International Essay Competition 2008

www.essaycompetition.org

Summary and Winning Essays

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PART I: Description of the International Essay Competition

1. About the International Essay Competition

Young people are not only the future, they are also the now. More than one fifth of the world’s population is between the ages of 12 and 24, with 1.3 billion young people living in developing countries. Over the last two years, consultations and research work have demonstrated that youth can make a difference in fighting poverty through their actions and advocacy activities in youth organizations. Youth are key agents of change, but too often the nature and impact of their projects are not recognized or documented sufficiently, and youth face difficulties being heard and engaging more directly in civic life.

In order to learn how young people can make a difference in reducing poverty, the World Bank launched the International Essay Competition in the year 2004. The Essay Competition is an annual, worldwide competition targeting youth aged between 18 to 25 years and managed by the World Bank Office in Paris. The competition is designed and implemented in partnership with Country Offices of the World Bank and Public Information Centers (PIC) in 84 countries, as well as partners representing universities, NGOs and youth organizations all over the world.

2. Facts and Figures

The Essay Competition 2008 was launched on January 15, 2008. It invited young people from all over the world to reflect on how they make a difference by addressing the question of:

*What can you do to shape the city of your dreams?*

As a result of a massive communication campaign in 104 countries (e.g., involving the distribution of 50,000 leaflets and posters), **3,278 young people from 148 countries submitted their essays.** 95% of the essays came from developing countries. The highest number of submissions came from the United States, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Brazil and India. Essays were submitted in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic.

Between February and July 2008, participants were following the **Essay Competition blog**, which aimed to shed light on the organization and review process, and to engage in a discussion with the essays’ authors. The blog hosted **41 posts by 15 bloggers and more than 1430 comments**, and attracted over **10,640 unique visitors per month**.

- 50,000 leaflets distributed
- 56,800 unique monthly visitors on the website, and 10,640 on the blog
- 3,278 submissions from 148 countries
- 95% from developing countries

3. Essay Competition Partners

The Essay Competition 2008 was organized by the World Bank, the Cities Alliance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, in partnership with 11 prominent academic and civil society organizations:

- World Bank
- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Cities Alliance
- UN Habitat
- United Cities and Local Governments
- Cairo University, Egypt
- Jadavpur University, India
- National Autonomous University of Mexico
- Conciencia Argentina
- The Glocal Forum
- AEGEE Europe
- AIESEC International
- Junior Achievement Worldwide
- Africa Leadership Forum
- Researchers Alliance for Development (RAD)
- Norwegian University of Science and Technology
ESSAY COMPETITION CALENDAR

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<td>Launch of the Essay Competition 2008</td>
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4. Review Process

In April 2008, essays were blind-reviewed by the Essay Competition partners (reviewers), in a three-round reviewing process. Authors of the eight best essays were invited to present their work to the Jury during the Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics (ABCDE) in Cape Town, South Africa, on June 9, 2008.

During the Final Jury, each of the eight finalists had 10 minutes to present his or her paper, followed by a Question and Answer session with the Jury and other finalists. After the presentations, the Jury discussed the presentations and announced the winners.
Winners:

- Winner of the 1st Prize: Saptarshi Pal (India)
- Winner of the 2nd Prize: Menting Wang (China)
- Winner of the 3rd Prize: Maria Angelica Rodriguez (Colombia)

Runners-up:

- Jonah Obajeun (Nigeria)
- Ashis Himali (Nepal)
- Hermann Hokou (Cote d’Ivoire)
- Sara Abreu Machado (Brazil)
- Katarina Marsha Nugroho (Indonesia)

Awards:

- 1st Prize: 4,000 US dollars
- 2nd Prize: 2,000 US dollars
- 3rd Prize: 1,000 US dollars

5. Essay Competition 2008 Award Ceremony

The winners received their awards during the Award Ceremony on June 11, chaired by Danny Leipziger, Vice President, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, The World Bank. Diplomas were awarded by Trevor Manuel, Finance Minister of South Africa. More than 400 people from all over the world attended the Ceremony.
First prize winner Saptarshi Pal addresses the audience at the ABCDE conference

Second prize winner Menting Wang receives her diploma from Trevor Manuel, Minister of Finance, South Africa

Third prize winner Maria Rodriguez addresses the ABCDE conference
The Winners Said... (Award Ceremony)

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I’ll come straight to the point, because I’ve been given very little time. My idea is about how to develop a three-tier development model for my city. This model is youth centric, as I believe that it is very important to have the voice of the future inhabitants of the city heard and streamlined into the development process. Now, this starts with an individual in a school and scales up to include more schools to form a democratic youth council, and from that we invite the mayor to be its nominal head, to involve the civic bodies, which is very important. Now, I believe that a nation goes wrong not because of the actions of the corrupt people, which are very few in numbers, but due to the inactions of the good ones. So it is very important to make those good ones work, and to do that, we came up with various incentives, not really for the youth, but also for the media, corporates, NGOs, I mean, everyone, to get everyone involved in the project, as a form of networking of all the different players of the society, and try to coordinate all projects together. I started off small, but now it is such a huge youth movement. Right now we are working on business plans, to ensure financial stability, like how to sell our projects to the corporates. All that has made me believe that in life, a little goes a long way. To conclude (I took more time, because I am the winner, so I get to talk for longer), I would like to quote Mahatma Gandhi. Because I am an Indian in South Africa, I have to quote Mahatma Gandhi: ‘An ounce of practice is worth more than a ton of lectures’. Thank you very much. Pal Saptarshi, India, winner of the first prize

After my summer internship in a community development NGO in Kolkata, I’m always wondering why India can have more than 1 million active NGOs in the slums, while my country, China, has minimal activity in that sector. So, after realizing that the main pressure is from the suspicious and kind of sensitive attitude from our government, I want to use the power of our college students to help relieve the imbalance in my city Beijing. College students, on the one hand, know little about the real picture of slum life, while people in those areas basically are isolated from the prosperity and culture of the city. So, by bringing college students to those areas with what we have, like performing arts or special knowledge on hygiene or education, we can create a bridge between the local people and college students. I hope that some day in the future my student association could be registered as a formal NGO in China and through our constant and hard work we can win the confidence of both our government and the local people.

Menting Wang, China, winner of the second prize

I want to say that I firmly believe in the capacity that young people have to think and implement creative solutions for the most important global problems we are facing today, like poverty and inequality. Also I firmly believe that the solutions can involve a more effective use of existing resources. For example, there are over 400 computer labs located in public schools in Bogota, the capital city of Colombia, my country, 80% of which are currently underused. The non-profit organization that I lead is currently using five of those computer labs to facilitate access to education for over 100 people facing poverty and we aim to benefit over 4500 by 2012. Initiatives like this competition are really important to support and raise awareness about projects that involve youth-adult partnerships and aim to make this world a better place. So thanks for this effort. Maria Rodriguez, Colombia, winner of the third prize

More...
- Videos of the Award Ceremony: www.worldbank.org/abcdesouthafrica
- Website of the Essay Competition http://www.essaycompetition.org
PART II: Analysis of the essays submitted for the Essay Competition 2008

Participants of the Essay Competition 2008 were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Think about the city you live in. What are the biggest opportunities and challenges for people living there?
2. What needs to be done to transform your city into the city of your dreams?
3. What could be your role, working together with your peers, in shaping the city of your dreams?

The following summary comes from a close analysis of the top 233 essays (out of 3,287) submitted to the Essay Competition 2008. Examples in the third part come from the top 22 essays.

1. Youth speak about opportunities and challenges in their cites

Youth participating in the Essay Competition 2008 describe their cities as lively, booming centers of economic activity, intense growth and numerous opportunities. Cities offer better education, better paid jobs, healthcare and even more interesting entertainment. Graduating from a good university, finding a good job, getting a necessary medical operation, starting a business or forming an association – all this is easier in the city, according to the 2008 participants. Authors see their cities as living organisms that develop and evolve constantly. Economic growth spurs further urbanization, which in turn generates more jobs, improves infrastructure and services.

At the same time, the promises that cities hold are not equally accessible to all. Youth claim that a young, educated and entrepreneurial person can easily profit from living in a city, while the most vulnerable – children, the elderly, the less educated, who often constitute the majority of the urban population, find themselves marginalized, with access to hardly any benefits of city life at all. Contestants point out enormous social and economic differences that they witness on a daily basis in their cities. Beautiful, luxurious houses behind gates and fast, shiny cars or modern skyscrapers often neighbor informal settlements composed of provisional shacks with no access to water or electricity. Even though the two worlds are so close, there is hardly any way for the disadvantaged population to escape the cycle of poverty and gain full access to the benefits of economic development. Youth living in developing countries describe slum areas as scars on the face of their cities. In some cities, nearly half of the population lives in informal settlements lacking sanitation and other basic services.

Cities attract high numbers of migrants from rural areas, who come in search of employment and better living conditions, but often fall into even greater poverty instead. Migration accelerates urbanization and usually benefits the city as well as the new settler,
but is also puts pressure on the city’s scarce resources and, if not managed properly, leaves many migrants stranded. 

According to Essay Competition participants, the biggest urban problem, apart from inequality, is pollution. As cities grow, more and more vehicles clog the roads, giving rise to accidents and polluting the air. Public transportation is often no alternative, as it is unreliable, crowded, often unsafe or even non-existent. Traffic jams not only lead to air contamination and disease in humans, but also paralyze the city, making smooth functioning of schools and businesses problematic. Big cities are choking under tons of litter, a potential cause of disease, which is due to inadequate waste management and habits of the inhabitants, unused to reducing, reusing and recycling garbage. In addition, most slum dwellers don’t have access to safe drinking water, which leads to epidemics of easily-preventable diseases, especially in young children.

Many contestants, in particular those from industrialized countries, talk about rampant crime and violence, which they see as an outcome of long-term unemployment and lack of opportunities among vulnerable groups.

Living in a city is a potential source of stress. The pace of life is incomparably faster than in the countryside, with strong pressure to succeed and exceed. People, especially those who left their native towns to move to the city, often tend to live in isolation from their families and neighbors.

The youth see the opportunities, but are also acutely aware of the problems their cities are facing, without being too pessimistic. Most name lack of adequate regulation and planning as the underlying cause of their city’s aches. They see their cities as developing fast, but chaotically. Local authorities often fail to manage urban growth and respond to the needs of the growing population. The strongest citizens grab their chance and succeed, while the weakest are left on their own.

Essays’ authors are fairly unanimous: the world’s cities, especially those in developing regions, have enormous, yet untapped, potential to provide a healthy and friendly living environment for their inhabitants, as well as attractions for the tourists. The young people like their cities and would like to take active part in releasing their potential for development.

2. **Youth propose solutions to transform their city into the city of their dreams**

The youth are of the opinion that a lot must be done in order to transform their cities into the cities of their dreams, but they see concrete steps towards improvement. First of all, the city of dreams is a clean one, with unpolluted air and safe water. Improving sanitation and reducing pollution should be the local government’s number one priority. This will require introducing and enforcing strong pro-environment regulations. Youth also advocate an efficient public transport system that would help decrease pollution, liberate the streets from congestion and improve road safety.

Long-term urban planning is needed to ensure that development is sustainable and beneficial to all. Contestants stress the imperative for inclusive development, with no one left behind. In a dream city, no slums would exist, and everyone would have access to adequate housing at moderate prices, clean water, basic education, healthcare and employment. It should become a priority for the city to create opportunities for jobless,
unskilled youth living in disadvantaged areas. Employment, the necessary prerequisite, can either be achieved by teaching skills sought by the market, or by promoting entrepreneurship, for people to create their own jobs. The young writers do not limit themselves to a ‘wish-list’ that they think the government should implement. Many say that positive change is more a question of will and changing some basic prejudices than a money issue. They see tangible benefits in engaging all groups of the society to bring about change. The young authors emphasize the often underestimated power of non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector. By building public-private partnerships and implementing corporate social responsibility projects, the energy of the private sector can be channeled towards social change. Youth call for better use of existing resources, more transparency and better governance. They strongly believe that all citizens can work together for more social inclusion and sustainable development of urban areas. Youth are well placed to contribute to this process, as they have fresh ideas, energy and more free time than their adult counterparts. Partnerships with other cities both nationally and abroad would further enrich the pool of ideas and allow each city to profit from the best practices of others.

3. **Youth work with their peers to transform their cities**

The selected examples below come from the top 22 essays submitted for the Essay Competition 2008. Full essays can be found on the website of the Competition. Some of the projects described below are already running, while other ideas are in the planning stage.

1. **Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire.** Medical students raise funds from pharmaceutical companies and offer free consultations, basic drugs and advice on healthy lifestyle to inhabitants of a city slum.

2. **Beijing, China.** The author aims to popularize NGO and voluntary work in China, using the experience of Kolkata, India, where she used to work in a civil society organization.

3. **Belo Horizonte, Brazil.** The author is part of an association that aims to revitalize slum areas and encourage civic participation through culture and art.

4. **Bhopal, India.** The author plans to start a consulting firm that would advise local governments on managing urbanization in a long-term, sustainable way, taking into account the specificity of each city. Among the common solutions, a bus rapid transit system (dedicated bus lanes) would be created, to relieve the city of traffic jams.

5. **Bogota, Colombia.** Youth run IT literacy courses for disadvantaged citizens and offer access to computers equipped with Internet in school computer labs after hours, so that people can look for jobs or follow online courses.

6. **Casablanca, Morocco.** Youth raise awareness among peers on pollution and other environmental problems, organizing lectures in schools and planting trees with the help of the local electricity company.

7. **Hanoi, Vietnam.** Youth lead an information campaign on preventing car pollution and promoting road safety.
8. **Ibadan, Nigeria.** Youth work together with local authorities and media to improve sanitation in the city. They organize awareness campaigns against littering and partner with the private sector to place waste bins all over the city, in exchange for advertising space.

9. **Jakarta, Indonesia.** The author argues for promoting social entrepreneurship in cities.

10. **Keystone Heights, Florida, USA.** The author proposes to hold a community service awareness day, to promote volunteer work among youth.

11. **Kolkata, India.** Youth start nature clubs in schools, and collaborate with media to raise awareness of environmental issues among fellow citizens.

12. **Phnom Penh, Cambodia.** The author joined an NGO working with street children (through non-formal education), and is helping raise awareness among citizens about child abuse.

13. **Pokhara, Nepal.** A student-led organization mentors fellow youth on how to start a business, and trains future entrepreneurs. In the future, they plan to expand: hold virtual courses and build a vocational resource center for unemployed youth.

14. **Singapore.** The author proposes a series of public events aimed at strengthening bonds between citizens living in isolation.

15. **Warsaw, Poland.** The author proposes constructing a cultural center in a disadvantaged area, to integrate the local community with the rest of the city and improve the reputation of the district.

### 4. Conclusions

According to participants of the Essay Competition 2008, cities offer numerous opportunities, such as better access to employment, education, healthcare and other services. However, cities are also a place of vast inequalities, with slum areas neighboring with financial districts and luxurious residential areas. Cities tend to be polluted and roads are congested. Crime, violence and stress are yet another characteristic that many participants described as associated with life in their cities. Lack of adequate regulation and lack of governance lead to wasted potential of cities as centers of economic activity and tourist attractions.

Good regulation and urban planning are the most called for measures to improve city life. Moreover, cities need to invest in transport and environmentally friendly solutions that would keep them clean and safe.

Youth unanimously emphasize that a dream city is one where development is inclusive, no slum areas exist and all citizens have access to essential services. This can be achieved through better coordination and a collaboration of all groups of citizens (government, private sector, NGOs) and does not necessarily require high amounts of money. Youth are natural allies in this process and potential powerful agents of change.
Essay authors said... (quotes)

I dream of a city with fresh air, water and soil.
I dream of a city without the unhygienic slums.
I dream of a city with no child labor and adequate number of public schools for poor kids. (India)

A city’s first purpose, aim, is to serve its inhabitants. (Poland)

One of the primary things I wish to achieve through this project is to show people that it does not take having a huge amount of money to make a difference. (Nigeria)

The best way to influence people is to be an example. (USA)

Borrowing the words of Marian Wright Edelman: I can shape my world, by focusing on “the small daily differences I can make which, over time, add up to big differences”. (Nigeria)

“One home, one enterprise” is the city of my dreams. (Nepal)

The role of young people: generating creative solutions for the efficient use of existing resources to benefit the disadvantaged. (Colombia)

It seems to me that creating such a city is not a dream anymore – it will become a necessity. (Poland)
PART III: Winning Essays

Winners:

First Prize: Saptarshi Pal, India (p. 15)

Second Prize: Menting Wang, China (p. 24)

Third Prize: Maria Angelica Rodriguez, Colombia (p. 33)

Finalists:

Jonah Obajeun, Nigeria (p. 41)

Ashis Himali, Nepal (p. 51)

Hermann Hokou, Ivory Coast (p. 59)

Sara Abreu Machado, Brazil (p. 67)

Katarina Marsha Nugroho, Indonesia (p. 78)
Saptarshi Pal
India
1\textsuperscript{st} Prize Winner
A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY........

“We are responsible for what we are, and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in future can be produced by our present actions; so we have to know how to act.”

Swami Vivekananda –Indian Spiritual leader of the Hindu religion (Vedanta). Founder of the Ramakrishna Order of Monks

Today Kolkata is aspiring to become a Mega city. However, growing up is a very painful task and in this case, it is visible on the streets of my city! The major Indian cities can be well compared to oasis of successful endeavours in a desert of deprivation and helplessness. The same trend is witnessed all over the world in developing and some under-developed countries as well. The results too are the same around the globe –mass migration from villages to cities resulting in slums, pollution, unhygienic conditions and security problems. To combat these problems on a permanent basis much needs to be done at a macro level. These things are proposed and discussed by renowned people and government heads on a daily basis, and hence they are out of the reach of a common Indian youth like me. However, there is much that I can do and I have done. A nation goes down not because of the actions of the corrupt people but the inactions of the good ones! Why don’t we take a stand? We are not helpless, but yes it is inconvenient. As long as the youth take convenience to conviction the nation will go downhill.

I. The City of Joy: Its opportunities and challenges!

Kolkata, formerly called Calcutta, came into existence with the coming of the British East India Company and eventually became the Capital of British India. Therefore, as a city, Kolkata has a rich heritage and a cosmopolitan culture. Its numerous palatial buildings, with British Imperial architecture, have earned the city the title of ‘City of Palaces’. Due to its fame as the center of trade and commerce in British India, immigrants from all over the world came and settled in this city, thereby contributing to its rich cosmopolitan culture. Volumes of books have been written on the glorious years of this city; much better than I can ever express with my limited abilities.

Ever since the turn of the millennium the state of West Bengal (Kolkata is its capital) has been on an aggressive drive for industrialization and also the IT Industry. Many transnational and national companies are setting up its factories and establishments in this state. Kolkata being a port city is also being considered as the gateway to South-East Asia. If India wants to take advantage of the South-East Asian ‘miracles’ it must develop Kolkata, for its strategic location. It’s fast growing industries are attracting people from all over India and also the world, and the city is growing at a rapid pace. Numerous flyovers, subways are being constructed; also roads are being broadened for its rapidly increasing traffic.
Such developments are always good for a city, provided they are in a planned way. Here lie the challenges that the people of Kolkata are facing.

