocational training, schools and sanitation campaigns.

The preamble of the National Youth Policy of 2003 states that the “policy is based on recognition of the contribution that youth can and should make to the growth and well-being of the community and endeavors to ensure effective coordination between the policies, programs and delivery systems of various Ministries, Departments, and other Agencies.”6 The policy identifies eight key sectors of youth concern including training, employment, civics and citizenship. Three objectives of the policy bear directly on youth civic engagement:

• Article 4.2 seeks to develop the qualities of citizenship and a dedication to community service among all sections of youth.
• Article 4.6 seeks to sustain and reinforce the spirit of volunteerism among youth in order to build up individual character and generate a sense of commitment to the goals of development programs.
• Article 4.8 seeks to develop youth leadership in various socio-economic and cultural spheres and to encourage the involvement of NGOs, cooperatives and non-formal youth groups.

The National Youth Policy 2003 also includes provisions for an information and research network to facilitate the formulation of focused youth development schemes and programs. The policy designates the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute for Youth Development (RGNIYD) as the apex body of this research network along with the National and State Youth Centers and the Youth Development Centers under the Nehru Yuva Kendra Scheme (NYKS). Based near Chennai, the RGNIYD was established in 1993 in recognition of the need to “establish a national level Training Institute [which]
was considered imperative to bring under one umbrella all Youth Development activities viz. training, action research, extension, documentation and dissemination.7 Today, the RGNIYD is India’s premier resource on youth development policies and programs through its research and trainings.

The policy is scheduled for review five years after implementation is commenced. As such, the policy should be under review by now, but it remains unclear when the government will complete the review process. It is also unclear whether the creation of the National Committee on Youth Policy and Programs had been convened or if any progress has been made toward creation of a National Youth Development Fund.

Among the most well-known schemes promoting youth civic engagement are the National Service Scheme (NSS), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangatham (NYKS), and the National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS). The NSS is a student program aimed at stimulating the social consciousness of youth with an overall objective of student development through civic participation. Participants engage in 120 hours of community service per year for two years. The NSS conducts activities in several areas including: improvement of campuses; tree planting; constructive work in adopted villages and slums; blood drives; adult and non-formal education; public health, including nutrition, family welfare, and AIDS awareness campaigns; construction of durable assets; and sustainable development with an emphasis on wasteland development and watershed management. The NSS approach is to foster relationships between campus and community, colleges and villages, and knowledge and action. The NSS draws support from 174 universities, 7,500 colleges, 16 senior secondary councils and 2,000 senior secondary schools.8

Launched in 1972, the NYKS is designed to give rural non-student youth the opportunity to engage in social and community development. Today, some 50,000 kendras (centers) have been established across the country to encourage the development of youth clubs designed to promote awareness of community issues and participate in a variety of service projects. NYKS participants carry out a variety of programs that range in theme from the development of sports clubs to AIDS education and from vocational training to anti-smoking campaigns and natural disaster relief and rehabilitation.9

The NSVS, which was initiated in 1977, is a full-time service scheme for recent university graduates. Through this program, participants are expected to contribute to national development, learn about pressing community issues, and gain an appreciation for the dignity of labor. The scheme is open to students who have graduated and are under the age of 25. Volunteers undergo four weeks of training to learn more about the nation’s development challenges and the objectives of their service, as well as to gain the basic managerial and technical skills necessary to operate youth programs. Participants are placed within the kendras of the NYKS, the NSS, the Bharat Scouts and Guides, State Governments and Union Territory administrations, or with civil society organizations approved by the Ministry.10

Rationale/Background
By the early 20th century in India, civic engagement, voluntary action and rural upliftment had become central to the Swadeshi (self-sufficiency) movement and the political philosophy pioneered by Gandhi. This early interplay between community service, political struggle and Indian nationalism combined with Gandhi’s later philosophical influence on independent India, set the stage for the voluntary sector of today.11 Each of the government civic participation programs evolved out of discussions on the role of youth in nation building in the first 20 years of independent nationhood. The National Service Committee of 1959-1960, the Saiyidain Committee of 1961 and the Education Committee of 1964-1966 each recommended the creation of some form of national service. Additionally, based on the recommendations of the National Policy on Education, community service was incorporated into the curriculum of many educational institutions.12 In India’s dynamic civil society, numerous organizations have also responded to the large population of young people to engage them in their communities while also building skills for future success.

