

# Profile of the Kenyan Youth Exchange Network



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NGO Networks for Health (Networks) is an innovative global health partnership created to meet the burgeoning demand for quality family planning, reproductive health, child survival, and HIV/AIDS information and services around the world. Funded by USAID, the project began operations in June 1998.

Networks' Technical Support Group encourages and supports health policy makers, program managers, and service providers to:

- become aware of the need to consider related social issues in all aspects of their work;
- understand that individual's perceptions can affect policy making, program planning, and clinical practice; and
- become comfortable in discussing a wide range of issues with colleagues, clients, and other persons at community levels as appropriate in their work.

Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) is an international, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization whose mission is to find and implement solutions to critical health problems, especially those affecting women and children. PATH is widely recognized for its collaborative work with local and international partners and its success in building and sustaining public- and private-sector partnerships. PATH exchanges knowledge, skills, and technologies with governments and nongovernmental partners in low-resource settings around the world. For PATH, "appropriate" technologies and interventions are those that meet critical health needs in an affordable and culturally acceptable manner. PATH is based in Seattle, Washington, and has 23 program offices in 14 countries. As part of this global network, PATH advances its mission through a special focus on reproductive health and behavior change communication.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This document was created for NGO Networks at the request of USAID's Bureau of Africa in order to assess the networking experience of Kenya-based NGOs. The Youth Exchange Network (YEN) was selected as an example of a young network still establishing its identity and discovering its value. Prior to being completed, this report was reviewed at a dissemination conference held in February 2002 in Kenya. This final draft reflects the comments of the partner NGOs at that conference.*

**T**HE SLUMS OF NAIROBI ARE CHARACTERIZED by poverty, dense population, unplanned structures, poor infrastructure, and heavy pollution. Housing is temporary, small, and of very poor quality. Families typically live in small single rooms, which serve as bedroom and kitchen, and sometimes as bathroom and toilet. Water is scarce, and the little that is available is very expensive. There are no proper disposal systems and slum communities are constantly exposed to the dangers of open sewers.

There are few maternal and child health facilities and many mothers have no access to pre-natal and post-natal care or to immunization for their children. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like HIV and AIDS, gonorrhea, and syphilis are common and spread rapidly. Poverty, drunkenness, illicit drugs, idleness, promiscuity, and commercial sex are the key contributing factors to the rapid spread of these STIs.

Within slum households, women, adolescents, and children—who have least access to economic resources and social privileges—experience the worst health problems as a result of household poverty. Mounting evidence indicates that the urban health and poverty crisis has been particularly detrimental to adolescents. The problems of teenage pregnancy, reproductive tract morbidity, and abortion are more prominent among youth living in the slums than among other adolescents. Problems of violence, unemployment, and substance abuse are also commonplace among urban youth.<sup>1</sup>

In March 1998, eight organizations working with youth in different Nairobi slums came together to form YEN. The groups were motivated to join forces to better serve young people and other residents of these areas. They felt that as individual groups they were limited by their relative isolation, but recognized that as a collective power they could make more significant changes in these communities.

### YEN's Achievements

Since its inception YEN members have sought to contribute to the development of young people in Kenya by exchanging knowledge, experiences, and opportunities. Despite having been in existence for only three years, YEN has achieved a lot, including:



*Children living in slums have least access to economic resources and social privileges.*

- enhancing understanding among members of the benefits of collaboration and an increased willingness to work collaboratively;
- creating a mechanism to allow members to increase their effectiveness through the exchange of knowledge and experiences and creating opportunities for training and collaboration; and
- promoting and sustaining a sense of professionalism in youth development workers.

## **Future Challenges**

YEN members identified the following as their major challenges for the years ahead:

1. Deciding if the focus of the Network's activities should expand beyond the level of exchange of information, knowledge, and opportunities.
2. Producing a long-term strategic plan.
3. Clarifying membership criteria.
4. Developing a shared understanding of the role of managers.
5. Strengthening internal communications.
6. Undertaking a formal evaluation and documenting activities.

## **Lessons Learned**

YEN members identified the following lessons learned from their efforts to initiate, build, and strengthen the Network.

1. **Early success helps build commitment to a network.** During the early stage of a network's development it is important to have an experience that demonstrates the benefits of belonging to such a group. The Youth Development Exchange Project, which provided for a group of program managers and a group of youth leaders to travel to the United States and visit youth development projects, was identified by members as a major milestone and "building block" for YEN and their commitment to the Network markedly increased as a result of this exchange.
2. **Create opportunities for members to understand the benefits of belonging to a network.** Member organizations felt that they did not have a shared understanding of the benefits organizations accrue through participation in YEN activities. Some members value YEN much more than others and youth leaders\* thought that they benefited from the Network more than the managers. Organizational support for the Network would likely increase if managers and youth leaders met to discuss the benefits of YEN.
3. **Operationalize commitment to youth development.** It is important for a network of youth-serving organizations to create opportunities for young staff and member volunteers and to share a common understanding of "youth development" and practice its principles of participation, empowerment, and leadership.
4. **Keep it simple.** The core activities of YEN have been the exchange of information and opportunities and the development of new skills. Members recognize that they have been able to sustain these activities because they know how to coordinate and administer their work and agree that

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\*The term "youth leaders" used throughout this document means the paid staff and/or volunteers of YEN member organizations who are also young adults.

they may not have been able to sustain a more ambitious agenda at this point in their development. If YEN members decide to take on additional activities, they know that they will have to step up their collective level of commitment to the Network.

- 5. Share the work.** YEN's development as a network was advanced through the coordination and facilitation services provided by Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) and its other members. Sharing coordination responsibilities helped build ownership of, and commitment to, the Network.
- 6. Share learning opportunities.** Opportunities to participate in training, exchange, and other Network events were highly valued by the staff and volunteers of most YEN members. Members must all be well informed of training opportunities and should have equal access to these events.
- 7. Leadership style is important.** In the early phase of network development it is important that the group leaders or facilitators strike a balance between the need for results and the need to enable participants to take ownership of the network.
- 8. Address issues concerning sustainability.** YEN is sustained through the support of one major funder plus the contributions of member organizations. Members feel the Network is financially vulnerable through its dependence on a single major donor and have suggested that it develop a strategy to ensure its sustainability. Part of this strategy would include a systematic attempt to find additional funders for operational and project-related costs.

## BACKGROUND

### Overview of Conditions in Nairobi Slums

***The eight members of the Youth Exchange Network work in the slums of Nairobi in adolescent sexual and reproductive health.***

Africa is currently undergoing an urban population explosion. Despite slow economic progress since the 1970s, African cities have experienced the fastest population growth rates in world history, at over 5 percent a year, and virtually all future population growth in Africa is expected to occur in urban areas. As a result of this rapid growth under economic constraints, the majority of residents in Africa's large cities now live in overcrowded slums and shantytowns where health conditions and livelihood opportunities are poor.<sup>2</sup>

The population of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, is estimated to have grown from 1.35 million in 1989 to 2.2 million in 1999. In all, 18 slum communities exist in Nairobi, where 70 percent of the city's population resides.<sup>1</sup>

Nairobi slums exemplify the crises of poor health and economic deprivation that increasingly afflict Africa's big cities. A recent study by CARE Kenya documented the following conditions in these slums:

■ **Lack of employment and poverty.** Nairobi slums, just as areas in the rest of the country, are suffering from a serious unemployment crisis. A large labor force of unskilled and semi-skilled people can not find jobs because of a slump in the national and city economies. Poverty in Kenya has reached alarming proportions. Indications of rising poverty in the city's slums include increased food insecurity, an increase in the percentage of stunted children, and a steady drop in real incomes.<sup>1</sup>

■ **Dense population.** Most settlements, particularly those on public land, have extremely high densities, typically 250 housing units per hectare. This compares to 25 per hectare in middle income areas and to 15 per hectare in high-income areas.<sup>1</sup>

■ **High morbidity and mortality.** Morbidity and mortality rates caused by diseases stemming from environmental conditions are higher than in other areas of the city, owing to poor sanitation, lack of potable water, poor drainage, uncollected refuse, and overcrowding.<sup>1</sup>

■ **Poor infrastructure.** The terrain is haphazard, making it difficult to introduce roads, pathways, drainage, water, and sanitation.<sup>1</sup>

■ **Lack of clean and adequate amounts of water.** Water is only provided to a few standpipes, if it is provided at all. Most residents do not have access to proper sanitation and live near open sewers.<sup>1</sup>



Seventy percent of Nairobi's population reside in 18 slum communities.

