Youth Development through Civic Engagement: Mapping Assets in South Asia

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Note from Innovations in Civic Participation

This report presents information ICP received through extensive desk and survey-based research conducted in 2008 and 2009. This working document also received further input and review at a consultation of stakeholders in New Delhi in March 2009. While we believe it presents a great deal of information regarding existing programs and policy in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, we continue to seek information regarding additional programs throughout these countries and welcome any information regarding programs and policy in the surveyed countries that are not represented in this working document. To submit this information, please contact ICP Program Associate Colleen Hammelman (hammelman@icicp.org). More information about ICP’s work in the region is available online at www.icicp.org.

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AYON</td>
<td>Association of Youth Organizations of Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAYR</td>
<td>Bangladesh Association of Young Researchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>bEARN</td>
<td>Bangladesh Education and Resource Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCE</td>
<td>Center for Civic Education (Pakistan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Development Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO2</td>
<td>Carbon Dioxide</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFL</td>
<td>Compact Fluorescent Light</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CYDA</td>
<td>Centre for Youth Development and Activities</td>
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<td>CYP</td>
<td>Commonwealth Youth Program</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<td>GOI</td>
<td>Government of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICP</td>
<td>Innovations in Civic Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>iEARN</td>
<td>International Education and Resource Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organization (religious or non-religious)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IO</td>
<td>International Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IYCN</td>
<td>Indian Youth Climate Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>Mass Organization (organizations incorporated into the party-State structure under Socialist rule; designed to develop leadership skills, sense of nationalism and civic duty, and allegiance to the party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOY</td>
<td>Ministry of Youth</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>Nagarik Aawaz</td>
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<td>NDS</td>
<td>National Development Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFYOB</td>
<td>National Federation of Youth Organizations in Bangladesh</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization (religious or non-religious)</td>
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<td>NSS</td>
<td>National Service Scheme</td>
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<td>NSVS</td>
<td>National Service Volunteer Scheme</td>
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<td>NVM</td>
<td>National Volunteer Movement</td>
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<td>NWFP</td>
<td>North West Frontier Province</td>
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<td>NYC</td>
<td>National Youth Council</td>
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<td>NYKS</td>
<td>Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan</td>
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<td>NYP</td>
<td>National Youth Policy</td>
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<td>NYSP</td>
<td>National Youth Service Policy</td>
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<td>PNYS</td>
<td>Pakistan National Youth Service</td>
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<td>RGNIYD`</td>
<td>Rajiv Gandhi National Institute for Youth Development</td>
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<td>RI</td>
<td>Relief International</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation</td>
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<td>SBMA</td>
<td>Shri Bhuvneshwari Mahila Ashram</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPW</td>
<td>Student Partnerships Worldwide</td>
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<td>SSNCC</td>
<td>Social Services National Coordination</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children Fund</td>
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<td>UNV</td>
<td>United Nations Volunteers</td>
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<td>VPE</td>
<td>Volunteer Peer Educators</td>
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<td>VSO</td>
<td>Volunteers Service Overseas</td>
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<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<td>WDR</td>
<td>World Development Report</td>
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<td>WWF</td>
<td>World Wildlife Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>YAN</td>
<td>Youth Advocacy Network</td>
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<td>YAN</td>
<td>Youth Action Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Youth Engagement Services Network Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Youth Engagement in Sustainability (Nepal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YI</td>
<td>Youth Initiative (Nepal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YJ</td>
<td>Yuva Janaagraha</td>
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<tr>
<td>YO</td>
<td>Youth Organization</td>
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<td>YP</td>
<td>Young People</td>
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Executive Summary

With approximately 700 million people between the ages 15 and 24,1 South Asia is home to about 30 percent of all young people in developing countries. Perhaps nowhere in the world are the opportunities and challenges presented by a large youth cohort felt more than in South Asia. As countries throughout the region experience growing economies, expanding civil societies and political transitions, there is a significant opportunity to harness the energy of young people in order to advance social, economic, and human development on a massive scale. Yet, in order to reap this “demographic dividend”2 young people must be equipped with the skills and abilities—the human and social capital—to become responsible and productive citizens. Worldwide interest in youth civic engagement is growing as an important part of youth development that enables young people to acquire the human and social capital they need to make the transition to adulthood and contribute to national development.

This study seeks to provide a framework to better understand the field of youth civic engagement in Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, including survey research, expert interviews, and focus group discussions, this study identifies existing institutional ‘assets’ that support youth civic engagement in the four countries. In addition to identifying existing policy environments and national and international organizations that can support expanding youth civic engagement opportunities, this study highlights emerging insights around assets, risks and opportunities for scaling up youth civic participation and makes preliminary recommendations for scaling up youth civic engagement in each country.

The study will proceed in nine sections. First, the authors situate youth civic engagement within the larger discourse on youth development, particularly in relation to current dynamics in South Asia. This is followed by defining key relevant terms. The third section discusses factors affecting youth civic engagement such as political systems, civil society, civic culture, and socio-economic and demographic factors. All of these factors can affect the shape civic engagement takes in any given society, which is also discussed in the fourth section as they authors give a typology of civic engagement programs. This typology describes voluntary service forms ranging from formal, long-term service to occasional volunteering to service-learning. Section five discusses the research methodology for this study describing the survey-based research and limitations encountered in the research design. With this foundation established, the study presents the asset mapping findings for Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India in section six. The overview of each country is presented within a framework of the historical and socio-economic situation, the policy environment for youth civic engagement, and the state of civil society and civic culture. Section six also places youth civic engagement organizations within the typology discussed in section four and gives examples of the form youth civic engagement organizations take in each country. The seventh section discusses emerging insights across the region as to assets, risks and opportunities for scaling up youth civic engagement. Informed by the emerging insights, section eight presents recommendations about possible areas for further investment in order to enhance the number and quality of opportunities for young people to become civically engaged.

The overarching conclusion of this research, presented in section nine, is that although youth civic engagement policies and programs are at different stages of development across the region, each country has a variety of available assets that can be strengthened through further investment by governments and local and international donors. The coming decades are critical for young people in South Asia and ultimately the long-term social, economic, and political health of the region. Now is the time to invest in youth development through civic engagement in order to advance economic and social development and empower the present generation to become community leaders.

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2 Put simply, the “demographic dividend” refers to the impact that a relatively young population can have on the long-term macroeconomic growth of a society. Societies with a larger working-age population relative to total population have lower “dependency ratios” and are thus economically more efficient. An expansion of the workforce with fewer children and elderly to support typically increases savings rates and thus allows for an increase in investment.
1. Introduction

Today the world’s 1.5 billion young people aged 12-24 constitute the largest generation ever to make the transition to adulthood.\(^3\) The values, attitudes and skills they acquire and develop will fundamentally shape the future of the societies and nations to which they belong. Acknowledging the impact that today’s youth will have on the future, many in government, multilateral lending institutions, international aid agencies and civil society are taking a growing interest in the development of the current generation of young people. The recognition that youth can have enormous impact (both positive and negative) on the health of a society is moving youth development from the periphery to the mainstream in the spheres of policy-making, program development and scholarship in different countries. For example, the World Bank’s Youth Development Report in 2007 featured youth civic participation as a promising approach to development.

Youth civic engagement is one aspect of youth development that has received growing attention from donors, policymakers and practitioners in various countries in recent years. Civic engagement is increasingly recognized as an important component of youth development (and development generally) because it can build human and social capital, educating young people about their political rights and responsibilities as citizens. As the World Development Report 2007 states, “Youth is an important stage of life for building the human capital that allows young people to escape poverty and lead better and more fulfilling lives. The human capital formed in youth –whether in skill levels or health, or civic and societal engagement—is an important determinant of long-term growth.”\(^2\)

Civic engagement takes various forms such as voting, involvement in decision-making bodies, participating in civil society organizations, and volunteering. For the purpose of this study, the focus has been narrowed to young people engaging in volunteering or service activities. Those working in the field of youth civic engagement have long seen the benefit of service or volunteering in helping young people acquire life skills and vocational skills, enabling them to practice citizenship, address genuine community needs and contribute to national and community development. For experts in the field of youth service, the recent interest in civic engagement among development practitioners is an exciting opportunity to broaden the horizons of the discipline. For those in the field of development it is an opportunity to engage with volunteerism as one method for achieving development objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals.\(^4\)

A. Why South Asia?
Why Civic Engagement?

Young people in South Asia make up approximately 30 percent of youth in developing countries, creating unprecedented and significant opportunities and challenges.\(^5\) Perhaps nowhere in the world has the recent emphasis on youth in the field of development been more widely embraced than in this demographically young, economically vibrant region that is still developing. Leaving aside the sheer number of young people in South Asia societies, the countries of this region are currently confronted with three inter-related social ‘transitions’ that are occurring simultaneously and make a focus on youth development particularly relevant and important: falling fertility rates, the growth of civil society and political transitions.

First, the region is faced with a fertility transition. Large youth cohorts and falling fertility rates suggest that the working age population relative to the total population will likely peak in the next decade or two.\(^6\) As a result, the societies of South Asia are poised to reap what economists call a “demographic dividend” if they can effectively harness the energy of a youthful population to help power rapid economic growth.\(^7\) However, a young population alone is not sufficient to drive long-term growth; growth also requires that countries enact effective

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\(^7\) See footnote 2 for a description of the “demographic dividend” concept.
policies that create jobs and cultivate a skilled labor force. Without investing in human and social capital, a society cannot hope to reap the benefits of the “demographic dividend.”

The second major transition facing the region is the growing importance of civil society (and private-public partnerships) as economic and political reforms have reduced the influence of the state and opened up spaces for civil society. This transition began in the late 1980s and early 1990s when several countries initiated economic reforms that resulted in accelerated economic growth. Although liberalization, privatization and greater fiscal austerity increased growth and reduced poverty, economic reforms have also exacerbated inequality while eroding some of the social welfare functions traditionally provided by governments. This rapid but uneven growth has placed new demands on the state, but has also created space for a civil society to flourish as non-governmental actors take on some of the social welfare roles traditionally assumed by governments.

In addition to rising inequality, a shortage of skilled labor now threatens to slow the region's growth. In order to sustain long-term growth and ultimately reap the "demographic dividend," countries in South Asia must develop new methods of addressing issues of inequality and social welfare, while cultivating human capital, particularly with regard to young people. In this process a robust civil society, which involves and supports young people, can reinforce government efforts and make important contributions to national social, economic and political development. Ultimately, however, states must tolerate and empower non-governmental actors. The emergence of a robust civil society requires that states foster supportive legal and policy environments within which non-state actors are able to engage actively in social, economic and political processes.

Finally, a number of countries in the region are in the process of important political transitions. Although India has been a democracy since independence in 1947, rising inequality resulting from rapid economic growth is producing new political demands such as the recent emphasis on more inclusive growth. In Bangladesh, long-delayed elections were held in December 2008 and brought into power Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Zillur Rahman. In Nepal, Maoist rebels laid down their arms after ten years of civil unrest and joined the political process where they won parliamentary elections in April 2008. The Maoists formed a coalition government in August 2008, but resigned in May 2009. Although still fragile, the recent political progress in Nepal has been remarkable and encouraging. Even in Pakistan, where the conservative influence of Islam and the military remains pervasive, democratic elections in 2008 brought to power moderate secular parties with strong democratic leanings. Across the region there is a great need to consolidate these democratic gains and encourage further progress. An engaged citizenry and a robust civil society are essential for both purposes.

In sum, the convergence of demographic, economic and political trends in the region makes investment in youth development—and youth civic engagement in particular—a logical choice for governments, international organizations, aid agencies and NGOs seeking to support development throughout South Asia. Because of the interrelated nature of these three transitions and their unique impact on both youth and community development, investing in youth civic engagement is simultaneously likely to advance the demographic, economic and political transitions already underway.

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Why civic engagement?

Focusing on youth will ensure the sustainability of these investments in civic engagement and will facilitate the current generation's transition to adulthood by equipping them with the skills and abilities to thrive in an environment of rapid and uncertain transformation. Given the opportunity to engage and provided with the skills to make a meaningful contribution to their communities, this youth cohort can form the vanguard of transformation in their societies. However, if youth are not afforded opportunities to participate in building their future and do not have a vested interest in the development of their communities, South Asia's demographic window of opportunity may close before the extra dividends are achieved.

This could result in significant opportunity costs in terms of the political violence and social instability, fuelled by pervasive poverty, illiteracy and inequality. Instead, civic engagement opportunities can empower young people and provide them with a sense of responsibility and possibility that is a prerequisite for their becoming active participants in their own development, as well as that of their societies.

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9 India’s economic growth since initiating reforms in 1991 has certainly been the most impressive in the region and is the most often discussed. However, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan have all undertaken a series of reforms in recent years and have generally experienced positive growth beyond expectations, given the amount of conflict and corruption some of these countries face. For background on these developments see “Economic Growth in South Asia: Promising Unequalizing…Sustainable?” Divavajan and Nabi (2006).
In addition to helping young people acquire soft skills, civic engagement programs of sufficient duration and sophistication can help participants acquire vocational capabilities valued by employers in the global marketplace. Civic engagement can help cultivate the human and social capital of young people in both its political (organized political formations) and ‘non-political’ forms (i.e. voluntary service, social work, and community development) so as to reduce skilled labor shortages that many countries in the region confront. In this way it adds to societies’ reaping their “demographic dividend.”

Furthermore youth civic engagement can help support and reinforce the democratic political trends of recent years. Despite the movement toward more open, accountable, transparent, and representative government, many South Asia countries still have some distance to go toward realizing good governance within democratic contexts.12 The policy environment for organizations providing opportunities for civic engagement (i.e. the right of voluntary organizations to associate, their legal recognition, government promotion or discouragement of youth civic engagement) is integral to the type and quality of civic engagement afforded to young people. Civic engagement can educate young people about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and channel their energy into positive avenues within prevailing political frameworks. By enabling young people to participate in the public sphere, civic engagement can foster a political culture of tolerance and social engagement, producing young people with informed and responsible notions of citizenship that will last for their lives and that of their generation.13 Furthermore, the promotion of civic engagement in countries that have been in conflict can also result in building social capital by strengthening relationships and building bonds of trust between people. In post-conflict situations, however, it is important to foster ‘bridging’ social capital through which diverse individuals and communities can learn more about each other.

B. Mapping Assets for Youth Civic Engagement in South Asia – The Approach Used

Given the unique confluence of factors in South Asia and the importance of engaging young people in the social, economic and political development of the region, ICP launched a multi-year regional program to study and support youth civic engagement in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. This regional initiative follows on the heels of several other regional capacity-building projects undertaken by ICP over the last several years, including policy scans in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and a research paper for UNICEF in the East Asia and Pacific region. Based on experience in these previous regional research and capacity building initiatives and more than 30 years of expertise in the field of youth civic engagement, ICP began a South Asia regional initiative with an “asset mapping” exercise culminating in this report.14 Asset mapping is a process of inquiry that provides an overview of existing conditions, highlighting strengths and revealing gaps. This mapping research aims at creating a picture of which youth civic engagement programs and initiatives exist, the policy and legislative environment in which they operate, how they are implemented and what kind of impact they may have so as to make recommendations about how youth civic engagement opportunities can be strengthened.15

The aim of ICP’s regional initiative is to enhance the number and quality of opportunities for youth civic engagement by raising awareness about its impact on positive youth development, increasing investment in such programs, and fostering a community of practice that can work to implement these programs. ICP hopes that policy-makers from the region, as well as international organizations and NGOs (both local and international) will look to this report as a resource if and when they decide to invest in youth development or youth civic engagement in South Asia.

11 According to Training Citizens While Training Workers: Strengthening Ties Between Civic Engagement and Workforce Development, Minnesota Campus Compact (2006), “soft skills include things like communication proficiency, team building, and working across intercultural and inter-generational differences. These ‘soft skills’ are becoming increasingly important as many of the fastest-growing career fields (education, healthcare, services, etc.) require people with good civic skills.”

12 Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2009 ranks 180 countries based on their level of corruption. India is ranked 84, Pakistan and Bangladesh are 139, and Nepal is 143. http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi

13 As will be explored in the next section, civic engagement often takes partisan political forms, but often functions best in terms of youth development when it remains non-partisan in nature. Partisan civic engagement must remain consistent with the norms of tolerance and democracy if it is to retain a developmental purpose.

14 More information about ICP’s initiative in South Asia can be found online at www.icicp.org.

15 Asset mapping refers to an approach to community development and capacity building that focuses on the strengths rather than the weaknesses found in a given community – in this case the individuals, institutions and organizations in the field of youth civic engagement. The approach stands in contrast to a “needs assessment” as it focuses more on assets rather than deficiencies. For more on this approach see Bealieu, Lionel, “Mapping the Assets of Your Community: A Key Component for Building Local Capacity.” Southern Rural Development Center, 2002. http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/227/227_asset_mapping.pdf.
2. Definitions

The definition of youth 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. The UN defines youth as people aged 10-24 years. In South Asia ‘youth’ can refer to people anywhere between the ages of 10-35. In consultation with our regional partners and to work within the most common definition of young people in the region, we focused this study slightly more narrowly to include young people between 15 and 30 years of age.

Civic participation and civic engagement are often used interchangeably, and there are multiple definitions of these terms based on different cultural contexts. The terms ‘youth service’ and ‘voluntary service’ are also often used interchangeably with civic engagement, but as the typology of civic engagement in Section 4 will show, service is one of numerous forms of civic engagement. For the purposes of this study, civic engagement is defined as individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. This study however focuses specifically on volunteering and service as key forms of civic engagement and uses the terms civic engagement to refer to volunteering and service.

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.) (See typology in Section 4 for more details.)

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."17

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. The term ‘voluntary sector’ is more commonly used in South Asia and is thus used in this paper.

Non-governmental organization (NGO), civil society organization (CSO), voluntary organization, non-profit organization are all used fairly interchangeably to refer to the various informal as well as formal associations and organizations that comprise the civil society.

16 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/slice/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.”

In this report, we discuss initiatives that are “innovative” in their work. Traditionally, innovative can be defined as “being or producing something like nothing done or experienced or created before.” ICP uses a more open or creative definition that includes programs that are innovative because they are successful in developing new strategies for engaging young people or communities, are sufficiently flexible to be tailored to specific contexts and needs, involve stakeholders to produce resources through funding or strategic partnerships, develop new solutions to old problems, meet the needs of under-served groups, facilitate genuine youth empowerment, tap into contemporary and relevant youth culture, mobilize young volunteers by combining different kinds of volunteering with opportunities for reflection, and define borders or boundaries in new ways, promoting linkages across them.

Although ICP believes that civic engagement takes some form in every culture and society, it can vary in character significantly. A variety of factors have been identified that substantially impact the nature, form and degree of civic engagement in different socio-cultural contexts. Acknowledging these factors and incorporating them into the overall picture of youth civic engagement in the South Asia region is one of the major tasks of this research. Understanding their impact is also a crucial prerequisite for further investment and capacity building. The following factors have been identified as having a major impact on youth civic engagement in South Asia (as elsewhere) and are discussed briefly below:

A. Political System

One important condition for civic engagement is that a country or society’s political system is relatively open and tolerant. Robust civic engagement ultimately depends on the ability of citizens to freely express their thoughts, form associations and advocate for specific viewpoints or policies in the public realm. Citizen participation and civic engagement flourishes when people’s right to associate is protected, when legal support mechanisms are in place, and where governments and other partners actively recognize the value of and support (financially or otherwise) youth civic engagement. In short, the political system must, at a minimum, tolerate and provide space for citizens to air their grievances publicly, dissent and form a ‘loyal opposition.’ Although official tolerance of civic participation is a minimum requirement, a truly robust civil society requires that governments actively support and enable active citizenship, as well as the formation of associations.

Governments can do this by creating a policy environment that is conducive to the development of a robust civil society, philanthropy, volunteerism and citizen participation. This involves first and foremost, governments developing a system that legitimizes civic associations such as generating a system for registering and incorporating organizations in order to provide them with recognized legal status. Governments can also help cultivate a culture of philanthropy by providing incentives for making charitable contributions such as designating certain organizations for preferential tax status (such as tax exempt or non-profit status). Developing a legal framework for non-governmental organizations is a crucial initial step toward legitimizing free association and creating a robust civil society. Yet governments can do more to promote civic engagement than merely permit and legitimize the right to free association. They can also allocate resources and/or create policies that actively encourage civic engagement. Such support is especially critical for encouraging young people’s civic education, participation and empowerment. Government policies toward youth and civic engagement have a profound impact on the nature and degree of youth civic engagement.

Governments can create a National Youth Policy (NYP), which commonly defines the age range of young people in a particular country as well as “the place and role of youth in society and the responsibility of society to youth...” In some cases a NYP may also “…encourage youth participation in the mainstream of society and in its decision-making processes.” In instances where a Ministry of Youth is not already in existence, NYPs can provide for the creation of a governmental body (such as a youth commission) that coordinates government policy toward young people. Some NYPs may provide for youth civic engagement as a statement of principle or may articulate implementation mechanisms specifically designed to facilitate youth participation. Some governments may choose to create a separate National Youth Service Policy (NYSP) that explicitly outlines the supports for youth civic engagement and the institutional mechanisms by which young people will be given a voice in the society and government. Often NYSPs result in Youth Commissions and/or Youth Funds that are responsible for allocating money toward youth civic engagement initiatives and/or coordinating with other government agencies on the implementation of youth-related policies. In some instances, governments may develop policies toward the voluntary sector generally. Although not always targeted at young people, policies on the voluntary sector often also specifically target young people as participants in and/or beneficiaries of volunteer programs.

In sum, the kind of policy environment provided by government can have a profound impact on youth development, civic engagement, and the subsequent level, type and form of youth civic engagement. The conduciveness of a policy environment toward youth civic engagement is best conceived along a spectrum where at one end government restricts freedom of association, leaves little space for civil society to function, and has no policy in respect of youth. At the other end of the spectrum, government actively promotes citizen participation (endowing NGOs with legal form, developing a policy on volunteering), adopts an explicit policy toward youth (such as a National Youth Policy) and either embeds youth civic engagement within a general NYP or creates a separate national youth service policy to encourage youth participation.

B. Civil Society

The development of a robust civil society is closely related to the political system and policy environment in a given country. Freedom of association is a necessary condition for the formation of a strong civil society. Official recognition and support for such associations further strengthens civil society organizations. The presence of a strong civil society is often the foundation on which youth civic engagement is built. Whether it is made up of political parties, welfare associations, student unions, religious organizations, youth clubs, and/or social development organizations, a robust civil society serves as an example and a mechanism for all kinds of youth participation. Yet in addition to official tolerance or support, a robust civil society also depends on the prevailing attitudes of citizens and their ‘civic culture.’

C. Civic Culture

Culture tends to be extremely difficult to define and its causal role is often difficult to discern. Rather than delve into a debate on political culture, this report will focus more narrowly on the subject of ‘civic culture,’ which here refers to people’s perceptions of volunteerism, philanthropy and citizenship, as well as youth and their social roles. The research sought to explore people’s perceptions of the role of the government in promoting youth empowerment through civic engagement and voluntary service. Although extremely difficult to measure or capture succinctly, these perceptions are of enormous importance in determining the type, form and level of youth civic engagement in a society.

In many respects, the extent to which a country has a history of civic engagement (and how that history unfolded) is an important predictor of levels of contemporary youth civic engagement. If there is no tradition of civic participation, no example to follow, then involving youth is likely to prove more difficult. How a society views young people, volunteerism, and philanthropy or charity is vitally important for understanding civic engagement. Other relevant factors include the extent to which a culture prioritizes individualism as compared with a culture that puts a premium on helping others and/or prioritizes individual obligation to the community. Family relationships and values may also be an important factor in determining whether and in what ways children are encouraged to become civically engaged. Gender roles may also affect whether volunteerism is viewed as an appropriate activity for some segment of the population. Often young people’s perception of their government, particularly how they feel the government views young people, profoundly affects the extent to which youth become civically engaged and how they do so.

D. Socio-economic and Demographic Factors

Socio-economic and demographic factors are important when considering the level of youth civic engagement in a country or region. In particular, it is important to consider the size and composition of the youth population as well as their skill level and education. Income and unemployment may also impact on the nature and scale of civic engagement. However, regardless of income, age, and skill level, all young people are capable of and entitled to some form of civic engagement. Nevertheless, these factors must be considered when examining the field of youth civic engagement and are especially important when designing programs for youth in different local and national contexts.

In many developing countries volunteering and mutual aid plays a vital role in the survival of poor communities. Nevertheless in societies where incomes are low and unemployment is high it is important to acknowledge that decisions to participate in civic engagement and to volunteer compete with the need to earn a livelihood. In these contexts volunteering and civic engagement may be viewed as a luxury the poor can ill afford. However, civic participation can be particularly valuable and beneficial to poor or disadvantaged groups in several ways: First, engaged citizens are more likely to hold governments accountable and promote policies favorable to job creation and equitable income distribution. Second, engaged citizens are more likely to participate in activities that develop their human and social capital or provide opportunities to acquire skills valued in the labor market. Finally, civic engagement can help inspire young people to become self-actualizing, more self-reliant, and more capable of solving communal problems, assisting less fortunate members of society. Despite these benefits, income levels and unemployment are likely to influence the amount of time participants can dedicate to voluntary efforts.

Age and education are also important factors for understanding youth civic engagement. Civic activities must be appropriate to the age and skill level of participants. The civic engagement activities of older youth (20-30) may not be practical or appropriate for those in younger age groups (10-20). Those with a college education are also likely to have certain capabilities that illiterate young people are not likely to have. In sum, socio-economic and demographic factors are important to consider because of the impact they have on the level and type of youth civic engagement. Yet, it is a basic principle that young people of all ages, economic backgrounds and levels of education can and should enjoy opportunities for civic participation.

4. Typology of Civic Engagement

Based on previous research, ICP developed a typology of civic engagement that captures the diverse activities that belong under the umbrella of civic participation. The typology is designed to explicate the dimensions along which civic engagement varies. Although by no means an exhaustive list, this typology considers the following dimensions to civic engagement:

- Forms of civic engagement;
- Program areas for civic engagement (impact on the community);
- Program goals for youth participants themselves;
- Types of organizations that commonly run civic engagement programs;
- Incentives offered for participation;
- Target participant population (age, gender, socioeconomic background, etc.);
- Roles that young people may play in the organizations or programs; and
- Levels of participation and decision-making for young people in each of these roles.

The typology was developed in an attempt to capture the diversity of civic engagement activities while maintaining the core characteristics associated with civic engagement. The forms of civic engagement listed in the typology below are categorized primarily by their purpose and type of activity and secondarily by their intensity, duration and location. Some programs may fall under several types of civic engagement. The questionnaires distributed during the survey research phase of this asset mapping exercise were designed to encourage respondents to classify their activities within this typology and consider the other dimensions of civic engagement articulated above.

Various types of civic engagement frequently have different program characteristics. The following table seeks to further clarify some of the strengths and weaknesses of different types of civic engagement as well as identify common characteristics typically associated with each type included in the typology.

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Box 1. Types of youth civic engagement

**Community service and volunteering:**
- Formal, long-term service: 20 hours of service per week for three months or longer.
- Part-time volunteering: Anything less than 20, but more than two hours per week for two months.
- Occasional (episodic) volunteering: Anything less than the above.
- Service-learning: A pedagogical method that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their schools and communities. Young people apply academic skills to solving real-world issues, linking established learning objectives with community needs. This can be either school or non-school based.
- International (transnational) volunteering: Volunteers offer services to communities in countries other than their own.

**Mutual aid:** Providing assistance and support to others within the same community or social group; the distinction between the volunteer and the beneficiary may be less clear.

**Governance:** Representation in, lobbying of, and/or consultation with government bodies; involvement in the policy process.

**Advocacy and campaigning:** Raising public consciousness about an issue or working to change a cultural norm, social norm, or government policy.

**Youth media:** Video, radio, film, newspaper, or other form of media production by young people; audience may be other young people or adults.

**Social entrepreneurship:** Creating innovative solutions to social problems by designing products or offering services.

**Leadership training and practice:** Mechanisms for learning and exercising leadership skills, including workshops as well as participation in volunteer activities.