According to a survey in 2004, the road space in Kolkata, in comparison with its population density, was only 6%, while its 23% in Delhi and 17% in Chennai. Although, the number of vehicles have increased dramatically over these years the road space has hardly increased by a few percentage. As a result, footpaths are being shortened and numerous trees are being felled to broaden the roads. In front of my school, the road had tall and beautiful trees on either side, which also provided us shelter from the terrible Kolkata summer. Unfortunately, all were chopped down in the name of development!

This simply doesn’t make ant sense to me. At a time when the pollution of the city is at a dangerous level, how can the civic authorities cut down trees that too in an area which has a number of schools? It is said that the ideal count of Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) and Respiratory Particulate Matter (RPM) should not exceed 140 and 60 respectively. However, Kolkata's average SPM count is 211 and RPM count is 105. During traffic congestion, which is quite normal as all the nearby schools begin and end around same time, this count can be double the city's average during busy hours!

According to a survey, there is a direct link between air pollution and the probability of lung cancer. Calcutta, with an approximate population of 16 million, is ahead of all Indian cities when it comes to lung cancer at 18.4 cases per 100,000 people - much ahead of the widely publicized pollution in Delhi, which is at 13.34 cases per 100,000. Anybody who travels in the city, especially children, face this risk!

II. Kolkata and the City of my dreams: Let’s compare!

“The best reason for having dreams is that in dreams no reasons are necessary.”
Ashleigh Brilliant, English Author.

However, with the harsh realities of the world all around us, our dreams have also adapted to its surroundings. Our dreams cannot be one of fantasy –an episode from Jetsons! –it has to be realistic.

I dream of a city with fresh air, water and soil.

How does it feel to know that the air you are inhaling every moment is not giving you life, but taking the life out of you –it’s slowly poisoning you? A recent report said that some 70% of people in Kolkata suffer from respiratory disorders. The traffic police being the worst affected, police stations across the city are being equipped with oxygen devices to help the policemen after their duty. But doctors admit that it is too late as the pollutants are deeply lodged in their lungs! Its not the policemen alone, even I travel a lot everyday.
I have to go to university and attend to other responsibilities. Majority of us cannot afford oxygen treatment everyday, so what do we do?

I dream of greenery across the city, there should be more trees and parks to offset the pollution. But the main pollutants—the vehicles—should be dealt with strongly. The public transportation system should be drastically improved. We need environment friendly modes of mass transport like the trains, subways, LRTs. Currently, we have a single subway line running North-South; we urgently need another running East-West, with LRTs covering the rest of the city. Apart from this, the loop train and other local trains should be revived and made more efficient. This will help commuters from nearby towns and help decongest the city. The trams, a part of our heritage, should also be revived. The Pollution Control Board should be given more autonomy, and they should enforce the ban on polluting vehicles. All buses and taxis should be allowed to run on streets only if they have converted to LPG.

**I dream of a city without the unhygienic slums.**

The slums of Kolkata, about one-third of the population live in slums, can be best described as rat holes of the city. I dream of low cost housing complexes for the slum dwellers on the outskirts of the city. All existing slum dwellers should be given a small flat with the basic necessities like electricity, water, gas and with necessary safety precautions. To avoid land costs, such Government sponsored housing project can be build on the outskirts of the city. The Howard Roarks (of *The Fountainhead*) of the world have shown that such projects are feasible. Having providing them such houses, we should proceed to find them adequate employment. There are lots more which can be said in this regard.

**I dream of a city with no child labour and adequate number of public schools for poor kids.**

It is stupid to assume that those kids working in the tea stalls outside KFCs and MacDonalds will bear all injustice silently. There will be agitations and violent protests from those sections of the society that are feeling left out of the process of wealth creation that is happening in the country. Unless we evolve steps to create a more equal society, our much-hyped demographic dividend could well turn into a demographic disaster—as can be realized with the increasing number of anti-social activities in the city!

III. Kolkata and I…

“We need men who can dream of things that never were, and ask why not.”
-George B. Shaw

After I entered high school, my throat infections became quite regular as a result of which it became difficult for me to enjoy my school life. The doctor told my parents that it is a common infection and went on to explain that the dust particles suspended in the atmosphere enters through our nose and mouth to settle in the throat. This resulted in my
frequent throat problems. The doctor’s assurance did satisfy me but I had to wear a mask sometimes during heavy traffic also I started to gurgle every night, an activity which continues till date to avoid major throat infections. Very soon the mask started irritating me thanks to my school friends’ comments. Realizing this, my class teacher explained to the class the benefits of wearing a mask. In her lecture, she blamed the high pollution in the city for this deadly situation. She even went on to quote her brother-in-law, "I have to be on the streets most of the time and with this pollution I would eventually develop lung cancer anyway, so why should I quit smoking?" Now I feel she should have avoided the smoking part in it to bring out the point, but it is very interesting to note how helpless the people of my city feel about this problem!

The Nature Club in my school was quite dormant till then, with only 20 members, but I decided to join it to get access to its Nature based magazines and journals. Seeing my interest in these issues, the teacher coordinator of the Club encouraged me to organize a nature-based event. Till then I was quite an introvert and had no leadership skills. Not wanting to turn down the teacher’s request, a couple of us organized a small Sit and Draw Competition on Earth Day, with nature as the theme. We were very surprised to see the turnout on the day of the event and to be honest every unprepared for it. You should learn from your mistakes and so did we; with more ambition and a bit larger workforce we decided to repair and paint the walls of the huge Park Circus Maidan (a huge park) in front of my school. We were not able to raise enough money from the students for all the four walls, so we decided to go ahead with the one facing us.

In India, due to lack of public toilets, men don't hesitate to urinate on the walls. I know it sounds gross, but this is a fact. So after having repaired the wall, to prevent its misuse (and to reduce the cost of painting!), we decided to paint the wall ourselves with various cartoons each containing a nature based social message. I must say the paintings were beautiful. Impressed by our initiative, the nearby schools decided to join in and very soon all the walls were repaired and painted!

Realizing the benefits of having more volunteers, we invited the Nature Clubs of the other city schools to work together, so that we could raise more funds and have more volunteers. The idea worked and very soon we formed the Nature Clubs' Council with around a dozen schools.

Water logging on the streets is a major problem in Kolkata. Sometimes during monsoons the entire city comes to a standstill due to widespread flood. A report in the newspaper held the plastic bags the main culprit, as these non-biodegradable items clog the drains. Further investigation by the municipal authorities confirmed this. Some city environmentalists’ were petitioning the municipal authorities to ban the widespread use of the poisonous plastic bags in the city; the toxic materials remain in the soil for years. Due to their efforts, the High Court issued a directive to ban plastic bags from 10 most important areas, including popular picnic spots like Alipore Zoo and Victoria Memorial, of the city. Thousands of people visit these places each day! However, as in all such Indian cases, the ban was widely flouted. From the Nature Clubs' Council, we decided to form groups and went to each of these places with banners and placards to make people
aware of the ban and explaining to the general public the reason for this ban. Thanks to
the support of our respective schools and the city’s media, our prolonged campaign paid
off and the security guards of all the 10 places were ordered not to allow people with
plastic bags.

Every project is a learning experience. We realized the power of media and we felt it was
very important to educate people on nature-related issues. For this reason, a couple of us
from my school's nature club conceptualized and launched the city's first Nature based
newsletter for the school students—we believe if you educate the child he will educate
his family as well. It was an instant hit. We realized how effective creative education
through graphics, games, real-life reports and articles is. Very soon we made it available
to dozens of other schools. New Leaf became a separate organization in itself, with its
editors, dozens of school reporters and with a department to arrange for sponsors as
well!

Half way through my tenure as the President of my school's Nature Club, I faced a then
unique problem—a financial problem! Till then, all school clubs used to run from the
contributions of its members and other school students. Due to our numerous activities,
from campaigning against the pollution of East Kolkata Wetlands (a Ramsar Site) to
beautification of Park Street (the most popular road in Kolkata), the school was also
funding us. Even with contributions from our now 250 members and the small funds
from school, we were unable to meet the expenses of our projects which were already
Rs.20000 (around $500).

This was the first time any school club was facing such a situation so we had to think of a
unique solution. We approached The Times of India with a list of three big projects, under
the umbrella of Environment Consciousness Campaign (ECC), that we had planned
for June’ 04. We explained to them that we need corporate sponsor to fund these projects
but a corporate would only fund it if it gets publicity out of it, hence we wanted the
newspaper to come up with such an arrangement. The Times of India understood our
problem and appreciated our work, and got us funds from companies like Indian Oil, in
the month long campaign which was started by the Mayor himself on the World
Environment Day. The campaign had three main events—a seminar on the role of public
in our Green Movement, planting of saplings and dustbins in a park and an Anti-Plastic
bag rally in the city. The campaign also involved local celebrities (thanks to The Times of
India again) and received widespread publicity. We were happy to be appreciated by the
general public and they promised to do their part as well.

One thing leads to the other. The chance meeting with the Mayor gave us another idea to
ensure the movement among the schools receives greater participation from the general
public and the civic authorities. We drew up a proposal for Mayor's Nature Club
Council.

Needless to say, in developing countries corruption in public administrative bodies is
probably the biggest problem. Youth all around the globe, as gathered from last year’s
World Bank Essay Competition, are doing much on their part to reduce corruption. Our
proposal was that an active, efficient and well-functioning student body like our existing Nature Clubs’ Council should be given more power, in the form of funds and easy-to-obtain permissions from the Municipal Corporation, for expanding their area of operation. The Mayor himself should become the Chairman of the Council, and dozens of other schools should be invited to become a part of it. With so many more student volunteers and major beautification projects all over the city, the general public are bound to realize their civic responsibilities and we can guarantee a cleaner, greener city and also proper utilization of funds (the account books for our various projects were always open to anyone for review)! I am sure students, we considered ourselves as good examples, can do much to change the face of the city given the responsibility. We also suggested having an Advisory Council, with eminent citizens of the city and NGO representatives on it, to direct and oversee the work of the Council.

The idea made much progress and the then Mayor promised to consider it seriously in a few months time. Unfortunately, the then Mayor lost the Municipal elections that followed soon after. Although I am out of school now, most of us as alumni continue to review the progress made on this. We have realized that our proposal is being rejected by some bureaucrats in the Municipal Corporation, for reasons clear to all of us! Hopefully, something will be worked out soon, if the current Mayor decides to look into it seriously.

**Here I would also like to say, that the same model for Mayor's Nature/Student Council can be followed in cities all over the world** – an efficient student organization of passionate, hardworking students determined to improve their cities under the supervision of the Mayor himself! Put in creative ideas like corporate sponsorship for environment-friendly projects, media sponsorship for publicity and awareness among general public, and you will certainly see the dreams of the youth for their city materializing in your city itself!

I would also like to add, that **powerful organizations like the World Bank, have much to do in this regard.** They can hold seminars in cities to inspire the school students to come together and form such a council and also help them with funds. At the same time they can convince the Municipal Authorities to take the suggestions of this Students' Council seriously. Personally, I feel that the prize money of this essay also should be given to the respective organizations and not the individuals.

**A little goes a long way!**

Mega projects and corporate sponsors came after two years of us starting our work. Initially we too used to feel how can a small event like picking up plastic bags from the Victoria grounds or cleaning the zoo make much of a difference in this world? Are we just wasting our time? Now when I see a thousand students together (as against the 20 when we started) doing it, and thousands of people being affected by it and promising the school children to do their part too, I KNOW it was worth it!

Based on my experiences and the various projects that our Nature Clubs did, I have drawn up a list of small projects that a small group of students, or even an individual, can
start off with. Always remember: "A little goes a long way". A small and seemingly insignificant act that you commit will inspire others to join you, and the chain spreads. Most students want to do something for the society, however and unfortunately, most of them are a bit lazy or is confused as to what to do. You can be rest assured that once they see a friend doing it, even they are bound to join in to do their part. Sometimes even I was surprised to see my friends, who hate to wake up earlier than 9 am on a Sunday, requesting the morning walkers of the Rabindra Sarobar (a huge lake in the heart of the city) to hand in their plastic bags—all active and happy even at 6 am! What do you think is the reason these normal school students willingly sacrifice their rare leisure time? The desire to do something for their society. And when the elderly witness this desire—to see the generation X that they so often complain about, so concerned about the social issues—they too take make a promise to themselves to do their part!

The list of small projects to start with:

- Writing to the editor of a local newspaper about a specific problem
- Organizing a Sit n Draw competition / one act play in the school to draw attention of fellow school friends to join your cause
- Cleaning (like picking up waste materials and dropping them to the dustbin) of school premises or outside school to inspire your friends
- Repairing a public wall and then painting it with social messages and cartoons
- Planting dustbins and saplings in nearby parks; taking care of the saplings.
- Organizing No-Horn campaigns in front of schools and hospitals
- Distributing leaflets and explaining to vehicle owners the harmful effect of their emission
- Organizing Anti-Plastic Bags campaigns; Go green –Use jute, cloth bags.
- Educating the general public at picnic spots or important places about using dustbins—please do not litter. What image of your city will the visitors have?

**That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.**
-Neil Armstrong

**Will our Green movement be limited to a few schools and a few students?**

Certainly not. As the snowball starts rolling it becomes bigger and bigger. What started among a few schools and students will soon spread to all the 300 schools in Kolkata and beyond. The strength certainly lies in numbers; please allow me to illustrate this point clearly. From among the 300 schools, even if 10 students per school are dedicated towards working for the city (a gross underestimate!) we will have an army of 3000 students always doing some project somewhere in the city. Even if the rest of the students in the school do not join the movement, they will certainly be positively affected by it; they will develop a sense of responsibility towards cleanliness of the city. We may not be the 100% population of the city, but we certainly are the 100% future of the city—and majority of the population in India are below the age of 25! There are around 2000-3000 students studying in each school; which means a minimum of 600,000 students being influenced by the Green Movement. Let’s go a step further. Do you think a student who is witnessing the hard work being put in by his classmates to keep the city clean will
allow his family to litter/pollute the city? Even if we assume 3 members per family of the students (again a gross underestimate) we will have an incredible number of 1.8 million people being directly/indirectly influenced by our Green Movement –more than 10% of the city!

Helen Keller was once asked, “What’s worse than not having eyesight?” Her reply was, “having eyesight with no vision!” Mayor’s Nature/Student Council is a sure way to deal with the dangerous levels of pollution that the cities around the globe are facing, and also address the issues of Global Warming. If you are ready to wait for eternity hoping things will become better –Good luck to you. I love my city –Kolkata.

To echo John Lennon “people say I am a dreamer but I am not the only one…hope someday you join us and the world will be one” –against pollution!

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Some newspaper article on New Leaf:

Some newspaper articles on Nature Clubs’ Council:
Menting Wang
China
2\textsuperscript{nd} Prize Winner
From Kolkata to Beijing: what we could learn from India

I Urban corners: challenge to city development

During my three years’ study in Beijing, I witnessed how the city dash on its way to an international metropolitan. The CBD looks more similar to Manhattan, with blocks of skyscrapers and no the least waste of a centimeter; dazzling luxury brands fill fancy malls; there is even a “Fifth Avenue” in Beijing. This ancient oriental capital becomes more dynamic, energetic and diversified than ever before. For the Beijingers, the city is full of chances of becoming successful. As China gains worldwide attention and reputation, more and more foreign companies come here for business and trade. Thus, it is easier to find a job here than their remote hometowns; it is easier here to open one’s own business or find a partner. In addition, Beijing’s infrastructure is comparatively more developed than most cities in China. People can get more convenient public transportation, better medical treatment, better social insurance, better education, even better night clubs here in Beijing.

However, making minor alterations of Charles Dickens’ famous words, it is a city of light, it is a city of darkness; it is a city of hope, it is a city of despair; we have everything before us, we have nothing before us. People here are always facing severe competitions and challenges. Living expenses, transportation fees, medical treatment fees, tuitions are higher than other Chinese cities. Nice, decent life in Beijing is actually unaffordable for low-income families like the large number of migrant workers. All in all, pressure goes along with opportunities.

While the biggest opportunity of Beijing is to develop into a prosperous, multifunctional capital with high-level social welfare, the biggest challenge lies in the same place. That is, if not paying enough attention to a balanced development path, possibly Beijing will become a combination of a metropolitan and a huge gutter.

In June 2005, the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences released an “Investigation of Urban Corners in Beijing” for the first time since the market economy reform. Urban corners are less modernized areas with less government regulations and managements than other parts of the city during the process of urbanization and modernization. Generally speaking, these areas share some similar characters. First, the environment is mostly dirty and messy. In one clearance work in 2003, around 800 tons of rubbish was moved away in a small area near Xizhimen. Second, there are insufficient and outdated city infrastructure. According to the investigation report, some areas are still using water drains built more than 300 years ago. Third, people live in dilapidated houses. At Qianmen area, 93% of the houses are in danger of falling down or in bad need of repairment. Fourth, the population there has a higher mobility, an older age structure, a

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1 Investigation of Urban Corners in Beijing, p12
2 Investigation of Urban Corners in Beijing, p13
lower education level and a lower income than other urban parts. In addition, other social problems like pornographic service and crime are more common since there are few government offices around the area.

According to their statistics, there are at least 358 urban corners in Beijing. Those urban corners usually have different origins. Some of them are from the unbalanced modernization. Those places as Da Shanlan were prosperous “old Peking” markets before but somehow died out during the economic reform. People there are usually citizens of Beijing for many generations. Some of them appear through the urbanization process. Many peasants in the suburbs of Beijing lose their land to real estate businessmen and have to live in vacant temporary shelters. The rest of urban corners are results from the huge wave of labor migration to Beijing. Just as those early immigrants crossing the Atlantic with an “American dream”, many people see Beijing as the Heaven, with countless opportunities of becoming wealthy and famous. Therefore, since 1980s, numerous people, including migrant workers, artists, businessmen and lobbists swarmed into the city, each with his/her own “Beijing dream”. According to a government report, there are more than 3,550,000 migrants in Beijing in 2005, among whom 87.3% are migrant labor workers.

Although people in the urban corners make great contributions to the city’s development, it is extremely difficult for them to become an integrated part of the city’s prosperity. They build Hilton but they sleep in a falling shelter; they build our National Center of Performing Arts but they can’t even afford a movie. As a result, they usually live in a poor neighborhood either in the center or in the remote part of the city and become the “marginal group” not only geographically but also psychologically. More often, these communities are extremely vulnerable to crime, pornography and other social problems. As the modernization and urbanization go further, the economical and social gap between “marginal” people and “mainstream” people in Beijing is widening. Urban corners have turned into a complicated problem for the authority of Beijing.