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
Going Forward

While the India youth civic engagement landscape is vibrant, diverse and well-developed, there remain substantial opportunities to enhance the quantity and quality of civic engagement opportunities for India’s young people. The various national service schemes can be reformed and modernized to incorporate international best practices and better monitoring and evaluation. Existing civil society programs offer invaluable lessons on how to help young people conduct advocacy and launch campaigns that are focused and sustained rather than just protest or riot. Such programs enrich the landscape of youth civic engagement. At the same time, it is also necessary to ensure that participants are given the space to reflect and learn about themselves as well as the issues they are addressing so that they can become effective leaders beyond the engagement with the program. While it might seem that given these various youth civic participation assets, further investment in India is unnecessary, it is actually in India that such investment is likely to have a long-lasting impact. Successful youth development through civic engagement in India will help reap the demographic dividend and provide a powerful example for the rest of the region.
Nepal

Located between China and India, Nepal’s total population in 2008 was estimated at 28.8 million people, with approximately 12.6 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$400.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview2
Despite limited institutional support for youth active citizenship, young people in Nepal have been quite engaged civically. Several civil society organizations have created various opportunities for young people to be engaged in their communities. Some of these include United Youth, Yatra, the Association of Youth Organizations of Nepal (AYON), Youth Engagement in Sustainability and Nagarik Aawaz. Many of these organizations are engaged in efforts to encourage the government to take a more active approach to young people and to prioritize the reformulation of the National Youth Policy. They have been in consultation with the government’s National Planning Commission and seem to be making slow, but steady, progress in putting youth development on the national agenda.

United Youth’s program, Youth Inspiration, runs youth capacity-building training sessions every Saturday for young people aged 16-24.3 The program is designed to provide training on six issues – the rule of law, good governance, leadership, youth roles and responsibilities, present government, and the future of Nepal or ‘the Nepal of my dreams.’ Each training session includes two courses and involves 18-22 participants. The goals of the program are to train the representatives of youth organizations (two each from 15 districts in all five regions); build a nationwide youth network so that young people from different organizations can come together and share their experiences and communicate; and motivate young people to contribute to national development in Nepal. The program is a leadership development and peer education program designed to ‘train the trainers’. After the training, the participants go back to their local communities where they help educate local youth organizations and other young people about youth issues. The program is youth-led with one youth coordinator and one paid youth assistant. There are five youth volunteer staff that run the courses. During 2007-2008, the program reached 90 young people.

Yatra was started in 2004 by young volunteers working in the environmental sector and is a youth-led and youth-managed organization targeting young people at colleges.4 Its goal is to develop youth groups among students from various subject disciplines, in pursuit of environmental sustainability. Through its Primary Environmental Care campaign Yatra seeks to promote youth activism for environmental sustainability and to help educate young people about conservation. To this end the organization has mobilized 30 youth volunteers between the ages of 24 and 27 to assess needs and design and implement a program promoting conservation. Yatra is also a founding member of the Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON) and is involved in the effort to create a National Youth Policy. AYON is a network of youth organizations that provides a platform for collaboration between youth organizations in Nepal.5

Youth Engagement in Sustainability (YES) Nepal is another environmentally-focused youth organization that is seeking to reduce CO2 emissions by promoting the use of more energy efficient technologies such as compact fluorescent light

bulbs (CFL). YES Nepal forged partnerships with CFL distributors selling the bulbs at discounted rates as well as with the World Wildlife Fund Nepal and the Nepal Electric Authority. The overall objectives of the program are to raise awareness on the wise use of energy, advocate for the replacement of incandescent bulbs with CFL, and to reduce energy consumption through technology transfer. A major component of the project is the creation of an EnviroCorps consisting of young people ages 16-29 who volunteer to help conduct the awareness campaign, lobby the government to reduce taxes on CFLs and change light bulbs.