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21 This typology is a culmination of ICP research and publications through previous asset-mapping exercises.
Table 1: Comparative summary of types of youth civic engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Main purposes</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Roles of Young People</th>
<th>Degree of young people’s influence over decisions regarding civic engagement</th>
<th>Numbers and level of inclusion</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cost per young person</th>
<th>ORGANIZERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Formal, long-term service</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>20 hrs/wk for 3 months or more</td>
<td>Volunteer, manager or leader, program designer or implementer</td>
<td>Low to high</td>
<td>Many -</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Part-time volunteering</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Anything less than above, but more than 2 hrs/wk for 2 months</td>
<td>Volunteer, peer educator or counselor, mentor, program designer or implementer</td>
<td>Low to high</td>
<td>Many - All</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Occasional volunteering</td>
<td>Social, religious</td>
<td>Anything less than above</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Low to medium</td>
<td>Many - All</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Service-learning</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Medium-term</td>
<td>Volunteer, student</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Many -</td>
<td>12+</td>
<td>Low to medium</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. International volunteering</td>
<td>Social, cultural</td>
<td>Ranging from short- to long-term</td>
<td>Volunteer, manager or leader, program designer or implementer, peer educator or counselor, mentor</td>
<td>Low to high</td>
<td>Few -</td>
<td>18+</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mutual Aid</td>
<td>Social, religious</td>
<td>Ranging from short-term to ongoing and occasional</td>
<td>Volunteer providing assistance</td>
<td>Low to Medium</td>
<td>Depends on size of community social group/ Limited to members of that group</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Advocacy and campaigning</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Short- to medium-term</td>
<td>Activist and advocate, volunteer</td>
<td>Low to medium</td>
<td>Few - many</td>
<td>14+</td>
<td>Low to medium</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Governance</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Medium-term</td>
<td>Policy analyst and developer, member, advisory board member</td>
<td>Low to High</td>
<td>Few - Generally elected by peers or handpicked by adults</td>
<td>14+</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Comparative summary of types of youth civic engagement (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Main purposes</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Roles of Young People</th>
<th>Degree of young people’s influence over decisions regarding civic engagement</th>
<th>Numbers and level of inclusion</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cost per young person</th>
<th>ORGANIZERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Youth media</td>
<td>Social, cultural, political</td>
<td>Medium-term</td>
<td>Reporter, media designer</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>Few - For young people who are articulate and good communicators</td>
<td>12+</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>Govt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Social entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Medium- to long-term</td>
<td>Program designer and implementer</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Few - Participants tend to be older, educated and often privileged</td>
<td>14+</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Govt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Youth leadership</td>
<td>Social, political</td>
<td>Short- to medium-term</td>
<td>Conference participant, volunteer, member, advisory board member</td>
<td>Low to medium</td>
<td>Few -</td>
<td>17+</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>Govt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Research Methodology

A. Case Selection

South Asia is made up of eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. However, this study was limited to four countries – Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal – for several reasons. First, the vast majority of the region’s population is found in these four countries. Second, while these four countries feature cultural, linguistic, economic, geographic and political diversity, they are nonetheless fairly representative of the region as a whole. Third, given ICP’s limited resources and the considerable difficulties in conducting research in countries experiencing ongoing conflicts such as Sri Lanka and Afghanistan where access can be very limited, it was decided that both of these countries should be omitted. Furthermore, the tenuous political situation in several South Asian countries means that the opportunities for youth civic engagement and the atmosphere for investment in such activities would be more limited than in the four countries selected. ICP chose to focus on countries where the social, economic and political contexts were more conducive to scaling up opportunities for youth civic engagement. Thus, although not every country in the region is included in this study and although there are numerous differences between and within the countries that are included, ICP believes that the observations and recommendations emerging from this study have some relevance throughout the region.

Nevertheless, ICP acknowledges (and explores in detail in later sections) that local/national context is important for understanding the kinds of civic engagement investments that may be appropriate in each country. Different countries have different strengths and weaknesses, needs, assets and specialties. Any future investment in youth civic engagement must recognize regional commonalities, but must also acknowledge cross-national differences and adapt programming to different country contexts.

ICP’s asset mapping approach seeks to identify the roles played by these and other institutions in promoting youth civic engagement. Based on previous research, ICP identified a number of institutions that typically support youth civic engagement programs and activities, or which can be mobilized to create the conditions necessary for maximizing opportunities for youth engagement. The list of institutions identified and the roles that each institution often fulfills are detailed further in Appendix A.

In the case of South Asia, research focused primarily on mapping assets in the government and policy environment, the local and international NGO sector, and youth organizations. Less emphasis was placed on identifying the role played by other institutions that commonly support youth civic engagement such as corporations and faith-based organizations. Although not the focus of the paper, some educational institutions and international volunteer agencies were also identified.

B. Research Design

This report and the asset mapping approach utilized to gather the information, are grounded in ICP’s 30+ years of experience in the field of youth service. They also draw heavily on the model provided by previous regional research initiatives and policy scans conducted by ICP in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In particular, this study was modeled on the asset mapping research conducted by ICP on behalf of UNICEF EAPRO in 2007. These earlier reports and the present one also draw inspiration from other recent studies in the field of youth civic engagement including McBride, Olate and Johnson (2008); Patel, Perold, Mohamed and Carapinha (2007); and McBride, Benitez, Sherraden, and Danso, et al. (2003).
The asset mapping approach is intended to identify the institutional framework in which civic engagement is situated (both conceptually and practically), both in the region and in each country. That is, by mapping assets this study situates the concept of civic engagement in the socio-cultural context, points to government policies and programs that support or inhibit civic engagement, and identifies local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), international organizations (IOs), and educational institutions that already work in the field of youth civic engagement. In particular, asset mapping is intended to identify the relationships among these actors as well as their strengths and weaknesses in order to better understand where, how and in what ways the shared goal of promoting youth civic engagement is being pursued and can be improved. A prerequisite for further investment in youth civic engagement is an ‘inventory’ of existing assets. Identifying existing assets helps to understand the strengths of the field and provides a basis for assessing what needs must still be met in order to enhance the community of practice.

The research design combines both primary and secondary sources. The first stage of the research began with desk research to identify individual experts on the subject, local NGOs and transnational organizations running civic engagement programs, and any relevant secondary sources. From this desk research an initial annotated bibliography was compiled and a detailed contact list consisting of area experts and relevant organizations was assembled.

The second stage of the research design called for original survey research and interviews with the organizations and experts as well as focus group discussions with small groups of young people. ICP collaborated with local partner organizations to help facilitate this stage of the research. ICP’s partners included Youth Engagement Services (YES) in Pakistan, Youth Initiative (YI) in Nepal, the National Federation of Youth Organizations (NFYOB) in Bangladesh and Pravah in India. These partners carried out a number of activities, including helping to identify additional experts and organizations, distributing surveys, providing translation services as necessary, sending reminders to encourage respondents to complete the survey, and collecting responses. Local partners also conducted focus group discussions on behalf of ICP (discussed in detail below). In India, ICP initially took the lead role in this research with the support of Plan India, Student Partnerships Worldwide, and the Public Affairs Office of the United States Embassy in Delhi. In 2009, Pravah conducted further interviews, built on previous studies and finalized the section on India in this report.

Survey research was conducted in two rounds in January-March and May-July 2008. An initial first-round questionnaire was developed, based on surveys from previous ICP mapping studies (Appendix B). The questionnaire was designed to learn about civic engagement programs and the organizations that operate them. Specifically the questionnaire was used to help identify the types and forms of civic engagement activities (see the Typology of Civic Engagement above). It was also designed to learn more about the youth/civic engagement policy environment in each country and to determine the respondents’ knowledge of that policy environment. The survey was designed to determine whether a country has a National Youth Policy, a National Youth Service Policy, or an organized movement to create either type of policy. Policy information was also gathered through online research, secondary sources and by speaking directly to local experts in the field.

This first-round questionnaire was distributed to 280 individuals and organizations through email between January 22 and February 6, 2008. Respondents were given until March 9 to complete the questionnaires. Forty-two completed first-round questionnaires were received by March 9.

ICP conducted a second round of survey research (Appendix C) between May 20 and August 1, 2008. A modified version of the first-round questionnaire was developed to take into account a variety of weaknesses in the first round. In the second round, 184 surveys were distributed and 14 were completed and received by July 29th. After distributing the second-round surveys partner organizations in each country called respondents on the telephone and requested that they complete the surveys.

In addition to collecting survey responses, ICP conducted interviews with individual experts. These experts were identified through desk research and secondary sources, as well as through survey responses. Survey respondents who showed a high degree of thoughtfulness on their completed questionnaires were contacted for follow-up interviews. ICP developed a list of interview questions (Appendix D) in order to obtain respondents’ broader perspectives on the field of youth civic engagement rather than specific programmatic or organization details. These interviews provided considerable insight into the perceptions of practitioners regarding the field of youth civic engagement as a whole.

Finally, ICP commissioned local partner organizations to facilitate several focus group discussions with small groups of young people. The focus group discussions sought to obtain a better sense of young people’s understanding and perspectives on youth civic engagement. Focus group guidelines and questions were developed by ICP (based on previous mapping initiatives) and were supplied to a number of partner organizations (Appendix E). In addition to YES in Pakistan, YI in Nepal, NFYOB in Bangladesh and Pravah in India, ICP also arranged for several INGOs operating in the region to conduct focus groups on our behalf. In Bangladesh the local country staff of Relief International conducted a focus group discussion with a half dozen students at one of the schools they operate. In India, ICP received assistance from Student Partnerships
Before proceeding to the next section which discusses and analyzes the results, it is necessary to offer a few qualifications and briefly discuss some of the limitations of the asset-mapping approach in the case of this study. First, due to the sheer size and diversity of the topic and the region in question, this report cannot claim to be comprehensive in the sense that each and every important actor in the field of civic engagement or significant activity can be documented or included. Instead researchers confined themselves to the goal of identifying the most relevant factors, organizations, and institutions affecting youth civic engagement in the four countries.

Second, although the study only includes four of eight countries in this immensely diverse region, and although the countries have great diversity within them, the countries were selected as representative of the region. The findings therefore should highlight trends that may be relevant for the region as a whole, but which may not be applicable in all situations. Additionally, the similarities among and within each country are sufficient to warrant a regional approach. However, ICP acknowledges that diversity between and within countries inevitably affects the ability to reach generalizable conclusions.

Third, 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 (which remains a second or third language in many parts of the region), some of the most isolated and localized organizations and activities may not have been able to participate. Fourth, the size of the ‘sample’ — that is, the number of organizations surveyed, individual experts interviewed and focus groups organized, though substantial, is not large enough to make definitive judgments about the entirety of the field of youth civic engagement across South Asia.

Fifth, the research design inevitably involved a degree of selection bias. Organizations and experts were sought out and found largely through online searches in English. Participation in the research (i.e., surveys, interviews and focus group discussions) largely required that respondents have a computer with Internet access, email, and the desire and capability to participate in this study. The implication of this selection bias is that the study primarily includes those individuals and organizations that already have the highest degree of exposure to international actors and a global civil society. That is to say, they may be more familiar with the discourse on civic engagement, more likely to speak English, more likely to be computer proficient, and/or more likely to receive support or exchange information with extra-regional actors such as foreign NGOs, IOs, or development agencies. In an effort to overcome this selection bias, local partner organizations were encouraged to reach out to non-English speaking organizations and organizations working at the grassroots level in communities with limited internet access.

Nevertheless, despite limitations, this report remains consistent with the asset-mapping approach which it has adopted rather than a social scientific or explanatory approach. As a result, the inferences drawn and conclusions reached here are admittedly more tentative and the criteria by which it is judged must also vary accordingly. This report has more modestly set out to identify relevant actors and factors (assets) in the field of youth civic engagement in South Asia. In so doing 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.

Table 2: Summary of research effort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Round 1 Survey: Responses Received</th>
<th>Round 2 Survey: Responses Received</th>
<th>Follow-up Interviews Conducted</th>
<th>Focus Group Discussions Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Country Analysis

This section identifies, analyzes and summarizes assets from each country for youth civic engagement. The country analyses focus on identifying the factors and conditions affecting youth civic engagement in each national context. First, the historical and socio-economic environment is described, followed by an examination of the political environment, the nature of civil society and implications for youth civic engagement. Then data from interviews, surveys and focus group discussions are used to explore the culture for civic engagement, including the history of civic engagement and perceptions of youth, civic engagement and voluntary service. Organizational profiles are included to provide information about program models for youth civic engagement. These provide the basis for a discussion about the features of youth civic engagement in each of the countries surveyed.

A. Nepal

1. Historical and socio-economic overview

Of the four countries included in this study, Nepal is the smallest in terms of its geographic size and total population. Nepal is also economically the poorest of the four countries with a per capita gross national income (GNI) of only $290. As with the other countries of South Asia, the youth population is quite large: out of a total population of 27 million about 9 million young people are aged 10-24 and 12 million people are under age 18. Adult literacy is around 49 percent and although literacy among young people (15-24) is considerably higher, there are significant gender disparities (81 percent for males and 60 percent for females). Primary school attendance is fairly high: 86 percent for males and 82 percent of females, though secondary school attendance is lower—46 percent for males and 38 percent for females.

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. Prior to 1951, Nepal was governed by a feudal monarchy that jealously guarded its power and placed considerable restrictions on freedom of association and expression. In the early 1950s the efforts of political leaders who had been educated in India and who took part in the Indian independence movement led to a situation in which the monarchy, threatened by its own military, entered into a period of shared leadership with newly formed political parties. A constitution was written and a period characterized by some elements of democracy existed for much of the 1950s culminating in the first democratic elections being held in 1959. However, four years later the King dissolved the constitution, halted the democratic process and arrested the prime minister, party leaders and democratic activists—a trend that continued for the 30 years of the panchayat system, which saw the absolute power of the monarch entrenched in the new constitution.

In 1990 the activities of pro-democratic activists eventually led to a situation in which the King had to accept constitutional and democratic reforms and in 1991 elections were held. A series of economic crises led to a range of protests. Unhappiness with the economic situation and lack of land reform in the rural areas eventually led to an uprising in which the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) began calling for the existing system of a parliamentary monarchy to be replaced by a people’s democracy. In 2005, after a ceasefire agreement between the government and the rebels collapsed and with violence on the rise, King Gyanendra dismissed parliament, declared a state of emergency and vowed to crush the Maoists. But popular protest against the King’s heavy handed and undemocratic tactics, along with foreign pressure, forced the monarchy to reinstate parliament. Students and young people participating in street protests and strikes played a decisive role in forcing the monarchy to back down. In 2006 the rebels and the government signed a peace agreement ending the 10-year-old insurgency and parliament abolished the monarchy declaring Nepal a republic. In National Assembly elections held in April 2008, former rebels gained the largest bloc of seats but did not win an outright majority. Since then, the political environment has remained contentious with Baran Yadav of the Nepali Congress Party as President and Madhav Kumar Nepal of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) as

22 Unless otherwise noted, most of the information in this section was provided by respondents to surveys, interviews and focus group discussions.


Prime Minister. Nepal’s recent efforts to draft a new constitution (which is expected in May 2010) may provide an opportunity for further promoting and encouraging youth civic engagement. Despite the end of the insurgency, conflict between former rebels and major political parties continues to plague the country, leaving a paralyzed weak political system as an obstacle to comprehensively promoting civil society, youth development and civic engagement.

The history of Nepal has led to a situation in which democratic traditions are valued, but are still to be entrenched in the day to day political systems. “The country has launched itself on a process of profound transformation, where everything is up for negotiation—the structure of the state, the symbols of nationhood, the rights of the citizen—within a pre-agreed and hopefully peaceful framework.”26 The turmoil has also impacted how civil society has developed and the types of development challenges that face Nepal.

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.27 This is an urgent question since it may threaten the peace agreement that currently forms the foundation of the new political dispensation in Nepal. A critical development question that thus arises in Nepal is how to address social exclusion since “equitable representation cannot alone resolve the problems of exclusion unless those who represent Nepal’s various constituencies can influence policy decisions through direct and active participation.”28

2. The policy environment and implications for youth civic engagement

The political system in Nepal has historically marginalized many of its people, including its young people. Dealing with youth issues and encouraging youth participation has therefore not been a key priority in the history of Nepal. Nevertheless, as has been mentioned above, young people played a significant role in ushering in the new dispensation. However, the challenge of forming a new government and democratic system in Nepal involves dealing with ongoing skirmishes, developing a new constitution, and trying to ensure economic development. In this context the participation of young people in society, particularly their political participation, is not necessarily a top priority for the new government and forging spaces that encourage youth civic engagement will remain a challenge. Youth organizations in Nepal are therefore concerned to guard against youth needs being marginalized once again.

There are, however, important changes underway that could facilitate youth development in the country. This may lead to greater commitment on the part of government to youth civic engagement. The positive developments include:

- **The presence of vibrant youth organizations**
  Despite a lack of institutional support for youth active citizenship, young people have been quite engaged civically. This may, at least in part, have to do with the involvement of young people, particularly students, in the uprisings against the monarchy and in pro-democracy activism – a situation that often arises in countries that are going through or have been through political upheaval. A key challenge for government will be to retain the leadership and involvement of youth activists and not to marginalize youth in the coming years.

However, the changing political and legal landscape (discussed below) may also be driving the engagement of young people. Additionally, the presence of a range of youth organizations provides young people with opportunities to be engaged. A variety of Nepalese youth organizations were identified in the asset mapping research such as the Association of Youth Organizations of Nepal (AYON), United Youth, Youth Initiative (YI), Youth Action Nepal (YAN) and Yatra. All of these organizations are engaged in efforts to encourage the government to take a more active approach to youth 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.

- **The increasing focus on youth in policy and planning**
  Of the four countries in this study, Nepal historically has the weakest policy environment for promoting youth development and civic engagement, although there are promising signs of change in the government. 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 undoubtedly the product of extensive advocacy efforts by diverse groups of youth-oriented NGOs and young people themselves.

27 Ibid
While the new policy being developed is not yet available, as mentioned above, 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 Deepi Khakurel, a survey respondent from Yatra, the interim plan does have 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. Khakurel says that the objective of the plan is to “make the youth actively participate in the reconstruction and social and economic transformation of the nation by providing opportunities to all Nepali youths to develop their potential and talents.”

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.

Despite a spate of crises in 2008 and 2009, the new Parliament has elected a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution (replacing the interim constitution of 2007) by May 2010. When that happens, the coalition of youth organizations are likely to have more success pushing forward on the finalization of the National Youth Policy. As Binod Adhikari of United Youth says, “the moment after the country gets a new constitution youth organizations would give their best to bring a youth policy. The movement to pressure the government to formulate a youth policy has been continuous for many years and I hope that won’t stop until the government does come up with one.”

While greater government stability would undoubtedly advance the progress toward passing a National Youth Policy, Nepali youth organizations and those considering investment in youth civic engagement can continue to operate despite the lack of a policy to support their work.

To wait for national reconciliation and a new constitution to be completed before further promotion of youth civic engagement would ignore the constructive role that young people can themselves play in the process of nation building. It would also hardly do justice to the exceptional youth civic engagement and voluntary service programs that are already in operation throughout Nepal. ICP’s asset mapping research identified a number of promising existing programs that serve as a model for further investment (see below) and this demonstrates the importance of acknowledging the assets already in existence on the ground. Furthermore, existing programs offer insights into the way civic engagement, volunteerism and youth are understood in Nepal, which issues are already receiving attention, and therefore where the possibilities for further investment lie.

### 3. State of civil society

Civil society often thrives under conditions of repression and lack of economic development as it is often the only mechanism on which people can rely for mutual aid and support, and as a means of challenging the status quo. Given the unstable political environment in Nepal over the past 60 years, political parties and other civil society organizations have developed, but their formal nature and relationship with the state has been in flux.

In many respects, the concept of the formal NGO understood today did not exist in Nepal until roughly the 1960s. However, countless less formal and more traditional notions of social obligation and welfare existed long before the nomenclature of NGOs emerged. The pre-1951 NGO sector was less structured and less political than in more recent decades, largely because the government did not place as many restrictions on more traditional charitable, religious, and communal welfare activities that had long formed the basis of the non-governmental sector. According to one report, the subject of legal recognition for NGOs is a very recent development in Nepal:

> In a country where religious, social, and charitable organizations with or without formal structures have existed traditionally for community work, collective self reliance, and social service for reasons of philanthropy or faith,

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29 Questionnaire completed by Yatra, February 2008. On file with ICP.
30 Questionnaire completed by United Youth, February 2008. On file with ICP.
32 Ibid.
the question of the availability and adequacy of enabling institutional and legal frameworks became important only recently. The traditional forms of non-governmental cooperation that relied on absolute volunteerism, personal and communal resources, and legitimacy provided by indigenous cultures and customs or religion did not need sanction from extraneous authorities, including the state.  

During the democratic interlude from 1951-1960 the more modern concept of the formal NGO as an actor for social and economic development and community building was introduced into Nepal. The formation of the non-governmental sector in Nepal and the expansion of NGOs into the domain of development may have been the result of various INGOs like the Red Cross and Planned Parenthood as well as religious organizations like the United Mission entering Nepal and seeking local counterparts. Unfortunately, the royal coup that reinstated the monarchy in 1960 slowed the growth of civil society in spite of the introduction of the ‘development’ oriented NGO during Nepal’s brief encounter with democracy. The restored monarchy abrogated the constitution and abolished parliament, banned political parties and generally repressed any form of civic activity or association that it deemed beyond the control and patronage of the Royal family itself.

The return to democracy in the early 1990s provided the non-governmental sector with new opportunities for growth. INGO activity increased with greater funding available for local organizations and a new focus on strengthening the democratic process, human rights, and political education. Although the Constitution of 1991 allowed for an expansion of NGO activity, the policy environment in Nepal remained challenging with a weak legal framework for NGOs and virtually no policy toward youth. The civil war that erupted in the mid 1990s between Maoist rebels and the government, and which claimed as many as 12,000 lives, further inhibited the development of a strong civil society and reduced opportunities for peaceful and constructive youth civic engagement.

The legal status of NGOs has historically been in flux in Nepal because of successive laws for their incorporation and registration that have been enacted and abrogated under different political and constitutional configurations. Despite this sometimes cumbersome legal environment, the NGO sector in Nepal continues to grow and flourish. Since popular protest in 2005 forced the King to restore the constitution of 1990, the right to free association now seems firmly established in Nepal. Increasingly the government has recognized the constructive role played by NGOs and incorporates them into planning and policy formulation. Additionally, foreign donors and INGOs remain active in Nepal and continue to build local capacity.

The political system in Nepal and the policy environment pose a number of challenges for civil society and robust civic engagement. Nonetheless, despite the historically restrictive policy environment and recent political turmoil, research revealed a relatively healthy civil sector and a variety of opportunities for youth civic engagement. This is evidenced in the range of youth development and youth activist organizations that are operating in Nepal, many of them being quite active in advocating for a National Youth Policy. It is these organizations that provide a solid platform that can be leveraged to support future youth civic engagement activities. Recent progress toward democracy and the drafting of a new constitution provides the opportunity to evaluate Nepal’s progress thus far and to establish what can be done going forward to further encourage youth civic engagement.

4. Culture for civic engagement

a. History of civic engagement

The current democratic political system in Nepal would not have been possible without the engagement of a range of activists—many of them young. 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. This is in part dependent on the nature of civil society and the policy environment discussed above, but is also rooted in the culture for civic engagement generally (and youth civic engagement in particular) among a range of stakeholders, not least among young people themselves.

b. How young people are viewed

Despite civic engagement having a long history in Nepal, it is not always viewed positively because advocacy for political reform often took violent forms. According to key informants and the young people themselves, this has led to a situation in which young people are often viewed negatively. It is important to note that the Maoist rebels drew many recruits from the younger generation and that youth therefore have a reputation for being radical, sometimes rowdy and destructive during protests and strikes. These perceptions may in part contribute to the skeptical view of youth in Nepal. However, Deependra Chamlagain, President of Youth Initiative, notes that cultural factors may also play a part in that communities in Nepal view young people as “immature, aggressive, and inexperienced.” This suggests that negative perceptions of young people might also have some cultural roots. Other focus group participants suggested that this perception was simply a fundamental generational clash: “Young people represent change and it is difficult for a society to break out of their comfort zone and accept change.”

Whatever the reasons, Chamlagain notes that this view leads to a negative cycle in which the problems of youth are not acknowledged by the older generation, including government officials. As a result, youth participation in decision-making is negligible, but their participation in protests and agitation for revolutionary change is strong. In short, the perception that youth are politically reactionary

33 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
has led in some ways to their exclusion from decision-making. Unfortunately, this exclusion may only further fuel alienation and frustration, leading to even more radical behavior.

In addition to these perceptions, the exclusion of young people from economic life may further constrain their ability to participate meaningfully, and shapes society’s perceptions of young people. Low enrolment rates for secondary education and difficulties in finding employment are key challenges that need to be addressed to assist young people to participate meaningfully in the mainstream of society. As was noted in one focus group with young people, one of the factors producing a poor view of young people is the fact that young people do not earn an income. Focus group participants did note that some change is occurring in perceptions of youth, but they were not clear on why this was the case or how this was expressed.

c. Perceptions of civic engagement

From the research conducted, perceptions among young people towards civic engagement seem to be generally positive, suggesting that efforts to increase opportunities for civic engagement would be positively received by young people.

The focus group participants felt that typically young people have the time to volunteer and that if the right opportunities come along they can gain experience that would be valuable later in life. Almost all of the young participants had been exposed to volunteering in theoretical terms as part of a curriculum, but once they were involved with voluntary activities, found it so stimulating that they wanted to continue. Several participants also indicated that they or someone they knew had worked on a blood drive or awareness campaigns for child literacy, HIV/AIDS education and women’s participation. Overall, the participants in both focus groups were optimistic about the contribution youth can make, given the information and opportunity to be engaged.

They also noted that there were a range of actions that needed to take place in order to enhance youth civic engagement. Efforts could be made to enhance volunteering by educating young people about the benefits of volunteering as well as the opportunities available to them. In order to mobilize more young people, the participants suggested that youth need to be better informed about what volunteering entails in order to show prospective volunteers what skills and knowledge they can acquire by being more engaged. Providing evidence of the impact of volunteering would inspire people and show them that they really can make a difference. It would also help to persuade parents and family of their success.

Focus group participants also felt that if volunteering was incorporated into the education system, many more young people would be exposed and many more would likely volunteer. In general, a perception among most participants was that the government could do more to encourage youth civic engagement by, for instance, establishing a Youth Ministry with a mandate to facilitate youth civic engagement. (Since the focus group took place, a Ministry of Youth has been created). A centralized coordinating body or organization that could involve young people might also provide space for young people to identify opportunities for engagement.

However, participants in one focus group noted that currently civic engagement was too politicized and felt that the charged political environment causes young people to become disillusioned or give up. They emphasized that it is important for any government initiative to capitalize on organizations already conducting volunteer programs and that it should take a decentralized approach. They also felt that international organizations could play a role by highlighting best practice from around the world, mobilizing local volunteers, and providing financial and capacity support.

5. Features of youth civic engagement organizations in Nepal

Despite the challenges posed by political instability, the research revealed a remarkable number of existing assets and organizations working to engage youth in voluntary service and give them a voice and a stake in Nepali society. Economic inequality, ethnic diversity, and the legacy of the civil war remain pervasive problems in Nepal. 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. Although some political leaders have called for the integration of former rebels into the national army, it is also important to provide other means for former combatants to reintegrate into the social and political mainstream. In addition to former rebels, thousands of people have been displaced by the conflict. Because youth civic engagement, and in particular youth voluntary service, 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.

Table 3 below provides a comparative summary of the selected youth civic participation organizations in Nepal. The detail provided indicates that these programs have the following features.

a. Forms

As has been discussed above, this research focused on youth volunteering and civic service as key forms of civic engagement. The organizations that participated in the study had different types of volunteering and civic service programs available. Some such as Nagarik Awaaz (NA) and Student Partnerships Worldwide (SPW) have developed structured programs that involve young people as volunteers on a long-term basis. Others such as Yatra and Youth Engagement in Sustainability (YES) have developed programmes that involve volunteers on a more ad-hoc and part-time basis.

b. Program areas/ goals

36 For more information on these organizations see Appendix F.
The organizations that were profiled in this research are involving young people in a range of focus areas. Environmental sustainability is a core program area in which both Yatra and YES are running programs. NA focuses on demobilization of young people who participated in the rebel movement, as well as reintegrating those displaced during the conflict. United Youth and SPW both position their programs in relation to national development goals. United Youth is concerned with leadership development and SPW encourages young volunteers to identify needs of a community and then work with the community to address those needs.

In addition to these core program focus areas, all of the organizations have the objective of fostering the personal development of young people through volunteering. By developing leadership skills and involving young people in lobbying efforts (as in the case of United Youth, Yatra and YES) and by training young people in various skills (in the way that SPW and NA do) all of these organizations focus on youth development as a key component of their programming. In some cases a focus on social entrepreneurship speaks directly to the importance of assisting youth to develop livelihood options.

c. Types of organizations
Of the five organizations profiled below, one (SPW) is an international NGO that works in various parts of the world, but has developed localized interventions in Nepal through the mobilization of young volunteers in communities. Yatra, YES and United Youth are national NGOs that could be seen as having advocacy or lobbying components. These organizations mobilize young people to become advocates in environment (Yatra and YES) or policy (United Youth). NA is a national NGO that runs face-to-face program interventions for displaced individuals.

d. Incentives
NA ensures that the young volunteers they involve are provided with financial support in addition to the training and volunteering experience that they gain. This financial support is intended to assist them as they look for employment. Incentives were not mentioned by the other organizations that participated in the study, although SPW provides around $50 in compensation per participant. This suggests that incentives are not a key feature of youth civic engagement programs in Nepal.

e. Target population
All of the profiled programs involve young people, but the age ranges differ. Taken together, the age range for all of the programs is between 16 and 29 years. NA targets a specific segment of young people who were either displaced or involved in the rebel groupings. YES, Yatra and SPW target students at colleges. This indicates that youth civic engagement is seen not only as a means for reintegrating young people into society, but also as a means of providing college students with opportunities to gain experience of active citizenship.

f. Roles of young people
Many of the programs profiled aim to train young people to take up leadership roles in the work that the organizations do. NA for instance trains young people who are then intended to work as volunteers in the organizations with which NA partners. YES, Yatra and SPW encourage their young volunteers to be advocates that will encourage other young people to volunteer. Yatra was in fact started by a group of young volunteers and still considers itself to be youth led. In some cases the young people also take the roles of peer educators, conference planners and researchers.

g. Levels of participation
As indicated above, young people are actively participating in the youth organizations surveyed and the development of their leadership skills is a key objective in all cases. Another indication of their participation is that in most instances the young people have participated in the design of the programs and are charged with implementing them. Young participants in SPW and United Youth also participate in monitoring and evaluating the programs. Furthermore, the information provided by Yatra, YES and United Youth shows that in these organizations young people have a strong influence on organizational decision-making.

6. Conclusion
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 engage young people in voluntary service. However, young people are sometimes viewed negatively because advocacy for political reform has taken violent forms and the Maoist rebels drew many recruits from the younger generation. A political environment in transition and poverty also continue to create significant challenges for expanding youth civic engagement opportunities in the country.