II Possible solutions to urban corners

In order to shape Beijing into a city of balanced prosperity, we should make a great effort to bridge the gap between the “marginal” and the “core”, between the rich and the poor. Thus, eliminating “urban corners” is the major consideration. There are three possible forces to achieve this goal, the market force, the government force and the grassroots force, that is, the nongovernmental and civil power.

Some say that urban corners are actually living evidence of market failure instead of successful market force. Many of the laid-off workers are the “victims” of the market economy reform. Even for the lucky migrant workers who stay in work, their low salary is partly due to the quantitative supply of cheap labor force. Though market force fails in urban corners, sometimes, there is still opportunities for business in urban corners. As mentioned above, some old urban corners used to be part of “old Peking”. Their architectures, “Hutongs”, snacks are all valuable cultural legacies. Therefore, it is

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1 Investigation of Urban Corners in Beijing, p9
2 The Social Development Report of China’s Capital, p32
profitable to renovate the old houses and open to tourists. In that way, we could protect the culture and improve the living standard there.

The Chinese government is well-known for its paternal role in running the country. So it seems very natural to turn to the government and ask for help. Indeed, some of the problems could not be solved without the contribution of government. For example, the government is responsible to provide the basic infrastructure, supply water and electricity. The government should guarantee basic healthcare and social security to local residents. The government should move out and relocate the residents of urban corners properly. Last but not the least, the government should strengthen the regulation in urban corners.

However, the government is not omnipotent and we cannot wait for the government to take care of everything. A major reason of government failure is that the government can’t really observe the residents’ daily behaviors. This kind of asymmetric information between the government and the local residents is the main obstacle to governments’ effective operation. Conflicts may burst out when there is misunderstanding between the two. Such conflicts usually end up with the government’s compulsory actions.

Besides the government force, we still have an important force which somehow has been neglected for a long time. That is the power of grassroots, or, the power of NGOs, NPOs and similar social forces. NGOs and NPOs work among ordinary people of a community, therefore they possess accurate and authentic information of the local people and have an advantage over the government. The conception of NGOs and NPOs are by no means new inventions in developed countries. They have also been widely accepted and found prominent presence in developing countries like India and Bengal., it is still a comparatively virgin field in mainland China.

The power of grassroots: lessons from India
To be honest, I myself didn’t have much confidence in what an NGO could do to change people’s lives. But all my misunderstandings about NGO changed after a summer internship in India.

Last summer I had a chance to go to India and worked at a grassroots NGO for 5 weeks. There I was shocked to see the power of NGOs and other grassroots organizations. I worked at Paschim Banga Krira-o-Janakalyan Parishad (PBKOJP), an NGO in Kolkata, West Bengal State. Its main activities were in a slum area called Khirdipur and a red light area called Kalighat. I was astonished that they actually could have so much influence in a community. They had a variety of programs, penetrating into almost every aspect of the daily life of local people. The Primary Health group did regular checkup for people, charging nothing for medicine. The Primary Education group did home-visits to each child’s family and school-visits to local primary schools. To take care of children’s personality development, they hired a professional psychologist to do regular consulting with the children there. To foster a good habit of study, they organized a night school and hire some part-time teachers. They had special programs for vulnerable daughters of sex workers. They also had vocational training programs like sewing courses as well as other fancy handicrafts trainings for school girl students,. They even set up a kindergarten
there. While I was there, I helped to develop a new program called “Child Watch”, which was aimed at streetboys and child labor in the slums.

I was also deeply touched by the close relationship between the local people and the NGO workers. Local people respected and trusted my colleagues. When a young woman was pregnant, before she figured out what was happening, she would come to Lura and listened to her advice. They told everything to my colleagues. Whenever Lura and I walked on the street in the community, everybody would say “Hi Didi” (Didi means sister in Bengali) cordially. I was told that it was even safer in a red light area than in the center of the city at night for NGO workers. With so much support of local people, many of the programs were quite successful. When night school started, children willingly came to classes without the parents’ urge. When weekly checkup began, sex workers came for AIDS test voluntarily. Through talking and visits, NGOs became the bridge between the local people and schools, hospitals and governmental civil administrations.

After returning to China, I start to reflect upon things around me. Can we use this force to solve the urban corners problem? Is the Indian model duplicable?

China and India have a lot in common and so do the big cities in both countries. Kolkata, the capital of India during British sovereignty, is one of the most populous cities in India. It has a modern “silicon valley” as well as starry slums and red light areas in and around the city. According to a urban slum report of Kolkata in 2001, 1.5 million people, or one third of Kolkata’s population, lived in 2011 registered and 3500 unregistered slums. The 1956 Slum Area Act of India defines slums as ‘those areas where buildings are in any respect unfit for human habitation’. There people don’t have clean drinking water, stable income, healthcare, education and so on. The slums of Kolkata can be divided into three groups: the older ones, up to 150 years’ old, in the heart of the city, are associated with early urbanization. The second group dates from the 1940s and 1950s and emerged as an outcome of industrialization-based rural–urban migration, locating themselves around industrial sites and near infra-structural arteries. The third group came into being after the independence of India and took vacant urban lands and areas along roads, canals and on marginal lands.

These living conditions of slums are quite similar to “urban corners” in Beijing and even the origins are exact the same except all types of urban corners in Beijing appeared at roughly the same time. However, the activists in slums and urban corners are totally different. The NGOs become a substitute role of government to some extent and they are doing quite a good job. In China we are used to expecting the government’s power. I don’t mean that Beijing should be like Kolkata, with so many slums and little government activity. We already have a strong but not perfect government. What we need is the “third force”, the force of grassroots to further improve the community construction.

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5 According to Dr. Nitai Kundu, among the unauthorized slums types are those which are simply encroachments on the roadside (locally called jhupri), canals (called khalidhar), or any vacant place (called ubbastu) by the poor people either displaced from the city itself or retrenched from their work place.

However, it is to say than to do. I realized a sad fact, that NGOs in China are more like an “elite” conception instead of practical organizations for ordinary people. The conception was introduced a couple of years ago but local people still don’t know much about this. People who accept the conception are mostly intellectuals and can’t really abandon their current work to pursue an NGO career. Some may be passionate at voluntary work for a while but few people really have a long-term commitment to community service. Even those who are determined to make some changes, they don’t really know how to run an NGO in reality. Running an NGO is not like opening a candy store. One has to deal with a lot of subtle relationships and some professional training is a must. In India, the whole system are more mature. In Kolkata, there is a union of NGOs. They hold seminars, share experience, and organize training programs for new NGO workers. Many of my colleague are graduates from colleges and know much in this field.

Another big difference between two countries and perhaps the major reason for the immaturity of NGO work in China is the attitude of the government. NGOs and NPOs are not publicly encouraged by our sensitive government. Many of them now exist in an “illegal” state. Without the acknowledgement from the authority, it is consequentially difficult for them to do fund raising and social networking. However, the government of India encourages establishments of NGOs, for they think it is a better and cheaper way to solve social problems using money and resources from the civic society and eventually from all over the world. They welcome all kinds of national, international foundations to sponsor NGOs’ programs. A website of West Bengal said there are more than 3000 NGOs in West Bengal, most of which in Kolkata. On my first day at PBKOJP, one of my colleagues tells me, NGO is an industry here.

Facing some many disadvantages, we should not lose heart. That we are not doing well right now means we have great potential.

III What we can do: Magicians around the Corner

As a college student, of course I don’t have the power to influence government decision and the sensitive mentality of our government. What we can do to help eliminate “urban corners” is to use the students’ organizations’ forces.

Student organizations should promote the conception of NGO on campus. I am running a student society aimed at promoting a similar conception, social entrepreneurship. Last November we held a multicultural event with the British Council. During that week, we organized lectures about the college students’ role in a civic society, movie-shows about social entrepreneurs in Britain and a salon for famous NGOs, social entrepreneurs around Beijing and a series of other activities. This 7-day event attracted high attention on the campus and the conception became a hot topic at that time. I think such activities can greatly influence students’ thoughts as well as afford a good communication platform for NGOs.

7 According to “Grassroots NGO in China”, the most successful but illegal grassroots NGOs in China can get up to 800,000 Yuan a year through donations, only 1% of the raised fund of Oxfam, a Hong Kong charity NGO.

8 Source: http://www.ngohome-kolkata.org/
After that event I realize that it is not enough for us to only engage in something within the college. We have to go to the urban corners and be a part of them if we want to change them. So I come up with the idea “magicians around the corner”.

Our major work is to bring new knowledge and new conception to urban corners, using the sources of our students, so that they are no more strangers to the culture of the city, no more isolated to the prosperity of Beijing. To be specific, there are three groups of “magicians”, the performing arts group, the primary health group and the education group. Members of a certain group don’t need to be an expert in that field themselves, but the bridge between the experts and the urban corners.

There are more than two hundreds students’ associations in my university, like piano, guitar, modern music, dancing, hip-hop, musicals, drama, and traditional operas associations, each with a group of talented college students. All of them are very valuable resources to us. What I am planning to do is to invite them to urban corners in Beijing and perform for local people. If we can arrange two performances a month, life in the urban corners would be much more colorful.

Magicians of the primary health group can invite volunteers from our university Red Cross to give lectures on hygiene. We can help with the daily care of the elderly. We can even be real magicians. From my Indian experience, I know that it is better to use interesting and innovative ways to inform people. For example, by easy but fantastic magics like conjuring injectors, children can accept the importance of vaccination easily.

As to the magicians of the education group, we should be like NGO workers in India. We could do home-visits to children and organize after-class study groups. Through talking with teachers and parents they actually become the bridge between the two. Besides, we could even be the facilitators and bridges between local residents and government. We can explain government policies to those “stubborn” residents. We may not be able to establish a kindergarten right now, we may not be able to provide the boarding to vulnerable girls right now, but as long as we keep on moving, something is going to change for sure.

All in all, we are magicians bringing joy and knowledge to them. Through our work, local people can also feel closer to students and to other NGO workers. As time goes by, the mutual trust and understanding can be rooted in all hearts.

Our initiatives lie in the integration of different resources. People in urban corners have a relative isolated mentality while college students don’t know much about them. We can bring beauty and arts to urban corners while bring practicing and communicating opportunities to students. We are the intermediaries in a win-win situation. In addition, we are running this at a low cost level. Students associations often perform for students for free on campus. So if we invite them to give a performance at urban corners, we only have to pay the transportation fees. Since most colleges have various student associations, they could copy the model and new magician groups can grow.
Gradually, we can spread our activities and raise other people’s awareness of urban corners. For example, those old buildings are good objectives for photography lovers. After their visit, we can hold an exhibition about urban corners. Then more and more people will start to notice the urban corners.

However, “magicians around the corner” still have possible difficulties. Students have high mobility and thus the consistence of membership may be a big headache for us. We hope magicians could be a part of the urban corners, not just some experience for fun. Since a student organization has problems as the mobility of part-time student volunteers, the consistence of programs while an illegal grassroots NGO also has bunches of problems as the lack of financial support and the professional management knowledge or “know-how”, I think we may combine student organizations and NGOs together. Here I am not saying being a volunteer at a certain NGO or run some programs with a certain NGO. Instead, let’s turn our organization to NGO. For most students’ societies in China, registering as a formal NGO is beyond the imagination. But why can’t we do this? College students can start computer companies, why cannot we start NGOs?

If we set-up a student-based NGO, we could take advantages and make up for disadvantages of both sides. It is comparatively easier for a student society to register with the government. I worked in “Sunshine Volunteers Organization” for one and a half years, which is a former student organization of our university. It is now registered under the supervision of the China Children and Teenagers Fund, a governmental foundation. As a registered NGO, Sunshine now has full-time employees and is running at a more professional level. It also can do bigger programs than a student organization like charity concert. Sunshine is a success example in healthcare fields. To eliminate urban corners, we need grassroots NGOs, too. As long as a student-based organization is set up, combining the full-time staff’s enthusiasm and the student volunteers’ knowledge, we can do more in the community.

I am not a daydreaming girl who thinks herself can change the urban corners overnight as a real magician. I know I cannot do everything, but if we keep on moving, we can always do more. As the society becomes more open, as the government is more transparent, NGOs will win more space for development eventually. One Bangladesh colleague told me, in Bangladesh, there is at least a NGO worker at every government program, monitoring the government’s work. The government pays high attention to NGO staff’s suggestions. What a harmonious picture of the governmental and nongovernmental force!

If and only if China has more space for grassroots NGOs, the city corner issue can be relieved and Beijing can become the dream city of anybody in the world. Believe me, poverty and urban development are not twin brothers. As long as we have the courage and persistence, we can eliminate the dark corners of the city and of our hearts.

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9 For more information about Sunshine, see www.isun.org
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Maria Angelica Rodriguez
Colombia
3rd Prize Winner
(essay translated from Spanish)
The Bogotá of my dreams: a city that improves the quality of life of its inhabitants through creative solutions to optimize existing resources

In my country, Colombia, 75% of the population lives in cities,\textsuperscript{10} according to the latest census, carried out in 2005. I live in Bogotá, the capital city, where 21% of Colombia’s urban population,\textsuperscript{11} more than 6.8 million people, reside.\textsuperscript{12} Currently, it is one of the 40 largest cities in the world and one of the 10 largest in Latin America.\textsuperscript{13} My city’s large size not only creates opportunities because it is a dynamic economic, social and cultural center; it also poses major challenges for ensuring that all inhabitants have a good quality of life.

Bogotá was founded in 1538, in the middle of the Andes, the legendary mountain range stretching from Argentina to Venezuela in western South America. During its nearly 470 years of existence, Bogotá has been a political, economic and cultural center of the country, receiving people from all regions. Beginning in the mid twentieth century, this immigration increased due to the violence caused by guerrillas and insurgent groups, which are concentrated in rural zones. Many people have been forced to flee to major cities such as Bogotá (“between May 1999 and August 2002, 8,362 displaced families in Bogotá received assistance, equivalent to approximately 35,000 individuals.”)\textsuperscript{14}

From a more informal perspective, Bogotá is a city where Colombia’s regional and cultural wealth converges. Colombia is a country with coastlines on two oceans, a wide range of climate zones and high levels of biodiversity. It is a country rated among the happiest in the world. Bogotá families are a mix of extraordinary customs, with generations hailing from the Caribbean, the Pacific, the coffee-growing or Amazon regions, while others were born in the city. My Bogotá is perhaps one of the best reflections of the cultural and ethnic wealth of Colombia. It is also one reason the city faces enormous challenges for social inclusion.

Bogotá: a city of educational, labor and business opportunities

Bogotá offers wonderful opportunities for inhabitants thanks to its education services, as well as the size and dynamism of its labor and business markets. Colombia’s primary, secondary (6% of the country’s schools) and higher education (35% of its universities)\textsuperscript{15} services are concentrated in Bogotá. Bogotá residents have an average of 9.6 years of schooling, higher than the average for the main urban areas of Latin America (9.2


\textsuperscript{11} Estimates by the author, based on the report “Proyecciones nacionales y departamentales de población, 2006-2020” (“National and Departmental Population Estimates, 2006-2020”), DANE.

\textsuperscript{12} Op. cit.

\textsuperscript{13} The Principal Agglomerations of the World, City Population, \texttt{<http://www.citypopulation.de/World.html>}, consulted on 23 March, 2008.


years), which indicates that education opportunities in the city permit the development of human capital that meets international standards.

In addition, the diversity of sectors present in Bogotá offers abundant labor and business opportunities. The economy of Bogotá has been growing since 2000, reaching 6.8% in 2006. Bogotá is the region with the largest number of economic units (industry, trade and services) in Colombia (approximately 320,000, equivalent to 23% of the total economic units of this type nationwide). Moreover, the Colombian capital has the country’s largest labor market, concentrating 18% of jobs nationwide and contributing a quarter of all new employment generated in the country. Finally, Bogotá is ranked third among Latin American cities that most stimulate the creation of new businesses, which indicates that the opportunities offered are not only for people seeking employment, but also for entrepreneurs who have the potential to generate it.

**Despite the educational and economic progress made, Bogotá faces major social challenges**

Bogotá also faces major challenges, however, such as a high rate of poverty and unequal income distribution. Although the poverty rate in Bogotá has decreased in recent years, it is still alarming: in 2004, 43.4% of the population lived below the poverty line, compared with 54.6% in 2001. Moreover, in the area of the city with the most equitable income distribution, the 10% of individuals with the highest income earn nearly 10 times more than those belonging to the 10% with the lowest income. In the area with the worst income distribution, the 10% with the highest income earn nearly 30 times more than the 10% with the lowest income.

Another major challenge is the school dropout rate: an estimated 30% of students who enter the public school system do not complete their high school education (last two years of secondary school). Studies suggest that economic factors are the main cause of high school dropout and nonattendance rates, especially in secondary school. These factors are associated both with families’ inability to cover education costs and with higher rates of child labor due to the difficulties these families face in meeting basic needs.

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16 Ibíd., National Education Ministry Data.
22 Ibid.
Additionally, the lack of public safety still figures prominently among the city’s problems. Although Bogotá crime rates in 2006 were at their lowest level since 1998, there were more than 1,300 murders, over 450 traffic deaths, more than 30,000 robberies (of individuals, homes, establishments and vehicles), 30 kidnappings and 15 acts of terrorism.\textsuperscript{25}

In short, the Colombian capital offers a wealth of educational and economic opportunities, which need to be strengthened to address problems such as poverty, income concentration, school dropout rates and the lack of public safety. Bogotá must strive to create more opportunities to confront the challenges identified, especially poverty.

**The city of my dreams:**

*One that takes advantage of existing resources to achieve social inclusion*

The city of my dreams is one where all of us, including the most disadvantaged, have the possibility of living the life we want. It is a city where we can all feel safe. A city in which the facilities we use are in harmony with nature and our natural environment. But above all, the city of my dreams is a city of happy human beings. One where all our hearts are full…full of passion, strength and hope.

If Bogotá is to become the city of my dreams, we need to do more than to improve the quality of public services, transportation infrastructure, education, health, housing and communication. We need to do more than stimulate employment and access to credit to create and strengthen businesses and professionalize non-profit organizations, among other aspects. The programs implemented must also respond to the needs of the urban population so that they can become tools to enable each individual to create his own happiness.

One might argue that millions need to be invested and consequently, that only cities in developed countries with sufficient resources could achieve this dream. But I believe it is an issue that goes beyond the amount of resources: it is a matter of how effectively they are used. I believe that a city like Bogotá, with serious resource limitations, can use what has been or is being invested in a much more effective way to further progress toward making it a city inhabited by happy human beings. To achieve this requires creative solutions, many of which we young people can generate.

**An example of existing resources with unexploited potential: computer rooms**

For example, the district government has provided 28,000 computers to 706 public schools\textsuperscript{26} as part of a policy to improve education that the city’s different administrations have developed since 2000. Additionally, the district government provides regular

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maintenance services to more than 400 computer rooms in the city\textsuperscript{27} to ensure that they can operate at maximum capacity. Nevertheless, these facilities are not fully exploited since most are not open in the evening and on weekends.