- **Inadequate health services.** Because they have no official recognition, slum communities see few direct health interventions by the Nairobi City Council (NCC). Health care is typically provided by the voluntary sector. Some communities have practically no access to health services from the NCC, private practitioners, or voluntary sector organizations.<sup>1</sup>
- **Minimal access to education.** Residents of Nairobi slums have limited access to education services. NCC schools are generally located outside the slums and usually cater to children from the surrounding middle and upper middle income residential estates. Access by the poor to NCC schools is constrained not so much by distance but by the fees and levies charged, compelling the majority of poor children to seek education in lesser-quality nonformal schools.<sup>1</sup>
- **High crime rate.** The crime rate in Nairobi has been steadily rising and is seemingly worse in the slums.<sup>3</sup>
- **Lack of recreational services.** At a recent workshop, members of the YEN noted that slum communities have few recreational services, particularly for children and young people. Workshop participants emphasized that lack of such services directly influences youth idleness, teenage pregnancy, crime, substance abuse, and other risky behaviors.

In slum households, women, adolescents, and children—who have least access to economic resources and social privileges—experience the worst health problems as a result of household poverty. Evidence suggests that the urban health and poverty crisis has been particularly detrimental to the young people of Kenya. The problems of teenage pregnancy, reproductive tract morbidity, and abortion are more prominent among youth living in the slums than among the general adolescent population. Problems of violence, unemployment, and substance abuse are commonplace among urban youth.<sup>2</sup>

## Overview of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Issues

About 34 percent of the Kenyan population consists of young people ages 10 to 24.<sup>4</sup> This segment of the population faces serious socio-economic and health problems including, but not limited to:

- **Low rates of contraceptive use and lack of access to information and services.** Studies indicate that while sexual activity among adolescents is high, contraceptive use remains low, subsequently leading to high levels of teenage pregnancy and related consequences. Adolescents lack access to information and services in part because of prohibitive social policies, and their sexual behavior tends to be inconsistent and unpredictable.<sup>4</sup>
- **Early sexual debut, unwanted pregnancy, and unsafe abortions.** In Kenya, many teenagers report early sexual activity, with the average age at first sex estimated at 16.2 for boys and 16.8 for girls. By the time they are 19 years old, an estimated 50 percent of girls have begun childbearing (up 6 percent from 1993), and 90 percent of pregnancies in this age group are reportedly unintended and unwanted. Unsafe and incomplete abortions are common. Premarital births are increasing considerably, with Kenya being one of three African countries where mean age at birth now precedes age at marriage by about one year.<sup>4</sup>
- **The spread of HIV and other STIs.** According to data from the Ministry of Education, about 20 percent of youth ages 15 to 19 (mainly secondary school students) are infected with HIV, the virus

that causes AIDS. Over 80 percent of Kenyan adolescents ages 15 to 19 do not perceive themselves to be at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Seventy percent still engage in high-risk sexual behavior.<sup>4</sup>

- **Increasing rates of sexual violence against girls and young women.** Emerging evidence suggests that, for young women, sex is often not voluntary, not pleasurable, and frequently violent. In a study among Kenyan girls ages 13 to 19, 23 percent of those who have had sex said they were “coerced” or “forced” into their first intercourse.<sup>5</sup>
- **Lack of employment opportunities.** Kenyan youth are disproportionately represented among the unemployed. Lack of employment opportunities, combined with poverty, are primary concerns and underlying factors that increase youth vulnerability to high-risk behaviors, including transactional sex (exchanging sexual favors for money, food, transportation, or other goods). In a recent study, 55 percent of unmarried adolescent girls ages 15 to 19 reported receiving money, gifts or favors in exchange for sex in the previous 12 months.<sup>5</sup>
- **Increased substance and drug abuse.** Available evidence suggests that the incidence of substance and drug abuse among adolescents in Kenya is high and rising. Such drug and substance abuse has been associated with idleness and an increased likelihood of dropping out of school.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that life for the residents of Nairobi’s slums is hard. However, the people who live there are more than just the sum of the social and economic problems they encounter. Community development and youth workers in these slums emphasize that the areas are culturally vibrant and that the residents, although poor, are resilient and often actively engaged in making their communities a better place to live.

## **Formulating Responses**

### **Response by the Government of Kenya**

As recently as a few years ago, Kenya’s commitment to meeting the needs of adolescents and young people was unclear. Recent policy developments suggest, however, that the country is on the cusp of making a concerted effort to support and promote a healthy adolescent transition. For example, the Kenyan Government is showing renewed commitment to meeting the information and service needs of young people. Six years ago both Muslim and Catholic clergy burned the Scouts’ Family Life Education curricula in the streets of Nairobi. Consequently, the Government of Kenya was reluctant to implement plans for introducing Family Life Education into schools. Today, it is their policy that AIDS education be mandatory in all schools.

Moreover, the Government of Kenya’s former policy on the provision of family planning and reproductive health services was ambiguous regarding adolescent access to services. The National Council for Population and Development, however, recently approved a National Policy for Adolescent Health that will be appended to the existing Population Policy. The National Policy is unequivocal regarding adolescents’ rights to access reproductive health information and services. And the Ministry of Education recently revised the “Return to School Policy” allowing school girls to return to their same school one year after pregnancy.

Though Kenya's government seems committed to meeting the needs of adolescents more now than in the past, many of the referenced initiatives seem to be commitments in name only. While these policies have been well conceived, they have not been implemented.

### **Response by Nongovernmental Organizations**

In the past decade there has also been tremendous growth in the number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), both domestic and international, working in the area of adolescent reproductive health, a development largely driven by the HIV and AIDS crisis. Most observers agree that NGOs provide more direct social and health services to the residents of slum areas, including adolescents and young people, than either the Government of Kenya or the NCC.

Despite the considerable presence and notable successes of NGOs working to meet the health, social and economic needs of Nairobi's youth, the NGO sector faces major challenges of its own.

Most NGOs work in isolation from other organizations addressing the same development issues. The main impetus to form YEN was to create awareness on the part of Nairobi's key youth-serving organizations that working in relative isolation limits organizational capacity, and that the benefits of sharing information and enhancing collaboration are exponential.



*Nairobi's slums are culturally vibrant and residents, though poor, are resilient and engaged in bettering their communities.*

### **Youth Development**

The members of the YEN are all youth-serving organizations committed to promoting a greater understanding and application of a "youth development approach" within their respective organizations and programs.

According to the Academy for Educational Development (AED), youth development is an approach to thinking about and working with young people that emphasizes five key concepts: positive youth outcomes, opportunities and support for youth development, outreach to underserved youth, healthy "youth-centered" communities, and principles of practice and youth participation.

