

## **YEN and YES: an assessment of two major initiatives to promote youth employment opportunities globally**

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Revised version of a presentation to AusAID, the Australian Aid Agency  
Canberra, 25 October, 2002

### ***Executive summary***

Improving the prospects for youth employment is the broad aim of two initiatives that seek to operate on the world stage. Both initiatives, from very different starting points, have achieved considerable success over the course of two years. However, as with any start up enterprise, current practice needs to be reassessed to expand operations on a global scale.

This paper contrasts the strengths and weaknesses of the top down approach of the UN Secretary General's Youth Employment Network with the bottom up approach of the Youth Employment Summit Campaign, a creation of the Boston-based Education Development Center.

As result of the initial success, expectations have been raised, both in terms of what is promised and what young people see themselves as capable of achieving. The challenge now for those making the commitments is to work out how to deliver in a tangible way. The analysis presented in the paper suggests the need for changes in five major areas.

- Each initiative needs to recognise the limits of relying on either a predominantly top down or bottom up approach and to work out ways to tap the complementary strengths of the other through some form of working relationship;
- More transparent and accountable operating modes are required also for both initiatives to enhance their credibility and profile.
- This should include greater efforts to involve young people in a more substantive way at the centre in the development of policy as well as in leadership and governance structures.
- Forward strategies for both initiatives are needed. These need to be conceptually sound, comprehensive, intellectually robust, innovative in the processes proposed and based on synergies with the other organisations with similar goals.
- Finally, far more funding and technical resources need to be mobilised than currently available to both initiatives. One way to do this is to devise innovative ways to leverage partnerships with governments, international enterprises, NGOs, and citizen-to-citizen exchanges.

## **Aim**

National governments through the Millennium Development Goals have committed themselves, among other things, to halve by 2012 the number of people living in absolute poverty. Action on youth employment is a key way to reduce poverty for current and future generations. The Millennium Development Goals, in particular, highlighted the need for Governments to ‘develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work’.

Considerable resources are potentially available to help countries achieve progress towards meeting the Millennium Development goals. The G8 Summit in Canada June 2002 offered the assurance that: ‘no country genuinely committed to poverty reduction, good governance and economic reform will be denied the chance to achieve the Millennium Goals through lack of finance’.<sup>1</sup> The US and the European Union have offered an additional \$5b and \$7b respectively to focus on poverty reduction. However, what now is needed are the mechanisms at international, national and local levels to direct the funds in such a way that they have maximum impact.

What has been the response of the international community to this challenge? Two initiatives from different starting points have been attempted over the last two years to mobilise a range of stakeholders to improve the employment prospects of young people. One is the Youth Employment Network, initiated by the UN Secretary General. The other is the Youth Employment Summit Campaign, initiated by an American non-profit NGO, the Education Development Center, headquartered in Boston.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight for these two major initiatives their relative strengths/weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats they face. Both began or reached some prominence about the same time, early 2000, so it is reasonable to make an assessment at the two year mark of what each approach has achieved and where there are gaps in their strategies and deficiencies in how they operate.

My aim is to highlight where there is scope for each initiative to learn from the successes of the other and to create synergies by working out ways to collaborate better. The paper also identifies some substantive issues that, it is suggested, both initiatives still need to address. This assessment of the current state of affairs in October 2002 can also serve to act as a benchmark from which to judge future progress.

My background as both a participant in the initial meeting of the Youth Employment Network at the end of August 2000 at the UN in New York and as a participant in the Youth Employment Summit in Alexandria, Egypt, 7-11 September 2002 gives me a special vantage point. I have held detailed discussions with a number of the people involved in both initiatives to further clarify the points made below.

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<sup>1</sup> G8 Africa Action Plan, G8 Summit 2002, Kananaskis, Canada, 25-27 June, [http://www.g8.gc.ca/kan\\_docs/afraction-e.asp](http://www.g8.gc.ca/kan_docs/afraction-e.asp)

The intention behind the paper is to offer feedback on the processes in which I have been involved. Having devoted some time and effort to writing papers for and participating in events related to these initiatives, I thought it important to switch from participant to observer to help provide some critical assessment of what has been achieved and what is still wanting.

My background is that of a consultant of ten years standing. I work in two broad areas relevant to the considerations offered below. My work covers both research based public policy analysis with a focus on young people and consulting on organisation change and performance measurement with mainly public sector organisations. In particular, I am interested in working out ways to promote greater policy integration and agency coordination.<sup>2</sup>

## Two different starting points

The two initiatives can be seen as representing opposing ways of organising a large-scale global campaign. Both initiatives have focused on the same issue - youth employment - but have gone about it in very different ways.<sup>3</sup> These two approaches can be described in simple terms as top down and bottom up. Both initiatives, at present, are largely operating independently of the other with little or no cross over in their efforts.