Moreover, the Colombian government, through its learning service, offers online courses free of charge. These courses are offered in different subjects, with a focus on job skills. Nevertheless, these courses are not reaching more people because a large percentage of the low-income population does not have access to computers with Internet access, even though resources are available to offer more courses and serve more users.

What would happen if these low-income residents of Bogotá could access the free online courses in the computer rooms already established in district schools? This is only one example of two loose ends in our economy, which represent an enormous resource investment. If they were joined, they could increase their impact using resources already budgeted. What is more, this type of initiative could be developed to help resolve many of the city’s key problems, such as the high levels of poverty and income concentration.

However, as mentioned earlier, the real needs of the population must be identified in order to propose programs and projects with a positive impact. Consequently, it is necessary to determine why low-income individuals have problems accessing education. During college, a group of classmates and I wanted to gain a better understanding of this issue, for which reason we conducted a study using primary (interviews, focus groups and surveys in three of the poorest city neighborhoods) and secondary sources (previous studies).

We learned that the problem goes beyond the lack of resources to continue one’s education. Once an individual leaves the traditional system, if he wants to return, he may have trouble adapting due to his age. In addition, in cities such as Bogotá, when people are employed and look after their homes at the same time they want to study, the long commutes (an individual may have to travel two or more hours from his home to his workplace) seriously limit access to education or traditional training services. This problem is due to the city’s great distances and the inadequate mass transport system. Moreover, the poorest neighborhoods are generally located on the outskirts of the city.

Thus, the challenge is not only to facilitate access to traditional education, but also to identify tools and methodologies to overcome barriers of adaptation due to age and the lack of time to commute to the training location.

E-learning is one way to overcome these obstacles. E-learning is education that is offered through online networks and therefore can be accessed anywhere in the world where there is a computer with Internet access. Individuals can study their courses whenever convenient and at their own pace, without their age or social characteristics creating barriers of adaptation.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
Furthermore, each student can receive assistance in accordance with his level of progress in the courses since the tutor can check which courses he has passed and which he has not, identify those which are causing him problems and determine whether his learning pace is fast, slow or average. This permits a personalized education, a practically utopian situation in the traditional education system.

Currently, an increasing number of education institutions in Spanish-speaking countries, such as Mexico, Spain and Colombia (as mentioned earlier) offer e-learning at different levels. Each of the computer rooms maintained by the district could become e-learning classrooms where thousands of people could take the courses offered, in accordance with their interests, and thereby improve their access to labor and business opportunities.

Facilitating disadvantaged individuals’ use of technology is in itself extremely important because the computer and the Internet have become everyday tools for development in the knowledge society. Training individuals to use the computer and the Internet opens the doors on a world of information that gives them the tools to explore and to establish contact with other individuals in similar situations for mutual learning and support. It means giving them the tools to take advantage of technological advances implemented by the government and society as a whole. It has already become a factor of social inclusion.

Thus, the city of my dreams is one that provides opportunities for all of its inhabitants, both through effective resource investment and the full exploitation of existing resources. The Bogotá of my dreams will be a city that puts its existing resources, such as computer rooms and online courses, at the service of those who need them most.

The role of young people: generating creative solutions for the efficient use of existing resources to benefit the disadvantaged

“(...) the poverty problem is not the exclusive responsibility of the city government; it requires the joint efforts of the nation, social organizations, private entities and citizens in general.”

After learning about the situation described above, my classmates and I decided to find out why the facilities were not being used to their full potential. We discovered that the obstacles impeding the optimal use of this infrastructure are associated with the interaction among several actors, such as the schools, the community, the local government and the course providers.

To determine how to optimize the use of the facilities to serve the population living in poverty, we developed a pilot project in 2003. During this project, we used one of the computer rooms, located in a district school in a low-income neighborhood of southwestern Bogotá, to enable local residents to access an online course on basic

28 Bogotá cómo vamos Project, Minutes of the Forum “¿Quiénes son y dónde están los pobres en Bogotá?” (“Who and where are the poor in Bogotá?”) of 17 August 2005. Representatives of the district government, experts and members of social organizations participated in this event, as did local council members and mayors, who offered their perspectives on the issue.
computer skills offered by a Mexican university. We obtained permission from the school principal to use the room and the Mexican institution to access the online course.

The project confirmed two basic hypotheses: 1) that schools are ideal locations for this type of project because they are located in neighborhoods where the beneficiaries live, thereby resolving the travel time limitations that occurred previously; and 2) that the e-learning methodology satisfies the learning needs of the beneficiary population by permitting each student to progress at his own pace and to take the same course with individuals of different ages and cultural characteristics without this negatively affecting his learning process.

The result of the project was that 15 individuals learned to use a computer and search the Internet, which gave them the capacity to access jobs not previously considered, organize their microenterprises and document the activities of the Community Action Boards of which they were members, among other things. The pilot project was a success thanks to the willingness of the school to lend its facilities, the availability of a quality course and the presence of an active, participatory community. We realized that there was a simple, effective way to help improve the quality of life of low-income individuals of our city.

This was the beginning of the project. Thanks to this experience, we decided to design a model that would permit the use of not just one or two, but many, computer rooms in the city to benefit the community. This model was our thesis project for a degree in business administration. We contacted several actors to participate in the project: schools, the district education secretariat and online course providers. The focus was on identifying the needs and constraints of all actors to design a win-win model that would effectively promote all actors’ participation.

During our research, we learned that schools were not using computer rooms during extra hours because there was no one to make sure that no equipment in the room was damaged or stolen, which would affect their education facilities. Although the district education secretariat wanted schools to open the rooms for longer hours, it could not force them to do so. Therefore, schools needed to be motivated to develop this type of project. Additionally, for the course providers, it was important to have a student population large enough for their courses and to be familiar with the training needs of the community.

In an attempt to satisfy the needs of all project actors, we designed an online organizational model facilitated by a non-profit organization that coordinates the project, ensures the efficient use of resources and at the same time facilitates and supplies what project actors needed. This was an innovative model in that it leveraged existing resources, supplied by different actors who are now connected online through the facilitating organization, to achieve greater impact than in the past.

29 "The community action board is a civil, social and community non-profit organization for social management, with legal capacity and autonomy, voluntarily formed by local residents who join efforts and resources to achieve integral, sustainable development in the context of the exercise of participatory democracy." Law 743 of 2002.
Today, this project has become a reality through a legally established non-profit organization that operates five computer rooms in Bogotá public schools, serving more than 100 people every weekend, whose ages range from 15 to 60. This organization is responsible for coordinating service delivery to the beneficiary population by linking schools, online course providers, community leaders and project beneficiaries. In addition, this organization encourages the actors mentioned to participate in the project through: donations of new computers to schools, remuneration of personnel that provide in-person learning support to beneficiaries, monitoring to ensure proper use of equipment and dissemination activities to reach more beneficiaries.

In the future, a project like this one could extend beyond the computer rooms of public schools in Bogotá. It could also be adapted to reach the 2,340 private schools in the city and even to establish computer rooms in independent community spaces, such as community centers, with donations of equipment in good condition that could be adapted for community use. This type of project could even be implemented in other cities of the country and the world. The only thing needed is computer facilities with Internet access that can be used more efficiently to benefit the community.

This experience demonstrates that we young people can play a key role in making Bogotá the city of our dreams. We can use the skills acquired to think creatively and design solutions that the city needs so that existing resources can be used more effectively and a virtuous cycle can be generated that takes Bogotá one step forward. Young people’s commitment and energy are essential for the city’s development. To promote this work, we must awaken the sense of urgency, the need to do something, but most importantly, to realize that young people really are capable of doing that something. Because in order to achieve the changes we all dream of, citizens and government, for-profit and non-profit organizations must work together. It requires the teamwork of all actors of society.

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Jonah Obajeun
Nigeria
Finalist
TITLE:
MAKING PARADISE FROM SLUMS

ABSTRACT
Our lives begin to end the day we keep silent about issues that are germane to our continued existence as a people. Thankfully, this essay affords me the opportunity to push my pen for some issues hovering around my existence as a student. Having been brought up in the slums of Lagos, Nigeria, I was moved by sheer envy and plain cynicism when a friend of mine who based in Paris sent pictures of some streets of Paris to me via the internet. I engaged myself in needless comparison of the streets of Paris with the streets of the city where I have spent over two decades of my existence. However, as a product of a society where slums have become my only available shelter, where people show apathy to the living conditions threatening their existence and where those at the helms of power are only concern with the seat of government house; I can adjudge that living in slums can be likened to living in hell. This was what triggered my curiosity on the theme of this essay which centers on the proposition of means by which a city embellished with slums can be developed into a city of desired standard. The approaches to achieving this as contained in this essay are practical-based and result-oriented. The challenges that may be encountered are not treated with scant regard some of which include: exponential growth rate of population in an urban city, abyss of penury, pollution as threat to human health, infrastructure break-down, as well as violence tendencies. Nonetheless, some of the examined mechanisms for combating the challenges are: the pivotal role of government with enviable leadership traits, the place of corporate social responsibilities of corporate organizations, public-private sector partnership, enforceable environmental legislatures as well as the passionate role of relevant None Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and individuals.

The methodology adopted is that the examination is done in such a way that the mechanisms seek fundamental solutions that are necessary for even development of a slum-embellished city rather than going for routines. Besides, the proposed mechanisms are presented with slight reference to some great cities in the developed countries. Good road networks, pollution-free environment, unwavering healthcare delivery, sustainable infrastructure development and violence-free society are some of the features that characterized these cities.
The major significant derivable conclusion of this essay is that with strict adherence to the recommendations and suggested mechanisms therein, a city of desired taste or standard can be developed with recourse to its master-plan.

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Bibliography
1. Introduction
Having been brought up in the slums of Lagos, Nigeria, I was moved by sheer envy and plain cynicism against the government of my country when a friend of mine who based in Paris sent pictures of some streets of Paris to me via the internet. I engaged myself in needless criticism against the government for the non-salubrious state of the city I reside in without regard to my influence as component of the city. Until I gained admission into the university where I was compelled to live in semi-slum environment—the best available. It was at that point I realized the importance of my role as an individual, government and corporate organizations in making a paradise from the slums we live in. Perhaps the above assertion may look like a tall dream that is far from being realized, but the objective of this essay is to provide ways and mechanisms through which the dream can metamorphose into its physical equivalence. However, challenges militating against the economic progress of a slum-like city are not treated with scant regard. Such challenges include: unbearably high rate of rural-urban migration, infrastructure breakdown, ethnical and religious crises, upsurge in poverty level, as well as pollution ranging from air, water to land pollution with air pollution being the greatest enemy to human survival. But baring all these limitations is then the dream city, the one that can be likened to paradise!

2. What is a City?
With no single generally acceptable definition of a city, geographers have tried to convince us that a city is the central meeting point for the power and culture of a group of people with diverse cultural orientation and beliefs. It is a place where diverse beliefs come into one focus with gains in both social effectiveness and significance. Furthermore, a city is an emblem of integrated social relationship. It is the ‘engine room’ of the economy, the hall of justice, the academy of learning. It is also characterized with good governance, good healthcare structure, sustainable economic growth and development alongside unrestricted access to economic opportunities. From the foregoing, it can be said that a city arises out of man’s social needs31. Therefore, a city remains man’s greatest work of art32.

3. My Dream City
Having found myself in a developing nation where all sorts of social vices, environmental degradation and poor healthcare services characterize my upbringing, I braced up to contribute my quota in reshaping the city where I live in to my dream city. My dream city is one with salubrious environment, one with well planned road networks, one with health-friendly atmosphere. Such city of my dream is characterized with controlled immigration and emigration rates, good healthcare delivery, readily available employment opportunities and unrestricted market access, standard social amenities as well as excellent leadership. Besides, the following are also essential parts of my dream city: high standard of living which is consequent of increase in Gross Domestic Product, violence-free, standard academy of learning and mutual co-existence of the people that reside in the city.

4. Any Opportunity in a City Embellished With Slums?
Oasis is an area in the desert where there is water and trees grow. What this means is that an agriculturally barren land can still play host to growing plants. This proverbial illustration can be likened to a city where majority of its residents dwell in slums. The opportunities therein in this kind of city cannot be discarded with a wave of the hand. Being an industrialized setting, there is better access to employment opportunities and other economic advantages such as social investment, entrepreneurship ideals and economic innovations that are technologically-driven. All these positive sides make such city to be the economic ‘engine room’ of a macro-community. Besides, with the influx of people migrating from the rural areas to the city in search of greener pasture, then the effect of the multiplying population of the city can be advantageous in terms of stronger defense to safe-guard the city against any physical attack from neighboring communities. This actually will depend on a number of factors ranging from the state of the city’s arsenal to its technical know-how.

5. The Challenges
With uncontrolled migration rate, the population of a city will continue to follow exponential growth pattern rather than being linear. The difference between linear growth and exponential growth is the classical theory by Malthus (1798). His hypothesis was that unchecked population would increase in geometric progression while the means of subsistence would increase in an arithmetic progression. As a result, there would be overcrowding, hence, population would expand to the limit of subsistence and be held thereafter by war, famine and ill health.

Infrastructure break-down is another major challenge hindering the social development of a city characterized with slums. This dysfunction of basic social amenities is consequent of poor maintenance on the part of the providers and risible cum inconsiderate utilization on the part of the users. That means both the providers which can be government, corporate organizations or individuals and the users are partners in infrastructure destruction.

Substantial part of the population of a developing city is living in abyss of penury. This is not unconnected from the fact that a developing city is overcrowded which then give rise to unbearably higher number of people in the league of job seeking than the available jobs. Hence, idleness and high level of poverty pervade the city. Another major challenge of a developing city is its violence tendencies. The crises can be politically instigated, religiously incited and ethnically fuelled. In all, a developing city is prone to crises with high level of destruction of lives and property.

Pollution is the greatest threat to human survival. A developing city cannot be completely rid of pollution which includes: air, water and land pollution. This is not unconnected from the fact that a developing city is also industrialized. Water-borne diseases can be contacted through contaminated water with heavy industrial chemical wastes. Oil spillage and indiscriminate dumping of refuse pollute land which can constitute road blocks, destroy farmlands and subject the environment to malodorous odor. With more and more Green House Gases being released into the atmosphere, the ozone layer is continuously...
being depleted and the air we breathe in is also being polluted. This has a high tendency of causing respiratory problems. Besides, in one of the courses I have studied in the university, I was taught how different industries contribute to accident through pollution by knowing their Fatal Accident Frequency Rate (FAFR)\(^33\) as indicated in table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Occupation</th>
<th>FAFR</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>FAFR</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chemical industry</td>
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<td>Air crew</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Professional boxers</td>
<td>7000</td>
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<td>Staying at home</td>
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<td>Fishing</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Traveling by bus</td>
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<td>Pedal cycling</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. FAFR of Typical Activities\(^34\).

Generally, pollution subjects a city to environmental degradation.

6. Pragmatic Approaches to Reshape the City
The following approaches to reshape a city to desired standard are presented in such a way that they are practical-based and result-oriented with recourse to relevant case studies as references.

6.1. Excellent Leadership
Show me a developed city and I will tell you of its vision-driven with zero tolerance for corruption. For a city to thrive, the place of good leadership cannot be treated with scant regard. From what I discovered, a city with bad leaders cannot witness economic growth and development. Therefore, a city that is aimed at being developed should be garnished with excellent leaders embellished with passion for knowledge, servant-hood, strength of character, discipline and value-centered. As institutional builders, good leaders produce strength in diversity. They deploy the potential of everyone towards the goal of developing the city. Besides, where do you think John Kennedy (USA), Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Abraham Lincoln and among others were made from? The essence of their excellent ideals did not come from birth but from the crucibles of life came their glowing character and strength for living.

6.2. The Place of Corporate Social Responsibility
As components of a slum-embellished city that is aimed at being upgraded to a city of enviable standard, corporate organizations have central role to play. The fact that the city that play host to them is in dire need of their support cannot be disregarded. Corporate organizations should learn to give back to their host city by enhancing their social responsibilities in such a way that it will not undermine their profits. They can be of help in collaboration with international organizations such United Nations Education, Social

\(^33\) FAFR is defined as the risk to life in 10\(^8\) exposed hours. This is equivalent to the number of fatalities occurring among 1000 men over the working life (assumed to be 33 years of working for 320 days per year and 10 hours per day).

and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the provision of standard teaching or learning facilities to already existing public schools in slum areas, build lecture rooms, provide adequately stocked libraries and computer systems, scholarship awards to indigent students and academically sound students. Corporate organizations can also be highly functional in endowment programs for public schools in slum areas and give research grants to lecturers. Undoubtedly, with all these, the standard of the academy of learning can be enhanced to world standard. Health sector can as well witness the supporting hand of corporate organizations in collaboration with some foreign agencies such United States Aid (USAID) and World Health Organization (WHO) through the provision of enhanced health facilities. They can develop youth empowerment programs which will consequently enhance the human capacity building of youths. Such empowerment programs may include: seminars, talk shows, youth conferences among others. Corporate organizations can as well enhance their operations, thus giving more employment opportunities and market access thereby reducing the scourge of unemployment. Behold, the dream city is gradually emerging!

6.3. Public-Private Sector Partnership
There are developmental projects that need to be executed in slum areas of a city but they are too exorbitant for either the private sector or the public sector to single handedly handled. Signing of memorandum of understanding which seeks the partnership of both the private and public sectors will go along way in executing such projects, hence, transforming the physical and economic landscape of the city. Such projects are capital intensive which may include: establishment of schools, establishment of industries, construction of good roads and development of local industries as well as the provision of long term social amenities. However, all these should be in tandem with the master-plan of the city. Besides, the projects will not only enhance the economic viability of the city but will also put the city on the global economic scene. Hence, the global market needed for my dream city is ascertained! Paris (France), New York (USA) and Beijing (China) shared the same sentiments in this respect. The collaborative effort of both the private and public sectors played major role in putting these cities on the global economic scene.

6.4. Mutual Co-existence of People
The understanding of the residents of a city that is aimed at being transformed to enviable standard is the bedrock of any developmental process. In this regard, every individual has a role to play. People should learn how to live with one another in harmony irrespective of cultural background, beliefs and ideologies. It should give a cause for reflection that before a city can be adjudge standard city, it should be a symbol of integrated social relationship. In re-engineering the diverse orientation of people towards achieving a common goal, the mass media has a responsibility to discharge. The mass media in collaboration with community-based organizations can help in bringing the diffuse rays of many separate beams of understanding of people into a focus. This can be achieved through: continuous public campaign against violence, public enlightenment campaign against political, ethnic and religious crises as well as spontaneous mass education of people on the gains of peaceful co-existence. In this respect, government should create a friendly environment where everybody will see himself or herself as stakeholder. Behold, here comes the peace needed in my dream city! Analytical reports from Paris (France), New York (USA), Tokyo (Japan), and Beijing (China) revealed that none of these cities
have witnessed any form of crisis in the last ten years. This was attributed to the understanding of the people that reside in these cities.