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. However, participants noted that more efforts were needed to educate young people about the benefits of volunteerism and the opportunities that are available to them. Recent government efforts and dynamic youth organizations hold much promise for engaging more young people in voluntary service. 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.
Table 3: Comparative summary of selected youth civic participation organizations in Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Main purposes</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Roles of Young People</th>
<th>Degree of young people’s influence over decisions regarding civic engagement</th>
<th>Numbers and level of inclusion</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cost per young person</th>
<th>ORGANIZERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nagarik Aawaz Displaced Youth Volunteer Programme (DYVP)</td>
<td>Long-term voluntary service, Advocacy &amp; Campaigning, Youth Media, Leadership Training and Practice</td>
<td>Re-integration, social, education</td>
<td>5-10 hours, 3-5 days a week, 1 year in host NGO</td>
<td>Volunteer, Peer Educator, Counselor, Mentor</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>20 per program cycle; All priority groups (e.g. women, victims, ex-combatants), mainly from rural areas and low class background</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>High (monthly stipend)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YATRA Primary Environmental Care (PEC) campaign</td>
<td>Advocacy and campaigning, Leadership Training and Practice</td>
<td>Education, environment</td>
<td>Around 10 hours per week for 1-3 months</td>
<td>Activist, Volunteer, Member Program Implementation Leader, Conference planner, Peer educator, Researcher</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All — mainly college students from middle class</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Engagement in Sustainability Nepal (YES) EnviroCorps/Change the Bulb Campaign</td>
<td>Advocacy and campaigning, Service-learning Community Service, Social Entrepreneurship Leadership Training and Practice</td>
<td>Environment, education</td>
<td>Around 10 hours per week for 4-6 months</td>
<td>Volunteer, Activist Leader, Program design, Program Implementation</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>16-29</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Youth Youth Inspiration Training</td>
<td>Leadership Training and Practice, Social Entrepreneurship, Advocacy Campaigning, Community Service</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4 days training</td>
<td>Volunteer, Manager Leader, Program design, Program Implementation, Monitor, Evaluator</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All from all regions, 18-22 people in course</td>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>NRS. 6667 per person (low)</td>
<td>x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Partnerships Worldwide (SPW)</td>
<td>Long-term voluntary service, Leadership Training and Practice, International &amp; long-term voluntary service, Community Service</td>
<td>Social, education</td>
<td>Around 10 hours a week (sometimes full time) for 7 – 12 months</td>
<td>Volunteer, Peer Educator, Students as pressure group (Green Clubs), Monitor, Evaluator, Program implementation</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>All—gender balance required</td>
<td>18-28</td>
<td>around $ 50 compensation per person</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Bangladesh

1. Historical and socio-economic overview

Bangladesh is a small country that nevertheless is one of the most densely populated in the world. After the war for independence in 1971, Bangladesh gained autonomy from Pakistan. In the 20 years after independence the country was subjected to famine, natural disasters, military coups and increasing poverty. In 1991 democracy was restored followed by economic progress. Today Bangladesh's per capita income has doubled since 1975 and it is listed as one of the “Next Eleven” emerging economies.

More recently political unrest has again characterized Bangladesh leading to a caretaker government being appointed in 2007. This interim government focused on dealing with the corruption and political violence that had characterized previous governments. In late 2008 an election was held and in early 2009 a democratically elected government came into power.

Despite its small size, Bangladesh's population of close to 160 million is nearly as large as that of Pakistan. The youth cohort is also extremely large, with those aged 10-24 years comprising about 30 percent and those under 18 comprising nearly 40 percent of the total population. In spite of the economic growth that Bangladesh has experienced, poverty and illiteracy remain pervasive with adult literacy around 48 percent and per capita GNI around $480 per year. Although literacy among youth aged 15-24 is considerably higher (67 percent for males and 60 percent for females) than for adults, young Bangladeshis today face enormous obstacles in their transition to adulthood, such as pervasive poverty, unemployment, and HIV/AIDS.

The Government of Bangladesh has a Ministry of Youth and has explicitly recognized the need to focus on the role of youth in development. Nevertheless, youth civic engagement and voluntary service remains a fairly limited part of the government's overall youth policy.

2. The policy environment and implications for youth civic engagement

Since winning independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh oscillated between democratically-elected civilian governments and military rule. Furthermore, the political system in Bangladesh, like in Nepal and Pakistan, fluctuated in its support for citizen participation and youth civic engagement. However, 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. This is acknowledged in the National Youth Policy of 2003: “Our national heritage is enlightened by the encouraging participation of youth. The youths of the country actively played a vital role in the language movement of 1952 and the liberation war of 1971.”

Despite official recognition of the role young people have played in the independence movement, opportunities for their participation in the decision-making processes since then have often fallen short. This is in part due to the fact that the Bangladesh parliamentary democracy was undermined by corruption and political repression, which inhibited civil society and robust civic engagement more generally. In addition, according to interviewees, the government has been slow to implement the National Youth Policy (2003). As is often the case with NYPs, the policy’s shortcomings are in the design of an effective implementation strategy. Furthermore, political turmoil in recent years preoccupied the government and slowed progress toward developing a comprehensive policy toward youth. This has meant that despite young people’s substantial involvement in the history of Bangladesh, their voices and needs are again at risk of being marginalized.

Nevertheless two policy frameworks exist that could be harnessed to provide greater opportunities for youth civic engagement.

- The National Youth Policy

Bangladesh, as has been mentioned, does have a National Youth Policy (NYP). However, the policy is not easily accessible and only half of the individuals and organizations ICP surveyed in Bangladesh were aware of its existence. Overall the NYP is a promising document that, if fully implemented, could vastly improve the opportunities for young people to become socially, economically, and politically engaged in Bangladesh.

According to the Bangladesh NYP, youth are defined as the population between the age of 15 and 30. At the time it was written, the policy indicated that of the 132 million people in Bangladesh one third, or around 43 million, fit in this category. The 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).

The policy identifies seven issues or areas it seeks to address, including education, employment, training, health,


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.

38 “National Youth Policy of Bangladesh.” Copy provided by Dulal Biswas, National Federation of Youth Organizations of Bangladesh, November 30, 2007.
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.

The policy goes on to outline 20 programs that will help realize these goals. Article 6.5 suggests that measures shall be taken for “representation of youth in all local bodies about their rights and responsibilities towards national development.” Article 6.8 seeks to make local development more effective by ensuring that all youth organizations are registered with the Department of Youth Development, while Article 6.9 says that the Department of Youth Development will provide grants to voluntary youth organizations.

**Challenges**

In many regards, the policy is quite strong, addressing all the major issues that a NYP typically is expected to touch upon. Yet, in other ways, it seems overly ambitious and is perhaps too focused on a statement of principles rather than outlining the concrete steps toward realizing the goal of youth development that most stakeholders seem to agree upon. Interviewees felt that the policy was a positive step on the part of government, though they felt it had flaws and would not be properly implemented. According to one respondent, the passage of the policy in 2003 “was not followed up with a comprehensive plan of action to implement it.” The result has been continued “exclusion [of youth] from the democratic and development process at all levels.”

According to another respondent, the reaction among young people to the policy was mixed and “unfortunately only an insignificant fraction of the policy has been implemented.” Yet, like other skeptics, the respondent also said that “if the policy is implemented it would be a great instrument for the youth of the country. But there is no effective mechanism in the government sector regarding youth involvement in voluntary activities.”

The “Implementation Strategy” section of the policy clearly indicates why the progress toward realizing the policy’s goals has been so slow and why some experts remain skeptical about the seriousness of the government’s commitment to empowering young people. Throughout the 27 articles in this section very few specifics in terms of funding are offered. Virtually no government agency is specifically named or charged with implementing the policy. Although the policy suggests creating a National Youth Council (ostensibly funded by the government) to coordinate the efforts of registered youth organizations, very little is offered in terms of lines of authority, allocation of resources, or budgetary control. Mostly the policy only commits to “encouraging voluntary youth organizations” that will serve a variety of needs and “involving NGOs in community development.” The implementation mechanism consists of a statement that the government will include youth organizations in development, will encourage the formation of youth organizations and coordination among them, and that these organizations will be provided with financial resources and technical assistance. Finally, 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 sum, the existence of a National Youth Policy is only one part of the equation in encouraging youth civic engagement. In the case of Bangladesh, it seems that lack of implementation, questionable commitment to the principles it espouses on the part of government, and limited awareness about its existence hamper the potential the policy could have to promote youth development and youth civic engagement.

- The establishment of a National Service Scheme

In 2009, the government established a new program, the National Service Scheme (NSS), which aims to help 2,000 young people develop skills through national service. 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, participate in a three-month training program focusing on various modules for skill development (including subjects such as disaster management, health service, self-employment and the like). After completing the training, the young people work in the 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. The blur between a focus on service vs. employment is captured in the following comment made by Ramani Mohan Chakma, director (planning) of the Department of Youth Development, who told a newspaper reporter that the “national service is going to be introduced for updating the skills of a youth, but it will not be a permanent job, adding that anyone can leave it (job) if he gets a better job.”

Despite the challenges, the National Youth Policy and
Young people are interested in providing civil services, but they lack the training and incentive.

National Service Scheme are positive steps toward a more inclusive approach to the nation’s youth. Furthermore, the principles articulated by the policy and government’s commitment to the NSS give youth organizations a stronger basis on which to push the government to honor its commitment to mainstream youth interests. This research shows that the culture of youth volunteerism and participation is beginning to take root throughout Bangladesh and a coalition of youth organizations and local NGOs is already in the process of engaging youth in development activities and actively pushing for implementation of the NYP. Ultimately it is the commitment of these organizations and young people that will foster a robust civic culture and perhaps eventually spur greater government investment in youth development.

3. State of civil society

The legal framework for NGOs in Bangladesh is good in principle, but often more challenging in practice. As one author put it, “The state and its machinery have from time to time introduced several rules and procedures, but due to their complexity and the weakness of the state, NGOs can easily evade them.” Unfortunately, not only the NGOs, but also the government often bypasses the laws and regulations that are supposed to govern civil society and free expression. Technically, organizations must register themselves with the government under one of several provisions including the Societies Registration Act of 1861, the Trust Act of 1882, the Companies Act of 1913, or the Cooperative Societies Act of 1964. In addition to registration, the government established several regulatory agencies such as the NGO Affairs Bureau, the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Department of Women and Cultural Affairs in order to control and monitor the flow of foreign funding to local NGOs. Allegations of foreign donations to various political parties ultimately spurred the creation of the Foreign Donation Regulation Ordinance of 1978 and the Foreign Contributions Ordinance of 1982. In practice, relations between the government and the NGO sector are somewhat inconsistent. While at an official level NGOs are embraced as playing an important and instrumental role in poverty reduction and national development, those NGOs engaged in human rights, electoral politics or anti-corruption campaigns often face challenges and restrictions from government. The legal environment for NGOs is thus fairly supportive, but corruption, electoral politics and civil-military relations inevitably limit the influence of civil society and inhibit greater youth participation and empowerment in national politics. Despite these limitations the government has begun to place emphasis on youth development issues in recent years. The passage of a National Youth Policy and the inclusion of provisions for engaging young people is a promising step. Unfortunately many of the same shortcomings in the government’s approach to regulating NGOs have also prevented the full implementation of the NYP.

4. Culture for youth civic engagement

a. History of civic engagement

The research conducted in Bangladesh revealed that civic culture is relatively strong though it could be strengthened in a number of ways. This may in part be due to the fact that, like many societies, the development of the civil sector in Bangladesh is rooted in the country’s moral, religious and charitable traditions. As a majority Muslim country, philanthropy in Bangladesh—like Pakistan—is largely rooted in the custom of zakat in which 2.5 percent of a household’s savings is supposed to be given to charity at the end of each lunar year. In Bangladesh, the Zakat Board regulates the giving of alms and it is estimated that around $50 million in zakat is distributed each year. Despite this rich tradition of charity, 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.

Although the NGO sector in Bangladesh has its origins in a colonial period when charities and welfare associations were established to operate schools, hospitals and orphanages, the emergence of development-oriented NGOs did not occur until the 1970s in response to a devastating cyclone in 1970 and the war for independence from West Pakistan in 1971. Initially these organizations helped coordinate relief and reconstruction operations, but over time became more involved in poverty reduction and agricultural assistance. 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.45

b. Perceptions of young people
One of the primary areas in which youth civic engagement
and voluntary service is already well developed is in the area
disaster relief. Several interviewees agreed that
although young people are
sometimes looked down
upon by elders, their
involvement in disaster
relief has afforded them
respect in communities:
“Young people are
respected as the second
support the entire nation
in times of natural disaster
without any profit.”
(Md. Abdul Wahed at
Eakok Attomanobik
Unnayan Sangstha) This
demonstrates that youth
civic engagement is a
powerful mechanism to encourage youth integration and to form
bonding social capital.

However, some interviewees noted that it is difficult to achieve
more sustained involvement of youth in voluntary service
beyond disaster relief responses. According to Mr. Golam Hiru
from Bangladesh Education and Resource Network (bEARN),
“NGOs don’t really pay their respect toward young people or
get their participation in national development, but they just
talk about it.”46

The young participants of the focus group discussions agree
with this point, noting that the government, NGOs and society
at large did not make much effort to engage young people.
They felt that this was due to the fact that adults did not believe
young people could make a contribution.

In addition, youth participants noted that public sector
engagement to support voluntary service is greatly needed.
Participants felt that lack of proper implementation of the NYP
has slowed down opportunities for youth development and
engagement. One participant said, “administrative help and
support are vital for youth service … [and] strong advocacy
with decision makers is needed.”

Similarly, Nafiz Zaman Shuman from Bangladesh Association
of Young Researchers noted that, “most of the youth
development policies are kept in paper and pen. I think
vigorous policy to ensure youth civic engagement is required
urgently.” On the other hand, participants expressed concern
about ensuring that the government did not get too involved.
They said voluntary services should be administered and
managed by NGOs, but that government should facilitate the
process along with international bodies.

Mr. Hiru from bEARN noted that young people are not as
engaged as they could be, and that this was predominantly
due to the fact that there is little messaging and affirmation by
society towards young people about the positive changes they
could make.

c. Perceptions of civic engagement
Participants’ understanding of civic engagement was quite
strong as they easily defined the term and were themselves
already engaged in various forms of volunteerism. The
participants’ volunteer experiences included planting trees,
clearing garbage, educating children from the slums, and raising
awareness about child labor and the dangers of drug addiction.
Several of them expressed an interest in working for voluntary
organizations. Regarding issues that matter most to the young
people and what they would like NGOs to help youth address
they listed a number of areas such as the environment (i.e. air
pollution, global warming and recycling), combating drug
addiction, disaster relief and literacy education.

Interviewees and focus group participants felt that in order to
encourage greater youth participation there needs to be further
investment in information and communication technology (ICT)
training, disaster relief and environmental protection/climate
change as well as community development and poverty reduction
more generally. These were areas in which young people are
interested and which would attract youth involvement.

The participants also identified government support as
important to widening volunteerism in addition
to raising social and
cultural awareness
about its benefits. They
suggested that the
government should create
a policy to encourage
volunteer groups in
each community. They
also indicated that the
government could help
raise funds or provide
training as well as create
opportunities for young
people later in life based
on their volunteering.

Finally, the students suggested that IOs and aid agencies could
help promote volunteering by raising awareness, providing

doc/NGOBangladesh.pdf.
46 bEARN is part of the iEARN network of non-profits and schools using the Internet to empower
teachers and young people to work together.

“Most of the youth development policies
are kept in paper and pen. I think vigorous
policy to ensure youth civic engagement is
required urgently.”
—Nafiz Zaman Shuman from the Bangladesh Association
of Young Researchers
funding and training, and pushing the government to create a volunteer policy.

The members of bEARN shared ideas for further encouraging volunteerism including training of volunteers, motivating young people to participate, and providing a regular schedule through which the young people can participate in volunteer efforts. The members emphasized that young people need to be given the message that they have a responsibility to their community and that volunteering is a service to humanity. Finally, bEARN is working to organize its own national volunteer center because the members “feel confident that if given enough opportunity, youth can make a real difference in the world.”

In sum, the youth participants have a strong understanding of voluntary service at both the conceptual and practical level. They have all had some experience with volunteering, and they demonstrated a high degree of sophistication and thoughtfulness in their discussion of the subject. They identified a number of factors inhibiting further youth participation, including broad social perceptions of youth, gender roles, familial obligations and roles, and government policy. For instance, according to focus group participants there are a range of social and cultural factors that inhibit volunteerism. This includes disincentives from parents who fear the volunteerism will interfere in their children’s studies. Girls also indicated that they faced obstacles because the society and many parents are not used to seeing their daughters involved in such activities. The girls suggested starting volunteer work at home and school with a goal of undertaking activities outside the home. After proven involvement in various activities they would be able to undertake activities outside their home. In order to encourage more volunteerism and youth engagement, the students emphasized the need to convince adults and parents about the benefits of volunteerism.

They all expressed a desire to enhance opportunities for youth engagement especially on issues of poverty reduction, literacy, environmental protection/conservation and disaster relief. Finally, they all identified ways in which the government and INGOs could expand opportunities for young people to become civically engaged.

5. Typology of youth civic engagement in Bangladesh

Although some inroads have been made in terms of policy to support youth civic engagement, much of the most important work, particularly in terms of face to face programs, is done through a range of NGOs and INGOs that are operating in Bangladesh.

Table 4 below provides a comparative summary of the selected youth civic participation organizations in Bangladesh. The detail provided indicates that these programs have the following features.

a. Forms

The organizations that participated in the research are all volunteer organizations that seek to build the capacity of young people through volunteering. The types of volunteering programs range from organization to organization. Youth Power in Social Action and Relief International both run international volunteer exchange programs. Youth Power in Social Action is also now involved in developing local volunteering programs. bEARN, BAYR and NationPulse all run local volunteer programs that include training components. For BAYR and NationPulse, young people are only involved in volunteer activities during the training component which lasts between 1 and 3 months. bEARN has a longer-term program, which requires young volunteers to contribute five hours of volunteer time a week for up to a year.47

b. Program areas

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.

c. Program goals

All of the programs seek to develop young people’s skills as leaders. Some of the programs such as bEARN and BAYR also seek to develop the advocacy skills of the young people they involve. Other skills the organizations seek to develop include ICT and disaster relief training.

d. Types of organizations

Most of the organizations that participated are local NGOs but many have strong collaborative relationships with INGOs. For instance, Relief International has strong connections with VSO, Global Exchange and the British Council. bEARN is an affiliate of iEARN. Many thus receive funding through their international partnerships. Those that do not have international partners, such as BAYR and NationPulse, do face funding constraints.

e. Target population

All of the organizations target young people between the ages of 15 and 25 years. Many of the programs target young people through colleges and are therefore reaching better educated and older youth. However, most recognize the importance of ensuring a diversity of participants and thus try to recruit widely in terms of geography and ethnicity. All have a clear focus on ensuring gender representation.

47 For more information on these organizations see Appendix F.
f. Roles of young people and level of participation
Many of the organizations that participated in the study are youth led or youth run and thus involve young people directly in programming decisions and in running the actual programs. All of the organizations seek to enhance the abilities of young people to become leaders.

6. Conclusion
The study reveals that there are a number of important assets for youth development and civic engagement in Bangladesh. These include the Ministry of Youth, a National Youth Policy, local NGOs, student unions and a substantial INGO and donor presence. However, political instability and poverty remain major obstacles to a more robust youth civic engagement movement. As in Pakistan, investments in advocacy, campaigning and youth media – though important – may prove to be controversial and less effective in the short term. However, investment in social and economic development programs that encourage civic engagement through voluntary service 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.

Although the government is officially committed to promoting youth development and empowerment, international donors remain the primary providers of financial support to the NGO sector. Building on existing progress, further investment in programs focused on sectors such as information and communications technology training, environmental protection/climate change, disaster preparedness and relief, and poverty reduction can empower young people and advance the country’s economic, social, and political development. In addition, Bangladesh’s unique history of and experience with micro-finance could provide an exceptional laboratory for experimentation with new models of youth social entrepreneurship and civic engagement. 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.

Box 3. NGOs working with young people in Bangladesh*

- Bangladesh Association of Young Researchers
- Bangladesh Education and Resource Network
- Bangladesh Hindu Youth Welfare Association
- Bangladesh Manobadikar Sangbadik Forum
- Center for Human Development
- Eakok Attomanobik Unnayan Sangstha
- Global Xchange Bangladesh
- Mymensingh Betorko Porishod
- National Youth Council
- NationPulse
- Palash Palli Unnayan Sangtha
- Scholastica Private Limited

*Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. It represents only those organizations identified during ICP’s research. For more information on these and other programs operating in Bangladesh, please visit ICP’s online database of programs and policies at www.icicp.org/Resources.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Main purposes</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Roles of Young People</th>
<th>Degree of young people’s influence over decisions regarding civic engagement</th>
<th>Numbers and level of inclusion</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cost per young person</th>
<th>ORGANIZERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bangladesh Association of Young Researchers</strong></td>
<td>Advocacy and campaigning</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>30 days training program</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>300 (in 2006) youth from around the country; students from colleges or public universities; 40% women quota; many participants from rural areas</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>700 taka</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ICT for Youth Program</strong></td>
<td>Community service, Youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bEARN</strong></td>
<td>Education, social</td>
<td>Educational volunteer service, Service-learning, Community service, Advocacy, Youth Leadership, Youth media</td>
<td>Minimum of 5 hours a week for up to more than 12 months (participation varies from weeks to more than a year)</td>
<td>Intern, Volunteer Peer Educator, Researcher, Program design and implementation, Leader</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Alt from different social and educational backgrounds</td>
<td>15-25</td>
<td>monetary compensation</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Various programs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NationPulse</strong></td>
<td>Leadership training</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3 months course</td>
<td>Volunteer, Member, Monitor, Leader, Researcher, Program implementation, Peer educator, Program design, Media designer</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>35 (in 2006), Alt; higher male participation rate; very high education level mainly from lower-middle class and middle class</td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>1428 BDT</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Leadership Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Pakistan

1. Historical and socioeconomic overview
The origins of Pakistan as it is known today go back to the late 1930s when fears of Muslim under-representation in the politics of India led to a call for a state for Indian Muslims. Shortly after India’s independence from Britain, the state of Pakistan was established. Controversy over divisions of particular states led to riots which resulted in the migration of many Muslims to Pakistan and many Hindus to India. Disputes over territories such as Jammu and Kashmir continued, and to this day hamper relations between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan has been characterized by periods of democratic rule interrupted by various coup d’états as well as civil war. General Ayub Khan led the country from 1958–69 after coming to power through a coup. His rule was characterized by internal instability and a war with India in 1965. Between 1969 and 1971, Yahya Khan, another military leader, led Pakistan through a civil war which resulted in the secession of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) as an autonomous state. A period of relative calm followed for the next five years after which time General Zia-ul-Haq became the country’s third military president. Zia introduced the Islamic Sharia legal code, which increased religious influence over civic life.

After Zia-ul-Haq’s death in 1988, Benazir Bhutto became the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan, serving from 1988-1990 and 1993-1996. Nawaz Sharif was elected as Prime Minister twice serving from 1990-1993 and 1997-1999. Political wrangling, and Pakistan’s involvement in the Gulf War of 1991, led to the political and economic situation in Pakistan becoming increasingly difficult. In 1999 Pakistan faced another military coup under General Pervez Musharraf who became president in 2001. In 2002 parliamentary elections were held and Zafarullah Khan Jamali became Prime Minister, while Musharraf remained as president. In 2007, after a period of stability, new elections were called and exiled leaders returned to Pakistan. Despite the assassination of its leader, Benazir Butto, in the run up to the election, the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) won the largest number of seats in the elections held in February 2008.

Despite a return to democracy, Pakistan is still characterized by political tension with India and conflict in North-West Pakistan between the government and Taliban militants, which has displaced millions of Pakistanis.

2. Policy environment and implications for youth civic engagement
The policy history of Pakistan, as well ongoing tensions with the Taliban and with India, poses a number of challenges to the development of a robust civil society and thus influences the prospects for vigorous youth participation. Throughout much of its history, Pakistan has been governed by the military, which often repressed political parties and intimidated civilian rivals. Democratically-elected civilian governments have been the exception rather than the rule.

Political changes have impacted on government’s attitude toward the NGO sector, which has been inconsistent. While official policy supports the voluntary sector, successive governments have placed restrictions on certain sections of civil society. Historically, the government has taken a much more favorable approach to NGOs that assume a welfare and service-providing role (i.e. those focused on development) than organizations engaged in social and political advocacy (i.e. those concerned with human rights or electoral politics). In particular, “there is hostility to ‘foreign-funded’ nonprofit organizations, whose operations remain largely outside the regulatory control of government either because they are part of some large international umbrella nonprofit organization or because they receive funding directly from bilateral or multilateral donor agencies. However, the hostility arises not only because of the financial and functional autonomy, but mainly because many of these nonprofit organizations have taken up causes like human and women’s rights, environment, political freedom, nuclear disarmament, municipal building regulations, etc., which are considered politically sensitive or have security implications.”

Nevertheless, there are positive developments, particularly with regard to the potential for encouraging youth civic engagement. For instance, the 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.” There are also a number of NGOs engaging youth in voluntary service. 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 also intends to create a National Youth Council (NYC) to “create synergy, harmony and increased coordination in the programs of various institutions.”

The policy begins by identifying 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. Notably absent from this list is the mention of opportunity for civic engagement or participation in community development. It also however 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. They include:

- Motivation, awareness, and sense of pride
- Character building
- National integration
- Promotion of sports and recreation
- Academic and intellectual development
- Enabling employment
- Youth health
- Social volunteering
- Incentives for talented and high performing youth (leadership development)
- Youth marriage
- Youth mentoring

The Plan of Action section of the policy outlines types of activities that might be undertaken to realize these objectives. Much of the policy focuses on activities designed to develop a stronger national consciousness among young people and help with nation-building. It also places a heavy emphasis on creating educational and recreational opportunities, encouraging job training programs and expanding opportunities for youth entrepreneurship. The section on social volunteerism—the most relevant in terms of promoting youth engagement and participation in development—is encouraging though ultimately not as strong as it could be.

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”.

The decision by the Ministry of Youth Affairs to include social volunteering in the National Youth Policy is an excellent initial step toward greater youth empowerment and social engagement. The decision that it may be necessary to consult with international experts on the design and implementation of the national volunteer corps provides opportunities for collaboration between the Government of Pakistan, local NGOs, INGOs and the international donor community to work toward positive youth development through civic engagement. These stakeholders can bring their expertise and resources to bear on building national volunteering capacity, engaging Pakistan’s youth and providing them with the opportunities for meaningful social engagement that they need and deserve.

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 NGOs 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. Despite these significant gains, there are many obstacles for full implementation of the policy that remain. For instance, the policy overlaps with many disciplines and institutions (government agencies, NGOs 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 Minister of Youth Affairs to take these voices into consideration, there is no evidence of this having been done.

Finally, the weakness of the “Institutional Implementation Plan” should give pause even among the policy’s strongest advocates. Developing the proper implementation mechanism for a policy is often the most difficult (though in many ways most important) part of policy making. Without clear, specific, and strong implementation mechanisms, the principles espoused in the policy will not be realized and so much effort and political capital may be wasted. Unfortunately NYPs, specifically National Youth Service Policies, have a history of poor implementation and have often disappointed champions

of youth development. Although the implementation plan put forth in the NYP has some valuable aspects, designing effective and sustainable mechanisms for realizing the policy’s objectives may present a significant obstacle in the long run.

Importantly, the policy recognizes that it cuts across many disciplines and that a number of institutions (government agencies, NGOs, international donors, etc.) are already engaged in a variety of activities that the policy seeks to expand and strengthen. In fact, the policy acknowledges that implementation will “heavily rely” on existing institutions and assets. In order to capitalize on and enhance these 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 (NYC) will be formed under the secretary of the Youth Affairs division. The NYC is created by implementation of the NYP which hasn’t occurred. There are no provisions for youth involvement in the NYC as described in the NYP.

In addition to the NYC, the policy calls for the creation of a National Youth Fund with the support of international donors, corporate bodies, banks, philanthropists, and some government seed money. Unfortunately, other than the provision of “scholarships for undergraduate students for education abroad,” the policy does not elaborate on the potential uses of the National Youth Fund. Although the policy lays out in broad terms a management system for the Fund including a board of governors, it is not specific enough about what the mandate of the Fund would be or how financial transparency and accountability would be maintained. This lack of specificity in oversight and financial accountability is likely to constrain international donor support.\textsuperscript{51}

There are several areas where the policy could be substantially improved through further consultation with a variety of stakeholders. The NYP is a bold and ambitious move on the part of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and it deserves prudent consideration and dedicated implementation.

The development of the National Youth Policy by government suggests that the time may be ripe for the government and civil society to find common ground in youth (and national) development through civic engagement—to include youth voluntary service and youth engagement in development. On issues from disaster management to literacy, from sexual and reproductive health to entrepreneurship and vocational training, there is an opportunity for the government, NGOs and INGOs to support youth civic engagement through voluntary service and by creating opportunities for young people’s participation. The political system in Pakistan may be challenging, and young people may be disillusioned with mainstream politics, but if given the opportunity to contribute to their local community young Pakistanis are ready to serve.

3. State of civil society

As discussed above, the vibrancy of civil society has been hampered by ongoing political contestation and tensions. Nevertheless, with the new government in place there are frameworks that lay the basis for the protection and support of civil society. Article 17 of the Constitution, for instance protects the right of citizens to form associations and there are a variety of laws for registering NGOs that provide them with a distinct legal status.\textsuperscript{52} Although at the time of independence in 1947, NGOs and the concept of social welfare as a planned activity were fairly novel, there are now thousands of NGOs and welfare associations operating throughout Pakistan. According to one report:

Today Pakistan’s NGOs vary in size, scope, and range of activities with affiliations ranging from the immediate local environment to the international. The NGO sector includes a variety of institutions such as special interest groups, service and social clubs, research institutions, universities, semi-autonomous bodies, charitable, sectarian, and religious and neighborhood groups, besides the NGOs and associations in the welfare and development context.\textsuperscript{53}

The historical development of the NGO sector in Pakistan has been closely related with the political environment, religious institutions, and the changing perceptions of social welfare and philanthropy. Volunteerism and philanthropy are deeply rooted in Pakistan’s Islamic religious traditions. The system of zakat, in which each household is expected to donate 2.5 percent of its annual income to charity, as well as other Islamic teachings have heavily influenced perceptions of volunteerism and charity.\textsuperscript{54} In Pakistan, religious institutions play an important though often controversial role in the voluntary sector. While many religious institutions carry-out important charitable work, some have become extremely partisan and politicized, and some exploit and manipulate young people’s idealism,

\begin{itemize}
  \item[52] For more on the legal environment for NGOs in Pakistan see: Shaheed, Farida and Warrach, Sohail, “The Legal Framework for NGOs in Pakistan.” International Center for Non-Profit Law, 2006.
  \item[53] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
desire for recognition and dedication to their community. A number of experts interviewed for this research suggested that young people’s desire to become civically engaged can be manipulated by religious institutions and they are recruited to become suicide bombers or wage jihad against non-believers. Thus, some religious institutions in Pakistan may work against promoting youth civic engagement and voluntary service within the context of a democracy.