The Youth Employment Network has started from the commanding heights of the Office of the UN Secretary General, and is endorsed by two pre-eminent international agencies – the International Labour Office and the World Bank and the recommendations of its eminent persons panel have been endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

On the other hand, the Youth Employment Summit (YES) campaign was initiated by the Educational Development Center, a US based non-profit NGO that runs some 350 youth related programs in the US and around the world.<sup>4</sup> In the words of the UN Secretary General's Press Release acknowledging the start of the Summit, the YES Campaign is a major 'global civil society initiative'.<sup>5</sup> Its starting point has been a

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<sup>2</sup> See Curtain, R; 'What is good public policy and how does Australia fare?', **Agenda: a Journal Policy Analysis and Reform** Vol 8, No 1, 2001, pages 33-46; 2001 and 'Youth and employment: a public policy perspective', **Development Bulletin**, Development Studies Network, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University, Canberra, No 55, August, 2001

<sup>3</sup> The goals of two initiatives are stated as follows: The objectives of the [Youth Employment] Policy Network are threefold – (a) to formulate a set of recommendations on youth employment which the Secretary-General will propose to world leaders for action; (b) to disseminate information on good practices and lessons learnt from specific past or ongoing youth employment policies and programmes; (c) to identify, for implementation with its partners, a series of collaborative youth employment initiatives. In relation to the YES2002 campaign: 'The Mission of the Youth Employment Summit is to seed a civil society movement to stimulate and inspire the development of programs and policies worldwide in order to ensure that the youth have access to the education and training programs, skills-development opportunities, resources, and credit that they need to build productive and sustainable livelihoods. The Goal of the Summit is to launch a Decade Campaign of Action in Alexandria in 2002, so that an additional 500 million young adults, especially youth facing poverty, will have productive and sustainable livelihoods by the year 2012.'

<http://www.youthemploymentsummit.org/about/why.html>

<sup>4</sup> See their web site <http://www.edc.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Secretary-General Welcomes Dynamism, Commitment Of Young People, Meeting At Youth Employment Summit In Egypt, 7-11 September, Press Release SG/SM/8354, 30 August 2002

mobilisation from the bottom, driven by a small team of dedicated individuals under the leadership of Poonam Ahluwalia.

Each of the two initiatives represents sharply contrasting approaches to running a global campaign. In many ways, the two approaches typify two very different styles of working – one could be termed the European approach and the other could be termed the North American approach. This may be one reason they appear to be operating in parallel, with little evidence of cross over between their activities.

The table below sets out in point form the differences between the two initiatives. These relate to sources of authority, the structure, the source of ideas and general policy orientation. The purpose of the matrix is to highlight their contrasting operating modes and emphases as a step to showing where synergies can be generated through collaboration.

Elements	YEN		YES	
<b>Authority</b>	Insider	Based on authority of UN, ILO, WB	Outsider	Based on personal authority of the initiator
<b>Structure</b>	Formal, bureaucratic	Centralised, seeking to work through national governments	Quick to respond but more ad hoc	Potentially more decentralised as it has set up an extensive network of country committees
<b>Source of ideas</b>	Lacks significant youth participation	Use of eminent persons	Consultation with and engagement of young people good	Youth participation at country level strong although substantive participation in YES governance structures is less evident
<b>Policy orientation</b>	Policy framework articulated in general terms	Emphasis on National Action Plans	Accepts YEN framework at simplest level	Emphasis on locally developed initiatives

The format for the rest of this paper is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each initiative to show where gaps exist in current strategies and how they can learn from each other. Opportunities are also outlined to suggest where there is scope for new direction. Also discussed are the threats each initiative is likely to face as well as the costs involved in continuing their current approaches.

## Strengths of Youth Employment Network

The main achievements of the UN Secretary General's Youth Employment Network, since its inaugural meeting two years ago, are the setting up of a panel of eminent persons, and the development of a major position statement with its set of recommendations. This has or will shortly culminate in a resolution passed by the

General Assembly of the United Nations calling on member governments to produce national plans of action on youth employment, based on four priorities.<sup>6</sup>

*We, members of the Secretary-General's Panel, recommend that the heads of the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization develop a new partnership between their organizations and national Governments in catalysing action for youth employment, where strategies are developed at a global level, while policies and action plans are developed at a national level.*

*Civil society, the business community, employers, trade unions and youth organizations should also be invited to contribute to policy-making and implementation at both global and national levels.*<sup>7</sup>

### ***National action plans on youth employment***

The action plans are to set targets for the creation of jobs and for the reduction of unemployment for young people. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been asked by the UN Secretary General 'to take the lead in supporting the implementation of these recommendations'.<sup>8</sup> Governments from ten countries will be encouraged to champion the process by initiating national action plans.<sup>9</sup>

National action plans are potentially an important tool for identifying existing the range of existing initiatives and promoting innovative ways to improve the position of young people in relation to employment and sustainable livelihoods. More importantly, the national action plans could also be a vehicle for assessing the extent of policy coherence and service integration of publicly funded programs aimed at assisting young people. In addition, national action plans, if specified in terms of expected outcomes that be easily measured and regularly reported on, will be important ways to hold governments more accountable on progress.