### **Positive Youth Outcomes**

Conventional approaches to working with youth focus on "problem prevention" and "status achievements." For example, identifying what we want to prevent young people from engaging in (i.e., delinquency, violence, drug and alcohol use, etc.) and what we want young people to achieve (i.e., secondary school graduation, beneficial employment, etc.). A youth development approach posits that young people are more than the sum of their problems and their achievements. It focuses on identifying the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors (positive development outcomes) that they need to act compe-

tently in a community setting. Examples of positive development outcomes include: a sense of safety and structure, a sense of self-worth, a sense of belonging and membership in the community, a sense of responsibility and accountability, the ability to work collaboratively with others, and good physical and mental health.<sup>6</sup>

## **Opportunities and Support for Youth Development**

Youth need services and instruction geared towards preventing problem behavior and obtaining status achievements. According to the youth development approach, youth can be provided learning opportunities and support to help them develop the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors identified as “positive development outcomes.” A “high-quality” youth development program also offers young people the opportunity to be actively involved in their own learning and to make decisions and contributions to this process. It also offers supportive adults and peers who provide respect, high standards, guidance, and affirmation to young people.<sup>6</sup>

## **Outreach to Underserved Youth**

Again, the conventional approach to working with young people is to identify and label those who are at “high risk” and then try to help them through specialized programs (i.e., drug prevention, violence prevention, vocational or remedial education, etc.). A youth development approach asserts that some youth become “high risk” because they do not receive the same developmental experiences afforded to their more fortunate peers. Consequently, the challenge for any organization or community working from a youth development perspective is to provide developmental opportunities and support to all young people.<sup>6</sup>

## **Healthy “Youth-Centered” Communities**

Community development typically defines a healthy community in terms of its safety, economic viability, and available services. According to a youth development perspective this is a limited view, and it is more useful “to think about healthy communities as those that offer places for young people to go – places that offer recreation and fun, that are rich in opportunities and supports.” Healthy communities are characterized by places that are “owned” by young people, places where young people can learn and contribute.<sup>6</sup>

## **Principles of Practice and Youth Participation**

The youth development approach emphasizes the need to establish a set of principles, focused on promoting youth development, to orient and guide the work of youth-serving organizations with young people and communities. Accordingly, these principles offer a foundation, a common frame of reference or vision from which to plan initiatives. One of the essential youth development principles is “youth participation.” According to AED: “The research is clear. When young people have ongoing chances to have a voice, to make decisions, to contribute, to make choices, then they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes.”<sup>6</sup>

**When young people have ongoing chances to have a voice, to make decisions, to contribute, to make choices, then they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes.**

— Shepherd Zeldin, *An Introduction to Youth Developmental Concepts*<sup>6</sup>



# THE YOUTH EXCHANGE NETWORK

## The Development of the Youth Exchange Network

**WHEN MARY ANNE BURRIS, A FORD FOUNDATION PROGRAM OFFICER,** arrived in Nairobi in 1996, she was struck by the apparent isolation in which many of the organizations funded by the Foundation's East Africa Youth Development and Adolescent Health Initiative appeared to be working. This was true despite the fact that they were all working in the same field. According to Dr. Burris, "I knew that some of the organizations were aware of one another, but they did not seem to know a lot about each other, their programs, or approaches to youth development. There was no significant collaboration going on amongst the groups that I was aware of. The project proposals that I received from the different organizations were often for similar projects. At first I tried on a case-by-case basis to encourage the groups to collaborate on specific projects. This went on for a while until some of the managers of the organizations and I decided that it would be interesting to hold a meeting for the groups to get to know each other better."

Seven Ford Foundation grantees working on youth development or adolescent reproductive health issues attended the initial meeting along with the Ford Foundation representatives. The group discussed areas of possible collaboration and agreed to keep the dialogue going. It took a few meetings before the groups settled on the idea of establishing a network, agreeing on its purpose, and collaborating on activities. It then took a while longer for all of these organizations to be convinced of the network's true value. According to one manager, "When we first started getting together we didn't know each other and there was not a lot of trust. Some organizations wondered if the Ford Foundation was going to make us compete with each other for funding. I also think that some of the groups came because they thought that they would be penalized or miss out on funding opportunities if they weren't at the table. It took a while to work through those issues but we did and it was worth it." In March 1998, the official inaugural meeting of the Youth Exchange Network was held.

## Purpose

The purpose of YEN is to contribute to the development of young people in Kenya and the member organizations by providing occasions for the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and opportunities.

## Structure and Funding

YEN can best be described as an "informal formal network." It is "informal" because the activities of the Network do not require a complex administrative structure and "formal" because the organizations involved have agreed to an administrative arrangement and a formal purpose for the Network. Members work systematically to achieve this purpose.

PATH plays the role of "Network facilitator." It has been charged with the administrative responsibility of keeping the Network moving. Accordingly, it coordinates meetings and some, but not all, of the Network's collaborative activities. PATH has assigned a program officer to carry out these coordination activities.

The Network members host meetings on a rotating basis, contribute resources and make in-kind contributions to keep the Network operating. The Ford Foundation is, however, the group's main donor.

## **Membership**

*(for member agency profiles see page 27)*

The eight organizational members of YEN, all of which work in Nairobi slums and receive various funding from the Ford Foundation, are:

- Family Planning Private Sector-Kenya
- Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors
- Kabiro Health Care Trust
- Kibera Community Self Help Program
- Mathare Youth Sports Association
- Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
- Slums Information Development and Resource Centres
- The Uzima Foundation

YEN has two categories of membership: organizational and "friends of the Network." The "friends of the Network" category was established so former employees and/or volunteers of member organizations could continue to be involved with YEN. Discussions within the Network about membership criteria are ongoing.

## **Meetings**

YEN members meet formally every two months. Members working on specific activities, however, meet on an as-needed basis. Minutes of the regular meetings are now produced regularly and distributed to all members. Youth leaders from the member organizations are also encouraged to meet informally to provide support to one another and to advance Network activities.

## **Decision Making**

Members of YEN make their decisions by consensus. When members decide to collaborate on a joint activity it is understood that they have the right to "opt out" for any reason.

## **Role of the Ford Foundation**

The Ford Foundation played an important role in establishing YEN and it continues to support the Network financially. A representative from Ford is invited and encouraged to participate in all Network meetings. However, the Foundation is not officially a member of the Network and as such has no official role to play in the group's decision making. Members of the Network describe the role of the Ford Foundation as "significant," "welcome," and "supportive" but consider the relationship between Ford and YEN to be "hands-off"—that is, they feel that the Foundation does not try to unduly influence the Network's direction, activities, or decisions.

### Box 1—MILESTONES IN YEN'S DEVELOPMENT 1998-2001

- March 1998** First meeting of what was to become YEN.
- 
- December 1998** First trip of the International Youth Development Exchange Project. YEN members host Ford grantees from the United States and planning begins for an exchange program between YEN members and youth-serving organizations in the United States.
- 
- March 1999** Second trip of the International Youth Development Exchange Project. Visit to the United States by managers from six YEN members.
- 
- June 1999** Third trip of the International Youth Development Exchange Project. Visit to the United States by managers and youth leaders from YEN.
- 
- September 1999** Evaluation of the International Youth Development Exchange Project is undertaken.
- 
- October 2000** Speakers Bureau is launched.
- 
- March 2001** First edition of the YEN newsletter – *Nexus* – is produced.

## MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE YOUTH EXCHANGE NETWORK

***YEN's main activities include collaborative projects, sharing opportunities, international exchanges, newsletter publication, and a speakers bureau.***

### **Collaborative Projects**

From time to time some or all of the members of YEN agree to undertake joint activities. For example, Network members recently collaborated with the AIDS Orphan Support Association of Kenya to develop posters, stickers, and flyers based on the question, "What Is Good Sex?" The Network helped with translation, field-testing, and distribution of materials focused on positive aspects of safe sex between committed young adults. YEN and Family Planning International Assistance (FPIA) collaborated to co-

host a pan-African youth meeting that included Network members and representatives from youth-serving organizations around the world.

Network members also participate in activities coordinated by individual member organizations. For example, youth from Network members helped the Kabiro Health Care Trust (KHCT) in a clean-up exercise in the Kawangware slum. YEN members also collaborated with PATH, helping to assess and recommend changes to the Life Planning Skills draft curricula. Similarly, YEN members field-tested educational materials for an AIDS awareness campaign developed by the Slums Information Development and Resource Centres (SIDAREC).



*Youth from network members helped clean up the Kawangware slum.*

In August 2001, YEN members held a skills-building workshop on the use of puppetry in the delivery of health education. They also hosted events leading up to the International Puppetry Festival held in Nairobi in February 2002.

### **Sharing Opportunities**

*"Effective collaborations are built upon trust with a structure that encourages participation and productivity." —PATH and TRG, Handbook for Collaboration: A Toolkit for Developing, Maintaining, and Repairing Partnerships<sup>7</sup>*

YEN members have agreed to include each other in training opportunities and events of common interest. The following examples illustrate the learning opportunities that the group's members provide to one another.

- Family Planning Private Sector-Kenya (FPPS-K) provided puppetry training and has helped YEN members produce folk murals in their communities.
- KHCT put together a focus group to field-test a youth-focused comic book called *Nuru*.

- The Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors (KAPC) hosted a special training session on counselling techniques for YEN staff and volunteers.
- Kibera Community Self-Help Program (KICOSHEP) staff has facilitated several YEN-sponsored training workshops.
- Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) has provided training and support to YEN member organizations wanting to start or strengthen sports programs for young people, including strengthening girls' participation in sports.
- PATH hosted YEN members in a "Communication for Change" workshop to help develop cultural alternatives to female genital mutilation in Kenya. PATH also supported the involvement of Network members in a one-week Internet training course.
- SIDAREC started a community-based peer education training project. Network members helped with different aspects of the training while other members were trained.
- The Uzima Foundation invited YEN members and their clients to participate in their "clean fun" recreation program for young people. Program activities included cultural festivals, hikes, picnics, debates, and sporting activities.

There is also a regular and systematic sharing of ideas and information, both formally and informally, between YEN members on technical issues in the area of adolescent sexual and reproductive health. Members discuss their programs and programming issues in their formal meetings, and staff members from various organizations consult each other on specific technical issues of interest to them. Members also endeavor to make their services available to the clients of other YEN colleagues whenever possible. For example, KICOSHEP and KAPC accept referrals from other YEN members to their health clinics where they offer HIV testing and counselling services, and YEN members send clients to SIDAREC to use their Internet resource center and other services.

YEN members also report that their increased collaboration with other youth-serving organizations has, in some instances, helped prevent duplication of services. According to one manager, "...through YEN we now have a better understanding of the range of services offered by other members. When a member offers a service that our clients need and we don't offer it, now we know where to send them to get the help they need. And, knowing what other members do and what they are good at prevents us from trying to re-invent the wheel. We stick with what we are good at, and refer clients to YEN members who are good in areas that we don't work in."

This kind of collaboration allows all parties to reach desired results in the most effective and efficient way. YEN partner groups respect each other's abilities and recognize that each of their contributions is valuable. There is an organic interdependency among these member groups that is especially appropriate and necessary since the challenges each individual organization faces are complex and require diverse expertise and coordinated efforts.<sup>7</sup> Each YEN member brings skills, knowledge, and resources to the Network that complements those of other members.

**There is an organic interdependency among these member groups that is especially appropriate and necessary since the challenges each individual organization faces are complex and require diverse expertise and coordinated efforts.**

— PATH and TRG, *Handbook for Collaboration: A Toolbook for Developing, Maintaining, and Repairing Partnerships*<sup>7</sup>

## International Exchanges

From time to time representatives from YEN participate in regional and international exchanges. The first exchange was coordinated by the Ford Foundation in 1998-1999 and brought together youth workers from organizations involved in youth development in Nairobi, New York City, and Washington, DC. The purpose of the event was to create an opportunity for those active in youth work to explore new ideas, approaches, and innovations that they could apply to their individual, collective, and organizational activities. Both managers and youth leaders from YEN member organizations participated in this transfer of learning.

Since the first exchange with American counterparts, YEN members have been involved in exchange projects in Germany, Nigeria, and Palestine.

## Newsletter

YEN produces a newsletter to share information with one another, and to “show others the strength of the connections we have forged.” This quarterly newsletter – *Nexus* – was first published in March 2001. An editorial committee consisting of YEN members was formed to determine the content of each issue and to encourage each organization to contribute articles.

## Speakers Bureau

In October 2000, YEN launched its “Speakers Bureau” project to organize a series of talks and discussions on issues of concern to youth in Kenya. Dr. Henry Tabifor, author of *The Dignity of Human Sexuality & the AIDS Challenge*, was the first guest speaker. The series continued in January 2001 with a presentation from the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Society for International Development about a project called “Kenya at the Crossroads: Scenarios for the Future.” Another Speakers Bureau event, held in April 2001, featured a representative from the newly-formed Coalition of Media and Health Professionals.

A committee, composed primarily of youth workers and volunteers from YEN members, has been formed to select the topics and resource persons for the series. They expect to organize between four and six sessions a year.

Advance notices of Speakers Bureau meetings are sent to YEN members, other youth-serving organizations in Nairobi, and a selected mailing list that includes the media, donors, and politicians.

From time to time individual YEN members will also invite someone to address their own constituencies. For example, the Uzima Foundation recently invited Dr. Kimani Njogu to talk about key issues related to the Kenyan constitution and the process put in place by the Government of Kenya to review it. The talk was given in Kiswahili, and other YEN members were invited to participate in the event alongside young guests from other youth-serving organizations.

***“YEN has changed my perspective of my profession. My experiences have made me see myself as a professional and this made me take added pride in my work.”***

—Youth leader, June 2001

***“It is through YEN that I was exposed to the idea of young people being in charge and the importance of their participation in all stages of a project. Now I try to empower the young people I work with by sticking to these principles.”***

—Youth leader, June 2001

## BOX 2—BENEFITS OF NETWORKING FOR YOUTH LEADERS

**The youth leaders of member organizations identified the following benefits of their participation in YEN.**

- A greater understanding of the guiding principles underlying the “positive youth development” approach and the conditions required for its effective application.
- Opportunities to share information on good practices in positive youth development with YEN members and other youth-serving organizations in Kenya and other countries.
- Increased confidence and self-esteem as a result of the formal and informal training they have received.
- Enhanced skills through participating in training opportunities, exchanges or other activities where they were given responsibilities and occasions to learn.
- Greater willingness to take initiatives at work and to offer suggestions to managers.
- Recognition of professional growth by colleagues and managers.
- Pride in being part of the youth development profession.
- A support network of other youth development workers (see Box 3).

### Profile: The International Development Exchange Project 1998-99

In late 1998, the Nairobi office of the Ford Foundation engaged Ford-funded youth-serving organizations in Nairobi, New York, and Washington, DC, in the development and implementation of an international exchange project. The purpose of the exchange was to provide an opportunity for those active in youth work, in a combined process of sharing and learning across and within cultures, to start exploring new ideas, approaches, and innovations that they could apply to their individual, collective, and organizational activities. The exchange was also viewed as an opportunity for the Ford Foundation to see how well some of the concepts of youth development, which they have helped to develop, operate in a cross-cultural context.