4. Culture for youth civic engagement

Based on the interviews and focus group discussions, it appears that young people in Pakistan have a robust understanding of youth voluntary service and civic engagement and that while some young people are already engaged, many more would like the opportunity to contribute to their community and be heard. 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 agreed that young people need opportunities in great quantity and quality in order to become civically engaged.

a. History of civic engagement

The political repression on the part of the state toward activists has in some ways weakened civic culture in Pakistan. Many young people who advocate for democracy and human rights have become the target of state or military repression. Those who seek to enter mainstream politics through the party system are often pulled into the same system of corruption and nepotism from which they originally sought to break free. Still others, seeking recognition from their peers and their community, join religious organizations, many of which contest the legitimacy of the democratic political system on which civic engagement is based. These challenges have led to a situation in which many people feel disillusioned with politics and civic participation.

Yet none of this is to say that young liberals will necessarily be repressed or that all politicians are corrupt, or that all charitable religious organizations are recruiting young people for jihad. Rather, these issues are important for understanding the context in which youth civic engagement occurs in Pakistan, which is essential for further investment in youth development through civic engagement. Young people in Pakistan need more opportunities to become civically engaged in ways that are genuine, safe, non-partisan, and enable them to make meaningful contributions to local community development. In addition, good role models among people who are civically engaged and a campaign that seeks to demonstrate to young people the contribution they can make, may be necessary to change some young people’s perceptions of civic engagement. As this research seeks to demonstrate, there are already a number of valuable program models in Pakistan that can inform further investments.

b. Perceptions of young people

According to the Pakistan National Youth Policy published by the Ministry of Youth Affairs, youth are defined as young people between the ages of 15 and 29 and comprise approximately 27 percent of the total population. Although the policy acknowledges that “young people are a major human resource as well as agents of socioeconomic change,” and that “it is necessary to provide adequate means and environments in which this invaluable human resource attains the optimal growth potential,” Pakistan’s youth, and Pakistanis in general, are faced with a number of socio-economic, cultural, and political challenges that inhibit robust civic engagement. Primary among these is the way in which they are viewed by the state.

As has been mentioned, political repression in Pakistan has often meant that civil society organizations and civic activists, particularly those contesting the political leadership of Pakistan, have been at the receiving end of state repression. Many young people who were involved in these organizations were targeted. As a result, explicitly political forms of youth civic engagement have met with considerable resistance and youth political participation remains correspondingly low. The most glaring restriction inhibiting youth civic participation is a decades-old ban on student unions. 56 “The ban on students’ unions was originally imposed through Martial Law Orders issued in 1984 during the rule of the then Chief Martial Law Administrator cum President General Zia-ul-Haq. Growing cases of violence in the campuses and the concern shown by the society were cited as reasons for the ban. However, it is also believed that the decision was based on reports that anti-government student alliances had gained considerable influence and strength, and these could pose a threat to General Zia-ul-Haq’s government.”57 The ban was lifted—at least in principle—through a Prime Minister’s announcement on March 29, 2008. In addition to such restrictions, official corruption, the perception that politics is a thankless (or even dangerous) vocation, and the lack of genuine opportunities for youth participation contributes to less political participation among younger citizens.58

Government’s historical stance towards young people may in part be driven by traditional perspectives about youth. As Mr. Zafarullah Khan, Executive Director of the Center for Civic Education Pakistan (CCE) explains, “unfortunately government officials to a large extent share the traditional view about young people” held by older generations that youth are inefficient and good for nothing. This view was reflected on by the young focus group participants who commented that the government and others consider young people “parasites” because they have yet to “prove their worth”.

56 “Political Participation of Youth in Pakistan,” Center for Civic Education Pakistan.
58 Ibid.
Government moves to establish the National Youth Policy, National Youth Council and other related bodies seem to suggest that this attitude is shifting and other interviewees and participants reflected on this shift. Mr. Rifat Sardar from UNICEF Pakistan, for instance, discussed the National Youth Policy and said that the government would like to promote youth voluntary service and civic engagement for the development of communities and society. There was also some agreement among interviewees that the government should engage young people more, particularly in areas such as peace building, promoting the rule of law and social development. Mr. Sardar felt that this could be accomplished by promoting the concept of ‘participation’ for protecting and promoting rights; engaging young people in community development plans and their implementation; allowing young people in the district, provincial and national elected assemblies to voice their opinion to elected representatives; and by allocating funds for development of programs which promote participation. Many of the youth participants also felt that government opinion of young people was changing and generally felt that government and society at large viewed young people as a potentially positive but underutilized resource.

Political parties also tend to have a disjointed view of young people. Although virtually every major political party has a youth wing and is active on college campuses, young people appear hesitant to engage in mainstream politics. According to Mr. Khan from CCE, one reason that the youth wings of political parties may not be very effective is because “very few young people are given leadership roles within the party hierarchy” suggesting that political parties view young people’s leadership abilities with some apprehension.

c. Perceptions of civic engagement

Based on the focus group discussions, it appears that young people in Pakistan have a fairly robust and nuanced understanding of volunteerism and civic engagement, but that their actual participation is constrained by the historical political repression that has been discussed above. This is confirmed by a recent survey conducted by the Center for Civic Education Pakistan (CCE) on youth political participation. It notes that 57 percent of respondents said they did not associate themselves with any political party and 61 percent said they did not want to join one. As for the ban on student unions, about half of respondents said that the ban should be lifted and 72 percent of respondents felt that political parties should not work at educational institutions. On the one hand, approximately 70 percent of Pakistani youth think that young people are indifferent toward politics, and 82 percent do not take part in political action. Yet 83 percent of youth surveyed believe that young people’s participation can have a positive impact on the political system and 86 percent believe that youth should play an active role in politics. When asked why youth were so indifferent to politics, respondents gave a wide variety of reasons. Twenty-two percent cited a lack of time, 19 percent said their parents would not permit them to be politically active, 28 percent said that they did not engage because politics is a thankless job, 36 percent cited a lack of resources, 16 percent favored other occupations and, perhaps not surprisingly, 21 percent view politics as a dangerous vocation and believe that one reason behind youth indifference is fear that engagement in politics puts one’s life at risk.

The seemingly contradictory results of this survey indicate a large degree of disaffection among youth with traditional and mainstream politics, but it also shows (as does our qualitative research for this study) that there is a desire on the part of young people to find a meaningful outlet to express their views, make a contribution to their local and national community, and have opportunities for meaningful social and civic engagement. This is further demonstrated by a survey CCE conducted in 2009 of 1,855 young people in 13 districts across Pakistan. The survey found that 51% of the young people have participated in some sort of volunteer activity and 72.6% expressed a willingness to be involved in volunteerism.

Many young people may find opportunities to engage through religious organizations. As Mr. Sardar from UNICEF Pakistan notes, “When young people have no paid work they join ‘Tabligh,’ [a religious organization] to feel useful and virtuous and gain respect in the community. Some may come into contact with religious segments that promote ‘jihad’ and volunteer to join ‘jihad’ and get sacrificed. [These youth believe] they are saving communities from getting occupied by foreign powers—infidels, atheists, the non-believers.”

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60 “Political Participation of Youth in Pakistan,” Center for Civic Education Pakistan.

61 Ibid.


63 Interview with Rifat Sardar, UNICEF Pakistan, July 9, 2008.
Several others similarly indicated that religious institutions can take advantage of young people’s interest in volunteering and desire for recognition in their community. Mr. Khan from CCE confirmed this and explained that young people seeking an outlet to express their views and feel empowered become involved with religious institutions; in the process many youth do exemplary work, but some become involved in jihad.

Regarding young people’s understanding of civic engagement and volunteerism, the focus group participants primarily said that it means providing a public service or working for the betterment of a community. One participant said that civic engagement means “to contribute to nation-building” and drew an historical analogy to the Kaksar Tehreek movement (a political movement founded by Allama Mashriqi in the 1930s that strongly encouraged community service). Another suggested that “civic engagement means social and political participation for the betterment of the people.” As for volunteering, the participants agreed that it meant to provide a service without monetary compensation.

Rifat Sardar of UNICEF Pakistan commented on youth civic engagement in Pakistan, especially regarding the obstacles to expanding opportunities for young people and potential solutions. According to Mr. Sardar the definition or connotation of youth civic engagement in South Asia is “understood to mean that young people participate in social issues and the problems in the community that affect society.” In his view, young people are already civically engaged, though not necessarily through expected means. For instance he said that they often organize themselves to form groups to provide services on different occasions such as funerals, clearing pathways, and building mosques (an assembly of tribal elders brought together for dispute resolution and other matters) and other religious or community events, as well as forming themselves into sports groups.

Mr. Khan from CCE also identified a number of NGOs such as the Red Crescent Society, United Nations Volunteers, and the National Volunteer Movement that engage young people in service. Among the issues that young people commonly sought to address, he identified emergency and disaster relief, blood donations, tree planting, literacy promotion, and environmental conservation and cleanliness drives as fairly common.  

Among the obstacles to greater youth engagement, Mr. Sardar from UNICEF Pakistan listed first and foremost, poverty which may prevent greater involvement because young people must look for work to survive. He also provided other factors which may affect the extent to which young people participate such as amount of free time, voluntary spirit, energy, and relationships and friendships in the community, which facilitated the encouragement of young people to participate. Mr. Sardar emphasized that young people are already engaged in activities such as funerals, clearing pathways, and building mosques.

Participants in the study also identified opportunities to encourage greater youth civic engagement. Mr. Khan suggested that the government should impart education and civic knowledge to young people, that young people should be given the chance to participate in the policy formulation process, and that voluntary services should be recognized and rewarded at the highest political levels. Mr. Sardar suggested that youth civic engagement could be enhanced by raising awareness among the youth of their rights and the services available to them. He felt that service opportunities assisted young people to “build their own knowledge to protect against abuse and exploitation; to protect themselves against being deceived or misled by traffickers or religious clerics; to protect themselves against violence and terrorism.”

d. Family relationships and values
One of the factors constraining youth civic engagement is cultural perceptions about youth. Mr. Khan from the CCE noted in particular that “many children are not trusted for taking decisions in their careers or even marriage. Parents insist on deciding everything for them.” This he felt played a role in limiting young people’s civic and political participation. It is further reflected in the reluctance of political parties to involve young people in leadership positions.

e. Gender
In Pakistan, gender can play a key role in terms of determining whether or not young women in particular will be able to access engagement opportunities. Two of the youth participants stated that “social taboos” and “backwardness” constrain their ability to participate in volunteer and other civic opportunities. Young women, for instance, are often expected to fulfill domestic roles and not to venture into the public sphere.

And yet, civic engagement may provide a pathway through which young women can demonstrate what they have to offer and demonstrate to communities that they are able to play a role beyond their duties in the home. The experience of young women who are members of the Youth Engagement Services (YES) Network Pakistan speaks for itself. YES supports young people to undertake social development and micro-enterprise initiatives at the local level. The participants of the focus group worked in local communities of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) as teachers and group leaders in a wide range of community organizations from schools to sewing groups and computer centers. Like many young Pakistanis, their interest in volunteering and community development arose after the devastating earthquake that struck Pakistan in 2006. YES provided a platform to become engaged in their communities and has since branched out from immediate relief and recovery efforts. Each of the participants felt they found a great deal of meaning in their experience at YES and were satisfied with their team and their contribution to their local communities.

64 Interview with Zaffarudullah Khan, Center for Civic Education Pakistan, June 25, 2008.
One participant explained that “before joining the (YES Network) I was confined to the four walls of my home and I was not in a position to solve any problems in the community.” But over time she demonstrated the positive contribution she can make to the community and was embraced and accepted by the community. “Before we joined the program, people used to have criterion in their minds that we should remain in our homes to do the domestic work only. However, after joining the organization there has been greater awareness, we have started working along with the men and we are now properly listened to.”

Another participant said that proving their worth (especially as women) was one of their biggest challenges. She said that when they joined the YES Network they faced a lot of problems:

People used to have loose talk about us, e.g. a new NGO has come; it has gathered young boys and girls, etc. However, we delivered good results and the people were a bit satisfied. Then we started having co-education English classes. People started saying that boys and girls have started studying together, who knows what is going to happen. We worked hard and got good results.

The progress these young women have made both personally and in their community demonstrates to their communities that woman can be ‘civically engaged’ in the public domain while still fulfilling their domestic roles, and that through volunteerism real community needs can be met. Their experience allowed them to grow as individuals, but importantly, it also started to challenge long held traditions about women.

5. Typology
A variety of NGOs and INGOs 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.

Table 5 below provides a comparative summary of the selected youth civic participation organizations in Pakistan. The detail provided indicates that these programs have the following features.65

a. Forms
As with the other three countries in the study, the forms of youth civic engagement in Pakistan range quite substantially. Two of the organizations that participated in the study run service-learning programs in colleges. Others are involved in ad-hoc volunteer opportunities that respond to particular community needs, such as disaster relief. As in the other countries, peer education models emerged as a form of civic engagement.

b. Program areas
There is a wide range of program areas in which organizations are involved in Pakistan and these tend to respond to various development challenges. Public health seems to be a specific focus area, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights. One of the organizations runs programs in disaster relief and preparedness, and notes that young people participating in this program have been recognized for their contribution to this type of volunteering. There is also a strong focus on vocational and skills training, with a particular focus on small business development.

c. Program goals
Aside from the goals associated with the program areas, all of the organizations are focused on the development of the young people that participate in their programs. In this regard, the focus is on skills and leadership development, particularly in the area of advocacy.

d. Types of organizations
Most of the organizations that participated in the study are local NGOs. A partnership model seems to be common to many of the organizations: some had partnered with local colleges to run service-learning programs while others had developed partnerships with international organizations.

e. Target Population
The organizations that participated in this research demonstrated a wide age range. Some engage young people as young as 10 years of age and the upper age limit is 29 years. There was some focus on gender representation among some of the organizations.

f. Roles of young people
Young people are integrally involved in the programs that are being run. Youth Advocacy Network was in fact started by young people and is still run by young people. In other programs the young people are trained with advocacy skills and as peer counselors, and participate in the programs using these skills. Many are now leading particular programs.

g. Level of involvement
The level of involvement varies across the forms of engagement. The service-learning programs offer more sustained and regular involvement for up to 12 months. Others had more ad-hoc levels of involvement. The shortest program time was three months.

65 For more information on these organizations see Appendix F.
6. Conclusion

Most of the program managers, young people, and experts consulted agreed that 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. It is also clear that despite a lack of government support there are already a number of NGOs 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. For example, one lesson from YAN (as well as Student Partnerships Worldwide which is working in Nepal, India, and elsewhere) is the utility of peer-to-peer interactions. Sexual and reproductive health education can be more effective when a peer education model is utilized. Another lesson is that volunteer immersion can alter local community’s perceptions about social customs and gender, as demonstrated by the YES Network Pakistan.

From the focus group discussions it is clear that young people are already engaged in substantial ways but would like to have even more (or better) opportunities to participate, express themselves and be heard. There appears to be a consensus in government, civil society and among young people themselves that social engagement and youth empowerment should be a substantial component of the National Youth Policy. Furthermore, there seems to be consensus that international organizations and foreign NGOs can contribute their expertise and help ensure that the NYP and the programs that are derived from it are based upon international best practice in youth development and civic engagement. 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.

Finally, this research identified a number of areas for strategic investment in youth civic engagement. Given the challenging political environment and the vulnerability of young people to exploitation by religious radicals, it is vitally important that youth in Pakistan are provided with genuine opportunities to contribute to their communities. Although investments in advocacy and campaigning or youth media are valuable, they may be met with skepticism by government and party officials as well as parents wary of their children’s involvement in Pakistan’s rough and tumble political system. Instead, investments in types of civic engagement oriented towards social and economic development (such as voluntary service) might prove more fruitful. 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 through voluntary service has proven enormously effective. Providing opportunities for young people in Pakistan to make a contribution to their communities through voluntary service 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.

Box 4. NGOs working with young people in Pakistan*

- Center for Civic Education Pakistan
- Ehsas
- National Youth Council
- Youth Engagement Services (YES) Network Pakistan
- Population Council - Pakistan
- Society for the Advancement of Community, Health, Education and Training Pakistan
- Youth Action for Pakistan
- Youth Advocacy Network

*Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. It represents only those organizations identified during ICP’s research. For more information on these and other programs operating in Pakistan, please visit ICP’s online database of programs and policies at www.icicp.org/Resources.
Table 5: Summary comparison of selected youth civic participation programs in Pakistan

| Organization                        | Type                          | Main purposes                                                                 | Duration                                              | Roles of Young People                      | Degree of young people’s influence over decisions regarding civic engagement | Numbers and level of inclusion | Age                | Cost per young person | ORGANIZERS |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|                                                      |                                             |                                                                                     |                               |                    |                    |            |
| Center for Civic Education          | Service-learning, Youth leadership, Advocacy | Education                                                                      | 5-10 hours per week for up to 3 months               | Civic Educator, Volunteer                        | High                                                                                  | Alt: 50% from rural areas; from lower-middle class and middle class       | 10-14 years old | Medium            | x          |
| Youth Engagement Services (YES) Network Pakistan | Youth Entrepreneurship, Youth Leadership, Community Service | Education                                                                      | Varies                                               | Educator, Leader, Volunteer                    | High                                                                                  | Alt: special focus on out of school and youth at risk, and rural girls | Varies              | Medium            | x          |
| Youth Advocacy Network              | Advocacy & Campaigning        | Education                                                                      | 1-4 hours a week for 7-12 months                     | Advocate, Volunteer, Member, Program Implementation, Leader, Peer educator, Researcher, Program design, Mentor | High                                                                                  | Alt: 25% from rural areas; mostly from lower-middle class               | 15-29               | Low               | x          |
D. India

1. Historical and socioeconomic overview
Within South Asia, India has a unique set of assets for promoting youth civic engagement. India’s sheer size and diversity – geographically, economically, linguistically and culturally – puts India in a league of its own. With its enormous population of 1.1 billion, India’s per capita GNI of $820 per year is the largest of the four countries in this study. The adult literacy rate in India is also nominally higher at 61 percent. With 330 million people aged 10-24, India’s youth cohort is nearly as large as the total populations of Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan combined. As for youth development and education indicators, India made enormous progress in recent decades: youth (15-24) literacy is 84 percent for males and 68 percent for females. Primary school attendance is 85 percent for males and 84 percent for females and secondary school attendance is 64 percent for males and 58 percent for females.66

Beyond its sheer size and rapid growth, India has a number of assets that make it unique among the countries in this study. India’s democratic character affords citizens opportunities for political participation as well as free expression and association to a degree not found elsewhere in South Asia. Additionally, the government created a policy environment that enables and supports civic engagement and voluntary activity. India is the only country in this study that has a National Youth Service and a National Policy on the Voluntary Sector in addition to a National Youth Policy, Youth Ministry, and a sound legal framework for the NGO sector. As a result of this political pluralism and enabling legal and institutional environment, India developed as robust and sophisticated a civil society as can be found anywhere in South Asia. Furthermore, India’s rich tradition of volunteerism and civic engagement is now an entrenched feature in the political culture and official policy planning. This combination of factors in India provides unique opportunities for the study, practice, and promotion of youth civic engagement.

However, it also makes the task of asset mapping much more complex than in the other three countries. Thus, the research is necessarily limited in scope and must be taken as provisional. While acknowledging that more work is required to gain a complete picture of youth civic engagement in India, ICP believes this research provides a promising initial inquiry and can form the foundation of future research and investment in the field.

2. Political system, policy environment and implications for youth civic engagement
Of all the countries in South Asia, India is the only one that has remained democratic for the last five decades. India’s pluralism protects citizens’ rights to free expression and association, providing regular opportunities for civic engagement. The norms of democratic participation have been firmly ensconced in the political culture and constitutional system. Civic engagement through or with the voluntary sector is one way these democratic norms have found expression. Indeed, the close historical relationship between civic engagement through voluntary action and India’s independence movement inexorably shaped the relationship between the state and civil society in India. Although a history of voluntary action in India is well beyond the scope of this paper, it is important nonetheless to recognize the origins of today’s voluntary sector.

India has by far the most robust policy environment for youth civic engagement of any of the four countries in this study. As noted above, through its National Youth Policy, various National Service Schemes and policy on the voluntary sector, the Indian government has thoroughly sought to involve young people in national development programs. The Government of India has done a commendable job of creating numerous diverse opportunities for young people of all backgrounds, skills levels and levels of commitment to become civically engaged. If all the policies, programs and schemes were fully funded and carefully implemented, India would be a global leader in the provision of opportunities for youth voluntary service and civic engagement. However more must be done to better implement and design these programs, as well as to create a more supportive environment for NGOs working with young people throughout India.

The two primary Government of India youth policies are the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector 2007 and the National Youth Policy 2003 (see Box 4). Both of these policies seek to promote youth in the growth and development of communities, through recognition and encouragement of innovative youth service. The provisions in these policies are indicative not only of India’s open and democratic character and thus tolerance of an active civil society, but demonstrate a concerted effort to promote and encourage civil society organizations to play a major role in the “advancement of the people of India.”

The National Youth Policy 2003 also sets out to develop 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).

Box 5. National Youth Policy in India

National Policy on the Voluntary Sector 2007

• 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.” It is a perfect example of the way in which the voluntary sector has become intimately enmeshed in India’s national development.

• 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 innovative and pioneering work by NGOs; develop a database of NGOs 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.

National Youth Policy 2003

• 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.”

• 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 policy also explicitly adopts an “inter-sectoral approach” and devises coordinating mechanisms among central ministries and departments, state and local governments, and community based organizations and youth bodies.

The National Youth Policy 2003 implementation mechanisms proposed include:

1. All ministries/departments of the central government and of the state governments, particularly in the social sector will strive to make identifiable allocations in their budgets for youth development programs.

2. A broad-based national Committee on Youth Policy and Programs is contemplated to review and assess the various programs and schemes focusing on youth. It will also advise the government on measures for implementation of the Plan of Action of the National Youth Policy.

3. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (with the guidance of this Committee) will be the Nodal Ministry for all such programs and schemes and will oversee the implementation of provisions of this policy.

4. An effective mechanism to coordinate the activities of the Central/State agencies and Community and Youth Organizations would be evolved in order to facilitate timely execution of youth development programs.

5. A National Youth Development Fund will be created through contributions, including from NGOs, which would be utilized for youth development activities. Income tax exemptions would be sought for contributions to the Fund.
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.” Today, the RGNIYD is India’s premier resource on youth development policies and programs through its research and trainings.

The Institute is an autonomous organization of the Ministry of Youth registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860, but receives its funding from the government. Its policy and management are determined by a 15-member executive council headed by the Minister of Youth. In addition to publishing the Endeavor journal, the Institute’s activities are carried out by five divisions: Training and Orientation, Research Evaluations and Documentation, Panchayat Raj Institutions and Youth Affairs, Social Harmony and National Unity, and the International Center for Excellence in Youth Development. Through its research, training and information sharing the Institute has become an essential asset in the field of youth civic engagement in India.

For all its strengths, the National Youth Policy of 2003, like the other NYP’s profiled in this paper, suffered from similar, though much less severe implementation, problems. Although the policy outlines fairly specific implementations mechanisms, it is unclear how much progress the existing and proposed oversight bodies have made in the last five years. Overall, the implementation mechanisms outlined (see Box 4) are in line with international best practices and could provide a useful example for the other countries in this study.

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 had been made toward creation of a National Youth Development Fund. Overall, it seems that coordination among so many bodies will be extraordinarily challenging. An additional observation is that other than creating a mechanism to coordinate among the government departments and community and youth organizations, the policy does not fully acknowledge the strength, diversity, utility, and expertise of the NGO youth sector and the established record of youth organizations. The more direct involvement of youth organizations and youth-oriented NGOs in the formulation and implementation might help to add weight to the government’s efforts. Although the government has done a commendable job of laying the groundwork for youth civic engagement and voluntary service on a massive scale, it cannot achieve the envisaged implementation in the youth development field on its own. Through closer cooperation, government agencies and the NGO sector can leverage their impact to ensure the full implementation of youth development and youth service schemes.

**National Service Schemes**

Although progress on the implementation of the NYP 2003 in recent years is somewhat uncertain, the Indian government has a fairly strong record of implementing youth programs over the last two decades. According to Mohanty and Singh (2001), the Ministry of Youth developed at least 22 schemes to promote youth development and empowerment ranging from the Scheme for the Promotion of Adventure to the Interstate Youth Exchange Program. Among the most interesting and well-known schemes from the perspective of promoting youth civic engagement are the National Service Scheme (NSS), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangatham (NYKS), and the National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS). However, several lesser known programs also show enormous potential including, the Scheme for the Training of Youth, the Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Organizations Working in the Field of Youth, Scheme of Youth Development Centers, and the program on Youth Development Studies/Research/Evaluation and Publication. These later schemes all show promise because of their potential to develop the “inter-sectoral approach” and thereby leverage overall impact.

The NSS, NYKS and NSVS have received most of the attention partly because they have been around the longest, partly because they are conducted on such a large scale, and because they are the most tangible programs engaging young people in voluntary service. Each of these 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. Based on the recommendations of the National Policy on Education, community service was incorporated into the curriculum of many educational institutions. Each scheme is elaborated in greater detail below.

The NSS is a student program aimed at stimulating the social consciousness of youth with an overall objective of student development through community service. 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. Although no extensive evaluation of the NSS has been undertaken, available evidence points to the positive impact that NSS programs have had on communities throughout the country. NSS efforts helped Kottayam, a town in the state of Kerala, become the town in India to achieve 100% literacy for adults. On the environmental front, 350 acres in the state of Karnataka were rehabilitated by planting 350,000 saplings. In the state of Orissa, another 1,000 acres were transformed through similar tree planting drives. In the desert state of Rajasthan, NSS worked with local villagers to improve water conservation and in the state of Chandigarh, NSS volunteers helped prevent the degradation of Sukhna Lake by removing 84,000 cubic feet of silt. During cyclone and flood season, NSS volunteers help with disaster relief, including rescue and rehabilitation efforts and the construction of thousands of temporary shelters.

The NSVS, which was initiated in 1977, is quite similar to the NSS but it 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 (centers) of the NYKS, the NSS, the Bharat Scouts and Guides, State Governments and Union Territory administrations, or with non-governmental organizations approved by the Ministry.

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 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 volunteers 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.

Yet it is in the area of disaster relief that NYKS has perhaps the most impact. Both NYKS and NSS youth volunteers played a critical role in the immediate aftermath of the devastating tsunami of December 2004 and then later in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of affected areas. According to the information received by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports from various kendras, thousands of NYKS and NSS volunteers affiliated with the local Youth Clubs engaged in rescue work. In Andaman and Nicobar Islands, youth clubs were mainly involved in assisting with relocation of families, arranging drinking water, preparing food in community kitchens, and setting up make-shift shelters. In Tamil Nadu, NYKS volunteers worked to set up medical camps and distribute clothes and other relief aid to affected people. Over 2,500 NSS volunteers from Andhra University, Acharya Nagarjuna University, and Sri Venkateswara University distributed food packets and drinking water, assisted health authorities with medical relief work, shifted people from low lying areas to safe places, and collected relief materials. On average 250 volunteers of NYKS worked in every major affected district in Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In Tamil Nadu, the NSS distributed 25,500 food packets for 2,500 families.

In addition to their initial response, NYKS and NSS remained actively engaged in the rehabilitation of some of the hardest hit areas. In March 2005, 40 tons of relief material consisting of much needed-household items like medicine kits, workmen’s tools, recreational kits for children, thatch mats, bed sheets, and mosquito nets were shipped to Campbell Bay. They were stored, sorted, and distributed in relief camps with the help of NYKS.

However, despite the achievements listed above, many of the experts and program managers consulted had a fairly low opinion of the NYKS and said that NSS did some good work, but its program quality was inconsistent. Overall, the individuals and organizations interviewed had fairly good knowledge of the relevant government policies on youth and youth voluntary service. While they commended the government for making the effort, there seemed to be a consensus that the government programs often do not work well in practice. Mr. Mathew Mattam from the Centre for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA) said that the NSS could be improved, but that it was “generally OK.” However, he reserved harsh words for the NYKS. He said that the NYKS program is “a white elephant, where there are no youth involved. Instead, older people enjoy good perks and salaries,” but he also held out hope that the program could be redesigned and revamped saying, “the structure is good, the reach out is

71 Ibid.
73 NYKS Regular Programmes,” NYKS website, Accessed September 1, 2008 http://www.nyks.org/
fantastic, but the output is almost nil." Ms. Shruti Veenam from Yuva Janaagraha said that:

Youth Service is definitely promoted by the government through national schemes like NSS and the National Cadet Corps (NCC). These programs are provided at schools and college levels and have huge enrollments, but these schemes are not geared toward civic engagement per se. The government seems to have washed their hands of youth service by providing these programs. Program managers from a variety of INGOs consulted also had a relatively poor opinion of NYKS though a slightly better view of the NSS. Many of the criticisms of NYKS were that it was excessively partisan and often used more like a youth wing of a political party than a non-partisan national volunteer service focused on national integration and development. One article put it bluntly: "presently the NYKS is seen as a government of India agency and the support and assistance it receives in the states depends on the political equation the state government has with the center." Experts seem to agree that the NSS is less partisan, but that its quality is inconsistent and highly dependent on the commitment and ingenuity of local program officers.