According to its Concept paper, the Network is expected to operate at two levels.<sup>10</sup> The high-level eminent persons panel is expected to mobilise opinion and action in favour of youth employment worldwide, especially in developing countries. At its working level, the Network seeks to bring together a range of recognized practitioners involved in either specific youth employment initiatives, or broader employment or

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<sup>6</sup> These are: 1.*Employability*: Invest in education and vocational training for young people, and improve the impact of those investments; 2.*Equal opportunities*: give women the same opportunities as young men; 3.*Entrepreneurship*: make it easier to start and run enterprises to provide more and better jobs for young women and men; 4.*Employment creation*: place employment creation at the centre of macroeconomic policy.

<sup>7</sup> Recommendations of the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network, UN General Assembly A/56/422, para 17.

<sup>8</sup> UN Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly: Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit Fifty-sixth session, Agenda item 29, 28 September 2001.

<sup>9</sup> The following countries have so far volunteered to develop model action plans: Hungary, Indonesia, Namibia, Senegal and Sri Lanka see S. Miller 2002, 'Discussant's comments, Youth Employment' Expert Meeting on Global Priorities for Youth, Helsinki, 6-10 October, p 4.

<sup>10</sup> The Secretary-General's Youth Employment Policy Network: Concept Paper, no date, p 2.  
[www.ilo.org/yen](http://www.ilo.org/yen)

development policy initiatives related to youth employment.<sup>11</sup> The eminent persons panel has been invited by Kofi Annan to continue to act in an advisory capacity to him on the issue of youth employment. The ILO web site provides information about the Network.<sup>12</sup> The ILO in late October 2002 was developing an action plan in response to funding received from the Swedish International Development Agency.

## **Strengths of the Youth Employment Summit Campaign**

The achievements of the Youth Employment Summit initiative, on the other hand, relate to a range of bottom-up initiatives that have been started independently of any international agency or government. These achievements include the holding of a major international conference with some over 1800 youth delegates from over 120 countries and ministerial delegations from 71 countries participating.<sup>13</sup>

### *Involvement of young people and governments from a large number of countries*

These youth delegates were overwhelmingly from the regions where the need for employment generation is greatest: sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle Eastern countries. There was also a significant contingent of 29 participants from Latin America. The Summit's location was also highly significant. It was in the largest Arab country in the world, itself with a large population of unemployed youth. The date of the Summit, ending on 11 September, also gave it a special poignancy.

The preparations for the conference included the commissioning of a range of papers related to youth employment issues for discussion at the conference and published on their website. According to the YES Campaign web site, up to 70 country networks have been established, each with its own web page, to continue the work of the Summit.<sup>14</sup> The bottom up, non-government, non-international agency involvement as starting points are real strengths for the future. This means that the local country networks are starting with a strong self-help orientation.

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<sup>11</sup> According to a paper by the European Youth Forum Position Paper on The United Nations' Youth Employment Initiative (p6): 'The Youth Employment Network (YEN) will continue to promote the recommendations, with the support of a secretariat hosted by the UN Division for Social Policy and Development. The secretariat will coordinate the work of the YEN, organise and coordinate the political process recommended by the High-Level Panel, organise cooperation on Indicators of Youth Employment, carry out advocacy work on the Youth Employment Initiative, build and expand the YEN networks, publish and disseminate technical reports and organise and support the meetings of the High-Level Panel in 2002 and 2003'.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/exrel/partners/youth.htm>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.youthemploymentsummit.org/>

<sup>14</sup> According to the YES Campaign web site: 'The objectives of a YES Country Network are to: Raise awareness on the issue of youth employment across the country. Bring together youth led and youth serving organizations to work collaboratively to achieve the goals and outcomes of the Summit Create partnerships between youth organizations and others members of society such as governments, private sector companies, NGOs etc. This includes encouraging their Governments to send Ministerial representation to YES2002. Disseminating information on YES2002 and from the YES Global Knowledge Resource to youth around the country, especially those without access to the Internet and email. Prepare youth in each country for the upcoming YES2002 and to ensure that there are effective channels to implement the outcomes of the Summit. These networks will be a vehicle for youth to be a part of the post- Summit process.'

In addition, the YES secretariat, in partnership with a Canadian based web portal called TakingITGlobal, is developing a knowledge bank on youth employment issues covering effective practices, toolkits, publications and research and a list of useful web links.<sup>15</sup> The YES Campaign link with the TakingITGlobal web site is also a good example of forming an alliance with a youth led initiative with members in more than 190 countries, seeking to 'collaborate on concrete projects addressing global problems and creating positive change'.<sup>16</sup>

The YES campaign operates in a highly personalised way with much prominence given to the YES Secretariat's Executive Director, Poonam Ahluwalia. This is in contrast to the Youth Employment Network Secretariat where the contact point is merely [youth@ilo.org](mailto:youth@ilo.org).

## **Weaknesses of the Youth Employment Network**

However, both initiatives also suffer from clearly identifiable weaknesses. Considering first the Secretary General's Youth Employment Network, the approach, as noted above, is essentially top down. This has involved first setting up of a panel of eminent persons as a means of establishing credibility with governments.<sup>17</sup> The next step has been to seek endorsement for a plan of action through the General Assembly to be followed up by an International agency, the ILO, to encourage and assist countries to develop national plans of action on youth employment.