6.5. Government, Championing the Course to Shape my Dream City

Of all the approaches discussed, the role of the government is the most important. The government can embark on environmental development with enforceable sanitation policies. Indiscriminate dumping of refuse should be prohibited through enactment of laws that sanctions the defaulters. However, government should first see that there is aggressive press campaign against such ill-environmental act. Besides, other environmental issues that need to be addressed are: the need for hard data on air quality, bush burning, vehicular emissions and the concerns of host cities about the risk of their lives due to the presence of industrial facilities. Nonetheless, the need to check population growth (a social policy issue) as well as to check the per capita energy consumption growth rate through appropriate technological innovations and energy policy is also very essential. In this regard, a maxim of environmental management applies: ‘Think Globally, Act Locally’. The use of more refined technology by industries is central to reducing the scourge of pollution. However, the failure of central electricity generation and the use of so many pollution-prone standby generators should be redressed. Hence, there is need to enact national emissions source regulations with enforceable limits. In pursuance of this, the appropriate agencies should be strengthened and trained in anticipation. Thereafter, a health-friendly environment will be in view.

As a social policy issue, checking of population growth rate is as important as ever in changing the face of a city. The influx of people migrating from the rural areas to the cities will actually subject the population of the city to grow without specific pattern, thereby making the statistics and demographic analysis of the city non-reliable. In order to have a city with controlled emigration and immigration rates, appropriate policies need to be made by the government. In achieving this, government machineries such as functional migration ministry with enhanced database and reliable registry of death and birth staffed with highly proficient demographers and statisticians need to be put in place.

The provision of basic social amenities is naturally the role of government. It is not the provision that matters but the sustainability which borders on maintenance. Such infrastructures may include: electricity, water, good transportation network, well grounded healthcare delivery and formidable housing scheme. In maintaining these facilities, the providers should work in collaboration with community-based organizations to set up monitoring and maintenance group. This group will be educating the users about the careful use of the facilities and give reports containing details of the state of the facilities to the providers. With these recommendations, the facilities can serve for longer years thereby giving the city a befitting infrastructure standard. This will undoubtedly attract foreign and private investors. Now it remains a step to fully shape the dream city!

6.6. The Role of NGOs

NGOs can work in collaboration with community-based organizations with the help of corporate organizations to embark on youth empowerment programs, aggressive mass

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education of people on how to live with understanding as well as formation of grassroots organizations aim at nurturing the mindset of young people towards the development of the city they live in. Here comes the dream city, the paradise!

7. My Role and What I Have Done
I am at present, the president of the Association of Campus Journalists (ACJ) in my university and national coordinator of the Youths Ambassadors for Development Embassy (YADE)-an NGO which I founded in my first year in the university. For long, I have always been a crusader of development. As president of ACJ, I work in collaboration with ‘THE NATION’-a Nigerian national daily, alongside my colleagues to write features on some of the projects some corporate organizations have executed in Nigerian campuses. We aptly called them (corporate organizations) the ‘Deans of Nigerian Campuses’ and our aim was to encourage them and call their attentions to other neglected areas where they can come in. Thank God we were able to achieve this. Besides, I have taken time to browse through the internet, make rigorous enquiries in order to know whether such thing has been done in other places. I am proud to say that it is the first of its kind in the whole of black Africa; hence it is an innovative idea. With what we have done, several other corporate organizations who also want their names in the good book of history have also taken the bull by the horns to lend their helping hands. These organizations have actually focused on the neglected areas mentioned in the newspaper. Such areas include building more lecture rooms to cater for the multiplying population of students, establishment of business schools and financial endowment programs. Some Nigerian banks have actually taken up the gauntlet.

YADE has seven board members that cut across seven Nigerian universities with respective university having membership ranging from 50 to 100 students. What we have done in the past was to organize talk shows and seminars as our own way of enhancing the human capacity building of Nigerian youths especially those in the university. With these empowerment programs, we have been able to produce about 15 student entrepreneurs across the seven campuses. This we considered to be our social responsibility. We are currently running a project tagged ‘Keep the Campus Clean’ in the seven universities. Through the help of funds raised from our pockets, we have been able to procure waste baskets in a bid to actualize this project. We have embarked on press campaign in collaboration with ACJ as we believe that information empowers the mind, if you are informed, you will be deformed. We have been able to educate people on the need to keep our environment clean. We informed them about Beijing, Tokyo and showed them pictures of some streets of Paris. We pointed that our own city can also be like Paris, Tokyo and Beijing. We declared that these cities were not from heaven, they were made! Thankfully, our campaign has actually yielded some positive results. Students now feel reluctant to dump waste indiscriminately; the waste baskets are being carefully utilized. With just four months into the project, I dare say that the level of neatness of these seven campuses can be likened to any campus in Paris and other developed cities.

8. Improving the Impact of My Work
With the encouraging result I have gotten so far, I hope to extend the tentacles of these developmental projects to the city at large. I intend to achieve this lofty goal by collaborating with other NGOs, private sectors, government as well as almost all the Nigerian national dailies and some international organizations such as World Bank, United Nations among others. The tag ‘keep the Campus Clean’ will thereafter becomes ‘Keep the City Clean’. We also hope to embark on large scale empowerment programs for people in order to instill the ideals of entrepreneurship in the minds of people. By doing so, we hope that more employers of labor will be produced. Other youths can also take up the gauntlet as I have done. They can start from their campuses or streets and then take it beyond that level as I am also hoping. Together we can make paradise from the slums we live in, it is possible!

9. Conclusion
Can anything good come out from Nazareth? But Jesus Christ came out from Nazareth. However, it took some processes that are better appreciated in the bible before Jesus could emerge from the city. He eventually became the progenitor of Christian faith. The same scenario applies to the slums I live in. Can a paradise be made from the slums? Yes, it only involves some processes and time as cities are sometimes described as product of time. The processes have been painstakingly highlighted in this essay. Albeit, majority of the ideas are based on personal experience peculiar to Nigerian cities but with little or no modifications, it can still be applied in other places. Who says it is not possible to make paradise from slums? Honestly, it is possible!

Bibliography
Ashis Himali
Nepal
Finalist
In the Hindu mythology, Amrawati the capital city of Paradise is the most dreamt city. Where its immense beauty and prosperity make the people happy and contended. However, not every city is Amrawati some are to be made so because there is a saying those who dream the most do the most. My hometown Pokhara is one of the most beautiful cities naturally endowed with the magnificent Annapurna range and Phewa Lake. Still it is not my dream city as it lacks the feelings of entrepreneurial culture and dignity of labor. I dream a city of “one home one enterprise” where every new possibilities are explored and revolutionary ideas developed into entrepreneurial skills.

Briefly, describing about my hometown Pokhara. It is a valley of about 600,000 people having an area of about 124 sq. Km. It is a multiethnic community with a per capita income of about $300 and literacy rate of about 56%. It is a tourist center and most people rely on government jobs, agriculture and remittance for their hands to mouth. It is the second biggest city in Nepal where many youths come from different villages to enhance their career and get better jobs. Therefore, it is generating a great pace for the urbanization and having many opportunities and threats as well.

If we concern the opportunities that are prevalent in my city than there are enough chances that could lead for major deals. However, the sad thing is that until now only few opportunities are explored. We have enough prospects in the field of tourism, agriculture, education, business, entrepreneurship and many other areas. If we are well determined and enthusiastic than everything could be a Midas touch. There is a saying to be successful we should not do different things but we have to do things differently.

My city is a beautiful tourist destination from where we can go for treks to various places like Annapurna Base Camp, Gorepani and many others. So we can create many opportunities by fostering the cultural heritages and the natural sceneries. Moreover, we can create the employment by empowering the local youth by focusing on the indigenous production of carpets, curio goods, handicrafts and many others. We can also make unemployment reduced by concentrating on adventurous tourism. Rafting, kayaking, rock climbing, parajumping, parahawking can become increasingly popular. There are also greater chances for sports tourism. Organised events for rafting, parajumping, mountain biking can be organized. There are better spots and environment to make such events grand success. The village areas have also favorable environment for the local herbs, which can be processed to derive better medicine. These medicines have good international market. Most people go abroad to earn money so remittance is a major portion of their earning. Accordingly there are enough opportunities for real estate business and housing. Therefore, we can say that there are sufficient opportunities that can produce major changes among the people.

Now let us focus on the threats! Youths are the pioneers of nation building. The major threats are the muscle drain and the brain drain. The political instability of the country is also not so good. So most of the youths go abroad for the purpose of studying and getting better jobs. Most of the youths who have to lead their nation are going abroad. This is definitely not a good trend. Due to the political instability, most of the industries are closed and many people are losing their jobs. These situations also have lead to the unemployment problems. The other threat can be the insecurity and kidnapping. Most of the rich businesspersons are being threatened and demanded for heavy ransom. This also has lead to the downfall of many businesses. Next is the power cut off. We have the load
shedding for six hours a day, which is definitely a great threat to the different sectors of my society.

Others can be the lack of entrepreneurial culture and the tendency of doing government jobs only. Most of the people do not want to do their own business. They prefer to do job for others than doing something enterpreneurial. This has led to job crisis in the city. The lack of proper and farsighted government planning and the political instability are also being the major threats over here. The government is not much aware about the proper planning that can lead a precise way for the development and prosperity of the people. So due to these situations we have different kinds of strikes and protests leading to religious and political conflicts.

I do not dream a city of mega structures and modern marvels with sophisticated technology, but a city where the individuals have the dignity of labor and their ideas been saluted for prestigious profession. That is a city of entrepreneurs-‘one home one enterprise’. There should be numerous possibilities and people should be able to cash their revolutionary ideas and entrepreneurial skills. It will definitely be a pragmatic solution to overcome the unemployment of my city as well leading to make it the city of my dreams.

Now the question arises what needs to be done to transform my city into city of my dreams. It just is developing the entrepreneurial culture among the youths, enhancing the dignity of labor and utilizing the local resources, ideas and work force to give a better yield. It ultimately reduces the muscle drain and brain drain creating enough chances for employment in the country itself.

Traditionally in my city, there is a misconception that to have a safe career one should have a government job, which would yield to fixed salary and facilities. This type of traditional concept has brought down the entrepreneurial culture. Youths try to follow the traditional work style thus bringing down their innovative and fruitful activities. However, if the entrepreneurial culture is motivated than youths can have their own jobs thus making them self-dependent and energetic. Their revolutionary idea can remain within the city itself thus contributing for the development. They can work for them and have their own enterprise thus motivating their own skills and concepts.

Work is worship. Whatever type, big or menial; we must do with great honor. Work and profession is the basis of life. However, in my city there is no dignity of labor. Youths always want to perform high paying white-collar jobs. They do not want to do small type of jobs at least in their own home city. They prefer to remain idle than working for menial jobs. Even though they are not qualified, they want better jobs by favorism and nepotism. This kind of attitude has lead to the problems of unemployment and frustration. So developing the feeling of dignity of labor is also one of the major attributes of my dream city. There everybody will be considering their jobs to be the best one and they have respect for others jobs as well.

We should explore and benefit from what we have. We should be able promote the local resources and manpower. We should be able to utilize them and motivate them so we can make the optimum use of what we have than expect some donations and help from others. It is not always a good idea to rely on others. We have enough chances in the field of tourism, agriculture, herbs, arts, handicrafts and many more. Using the local resources in the best use, we can be self-dependent and productive. We can have everything in superfluous amount. This will surpass the motivational level of every youth so that they
will have enough to work for themselves. Building one’s own city with one’s own resources could be another great deal.

If we can produce ample job opportunities within the city itself utilizing the local resources and availabilities than that will definitely heightened the motivational level of the youth. If they are aware about the dignity of labor it will contribute for the production of more job opportunities. If they can get the job within their own areas than surely they are not going abroad for working. These will definitely help to reduce the muscle drain and brain drain. It will help them psychologically; as they can be happy and overwhelmed for remaining together with their family members. Otherwise, most of the youths had to stay away from their family members for a longer period. Being together with my beloved ones may also be one of the things to bring happiness.

So now, if there is a better entrepreneurial culture where youths can create their own jobs and respect others jobs as well than that will definitely help to reduce the unemployment ratio. The youths are able to get a better environment for their jobs within their own hometown by using the prevalent resources than that will be a great moment. If the city is prosperous and people satisfied with a prestigious profession being together with their happy family than that is definitely like a dream come true. I will have my dream city made. That is not so easy it will require a great deal of hard work and determination.

What should I do and how am I working to make my city the city of my dreams is another question? Dreaming is easy but to make that dream come true many we should do many things. So now, it starts with an individual to an organization. The journey starts with some hopes of better horizon. It is all about networking, mentoring, harnessing and motivating the local youths. Moreover, it also concerns about preparing a generation and bridging them with the prospects of the local entrepreneurs. It is like a legacy handing over to new entrepreneurs. It is a dream that we should work within a span of 10 years.

For this, we have formed a youth organization working in the local level ‘Alternatives - NEPAL…finding new possibilities for youth.’ We initiated this organization in the year 2006 and officially registered it in November 28, 2007 in Kaski of Nepal. Presently, we are six in the team.

At first the major population of my city that should be focused for networking is the youths from the age between 13-25. Basically it includes the youths studying between 7th grades to bachelors level. This is the mass which have a great potential and moreover they are the people who are the pioneers of the nation. How can we network them is the major concern? I think this is the most important aspect of my entire objective. For this, we have chosen the educational institutions and classified them into three categories. The first type is the government school where the students are from the lower economic class. The second type considers the private school where the students are from the medium economic class. The last type is the schools where the students are from the higher economic class. We did this so that there will not remain any gap between the levels of students.

The next step that we have taken is the coordination with the local youth organizations like PAAILA…an initiative of youth and YUWA FORUM. These are the organizations working for the youth issues. These can be the best networking prevalent in the local level.

The next step that we have done is mentoring the youths. We have talked a great deal about entrepreneurship. However, what actually is entrepreneurship that we should make clear to the target group. For this, we conduct AWARENESS CAMPAIGNING in the
segmented schools where we DISCUSS AND INTERACT. We give presentations about the issues in the entrepreneurship and inform them about its essences. We give them the examples of local entrepreneurs and those in the international levels as well. After that, we give them some group works that would help them know what the different entrepreneurial opportunities in the local level are and evaluate for the future understanding. It will definitely encourage them to think something new.

Everybody has some brilliant and crazy ideas in them. Therefore, to stir and agitate we give them YOUTH ENTERPRENURSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM (YETP) if they had to do something entrepreneurial in the local level. This is the most effective way to generate new ideas from the youths. Most ideas are stupid but some are brilliant. If harnessed properly than that can generate really a better output. After that, we ask the best ideas to give their presentations and suggest them for some improvements. We also tell them what they could do and encourage them as well. For this, we ask the school authority to support the students at their best possible level. If essential, we give them LEADERSHIP AND VOCATIONAL TRAININGS. Moreover, we also give them YOUTH COUNSELING.

This is our initial stage and till now we have conducted programs in six schools of our classifications and we have planned to cover for at least 30 schools in my area. From that we hope that at least 60 ideas can be generated that can be encouraged for the professional level. We hope that it will grow in a geometric progression. If one idea can employ and motivate 2 youths than 60 entrepreneurial ideas can lead to have 120 more entrepreneurs. So if the ideas can cover different sectors ranging from tourism, agriculture, arts, herbs, social services, music and many more. If so than what more do we need. This will definitely be a great development and encouragement for all the local level youths.

Moreover, we also conduct a weekly radio program YUWA PUSTA in the local radio called Barahi FM. Here the discussion is about the youth entrepreneurship and civic concerns. It is also one of the best ways of motivating the youths. Here we invite the local youth entrepreneurs who initiated with some small funds. We have called Kiran Baral who has a buffalo farm. Santosh Adhikari who has a banana farm and many more like this. Our main objective is that youths get inspired from them not because they earn a lot but they do such jobs, which are not supposed to be done by such graduates in my community. This is really inspiring and productive.

Last week we conducted program in NAULO GHUMTI the organization that works for PLHIV (PEOPLE LIVING IN HIV). This has been one of the most encouraging program because we could make them aware about the entrepreneurship and they were motivated to do some kind of entrepreneurial activities. They made a team and with some funds of 10, 000 rupees ($150). They started a candle factory. It was a good move. We also measure our accomplishments in the different suggestions that we get from our well-wishers and especially the youths who want to be entrepreneurs. Moreover, they are many youths who have been determined to work in the country itself than going abroad. We consider this one of our greatest achievements. We have in some aspects helped in controlling brain drain and muscle drain.

There are many INGOS and NGOS in my city Pokhara. They work in different sectors of social aspects like HIV, drug abuse, street children, human rights and many more. They get fund from international donors who get thousands of dollars and have many linkages
and experts. Still I do not think that the results are up to the mark. Their performances and range have still not reached the targeted level as per their resources. Nevertheless, my organization ALTERNATIVES have focused such areas youth and entrepreneurship which no others have done. We started the organization with an initial fund of 6000 rupees ($100). It has been able to motivate and improve at least 2000 youths of Pokhara. We do it all in the local resources and until now we have not taken any help from the bigger agencies. This must be inspiring for all the youths because there are always opportunities in the environment and one can cash them if one has an entrepreneurial mind. Just make a local team and explore your locality you can create gold out of stone! However, you need some kind of mentoring and definitely hard labor and determination as well. We hope that my idea will be influential to other youths as well building enough chances for employment.

We hope and plan to do even more. In the future, we plan to make a VIRTUAL TEAM especially with the local youths staying abroad. We hope to generate some ideas and fund from them. As they have traveled abroad they are definitely laden with experiences, we hope to utilize them in the local level. We will give them virtual membership and they will remain in touch with us via internets and emails. We also plan to make YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE. Here we plan to make it a hub where there will be enough resources for the youth. They can get counseling, read the library and explore their ideas by the supporting programs like internship and volunteerism. Here we hope to enhance the youths’ personality by helping them recognize their cultural, social, civic and economical role. It will also be an IDEA GENERATION LAB where the youths can burst their crazy ideas. There we hope to generate as many ideas as we can. We plan to get the best ideas and foster and encourage them as practicable. We will try to involve as many youths as possible and hope to make it an ENTREPRENEURSHIP-SCHOOL where we will work and motivate every aspects of entrepreneurship in the local level that has the potential to grow for the national to international level. Every body will have their own career and family responsibilities so no one can give time for too long. We should prepare a generation after us so that the organization can run for eternity. Therefore, to prepare for the legacy handover we plan to prepare a TRUST so that it will continue to run for time immemorial.

We are also working to launch the website of our organization so that it will create some advantages to the youths who are out of the reach. It will provide a network and information center to the youths staying through out the nation. It must create a base to the entrepreneurial youths.

Development is one-way traffic and my country is a developing nation. We cannot develop by adapting the dumped technology and machineries of developed nations. We should dream and excel in what we have and what we can do, not in what we cannot achieve. We can create new alternatives and possibilities from our local resources and make opportunities for thousand more. My city requires more entrepreneurs who can work to utilize the local resource to make a city of dreams. Every youth should be able to dream better. The nation can automatically develop if every youth in the nation can dream of making a better nation.