Finally, Nagarik Aawaz (NA) is working with displaced persons and former rebels, in addition to once-off events such as peace song competitions, drama and family get-togethers, which are all aimed at emotional healing of participants and their families. The main program, however, is the Displaced Youth Volunteer Program, which provides participants with skills development, financial support and employment-related exit opportunities in the space of one year. Priority is given to victims of conflict, women, applicants from low income groups, high school graduates, ex-combatants and apolitical young people. Selected participants undergo a three-day orientation to familiarize them with the program. Then they become involved in running the organization’s weekly ‘peace kitchens,’ where they cook and serve food to the poor and homeless. Those who choose to continue being involved in the program as volunteers are connected with different NGOs throughout Kathmandu where each volunteer learns basic office skills and becomes involved in the host organization’s program where they spend 2-5 days per week. While serving their CSOs they receive a monthly stipend for up to one year.

Policy Overview
To oversee policy and issues related to young people, a Ministry of Youth and Sports was established in 2008 and a National Youth Policy, based on a review of the draft policy developed by the King’s government in 2006, is currently being developed by the Ministry. The government’s recent focus on issues facing young people is likely the product of extensive advocacy efforts by diverse groups of youth-oriented NGOs and young people themselves.

While the new policy being developed is not yet available, the King’s government drafted a National Youth Policy in 2006, which reportedly included mechanisms for engaging young people in decision-making bodies and involving them in nation building and development. The National Planning Commission also included a chapter on youth development in its three-year interim plan (2007-2010). According to Deepti Khakurel, from Yatra, the interim plan has provisions recognizing the role of young people as major contributors to socio-economic development and sustainable peace, and aims to provide them with opportunities to participate in nation building and development. The inclusion of a chapter on youth development in the government’s three-year interim plan is a significant step forward by the government and is a victory for the coalition of youth organizations advocating on behalf of Nepal’s youth. The fact that the plan also acknowledges the necessity of creating mechanisms for youth participation and empowerment in the policy process is further evidence that the time is right for further investment in youth civic engagement in Nepal.

Rationale/Background
During the last 60 years Nepal has been through a range of political transitions as the monarchy has fought to retain its control of the country. In 2006 Maoist rebels and the government signed a peace agreement ending a 10-year-old insurgency and parliament abolished the monarchy declaring Nepal a republic. Nepal’s recent efforts to draft a new constitution (which is expected in May 2011) may provide an opportunity for further promoting and encouraging youth civic engagement, however this process has been quite stalled. Despite the end of the insurgency, conflict between former rebels and major political parties continues to plague the country, leaving a weak political system as an obstacle to comprehensively promoting civil society, youth development and civic engagement.

One of the key challenges facing Nepal’s new democratic system is the high level of inequality across regional, caste, gender and ethnic groupings. High levels of inequality raise the risk of these groups being excluded from the peace and development processes and have raised questions about how effectively the current democratic system can represent the interests of all Nepalis. Youth civic engagement programs that seek to address these issues by promoting national integration and cross-cultural understanding, or focus on combatant demobilization, could make significant impact on the process of national reconciliation now underway. Given that many former members of the Maoist rebel groups are
young and from ethnic minorities or low classes and caste, their reintegration into the body of politics is of particular importance. In addition to former rebels, thousands of people have been displaced by the conflict. Because youth civic engagement provides young people with opportunities to work and cooperate with people from other classes, castes and religious orientations, it also offers great opportunities for forming bridging social capital. In the Nepalese context of conflict and displacement, such interventions would therefore be vital for sustaining peace in the long run.

Going Forward
It is clear that in Nepal there are many important assets for supporting youth development and promoting youth civic participation. This includes a recently formed Ministry of Youth and a National Youth Policy under development. Additionally, Nepal has a history of youth activism and a variety of dynamic organizations working to civically engage young people. Civic engagement, despite political challenges over the years, has therefore been a historical source of advocating for change and for survival for many Nepalese and has a long history. However, in a new political era the space for youth civic engagement that is legitimated and supported must be encouraged.

Despite existing challenges, a vibrant youth population is positively impacting pervasive issues in Nepal such as economic inequality, ethnic diversity, a legacy of civil war and the impact of climate change. Efforts to engage demobilized combatants and young people displaced by conflict hold particular promise for positively addressing a critical national need. Recent government efforts and dynamic youth organizations hold much promise for youth civic participation in Nepal. At the same time, much more investment by international organizations is needed in Nepal to significantly expand formal long-term service opportunities for all young people in Nepal.
Pakistan’s total population in 2008 was estimated at 176 million people, with approximately 77 million people under 18 years old. The GNI per capita is US$980.1

Youth Civic Participation Overview

A variety of civil society organizations and international organizations are creating opportunities for youth civic engagement in Pakistan. These organizations operate in a variety of institutions addressing a wide range of critical community needs. Some of the organizations implement service-learning programs while others are involved in ad-hoc civic participation opportunities that respond to particular community needs, such as disaster relief and public health.