### ***Limitations of national action plans***

The top down thrust is evident from the beginning in the Eminent Persons' Recommendations. Despite the opening recommendation of the Panel to request 'the heads of the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization invite the youth of the world to build a strong alliance' on youth employment related issues, the subsequent thrust of the recommendations is to propose working primarily through national governments to develop national action plans.

The implementation mechanism of national government initiated action plans on youth employment borrows directly from the European Union's practice of requiring its member governments to develop plans of action on employment issues in general. This approach may be suited to the operating approach of many European Governments but it remains to be seen how effective it is likely to be as an implementation tool outside of Europe.

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<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.youthemploymentsummit.org/gkr/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://takingitglobal.org/aboutus/vision/>

<sup>17</sup> The Panel is composed of Mr Saifuddin Abdullah of the Malaysian Youth Council; Mr César Alierta of Telefonica S.A. and representative of the International Organization of Employers; Dr Ruth Cordoso of the Comunidade Solidaria; Mr Hernando de Soto of the Instituto Libertad y Democracia; Dr Geeta Rao Gupta of the International Center for Research on Women; Mr Bill Jordan of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; Mr Allan Larsson, Former Swedish Finance minister and European Commission Director-General for Employment; Mr Rick Little of the International Youth Foundation; Ms Maria Livanos Cattai of the International Chamber of Commerce; Mr Magatte Wade of the Agence d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public contre le Sous-Emploi; Mr Ralph Willis, former senior Cabinet Minister, Australian Government; and Dr Rosanna Wong of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups.

As noted above, national action plans are a potentially valuable tool for identifying existing policies, mapping what exists in terms of the allocation of resources and where gaps exist. However, national action plans will also need to be mechanisms of critical review of existing policy and practice to enable them to forge new directions. To do this, they will need to incorporate a participatory process that involves young people themselves in a substantive way. This is one way to provide the critical feedback loop needed to review existing policies and practice.

Otherwise, there is a real danger that many non European Governments will comply by using the national plan of action to merely list existing initiatives.<sup>18</sup> At worst, it may be seen by Governments of middle and low-income countries as another hurdle or form of conditionality to be complied with to obtain further aid and debt relief from the high-income countries. The participatory processes involved, the range of inputs from different groups of young people and tapping innovative ideas from elsewhere will be crucial determinants of the effectiveness of action plans.

### ***Lack of engagement with young people***

Engagement with young people so that they can provide feedback on the obstacles they have encountered will be crucial to the success of employment action plans. Unless obstacles such as access to structured work placements while still in education, access to internal labour markets biased towards seniority, or obtaining credit for a start up micro enterprise can be addressed, little change will occur. This information can best come from seeking information local level initiatives such as those being fostered by the country networks of the Youth Employment Summit Campaign.

A related limitation of the top down nature of YEN is the low level of youth participation in the initiative to date. This has been limited to a 'youth focus group' of five young people, representing established youth organisations.<sup>19</sup> As noted above, the Concept Paper sees its role at the technical or working level as bringing together 'a host of recognized practitioners' on youth employment related issues rather than working directly with young people themselves, either through their representative bodies or with grass roots efforts. Young people also need to be engaged in different and appropriate ways in the development of public policy related to them.

If the Network seeks to operate as an umbrella group, this requires it to enter into some form of relationship with organisations interested in promoting its aims. This involves entering into memoranda of understanding, which identify common goals, protocols for interacting and a form of external accountability for agreed outcomes.

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<sup>18</sup> Although as noted above, five non-European countries have offered to act as lead countries in developing youth employment action plans. Offering to be a lead country is likely to attract bilateral and multilateral technical assistance to help develop the action plan (Guidance Note for lead countries in developing and implementing strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work, Annex 2, Steven K Miller, 2002, youth employment: discussant's comments, Expert Group Meeting on Global Priorities for Youth, Helsinki, 6-10 October)

<sup>19</sup> Its members are: Donald Chaumbira (Zimbabwe) Secretary-General, World Assembly of Youth, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Kolbé Kolver (South Africa) Chairman, Young Farmers Committee; Grace Kyriakos (Cyprus) Development Coordinator, YWCA Lebanon; Tandiwe Munyanyi (Zimbabwe) Youth Officer, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and Mr Henrik Soderman (Finland) President, European Youth Forum

### ***Need for more interagency collaboration***

Another purpose of the Youth Employment Network is to foster closer collaboration on the issue of youth employment between specialist agencies within UN system and between the UN and the World Bank. However, inter agency collaboration requires more than an endorsement by the heads of the three agencies. An explicit strategy of working together is needed to overcome the traditional silo effect that bureaucracies cultivate. Interagency collaboration requires a special set of arrangements that go beyond the skills and practices that are needed in operate in one organisation. These include a balanced mix of focus/vision on a common issue, the facilitating skills of those involved, and the quality of available resources, with capacity to cope with potential threats such as personnel turnover and variable support from partners.<sup>20</sup>

### **Weaknesses of the YES Campaign**

In relation to the YES Campaign, its strengths can also be said to be its weaknesses. Its bottom up approach has involved the use of informal structures and enthusiastic personal leadership to get to a point that has shown there is growing interest in and concern about youth employment among non-government organisations.<sup>21</sup> However, the success of the Summit also carries with it a major responsibility in terms of responding to the raised expectations of the young people at the conference who have now set up over 70 local country networks. The YES campaign has to demonstrate that it is capable of going beyond the ‘consciousness raising’ stage to implementing real change on the ground in the form of concrete initiatives related to the Campaign’s objectives.