According to the 2001 census, here are some of the figures that can show the situation of Nepal.
Current economic situation of Nepal (fig.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population (millions)</th>
<th>27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% population under 15 years of age (2002)</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth literacy rate</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net primary enrollment ratio in %</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita PPP in us$ (2002)</td>
<td>1550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population living below the net poverty line</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment pattern in % (fig.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>agriculture</th>
<th>service</th>
<th>manufacturing</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unemployment rate (in percentage fig.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>heading</th>
<th>Both sexes</th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All age group (15-60)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth unemployment rate</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above figures, we can see the scenario of our country. We can see the current economic situation, employment pattern and youth unemployment rate in Nepal. Assuming these figures, we can say that entrepreneurial development can be a great success in the context of my city helping to solve the unemployment rate. It will ultimately add up for the development of the nation.

Everything starts from zero. I hope my dream of ‘one home one enterprise’ will be a success because I have strong determination with my team working well for it. This is definitely a great idea to develop the entrepreneurial culture. I hope this initial starting will be the milestone for every youths of my nation. This will also help to reduce the unemployment rate of Nepal. Therefore, in this present context of urbanization self-employment and entrepreneurs could be good solutions.

In conclusion, we can say that dreaming is easy but to make it come true requires a lot of determination and hard work. “One home, one enterprise” is the city of my dreams. There is lot of opportunities in my hometown ranging from tourism, agriculture to herbs processing. Likewise, threats also range from political instability, brain and muscle drain to unplanned government. Whatever it is the development of entrepreneurial culture, dignity of labor and utilization of local resources leads to the shape of my dream city. For this process, we have formed an organization named “Alternatives-Nepal” which will work integrating with other local youth organizations. Its focus will be in the youths ranging from 15-29. It will be conducting different Youth Entrepreneurial Training Programs, leadership and vocational trainings in school level. In future, it will run like an Entrepreneurship School. For the legacy handover, we will make it a Trust. Let us hope that within a span of 10 years I will have my dream city made where people are happy and contended being an entrepreneur. They will have their prestigious profession and
dignity of labor. They are working for themselves utilizing the local resources and revolutionary idea. We can make every people employed and motivated. I hope this entrepreneurial culture will be inspiring for others as well as motivating to make their dream city.
Hermann Hokou
Cote d’Ivoire
Finalist
(essay translated from French)
When I saw the question “What can you do to shape the city of your dreams?” posted at the back of a room, my senses were suddenly awakened. I was surprised, moved, astonished, and enthralled by it! “Could it be possible?” I asked myself. For once, my dreams were not being criticized. Even better, someone would want to read all these stories coming straight out of my head accompanied by a melody that comes from the innermost depths of my being. Write therefore, I said to myself, “of your balderdash, baloney, and your pipedreams” as I am often told. However, the shock of the thrill (like a slave whom the king allows to speak in public) meant that for three mornings in a row I woke up and pinched myself, then took the booklet from my bedside table and re-read this question, taking pleasure in articulating these words: “What can you do to shape the city of your dreams?” Today I made sure that I am really myself, and these words that pierce my heart like Cupid’s arrow have not disappeared. I therefore took my pen, looking to the horizon at the hour when the sun unfurls its gold-colored coat. I took out my pen to count the dreams that haunt my nights and shadow my days: Here is the Abidjan of my dreams!

The Megapolis of a Thousand Colors

The city of Abidjan is located in the south of Côte d’Ivoire and borders the Atlantic Ocean. It is the country’s financial capital. Like all megapolises, Abidjan is a city of contrasts. In the Plateau commune, workers move in all directions, in all the offices and places of employment. Simultaneously, the square known as ‘la Sorbonne’ is host to speeches and discussions led by numerous tattered and exhausted job seekers and unemployed persons. Idlers loiter around all of Abidjan’s street corners. Beggars and lame and disabled persons line the avenues, right under the noses of other Abidjanis. With their paunches, comfortably seated in their luxury cars, they only think about arriving at their sumptuous villa to drink a glass of champagne. In the markets of Belleville, Treichville, Koumassi, Marcory, Kouté, and Adjamé, 36 Abidjani women have their shopping carried by girls between 8 and 12 years old who ask for just CFAF 50 to buy something to eat.

In all ten communes, there is always a group of children playing a football match. These kids all hope to one day set foot in the large stadiums of Europe like Didier Drogba. At the bus stops, those going to or coming from school have to fight as much as those playing football. Because it’s a real challenge to arrive at school on time or to get home before 8 p.m. The buses are so crowded that they themselves are sweating. Not to mention those who are on it...Some mischievous schoolchildren get three-quarters of their bodies onto the bus; but an arm, a foot, and a knapsack hang outside. It’s an unbearable sight - but nobody is astonished about it anymore! There are fewer Abidjan Transport Company [Société de Transport Abidjanais SOTRA] buses and those available don’t come when needed. The ones they have cannot be used. They are all always broken down.

But it’s not only the buses – there are also minibuses commonly referred to as Gbaka. Those win all the prizes possible – for insecurity, danger, repeated strikes, lack of

36 Belleville and Kouté are neighborhoods. Treichville, Koumassi, Marcory, and Adjamé are communes.
regard for users, and so forth. Women know that to take the *Gbaka*, pants are strongly recommended, otherwise skirts could be unintentionally torn during the fight. And I do mean fight! Yes, because that’s what it’s all about. At Siporex, people jostle each other to reach the vehicle’s doors. At Adjamé Liberté, people elbow each other to get a seat. It’s every man for himself – God will provide, they say! But that’s not all – there are also the lines for communal taxis known as “*Wôrô-Wôrô*” or “*Waren*” in Abidjan. These lines snake, turn, and twist around buildings. In short, lines that go for kilometers! But there is no choice, you have to wait, wait, and wait some more to be able to spend some time at home and pretend to fulfill your family obligations, before returning to work some hours later. Poor Abidjanis, unhappy Abidjani women, who stand waiting, rain or shine, in front of the pyramid on the Plateau, at Cocody (Place St Jean), at the crossroads of Riviera 2, at Yopougon laundry/cleaners, at Koumassi Djaassa, keep it up! Lines of Abidjanis, cast your burdens on the most high God Himself, because any other spirit could confuse you from up there with the Great Wall of China!

At Abidjan’s three university hospitals [*Centres Hospitaliers Universitaires* CHUs] and all public hospitals, the sick are legion. Only a handful of Abidjanis can afford to pay clinic fees. In emergency rooms, doctors must choose to care for those closest to death from among the most critical cases. In Abidjan, having a coffee for breakfast is a veritable luxury and only the rich can afford chocolate. This is a paradox as the country is the third largest African coffee producer and the number one cocoa producer worldwide!

The national success rate in the baccalauréate was 27 percent for 2007. In other words, three out of four pupils repeat their final year or are dismissed from public schools. Abidjan accounts for close to one-fifth of the national population and the city has a high density of young students. What a pity!

Although this gloomy view of the city of Abidjan pains us, we hardly find it alarming. If not, we would have nightmares rather than dreams. The city has undeniable assets that remain largely underutilized or even untapped. Abidjan can respond to the challenges of health, education, transport, housing, employment, wholesomeness, and poverty. We strongly believe that these problems are not fate. Doesn’t hope push back the frontiers of inevitability until it disappears? No, we shouldn’t be fatalistic. The practice of the outstretched hand must be replaced by that of rolled up sleeves. Abidjani men and women must awaken. Isn’t it absurd to sleep on gold and die of hunger? We believe that we must make the most of the city’s magnificent body of water, the population’s high proportion of young persons, and the traditional generosity and hospitality of Abidjanis.

Union-Discipline-Work, the country’s motto, should not go unheeded. We should take advantage of our unifying links, mutual cooperation, and the union of Abidjanis to rethink and rebuild a new city through work and discipline. All the country’s critical structures are in Abidjan: what a windfall! Abidjan is the crossroads for all Ivoirien ethnicities, traditions, and cultures. Which Ivoirien from the country’s interior doesn’t have a relative in Abidjan? Further, the city of Abidjan opens wide to the world with its two major gateways – the Vridi port and the Port-Bouët airport. In the commune of Yopougon, one hundred year old trees stand imposingly in the Banco forest reserve. In the commune of Cocody, the Riviera neighborhood and its spaces seem to cry out in chorus: who wants us? The hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of Abobo are only

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37 Vridi is a neighborhood and Port-Bouët is a commune.
seeking employment. The young persons in numerous neighborhood associations want to be given innovative ideas, they want entrepreneurship subsidies - not incessant football tournaments or endless beauty contests. The city of Abidjan has immense assets. The challenges to be met there are enormous and opportunities exist. You don’t need to be a prophet to see them. We need to reconceptualize the city of Abidjan in terms of the challenges of the third millennium. Then, action must be taken – and quickly!

**Not All Dreams are Pipe Dreams**

Youth is an asset. We want to exploit it. Using the multitude of associations, clubs, collectives, and groups for young people in Abidjan, we can make our dreams a reality. First, a large awareness-building campaign must be launched to show young people what they are capable of, if they find employment. They just have to channel their energies, ideas, and even their craziness toward actions that will benefit the entire city of Abidjan, and thus all of Côte d’Ivoire. This large campaign can be carried out in all the schools and training centers during the week and in neighborhoods on the weekend. In the streets of Abidjan, which are never empty, every day is appropriate. Little shoe-shiners, little bag carriers, and all the children and young persons who exercise these professions can be encouraged to learn a profession – a real one. Boys could choose mechanics, joinery, plumbing, and other worthy trades. Girls could learn such skill as hairdressing, sewing, and cooking. Not in expensive establishments, but from professionals who are already established with certificates provided at the end of training. All these young people can therefore learn professions at the city’s various workshops and places of employment. Male and female instructors could receive monthly and annual subsidies, by means of a direct payment or a tax break, in order to provide an incentive for the admission of young learners. Further, a budget could be allocated for this activity by the Ministry of National Education. And what are the responsibilities of this ministry? Should it educate and/or teach? If it is to educate, it could then be very well involved in this large awareness-building campaign. Further, in Côte d’Ivoire, we are privileged to have a Minister for the City and Urban Health [Ministre de la ville et de la salubrité urbaine]. This Ministry could supervise this massive undertaking in order to encourage citizens to help build a new city. A number of persons, who are elected from among the presidents of youth groups, could form an executive committee tasked with leading operations, in collaboration with the appointed ministries. In this same vein, all the young people milling around at crossroads doing nothing but selling paper towels and bags of water could receive training to provide traffic support, thus enabling youth to be at every junction at rush hour, to avoid nightmarish traffic jams. They could definitely regulate traffic where there are no traffic lights and even where they do exist. There is also a need to build awareness among drivers whose indiscipline is the stuff of legend.

These young persons could be reintegrated later to provide support to the police and the courts. It is so difficult to have documents issued or certified in Abidjan within a reasonable timeframe! All in uniform, these young girls and boys would add a touch of beauty to the city. And their pay? It could come from a slight increase in the price of license tags and an increase in fines. This money would allow them to live reasonably and with dignity, instead of traveling around everywhere in rags while trying to sell their knick knacks. Further, competitions can be organized by the Abidjani Youth Committee
[Comité Abidjanais des Jeunes], the famous executive committee. Other than from the State, financing could come from politicians, town halls, and NGOs that finance parties and football tournaments day in and day out. The objective of these competitions will be to motivate youth initiatives and to encourage healthy competition. The following competitions could be organized:

- Best cybercafé
- Best youth invention
- Best entrepreneurial activity
- Best youth association leader
- Most attractive and cleanest neighborhood
- Etc.

In short, we should lift people up – and not just young people – value work, and celebrate merit. And there is no shortage of exceptional individuals in the pearl of the lagoons.

With regard to education, the principle of free schooling in Abidjan and throughout the country must be applied. All forms of charges and payments for schools must be prohibited by presidential decree, reinforced if necessary by communal decrees from Abidjan’s ten mayors. We are prepared to get a petition signed in this regard and organize sit-ins. Moreover, all resources must be dedicated to raising baccalaureate success rates. However, technical and vocational training should be promoted for those who fail. SOTRA\(^\text{38}\) could employ boys and girls for its Koumassi workshops. These young persons could build buses and water buses for the company. The resources and skills already exist for that purpose. This project has numerous advantages. For example, if the Abidjanis themselves build their buses, they will refrain from setting them alight at the slightest social protest. These buses would be a source of pride for them, a step forward toward expertise in the automobile industry.

But, where can the money be found for all of that? We believe that the millions of CFA francs that are used to import buses from Europe and Asia each year could be reallocated for this purpose. Telephone booths are also springing up in Abidjan. Nowadays, no sidewalk can complain about not having its share of them. We think that this pseudo-profession created by force of circumstance and especially by poverty should be organized. Telephone companies could be encouraged to build booths with their colors or with their slogans for the booth managers. These booths would have the double advantage of beautifying the city and giving them publicity. Each booth manager should be authorized to operate there, and should be registered in one of Abidjan’s ten communes. This would prevent disorder, and the illicit occupation of sidewalks and other public spaces. With regard to housing, experienced older masons (and God alone knows that there are many of them in Abidjan) could be asked to help young unemployed school dropouts who want to learn masonry. Because we believe that you can do a lot with a little. These young persons could be useful while waiting for the era of experts! Indeed, these young persons can learn by observation. And by the experience acquired on the job, with the help of technicians trained in the grandes écoles, they could participate in building operations needed for the expansion of the cities. These young people can even begin by rebuilding their own houses - those who often live in the slums of Wassakara in

\(^{38}\) Cf. page 2.
Yopougon, Gobelet in Cocody, Boribana in Attécoubé, and so on. And why not - at the initiative of young entrepreneurs, this cheap labor could build entire neighborhoods to offset the glaring housing shortage in Abidjan. Thus, there would be jobs for all the laborers and technicians; and also for all the engineers pouring into the jobless market each year. Through effective lobbying by all and especially young people, through web sites showing the economic potential and tourism assets of Abidjan, and within dynamic associations, we can obtain foreign investments and raise significant funds. Large construction sites in the city could then be established. The construction of several bridges, roads, and buildings would considerably clear la rue princesse in Yopougon, as well as the numerous banguidrômes and tchapalodrômes of all the communes. And our lagoon! This not long ago shiny and attractive Ebrié lagoon is now smelly and repulsive. We need to organize the citizens. All the functioning manpower loitering and roaming aimlessly around must be put to good use to restore our lagoons. Schools, neighborhoods, and communes – each group can organize cleaning and sanitation operations.

Emerging from this vast operation led by young people with help from the Ministry of Health, we will have a different lagoon, the one of yesteryear. We will then be able to set up recreation spaces all along the lagoon. We will be able to build restaurants, protected green spaces for children, reading centers, and libraries. Swimming competitions and canoe races could be organized. All of this under the vigilant eye of a lagoon patrol, composed essentially of young school dropouts from the city – young people who, in addition to knowing how to swim, are familiar with the meanderings of the Ebrié lagoon. And what can we do about our beggars? Banning begging is almost utopian. But beggars could be encouraged, or obliged, to engage in small trade. Physically challenged persons could sell paper handkerchiefs or bags of water at the very place where they beg. They can comfortably begin such a trade with the money they obtain from begging. Who knows? Perhaps they would eventually stop this persistent practice. In any case, they will at least have the feeling of being useful to the city and the society. And it is evident that Abidjanis would see them in a new light. Lastly, other young people could organize, as we have done, medical assistance and school support programs.

When Our Dreams Become Reality!

Since 2006, we have been organizing medical assistance with student friends in the Wassal slum near the University of Cocody. This is how we went about it. For a start, we took steps under the umbrella of the “Médecins 2000” association that was already in existence. Students other than medical students were invited to bring together the maximum amount of skills possible. Then, once the group was constituted, we requested assistance from pharmaceutical laboratories located in Abidjan and several pharmacies in different areas, explaining our well-founded activities to them. We received enough to launch the activity. We also requested donations from individuals who responded to our appeal. We therefore initiated our medical assistance. As volunteers we meet every Saturday morning, because we generally don’t have class at that time. Then, as a group, we go to the slum; the medical students in their coats and the others in civilian clothing. It’s a beautiful procession to see! Once we arrive at our location, we set up our stations at

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39 Yopougon, Cocody, and Attécoubé are communes in Abidjan.
40 Common name for places where strong local drinks are consumed.
the entrance to Wassa, under a shelter that we rent for that purpose. Then, because we have already met with the heads of the village of Wassa who have given their consent, the residents hasten to come forward. It’s a magnificent sight! Young and old, adults and children, men and women, all come to our booth. For the consultations, we invite our older medical alumni who are already doctors. All the other medical students perform services and dress wounds. Pharmacy students distribute, free of cost, medication that we have received through our numerous requests. During this time, the other students build awareness about hygiene and cleanliness with the help of numerous exhibition boards and images that we have had prepared. At the beginning of the afternoon, we have to terminate this activity in order to go and study, always returning home with a heavy heart for having had to turn away long lines of people. Then, at around 3 p.m. over a friendly lunch, we exchange wonderful anecdotes about the morning to encourage and strengthen ourselves. Surely next Saturday we will do more and better!

More recently, in 2007, we initiated another activity: school support in an underprivileged neighborhood. The activity takes place in a slum near the village of Kiyi, at the Riviera Bonoumin. We initiated it under the ‘Youth Crossroads’ [Carrefour Jeunes] NGO. This new activity allows us to gradually leave the initiative in the Wassa slum to medical students only. In the slum in the village of Kiyi, we spoke to all the residents in the neighborhood about our project. All the parents that we met beforehand – particularly the mothers – were happy with our project. They were pleasantly surprised to see young volunteers help their children free of charge. The activity effectively has two components as follows:

- Remedial classes for children enrolled in school; and
- Literacy classes for those who have never had the opportunity to go to school.

To get this project started (because we charge neither the children nor the parents), we have had to make donations ourselves and request assistance. Fortunately, we can still depend on the generosity and sensitivity of Abidjanis toward this type of initiative. Even those of modest means have given from the heart! Some have given us a CFAF 10,000 note, others, sticks of chalk or used children’s books. In short, we were able to pull together a sufficient amount to begin while waiting for other donations. And it bears noting that this activity is less costly than the first because the material needed is essentially school books, which are cheaper than the medical supplies needed for Wassa. As such, every Saturday morning our battalion enters the slum in the village of Kiyi. Armed with sticks of chalk, pens, and books, we go to combat ignorance and idleness, and by extension, poverty.