Youth Engagement Services (YES) Network Pakistan (formerly the Pakistan National Youth Service) was founded by Ali Raza Khan in 2002, following his efforts in providing relief to victims of the devastating earthquake in Quetta, Pakistan. It has played a pioneering role in the field of youth civic engagement and social entrepreneurship in Pakistan. YES Network Pakistan works with young people living in low-income or under-privileged communities and it offers training and capacity building for disadvantaged young people (particularly women) to launch their own micro social enterprise. Working with key local stakeholders YES and its group leaders address issues of public health, disaster preparedness, vocational training and education. YES Network has also worked to institutionalize service-learning in Catholic schools in Pakistan by engaging over 8,000 students in over 200 service-learning projects. These projects are designed and implemented by students to address issues that are important to them. YES Network Pakistan is working with the Catholic Board of Education Lahore to expand the projects to engage 25,000 students in 2010.

Another initiative working with young people in Pakistan is the Youth Advocacy Network (YAN), which focuses on sexual and reproductive health issues. YAN was formed by a group of young people in 2005 with the support of the World Population Fund and a Dutch youth group called CHOICE (both continue to support the organization). Its mission is to “improve the quality of life of young people, by campaigning for the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) through advocacy; to reduce high-risk sexual behavior; and to organize young people into groups, building their capacity so they can become agents of change in their communities.” YAN offers capacity building support regarding youth SRHR issues. It supports skill enhancement around health topics and it has conducted orientation workshops in every province of Pakistan. Young people serve with YAN for approximately 1-4 hours each week for 12 months. YAN encourages its members to take the lead in organizing sessions advocating for SRHR for their friends, families and communities to enhance their leadership skills. Young people take the lead in conducting advocacy sessions, campaigns and events and are involved in every level of program development. Young women represent 50% of the peer educators and the program caters to both rural and urban populations to promote an enabling environment for young people.

Finally, the Center for Civic Education Pakistan (an affiliate of the Center for Civic Education based in California) is operating a program called Project Citizen. The aim of the project is to enhance civic education in Pakistan and promote active citizenship and democracy. The project engages about 16,000 students in grades 7 and 8 to experience the usefulness of active and informed participation in the public policy process and in the resolution of problems that afflict them and their communities. The center operates a network of training centers in 15 districts. At these centers two Master Trainers are trained and are also designated as mentors. These master trainers mentor teachers from each participating school in a district. The teachers work to guide students through the public policy process. The young people identify a local issue and then work with members of the community and the government to try to devise solutions. These represent just some of the various civil society efforts in Pakistan.

Policy Overview
The Pakistan government recently passed a National Youth Policy that aims to “enable the youth of Pakistan to become proud Pakistanis, good citizens, to prepare them for income generation in their practical life, and secure the future of Pakistan.” The policy, which was approved in 2009, is divided into three sections: Principles of National Youth Policy, Plan of Action and Institutional Implementation Plan.

The policy recognizes that “Pakistani youth are invigorated with ambition, enthusiasm, dynamism and commitment to rise. Young people are a major human resource as well as agents for socio economic change, growth and developing entrepreneurship. They are the future of the country.” The purpose of the policy is “to mainstream the youth,” “harness their talents and energies” and address the “challenges confronting today’s youth.” The policy proposes to accomplish these objectives by integrating existing programs from a variety of ministries already working to address youth issues. The policy also articulates 11 principles that animate the policy and inform the government’s approach to youth development, which includes “social volunteering.”

The policy provides for the creation of a “National Youth Volunteer Corps,” to “utilize the youth human resource” and mobilize them to assist in the social and economic development of the country. It suggests that youth volunteers should be engaged in volunteer work across all sectors from “social security, health, education, environment, gender, sports and community uplift.” Although this portion of the policy could be improved with greater specificity, it also acknowledges the need to develop the national volunteer program based on the “methodology, principles, and best practices adopted internationally and to acquire the necessary foreign professional expertise to establish and help this vital initiative gain momentum.”