Even the RGNVYD has not spared NSS, NYKS, or the Youth Ministry some criticism. In an article in the Institute's journal Endeavor, Devendra Agochiya argues that the youth development programs in India are at a crossroads. A former director of the Commonwealth Youth Program with considerable expertise, Agochiya is at times scathing.

The manner in which youth programs have developed in the country over the last two decades is a matter of despair and disillusionment to professionals and practitioners in this country. It is an irony that though we were first out of the blocks (in South and Southeast Asian countries) when we launched two unique and innovative schemes in the early seventies—NSS and NYKS—we have allowed ourselves to get fettered and as a result there has been stagnation.

Some of the more concrete shortcomings of the NSS were highlighted in a SWOT analysis done by Dr. Vishnu Bhagwan, an NSS program coordinator and reader in the department of public administration, Ch. Devi Lal University, Sirsa. According to him, the NSS has not been redesigned since its inception in 1969. There is no uniformity in practices relating to awarding academic weightage and incentives to NSS volunteers and as a result students are not motivated. There are also no monetary benefits for the program officers, most of whom are untrained. A survey conducted by Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak, showed that more than 60 per cent of the program officers did not have adequate knowledge about the function and objectives of NSS. There is also a paucity of funding and a lack of coordination between the central, state and university levels.

Despite the programs' shortcomings, most experts agree that they need not be abandoned. There seems to be consensus that the scope of the programs and their corresponding infrastructure is impressive and commendable and potentially quite useful, but there needs to be much more emphasis on attaining measurable results. The programs can be reformed "to give new direction and impetus to youth development," if "appropriate structural and programmatic changes" can be successfully implemented. Reforming the now four-decades-old national service system in India would undoubtedly bring about positive change and provide not just a large number of opportunities for civic engagement, but enhance the quality of those opportunities as well. By bringing the national service schemes in India in line with international best practices, they could become a significant force for positive youth empowerment in Indian society.

While the policy environment in India is more robust than in the other countries in this study, there remains an adversarial relationship between the Indian government and NGOs working with young people in India, especially if those organizations advocate for human rights. The government attempts to exert pressure on organizations through the granting (or non-granting) of permission to bring in foreign funding under the Foreign Contribution and Regulation Act. It is becoming more difficult for NGOs to obtain permission and there is a recent effort to amend the Act to require renewal of permission every five years placing an increasing burden on NGOs.

Fortunately, as research has shown, there is fertile ground for reforms and further investment in youth civic engagement in India. India's rich tradition of volunteerism and civic engagement and the civic culture it has fostered are already in evidence throughout the country. Perceptions of young people, voluntary service, civic engagement, and the role of...
government are sophisticated and robust. In addition, countless NGOs are already conducting innovative and pioneering youth development and civic engagement programs across the subcontinent. Government efforts and public policies are important, but the civic culture and non-governmental sector are assets that are equally important, if not more so. It is these to which the paper will now turn.

3. State of civil society

India has a large and vibrant civil society, which is by and large supported by positive relationships with the state. The launch of India’s first five-year plan in 1951 and the inclusion of various community development initiatives provided voluntary organizations and NGOs an opportunity to redefine their roles and become officially involved in nation-building and rural development. The need to incorporate young people in this process was not lost on India’s government. Political turmoil in the late 1960s, including agitation by students, was partly the inspiration for the creation of India’s first national youth service scheme – discussed above. During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the government increasingly sought to provide support to the voluntary sector and incorporate civil society actors in its own planning process. As detailed by Mohanty and Singh (2001), the relationship between the government and voluntary organizations has only grown closer with time. Mohanty and Singh profiled nearly 300 different schemes under which various ministries and departments of the government provide financial or other assistance to voluntary organizations and NGOs. In India, as elsewhere, voluntary and nongovernmental organizations have become so integral to the process of nation building that some observers see the emergence of a new development paradigm:

In the last few decades, the growing awareness of the limitations and intrinsic constraints of the government has led to an increasing recognition of NGOs and voluntary efforts and sought their greater cooperation and involvement in the process of development and nation-building. Today they are important partners in the process of development and are an inalienable part of the scene. Their involvement is not only seen in the implementation of government programs but also in the process of the formulation of public policies and even the enforcement of social legislation.85

Given the extent to which the NGO and voluntary sector have become enmeshed with government efforts to deliver social services, it has become essential for the government to develop policies that regulate civil society and state relations. In order to encourage volunteerism and include youth in voluntary activities, the government developed a National Youth Policy and a National Policy on the Voluntary Sector. Additionally, the Ministry of Youth operates several national service schemes. The combination of government policies toward youth and the voluntary sector created a dense policy environment in which youth civic engagement takes place. The next section explores the culture for youth civic engagement in India in order to identify the context in which the specified assets are functioning to support youth civic engagement. Finally, the results of survey research and interviews will provide insights in the perceptions of youth, volunteerism, and the various government programs. This research also helped to identify a number of exemplary NGOs already providing opportunities for youth civic engagement.

4. Culture for youth civic engagement

a. History of civic engagement

Often the spirit of volunteerism in a society can be traced back to its traditional religious, charitable, and philanthropic practices. In pre-colonial South Asia, family kinship, caste, village and religion were the institutions that provided for social and communal welfare. And while Indian culture, religion and history are full of teachings and incidents that exemplify this charitable spirit, volunteerism in India as it is commonly understood today was in some ways a dialectic response to the introduction of western liberal and religious ideas. According to one source, “the dawn of voluntary action was the emergence of reform movements. The introduction of western ideas and Christian faith by the end of the 18th century precipitated the widespread emergence of religious and social reform movements in India during the first half of the 19th century.”86 These early social reformers (including Ravindranath Tagore) focused much of their attention on abolishing practices such as Sati (the practice of a widow’s self-immolation on her husband’s funeral pyre), child marriage, etc.

By the second half of the 19th century, this reform movement began to grow and seep into the consciousness of the emerging middle class, which was to become the vanguard of the struggle for national liberation. The founding of the Indian National Congress, by now the most famous of all early Indian civic associations, is perhaps the best example of how early voluntary activity became enmeshed with the social reform movement and ultimately, Indian nationalism. By the early 20th century, 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 voluntary action, political struggle, and Indian nationalism combined with Gandhi’s later philosophical influence on independent India, set the stage for the voluntary sector of today. Indeed, “in the initial phase after independence the legacy of the Gandhian era influenced voluntary action to fulfill the unfinished tasks undertaken prior to independence.”

In the first few decades after independence, support for the voluntary sector and its participation in national integration and development became central to Indian policy planning. The important role of voluntary action in the Swadeshi movement championed by Gandhi set an important precedent for the voluntary sector’s continuing influence on Indian development.

b. Perceptions of young people

Throughout a number of interviews and discussions, a variety of perspectives on young people’s role in society emerged. The general view expressed is that there remain substantial challenges (aside from government policy) to further youth civic engagement, but that there is nevertheless a real opportunity to encourage young people’s participation in social, economic, and political development.

One asset for promoting youth participation in India not found elsewhere in the region is an extraordinarily high degree of youth optimism. Recent survey research shows that young Indians, especially the middle class, are “strikingly more optimistic about their own future but also the future of their society.” The picture that emerged from the multi-country survey was that in other countries young people tend to be personal optimists but social pessimists. The survey attributes this optimism to expanding economic opportunities from India’s recent strong growth. Indeed, given its recent economic performance, young Indians have good reason to be optimistic. This presents a significant opportunity to tap into youth optimism and link it with community welfare in addition to personal gain. In fact, the need to re-emphasize social duty at a time of rising prosperity was a common view expressed by several experts.

Meenu Venkateswaran, co-founder of Pravah, observed that youth are seen either as liabilities or as assets. On the one hand, everyone is talking about the need to invest in education and vocational training in order to boost economic growth and national prosperity. On the other hand, youth is seen as a problem that needs to be addressed—the passive recipients of services delivered by development programs. Few organizations look at what youth want and help them to discover their own potential as change makers. She emphasized the need to combine action with reflection and learning and promote youth development instead of youth for development.

On the other hand, several academics believe that young people today are interested in social analysis and action. Mukul Manglik, a senior lecturer of History at Ramjas College, Delhi University, cited the sense of insecurity and uncertainty that prevails today, along with the greater availability of information as one of the reasons for greater civic engagement among youth today. He felt that the uncertainty awakens a desire to make things work—even if only for themselves—and this results in them wanting to understand issues and take action. Rev. Valson Thampu, Principal of St. Stephen’s College in New Delhi, points to the need not only of exposing youth to social realities and different perspectives but also creating opportunities for concrete action. He felt that university students have a social responsibility since they are beneficiaries of a highly subsidized higher education.

c. Perceptions of civic engagement

In general the experts consulted felt that while some young people are engaged in voluntary service or political participation, they generally lacked opportunities for meaningful civic engagement. According to Mr. Ameen Charles from the Community Development Center (CDC), “most youths are involved in a political movement, but they are not serving the community. Political parties use their strength to make a crowd. Some youths are working for NGOs, but overall youth volunteering is relatively low because they don’t have proper information and guidance, and the present culture is very materialistic.”

Comparing the situation in rural and urban areas, Sanjay Kumar (CSDS) indicated that rural youth are more civically engaged perhaps because conditions in rural India are so poor that it is easy to mobilize youth. There are also less distractions and opportunities compared to the city, according to Mr. K T Suresh, Executive Director, YUVA.

Ms. Shruti Veenam from Yuva Janaagraha indicated that “youth tend to be socially engaged, but not civically engaged.” She explained that urban youth are increasingly volunteering at orphanages, interacting with underprivileged kids and the elderly or participating in AIDS awareness walks/drives, but few were engaged in issues of ‘civic importance.’ She said few bother to vote or become engaged in issues of local self-governance (i.e., solving traffic, water supply and public transport issues). She attributed this youth apathy to cynicism about government often learned from watching adults struggle to get things done, lobbying local officials, and unfamiliarity with local governing structures.

Rita Mishra, founder of Patang in Orissa, observed that lately there have been increasing opportunities for youth volunteering thanks to greater access, information and technology. However, she questioned the intent of these opportunities. In her opinion, volunteerism is only the vehicle toward developing youth leadership and connecting youth with the larger world. This is a transformative process that requires reflection and learning. Many organizations are unwilling to invest in youth and end up using youth volunteerism to fulfill their own
organizational agendas. She also observed that the type of engagement has changed since the turn of the century. Whereas earlier, the forms of engagement were more confrontational—with many young people joining social movements, such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan, today's young people are more inclined toward volunteering for less controversial issues which do not force them out of their comfort zone. For example, in Orissa young people tend to stay away from initiatives that address social inequalities, the exploitation of tribals by mining companies and industry, and communal tensions. While the issues may have changed, many young people are also using the Right to Information and other legal instruments, such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) to ensure that the poor get their entitlements. The traditional forms of protest rallies have given way to dialogue and collaboration. Perhaps both forms of engagement are required for bringing about meaningful change.

The focus group discussion participants and interviewees all had ideas about how to further encourage youth participation. A young activist suggested that there needed to be more awareness raised about the problems communities face and a greater sense of urgency around the value of civic duty. He felt that adults need to lead by example in order to show youth the virtues of being civically engaged. Participants also recommended fellowship and internship opportunities for young people so that they can experience working in the voluntary sector.

Lata Narayan, Associate Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, attributes other factors for low civic engagement. According to her there are many young people who do not have access to the fruits of economic growth in India and are often caught up in survival, leaving them little time for leisure or volunteering.

Regarding the government's approach to youth empowerment, there was general agreement that it was inadequate. Mr. Gopal Thapliyal, Shri Bhuvneshwari Mahila Ashram—Plan, indicated that the government does not have an appropriate policy toward youth and it is not providing incentives for young people to participate in voluntary organizations. Mr. Singh believes that though government officials think young people should be more engaged, they have no real answers for how to facilitate their engagement in a more meaningful way. Rita Mishra suggested that youth organizations need to pilot joint programs with NSS and NYKS. While the government programs have huge outreach, they tend to be unimaginative. NGOs, on the other hand, run context-specific and innovative programs but reach out to much smaller numbers. “A partnership between government programs and the voluntary sector would enable us to strengthen government youth programs and reach out to many more young people.” The experts consulted did not put all the blame on government either. In reference to factors that determined the level of youth civic engagement, a number of other issues emerged such as encouragement and recognition by elders, peer group behaviors and attitudes, lack of time due to studies and the pressure to earn a livelihood. Some experts also felt that young people shared a general cynicism about the motives of NGOs and that if the profile of the sector could be enhanced, more young people would be willing to volunteer. Moreover, young people often do not understand the needs of the social sector and may not be aware of available volunteering opportunities.

In terms of encouraging youth participation, one program manager from a rural NGO suggested that the government upgrade rural development schemes and promote the importance and worth of volunteering by including it in the school and college curriculum. He also proposed that the government provide free education for those who provide voluntary service in return. Mr. Charles from CDC emphasized that youth participation needed to be initiated first within the family and that “parents should play an effective role for enhancing youth civic engagement.” This was difficult in part because there is a tradition of “volunteer culture,” it needs to be regenerated and promoted as a way of life.

Meenu Venkateswaran said that NGOs need to create an understanding among youth that it is important to engage with social issues and build leadership skills in them so they can become active citizens. They also need to proactively provide opportunities to young people to understand social problems and create a non-threatening and fun environment for learning and volunteering.

A study on volunteerism revealed that young people who have experienced volunteering, value it and would like to continue. Exposure to volunteering through volunteering activities at school and college must be encouraged if not made mandatory, as it introduces students to the concept of volunteering and also makes them sensitive to social issues and fosters a lasting interest. The study also pointed out that popular culture and mass media offer few examples that portray volunteerism as necessary and admirable. It recommended that testimonials and advertisements by role models could be used to promote volunteerism as something cool. More youth can be motivated to volunteer if volunteerism is positioned as an opportunity to belong to a peer group engaged in useful work which is also aspiring toward success. It is also an opportunity for developing their leadership qualities and building their confidence, for making friends and having fun.

Rita Mishra also emphasized the need to train youth facilitators. “It is not just about designing new programs and increasing coverage—who will be reaching out to youth? We need to create that resource so they understand youth development processes. It is very easy to expand programs,

90 Talking Volunteerism: A Qualitative Study by Pravah, iVolunteer and Patang Supported by The Youth and Civil Society Initiative of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust. 2008.
but who will run them? We need more courses for youth facilitators. One source could be alumni who have been through these programs and experienced the transformation. They are therefore more motivated and believe in the process.

There is also a great need to build NGO capacities to manage youth volunteers. While many NGOs recognize the value of volunteerism and involve them in a range of activities, few have invested in setting up a structured volunteering program with a volunteer coordinator who can design effective processes for orienting, training and placing volunteers.

Finally, several experts consulted believe that the best way to encourage youth civic engagement is involving youth more fully in local self-governance. Mr. Thapliyal suggested that young people need a legal platform such as youth councils where they can voice their concerns and ensure that the government hears their grievances. Several organizations in India are already working to promote such “Bal Panchayats” (children’s council). Two others suggested that young people should be involved in Panchayat Raj institutions (discussed further below).

Several youth perceptions were consistent with the experts mentioned above. One youth activist interviewed said that young people are mostly involved in social work and while some take positions with voluntary organizations working on a myriad of issues, their level of involvement varied greatly. While some youth are genuinely committed to social issues, others are just looking to build their resumes.

A study91 conducted on youth volunteerism in three cities (Delhi, Mumbai and Bhubaneswar) revealed that most young people do not have an understanding of volunteering since they do not have any exposure to volunteering. Youth who displayed a positive attitude toward volunteering had been exposed to the idea in senior school and college. There was also a difference in perceptions of development between youth. While youth in metropolitan cities were largely dazzled by the malls, multiplexes and money that have accompanied economic liberalization, the youth in Bhubaneswar were more aware of poverty and hunger and pointed to the need for social development, not merely economic development. They were also aware that the rural poor lack education and skills and therefore cannot benefit from new opportunities offered by a globalized economy.

The study also found that most young people are skeptical about volunteering without getting something in return. They want recognition for their efforts in the form of certificates or public acknowledgment. They also seek to build their confidence and aspire for opportunities for skill building, learning, work experience, exposure and personality development.

d. Extent of individualism

The experts consulted emphasized the importance of creating more youth service opportunities as prosperity increases. Mr. Kartikeya Singh from the Indian Youth Climate Network indicated that affluence in India is a potential obstacle to more robust youth civic engagement. He said that many adults seem to think that young people are “slipping away and these days don’t care about humanity… there are too many distractions and youth are now money-driven.” In his opinion, there is a need to combat the creeping “mall culture” by creating more opportunities for youth civic engagement.

e. Family relationships and values

Another inhibiting factor reported by many young people is the lack of support from the family and community. Many parents are focused on their children achieving prestigious professional careers or going into business. These parents, and many teachers, often discourage youth from volunteering because it is seen as a diversion from studies. Students participating in the NSS program in Mumbai mentioned how their lecturers discouraged them from continuing with NSS in their final year because of exam pressures. One of the young men interviewed, who belonged to a business family, was rejected and disinherited by his family when he decided to join the voluntary sector. For women, especially those from more protective families, the family concern is around safety. From the interviews conducted during this study, religious institutions emerge as the main structures that draw family approval for voluntary work being socially permissible. For example, in Nagaland many young people join the Church and become actively involved in church-based activities with the full support of their families.

f. Challenges facing the further growth of youth civic engagement

A number of factors were identified by young people as obstacles to youth volunteerism, including practical problems, such as the lack of time, or inconvenient timings, commuting over long distances, concerns about safety, financial constraints and academic pressures. Even when young people manage to negotiate with their families and opt to volunteer, they face difficulties entering the voluntary sector. One of the young persons interviewed, criticized the voluntary sector for being too exclusive. When he began exploring opportunities, he found that development professionals were skeptical and set numerous terms and conditions for volunteer involvement. According to him, they don’t realize the motivation and potential of young people and believe that they will not be able to give the time or commitment required. It would seem that these NGOs view youth only in the context of their own project-based work and not in terms of youth development. They fail to find ways in which to involve youth and do not explore what volunteers would like to do. Luckily for this informant, he found the right NGO with the right mentors, but this was not easy.

91 Talking Volunteerism: A Qualitative Study by Pravah, Volunteer and Patang Supported by The Youth and Civil Society Initiative of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust. 2008.
Many young people are not as lucky and do not have the luxury of searching for the right option. Their parents are often pushing them to take up the most lucrative and prestigious job. Unlike mainstream professions, such as banking, medicine, engineering and MBAs, the voluntary sector is often seen as an option for losers who have no other options. There is also a lack of examples of volunteerism in public life and celebration of voluntary efforts. This lack of recognition and appreciation is a big constraint for young people.

In the socio-economic sphere, market and social forces create conditions in which conflicts emerge owing to the fact that not all Indians have access to opportunities created by economic liberalization and many are being impacted adversely by the forces of globalization. Examples include conflicts between tribal/rural communities and industry in Orissa and other parts of India. There have also been increasing instances of conflict around caste, religion and politics. These tensions also provide fertile ground for youth participation and civic engagement. Youth are invariably the first to get involved in social action so they can contribute to social change. Unfortunately this enthusiasm is sometimes exploited by right-wing fundamentalist forces like the Bajrang Dal92 and the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) in the absence of alternative and more progressive ways of engaging. This danger makes it imperative for the voluntary sector in India to provide meaningful avenues for youth civic engagement.

5. Typology

There are a number of Indian NGOs and institutions providing opportunities for young people to engage with social issues in a variety of areas. They use different strategies and approaches. Several of these strategies were presented by NGOs at a consultation on Youth Active Citizenship in India organized by Pravah and ICP in 2009.93 Through this research and the consultation a number of strategies and forms of youth civic engagement emerged and these are presented below.

a. Forms

The forms of youth civic engagement in India range from preparing young people for participation in local governance, to training them to run youth development organizations, to setting up youth resource centers.

A key form of youth active citizenship is youth involvement in local government. CDC in Madhya Pradesh is working to strengthen local panchayat institutions and involve young people through local youth groups called Srijan Kendras. The Shri Bhuvneshwari Mahila Ashram (SBMA) in Utrakhand is working to create Bal Panchayat groups to participate in the process of community development programs and decision making. SBMA is also conducting trainings of village youth in preparation for the village level planning that occurs at panchayat meetings and the Gram Sabha (a twice a year meeting where the panchayat and the community discuss local problems and community development initiatives). YUVA in Mumbai has formed the Maharashtra Yuva Manch, a semi political youth organization with a membership of almost 9,000 socially marginalized youth across the state. It conducts an election watch in almost every district of Maharashtra to check discrimination in the electoral roll process and on election day. In Bangalore, Yuva Janaagraha (YJ) is preparing young people to address issues of local urban governance. YJ aims to “orient the youth towards identifying civic [and] social issues and acknowledging their role as citizens capable of creating change.” YJ also seeks to “create willingness to get involved in creating change through constant engagement with the government.”94 Project Citizen is another successful school initiative which gives adolescents a chance to be competent and responsible participants in local and state government. Students select a problem about which they want to do something—garbage, traffic, etc. They study the government policy related to the problem, meet government officials, and often realize that policies are in place, but are not being implemented. They draw up an action plan or devise an alternative policy aimed at solving the problem.

Underpinning such work is another form of youth civic engagement—that of preparing young people as citizens through approaches such as citizenship education, opportunities for exposure to social issues through volunteering, rural camps, internships, action projects and campaigns. Pravah for instance does just this. Formed in 1993 after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Pravah noted that the education system does not prepare young people to engage with social issues and become active citizens. It started working with adolescents in schools and soon extended its outreach to college students. Pravah’s vision is 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.

A further form is the development of youth resource centers. These centers are friendly, non-threatening spaces – often youth and state government. Students select a problem about which they want to do something—garbage, traffic, etc. They study the government policy related to the problem, meet government officials, and often realize that policies are in place, but are not being implemented. They draw up an action plan or devise an alternative policy aimed at solving the problem.

Volunteering is another form of youth civic engagement, which can happen in long-term programs or on a more ad hoc basis, as and when volunteers are required. Many educational institutions have started programs to encourage students to volunteer. St. Stephen’s College in Delhi University for example, has an active Social Service League. Its activities include sending volunteers to

92 Bajrang Dal is a right wing Hindu organization and the youth wing of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). It is based on the ideology of Hinduism and aims to protect India’s Hindu identity from perceived dangers of Muslim demographic growth and Christian conversion.

93 See Nurturing Youth Active Citizenship in India: Report on a Stakeholder Consultation. New Delhi, 3 – 4 March 2009. Pravah and ICP.

Bihar for flood relief, organizing blood donation camps, evening classes for poor children, reading for the visually impaired, etc.

These programs have led to involvement in yet another form of youth civic engagement — that of advocacy. Students are also active in virtual spaces, such as awazdo.com and petition.com besides coming together to organize campaigns, such as B for Bhopal to get justice for the survivors of the Bhopal tragedy and the Safe Campus Campaign against sexual harassment.

Media also offers a platform for an alternative form of youth civic engagement. The media, arts and communications have huge 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. They may have zero literacy skills but have a passion to do something creative in their communities to create change.

b. Program areas
Organizations involved in youth civic engagement are involved in almost as many program areas as there are development issues facing India. Some of the key program areas that emerged in the research include: conflict resolution; local governance; HIV/AIDS; child rights; gender issues; climate change; and environmental awareness.

There are a range of organizations involved in conflict resolution. After the Gujarat riots of 2002, Jan Vikas initiated a youth development program called Yuva Shakti as a long-term strategy to avoid recurrence of such incidents. The program emphasizes the importance of peace promotion and conflict transformation and addresses the challenges of caste politics. It empowers youth toward understanding themselves and the issues around them, in addition to enabling them to participate in village development and addressing the needs of youth and communities. Conflicts in other parts of the country have given rise to similar youth initiatives, for example, the North Eastern Regional Youth Commission (NERYC) has launched Operation Shanti which is building a movement for peace with youth at the center. The program involves young people in peace education, bringing divided villages together, and assisting victims of violence.

SAHER, a community-based organization, works in Jogeshwari, Mumbai. It began as a local youth group and seeks to address the growing divide between Hindus and Muslims in the community by designing spaces that bring together youth of different communities and encouraging them to look beyond their stereotypes of each other. These spaces include an inter-school sports meet, a community center, and life skills programs for school and college students.

Environmental awareness and issues of climate change have also gained popularity as key program areas. The Centre for Science and Environment for instance, runs a Green Schools Program that places young people at the center of a practical initiative as change makers. It uses environment education to empower youth to develop their knowledge and skills as citizens and environment managers. In schools where resources are scarce, the audit focuses on ensuring that basic needs are met; in schools where there is plenty, the audit helps prevent wastage. Using a simple audit map and a do-it-yourself handbook on how to audit the management of water, energy and waste within the school premises, the program has drawn students out of the classroom to engage with the school environment. Over a two-year period the project found a startling improvement in conservation practices with young change makers increasing the actual rainfall harvested from 3% to 70%.

The Indian Youth Climate Network (IYCN) was founded in 2008 by a small group of dedicated young people who participated in the UN Conference on Climate Change in Bali. IYCN is made up of thousands of Indians worldwide seeking to raise awareness among India’s youth about the dangers of climate change and some of the potential solutions that young people can work to implement in their local community. IYCN sent a delegation of 25 young people to the climate negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009 and continues to add a youth voice to the climate change conversation in India and globally.

c. Program goals
Besides the range of program goals related to the program areas in which organizations locate themselves (such as climate change, HIV/AIDS and gender issues), most of the programs that are documented in this research have as a core program goal the development of young leaders and young citizens, and the creation of a generation of responsible activists. The Thoughtshop Foundation in Kolkata for instance empowers young people to run resource centers. These projects have helped youth members learn planning and organization skills. The youth members are also playing the roles of support groups to young people in their community, of change makers in the community, and watch dogs that challenge cases of social injustice, such as early marriage, abusive relationships and school dropouts. As a result of these interventions, the trainers have gained respect in the community and are now being approached by community members when there is a problem. The youth resource center set up by Patang in Orissa, has started a Right to Information clinic to help people understand the RTI Act so that they can use it to make the government more accountable.

Another group, the Centre for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA), is working on issues of education, health, livelihood, governance, and volunteer promotion to “build the capacities of young people” to address “the needs of adolescents and youth, initiate policy dialogue, organize for collective action, and realize the rights of deprived.”

95 Questionnaire completed by CYDA, February 2008. On file with author.
and “involve a large number of students and professionals” in volunteer work. On the issue of governance, CYDA created a Youth4Change program to encourage youth to become active citizens and take action on community issues.

Drishti, which uses media to enable young people to tell their stories, has created young leaders in communities. The participants undergo intensive training over 18 months to learn creative ways of conducting research, writing scripts, shooting film and editing. Daily screenings attract 200 – 500 villagers, many of whom walk 10 km to watch the program. Post-screening discussions are important for the producers because every film makes a call to action which creates debate and aims to inspire people to view things differently. In this way, young people become leaders in their communities – they talk to people about local issues and discuss how communities can take action to improve their lives.

**d. Types of organizations**

Unlike the other countries profiled in this report, in which many of the organizations are dependent on partnerships with international organizations for sustainability, India has a vibrant network of local youth organizations. Most of the organizations that participated in this research and were represented at the consultation are locally based or national NGOs. Further, many of the better resourced organizations are working to start up or sustain other local organizations.

Pravah for instance supports youth-led social initiatives. Its year-long Change Looms program helps young people to launch their own social change ideas. It has nurtured over 37 youth-led teams from across the country so that they can strengthen their interventions. These organizations work on a variety of issues including tiger conservation, tribal rights, child sexual abuse, life skills education, and preservation of folk arts. The program facilitates learning around core areas such as needs analysis, strategy design, goal setting, and creating win-win approaches to community mobilization. Pravah’s Streaming Initiative partners with or incubates youth organizations across the country to design and implement innovative youth development and citizenship action programs. The vision is to build an ecosystem of organizations advocating for youth development and active citizenship.

A recent development in the field of youth voluntary service and civic engagement in India is the Teach India initiative launched in 2008 by the Times of India and Teach for All. Inspired in part by the success of Teach for America, Teach India aims to engage volunteers in classrooms for up to three months teaching underprivileged primary school children. Working through a network of NGOs, Teach India works to match volunteers with classrooms. The number of applicants far exceeded expectations. An astonishing 55,000 volunteer applications were received by the first deadline. Unfortunately, the initiative could not find adequate placements and many NGOs did not have the capacities to manage volunteers. However, the popularity of Teach India suggests that Indians are eager to volunteer if only given the structured opportunity to do so.

This highlights that there are a range of international NGOs, whose involvement is also important in the development of youth civic engagement opportunities. The Teach India campaign has led to international volunteer agencies such as Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO), Peace Corps, and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) working to build national volunteer capacity into their programs. The Commonwealth Youth Program (CYP) also partners with Student Partnerships Worldwide to run its HIV/AIDS awareness program.

In many ways, India can operate as a regional hub for the promotion of youth civic engagement in the region. CYP for instance has its Asia headquarters in Chandigarh, India. CYP has programs in Youth Enterprise in Sustainable Livelihoods, Governance, Development and Youth Networks, and Youth Work Education and Training. CYP also operates a “Youth Caucus” with members in Nepal, Pakistan, and India (as well as other Commonwealth Countries). Finally, CYP undertakes research and publishes a number of important and useful reports on youth volunteerism and empowerment.

**e. Target population**

Most of the programs surveyed in India have a very wide range in terms of target population. The overall age range is from 10 years to 35 years.