The exchange consisted of three organized trips. In December 1998, representatives from two Foundation grantees in the United States—Community Impact and AED—and U.S.-based Ford employees were hosted by six members of the YEN. The United States exchange participants visited YEN member organizations to learn about their work and to start planning for the next part of the exchange that would bring the Kenyan organizations to the United States.

In March 1999, six senior managers from YEN member organizations visited the groups they had hosted in December. They also visited the Ford Foundation offices and five other youth-serving organizations. They learned about the programs and youth development philosophy practiced by the United States organizations and helped plan the third trip, which would bring youth leaders from YEN to the United States.

The youth leaders arrived in the United States in June 1999 for an intensive two weeks of meetings and presentations. Highlights of the trip included:

- participation in a Training of Facilitators course hosted by AED (Washington, DC);
- a visit to Community Impact and associated projects (New York);
- a visit to the Hetrick-Martin Institute, a community-based organization serving gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth (New York);
- a visit to The Door, a drop-in center for youth (New York);
- a visit to the Ford Foundation and a roundtable discussion involving the Kenyan participants, 19 U.S.-based youth-serving organizations, and Ford Foundation staff (New York); and
- a variety of social activities such as attending a Community Impact award ceremony at the Kennedy Center, visiting the National Air and Space Museum, viewing an IMAX film, going to a Broadway musical, shopping, and taking a boat ride down the Hudson River.

### **Benefits of the Exchange**

Following the exchange, the Ford Foundation sponsored an evaluation of the activity. A summary of the evaluation findings from the report titled, *The International Youth Development Exchange 1998-99*, includes the benefits of the exchange for member organizations, participants, and the YEN.<sup>8</sup>

#### ***Benefits for Member Organizations***

The evaluation documented how several YEN members either implemented or adapted ideas and programs they were exposed to in the United States into their own country activities and programs. For example:

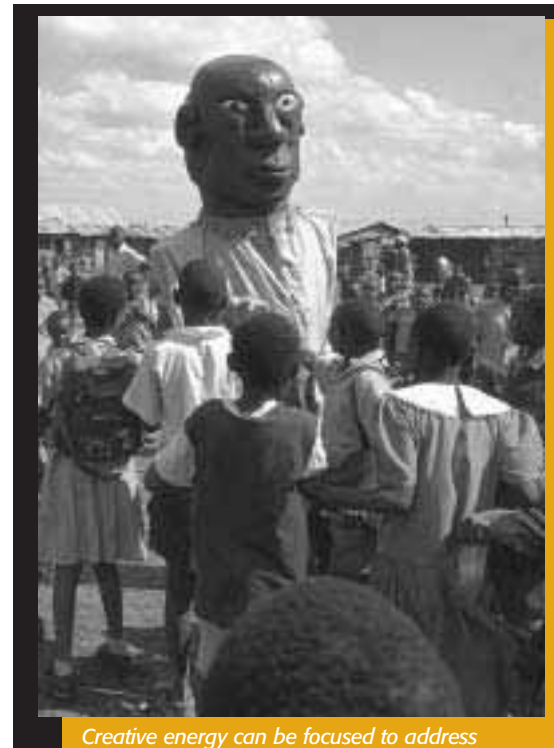
- FPPS-K adopted techniques learned at the AED "Training of Facilitators" workshop into their own training programs. FPPS-K also benefited from the materials and documents they collected during the exchange.
- KHCT changed the operating hours of its clinic to make it easier for youth to attend without too many adults around, and staff stepped-up efforts to encourage girls and young women to use services.
- KAPC adopted techniques learned from the training workshop at AED into its own counselling approach. A youth leader from KAPC who participated in the exchange had his training responsibilities increased immediately upon his return from the United States.
- KICOSHEP increased efforts to involve community youth and volunteers in their planning, opened a café run by youth to attract more young people to the center, and implemented and improved the organization's reward system for volunteers based on ideas learned during the exchange.
- MYSAs took steps to make its leadership training more participatory, added career development to their leadership training activities, and implemented ideas to improve their approach to evaluation.
- PATH implemented youth development concepts into programming and adopted ideas learned from the AED training into its training practices.

- SIDAREC adopted ideas to strengthen its services to young people, including setting up an Internet café, emphasizing outreach services, providing more skills training for young women, and involving youth in organizational planning meetings.
- The Uzima Foundation began to offer vocational skills training, created a Network of Uzima youth, established a system to motivate and reward volunteers, and initiated outreach counselling services in the community.

### **Benefits for Exchange Participants**

Following the exchange:

- Youth participants reported feeling more self-confident and better able to represent their organizations.
- Many participants felt their skills were enhanced by the trip and that they were able to apply these enhanced skills to their work upon their return. The AED training was particularly effective. Several youth participants indicated that they had been promoted and/or had been given additional responsibilities soon after their return to Kenya. Some managers also noticed that the returning participants were more willing to suggest creative ideas and take on new tasks.
- Some youth participants said that they made efforts to play a more participatory and active role in decision making in their organizations. These efforts were met with varying degrees of success.
- Youth participants described their intention to play a leadership role in their organizations and communities to help ensure a greater understanding, appreciation, and application of youth development principles, particularly youth participation and empowerment. Several youth participants reported that they were trying to “put more power in the hands of youth” in the program areas they were responsible for.
- The managers who participated in the exchange reported that it was an important professional development experience and that they had been exposed to many new ideas.
- Some managers and youth participants from the same organization reported that the exchange had improved their working relationship and that they were able to speak with each other more openly.



*Creative energy can be focused to address important community issues.*

### **Benefits for the Youth Exchange Network**

The exchange had a major impact on the development of the Network as evidenced by:

- Increased development of new projects and deeper interorganizational cooperation among YEN members.

- Increased interorganizational communication between the managers and youth leaders of YEN members.
- Greater awareness of the value of the Network to member organizations.
- Enhanced commitment by members to hold regular meetings.
- Development of an informal network among the youth leaders that participated in the exchange.

### **Box 3—AN INFORMAL SUPPORT NETWORK**

Many of the youth leaders who participated in the U.S. exchange developed strong friendships with each other in the course of the project. Upon their return to Kenya they continued to meet as a group, in part to foster the friendships, but also to provide one another with professional support. Following their return, the group would meet for dinner as often as once a month. The dinner discussions were wide-ranging, covering many controversial and challenging topics. Still, business related to the YEN Network was addressed. As Maina Kiranga of PATH explained: “A lot of good ideas for YEN and for possible collaborations between different members came out of those discussions over dinner.”

The group does not meet as regularly now, and some of the original participants have dropped out or left Nairobi to pursue educational or other professional opportunities. The remaining colleagues still meet at least three to four times a year, however, with new participants joining each time.

Most of the youth leaders from the U.S. exchange and newer participants in the Network are in contact with one another on a regular basis primarily for “work-related” reasons. They coordinate YEN activities and help advance collaborative work. Other times, they meet for practical advice or moral support. Many of the managers from YEN also noted that their involvement in the exchange helped them learn more about the programs and activities of YEN members and that they too were in closer contact with other managers after the exchange.



## ACHIEVEMENTS

Though only in existence for just over three years, YEN has accomplished a lot. The achievements presented herein are an assessment of the most significant impacts that the YEN has had on member organizations.

### **Increased Willingness to Collaborate**

Prior to YEN, there was not a great deal of collaboration among these organizations. The member groups were, of course, aware of each other and may have occasionally exchanged information, but only rarely, if ever, did they undertake joint planning and implementation of projects. Through YEN, member organizations have enhanced their understanding and appreciation of the benefits of collaboration and are committed to increasing their collaborative initiatives and strengthening the Network.