In November 2009, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) announced plans to help the Government of Pakistan with implementation of National Youth Policy. UNFPA will take a lead role in the implementation of the policy by coordinating and mobilizing local CSOs and groups. In addition to financial assistance and technical support, UNFPA will assist the Ministry of Youth Affairs with establishing about 100 Youth Activity Centers with the UNFPA Youth-Friendly Model.

Finally, in order to capitalize on and enhance existing assets, the policy provides for the creation of a National Youth Council (NYC) to “create synergy, harmony, and increased coordination in the programs of various institutions.” The council would be set up under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister with the Chief Minister of the provinces, the Governor of the North West Frontier Province, Chief Executive of the Northern Areas and the Minister in Charge of Youth Affairs as its secretariat. The policy further proposes that “operational coordination with all the stakeholders and the leadership and Executive Committee of the National Youth Council will be formed under the secretary of the Youth Affairs division. However, the NYC is created by implementation of the NYP which hasn’t occurred.”

In addition to the National Youth Policy, the Pakistan government encourages civic participation in university campuses by embedding it in higher education policy. The Higher Education Commission is responsible for quality assurance,

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carried out through the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), which works with universities to establish a Quality Enhancement Cell to “improve the quality of higher education in a systematic way with uniformity across the country.” Rationale/Background

Community engagement is one of the aspects of universities’ performance that is included in the QAA’s Quality Assurance assessment process and universities such as the Aga Khan University have implemented important civic engagement programs with their students and communities.

Pakistan has been characterized by periods of democratic rule interrupted by various coup d’etats as well as civil war. Despite a return to democracy, Pakistan is still challenged by political tension with India and conflict in North-West Pakistan between the government and Taliban militants, which has displaced millions of Pakistanis. While the government could create more opportunities for youth civic engagement, other factors such as gender roles, family obligations, poverty and a lack of “civic culture” also inhibit young people from becoming more fully engaged in their communities. In spite of these obstacles, all the young people and NGO leaders consulted in ICP’s mapping study agreed that young people need opportunities in great quantity and quality in order to become civically engaged.

The National Youth Policy identifies a number of challenges that the nation’s young people face including: unemployment; lack of career guidance; shortage of vocational training; decline of moral values; increasing violence; lack of health counseling and awareness; and a lack of recreational and academic opportunities. The policy and various civil society efforts in Pakistan engage young people in addressing these challenges and contributing to community development. On a range of issues, including disaster preparedness and management, environmental conservation, literacy promotion and education, sexual and reproductive health, and gender sensitization, youth civic engagement has proven enormously effective. Providing opportunities for young people in Pakistan to make a contribution to their communities through civic participation can help young people acquire the human and social capital they need to make the transition to adulthood and help Pakistan reap a demographic dividend.

Going Forward

Despite significant gains with the passage of a National Youth Policy, there are many obstacles for full implementation that remain. For instance, the policy overlaps with many disciplines and institutions (government agencies, CSOs and international donors) with active programming. There has been a lack of sufficient funds for implementing the National Youth Policy since its approval. The policy could also do much more to provide opportunities for youth participation in decision-making. There was no youth involvement in the drafting of the policy and despite efforts on the part of The Youth Forum of Consumer Rights Commission of Pakistan (TYF-CRCP) and British Council Pakistan to run youth consultations on the policy, and promises from the Minster of Youth Affairs to take these voices into consideration, there is no evidence of this having been done.

Although formal civic engagement and volunteer programs may be unfamiliar in some communities in Pakistan, the basic principle of offering service to other members of the community is an age-old tradition. What is needed is a mechanism to tap into and capitalize on the inherent civic spirit that young people and their communities feel by raising awareness about how young people can be engaged and the advantages (both for the young people themselves and the community at large) of doing so in a more formal and organized way. Despite limited government support there are already a number of CSOs and informal associations in the voluntary sector that are capitalizing on this civic spirit and engaging young people in order to address genuine community needs. These institutions and organizations serve as models for further investment.

There is a real opportunity for the government, civil society, and youth of Pakistan – with some input from international donors – to come together to provide the resources and the forum for young people to develop their potential while giving back to their community. While there is undoubtedly more that the government, local NGOs, and international donors can do to encourage youth participation, it is important to acknowledge some of the more successful models currently engaging young people across Pakistan.

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10 National Youth Policy: Draft.  
11 Youth Development through Civic Engagement: Mapping Assets in South Asia.