Our group is constituted of students from both public and private universities. Upon arrival, children are divided into two large groups – enrolled and non-enrolled children. As volunteers, we help those in the first group to do their exercises, to understand and learn their lessons. The other children learn to read and write. We see in them the future citizens of the city of Abidjan and the future of the country! Sweets are distributed to the hardest working and most assiduous children. We try to forge in them a spirit of self-sacrifice and the will to overcome discouragement. After helping them to study, we give them recommendations for the week. At the end of the activity, we sometimes take photos with the children or sing popular songs. When we leave at lunch time, the children always insist on seeing us off. And our happy and teasing band of students leaves, proud to be in the process of building a city of solidarity. This academic
support has begun to bear fruit. In their various schools, the test scores for these students have shown an overall improvement. They openly tell us more and more about their difficulties. For them, we are neither rigid parents nor strict teachers – we are their friends! Many now know how to read and write. We have helped these children to rediscover their smiles and discover the joy of learning. Ever since, a different world has opened up to these children. Challenges are born and ambitions become visible to them. And each time I see these candid and innocent faces, I tell myself that we are shaping the Abidjan of my dreams.
Sara Abreu Machado
Brazil
Finalist
(essay translated from Portuguese)
The Quest for More Beautiful Horizons

The city, which shapes us and nurtures our dreams, is an inspiring cultural and artistic work that taps into human potential, creating and recreating the impossible and unimaginable.

Introduction

For me, mention of Belo Horizonte brings to mind my history, the place where I was born and lived until age 23, the place where my family ties were formed, and the place that gave me my cultural identity. This is the place where I learned about and developed a passion for the art of Capoeira, infused with its libertarian resistance struggle, and for the art of believing in the struggle for a better life in areas where people are denied their rights. This city, which revealed to me such discordant and contrasting realities as a private school, affluent neighborhoods, the Federal University, and gated condominiums – places where the fear of violence have made people shut themselves off – and an Aglomerado da Serra, Alto Vera Cruz, or far-flung neighborhoods such as Pindorama where life is so different, resembling a rural town where people know and greet each other in the streets, help each other, visit friends in their homes, and whose narrow streets and alleys are filled with children at play.

The faces of the Belo Horizonte I know are multifaceted and not always beautiful. Forever etched in my dreams will be the city where Capoeira is on display in Praça Sete and Praça da Liberdade, surrounded by the most unusual persons – drummers from Minas Gerais, artists and Samba dancers, Candombe from Serra do Cipó, and the carnival waste recyclers [catadores de papel]. These sentiments are intermingled with the feelings of revulsion that well up in me as I shuttle back and forth between the glaring inequalities in conditions, access, and opportunities and compare the lives of my equally dear friends who live on the outskirts of the city with those who were born in affluent areas.

These were the feelings that I harbored most strongly during the year I lived in Auckland, New Zealand. Being on the other side of the planet, I felt happy to live in a place where workers are generally valued, social inequalities are minuscule, the freedom to be oneself and respect for differences are palpable in the streets, and trees and parks are everywhere. However, there was a void in the lives of these people given that, though they are apparently among those who enjoyed the highest living standards in the world, they have a very high suicide rate. From my vantage point, this void lies precisely in the absence of a strongly rooted cultural identity, something I feel as a Brazilian. This was also one of the main reasons why I felt so comfortable there – the fact that I could teach and showcase Brazilian culture and be greatly appreciated for this.
It was also the passion for my country's culture that pulled me back as if by magnetic force, although initially, I did not intend to live in Belo Horizonte. However, when I rediscovered my Capoeira group, the music and dance of so many cultural areas, and the CRIARTE group from the Aglomerado da Serra, with which I had been involved for a year and half before moving, I realized that there are still many things about my city that inspire me to continue participating and striving for more beautiful horizons here. At that very moment, I was moved to write this article on my city, and when I reflected on what I can do to make it the city of my dreams, I began to relive and reexamine my experiences and beliefs until I came up with the thesis that I proffer here: casting my lot with culture and artistic productions as a powerful force for providing a sense of identity, belonging, and worth, and the coming together of people; designing a project that creates a structure for establishing ties between the university and artistic groups in the outlying areas of the city, by carrying out transformative projects via a network, with the backing of government cultural policies.

History Shedding Light on a Storied Past

In 2008, Belo Horizonte will celebrate the 111th anniversary of its founding. Though it is a relatively new city, it has a very storied history. It was built using a modern, geometrical, and logical design that was prepared for the construction of the new mining capital. However, it has been changing during the natural course of occupation by people who were lured from the countryside in pursuit of their dreams of freedom and the promise of opportunity. Cities are dynamic, given that people inhabit them and go about their daily lives, doing the unexpected, encountering problems, and crafting solutions.41

The plan of the city did not include space for the poor who would supply the necessary manpower for its construction and operation. Its design included wide avenues, few plazas, few places to gather, and a ring road that separated the city from the suburbs, serving as a subtle border between urban and suburban life. Workers who initially lived outside the city gradually moved closer to its center and built their shacks above the favela.42

Belo Horizonte, which enjoys the third highest level of economic development among the metropolitan hubs of the country, has achieved a level of development comparable to countries considered to be among the most developed in the world. This characteristic, which could prove to be an important step toward realizing the dream of a city that offers justice to everyone, contrasts with the telltale signs of neglect of the poor who live here. In addition, it is a place that weaves, like a patchwork quilt, inequalities in income and employment opportunities, in access to health, justice, education,

culture, recreation, security, choices, and civic policy, with each constituting one dimension of a broader issue known as social exclusion.

**Enriching our History through Culture and Art**

In addition to the factors that lead Brazil to have one of the highest indices of social inequality in the world, another prominent feature of our country is its cultural and artistic richness and diversity. Aside from its famous carnival, Brazil possesses an immense variety of cultural genres in its different regions, which also end up mirroring the inequality in investment and opportunities.

It is in this symbolic and material wealth, which also exists in Belo Horizonte, that I see fertile ground for organizing and mobilizing efforts to combat inequality. Beginning with Afro-Brazilian culture, as seen in *Capoeira*, drums, and the religious traditions firmly rooted in Minas Gerais, and passing by the street corners of Minas, with its renowned singers and composers, I discovered here other artistic works that condemn injustice and seek to transform our city – art produced in the outlying areas of Belo Horizonte.

Seeing so many persons living on the edge prompts me to reflect on the important battles that still need to be waged in order to realize, side by side with Belo Horizonte's rich cultural life, my dream of a city where the fundamental values of human dignity and life are respected, rights for all inhabitants (including the right to diversity) are guaranteed, the environment is protected, and an ethical order associated with democratic coexistence prevails (with ethics being understood as the ability to choose what is necessary for a life of dignity for all), thereby overcoming the violence; and where social justice prevails, measured by the quantity and availability of public goods available to all citizens.

Based on the above, what can I do as a citizen? According to José Bernardo Toro (2005), a citizen is someone who is capable of creating or transforming the social order in a way that guarantees the dignity of all. This requires cooperation and organization with others, given that rules in a society are shaped through organizations, thereby creating the framework for human, social, and economic exchanges. Furthermore, citizen participation increases when people are capable of conducting more useful transactions, whether economic, political, social, or cultural. Organizations provide people with a forum for negotiations and the design of future projects, as well as the ability to gain State recognition of them. This is an important lesson in training citizens and strengthening democracy.

The first step toward social change in a city lies in the establishment and strengthening of organizations and the ties among them and, in so doing, reinforcing the fabric of the social network. We cannot overlook the role of the State in implementing effective and efficient programs to reduce inequalities, nor can we fail to take into account the importance of the work of organized civil society, with a view to its participation in public decision making and the formulation of public policies.
When public policy is mentioned, the first thought that generally springs to mind is the need to invest in the areas of social welfare, education, health, housing, basic sanitation, improving the quality of the environment, transportation, recreation, and lastly, all services necessary for a life of dignity in a community. However, thought should also be given to the following: what is the importance of cultural policies in the context of social development?

“Art is the place of the imponderable; it is in looking through its lens that new possibilities are discovered.”

Without culture and art, it is impossible for me to envision the Belo Horizonte of my dreams.

Here, culture is viewed as an experience that influences human life in the quest for knowledge, self-improvement, a sense of belonging, and the capacity for symbolic change. It is also important to bear in mind that relationships involving power in the cultural sphere shape both the elements of the dominant ideology that are necessary for maintenance of relationships of economic and political power, and resistance, conflict, and the negotiation of feelings. Hence the importance of viewing access to culture as an undertaking that requires the collective political involvement of citizens.

Without falling prey to the naïve temptation of equating art with salvation, I do think that art can offer alternatives and contribute to change in our society. Taking this idea further, culture can be an area brimming with opportunities for local development, given the universal nature of cultural services, and the organization of a cultural market that is commensurate with the ability and talent of which our creative diversity is the wellspring. It could even help change the ugly face of a city (and of the country) that violates human rights in myriad ways. Following this line of thinking, how can we go about building a more beautiful Belo Horizonte?

Between September 2005 and the end of 2006, I worked with a group called Comunidade Reivindicando e Interagindo com a Arte - CRIARTE [Community Promoting and Interacting with Art], which was composed of representatives of the various artistic genres in the Aglomerado da Serra. The group's mission is to strengthen and heighten appreciation for local identity and cultural productions as a way of encouraging civic participation. The link with the group was established as a result of my position as a cultural expert working on a social project in the Aglomerado da Serra, and from observing and providing pedagogical advice to cultural groups in the community in an attempt to establish ties among these groups.

During the course of my work, I participated in weekly CRIARTE meetings by providing the group with assistance in planning and carrying out activities, seeking partnerships, and producing events, in addition to participating in the

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Cultural Management and Production course offered between March and June 2006 by the Redemuim Art and Cultural Project (the first CRIARTE project approved by the Municipal Law on Cultural Promotion [Lei Municipal de Incentivo à Cultura]). I went on to deepen my involvement with the group, moving beyond my initial function, as I was becoming fascinated with it, assuming joint responsibility for the work, and establishing a closer relationship with erstwhile strangers who lived in my own city.

“Aglomerado da Serra - Formed Between Alleyways and Pathways”

The Aglomerado da Serra, located in the South-Central region of Belo Horizonte, is considered to be the largest favela in the capital and the third largest in the country. It is composed of seven small towns that were formed when the city was founded, housing persons who worked on the construction of the capital of Minas Gerais. Shut out from the downtown areas, they built homes on the city's hills. At the moment, an Aglomerado da Serra urbanization program is being implemented by the city government, and while it has led to some improvements, it has also generated much dissatisfaction among residents.

CRIARTE, composed of persons living in the Aglomerado da Serra who are involved with a variety of artistic and cultural art forms such as hip hop, crafts, rock, and community radio, and of persons involved in these activities but residing elsewhere (students and professionals involved with community cultural work, as was the case with me), sees itself as a group that brings together some of the artistic diversity found in the Aglomerado da Serra and seeks to serve as a local cultural repository.

The Origins of CRIARTE

CRIARTE came into being as a result of a mini-course on cultural management and production, held in the Aglomerado da Serra in December 2003. Its goal was to establish ties among local cultural groups, increase the visibility of local productions, and strengthen cultural movements through political and community organization. Since that time, it has been working on bringing groups together and achieving political participation in the local and regional councils and entities of the city of Belo Horizonte, by organizing cultural events in the community and attempting to build bridges with other artists, groups, and cultural agents in other towns and favelas.

In 2006, the group changed course sharply. Based on the initiative of a social science intern who was working with CRIARTE on the preparation of a social project that was approved by the Municipal Law on Cultural Promotion, the group shifted its focus to the execution of the Redemuim Art and Cultural Project and organized a four-month training course in cultural management and production, which was free of charge and geared toward the community's cultural agents. Classes were taught by university professors and

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44 SANTANA, Reinaldo, member of CRIARTE, speaking about the name he thought about for the local newspaper.
persons working in the area of cultural productions (among them, cultural agents from other towns in Belo Horizonte). The final event of the course was the “Aglomerere-se” production, a show put on by participating students.

The project was continued through a new project approved by the State Law on Cultural Promotion [Lei Estadual de Incentivo à Cultura] in 2006, which created communications and production focal points to develop a cultural exchange network among artists and cultural groups and agents from the Aglomerado da Serra and other towns and favelas in Belo Horizonte, based on another training session. The aim was to strengthen the work of CRIARTE as a catalyst and liaison instrument for this network.

It is important to underscore the participation of persons living outside the community, who contributed their technical and scientific knowledge in order to promote the drafting and execution of projects such as the Redemuim project, thereby building a suitable bridge between the knowledge and desires of individuals who, in several respects, found themselves excluded from development opportunities in the city, and the State, which is seeking to move beyond its work in the area of social assistance. This process is not a simple one; it entails conflict, differing ideas, and the exchange of arguments, which I consider to be enriching and essential for learning and promoting the cultural shifts that are necessary for the change that drives personal and social development. It was this process, created by the brainstorming of CRIARTE participants, which gave rise to a project that was set forth in writing, which became a reality and has been receiving support from its various advocates.

As a result of this second phase of Redemuim, the communications focal point worked on four fronts:
(a) Newspaper, by producing the newspaper “Entre becos e vielas” [Between Alleyways and Pathways];
(b) Design, by preparing the layout of the newspaper and designing posters for events;
(c) Website, by creating a CRIARTE webpage on the Internet, providing information on the projects and art produced in the Aglomerado; and
(d) Radio, by preparing "spots" to advertise events and news related to Redemuim as well as an audio-documentary on local culture.

The production focal point organized two events:
(a) The first event, “Brincando e Aprendendo” [Playing and Learning], which featured various activities related to art and recreation, geared toward children and families, as well as exchanges with artistic groups from other regions of the city, with the aim of providing information on and discussing the rights of children and adolescents.
(b) The second event, “Aglomerere-se”: “Construindo e Desconstruindo” [Aglomerere-se: Constructing and Deconstructing], which entailed a discussion session and a cultural show, the aim of which was to engage in a process of reflection on urbanization work in the Aglomerado da Serra.

At the moment, CRIARTE is built around these two action focal points and is making preparations for a third Redemuim event, approved by the Municipal Cultural Fund
Launching is planned for 2008 and the focus will be on learning digital technology for art and communications purposes. This third event will be open to artistic producers only.

Assistance with this project will be provided by the Vila Marçola Cultural Center, established in August 2007 and approved by the 2005 Participatory Budget (in which CRIARTE participated actively). The center, which is the first cultural facility open the public in the Aglomerado, has a library, auditorium, dance room, theaters, and space for related activities, as well as a plaza that provides a beautiful view of the city. Two current CRIARTE members were hired by the Belo Horizonte Cultural Foundation [Fundação de Cultura de Belo Horizonte] and have been serving as cultural experts for the Vila Marçola Cultural Center in order to make a strategic contribution, with persons living in the city participating in activities and using the center.

Stocktaking and Evaluation

In light of the complicated factors that impact the cultural context of favelas, it is difficult for the members of CRIARTE to actually organize a fully comprehensive cultural movement both within and outside the Aglomerado da Serra. The reasons include a dearth of financial resources, along with such factors as a lack of “formal” cultural equipment and difficulty gaining access to the conventional mechanisms for providing exposure to local artistic groups and to the channels of communication, knowledge, information, and technology. The “conflict” with the values disseminated by the mainstream media, such as consumerism and mass entertainment culture, are among the factors that make it difficult to mobilize local cultural agents.

However, it is important to recognize that one of the avenues for the organization and exercise of civic participation has been provided by groups whose common ground lies in the production of cultural and artistic shows, as is the case with CRIARTE. There are several cultural groups or solo artists in the Aglomerado. Hip hop, street dancing, afro-dancing, forró, pagode, samba, percussion, theater, poetry, and Capoeira are activities that are organized to varying degrees. This kind of artistic and cultural expression, particularly by young people, offers opportunities to revive traditions and break historical stereotypes and, for this reason, plays an important role in providing these young people with a sense of identity.

In the case of CRIARTE in particular, the innovative nature of its mission is evident in several ways – it is a group that brings together the most diverse forms of artistic expression and promotes a genuine exchange of cultural diversity within the group itself, given that it is not involved only with artistic production, but also organizes discussion sessions and seeks to mobilize in the local community and the city an awareness of the many ways in which our culture has the potential to bring about social change by acting in the political sphere, demanding rights and engaging in public policy making in the cultural sphere; establishing ties with various entities in the city such as government
bodies, political forums for the participation of civil society, universities, social projects, professionals working in the area of production and communications, and groups from other towns and favelas.

One way to measure the results of my work is precisely by evaluating, observing, and reflecting on the impact of CRIARTE’s work on the community. Much has been achieved to date – the provision of training and development courses in which cultural agents from the Aglomerado da Serra have participated; the organization of cultural shows that have given visibility to local artists and enlivened the cultural scene in Serra; the availability of communications products that record, disseminate, and enhance the value of the work of those artists; the addition of new faces involved with projects, debates, discussions, and training provided by CRIARTE; the professionalization and enhancement of the curriculum and of information on local artists, thereby helping them work independently; and obtaining resources to carry out organized projects and to establish a public facility, namely, the Vila Marçola Cultural Center, which enhances the value of the work of these artists and provides the impetus for them to continue doing the work they believe in. Furthermore, both depth and breadth can be added to this work.

The members of CRIARTE recognize the contribution made by the area's non-residents, who, inspired by a belief in the cause, have been providing support to the group so that it can continue its work. This forms the backdrop of my participation and is the vantage point from which I see the possibility of expanding this participation, together with other young people who have followed similar paths and share similar beliefs. The CRIARTE experience has demonstrated the fruitful nature of joint work performed by young people of different backgrounds. I am casting my lot with this knowledge and experience as one of the avenues necessary to build a coherent network that establishes an interconnection among the towns, favelas, and aglomerados in Belo Horizonte as well as a connection with the actual city.

Next Steps – Planning the Contours of the Horizons

CRIARTE's approach is already leading to major changes in the city's favelas, given that the group focuses precisely on establishing links with other groups and persons, involving communities and encouraging their participation through events, discussions, courses, and communications instruments. In addition, it organizes exchanges with other towns and favelas and maintains partnerships with various organizations and actors working in the area of cultural development in the city, particularly young people.

My proposal to expand the reach of this work entails starting a pilot project involving community work by the various universities in the city, with a view to creating a support network aimed at strengthening the network of cultural and artistic groups in the city's outlying areas (which, to some extent, already exists). This assistance would take place through the participation of interns and professors/supervisors who teach different courses at the university. Together with the representatives of community cultural
groups, they would serve as **focal points for continuing education**, working together to develop cultural projects for communities and operating as a network.

The example and experience of CRIARTE and other groups that would join this network would serve as the point of departure for building focal points and for determining how they will function. An initial project could include the following:

- **Project focal point**: (courses in the social sciences, social welfare, and public relations). Put forward requests, identify contact points for available resources, prepare projects, and mobilize resources to respond to the requests of groups.

- **Artistic training focal point**: (courses in theater, visual arts, music, dance, and education). Based on an exchange involving artistic courses offered by the university, hold training workshops on an ongoing basis, in keeping with the potential of groups and the requests made by them.

- **Production focal point**: (courses in communications, management, and economics): Coordinate the management of projects in order to achieve planned objectives, based on projected timeframes and resources.

- **Communications focal point**: (communications courses such as journalism, advertising, radio/television, and public relations). Support community activities related to each project and ensure communication and coordination among network members (cultural groups, university).