YEN members also appreciate that their work together has helped eliminate a great deal of the mistrust and unproductive rivalry and competition that characterized their interactions prior to, and at the beginning of, the Network. Some members characterize the increased willingness to work together and their diminishing level of suspicion as the creation of a “fraternity” of youth-serving organizations. Many consider this to be YEN’s major achievement to date.

### **Creating a Mechanism for Greater Cooperation and Effectiveness**

By exchanging knowledge and experiences, and creating training and collaboration opportunities, the Network has introduced a vital mechanism that helps members be more effective. All members interviewed for this report were able to identify how their organizations and staff have benefited from YEN, and how the Network has facilitated interorganizational cooperation on projects and activities. Members also value the “informal” opportunities for learning as much as they do the formal training, exchanges, and collaboration activities. Members claim they have learned a great deal about how to work collaboratively to enhance the impact of their efforts for themselves and for the young people they serve.

As a mark of the Network’s growing value to its members, YEN organizations are now considering new activities, such as policy work and advocacy. These new activities would increase their required level of commitment and accountability to each other.

### **Fostering a Sense of Professionalism in Youth Development Workers**

Several of the youth leaders indicated that their involvement in YEN has made them feel part of a valued profession. They now have a greater sense of pride and professionalism as youth development workers. As one of the youth leaders put it: “Before the YEN exchange visit to the States I just thought of my job as a job. It never occurred to me that it was a profession that I could make a career out of.”

Several managers also noticed that this increased sense of pride made the young workers more confident and willing to suggest new ideas and approaches in their work.

#### **BOX 4—MARTIN: UNDER NIGERIAN SKIES**

Martin Wainaina first became involved in the Youth Exchange Network while volunteering as a peer health educator with Kabiro Health Care Trust. Martin has been a regular participant in the Network's meetings and has taken an active role in collaborative projects including the "What is Good Sex?" campaign and the editorial committee for *Nexus*, the YEN newsletter.

In May 2001, Martin was chosen to represent the YEN in the planning phase of an exchange visit to Nigeria. Martin, along with Rita Nyambura, a youth worker with Family Planning Private Services-Kenya, visited five organizations in six days.

Martin described his trip to Nigeria as "a real eye-opener." "It was during this trip that I really came to learn that young people could become empowered—that young people really have the power to do things themselves. Virtually all organizations we visited in Nigeria were run by young people. And they were free to speak for themselves on issues that affect them. Nobody talks on their behalf. In Kenya we have not gone to that level. You always find other people talking on behalf of young people in Kenya. This is one of our problems."

Another highlight of the Nigerian exchange for Martin was meeting the group called Conscientizing Male Adolescents. "This group really amazed me. They were young men advocating for human rights for women and for an end to practices such as female genital mutilation, child labor, and girls in early marriages. I was amazed that men could be so supportive of women. I came away with the conviction that men in Kenya must do more to support women in their fight for respect."



## FUTURE CHALLENGES

**T**HE IMPETUS TO CREATE YEN was derived, in part, by the desire of a small group of NGOs working in the area of adolescent reproductive health and youth development to improve their policy and program responses through the exchange of information, knowledge, and opportunities. The first three years of its existence were “building years” and its members have learned from both the successes and problems they have encountered during this time. The following section is a summary of the future challenges and possible actions to advance the development of the Network that have been identified by members.

### 1. YEN at a Crossroad

Though many members were satisfied with the benefits they get from participating in YEN, most wondered if “YEN could not be doing something more,” or if it was time for YEN “to move to the next stage.”

The time has clearly come for members of YEN to decide if the focus of its activities should expand beyond just an exchange of knowledge and opportunities. When asked what kind of additional activities they would like YEN to undertake in the future, member suggestions included:

- Developing and implementing a capacity-building agenda on the theme of “youth development” for YEN member organizations. Specific activities could include:
  - organizing a meeting on youth development and the principles that should guide the management of youth workers in such organizations;
  - holding skills-building workshops on youth development;
  - producing information sheets and fact sheets explaining youth development and identifying resources in this area; and
  - developing a “train the trainers” workshop in youth development.
- Developing and implementing a training agenda for managers and youth workers on topics of interest to member organizations, such as policy development and advocacy, reproductive health issues, and political, social, and economic issues.
- Developing a YEN Web site. Content could include information on what YEN is, descriptions of members with contact information, the YEN newsletter (*Nexus*), minutes of meetings, trip reports, upcoming events, and a list of training opportunities for youth development workers.

### 2. Strategic Planning

Members indicated that the Network should conduct a strategic planning exercise. According to several of the managers interviewed for this report, although YEN made a commitment to hold a strategic planning meeting, it had not yet occurred. The overall feeling was that while YEN was still accomplishing a lot, there was a need for a long-term plan. A strategic planning exercise would provide the Network with a clearer direction and give members a better idea of how they could contribute and benefit more

from their membership. If the members decide to step-up their activities, a strategic planning exercise would be imperative.

### **3. Membership Criteria**

Members identified two important membership issues that they want clarified. The first is whether or not to expand membership in YEN to include other organizations. To date only the original eight members make up the YEN. Discussions about whether or not to open the group up have not been conclusive.

The second issue has to do with determining if YEN is a Network of organizational members, individual members, or both. YEN lacks a clear statement and understanding among members on this issue.

### **4. Managerial Roles**

There is a low turn out of managers at formal Network meetings. Some members interpret this as an indication that managers do not value the work and objectives of the Network. Some youth leaders feel that the absence of managers at meetings is a good thing, however, giving them more opportunity and ease to express their opinions. Both managers and youth leaders indicated that the absence of managers at these meetings sometimes delayed the decision-making process.

Several managers revealed that YEN was not meeting their needs and that consequently they were feeling “marginalized” within the Network. Other managers felt that YEN was never meant to serve their needs in the same way that it was meant to serve youth leaders. There is not a common or shared understanding of the role of managers or the extent to which the Network is intended to address their needs.



*Effective collaboration helps all parties reach desired results.*

### **5. Internal Communication**

Managers and youth development workers alike reported frustration at times by what they perceived as a lack of communication among members. The most frequently cited examples of inadequate communications were not finding out in time about meeting dates, not being given enough advance notice about YEN or member events that they are expected to participate in, and poor access to information about the results of important events (i.e., meetings, exchanges, training workshops).

To help address these issues, members offered the following suggestions:

- Schedule meetings six months to a year in advance and send reminder notices to members at least two weeks before an upcoming meeting.
- Ensure that all of the managers and youth leaders involved in YEN are on a regularly-updated mailing list.

- Produce and circulate reports on important events in a timely manner (e.g., formal exchanges, training workshops, meetings).

## 6. Evaluate and Document Activities

Several members suggested that a participatory evaluation of YEN would be a good learning experience. They believed that an evaluation would help clarify the impact that YEN activities are having and establish how beneficial the Network is to members, youth workers, and clients. Moreover, they felt that the results of the evaluation could help member organizations determine the human and financial resources the members would be willing to commit to YEN. This, in turn, would likely strengthen the commitment of both managers and youth workers to the Network.

While YEN and its members were undertaking many worthwhile activities, there was no record of what the events were or their results. A few members suggested that the Network's activities and the interorganizational collaborations it engenders should be documented to provide a record of the Network's numerous outputs. This information is needed to help members realize and appreciate YEN's many achievements and to illustrate the vitality of the Network to donors and potential donors.