### ***Need for new structures to support expansion***

The entrepreneurial spirit that created the momentum for the Summit will not be sufficient to carry the campaign forward into post summit phase of consolidation. An enterprise start up, no matter how successful, reaches the limits of its initial organisational structure. There were definite signs at the Summit that the limits of the informal and ad hoc organisational arrangements of the start up stage had been reached. It was clear to me and to others I spoke to at the Summit that a different organisational structure would be needed to take the campaign forward.

The lack of youth participation at leadership levels of the YES Campaign is also a major weakness. The principle of youth participation requires that young people be responsible for running the campaign at all levels. The YES Secretariat needs to give young people a prominent role in its executive leadership, governance structures such as its steering and advisory committees.

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<sup>20</sup> Bardach, E, 1998, *Getting Agencies to Work Together: the practice and theory of managerial craftsmanship* Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC; p 49.

<sup>21</sup> As shown by the listing of over 2000 Global Alliance member organisations on the YES web site – although it is not clear what membership of the Alliance involves beyond providing information about the organisation’s current activities ‘to promote productive and sustainable livelihoods for youth’.

### ***Need for close working partnerships***

The absence of alliances or partnerships with representative youth associations, major international agencies, national governments or the private sector is another major limitation of the campaign. Although the YES Campaign's Global Alliance membership is said to be a range of 'diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, the private sector, youth organizations, and education and training institutions', there is no mention of more complex working partnerships. These partnerships are need to provide the funding and other resources to support the country networks that have been set up prior to and after the Summit.

Some 28 international agencies, including several UN agencies and the World Bank, are identified on the YES web site as 'collaborating institutions'. However, none of these organisations are listed as Global Alliance for Youth Employment members. Only one UN agency, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has agreed to participate in the YES Campaign. This appears to be limited to the UNIDO Director General, Carlos Magariños, accepting the chair of the YES Campaign committee for the next two years and a proposal for a pilot project (subject to obtaining donor funding) for youth entrepreneurship development and technical skills training in West Africa.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Need for more transparency***

One factor that may be inhibiting the YES Campaign from forming partnerships may be the lack of evidence of the legal status of the YES Secretariat (is it an incorporated body?) or of a constitution setting out its governance arrangements. There is also a lack of transparency in relation to the operations of the Secretariat (eg what are its performance goals, targets and progress to meeting these?). What is the role and responsibilities of the international advisory committee and where is the information about its deliberations eg details of future meetings, minutes of past meetings? There is also no information available about the funding sources and conditions of funding for the YES Secretariat and the Campaign.

Concern about governance issues also extends to the key relationship of the YES Secretariat and the country networks it has encouraged. What support is offered and what is expected in return for these networks? How will the success of the country networks be measured? How is the relationship between the two entities formalised in the form of an agreement setting out mutual expectations, goals, agreed processes and outcomes. These formalities are important as a basis for attracting resources from third parties to support the activities of country networks.

### ***Evidence of projects on the ground?***

As noted above, perhaps the key litmus test of the YES Campaign will be what it can achieve on the ground. However, only three projects are mentioned on the YES

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.youthemploymentsummit.org/campaign/ynews/unido.sep2002.htm>

website.<sup>23</sup> The lack of on-the-ground activity or plans to establish projects offers support to the criticism by some that the YES Campaign has little or no substance.

The follow up to the Summit has been slow in coming. There is no information publicly available about the forward strategy for the campaign over the next decade. Indeed, the YES Campaign web site has not been updated in any significant way. For example, the web site does not mention upfront the Framework for Action circulated at the end of the Summit. Nor are there details of the Decade Campaign of Action provided, said to have been launched at the Summit.<sup>24</sup> The only activities mentioned are other planned conferences in India and Mexico. This suggests that the Campaign is only to be a series of events rather than a real campaign of action that produces measurable changes for young people?

### **Opportunities: Youth Employment Network**

The Network has high credibility among international agencies and national governments based on its status as a creation of the UN Secretary General, endorsed by the President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn and the Director-General of the International Labour Office, Juan Somavia. The Youth Employment Network also has an independent status separate from any one agency. This independent status comes from the continuing advisory role that the panel of eminent persons has.

#### ***Advocate on youth employment and coordinator of efforts***

This status gives the Network considerable potential to undertake two roles. The first is to act as an advocate to international agencies and national governments for a greater focus on youth employment issues. The second role is to identify ways that coordination between agencies can be improved. Two issues are central to the issue of promoting youth employment – how to get youth employment and livelihoods recognised as a key cross cutting issue for international agencies, and national governments in their relations with other key stakeholders.

