

Promoting innovations

In the global information society, young people are mainly the leading innovators in the use and spread of ICTs. But, young people can remain an untapped resource if their knowledge, vision, and experience are not integrated by decision-makers. The Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), the world's first broad-based multi-stakeholder partnership in ICTs for development, which operates at the global level, recognises that many young people around the world are at the forefront of building information and knowledge societies.

It was June 1997. The development stakeholders from 144 countries came together for the first Global Knowledge Conference (GK97) in Canada, which was hosted by the World Bank and the Government of Canada, and supported by a large group of public and private organisations. This was the first conference of its kind in the world to address challenges of Information Age, faced by the developed countries and the international community. After five months of this conference, in New York, GKP emerged. Since then GKP is harnessing the Partnership's knowledge and experiences on ICT4D programmes, focusing on gender, youth, media and communications, poverty reduction, governance, local content and indigenous knowledge, multistakeholder partnerships and financing ICT4D.

The 'Youth Creating Digital Opportunities' (YCDO) Coalition, the core component of the GKP Youth Strategy, was launched at a reception held in conjunction with WSIS PrepCom2 in Geneva on 20 February 2003. Spearheaded by GKP, TakingITGlobal and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the YCDO Coalition is comprised of organisations committed to realise the potential of young people as leaders in using Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to achieve more sustainable development in their communities and around the world.

GKP and youth initiatives

GKP youth strategy and activities include identifying with a collaborative youth strategy, supporting youth in advocacy (through youth focal point at GKP Secretariat, Youth Caucus and GKP Youth



Award at WSIS, recommendations to G8 DOT Force including youth issues), stimulating information exchange on youth projects in ICT4D and fostering collaborative opportunities. Many of the GKP members have youth projects (health, education, skills training, social change for marginalised youth, etc.).

- **e-Conference on Youth Building Knowledge Societies (YBKS):** In January and February 2000, hundreds of young people came together in an online conference to explore how youth are using ICTs in the production, dissemination and use of knowledge for sustainable development. The e-Conference, titled Youth Building Knowledge Societies (YBKS) focused on the actual experiences of young people in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe. The e-Conference findings were shared and further refined by a youth advisory committee at the Global Knowledge II Conference in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia from 7-10 March. This final report, as presented at the Global Knowledge Action Summit, summarises the output of the e-Conference and highlights specific issues for consideration and action by the members of the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP). In July 2000, the Digital Opportunities Taskforce (DOT Force) was established at the G-8 Summit in Kyushu-Okinawa to address the

widening digital divide. It initiated a year-long process including formal plenary meetings, informal meetings, and public consultations, to develop recommendations on how the G8 could contribute to create digital opportunities for all. GKP served as one of the primary conduits for civil society perspectives into the DOT Force process. Based on the quality of the youth input to the GKP Action Summit, in March 2001 the GKP asked International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) to reconvene the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to update the report 'Youth: Building Knowledge Societies' (YBKS) within the framework of the DOT Force priorities.

- **GKP Youth Award:** The GKP Youth Award aims to reward and bring international recognition to the outstanding work of young people who have used information communication technologies (ICT) for the promotion of development around the world.
- **YSEI Fellowships:** The Youth Social Enterprise Initiative (YSEI) fellowships are designed to help social entrepreneurs achieve their goals from the initial idea to project implementation and impact creation. YSEI is programme focused on providing support to young social entrepreneurs to develop innovative solutions to social problems YSEI will support fellows by providing mentorship and training programmes; networking; and seed grants up to US\$15,000 per project.

Keeping the focus on multi-stakeholder partnerships for knowledge sharing and increasing effectiveness of ICT for development initiatives, GKP has already shown the way to promote innovation in the use and appropriation of ICT for development initiatives and knowledge sharing. In its way, the power of youth might add a special momentum. ■

Reference: www.globalknowledge.org
<http://www.iisd.org/>