**f. Roles of young people and levels of participation**

In most of the organizations young people are central to the running of the organization and are empowered to start up their own campaigns, projects and organizations. The levels of participation range from ad hoc involvement in volunteer opportunities that arise in response to a need, to more structured programs which require long-term training and volunteering. India’s supportive policy environment and robust civil society are enormous assets for promoting youth civic engagement. This robust environment ensures that a range of opportunities are available for young people to participate in all types of civic engagement programs. From more formal long-term national service to advocacy, service-learning to youth social entrepreneurship, the field of youth civic engagement in India is broad and deep. The NSS provides students with service-learning opportunities while performing 120 hours of service per year. The NSVS provides recent graduates with a full-time residential volunteer experience. And the NYKS

96 “Teach India: India Lines up to Teach” Times of India July 31, 2008. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Teach_India_India_LINES_up_to_Teach/articleshow/3308259.cms

provides rural non-student youth the opportunity to join youth clubs. In the NGO sector, young people can become peer educators or seek support as a social entrepreneur.

6. Conclusion
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 youth. The various national service schemes can be reformed and modernized to incorporate international best practices and better monitoring and evaluation. In particular, SPW offers an exceptional illustration of how long-term service programs can utilize peer education to enhance overall impact. These 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.

An exciting development is the emergence of a youth collective. Given the size and diversity of the country and the number of young people, there is a realization that no single organization could make a significant impact. To make a difference, many different organizations and individuals with diverse experiences in youth work need to join hands and form a collective. ComMutiny – The Youth Collective consists of members from ten organizations across the country. Besides a Learning and Leadership Journey for young people, it also aims to create a positive image of youth active citizenship, develop a bridge between policy makers and implementers to strengthen youth programs, and to bring more organizations towards youth development.

While it might seem that given these assets, further investment in India is unnecessary, it is actually in India that such investment is likely to have the longest 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.

### Box 6. Youth Organizations in India*

- Akshara, Mumbai
- Centre for Youth Development and Activities, Pune
- Commonwealth Youth Program Asia, Chandigarh
- ComMutiny – the Youth Collective, New Delhi
- Drishti, Ahmedabad
- Indian Committee of Youth Organizations, New Delhi
- Indian Youth Climate Network, New Delhi
- Indicorps, Ahmedabad
- Patang, Orissa
- Peace Child India, Bangalore
- Pravah, New Delhi
- PUKAR, Mumbai
- Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development
- SAHER, Mumbai
- Samvada, Bangalore
- Shri Bhuvneshwari Mahila Ashram, Uttarakhand
- Thoughtshop Foundation, Kolkata
- The YP Foundation, New Delhi
- Yuva Janaagraha, Bangalore
- Yuva Shakti, Ahmedabad
- Vidya Poshak, Dharwar

*Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. It represents only those organizations identified during ICP’s research. For more information on programs operating in India, please visit ICP's online database of programs and policies at www.icicp.org/Resources.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Main purposes</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Roles of Young People</th>
<th>Degree of young people’s influence over decisions regarding civic engagement</th>
<th>Numbers and level of inclusion</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cost per young person</th>
<th>Govt</th>
<th>NGO &amp; MO</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>IO</th>
<th>YP</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Center for Science and Environment</strong></td>
<td>Youth Leadership</td>
<td>Education, environment</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Environmental auditor, Volunteer</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>All; approx. 10 students form a chapter; Students from all backgrounds</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td><strong>Green Schools program</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Commonwealth Youth Program</strong></td>
<td>Youth Leadership, Advocacy &amp;</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Peer educator, Activist Volunteer</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All young people who are infected/affected with HIV/AIDS or reformed drug addicts or healthy young people with adequate knowledge of youth health issues</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Campaigning</td>
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<td><strong>CYDA-Youth4Change program</strong></td>
<td>International volunteer service, Youth leadership</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5-10 hours; more than 12 months</td>
<td>Peer educator, Conference planner</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>5,000 (as of 2006); All mainly from lower-middle class and middle class</td>
<td>15-25</td>
<td>Low ($10 per person)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indian Youth Climate Network</strong></td>
<td>Advocacy &amp; campaigning, Youth leadership</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1-6 months</td>
<td>Member, youth-led</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All, from various regions</td>
<td>14-35</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td><strong>Pravah</strong></td>
<td>Long-term Voluntary service, Service learning, Youth Leadership</td>
<td>Education, social</td>
<td>More than 12 months</td>
<td>Volunteer Leader</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>All, from various regions</td>
<td>17-27</td>
<td>Modest learning stipend of Rs. 20,000; eligible for a Rs. 40,000 organizational development grant if completing program</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Main purposes</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Roles of Young People</td>
<td>Degree of young people's influence over decisions regarding civic engagement</td>
<td>Numbers and level of inclusion</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Cost per young person</td>
<td>ORGANIZERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Citizen</td>
<td>Leadership Training and Practice, Social Entrepreneurship, Advocacy Campaigning, Community Service</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4 days training</td>
<td>Volunteer, Manager, Leader Program design, Program Implementation, Monitor Evaluator</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All from all regions, 18-22 people in course</td>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>NRS, 6667 per person (low)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Partnerships Worldwide (SPW) Youth Empowerment Programme</td>
<td>Long-term voluntary service, Leadership Training, International volunteer service, Community Service</td>
<td>Social, education</td>
<td>10+ hours a week; 7-12 months</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All young people who are infected/affected with HIV/AIDS or reformed drug addicts or healthy young people with adequate knowledge of youth health issues</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach India Fellowship</td>
<td>Long-term voluntary service, Youth leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 weeks training; full-time 2 year fellowship</td>
<td>Volunteer Leader Teacher</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>All graduate students, undergrads, young professionals, experienced professionals</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>High (stipend)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoughtshop Foundation - Development of Community-Based Youth Resource Cells</td>
<td>Youth Leadership, Advocacy &amp; campaigning</td>
<td>Education, social</td>
<td>More than 12 months</td>
<td>Peer educator, Activist, Volunteer,</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>All from various regions</td>
<td>15-25</td>
<td>High (e.g. stipends)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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1. Assets for youth civic engagement in South Asia
What emerged from the analysis of the four country profiles is that there are multiple assets in place for the support and development of youth civic engagement in South Asia. Primary among these are public policies at various stages of development, programs that are currently being implemented through youth-led and youth-focused organizations, an enabling civic culture, the interest of young people in civic engagement, and the prevalence of a variety of partnerships between local and international organizations, and between civil society and government.

b. Policy environment
All four countries have a youth policy in place or are in the process of finalizing youth policies. Although India demonstrates the most sophisticated range of policies that impact on the environment for youth civic engagement, these are seen by some respondents to be in need of review in order to sharpen implementation and widen the accessibility of youth civic engagement opportunities. Nepal has a draft NYP, which is currently being reviewed; in Bangladesh the NYP was commonly noted as being ineffective; in Pakistan a NYP was approved in 2009 and that country is currently in the process of developing an implementation strategy in partnership with UNFPA; and in India a NYP and policy on the voluntary sector have been passed but require better implementation. While the effective implementation of these policies is a persistent challenge (as is the case in other countries), they nevertheless provide a framework for a greater focus on youth issues and a reference point for priorities in youth development, including opportunities for youth civic engagement. NYPs can provide a significant framework of support for related policies and public funding for youth civic engagement initiatives undertaken by both government and civil society players.

In this regard, India’s nuanced policy framework for youth holds numerous lessons for youth policy in other countries in the region. Clearly India is a regional leader in the field of youth civic engagement. Its stable, democratic government and supportive legal and institutional framework have created the conditions for a strong and engaged civil society. That said, some respondents noted that India needs to strengthen the implementation of the policies relevant to youth civic engagement. It will be important to track how Pakistan fares in this respect through its implementation partnership with UNFPA.

In terms of asset value, the national youth policy environment in the four countries constitutes a significant feature of the landscape required to foster youth civic engagement. At best, NYPs provide a framework for investing public and private resources in youth civic engagement and help to prioritize activities that foster youth volunteering, youth service and youth development. At worst, they represent statements around which interest groups can lobby for increased attention to youth civic engagement and/or advocate for the mainstreaming of youth interests more generally.

b. Programs and youth organizations
All four countries exhibit active civil societies and numerous youth civic engagement opportunities. Given India’s history of civic action and democracy, it is perhaps not surprising that it has an impressive size and diverse scope of opportunities for youth civic engagement. These opportunities are evident in government-sponsored national service schemes, in the engagement of local NGOs with youth around a variety of issues, through programs run by INGOs, and through local self-governance opportunities such as Bal Panchayats.

Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan all present varied opportunities for youth civic engagement including active civil societies, the National Youth Service in Pakistan, and investment in youth civic engagement programs by international organizations. However, these local, national, and international organizations all work in less accommodating policy environments than that found in India, and experience a lack of resources and government support to varying degrees.
In all four countries, the program scan reveals that a tension emerges between program intensity (i.e. participant immersion in program activities), program duration and scale. In most cases, the reach of NGO youth active citizenship programs is constrained by limited resources, which also impact on the variety and duration of the activities offered to the young participants. This in turn affects the extent to which youth active citizenship can be mainstreamed. In Nepal, the organization called Nagarik Aawaz emerges as a significant example of a civil society organization that seeks to impact on a mainstream issue viz. the reintegration of demobilized combatants and those young people displaced by the country’s conflict. Small in size, but national in scope, this organization provides a good example of how a civil society organization can provide leadership and direction on an issue that is worthy of national support and central to the country’s future.

In regard to issues of scale and sustainability, government funding and support for youth active citizenship becomes essential. Governments have the resources to support long-term service programs, which are able to have significant impact on young people and the communities they serve. Although respondents indicated that India’s national service schemes need to be strengthened in terms of the quality of programs offered, the programs do provide significant examples of reach and accessibility. The other three countries have the opportunity to create national service schemes of their own, which would afford significant numbers of young people opportunities to become civically engaged and participate in community service. There also exist important opportunities for government and local organizations to work together to expand reach while capitalizing on local knowledge.

The mapping study also demonstrates that the organizations surveyed in the four countries have accumulated a wealth of experience and knowledge about youth civic engagement. This includes how best to meet the needs of young people, how to involve young people directly in programming, how to develop youth leadership capacity, and how to access international partnerships for funding and program design so as to ensure future sustainability. A significant feature of the organizations surveyed is their focus on developing youth leadership and providing young people with opportunities to design and implement the civic engagement programs promoted by the different organizations. This provides a unique experiential learning opportunity for young people and focuses on developing leadership as well as other important skills. The organizations and programs in the region thus provide a depth of knowledge that should be shared and recognized so as to influence mainstream practice in national youth service programs as well as public policy and programs in those sectors that target youth (e.g. education, health, social development, etc).

c. Civic culture and youth energy
The various cultures that characterize the South Asia region are strongly underpinned by religion, predominantly Hinduism and Islam. This was mentioned by many of the respondents as playing an important role in stimulating a commitment to philanthropy and giving, since charity is seen as integral to the expression of the faith. In Pakistan the role that culture plays was pointed out as a clear asset for youth civic engagement since faith-based and community duties mean that young people are already involved in various voluntary activities, including helping at funerals and clearing pathways. The challenge lies in translating these activities into wider forms of social engagement, as is discussed later.

The energy and commitment of young people is a further asset for youth civic engagement. It was noted in all four countries that young people played a central role in the struggles for liberation, independence and for democracy. The study shows that today, however, young people are recognized for a more limited contribution to issues of national significance, such as their involvement in disaster relief. While this is positive, it does not necessarily translate into a wider understanding of the varied roles that young people can play as active citizens in other spheres and sectors. This requires advocacy and recognition by public and private players of the importance of supporting volunteer infrastructure for youth civic engagement.

d. Partnerships for youth civic engagement
A further asset that emerged across the countries was the way in which many of the organizations surveyed have entered into partnerships with international NGOs and with governments. These partnerships serve to strengthen programs, provided that they are mutually beneficial and that local organizations do not become dependent on international NGOs. The partnerships serve to provide funding support and expertise, lend legitimacy and credibility to programs, promote both international and local volunteering, and facilitate the exchange of lessons of good practice between organizations across the region and in different parts of the world.

2. Risks facing youth civic engagement in South Asia
While there are a range of assets that can be built upon in further stimulating and developing youth civic engagement in the region, the mapping study identified a number of risks that must be overcome.

a. Policy and political environment
A range of risks emerged with regard to the policy environment for youth civic engagement in the countries. First, it was noted that in most of the countries, youth policy implementation was not effective or was not a priority. Thus, where policies were developed, implementation plans were not evident, and it is not clear how resources for implementation would be allocated, or from which sources they would be forthcoming.
Respondents in Bangladesh, for instance, felt that the youth policy was really only a policy in name and didn’t result in any meaningful changes for young people.

A further risk that emerged was the fact that the youth policies were developed with very little consultation with young people themselves. Thus, while there seems to be a strong commitment to youth-centered and youth-led programming at the organization level, this is not necessarily the case at the level of public policy or government implementation. It was also noted that in many of the youth policies, youth civic engagement either received no attention or very little. Nevertheless, these policies do serve as a platform for advocacy, discussion and development with regard to youth civic engagement. Finally, although freedom of association is officially recognized in each of these countries, certain types of civil society groups are more likely to face restrictions from government, particularly those advocating for human rights.

b. How young people are viewed
While there was recognition of the important role that young people played in the struggles leading up to democracy and independence, as well as an acknowledgement of the contribution they make in times of disaster (as discussed above), this does not always translate adequately into placing the same value on young people during times of peace. Thus while youth are often thought of as being useful in times of crisis, in times of peace there is less focus on the powerful role that young people can play in socio-economic, political and civic development. This is demonstrated by the fact that, for instance, young people by and large were not consulted in the development of national youth policies and that in India, as Pravah notes, young people are generally not evident in leadership roles in governance at the regional and national levels.

c. Civic culture
While civic culture plays an important role in underpinning commitments to civic engagement, it can also undermine efforts to widen youth civic engagement.

First, where voluntary contributions to community activities or duties are a “way of life” the value that these activities add to communities may be overlooked or taken for granted. There is thus a need to raise the profile of the value that young people add when they are involved in community activities, regardless of community expectations or duties.

Second, in the case of gender issues civic culture might also create barriers for the involvement of young people, particularly young girls, in youth civic engagement opportunities. In addition, it was noted in most of the countries surveyed that there are strong parental expectations around young people’s education success and prospects for employment, and many may see civic engagement as a distraction from these goals. There is thus a need to frame youth civic engagement in a positive light in relation to accessing work and education opportunities, and to begin to slowly reshape commonly held perceptions about the role of women in civic engagement in communities.

d. Economic development and individualism
While it seems strange to cite economic growth and development as a risk to youth civic engagement, this factor was mentioned as a constraint by some of the respondents. In their analysis, increasing economic development, particularly in the case of India, can lead to increased divides in wealth and class—widening the income gap. This sets up a situation in which individualism and the pursuit of wealth overshadows commitments to the common good and serves to undermine efforts to involve young people in civic engagement opportunities.

However, poverty also emerges as a challenge since many young people must choose between earning a living and being involved in volunteer activities. Parents may also place pressure on young people to find work rather than to volunteer. As is mentioned in the recommendations, there is thus a need to ensure that youth civic engagement opportunities are innovative, speak to the aspirations of young people, and are relevant to their interests. Framing youth civic engagement in relation to prospects for employment may also go some way toward addressing these risks, although care must be taken not to instrumentalize young people in this process.

3. Strategies for mainstreaming youth interests and youth civic engagement
Based on the above assessment of assets and risks facing youth civic engagement in South Asia, a range of strategies emerge as possibilities for supporting and increasing youth civic engagement in the region.
A key strategy to start mainstreaming youth civic engagement and demonstrate the potential that young people have, is to increase opportunities for civic engagement. Strategic investment by local, national, and international organizations is needed to increase awareness and quality opportunities for young people to engage. This includes more investment in capacity building for organizations in order to ensure they have the resources and infrastructure to engage volunteers and to ensure that volunteers are gaining the necessary skills through the experience. Those in the field of youth civic engagement in South Asia have the expertise to make this happen and have seen the positive outcomes that youth civic engagement can produce. Many young people indicated that once given the opportunity to volunteer, they gained more respect from their peers and the adults in their community, and became more motivated to serve.

There are possibilities for increasing youth civic engagement opportunities and tapping into the interests of both youth and government by designing programs around key development challenges that capture the attention of citizens. For instance in Nepal the issue of demobilization is seen as a key issue that requires attention and the activities around that program are ensuring that young people are moving back into the mainstream of society. Climate change and other environmental challenges, as well as disaster relief and preparedness, all emerge across the four countries as issues that are of interest to young people and are key development priorities in the countries concerned. Peer to peer programs were mentioned as being particularly effective in encouraging youth development and engagement and volunteer immersion can alter local community’s perceptions about social customs and gender, as demonstrated by the YES Network Pakistan.

In relation to mainstreaming youth civic engagement, there is a need to be mindful of diversity issues. In some cases gender was mentioned as an issue and that many perceptions of gender made it difficult for young women to be involved in engagement opportunities. However, some of the organizations had developed interesting ways to encourage the involvement of young women in their programs. Most organizations were mindful of the need to involve a wide range of participants, including those who were of a lower economic class, those who did not have access to education, and those living in rural areas. Programs should work toward greater inclusion and aim to address the varying needs that different populations bring to the table.

Policy also plays an important role in mainstreaming youth issues, but needs to be more than simply policy in name. National youth policy must be acceptable to young people, prioritize their involvement in mainstream activities, and be implemented through the adequate allocation of public resources.

It was also noted among respondents that despite democratic principles being in place in the countries involved in the study, an adversarial relationship persists between governments and foreign-funded NGOs (as in the case of Pakistan) and between government and those organizations advocating for social change. These attitudes may take many years to change and it is thus important for organizations to bear these risks in mind.

This mapping study demonstrates that civic engagement means different things in different contexts and is not always perceived in a positive light by governments that wish to limit the involvement of its citizenry in political matters. It is important to highlight a broader conceptual and definitional understanding of civic engagement beyond explicitly political activity to include voluntary service and local community development activities. Youth voluntary service can be a powerful tool for delivering vital social services while simultaneously helping young people develop the human and social capital necessary for productive employment and responsible citizenship.

As the levels of active civil society in all four countries demonstrate, government support for youth civic engagement through voluntary service in the form of an NYP is not a prerequisite for robust youth civic engagement, although it certainly helps. While conditions of political uncertainty could be seen as a reason not to invest in youth development/civic engagement/voluntary service programs, ICP believes the opposite is true. Investing in youth active citizenship programs when governments are unable to develop or implement a youth policy, is vitally necessary because without international support and expertise, many of these programs could not be sustained. Furthermore, positive youth development programs that include civic engagement and voluntary service components will enhance long-term political stability as civil society is strengthened.
Civic culture also plays a key role in mainstreaming youth involvement in engagement opportunities. However, there is a need to develop mechanisms 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.

4. Conclusion
Varied youth service and youth civic engagement policies and programs are evident at different stages of development throughout South Asia. The four countries included in this study have particular strengths, challenges, needs and constraints with regard to the promotion and practice of youth civic engagement. This section has highlighted the key assets, challenges and strategies that should be borne in mind by organizations seeking to further develop youth civic engagement opportunities. The assets discussed here present an optimistic picture in all four countries that, provided some of the challenges are dealt with, could be capitalized on with strategic investment to scale up youth civic engagement in the region.
8. Recommendations

Based on this research and assets identified in the four countries, ICP puts forward the following eight recommendations for scaling up youth civic engagement in each country and regionally in South Asia.

**Regional**

1. Regional Engagement and Promotion of Volunteerism
2. Innovation to stimulate youth volunteering in 21st century South Asia

**Nepal**

3. Invest in developing policies and frameworks that promote youth civic engagement and ensure good governance for effective implementation

**Bangladesh**

4. Increase information availability and resource accessibility
5. Review and revise National Youth Service Policy

**Pakistan**

6. Review and implement the National Youth Policy and other opportunities for youth civic engagement

**India**

7. Strengthen the implementation and relevance of youth policies and programs
8. Facilitate additional youth civic engagement opportunities

**International Organizations and International Non-Governmental Organizations**

9. Increase strategic investment in local, national, and government youth service opportunities

**Regional**

**Recommendation 1:** Regional Engagement and Promotion of Volunteerism

The study demonstrates that youth civic engagement is an important area of policy focus and programmatic activity across all four countries. In some cases these activities take forms that emerge from particular historical circumstances, but there is clearly room for engagement between youth organizations across the four countries to explore issues of mutual interest in relation to policy and programs for youth volunteering and service. Where youth policy and youth service are in place, implementation emerges as an area of weakness and organizations in different countries may gain from each other on how to address issues such as these at the national level. However, a conflicted regional environment may limit the extent to which joint action can bring about change in individual countries.

**Recommendation 2:** Innovation to stimulate youth volunteering in 21st century South Asia

Among the four countries surveyed, three have recently emerged from conflict situations and all four, India in particular, face the challenge of widening socio-economic disparities in the face of future economic growth. In this context it will be necessary for youth civic engagement policies and programs to be increasingly innovative in attracting a diversity of young people into opportunities for volunteering and civic service. It is thus recommended that youth needs and interests constitute the starting point for policy and program design and/or review, linking ‘what is cool’ with wider social and contextual needs (e.g. environment, health, etc) in order to bridge the relationship between the individual development of young people and wider social change through civic engagement.
Nepal

Recommendation 3: Invest in developing policies and frameworks that promote youth civic engagement and ensure good governance for effective implementation

The study demonstrates sustained capacity for youth involvement in Nepal and the development of a new constitution presents a clear opportunity for consultation with young people and for the creation of institutional frameworks for national youth service and a National Youth Policy. Both public policy instruments could scale up youth development and youth participation. Given that youth policy implementation weaknesses that emerge in the other countries involved in this study, it is recommended that particular attention be paid to the development of an action plan with clear time frames, as well as enhanced accountability and transparency mechanisms, and provide indications of the sources from which resources will be allocated. International good practice could be helpful in informing policy development and program design. Increasing school and university-based civic engagement opportunities presents a significant area for growth that could draw upon the resources of other countries in the region and further afield.

Bangladesh

Recommendation 4: Increase information availability and resource accessibility

Research showed that more youth would welcome the opportunity for civic engagement given the necessary information and opportunities. Therefore, the Ministry of Youth should work to increase transparency and make information on existing programs and available resources more accessible to local NGOs and international donors. The Ministry of Youth should also facilitate and encourage more opportunities for national youth service and civic engagement through school and university programs.

Recommendation 5: Review and revise National Youth Policy

Given weaknesses evident in the National Youth Policy 2003, the Ministry of Youth is encouraged to review and revise the NYP in order to increase opportunities for youth civic engagement. In particular, the Ministry of Youth should add an emphasis on citizenship, political rights and responsibilities and voluntary service as well as strengthen the implementation mechanisms outlined in the policy. In addition, the Ministry should consider creating a national youth service scheme to expand opportunities for young people to serve the nation in the areas of literacy, sexual and reproductive health, rural development, microenterprise, and disaster relief.

Pakistan

Recommendation 6: Review and implement the National Youth Policy and other opportunities for youth civic engagement

Pakistan passed a National Youth Policy in 2009 and has enlisted the support of UNFPA to implement the policy across the country. While these steps will create opportunities for young people to become involved, the ongoing involvement of youth in assessing policy implementation and further policy development is central to ensuring that programs are relevant to the interests of young people in Pakistan and are in line with international best practice. The Government of Pakistan is further encouraged to support efforts to scale up national youth service programs that are currently being run by NGOs so as to help address issues such as disaster preparedness, literacy, rural development, and infrastructure development. In addition, the government could provide additional opportunities for youth civic engagement through increased school and university-based civic engagement programs. Both government and civil society organizations could draw on the resources of other countries with experience of dealing with these issues.

India

Recommendation 7: Strengthen the implementation and relevance of youth policies and programs

As detailed previously, India has a robust and active civil society with an impressive array of public policies that address the development of young people. These include the National Youth Policy and several national service schemes. While it is commendable that the Government of India has already established these mechanisms to promote youth civic engagement, the study identifies the need for improved quality in the content and implementation of the programs that have emerged. The Indian government should conduct a comprehensive and participatory evaluation of its national service schemes to assess the fit between these programs and the needs and interests of India’s young people in the 21st century, and should draw on international best practice where this is relevant. Furthermore, the low level of participation by young people in governance in national and regional forums should be addressed.
Recommendation 8:  
Facilitate additional youth civic engagement opportunities  
In order to encourage more youth civic engagement, the Indian Ministry of Youth is encouraged to cultivate a results-oriented culture, enacting appropriate monitoring and evaluation measures and enhancing accountability and transparency. The Ministry of Youth should also facilitate more opportunities for youth to engage in local and self-governance initiatives such as Bal Panchayats. In addition, given the numerous and wide-ranging universities and schools in India, the government should consider devoting more resources to increasing school and university-based civic engagement opportunities. Leadership from the highest level of government would help educate communities to value youth civic engagement as one pathway to becoming full participants in society.

International Organizations and International Non-Governmental Organizations  

Recommendation 9:  
Increase strategic investment in local, national and government youth service opportunities  
International organizations and international NGOs are uniquely positioned to strategically invest in youth civic engagement opportunities, sharing international best practices and increasing local capacity. Strategic investment should help build local capacity among youth organizations and encourage national volunteering movements. In turn, international organizations and INGOs should share South Asia approaches and methodologies to widen partnerships with private and public sectors that leverage investments in youth civic engagement and voluntary service.
9. Conclusion

The four countries surveyed in this South Asia asset mapping study are confronted with three transitions that are almost simultaneous: demographic, economic, and political. Each of these provide a unique window of opportunity to harness the energy of young people in order to reap a demographic dividend and advance social, economic, and human development on a massive scale. However, in order to reap this dividend, the current generation of young people must be equipped with the skills and abilities – the human and social capital – to become responsible, active citizens and productive employees. Youth civic engagement provides a unique opportunity to help young people acquire the human and social capital they need to make the transition to adulthood and advance the progress of their societies.

This research sought to take stock of the existing and available assets for the promotion of youth civic engagement in Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. The overarching conclusion is that although youth civic engagement policies and programs are at different stages of development across the region and each country has a variety of assets available to foster the growth of this field, which is ripe for strategic investment on the part of governments and international donors.

INGOs already have a substantial presence in the region but their involvement must grow in the years to come if youth civic engagement opportunities are to expand. The involvement of INGOs is critical because they bring international best practices, resources and prestige when they engage governments and local NGOs across the region. In order to be sustainable, however, this investment should seek partnership opportunities to build the capacity of local volunteers and local organizations to advance their own goals and priorities with regard to youth civic engagement.

In addition, investment in youth civic engagement in South Asia must incorporate the expertise of dedicated professionals in the local NGO sector who have decades of knowledge and experience indispensable for the development of programs that are appropriate in diverse local contexts. Local NGOs have themselves pioneered innovative youth civic engagement models that could be of significant benefit to governments, INGOs and the field of youth civic engagement globally. Educational institutions can also play an important role in promoting civic culture through service-learning programs and by promoting other forms of voluntary service.

Working together, these institutions can leverage their overall impact by investing in youth civic engagement, helping young people acquire the skills and abilities necessary for adulthood, and developing their human and social capital. The next two decades are critical for young people in South Asia and ultimately the long-term social, economic, and political health of the region. Now is the time to invest in youth civic engagement in order to empower the present generation to become the leaders of tomorrow.
Appendix A. Institutions Supporting Youth Civic Engagement

Based on previous research, ICP identified a number of institutions that typically support youth civic engagement programs and activities, or which can be mobilized to create the conditions necessary for maximizing opportunities for youth engagement. Although not exhaustive, the following list briefly summarizes the roles that each institution often fulfills. The results are summarized in the table below.

Governments (local, state, and national): The role of government in supporting or inhibiting civic engagement is critical. When a government creates the space for citizen participation, a more robust civil society develops to foster greater civic engagement. At the very least, governments should adopt a tolerant attitude toward civic engagement. Better yet, governments can actively support civic engagement and volunteerism by creating an enabling and supportive policy environment. By funding and encouraging civic participation and volunteerism, governments can prepare their sectoral or national policies and strategies; governments support youth civic engagement and volunteerism by creating an enabling and supportive policy environment. By funding and encouraging civic participation and volunteerism, governments can prepare their population for productive employment and responsible citizenship while including them in achieving national and community development goals. Some examples of the way governments can support youth civic engagement include:

- Adopting the universal declaration of human rights including its provision for the right of individuals to form associations;
- Devising a legal and/or institutional framework that gives such associations a distinct legal status; the framework should outline the norms of behavior that such associations must adhere to; it should also govern the relationship between the government and the civil sector;
- Encouraging the formation of civic associations by providing them with legal standing and preferential tax status (i.e. non-profit status);
- Establishing youth ministries or equivalent official government agencies;
- Forming youth bodies such as councils, parliaments, advisory boards, commissions, or forums;
- Appointing youth representatives to other government bodies;
- Creating youth policies, acts or constitutional articles, or policies supporting youth participation and civic engagement specifically;
- Incorporating youth perspectives and foci into other sectoral or national policies and strategies;
- Creating a positive legislative environment for civil society and volunteering;
- Signing and enforcing related international conventions (such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child);
- Creating school-based community service requirements or mandatory curricula relating to youth civic engagement;
- Establishing government-sponsored and government-run programs for young people; and
- Funding non-governmental or school-based programs promoting youth civic engagement.