In relation to the role of advocate, YEN is well placed to offer intellectual leadership in the form of well-documented analytical papers that highlight why young people should be given special focus ahead of other age groups. An analysis is needed of what it is that young people face particular difficulties in the labour market or in trying to tap a source of livelihood compared with other age groups, and why these difficulties are likely to continue for this and coming generations despite higher overall levels of education and what programs work and what do not. This analysis needs to identify the particular issues facing young people in low, middle and high income countries, and how these difficulties are likely differ by gender and rural urban location.

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<sup>23</sup> A Press Release from the Alexandria YES committee on the YES web site, dated 25 Sept announced that Egypt's ruling party, the National Democratic Party, has agreed to work in partnership with the YES Alexandria Network to get private sector companies in Alexandria to hire 100 young technical graduates over the next year. In addition, the Press Release notes that following the YES Summit, the Egyptian Government has agreed to hire 300,000 young people in 2003.

<sup>24</sup> UNIDO Director- General accepts YES Campaign Chair,  
<http://www.youthemploymentsummit.org/campaign/ynews/unido.sep2002.htm>

In relation to international specialist agencies, a key challenge for the Youth Employment Network is to encourage them to move from a narrow problem or programmatic focus on youth to one that is broader in focus and is integrated with the programs of other agencies.<sup>25</sup> For example, one major problem area that needs to adopt a more integrated set of strategies is in relation to HIV/Aids and young people. There is clearly a link between a lack of income generating activities and the spread of HIV/Aids in Africa.<sup>26</sup> While there are, no doubt, many efforts on the ground to make this link, these efforts need to be consolidated into a more explicit strategy for disseminating information and channelling the resources for action. Youth employment is a basic cross cutting issue that has the potential to address several problems at the same time.

The potential for cross agency collaboration has already been demonstrated by UNAIDS and UNESCO in relation to HIV/Aids and education.<sup>27</sup> The approach for Africa proposed in their agreed joint approach is to seek at three levels a multi-partner effort from the HIV/AIDS affected countries, the UN system, bilateral donors, NGOs and the private sector. The first level is advocacy at the ministerial level to promote political will. The second is the sharing of experience among countries and capacity building through facilitated seminars to promote understanding of feasible actions. The third level is to provide support at the country level for the education sector to develop and implement an effective response.<sup>28</sup> This three tier approach, with appropriate changes, could also be applied to youth employment.

## **Opportunities: YES Campaign**

The YES campaign, due to its bottom up origins and approach, is well placed to develop innovative solutions to developing sustainable livelihoods. The YES Campaign's has an opportunity to show that local level initiatives have a great potential to generate new approaches in a way that government programs fail to do. Government run programs are likely to be limited in scope and duration.

### ***Scope to develop partnerships***

One way for the YES Campaign to promote innovative solutions is to use its good offices to bring together interested parties from the private sector and funding agencies to set up a framework to encourage the use of information and communication technology to generate self employment opportunities by and for young people. Based on an agreed framework and supporting funding, YES country

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<sup>25</sup> The World Bank projects database identifies 17 projects worth \$US505m with youth in the title. However, only one project mentions employment, albeit indirectly in its title ('Education and Training for Youth Employment Project') and no project, according to the information provided in the summary, appears to focus directly on employment generation.

<sup>26</sup> 'Poverty and scarce employment opportunities are the principal reasons why young people enter into sex work', Vivian Mercedes Lopez, 2002, *HIV/Aids and Young People: a review of the state of the epidemic and its impact on world youth.*, report prepared for the World Youth Report 2003, Helsinki. 6-10 October, p18.

<sup>27</sup> 'In Turning the Tide Against HIV/AIDS, Education is Key' Press Release, 18 October, 2002, UNAIDS and UNESCO. <http://www.unaids.org>

<sup>28</sup> 'In Turning The Tide Against Hiv/Aids, Education Is Key', Washington, October 18, 2002, [http://www.unaids.org/whatsnew/press/eng/pressarc02/EducationandHIVAIDS\\_181002\\_en.htm](http://www.unaids.org/whatsnew/press/eng/pressarc02/EducationandHIVAIDS_181002_en.htm)

networks could then be invited to prepare and submit proposals for funding. It may be necessary to provide some funding upfront to provide some technical support to help develop realistic proposals. The funding may need to be allocated partly on a grant basis and partly on a loan basis to ensure the commercial viability of the project is given due attention.

### ***Part of a critical feedback loop***

Many attempts to self-start projects are not likely to be successful. However, as noted above in relation to the preparation of national action plans on youth employment, it is important to identify the reasons for failure. The YES country network could play a valuable role in identifying what obstacles were encountered and to pass on these lessons to their national governments and to the international community. The opportunity costs of high import taxes on computers for income generation purposes and the high cost of access to the Internet in terms of lost employment potential need to be highlighted and feedback given to a review process about the obstacles to eradicating poverty.<sup>29</sup>

### **Threats: Youth Employment Network**

One of the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Youth Employment notes that ...'All countries need to review, rethink and reorient the legal and institutional framework for business to make it easier to start and run a business'. This requires a willingness to change existing practices that many governments are likely to show little inclination for, unless it is in response to pressure from a well-organised constituency.