### Box 5—At the Heart of the Matter

**After reading the first draft of this case study, one of the managers of a YEN member organization had this to say:**

*"... the elements of YEN's story are here but it's missing an essential ingredient. Over the years I have witnessed remarkable transformations in some of the young people involved in YEN that this draft is not getting at."*

*"I remember the first time the youth members came together to make a PowerPoint presentation on the Network. A group of about eight youth workers and volunteers put in a couple of twelve-hour days to get it done. At one point I went into the room to see how they were doing and saw one person at the keyboard and another person on the mouse. Now if that's not collaboration, then I don't know what is!"*

*"Another thing that has not come out strongly enough is the sense of empowerment and confidence that many of the youth leaders have developed through their participation in YEN. For many of the youth leaders, the Network has provided the first experience in which they are expected to contribute fully to the development of projects and activities. It is particularly special when the youth leaders bring the 'empowerment experience' back to their own organizations and create similar opportunities for the young people who are the organization's beneficiaries."*

## LESSONS LEARNED

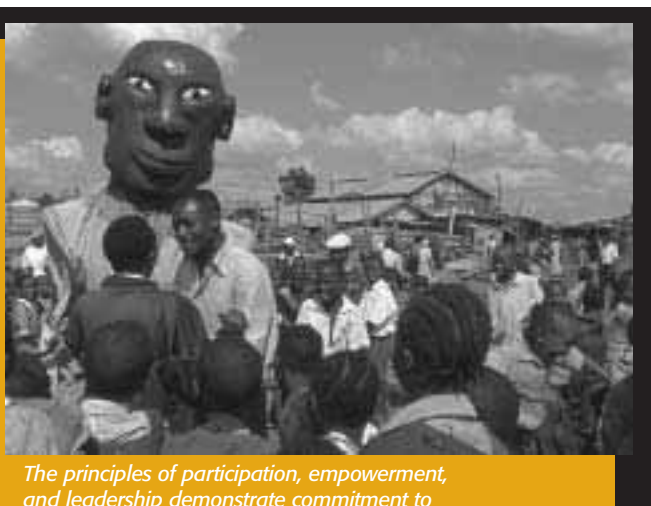
Members identified the following lessons learned from their efforts to initiate, build and strengthen the Youth Exchange Network.

- 1. Early success helps build commitment to a network.** During the early stage of a network's development it is important to have an experience that demonstrates the benefits of belonging to the group. The Youth Development Exchange Project was identified by members as a major milestone and "building block" for YEN. The members' commitment to the Network seemed to markedly increase as a result of this exchange.
- 2. Create opportunities for members to understand the benefits of belonging to a network.** Member organizations do not have a shared understanding of the benefits that organizations accrue through their participation in YEN activities. Some members value YEN much more than others, and youth leaders have a greater estimation of how they have benefited from the Network than the managers. Organizational support for the Network might increase if managers and youth leaders met to discuss the benefits of YEN.
- 3. Operationalize commitment to youth development.** It is important for a network of youth-serving organizations to create opportunities for young staff and volunteers of member organizations to

reach a common understanding of "youth development," and put into practice the youth development principles of participation, empowerment, and leadership. The Network and its members must demonstrate commitment to youth development, in both theory and practice.

- 4. Keep it simple.** YEN members' core activity has been the exchange of information, knowledge, and opportunities. Members recognize that they have been able to sustain this activity because they have the capacity to coordinate and administer. If they decide to take on additional activities, they will have to step-up their collective level of commitment to the Network and pursue some higher professional development.

- 5. Share the work.** YEN's development as a network was advanced through the coordination and facilitation services provided by PATH and its other members. Sharing coordination responsibilities helped build ownership of, and commitment to, the Network. Members found that the formation of committees with clear terms of reference was an effective way to ensure that specific tasks were accomplished. YEN members took turns hosting meetings and this provided an opportunity to visit other member organizations and to learn more about their programs and operations.



*The principles of participation, empowerment, and leadership demonstrate commitment to youth development.*

**6. Share learning opportunities.** Participation in training, exchanges, and other opportunities created by YEN were highly valued by the staff and member volunteers. Learning opportunities must not be restricted only to those who actively participate in official YEN meetings or other coordination activities. All Network members and their colleagues are meant to benefit from YEN. Concerted efforts must be made to make members aware of training opportunities.

**7. Leadership style is important.** In the early phase of network development it is important that leaders or facilitators strike a balance between the need for results and the need to enable participants to take ownership of the network. Network facilitators may wish to take on some process-oriented tasks for the sake of efficiency. This is often at the expense of sharing responsibilities and building member skills, however. Whenever possible, network members should play an active and leading role and feel empowered to carry through demanding activities.

**8. Address issues concerning sustainability.**

At this point in time YEN is sustained through the contributions of one major funder, plus the contributions of member organizations. YEN must begin to address its financial sustainability and the vulnerability associated with having only one major donor. The group should develop a strategy to ensure its long-term financial sustainability and include a systematic plan to find additional funders for operational and project-related costs.



*As a collaborative group, network members feel empowered to make more significant changes in their communities.*



## GLOSSARY

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<b>AED</b>	Academy for Educational Development
<b>AIDS</b>	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
<b>BCC</b>	behavior change communication
<b>CBO</b>	community-based organization
<b>FPIA</b>	Family Planning International Assistance
<b>FPPS-K</b>	Family Planning Private Services - Kenya
<b>HIV</b>	human immunodeficiency virus
<b>IEC</b>	information, education, and communication
<b>KAPC</b>	Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors
<b>KHCT</b>	Kabiro Health Care Trust
<b>KICOSHEP</b>	Kibera Community Self-Help Program
<b>MYSA</b>	Mathare Youth Sports Association
<b>NCC</b>	Nairobi City Council
<b>NGO</b>	nongovernmental organization
<b>PATH</b>	Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
<b>PLHA</b>	people living with HIV/AIDS
<b>SIDAREC</b>	Slums Information Development and Resource Centres
<b>STI</b>	sexually transmitted infection
<b>U.S.</b>	United States
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>YEN</b>	Youth Exchange Network



## MEMBER PROFILES

### **Family Planning Private Sector—Kenya**

Family Planning Private Sector (FPPS-K) began in 1984 as a USAID project to assist private sector and CBOs to initiate and develop family planning and maternal and child health services. In 1997, it became a Kenyan NGO and expanded the scope of its program areas to include environmental awareness, responsible citizenship, and the use of cultural communication.

As part of its mission to build the capacity of private sector organizations, NGOs, and community organizations to implement sustainable reproductive health services and community development programs, FPPS-K is involved in upgrading sites to ensure quality services, and providing training for service providers and other personnel. FPPS-K also trains peer educators in reproductive health, sexuality, and counselling. These educators, as well as IEC materials, have been made available to more than 200 health establishments including NGOs, private sector companies, private clinics, nursing homes, and institutions of higher learning.

FPPS-K is also well known throughout Kenya for producing wall calendars using local artists' work and depicting development issues. They also use puppetry and folk media to educate and mobilize the community. The Community Health Awareness Puppeteers, a project of FPPS-K, have used their creative energy to focus on issues as diverse as reproductive health and corruption.

#### ***The benefits that FPPS-K has gained through their membership in YEN include:***

- learning more about participatory training and facilitation methodologies;
- learning from YEN member organizations about community outreach and involving communities in the development process; and
- developing their staff's skills in the area of project and proposal writing.

### **Kabiro Health Care Trust**

Kabiro Health Care Trust (KHCT) began as an informal school serving the Kawangware slum of Nairobi. Funding from USAID in 1996 helped the organization develop a reproductive health care focus, establish a mother and child clinic, and develop a number of HIV and AIDS interventions including an information and education campaign.