Governments are particularly well placed to mobilize large numbers of young people from both rural and urban areas as well as to establish cross-sector partnerships to address the most pressing local and national challenges. Governments may also achieve high visibility for programs. Well-designed and implemented government policies can have a significant, lasting impact on both participants and communities to a higher degree than non-governmental programs. However, challenges that governments commonly face in developing effective civic engagement programs and policies include:

- Ensuring real opportunities for young people to express their views and to influence decisions in these processes and programs as opposed to token representation;
- Striking a balance between achieving national priorities and decentralizing policies and programs to respond to local needs and to ensure local youth participation;
- Financing policies and programs over the medium- and long-term;
- Maintaining policies and programs despite changes in government;
- Achieving broad-based government support for policies and programs and inter-ministerial cooperation for their design and implementation; and
- Ensuring that programs do not become politicized, partisan, or nationalistic.

Youth organizations: Youth organizations often include student associations, youth clubs, mass youth organizations (youth unions, federations and political parties), youth councils (local, national and regional), youth media, youth-led or youth-focused organizations that form around specific issues such as HIV/AIDS, street children, etc, and activity-based organizations such as Scouts associations. Youth organizations can be effective in supporting large numbers of young people to work on important local and global issues. Youth clubs are a particularly replicable model for structuring decentralized, low-cost and inclusive youth civic engagement programs. They typically have a high degree of youth involvement (i.e. are often youth led), but they also may be less effective than more formal, professional and structured programs. Nonetheless, there is perhaps no greater way for young people to become engaged than to start or join an organization or club and seek to address issues that are important to them.

Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs): Many local NGOs support youth civic engagement activities in the region. While local NGOs may be particularly equipped to understand the context for youth civic engagement in each community —informing program priorities and strategies for mobilizing young people—they are often under-resourced. Local NGOs can be big or small, focus on a variety of issues and have varying levels of infrastructure, resources and grounding in the communities they serve. Other challenges for local NGOs include restrictive or unsupportive policy environments as well as logistical and financial constraints for networking with other
stakeholders to share program information and good practices.

International NGOs (INGOs): International NGOs are in a unique position to take advantage of local expertise, while also bringing international resources and expertise. INGOs can work with local governments, local NGOs, and various development agencies and international organizations to develop and support high quality civic engagement programs. Although typically not as grassroots as local NGOs or as large-scale as government programs, INGOs often share innovative and proven program models across diverse country contexts. In doing so, they enhance the versatility of their own program models, whilst sharing and spreading best practices internationally. In some countries, however, foreign NGOs face a restrictive policy environment and may be denied access by local governments.

Faith-based organizations: Faith-based organizations are able to mobilize young people at the local level and may also tap into national and international networks for larger events, campaigns or projects. At the local level they may be able to generate community-wide participation and support for youth activities, especially in countries where people have trust in religious organizations. However, faith-based organizations may be sectarian in their approach, incorporating religious doctrine into activities. This can dissuade some young people from participating and may exclude young people who are members of other religious groups. Also, faith-based organizations tend to be top-down or hierarchical in their approach to young people, which can limit the opportunities for youth leadership and participation. There is a growing movement of interfaith service organizations which engage community members of various faiths to create understanding and respect through serving their communities.

Schools and universities: Schools and universities can play an enormously important role in promoting civic participation. Increasingly primary and secondary schools as well as universities and technical colleges are incorporating service-learning, community-based learning, civic education, and youth participation into classroom-based and extra-curricular activities. Universities are also conducting research on youth needs, attitudes and forms of participation. In some cases, the impetus for these activities comes from teachers and administrators; in other cases governments, international organizations, or young people themselves are the driving forces. Generally, school-based programs are relatively inexpensive and able to mobilize large numbers of young people; however, they often do not reach those young people who are most at-risk, including drop-outs or those who do not go on to secondary or higher education. Additionally, there is an ongoing debate as to whether obligatory service-learning programs can be considered a form of volunteerism.

International volunteer-involving agencies: Some important international volunteer-sending agencies include the Peace Corps (a United States government program), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), Volunteers Service Overseas (VSO), and Global Exchange (US), among many others. While volunteers participating in these programs may not exclusively be young people and are generally not from the countries in which they serve, in many instances they are developing youth civic engagement programming at the community level. Peace Corps is particularly interested in developing service-learning programs for local young people. However, as previously mentioned, these programs are often high-cost and exclusionary (limited to university graduates, for example). For these reasons, it is particularly important that agencies involve local, disadvantaged young people in projects, as several of the organizations mentioned above are doing.

Other international agencies: International organizations are often better able than local NGOs to mobilize more sustained resources and to participate in relevant international networks. In some cases, they may also have better access to government officials and may be able to work around restrictive legislative environments for civil society organizations. Challenges for international organizations include shifting priorities of their headquarters and local governments, understanding the local contexts of each of the countries in which they operate, and sharing information within large and sometimes bureaucratic organizations.

Corporations: Sometimes corporations run social projects directly, but more often invest resources in other organizations to carry out projects. They are often able to mobilize significant funds, but may have less direct control over program goals, structures, and outcomes. In some cases, corporations may support projects to increase the human capital of potential future employees, such as youth education or leadership projects in communities from which corporations draw their work forces. The level of corporate involvement may also depend on the policy environment (applicable tax incentives) as well as the overall ‘culture of philanthropy’. Typically corporations can be convinced to support youth civic engagement when NGOs and international organizations seek partnerships to advance specific projects.

ICP’s asset mapping approach seeks to identify the roles played by these and other institutions in promoting youth civic engagement. In the case of South Asia, research focused primarily on mapping assets in the government and policy environment, the local and international NGO sector, and youth organizations. Less emphasis was placed on identifying the role played by other institutions that commonly support youth civic engagement such as corporations and faith-based organizations. Although not the focus of the paper, some educational institutions and international volunteer agencies were also identified.
Table 7: Institutions Supporting Youth Civic Engagement, Strengths, Weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of institution</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weakness</th>
</tr>
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| Governments                         | • Ability to mobilize large numbers of young people on a national scale  
• Potential ability to form cross-sector partnerships to address critical local and national needs  
• Access to national and international funds  
• Ability to mobilize media for program and policy visibility  
• Development of policy to ensure supportive environment for youth civic engagement | • May be unable or unwilling to finance programs over the medium- and long-term  
• Inability to maintain continuity of programs and policies because of frequent changes in government  
• Potential inability to implement cross-sector and multi-party partnerships for policies and programs  
• Difficulty in ensuring youth voice and local participation |
| Youth Organizations                  | • Often have wide networks  
• May have decentralized, low-cost and replicable operating structures  
• More likely to provide opportunities for youth leadership and empowerment | • In some cases, mass organizations aim to create good members or good party members (in the case of youth wings of political parties) rather than to empower young people on a non-partisan basis  
• Difficulty accessing resources |
| Local NGOs                           | • Better understanding of local contexts and youth needs  
• Often empower young people to a greater extent than other kinds of institutions | • Difficulty accessing sustained funding  
• Limited impact due to narrow focus of projects, limited geographical scope, fewer participants, and limited funding  
• Constrained by government regulations and policy environments  
• Difficulty of networking with other stakeholders due to financial and logistical constraints |
| Faith-based organizations            | • Often have extensive local, national and international networks  
• Generate confidence among both young people and adults | • May exclude young people who are not members of a particular faith (bonding rather than bridging social capital)98  
• Tend to be top-down |
| Schools and universities             | • Access to large numbers of young people  
• Access to resources and infrastructure to carry out programs and research  
• Large-scale programs are often lower cost per participant  
• May be able to integrate civic engagement components into curricula making it more likely for young people to participate | • Limited to those young people who are in-school (and in the case of universities, those who can access higher education)  
• Obligatory nature of some programs undermines sense of volunteerism |
| International volunteer agencies     | • Programs may generate bridging social capital (cross-cultural understanding)  
• Longer-term programs often have high impact both on participants and communities  
• May contribute to capacity building  
• Able to access more sustainable sources of funding  
• May be able to demonstrate good practice from other countries | • Often higher cost per participant  
• Exclusionary due to costs or requirements  
• In some cases, most significant benefits are gained by the international volunteer rather than the local community  
• May have more limited understanding of local needs and culture |
| Other international agencies or organizations | • Access to resources and decision-makers  
• Generally better able to negotiate certain government restrictions  
• Ability to network with governments, local organizations and other international agencies to promote cross-sector programming and to share lessons learned  
• Access to media for program visibility | • May be bureaucratic  
• Shifting organizational and government priorities  
• Possible restrictive policy environment and denied access by local governments |
| Corporations                         | • Access to resources and decision-makers  
• Can provide young people with valuable work experience and work place skills. | • Primary goal may be to improve a company's bottom line and secondarily to have a positive impact on the community  
• Often less direct control over programs  
• In some cases, may be removed from local realities |

98 “The distinction between “bonding” social capital (that is, ties within a given social or ethnic group) and “bridging” social capital (that is, ties between groups) is very important. A society that has only bonding (social capital) and no bridging (social capital) is in serious danger of coming apart. So a modern pluralistic democracy has special needs for bridging social capital. But it is a fact about the human condition that bridging social capital is harder to build than bonding social capital-‘birds of a feather flock together’. So leaders in every modern society today need to be especially concerned about fostering networks and trust that bridge divisions.” Putnam, Robert D. *Education, Diversity, Social Cohesion and Social Capital* Presentation to OECD Education Ministers: Raising the Quality of Education for All, Dublin, March 18, 2004.
Appendix B. First-Round Questionnaire

Instructions

Please complete this questionnaire and return it to Innovations in Civic Participation:
  By e-mail to Alex Etra: etra@icicp.org
  By fax: +1-202-833-8581
  By mail: 1776 Massachusetts Ave, NW Suite 201,
          Washington, DC 20036 USA

Deadline for submissions is: February 18th, 2008
Please note: Surveys completed after this time will not be entered into the Award of Excellence competition.

Background and Contact Information:
Please provide the following information about your organization and program.

Organization Name:

Country:

Activity/Program Name:

Mailing Address:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Website:

Personal Information:
Please provide the following information about yourself in case we need to contact you for any clarifications.

Your Name:

Your Title:

Organization:

Country:

Relationship to the profiled program:

Email:

Telephone:
Part One: Program Information

1. Type of program (Check all that apply)

- **Community Service**: main goal of the activity is service to a community, including working with an individual or group of individuals within a particular community.
- **Service-learning**: goals include service to the community as well as achieving specific educational objectives. Can be school-based or non-school based.
- **International volunteer service**: volunteers offer services to communities in countries other than their own.
- **Mutual Aid**: providing assistance and support to others within the same community or social group—the distinction between the beneficiary and the volunteer may be less clear.
- **Governance**: representation or consultation on local or national government bodies, or other community or local councils or bodies which may not be government supported.

- **Advocacy/Campaigning**: groups working to raise public consciousness, working to change legislation or public policy.
- **Youth Media**: Video, radio, film, or newspaper production by youth.
- **Social Entrepreneurship**: creating new solutions to social problems, making products or providing services where the profits are not for the benefit of an individual or family but rather for a community.
- **Leadership Training and Practice**: Workshops, training, and development of youth community leaders.
- Other—please describe: _________________________

2. Areas of Service to the Community (check all that apply):

- Fighting extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieving universal primary education
- Reducing child mortality empowering women
- Improving maternal health
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Promoting gender equality and
- Ensuring environmental sustainability
- Developing a global partnership or network for development
- Emergency response and preparedness
- Peace building / promoting conflict resolution/preventing conflict
- Ensuring public safety

- Infrastructure: building schools, bridges, housing, sewer systems, electrical poles or any other kind of physical infrastructure.
- Matching participants to programs: a program through which domestic and/or international volunteers can find volunteer activities in which to participate.
- Social services: prevention / care for abused people, street children, elderly, disabled populations, etc.
- Other—please specify: _________________________

3. Scope of program

- Local
- National
- International
4. Type Of Organization Conducting The Program (Check All That Apply)
   - Local or national government agency
   - International non-governmental organization (NGO)
   - Faith-based NGO
   - Non-faith-based NGO
   - Community-based informal organization
   - Business or corporation
   - School or higher education institution
   - Organized youth association
   - Non-formal youth group / movement
   - Youth council / parliament
   - Individual young person / people
   - Political party
   - Labor union
   - International network
   - Student union
   - Other: __________________________

Please describe any additional relevant information about the organization, including relationships with partners or other stakeholders and organizations:

5. Please list and explain the goals and objectives of the program.

6. Briefly describe specific program activities (100-200 words):

7. Number and age range of full-time/paid program staff:

8. Number and age range of volunteer staff:

9. Geographic area(s) where program operates:

10. Year program was started:

11. What is your current annual budget (if applicable)? Please list the budget for the program being described, not the overall budget for the organization running the program:

12. What does the program cost per participant (if applicable)

13. Please list you major funding sources (i.e., government, participation fees/member dues, products and services, international donors, or other organizations):
Part Two: Participant Information
This section is designed to get a better profile of the program participants and their role in the program.

1. Is participation in the program mandatory or voluntary (as in the case of a mandatory national service program or as a prerequisite for matriculation at an educational institution or the acquisition of professional certification)
   - ☐ Mandatory
   - ☐ Voluntary

2. Total number of program participants last year (2006) ____________________ (please estimate if necessary)

3. Total number of program participants (if known) since the program was launched

4. Composition of participants (age, gender, socioeconomic background, education, rural/urban)
   Check all that apply. Please note, we will not include programs comprised mainly of youth older than 24.

   4a. Program participants are between the ages of:
      - ☐ 10-14
      - ☐ 15-19
      - ☐ 20-24
      - ☐ 24 or older

   4b. Percentage of program participants who are male:
      - ☐ 0-25
      - ☐ 25-50
      - ☐ 50-75
      - ☐ 75-100

   4c. Percentage of program participants who are female:
      - ☐ 0-25
      - ☐ 25-50
      - ☐ 50-75
      - ☐ 75-100

   4d. Average education level (number of years) attained by program participants:
      - ☐ 0
      - ☐ 1-6
      - ☐ 7-12
      - ☐ more than 12

   4e. Percentage of program participants from rural areas:
      - ☐ 0-25
      - ☐ 25-50
      - ☐ 50-75
      - ☐ 75-100

   4f. Socio-economic status of participants is generally:
      - ☐ Lower class
      - ☐ Lower-middle class
      - ☐ Middle class
      - ☐ Upper class

5. What, if any, are the incentives for young people to participate in the program? Check all that apply

   - ☐ Monetary compensation for expenses incurred through participation
     (if yes, please specify amount):
   - ☐ Educational awards or scholarships
   - ☐ Professional certifications
   - ☐ Awards or other recognition
   - ☐ Microfinance or grants for developing projects or businesses during or after program completion
   - ☐ Direct or preferential job placement
   - ☐ Other (please specify): ____________________

99 Please note that “participant” refers only to those youth who actively engage in the volunteer activity, as opposed to youth who may be recruited or trained, but drop out before beginning the program.
6. Duration of participation

6a. Average number of hours young people participate in the program per week:
☐ 1-4 hours  ☐ 5-10 hours  ☐ over 10 hours

6b. Average number of months young people participate in the program (if applicable):
☐ less than 1  ☐ 1-3  ☐ 4-6  ☐ 7-12  ☐ more than 12 months

7. Goals for youth participants (list all relevant goals in order of importance, 1 being the most important):

☐ Life skills development: Creative thinking, critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving, self-confidence, communication and interpersonal skills, conflict management, cooperation/teamwork, managing one's emotions, contribution (civic values), empathetic skills, respect, responsibility.
☐ Citizenship/social responsibility: Voting, activism, knowledge of human rights, participation in civic life and community affairs.
☐ Employability: Improving young people's employment, entrepreneurial, and personal skills as a way to build capacity for productive work.
☐ Strengthening social capital: Increasing racial or socioeconomic cohesiveness; for example, a summer camp program that mixes young people of all income levels.
☐ Prevention of risky behaviors: Education on sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS. Prevention of drug use or criminal behavior.
☐ Rehabilitation: Second-chance and reintegration of at-risk youth or young people with criminal records.
☐ Other: please describe: ___________________________ ___________________________

8. What role(s) do participants (i.e. young people) play in the organization or program (Check all that apply)

☐ Volunteer ☐ Peer educator/counselor
☐ Member ☐ Mentor
☐ Advisory Board Member ☐ Policy analyst/advocate
☐ Manager/leader ☐ Conference planner/participant
☐ Program design ☐ Media designer/public relations
☐ Program implementation ☐ Other: ___________________________
☐ Researcher
☐ Monitor/Evaluator

9. Briefly describe the role young people play in the program (100-200 words). How has the program empowered youth (to participate in the program, community affairs, etc.)?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Part Three: Short Answer
This section is designed to gauge the impact and originality of your program. We are looking for in depth narrative responses to these questions. Responses should be around 100-200 words.

1. Describe what you see as the key successes (greatest impacts) and main challenges facing the program. How is program impact measured, if applicable? What can be done to improve the program?

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2a. Does the country in which your program is based have a national youth service policy\textsuperscript{1} or youth? civic engagement/participation policy?

☐ Yes  ☐ No (skip to question 2b)

i. If yes, what is the policy called? ___________________________________________________

ii. What form does it take? (check box below)

☐ Legislation  ☐ Regulation  ☐ Decree  ☐ Strategy  ☐ Other: __________

2b. If there is no current National Youth Service or Civic Engagement/Participation Policy, is there a movement to create one?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

i. If yes, please describe this movement and its potential outcomes.

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

3. Is the national youth service or civic engagement/participation policy independent from a more general national youth policy?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

4. Please describe the national youth service or civic engagement/participation policy (as you are aware of it) in as much detail as possible. Relevant information might include the organization, ministry, or agency responsible for implementing the policy; the year the policy was enacted; the type of service or mechanisms for participation outlined in the policy; the scope of the policy [local/regional/national/international]; and any other information you deem relevant. The purpose of the question is to learn what impact (if any) the policy has on youth civic engagement/participation in your country (100-200 words).

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Please complete this questionnaire and return it to Innovations in Civic Participation:
By e-mail to Alex Etra: etra@icicp.org
By fax: +1-202-833-8581
By mail: 1776 Massachusetts Ave, NW Suite 201, Washington, DC 20036 USA
Deadline for submissions is: February 18, 2008

\textsuperscript{1} The term National Youth Service Policy (NYSP) refers to a governmental legislation, regulation, or set of strategies that provide opportunities for youth to engage in civic service. NYSPs create and implement programs that operate locally (e.g. in the community), nationally (e.g. in a town other than the local community), or internationally (e.g. in another country).
Appendix C: South Asia Mapping

Global Survey of Youth Service Programs and Policies

Welcome to ICP’s Global Youth Service Program and Policy Survey!

This survey is designed to:
1. Gather information about youth service programs and policies from program managers, funders, young volunteers, or community members and add it to our online database;
2. Provide a forum for sharing information about national youth service programs and policies around the world among the community of youth service practitioners and researchers.

All you have to do is answer the questions on this survey and submit your information and ICP will add your information to our ever expanding global youth service database available at www.icicp.org/Resources.

The survey should only take about 15 minutes.

2. What is youth voluntary service?

ICP is interested in learning about programs that engage youth in voluntary service. These programs have a variety of characteristics in terms of the goals, target populations, participants, issues addressed etc. If you operate, participate in, or fund a youth service program, please complete the following questions:

1. Does your program engage young people (ages 10-30) in voluntary service? If not, please do not complete the rest of the survey.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

Program Basics

Program Name

Organization Name (if different from Program Name)

Country in which the program operates

Please provide relevant contact information for your program or the organization operating the program

Address

City

Telephone

Email

Website
Program Information

In what year did this program begin?

Volunteers in your program are generally...

At what level does your program operate?

Program Information

☒  Between 10 and 15 years old
☒  Between 15 and 20 years old
☒  Between 20 and 25 years old
☒  Older than 25

Additional Comments:

What type of organization primarily implements this program? Select a max. of 3 options

☒  Government (local, regional, or national government ministry or independent body established by the government to conduct the program)
☒  Non-Faith Based NGO (non-profit organization with no affiliation with any religious groups or governments)
☒  Faith-based NGO (non-profit non-governmental organization with formal ties to one or more religious traditions)
☒  Community-based NGO (i.e. created by the community it serves)
☒  International NGO (non-profit non-governmental organization that operates in more than one country, most often is based outside the country in which the program is being implemented)
☒  School, College, or University Business or Corporation (private sector, for-profit organization)
☒  International Organization (members of the organization are governments, i.e. World Bank, UN)
☒  Youth Council (formal council composed of young people with a role in governance at the organizational, local or national levels)
☒  Non-Formal Youth Group (group of young people engaged in community affairs but not part of a formal organizational structure)
☒  Political Party (a political organization that seeks to attain varying degrees of political power within a government)
☒  Labor Union (a legally sanctioned, formally organized association of workers who have united to represent their collective views for wages, hours, and working conditions)
☒  International Network/Association (formal association of individuals or organizations from countries around the world)
☒  Individual (not representing any organization)
☒  Other (please specify)

Is this program based on/supported by a national youth service policy?

☒  Yes ☐  No

Other (Please specify):
What form of civic engagement do young people participate in through this program (the program may promote others, but not actually do them)? Select a max. of 3 options.

- Government (local, regional, or national government ministry or independent body established by the government to conduct the program)
- Non-Faith Based NGO (non-profit organization with no affiliation with any religious groups or governments)
- Faith-based NGO (non-profit non-governmental organization with formal ties to one or more religious traditions)
- Community-based NGO (i.e. created by the community it serves)
- International NGO (non-profit non-governmental organization that operates in more than one country, most often is based outside the country in which the program is being implemented)
- School, College, or University
- Business or Corporation (private sector, for-profit organization)
- International Organization (members of the organization are governments. i.e. World Bank, UN)
- Youth Council (formal council composed of young people with a role in governance at the organizational, local or national levels)
- Non-Formal Youth Group (group of young people engaged in community affairs but not part of a formal organizational structure)
- Political Party (a political organization that seeks to attain varying degrees of political power within a government)
- Labor Union (a legally sanctioned, formally organized association of workers who have united to represent their collective views for wages, hours, and working conditions)
- International Network/Association (formal association of individuals or organizations from countries around the world)
- Individual (not representing any organization)

Other (Please specify):

Is this program based on/supported by a national youth service policy?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Other (Please explain):

What form of civic engagement do young people participate in through this program (the program may promote others, but not actually do them)? Select a max. of 3 options

- Leadership Development (programs that are youth-led or involve leadership training)
- International Service (formal, structured volunteering in a country other than one’s own)
- Youth Media (programs involving young people in using media or technology)
- Mutual Aid (providing assistance and support to others within the same community or social group — the distinction between the beneficiary and the volunteer may be less clear)
- Participation in Civic Associations (formal participation by youth in existing civil society organizations. For example, national youth councils and municipal commissions. NOT volunteer groups)
- Peer Education (young people teaching other young people, mentorships etc)
- Service-Learning (young people apply academic skills to solving real-world issues, linking established learning objectives with genuine needs. Can be school-based or non-school based)
- Occasional Volunteering (volunteering for less than 2 hours each week for two months)
- Governance (representation or consultation on local or national government bodies)
- Social Entrepreneurship (creating new solutions to social problems, making products or providing services where the profits are not for the benefit of an individual or family)
- Advocacy/Campaigning (working to raise public consciousness, working to change legislation or public policy)
- Formal long-term service (volunteering for at least 20 hours each week of service for 3 months or longer with minimal or no compensation)
- Part-time Volunteering (volunteering that is less than formal, long-term volunteer service, but more than 2 hours each week for two months)

Other (Please specify):
On average, how long do youth participate in the program?
☐ 0-1 month ☐ 1-6 months ☐ 6-12 months ☐ More than 12 months

What are the primary goals for the program’s participants? Select a max. of 3 options
☐ Capacity Building (enhancing leadership skills, training etc.)
☐ Citizenship/Social Responsibility (voting, activism, volunteering, civic engagement)
☐ Education about the Community (general education about issues facing the community and ways young people can contribute)
☐ Employability (improving young people’s employment, entrepreneurial, and personal skills as a way to build capacity for productive work)
☐ Life Skills Development (Creative thinking, critical thinking, decision-making / problem solving, self-confidence, communication and interpersonal skills, conflict management, cooperation / teamwork, managing one’s emotions, contribution (civic values), empathetic skills, respect, responsibility)
☐ Prevention of risky behaviors (sex-education, disease prevention, anti-drug or gang etc.)
☐ Rehabilitation (second-chance and reintegration of at-risk youth or young people with criminal records)
☐ Social Consciousness (knowledge of human rights, awareness raising about social issues)
☐ Strengthening Social Capital (increasing racial or socioeconomic cohesiveness, peace building etc.; for example, a summer camp program that mixes young people of all income levels)

Other (Please specify):

Are there any incentives provided to youth to participate in the program? (i.e. scholarships or awards, stipends, housing, training etc.)?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Other (Please specify):

What are the primary focus areas of your program (i.e. what issues do volunteers seek to address)? Select a max. of 3 options
☐ Community Development (building schools, bridges, housing, sewer systems, electrical poles or any other kind of physical infrastructure)
☐ Democracy Promotion (good governance and transparency, participation in governance, voting and other active citizenship behaviors)
☐ Education (focus on improving general education and literacy)
☐ Emergency Response and Preparedness (responding to natural disasters or crises and preparing communities to deal with these phenomena)
☐ Environment (ensuring environmental sustainability and responding to global climate change)
☐ Human Rights (poverty reduction, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, treatment of indigenous groups)
☐ Peace Building/Conflict Resolution (promoting conflict resolution and prevention)
☐ Public Health/Disease Prevention (reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases)
☐ Public Safety (providing security or educating about issues of security)
☐ Social Services (prevention / care for abused people, street children, elderly, disabled populations, etc)
☐ Unemployment (addressing chronic joblessness through training/skill building)

Other (Please specify):

In addition to program information ICP is interested in learning about the policy environment in which programs are embedded and the impact that the policy climate has on your program (if any).

Do you have information about national youth service policy in your country? Are you willing to answer a few additional questions about youth service policy?
☐ Yes ☐ No
Policy Environment

In addition to program information, ICP is working to gather information about the policy environment in which your program operates. The following questions are thus designed to learn more about the policy environment and how it impacts (or does not impact) your program. For the purpose of this survey a national youth service policy is defined as “A government-based legislation, law, regulation, decree, or strategy that has been approved and implemented for the purpose of involving young people in community service, volunteerism, or service learning.”

**Does your country have a national youth service policy?**

- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t know

If yes, please describe:

**If your country does not have a national youth service policy is there any organized effort to create one?**

- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t know

If yes, please describe:

**Does your country have a national youth policy (i.e. a general policy toward young people)?**

- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t know

**Does the general national youth policy have any service component to it?**

- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t know

If yes, please describe:

**If your country has a national youth service policy, does it affect your program? How?**

__________________________

__________________________

**If your government does not have a national youth service policy do you think it should? What could the government change so as to encourage youth voluntary service? Should the government get involved in youth voluntary service? Why or why not?**

__________________________

__________________________

Please fill out these fields to provide us with your contact information so, we can contact you if we need to clarify any of your responses or need additional feedback. Also, you may contact us to learn more about this project or if you have additional information you would like to share by emailing etra@icicp.org Thank You!

Only your email address is required so that we may contact you for further clarification. If you wish to remain anonymous leave your name blank.

Name:  

Company:  

Address:  

City/Town:  

State:  

ZIP/Postal Code:  

Country:  

Email Address:  

Phone Number:
Appendix D. Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Government Officials, Civil Society Leaders and Youths

Questions for Government Officials
1. How are young people viewed by their communities, by civil society organizations, or government officials? Why are they viewed that way?
2. What would you say is the definition/connotation of “youth civic engagement?”
3. What would you say is the definition/connotation of “youth voluntary service?”
4. Are young people “civically engaged?” Do young people engage in voluntary service? Are they engaged in the work of Voluntary Organizations (VO’s)? Why or why not? In what ways? To what extent?
   a. If yes…
      i. What form does their engagement take? In what ways do they engage? What kinds of voluntary services do they provide?
      ii. Do young people get engaged in the work of VO’s? What is the mechanism through which they become civically engaged (such as school, community organization, international aid agency, government program, political party or youth-led movement)?
   b. If no…
      i. What issues do they address through their service? What services do they provide? What issues do you think matter most to young people? If no…
      ii. Why are young people not more engaged in voluntary service or the work of VO’s? Why are youth not more civically engaged? 
      iii. What could be done to involve more youth in voluntary service?
5. What do you think are the key factors in determining the extent of youth civic engagement and voluntary service?
6. How would you describe the government’s approach to youth development? To youth civic engagement? How does the government view young people in relation to VO’s?
7. In your view, what kinds of issues (i.e. services) should young volunteers help address?
8. What role can young people play in national development?
9. Should the government support youth volunteering and/or VO’s? What role (if any) should the government play in supporting youth civic engagement through voluntary service? How, specifically could the government better support youth voluntary service? Should the government actually run programs on youth civic engagement or youth voluntary service?
10. What would you suggest is the best way to enhance youth civic engagement and voluntary service in your country/community?

Questions for Young People/Volunteers
1. How do you think people in the community (adults), voluntary organizations (VO’s) or government officials view you and/or young people more generally? Why do you think you are viewed that way? Do you think the view is accurate? Why or why not?
2. What does “civic engagement” mean to you? Can you give an example?
3. What does “voluntary service” mean to you? Can you give an example?
4. Would you consider yourself “civically engaged?” Do you volunteer or work with any voluntary organizations?
   a. If yes…
      i. In what way(s) are you ‘civically engaged?’ What kind of volunteering do you do?
      ii. How did you become civically engaged (i.e. through school, a community organization, an international aid agency, a government program, or friends or other young people)?
      iii. Are you engaged in the work of VO’s? Which VO do you work with? How much [time] do you volunteer?
      iv. What issues do you seek to address by volunteering?
      v. What issues matter most to you? What issues would you like to address as a volunteer?
      vi. What issues would you like VO’s to address? Would you like to or consider working for a VO?
b. If no…
   i. Would you like to volunteer? Do you have an interest in volunteering? Why or why not?
   ii. What factors prevent you from volunteering or supporting a VO? Why do you suppose you are not more
civically engaged?
   iii. How do you think you could become more involved in volunteering? What would it take to get you to volunteer?
5. Do you feel that the government supports young volunteers? Are you aware of any form of support the government gives
for volunteering? Does the government support your volunteer work?
6. What could the government do to help you as a volunteer? What could the government do to help you address the issues that
matter most to you?
7. What could be done (by international organizations or VO’s) to support your work as a volunteer? What could be done to help
you become more ‘civically engaged?’ How can aid agencies or NGO’s help you address the issues that matter to you?