The Youth Employment Network, as a newly established entity with little profile, may find it difficult to act as an advocate and coordinator for international agencies, national governments, private sector employers and NGOs in relation to youth employment.

Another threat to its success is a potential reliance on existing youth bodies for ideas on how to promote youth livelihoods. Large umbrella youth groups such as the European Youth Forum, representing 91 international non-governmental youth organisations and national youth councils, may suffer from Michel's 'iron law of oligarchy'. This refers to a common situation in political associations where control is vested in the hands of a small leadership group focused on maintaining their own power rather than serving the interests of their constituency as a whole. Unless youth participation is more broadly defined than the involvement of a small number of youth 'representatives', the innovative potential and entrepreneurial spirit of young people will not be tapped.

### **Threats: YES Campaign**

Working through volunteers and poorly funded structures causes potentially a number of major difficulties that do not beset working through the formal governmental

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<sup>29</sup> See Curtain, 2002, 'Tackling the Knowledge Divide: A Post-Summit Analysis' paper posted at <http://www.youthemploymentsummit.org/>

structures. Enthusiasm about issues is hard to sustain, particularly if it is a complex issue involving a range of stakeholders and a range of obstacles.

Many country networks may be opportunistic, with young people willing to participate in an internationally generated campaign as long as there are immediate rewards such as travel to an international conference and the prospect of obtaining donor funding for their operations. Developing capabilities and turning these into employment generating activities that can be sustained over the medium term will be a much more difficult task.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are offered for both the Youth Employment Network and the YES Campaign.

### ***Need for a better combination of top down and bottom up approaches***

Due to the different approaches and success achieved by YEN and YES, potential synergies exist to expand a campaign on youth employment from an idea to action in individual countries. This action should involve both government initiated national action plans and the efforts of young people themselves to try innovative approaches to generating employment. Ways to do this need to be worked out on a country by country basis within the framework of a memorandum of understanding between the YEN and the YES and other umbrella groups representing local level initiatives.

### ***More transparent and accountable operating modes are required***

A greater degree of transparency is needed by both initiatives. The Youth Employment Network, through its shortly to be released action plan, hopefully will clarify its objectives, set performance targets related to these objectives and undertake to report publicly and regularly on its progress against these objectives. Information about its activities and accountabilities could be provided through a more sophisticated web site. It is suggested that the web site be more than a one-way form of communication, with the opportunity made available for regular feedback from young people and other stakeholders on issues related to its goals and performance.

Similarly for the YES secretariat, transparency is also needed in relation to its governance arrangements, funding sources, goals and performance targets related to its objectives. There is a need to report regularly on progress in meeting the designated targets and to seek regular feedback on performance. Transparency is also needed in its dealings with country networks and other stakeholders.

### ***Need for greater youth participation***

Both initiatives in different ways need to address their form and level of youth participation. The Youth Employment Network needs to go beyond its 'youth focus group' to provide more than one way for young people to participate in the Youth Employment Network processes. Simply setting up a larger advisory group of people representing youth associations is only part of the answer.

One approach to obtaining a broader form of youth participation related to youth employment issues is to set up a youth panel based on a statistically representative sample and to seek their feedback on a regular basis. The sample for a country does not need to be large, only a minimum of 200 young people would be sufficient. The sample could be selected from particular groups of young people such as the self-employed or rural youth.

Another way for governments to involve ordinary young people in policy making is to set up Citizens Juries of young people. These are a structured method of obtaining detailed, considered views from members of the public on particular issues.<sup>30</sup> Randomly selected citizens are given the opportunity to hear from witnesses, deliberate on complex issues, and report their findings to the broader community.<sup>31</sup> Juries are usually made up of 12-16 lay people who are neither experts in the particular issue nor members of interest groups. Citizens' Juries have been used successfully in Germany, USA, UK, Norway and Australia. They have grown out of a perceived need to give ordinary citizens a stronger voice and role in democratic decision-making.<sup>32</sup>

The YES campaign, for its part, needs to send a clear signal that it is run for young people by young people themselves. The visible face of the campaign from this point on has to be a young person who in his or her profile obviously represents young people. Otherwise governments and international agencies will continue to see youth as a dependent group who require others to speak for them.

The initial stage required the enthusiasm of the 'start up' entrepreneur. However, the next stage of consolidation requires a consensus builder who is capable of enlisting the support of a range of key stakeholders. The three suggested criteria for a new leader are:

- Aged 18 to 30 years
- Strong credibility based on a background as a youth leader
- Demonstrated skills as an administrator.

### *Need for a forward strategy*

Both initiatives need to develop, make public and seek feedback on their forward strategies. For YEN, its forward strategy needs to show how the action plans can be used to produce effective ways to assist more young people to gain access to new jobs and to create new employment opportunities for young people. An important part of this should be a review mechanism at country level that obtains feedback from those on the ground who are attempting to start businesses or other ways to produce sustainable livelihoods for young people.