- **Coordination**: Encourage maintenance of the network and coordination of activities among its different resource groups (focal points, funding entities and partners, university, and cultural groups).

This exchange could help break the barriers between the scientific knowledge produced by universities and the knowledge and needs of people living in the city; between different areas of the city; between young people from different backgrounds who, as a result of their interaction (as I was able to experience with CRIARTE), come to see new dimensions of their own city, thereby finding new ways to become involved and provide service and, in so doing, add energy to the network that is already becoming part of the social fabric, in the quest for more beautiful horizons for our city.

A project of this nature will be able to help create the Belo Horizonte of my dreams - a city where everyone is born with culture seared in their hearts, lives under equal conditions, and is free to choose his or her own future.

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Investment in people:
Through education and social entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Jakarta, being the capital of Indonesia, has transformed from a “global city” to an “ailing city”. There are many challenges faced by Jakarta people. However, the greatest challenge of all is no other than the human beings who live there, both the government and the citizens. Instead of pulling their sleeves up and to resolving the prevailing problems together hand in hand, the Jakarta people are falling apart and failing to save their city. Looking at the rhythm and pace that they are going and the amount of efforts that were put in currently, Jakarta’s condition will become worse, as if it is revolving in a downward spiral to destruction.

The only way to save Jakarta and build it into a better city is to empower the human beings. Education and social entrepreneurship are the keys to resolve most of Jakarta’s problems. In the following essay, I would like to propose simple ideas which could be good win-win solutions for the betterment of Jakarta. I strongly believe that the prevailing and impending problems of Jakarta can be resolved by a unison of capable people with the right attitude. Therefore, the focus of this essay will be how to empower the human beings in order to shape a better Jakarta, an investment on people through education and social entrepreneurship.

Firstly, the “corrective measure”, slowly and steadily will cure Jakarta’s “ailments”, while both the government and the private sectors will be advantaged. The participants, in this case are the youths in Jakarta, who will be involved in the project will be empowered as well, while at the same time helping the poor and the needy to break the poverty cycle that they are trapped in currently. Secondly, there is a “preventive measure” that will focus on nurturing good moral values to children through the smallest unit in the society, which is family.

Even though the ideal Jakarta is still far from reach, I truly hope that these simple ideas that I propose would lead us steps closer to the betterment of Jakarta. Also, hopefully they could be useful in improving other cities in the world as well.
A Brief Background of Jakarta

Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, has been developing rapidly over the past decades. Initiated by a strong vision of our very first President Soekarno after Indonesia’s independence, the modern city of Jakarta was built. Then, the construction of Jakarta was continued under the thirty-two-year New Order Regime. Especially those thirty two years under the leadership of President Soeharto, Jakarta was transformed considerably to a “global city”, just like other capital cities, due to the rapid economic growth in Asia.

In 1998, the Asian economic crisis-which usually mentioned as “krismon” among us- hit Indonesia and manifested in major disruptions in economy in Jakarta. This big crisis has actually “squeezed” the economy of the Metropolitan City Jakarta. The unstable economy led to a surprising fact of the massive corruption in our government, thus it resulted in political instability. Consecutively, the number of domestic and foreign investments declined as Jakarta was not seen as a promising land of investment. Also, many banks and companies had to lay off their employees, causing the unemployment level to increase. As a result, the standard of living of the people in general decreased, and those people at the bottom had the greatest impact of the crisis. Crime rate which was already high started to rise again, as people were in need of money for the sake of survival. However, at that time, we did not have any leaders in the stable position to control the chaos. Our government who was heavily contaminated by “KKN”-corruption, collusion, and nepotism- were not able and trusted enough to stop the vicious cycle of problems and mixture feelings of helplessness and apathy. As a result, Jakarta, the city which was visioned to be a “global city”, has changed tremendously to an “ailing city” (Rukmana, 2007, n.p.).

Having the opportunities to study abroad in Singapore and Japan consecutively for high school and university, I experienced living in other metropolitan cities as well. There was a time when few friends of mine from Japan came to visit Jakarta. Their eager, curious eyes started to observe Jakarta. They made some thought-provoking comments regarding Jakarta, which intrigued me. Although what she said is actually true, I feel a painful pinch in my heart, sad to be reminded again that Jakarta is “struggling”. My own experiences and my friends’ comments became references which helped to open my eyes a little bit more to see Jakarta, the place where I was born and raised, from the perspectives of both a resident and a foreigner. Now, Jakarta is going through a turbulent, challenging stage, like a teenager who in the process of becoming a more stable and mature adult.

Challenges for Jakarta...

When we drove from my house in North Jakarta to a tourist attraction in South Jakarta, a Japanese friend of mine was often surprised to witness dramatic changes of view through the windows of my car because to them it was something very unusual. One moment we passed a middle-class residential place, and within the following fifteen minutes we could see a “kampung” where poor people live in slums and squatters nearby a garbage-
polluted river. Many of them have “inadequate or non-existent basic infrastructure” like clean water, proper sanitation, transportation, and electricity (AusAID in Indonesia, n.p.). It is also heart-wrenching to witness children do not have “access to basic education, medical services, and adequate nutrition” (n.p.). Within the very same journey, we also encountered many street sellers walking from car to car, knocking windows and begging people to buy their food or newspapers. There were also street beggars who will come near to ask for money, sometimes they do not have full arms or legs. When a little girl approached us and begged for money, my friend asked with concern, “Isn’t she supposed to be in school around this time?”. I replied softly, “I guess she doesn’t go to school. She cannot go to school”.

We witnessed one of the big challenges for Jakarta, urban poverty. According to Central Bureau Statistics of Jakarta (2007), in March 2007, there had been 405,700 people who lived under the poverty line in Jakarta (p. 1). 62.32% of those people suffered because of insufficient food. Poor people will continue to suffer in poverty throughout their lives unless there is an external intervention as they are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. It is because “poor people do not have the resources necessary to get out of poverty, such as financial capital, education, or connections”. The government has not been successful in eradicating poverty.

During that very same journey, we also experienced the legendary “traffic jam”. I flew home to Jakarta every year during school holiday only to find that Jakarta’s traffic has become more and more unbearable. The reason behind this phenomenon is the number of vehicles increased by 11% per year, while the area of the roads only increased by not more than 1% (Tempo Interaktif, 2004, n.p.). The government is corrupted and therefore failed to enforce the law to limit the number of private vehicles on the road. At the same time, the citizens of Jakarta also keep purchasing cars for the sake of convenience and prestige, despite the encouragement from government to use public transportation. As a result, Jakarta is dominated by 98% of private vehicles and 2% of public vehicles. It is not surprising that Jakarta is infamous with the name “traffic jam city” now (n.p.). If there is no appropriate measure implemented at all, and by 2014 Jakarta will experience a total traffic jam whereby vehicles cannot even go out of the garage because there is already traffic jam right outside of the house (n.p.).

Moreover, within the last fifteen years, Jakarta has been experiencing major floods as many as three times. The floods happened consecutively in approximately five-year cycle, 1996, 2002, and 2007. According to BBC News (2002), almost two hundred thousands (200000) residents have been left homeless and at least thirty three (33) people were killed because of flood in 2002. Many people whose houses and shophouses submerged or swept away by floodwater became homeless, suffering in monetary loss too. There were also diseases, like dengue and skin diseases, spreading during the flood periods.

The flood had a negative impact on the roads as well, the flood water which remained stagnant for several days broke the roads. According to the data from the Traffic Management Center in Metro Jaya District,
there are one hundred and twenty eight (128) areas of broken roads in Jakarta (Traffic Management Center, 2007, n.p.). As they cars have to slow down when passing them, these broken roads disrupt the flow of Jakarta traffic, and it aggravates the severity of Jakarta’s traffic jam.  

There are some reasons that combined together, causing flood. Firstly, Jakarta’s population growth increased by 1.11% (Central Bureau Statistics in Jakarta, 2007, p. 55), while the number of garbage trucks decreased steadily. When the population number grew, it means the number of people who produce garbage increased. This automatically results in a larger amount of garbage produced. On the other hand, the number of trucks that transport garbage decreased, which means less garbage could only be transported, thus the remaining, uncollected garbage increased to 540m3 per day. Moreover, the the layout of the city was not carefully considered for the purpose of long-term sustainable environment as the water catchment areas are inadequate to contain the rainwater.  

Last but not least, many of Jakarta people may not be fully aware of the consequences of their inconsiderate habits to dispose garbage to the rivers, which will cause water blockage, hence during heavy rains, water overflows and floods the land. The people, instead of working together to resolve this problem hand in hand, with their lack of awareness and conscience to society only end up compounding the garbage problem that has already existed. Thus, with the rhythm that Jakarta people is going on now, the Jakarta’s 5-year cycle of flood is inevitable.  

**The greatest challenge of all**

However, the biggest challenge of all, that we can derive from all the above-mentioned challenges, is no other than the human beings who live there, both the government and the citizens. Instead of getting all ready and alert to resolve the prevailing problems together hand in hand, the Jakarta people are falling apart and failing to save their city, losing themselves in fulfilling their self interests. Looking at the rhythm and pace that they are going and the amount of efforts that were put in currently, Jakarta’s condition will become worse, as if it is revolving in a downward spiral to destruction.  

Thus, there are many challenges but the greatest challenge of all is to empower Jakarta citizens to become aware that they are responsible and capable to save Jakarta and build it into a better city. In order to do that, they have to understand and accept the need to balance private and social consequences of their actions.  

As examples of Jakarta people’s indifference and self-centredness, many Jakarta people have the bad habit of throwing garbage into the rivers in the name of convenience, without any guilt. Although the government already gave warning regarding the matter, the rivers in Jakarta are still blocked with garbage, resulting in immediate flood despite the light rains. Furthermore, the government tried to reduce the traffic jam on Jakarta’s roads by building a TransJakarta bus way which provides a special road only for that
specific public bus. However, private cars often “invaded” that road and defeat the whole purpose of building that bus system.

What needs to be done?

What Jakarta needs is a unison of capable people with the right attitude with a set mind to resolve Jakarta’s prevailing problems. However, in reality Jakarta people are far from that. Unfortunately, many people in Jakarta do not live with the conviction to save Jakarta. Many are even involved in corruption which impacts society negatively. It is indeed human nature to fulfill our own self-interests. There are only very few rare souls on this planet earth like Mother Teresa who would be selfless and sacrificing all the way in contributing to society.

Nevertheless, as a normal social creature who lives with other people in a normal civilization, we need to consider the consequences of our own actions. It is best to balance the benefits gained by self and others, focusing on a win-win relationship. In business, the idea is materialized in social entrepreneurship. By Wikipedia’s definition, a social entrepreneur is someone who “recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change”. A social entrepreneur will be aware of social problems and try to come up with the solutions through entrepreneurial activities, while keep balancing the benefits and costs of his actions to society.

We can combine the idea of social entrepreneurship with the problems in Jakarta. In this occasion, I would like to connect it with education, because education is able to break the cycle of poverty. Therefore, social entrepreneurship is one of the keys to resolve some problems in Jakarta. According to the definition in Wikipedia, education “encompasses teaching and learning specific skills, and also something less tangible but more profound: the imparting of knowledge, positive judgment and well-developed wisdom”. Also, it “means 'to draw out', facilitating realization of self-potential and latent talents of an individual”. Education has to come first to solve poverty. If the poor are financially supported to pursue basic education, they will gain knowledge and value-added skills that will be useful for working. Intelligence is the best treasure that people could ever have because it cannot be stolen away. The poor may get new jobs and earn money. Thus, slowly the poverty problem in Jakarta will be eradicated when education can be provided to every person.

In order to save Jakarta, we need to practice social entrepreneurship and education. The city of my dream is not a dreamland where there is no worries for tomorrow and everyone is singing happily. I have a dream that one day the citizens of Jakarta will have the chance to receive good education and be empowered to care about the needs of others while fulfilling their own goals in life. The ideal situation may not be achieved, but I do hope that at least the few souls that have been touched will continue to inspire others.

What have I done?

During my high school years in Singapore, in 2006, a group of us did a raising-fund project for poor students so that they can buy food and sustain their education. As teenagers who love music, we created an album consisting of songs by bands who are still students and not yet popular, and sold about 500 copies of it at $15 each throughout
Singapore. Also, we recruited 911 volunteers from various schools and received donation from the kind souls. On top of that, we held a concert featuring the bands in the album and earned money from the ticket sales. At the end, we managed to collect over S$40000 within three weeks and passed the cheque to the Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund who eventually gave the money to the 10000 poor students from lower-income families.

Initially, we started off the “Dream On” project as 18 to 19-year-old wanting to inspire youths to follow their dreams. We were thrilled at the idea to encourage youths like us to push away negative comments by people around them, and continue pursuing their dreams because they can if they really want their dreams to come true. However, as full-time students we did not have any capital to start a project. We decided to join a business plan competition held by a joint organization who provided S$3000 for each group participant. From that capital we managed to materialize the project.

Our hard work was eventually paid off. Apart from being able to raise money beyond our target and getting the first prize in the competition, we achieved our double goals:

1. To convey message to other youths that ordinary people like us could do this project, so they will be able too if they work hard in pursuing their dreams. All they need to do is to “dream on”, to continue dreaming.

2. To help poor students from lower-income families to sustain education and buy food.

What have I learnt from it?

Despite the sweats and tears that we shed during the process, the results were satisfactory and we learnt a little bit more about life. We experienced the euphoria of achieving our goals and contributing to the society’s well-being at the same time.

Also, during this project, we discovered more about ourselves, our own strengths and weaknesses as well as learnt about communication with our teammates. This project had stimulated us to do an internal reflection about how we can grow and develop further as a person, about how this experience had changed our perspectives about life, what do we want to do in life, as well as the principles and values that we want to hold on to.

If an ordinary person like me can experience a breakthrough like this, so do they. I truly hope that other youths in Jakarta could have a taste of this life-changing experience, but I cannot expect them to have the same kind of “enlightenment” by merely telling them about my personal experiences. As much as I want to, I cannot change who they are. They have to change themselves.

Thom Hartmann once said:
“You can change and save the world by changing yourself. The most important part of personal transformation leading to planetary transformation is to become fully alive, alert, and aware of our surroundings and the divinity everywhere”

People can become aware and be transformed to become “fully alive, alert, and aware” of their surroundings, but they usually take plenty of time. There is no fixed age for a person to become “enlightened” and many people may die “unenlightened”. Therefore, in order to catalyze their self-development and the process of becoming “alive, alert, and aware”, the youths in Jakarta need to do a social entrepreneurial project. In
order for them to have a life-changing experience, there is only one way: they have to do and experience it themselves.

**Thus, the FIRST IDEA (the corrective measures)...**

**“a competition of self-entrepreneurial projects”**

It is a pity that this competition has not been held in Jakarta yet.

**Main Purposes**

1. Through learning by doing, this competition of social-entrepreneurial projects will be realized with an aspiration to enhance the self-development of the youths of Jakarta in the process of becoming the catalysts of change to solve the prevailing problems in Jakarta.

2. To raise fund for the education of the poor and needy in Jakarta, to help them breaking away from the poverty cycle that they are trapped in currently.

**Description of the competition**

This is a competition of a social-entrepreneurial projects. The selected groups of youths will be granted a certain amount of money as a capital to start of their social-entrepreneurial projects. They will carry out their plans to raise fund for their chosen beneficiary and seek outside sponsorships when necessary. After four months they will have to write a final report and do a presentation in front of the judging panel about: what they have done for their beneficiaries, how they have implemented the project, and their evaluations. The judges will then choose the winning teams of different categories and present awards.

**Categories of Awards for Winning Teams**

Team with highest donation, most innovative team, most influential team, best mentor.

**Who will sponsor the capital fund for the selected groups?**

Companies, or government, or both (public private partnerships).

**How if the starting fund is insufficient to cover all the expenses of the project of certain groups?**

The groups may seek sponsorships from other sources as well if they deem necessary.

**Single rule...**

The participants are not allowed to quit before completing the entire project.

**Beneficiaries...**

There are two options:

1. We can create a new organization to manage the fund to be passed down to the poor and needy for their education.

   or

2. Any existing official Voluntary Welfare Organizations or Non-Governmental Organizations in Jakarta, relating to education for poor people.

**Benefits of this project**

1. The youths will go through the a lot of thinking processes, face challenges and learn how to overcome them. This will train their adversity which is essential to possess in order to achieve success in life.
2. When they achieve the goals that they have set, they will gain confidence and have more courage to take up more challenges in life. They will also learn how to be responsible of their actions and consequences.

3. The youths will have the opportunities to absorb knowledge from their mentors, who have professional experiences with business ethics and work efficiency, which cannot be learnt in school, and also have the chance to put it into actions immediately.

4. They will have a chance to meet and get acquainted with like-minded peers.

5. The youths are helping government to flow the money from commercial private sectors (their sponsors) to the poor and needy.

6. Through the process of doing the project, their horizon about life will become wider, both inwards and outwards. At the end of the project, when they do a thorough reflection regarding the project, they will realize that this eye-opening experience will help them to discover much more about what they really want to do in life and how they contribute to society with their own talents and interests.

**Mentors**
Professionals with experiences who wish to nurture the youths in achieving their goals.

**Awards/Incentives**
Money, scholarships

**Timeline of the project**
1. Writing a project proposal
2. Submission of the project proposal
3. Notification of the selected proposals by e-mail
4. The disbursement of the money to start-off the project
5. Implementation of the project, (3 months) with the guidance of their respective mentors
6. Submission of once-in three weeks progress reports
7. Submission of final report
8. Announcement of the winners of the social entrepreneurial competition
9. Award-giving ceremony

**The SECOND IDEA (the preventive measures)...**
"**the cultivation of noble values during childhood**"

**Main Purpose**
To cultivate moral principles and values in children since early age by their own families

**Description**
A family is the smallest unit of society, it is like a cell in a human body. If each cell in our bodies function effectively, our bodies will be fit and healthy as well. If each child is nurtured with good moral values by their parents since early age, they will grow into responsible adults who will contribute positively to society, or at least do not pose negative threats to society.

The good values can be instilled through simple everyday encounters. Parents can lead by example, showing the children simple, basic values, like patiently queueing in the line, throwing garbage not to the rivers, but to the garbage bins, to give up seats to the elderly on a public bus, etc. Children at a very early age are the best to be “programmed” with important values in life. To raise awareness among parents of the ultimate importance to plant good values during early childhood, there are several ways:

1. Direct approach: Through campaigns and seminars for parents regarding early childhood education and the nurturing of good moral values.

2. Indirect approach: Through coorporation with schools, during regular parents’ meetings, the schools can remind parents how essential it is to cultivate good moral values to their children.

3. Subtle approach: Insert good moral values in children favorite entertainments, like story books and cartoon characters, or the toys that they play with everyday, so that they will absorb them while having fun. Playing together with their children at times, parents should talk to their children and put effort to instill good moral values through interesting encounters in children’s entertainments.
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