Questions for Civil Society Leaders
1. How are young people viewed by their communities, by NGO/VO leaders, or government officials? Why are they viewed
that way?
2. What would you say is the definition/connotation of “youth civic engagement?”
3. What would you say is the definition/connotation of “youth voluntary service?”
4. Are young people “civically engaged?” Do young people engage in voluntary service? Are they engaged in the work of
Voluntary Organizations (VO’s)? Why or why not?
   a. If yes…
      i. What form does their engagement take? In what ways do they engage? What kinds of voluntary services do they
         provide?
      ii. Do young people get engaged in the work of VO’s? What is the mechanism through which they become civically
         engaged (such as school, community organization, international aid agency, government program, political party
         or youth-led movement)?
      iii. What issues do they address through their service? What services do they provide? What issues do you think matter
         most to young people?
   b. If no…
      i. Why are young people not more engaged in voluntary service or the work of VO’s? Why are youth not more
civically engaged?
      ii. What could be done to involve more youth in voluntary service?
5. In your view, what kinds of issues (i.e. services) can young volunteers help address?
6. What do you think are the key factors in determining the extent of youth civic engagement and voluntary service?
7. What role (if any) do young people play in the operations of your program/organization?
8. How would you describe the government’s approach to youth development? To youth civic engagement? How does the
government view young people in relation to VO’s?
9. Should the government support youth volunteering and/or VO’s? What role (if any) should the government play in supporting
   youth civic engagement through voluntary service? How, specifically could the government better support youth voluntary
   service? Should the government actually run programs on youth civic engagement or youth voluntary service?
10. What would you suggest is the best way to enhance youth civic engagement and voluntary service in your country/community?
Appendix E. Focus Group Discussion Guidelines/Questions

Mapping Study of Youth in the Voluntary Sector in South Asia

Guidelines for Focus Groups
May 2008

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) is a Washington-based non-governmental organization that specializes in supporting young people to achieve more effective forms of civic engagement (see www.icicp.org).

ICP is conducting research to map the types of youth civic engagement and voluntary service opportunities in South Asia. The information gathered during these focus groups will be incorporated into a report due for completion in the Fall of 2008. The purpose of the information is to help ICP identify and make recommendations about the way it and other stakeholder can better support young people in their efforts to participate more fully in the voluntary sector and society at large while developing their human capital.

For further information, please contact Innovations in Civic Participation at info@icicp.org or at the address listed below.

Focus Group Purpose:
• Identify factors which encourage and enable young people to engage in activities that are aimed at addressing public or community issues (i.e. civic engagement).
• Identify barriers which discourage young people from participating in these types of activities.
• Identify positive effects of youth civic participation.
• Identify possible opportunities for greater youth engagement, leadership, and empowerment.

Group Composition:
Six to eight young people between the ages of 10 and 24 who are or have recently engaged in voluntary sector OR a small group 3-5 of staff (program managers) from civil society organizations (CSO’s) or voluntary organizations (VO’s) (preferably that work with young volunteers).102

Format:
Before the session, the facilitator should have each participant fill out a short survey (see attachment) on his/her basic demographic information and about his/her participation in volunteer or other civic engagement activities. If this is not possible due to an inability to translate the survey, it can be done verbally at the beginning of the group session, with the facilitator taking notes. The focus group should take approximately 90 minutes. There should be a 10 minute break in the middle. Ideally, participants would be provided with drinks and / or snacks during the break.

Chairs should be arranged in a circle.

Focus groups should be conducted in the language most familiar to the participants, with translators if necessary to support the facilitator. The proceedings may be tape-recorded if that will help to create a summary of the key points. These summaries should be returned in English to ICP by a date that is TBD.

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102 Note: Participants should be selected on the basis of gender and age according to the local cultural setting (separating females from males and youth under age 16 from those between 16 and 24 as deemed appropriate by facilitator). The goal is to obtain a representative sample of opinion and ensure that all participants have the chance to express themselves freely.
Sample Script:

The following is a sample script to give the facilitator some idea of the general tone of the focus group. Facilitators are encouraged to use their own discretion with regard to the conduct of the focus group. Whatever tone or approach is deemed most appropriate is acceptable to ICP but the idea should be to create a space that is relatively informal, in which people feel comfortable and safe to share their ideas freely and in which they feel that their thoughts and comments will be listened to and taken seriously.

Hi everyone! Welcome and thank you all for coming today. My name is ______, and I'm from ________ (or partner organization). I'm going to tell you a little bit more about what we're going to do today, and then I'll give you all an opportunity to introduce yourselves, and we can get going!

My organization ________ is helping to conduct research on youth civic engagement in ________ (country). Today we are gathered together to have an open and constructive discussion about youth civic engagement in ________ (country). That means we're interested in young people's participation in the political process but more specifically we are interested in activities young people engage in that are helpful to the community or society—volunteering, joining a club or group that's working on a project to help others, trying to improve the environment, or working with an NGO/VO. We want to hear directly from young people about their experiences and perceptions of these activities and projects.

This discussion will be part of our research and will be used to write a final report on youth civic engagement. However we want each of you to feel comfortable and safe to discuss your thoughts freely today so all your names and personal information will remain strictly confidential. We should finish within about 1.5 hours, and we will take a short break in the middle of the discussion.

The way this works is that I'm going to ask you a series of open-ended questions to which there are no right or wrong answers. Some of these questions will be about your personal experiences, some will be more general, and some will ask you to think about imaginary people and situations.

[Show the tape recorder] This will make an audio recording of our conversation today so that I can remember what you have to say. No one else will hear the tape, and it's just to help my own memory. I want you to feel completely free and comfortable to discuss personal and sensitive issues. If there's anything I can do to make this a more comfortable space for you, please let me know, either now or at any point during the discussion.

Does anybody have any questions about how this is going to work? Can I have a volunteer to explain what they understand the purpose of this group is? Can I have a volunteer to explain how we'll be using your answers?

All right, before we start let's get to know each other a little better.

[Again the Facilitator should use their discretion about how to “break the ice” and get participants to relax and introduce themselves. The suggested game is only one possibility. The facilitator should feel free to take whatever approach they deem necessary to begin the session. The aim is to introduce participants to one another as well as the facilitator and to create an open, casual and friendly atmosphere in which to begin the discussion]

Option 1:
I want to play a quick game: [Play juggling game as icebreaker / warm-up activity here (see appendix, page 9)

Option 2:
Let's go around the room and let everybody tell us their name and where they're from and share with the group a funny or interesting story about something that you've experienced when participating in a projects to improve your community, school, or country. I'll start.

[End of “Icebreaker”]

Great! Thanks so much for sharing. Does anybody have any more questions before we get started with some more open discussion?
Focus Group/Interview Questions for Young Volunteers and Civil Society Leaders

Questions for Young People
1. How do you think people in the community (adults), voluntary organizations (VO’s) or government officials view you and/or young people more generally? Why do you think you are viewed that way? Do you think the view is accurate? Why or why not?
2. What does “civic engagement” mean to you? Can you give an example?
3. What does “voluntary service” mean to you? Can you give an example?
4. Would you consider yourself “civically engaged?” Do you volunteer or work with any voluntary organizations?
   a. If yes…
      i. In what way(s) are you ‘civically engaged?’ What kind of volunteering do you do?
      ii. How did you become civically engaged (i.e. through school, a community organization, an international aid agency, a government program, or friends or other young people)?
      iii. Are you engaged in the work of VO’s?
      iv. What issues do you seek to address by volunteering? What issues matter most to you? What issues would you like to address as a volunteer?
      v. Would you like to or consider working for a VO?
   b. If no…
      i. Would you like to volunteer? Do you have an interest in volunteering? Why or why not?
      ii. What factors prevent you from volunteering or supporting a VO?
      iii. How do you think you could become more involved in volunteering? What would it take to get you to volunteer?
5. Do you feel that the government supports young volunteers? Are you aware of any form of support the government gives for volunteering? Does the government support your volunteer work?
6. What could the government do to help you as a volunteer? What could the government do to help you address the issues that matter most to you?
7. What could be done (by international organizations or VO’s) to support your work as a volunteer? What could be done to help you become more ‘civically engaged?’ How can aid agencies or NGO’s help you address the issues that matter to you?

Questions for Civil Society Leaders
1. How are young people viewed by their communities, by NGO/VO leaders, or government officials? Why are they viewed that way?
2. What would you say is the definition/connotation of “youth civic engagement?”
3. What would you say is the definition/connotation of “youth voluntary service?”
4. Are young people “civically engaged?” Do young people engage in voluntary service? Why or why not?
   a. If yes…
      i. What form does their engagement take? In what ways do they engage? What kinds of voluntary services do they provide?
      ii. Do young people get engaged in the work of VO’s? What is the mechanism through which they become civically engaged (such as school, community organization, international aid agency, government program, political party or youth-led movement)?
      iii. What issues do they address through their service? What services do they provide? What issues do you think matter most to young people?
   b. If no…
      i. Why are young people not more engaged in voluntary service or the work of VO’s? Why are youth not more civically engaged?
      ii. What could be done to involve more youth in voluntary service?
5. In your view, what kinds of issues (i.e. services) can young volunteers help address?
6. What do you think are the key factors in determining the extent of youth civic engagement and voluntary service?
7. What role (if any) do young people play in the operations of your program/organization?
8. How would you describe the government’s approach to youth development? To youth civic engagement? How does the government view young people in relation to VO’s?
9. Should the government support youth volunteering and/or VO’s? What role (if any) should the government play in supporting youth civic engagement through voluntary service? Should the government actually run programs on youth civic engagement or youth voluntary service?
10. What would you suggest is the best way to enhance youth civic engagement and voluntary service in your country/community?
Regional Study on Youth Civic Engagement in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh
Focus Group Participant Survey

Name: ___________________________ Age: ___________________________ Gender: ___________________________

Are you in school? If so, what grade? ___________________________

What city or town do you live in? ___________________________

1. What kind of volunteer, advocacy, or other service activities have you been involved in at school, in your community, or with other young people?

2. How long have you been participating in these projects? How many hours do you participate each week?

3. What has been your favorite part about participating in these projects?

4. What has been the most difficult part about participating in these projects?

Thank you for helping us by participating in this project! Your thoughts and ideas will be very helpful for the report we're writing.
Icebreaker activity—Group Juggling

Set up & instructions for 1st round of group juggling
- Arrange participants in a circle, not too close, not too far from one another
- Include yourself in the circle
- Explain that you are going to throw a ball to someone—pick someone out & ask their name, then say
  “Hi Freddy, my name is James...here you go!”
- Underarm throw a ball to Freddy
- Freddy then says
  “Thank you James”, picks someone and says
  “Hi X, my name is Freddy...here you go!” [throw]...they say
  “Thank you, Freddy] and on we go.
- If you’re not trying to learn names, skip the naming part & just throw!
- The challenge from here is simply to get the ball thrown around to everyone in the circle, and finally back to the trainer.

2nd round of group juggling
- I then say, “Right, well done, now let’s see if we can that again - making sure we use the same order, and using each other’s
  names. Remember to say the name of the person you are throwing to, and thank the person, by name, for throwing it to you,
  OK?”
- On the second round, most people will be challenged to remember who to throw it to, and the two names! Take it slow, help
  the group out, so that each person has a successful second round.

3rd round of group juggling
- I then say, “Good, so how about we do it again, but this time, let’s see how fast we can do it, OK? Here we go ... Hi Freddy,
  my name is James....” [throw]
- It will go pretty fast this time, and the group will probably feel quite pleased with themselves.

4th round of group juggling — introducing more balls
- I then say, “That’s great, but I think you can do faster than that. Come on, let’s see how we can really go...”
- After the first ball has passed through a few hands, I take a 2nd ball out of my pocket (surprise!), and casually, but earnestly say
  “Hi Freddy...” [throw].
- By now everyone is so well trained, the 2nd ball will automatically keep going, and there will be a detectable sense of
  challenge/excitement.
- After a bit, I introduce a 3rd and 4th ball, up to about 6 balls.
- Usually I let 4 to 6 balls be juggled for a while (note the balls will be coming back again to the trainer - just keep them going).
  A group of 12 adults can usually handle 4 to 6 quite well.
- If I’m feeling conservative, I just let the group have the success of doing this number of balls, and collect them in when that
  seems to have been achieved.
- But usually, once the group seems competent at 4 to 6 balls I gradually then introduce an unmanageable number of balls into
  the juggle & maybe also funny objects (e.g., kids soft toys) which all gets crazy, fun, out of control, etc. and ends in a hilarious
  shambles.
- Generally doesn’t require debriefing.
Appendix F. Organizational Profiles

Nepal

Nagarik Aawaz

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. Psychological services are also offered. 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. Initially, displaced youths are selected from a pool of applicants. Priority is given to victims of conflict, women, applicants from low income groups, high school graduates, ex-combatants and apolitical youths. 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. Training workshops are provided, depending on the youth’s interest and need, and/or the relevance of the program to such needs. While serving their NGOs they receive a monthly stipend for up to one year. Counseling services are offered by NA staff and monthly meetings for the youth are organized for them to share their experiences with one another. Some participants go on to be employed as peace ambassadors at some of NA’s partner NGOs once they complete the year-long program.

This program can be seen to be innovative because of the way in which it combines long-term voluntary service, skill development, training, and support for participants and its overall rehabilitative mission. NA is a relatively small organization that employs 14 staff members, but it has a national scope. It provides a blueprint for further investment in programs that seek to reintegrate demobilized combatants and those displaced by the country’s conflict. For national reconciliation to proceed, NA argues that the society must begin to deal with the legacy of the war and the lives it has affected. NA’s Displaced Youth Program is an inspiring example of how that can be achieved.

Yatra

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. Their 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 years. These young people assess needs and design and implement the program. The program in which young volunteers are directly involved includes orientation workshops with multi-disciplinary youth groups, workshops aimed at building youth leadership among participants in order to encourage the adoption of environmental activities, and peer group learning in colleges and communities. The participants voluntarily form clusters and coordinate a range of local level interactions and discussions. Young volunteers also encourage youth group members to take part in environmental preservation from individual to community level. To date these activities have reached approximately 465 young people.

Yatra is also a founding member of the Association of Youth Organizations Nepal and is involved in the effort to create a National Youth Policy. They have successfully partnered with the Ministry of Environment and this has enabled them to access state funding for their program. Program funding is supplemented by the Lutheran World Federation, the colleges at which programs are located, and through fees that are payable by the young participants.

Youth Engagement in Sustainability (YES)

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. Their initial goal is to change 5,000 bulbs in 1,000 households which would help save 400 KW of energy or the equivalent of about 40 million Rupees (about a half a million dollars).
YES demonstrates how organizations promoting youth civic engagement can partner with the private sector. YES currently receives funding from two CFL companies – Rathi and Philips. Another funding mechanism that YES is currently developing involves promoting “CTB (Change the Bulb) Supporter” and “CTB Business Partner” tags, which companies and individuals can purchase to highlight how they are promoting environmental sustainability by replacing incandescent bulbs with CFLs or buying carbon credits by sponsoring CFLs.

United Youth—Youth Inspiration Program
United Youth’s program, Youth Inspiration, runs youth capacity-building training sessions every Saturday for youth aged 16-24 years. 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 involves 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 youth 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. Eventually it is hoped that with additional funding, some money will be made available to participants to undertake local projects of their own design. This is the first program totally focused on youth and was created in large part in response to demands from youth organizations that the government pay more attention to youth issues. United Youth’s experience in youth empowerment programming has enabled them to secure funding from the Ministry of Youth and Sport. However, communication with the government personnel has been a challenge and at the time of this study the government was not supporting United Youth’s individual action plans. This demonstrates the often difficult financial and political terrain that organizations navigate.

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.

The program could perhaps benefit from placing greater emphasis on peer education (i.e. training the trainers), which could enhance the efficacy of this program and enable it to reach more young people. Because the workshops are so short and the number of participants limited, a peer education design would enable the participants in the program to better share the knowledge they acquire during their training with young people back in their local communities.

Student Partnerships Worldwide (SPW)
Student Partnerships Worldwide is an example of an INGO promoting youth civic engagement and creating a replicable model that can be applied to a variety of local contexts. SPW pioneered precisely the kind of peer education model that many programs could benefit from incorporating in their own activities. Although their work is primarily focused in Africa, SPW also operates highly successful programs in Nepal and India. The process begins with SPW recruiting young volunteers ages 18-28 and providing them with professional training to serve as Volunteer Peer Educators (VPE). After completing their training, VPEs are placed in rural government schools to work with youth and local community leaders to implement local capacity building projects based on a three phase model. Four volunteers (two local and two from outside the community) lead participatory rural appraisals to develop a village profile, identify community needs, and devise an initiative to address them. Often this takes the form of teaching in the school, setting up youth groups and clubs, building networks with local NGOs, and training local youth leaders. In the second phase of the project, VPEs work to build local capacity by shifting project management to youth groups, local schools and community-based organizations. In the final phase, leadership and responsibility is shifted to local stakeholders. Working with local communities, youth clubs, community volunteers, and building a local support network is the strategy used by SPW to ensure the projects sustainability.\(^\text{10}^3\) In order to prepare communities to take responsibility for the programs initiated, SPW staff identifies local partners with the support of local government departments. That way volunteers are normally placed in a conducive work environment. Volunteers are trained to ensure that the programs are participatory and that implementation contributes to local acceptance and project sustainability. After the implementation phase is completed, a consolidation phase follows that focuses on local capacity building to ensure sustainability and a connection to local government structures.
The peer education model combines youth community service with the development of life skills. Although SPW specializes in sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS education, their volunteers undertake additional projects to meet needs in local communities.

SPW has successfully managed to forge partnerships at a national level by presenting SPW’s work as a tool to contribute to Nepal’s development objective “Poverty through Social Mobilization”.

Bangladesh

bEARN

bEARN is seeking to become the lead research, resource development and support body for youth-focused and youth-led development projects in Bangladesh. It is also coordinating a national youth network for facilitating youth-led development projects. bEARN is developing a network that will connect a range of youth-oriented organizations as well as the Department of Youth Development in six metropolitan areas in order to create a database of collaborating organizations. They are also working to provide technical assistance and to build capacity among youth NGOs across the country. 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. bEARN works to adopt an approach to youth capacity building that involves the recruitment of young people from different backgrounds to work on youth participatory projects. Young people serve as interns with bEARN and work with staff on various youth focused initiatives to foster knowledge and skills. During 2006, bEARN engaged 300 participants.

bEARN is closely linked with iEARN and is partially funded through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh. iEARN is a global network that uses information/communications technology (ICT) to enable teachers and youth to collaborate on service-learning projects. In addition to facilitating international exchanges and providing leadership training, bEARN has a Youth Bank (micro-finance and social entrepreneurship) program and a Youth and Gender Policy Project, in which a group of diverse young people are being trained in research methods and gender awareness, to conduct research among young people regarding gender and using this to formulate a gender policy for bEARN and beyond. Through research, consultation, and gender analysis, a team of youth researchers will create this policy - with a vision of higher levels of female participation and greater gender equality within bEARN. From the research conducted and the resultant Gender Policy, bEARN aims to advocate for gender awareness and mainstreaming throughout youth-led and youth-focused organizations across Bangladesh. bEARN seeks to accomplish this through the creation of a youth-friendly Guide to Developing a Gender Policy for other youth-led and focused organizations within the bEARN network.104

Youth Power in Social Action

In addition to bEARN, several other local organizations were identified that received foreign support and were collaborating with INGOs. One such program is Youth Power in Social Action which is partnered with Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) from the UK, Global Xchange Bangladesh, 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 NGOs 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 to help local communities become aware of the service local NGOs can offer. 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.

Relief International

In addition to those already mentioned (i.e., VSO, Global Xchange, and the British Council) there are number of other active INGOs and IOs working on youth issues in Bangladesh. One of the most active INGOs is Relief International (RI). Through their Global Connections and Exchange program, RI works on a variety of issues from disaster relief to education and global connectivity to civil society protection in over a dozen countries including Bangladesh. Its programs in Bangladesh include building ICT capacity in local schools, English language exchange programs, and youth leadership development and exchange programs.

**Bangladesh Association of Youth Researchers (BAYR)**

BAYR’s main focus is on providing ICT training to students from institutions of higher education and thereby building capacity among future community leaders. BAYR primarily works with university students aged 18 - 25 (ensuring that 40% of their participants are female). The program focuses on self development helping young people to harness technology for their self development and obtaining skills that are ultimately used in national development. Its biggest challenge is a shortage of financial resources. BAYR is supported through participation fees, receives a reduced rate for using the British Council’s training center and other computer training centers also offer support.

**NationPulse**

NationPulse grew out of a project by DemocracyWatch and 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 youth 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 youth; 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, team building and group projects. The projects are initiated, planned and implemented entirely by young people. NationPulse primarily works with highly educated and motivated young people. It has experienced challenges in terms of financial resources and logistical support for carrying out its programming.

**Pakistan**

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.

**Youth Engagement Services (YES) Network Pakistan**

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 that express interest in participating in its programs or that it identifies through with the support of partners. It offers training and capacity building for disadvantaged youths (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 works with local stakeholders and international partners such as the International Association of National Youth Service (IANYS).

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.

**Youth Advocacy Network (YAN)**

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). Their 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 organized the first ever Youth Week in Pakistan (December 2007) and played an integral role in organizing the celebrations for International Youth Day on August 12, 2008. Organizing these events has helped YAN increase its reach among young people. Between 2005 and 2007, approximately 100 young people participated in its programming.

YAN offers capacity building support regarding youth sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) issues. It supports skill enhancement around health topics and it conducted orientation workshops in every province of Pakistan. Young people volunteer 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.
Despite YAN’s success they too feel the inevitable social pressures when engaging young people on issues of sexual health and gender sensitization. To address this, YAN’s campaigns include civil society organizations, government departments, universities and media to help build the case for the program’s focus areas. Young people serve as peer educators in their communities and families. 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.

Part of what makes YAN so promising is its belief in involving young people in the delivery of services which they see as “the need of the hour”, especially on sexual and reproductive health issues. YAN tries to involve young Pakistanis in decision-making processes that affect their lives and to ensure their participation at every level of program development. YAN encourages youth and adult partnerships where each age group can be a resource for each other. YAN believes it is essential to shift the perception of youth as recipients of services to active participants involved in leadership.

Centre for Civic Education Pakistan

On the more political side, 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 allows 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. The biggest challenge facing the CCE is the tense security situation in Pakistan and the general animosity (especially in the NWFP) toward foreign funded NGOs. CCE has sought to overcome these obstacles by utilizing the expertise of locals in different phases of the project. “Project Citizen” is a bold attempt to create a national civics education program that draws on the pedagogy of experiential and service learning.

India

There are a number of Indian NGOs and institutions providing opportunities for young people to engage with social issues in a variety of areas. They use different strategies and approaches. Several of these strategies were presented by NGOs at a consultation on Youth Active Citizenship in India organized by Pravah and ICP in 2009. 

105 Broadly one can distinguish between two approaches:

(a) Youth as instruments of change: this approach views youth as a valuable resource who can contribute their time, energy, skills, and labor toward achieving development goals. Often this strategy results in enhanced self esteem and skills. However there is a danger that youth may be instrumentalized and seen as the means to achieve organizational goals without their own specific needs being addressed.

(b) Youth development: this approach focuses on building the leadership potential of youth. It recognizes that personal transformation is as critical as societal transformation. It sees young people as partners in addressing development problems while nurturing their potential as change agents. This approach requires an investment in the development of young people as well, and also ensures that they are being prepared for citizenship roles that will continue beyond their engagement with the organization.

Centre for Science and Environment

The Centre for Science and Environment implements a Green Schools Program that places young people at the center of a practical initiative as change makers. It uses environment education to empower youth to develop their knowledge and skills as citizens and environment managers. In schools where resources are scarce, the audit focuses on ensuring that basic needs are met; in schools where there is plenty, the audit helps prevent wastage. Using a simple audit map and a do-it-yourself handbook on how to audit the management of water, energy and waste within the school premises, the program has drawn students out of the classroom to engage with the school environment. Over a two-year period the project found a startling improvement in conservation practices with young change makers increasing the actual rainfall harvested from 3% to 70%.

105 See Nurturing Youth Active Citizenship in India: Report on a Stakeholder Consultation. New Delhi, 3 – 4 March 2009 Pravah and ICP.
Centre for Youth Development and Activities
The Centre for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA) in Pune works on issues of education, health, livelihood, governance, and volunteer promotion to “build the capacities of young people” to address “the needs of adolescents and youth, initiate policy dialogue, organize for collective action, and realize the rights of deprived.” 107 CYDA focuses on preparing young people to face today’s dynamic cultural and economic environment. In addition to building youth centers with libraries and Internet access, CYDA helps young people get summer internships, is working to develop a peer educator program on HIV/AIDS, and “involve a large number of students and professionals” in volunteer work. On the issue of governance, CYDA created a Youth4Change program to encourage youth to become active citizens and take action on community issues.

Commonwealth Youth Program
The Commonwealth Youth Program (CYP) has its Asia headquarters in Chandigarh, India. CYP is the youth development and empowerment wing of the Commonwealth Secretariat and it seeks to empower young people to develop their full potential and maximize their participation in development and democracy. CYP’s programs include Youth Enterprise in Sustainable Livelihoods, Governance, Development and Youth Networks, and Youth Work Education and Training. CYP also operates a “Youth Caucus” with members in Nepal, Pakistan, and India (as well as other Commonwealth Countries). Finally, CYP undertakes research and publishes a number of important and useful reports on youth volunteerism and empowerment.

Drishti
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. They may have zero literacy skills but have a passion to do something creative in their communities to create change. Drishti believes that community media has the potential to revolutionize grassroots struggles and promote sustainable change. Drishti, which uses media to enable young people to tell their stories, has created young leaders in communities. The participants undergo intensive training over 18 months to learn creative ways of conducting research, writing scripts, shooting film and editing. Daily screenings attract 200 – 500 villagers, many of whom walk 10 km to watch the program. Post-screening discussions are important for the producers because every film makes a call to action which creates debate and aims to inspire people to view things differently. In this way, young people become leaders in their communities—they talk to people about local issues and discuss how communities can take action to improve their lives.

India Youth Climate Network
The Indian Youth Climate Network (IYCN) was founded in 2008 by a small group of dedicated young people who participated in the UN Conference on Climate Change in Bali. IYCN is made up of thousands of young Indians worldwide seeking to raise awareness among India’s youth about the dangers of climate change and some of the potential solutions that young people can work to implement in their local community. IYCN also presents a youth voice in the global debate of climate change, generating awareness about India’s role and how it should address domestic issues. IYCN sent a delegation of 25 young people to the climate negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009 and continues to add a youth voice to the climate change conversation in India and globally.

Jan Vikas
After the Gujarat riots of 2002, Jan Vikas in Ahmedabad initiated a youth development program called Yuva Shakti as a long-term strategy to avoid recurrence of such incidents. The program emphasizes the importance of peace promotion and conflict transformation and addresses the challenges of caste politics. It empowers youth toward understanding themselves and the issues around them, in addition to enabling them to participate in village development and addressing the needs of youth and communities.

Patang
Patang in Orissa implements a Pathmakers program to take young through a journey of “isolation to participation.” Bringing young people together, building their skills, exposing them to issues in their community and equipping them to create change, the program seeks to develop leadership among young people through voluntarism. Patang established a youth resource center and has started a Right to Information clinic to help people understand the RTI Act so that they can use it to make the government more accountable.

Pravah
Pravah, in New Delhi, has been supporting youth active citizenship since 1993. Formed after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Pravah noted that the education system does not prepare young people to engage with social issues and become active citizens. It started working with adolescents in schools and soon extended its outreach to college students. Pravah’s vision is to build youth leadership for social change. Its interventions with students are designed to take participants on a learning journey during which they can develop their skills, engage with social issues and discover their potential as change makers. Pravah also trains teachers, supports youth-led initiatives, incubates new youth organizations, and partners with other organizations to create an ecosystem of organizations that can advocate for youth active citizenship.
Thoughtshop Foundation

The Thoughtshop Foundation in Kolkata empowers young people to run resource centers. These projects have helped youth members learn planning and organization skills. The youth members are also playing the roles of support groups to young people in their community, of change makers in the community, and watch dogs that challenge cases of social injustice, such as early marriage, abusive relationships and school dropouts. As a result of these interventions, the trainers have gained respect in the community and are now being approached by community members when there is a problem. The Thoughtshop Foundation has transformed traditional neighborhood clubs into youth resource centers where young people can meet in friendly, non-threatening spaces—often youth led—and discuss social issues, build skills, organize and implement collection action.

Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action

Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) in Mumbai seeks to create civil society dialogue, bringing different and diverse actors together; to explore creative and effective ways of addressing these new challenges has increased. YUVA has formed the Maharashtra Yuva Manch, a semi political youth organization with a membership of almost 9,000 socially marginalized youth across the state. It conducts an election watch in almost every district of Maharashtra to check discrimination in the electoral roll process and on election day.

Yuva Janaagraha

In Bangalore, Yuva Janaagraha (YJ) is preparing young people to address issues of local urban governance. YJ aims to “orient the youth towards identifying civic [and] social issues and acknowledging their role as citizens capable of creating change.” YJ also seeks to “create willingness to get involved in creating change through constant engagement with the government.” Founded in 2001, YJ strives for inclusion of people’s participation in public governance supporting citizenship and democracy. YJ empowers and enables governments and citizens in urban India to take action on social issues that affect them.
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