KHCT has a youth coordinator, seven youth counsellors, 25 trained peer motivators, and a growing number of volunteer peer educators, many of whom go out into Kawangware's and Riruta's villages to make sure the youth who need services know where to get them. Their strategies include facilitating group and individual information sessions using IEC materials, videos, and puppetry. KHCT recently opened a "one-stop" center for youth that offers health, counselling, and recreation services all under one roof.

***The benefits that KHCT has gained through their membership in YEN include:***

- access to high-quality IEC materials on HIV/AIDS and other adolescent reproductive health issues;
- professional development opportunities for staff members and volunteers including the use of puppetry for behavior change communication messaging; and
- ideas and practical methods on how to develop and run sporting activities for young people and how to involve girls more systematically in KHCT programs.

## **Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors**

Since its inception a decade ago, the Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors (KAPC) has trained nearly 600 people from 15 countries in East and Southern Africa to counsel youth and adults on a variety of issues, including HIV and AIDS. In June 2001, KAPC organized and hosted their second international conference on HIV/AIDS counselling.

KAPC opened a center where adolescents can receive voluntary counselling and testing for HIV. The organization publishes its popular newspaper, *Straight Talk*, created by and for youth. *Straight Talk* deals with a range of reproductive health issues and has a distribution of 30,000 copies to over 800 schools and numerous youth-serving organizations throughout Kenya. An additional 65,000 copies are distributed throughout Eastern Africa each time *Straight Talk* is included as a supplement in *The East African Standard*. KAPC has also helped establish over 80 *Straight Talk* clubs in primary and secondary schools in Nairobi and Nyanza.

KAPC has opened branch offices in Kisumu and Mombasa to better serve Kenya's youth.

***The benefits that KAPC has gained through its membership in YEN include:***

- exposure to methods and techniques for empowering youth;
- staff development through participation in the international youth exchange project; and
- a Network to distribute *Straight Talk* to beneficiaries in other projects.

## **Kibera Community Self-Help Project**

Nairobi's Kibera slums are home to an estimated one million people. Despite the area's proximity to the country's best hospitals, most Kibera dwellers facing HIV and AIDS cannot afford care and support.

The Kibera Community Self-Help Project, or KICOSHEP, was established in 1991 to help Kibera residents cope with HIV and AIDS through a range of support services including home-based care, counselling, and accessible health care such as treatment, immunizations, tuberculosis management, STI management, and family planning. Other KICOSHEP activities include: the promotion of income generating activities for people infected or affected by HIV and AIDS; youth education and entertainment; a nonformal school for orphans and other children; and vocational training in needlework, tailoring, and carpentry. The project also works to raise the community's awareness of HIV and AIDS, STIs, tuberculosis, and environmental sanitation.

***The benefits that KICOSHEP has gained through their membership in YEN include:***

- exposure to new ideas on how to empower youth workers and involve young people more effectively in programs and activities;
- various trainings offered by YEN members, in particular counselling, Internet use, and puppetry; and
- an exchange of ideas and information on youth development issues.

**Mathare Youth Sports Association**

When the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) was formed in 1987, the goal was to empower young people through sports – to give youth a “sporting chance” on and off the playing field. Though MYSA has expanded its activities beyond girls’ and boys’ sports, the group’s enduring athletic talent was made clear last year when its Mathare United football team won the Moi Golden cup.

MYSA is also well known for the “Shootback” project designed to empower slum youth. MYSA gave Mathare kids cameras and sent them back into their neighborhoods to take a fresh look at their surroundings and capture what they saw. The resulting photographs were assembled into a highly acclaimed book and a photo exhibit that has traveled around the world.

The group is also involved in HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention, improving conditions for juvenile prisoners, feeding young people in prisons, and maintaining contact with the homes and parents of jailed youth. MYSA has established scholarships and offers youth leadership opportunities and coaching skills. MYSA recently entered the information age by starting a program to help young people learn how to design and develop Web sites.

***The benefits that MYSA has gained through their membership in YEN include:***

- training opportunities for staff and volunteers; and
- access to educational materials to use in its HIV and AIDS awareness activities.

**Program For Appropriate Technology in Health**

PATH’s mission is to improve health, especially the health of women and children. PATH’s Kenya office, established in 1990, is a pioneer in the field of behavior change communication (BCC). Although PATH’s BCC and community mobilization techniques can be applied to any topic, the organization’s prime focus remains on adolescent reproductive health and HIV prevention.

PATH has been a leader in working with communities to develop alternative rites of passage to help eliminate the practice of female genital mutilation. PATH is conducting operations research examining ways to encourage youth to delay sexual activity, and to reduce risky behavior for those who are already sexually active. As a partner in the USAID-funded IMPACT project, PATH uses cutting edge training and BCC techniques to support peer education of youth and adults to help them make choices to protect themselves from HIV and AIDS.

***The benefits that PATH has gained through their membership in YEN include:***

- collaboration with partner organizations on adolescent reproductive health and youth development programs;
- exposure to and adoption of participatory approaches to training; and
- collaboration with YEN youth workers and volunteers in testing IEC materials.

## **Slums Information Development and Resource Centres**

The Slums Information Development and Resource Centres (SIDAREC) may be best known for its monthly, bilingual community magazine, *Habari Vijini/Slum News*, which explores topics such as HIV, teen pregnancy, and corruption. This Majengo-based organization, started in 1996 with 45 young people and one organizer, extends its community reach beyond publishing to provide a variety of health and development services throughout the Pumwani area.

SIDAREC was created by slum youth and its mission is simple: to identify resourceful people in its community and tap their talents to allow them to give back to the community. It offers a youth reproductive health program, addressing drug abuse, STIs, HIV and AIDS, and family planning. SIDAREC also offers monthly youth/elder forums, and a recreation, education, and development program for children ages 2 to 6, some of them orphans.

SIDAREC's program was recently singled out by Habitat, the United Nations Center for Human Settlements, as a "Best Practice" for human settlements.

***The benefits that SIDAREC has gained through their membership in YEN include:***

- exposure to community outreach methods employed by YEN members; and
- opportunities for youth workers to develop skills in various areas including counselling, facilitation, and IEC materials development.

## **The Uzima Foundation**

Established in 1995, The Uzima Foundation's mission is to provide a platform for young people to improve their lives as well as their community, by acknowledging and harnessing youth's inherent strength. Uzima works to engage young people's innovative spirit, courage, enthusiasm, strength and energy to help them identify what they can contribute to their own well-being and that of their families and communities. Uzima's flagship "Youth for Life" program offers lively youth discussion forums that explore a range of issues affecting young people and their communities.

The Uzima Foundation's work can be divided into six thematic areas. One theme is the promotion of safe fun for youth, such as sports, music, drama, dance, picnics, and hikes. Another theme is reproductive health, teaching youth about the maturation of their bodies, and raising awareness about HIV and AIDS and other STIs.

The idea of gender parity cuts across all of Uzima's programs and is frequently featured in discussion forums. The Uzima Foundation's economic empowerment program features a revolving loan fund and training in business management, as well as career development programs offering help on writing *cur-*

*riculum vitae* and job application letters. To support peaceful co-existence in communities, Uzima holds discussions on issues such as violence. And in an effort to encourage youth to actively express compassion for others, Uzima promotes activities such as hospital visitation and home-building projects.

The Uzima Foundation also offers peer counselling and has considerable geographical reach with programs in Nairobi, Kakamega, Kisii, and Nyamira.

***The benefits that the Uzima Foundation has gained through their membership in YEN include:***

- learning about new programming ideas and adapting them for use in Uzima's programs;
- training opportunities for youth workers; and
- ideas on how to promote youth leadership and development.



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