YEN also needs to develop an explicit strategy to promote collaboration on youth employment issues between specialist agencies within the UN system and with other

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<sup>30</sup> UK Cabinet Office 'Citizens' juries' <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/1998/guidance/users/15.htm>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.jefferson-center.org/default.htm>

<sup>32</sup> UK Cabinet Office 'Citizens' juries' <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/1998/guidance/users/15.htm>

major international agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF. The formulation and monitoring of the performance of PRSPs offer an important opportunity to do this.<sup>33</sup>

For YES, its forward strategy needs to show how it plans to foster capacity development and sustained activity involving its country network. In particular, resources are needed to develop youth employment projects based on the principles of the Summit's Framework for Action. However, this framework is very basic and needs further elaboration to encourage more innovative projects and attract donors.

Working partnerships with the private sector are crucial to getting innovative projects off the ground. The YES Secretariat through the Education Development Center is well placed to seek support from large US-based companies with operations in low and middle-income countries. This support needs to be more than mere funding – the technical expertise of their employees needs to be tapped.

### *Need for a marketing strategy*

Both initiatives need marketing strategies that highlight new or innovative ways of generating greater employment opportunities for young people. The scope for developing low cost products and involving young people in the informal sector in their distribution is described further in Attachment 2.

A marketing strategy to produce change requires linking commitments to youth employment reporting on some form of performance targets. This means that concrete indicators of young people's employment position are needed.<sup>34</sup>

### *Need to forge alliances and partnerships*

YEN needs to develop a protocol for entering into relationships with other organisations that share the same goals, spelling out common goals, forms of cooperation and the outcomes sought. However, it is important that YEN see itself as more than merely a 'network of networks'.

YES also needs to develop alliances and partnerships that can generate funding to promote innovative solutions to youth employment. This may require seeking feedback on the expectations of potential funders in terms of expected governance arrangements and accountability mechanisms. It is essential to the future of YES that resources are generated to produce some significant projects on the ground.

Not only innovative approaches are needed but also in the nature of the partners involved. US Corporations in particular have been more reluctant than large enterprises from other countries to principles of corporate social responsibility.<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup> See Attachment 1.

<sup>34</sup> See Attachment 3

<sup>35</sup> Several sources have noted that US corporations are much less to espouse corporate social responsibility. Sandra Waddock writing about the UN Global Compact notes: 'By the time the first US-based conference on the Global Compact [GC] was held in April 2002 at the University of Notre Dame, hundreds of companies globally had submitted letters of commitment to upholding the nine principles of the Global Compact. ...Few of the 'signatory' companies were US companies, despite the

a range of working partnerships could be set up with US corporations that operate in low and middle income countries.

## **Conclusion**

Mobilisation of governments and mobilisation of young people should be two complementary features of a more coordinated approach. As the introduction noted, financial resources are available to countries striving to reduce poverty – what is still lacking is a coordinated strategy to generate sustainable livelihoods for young people. A strategy still needs to be developed and implemented that taps the capacities of governments, the resources of the private sector, the focus of the NGOs and, not least, the energy of young people. This requires some combination of both the top down and bottom approaches demonstrated by YEN and YES.

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apparent need for leadership by US companies to make the GC effective in the long run’.

[http://65.214.34.30/un/gc/unweb.nsf/content/Notre\\_Reflect.htm](http://65.214.34.30/un/gc/unweb.nsf/content/Notre_Reflect.htm)

Creating the Tipping Point towards Corporate Responsibility: Reflections on Meeting Expectations in the Global Economy University of Notre Dame April 21-23, 2002

## **Attachment 1: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers**

An opportunity to highlight the importance of youth employment in poverty reduction is monitor the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, now required by the IMF and the World Bank as a condition for granting debt relief to heavily indebted countries. These are publicly available documents than can be scrutinised easily. An initial assessment of the completed PRSPs indicates that youth employment issues are not a major focus.<sup>36</sup> However, ideas on how to foster youth employment opportunities may require on the ground technical support to identify local success stories in heavily indebted countries and to build on these.

## **Attachment 2: Innovative Ideas for projects**

Considerable potential also exists for the Network through its eminent persons panel to encourage multinational firms to develop products for the 4 billion people living under \$US2,000 a year. C.K. Prahalad and Allen Hammond highlight the importance of this market for future growth as many international companies have reached saturation points for their products in high-income countries. They also outline a number of ways that some international companies, such as the Indian subsidiary of Unilever, have been successful in developing low cost products such as laundry powder, candy and even ice cream.<sup>37</sup>

There is opportunity to engage youth in marketing, selling and distributing products while also imparting skills that can be transferable to other contexts. This could be done through mentoring and an enterprise-based training initiative. Efforts by Unilever and Procter and Gamble in Zambia to work through young people as a distribution network have been less successful. There is a need to look carefully at what worked and what did not, particularly in terms of the right incentives for young people to participate. These incentives need to be more than merely monetary ones.

Under the umbrella of the UN's Global Compact, YEN, working through the ILO, is well placed to work through ways that young people can generate livelihoods in the informal sector by acting as on sellers of a range of low cost products.

Another opportunity for YEN is to highlight obstacles to youth self-employment. One way this can be done is to scrutinise the user profile of micro credit borrowers and to identify the factors behind the under representation of young people. A concrete step to overcome the reluctance of micro credit lenders to extend loans to young people is to develop a credit assessment tool based on a risk profile of success in self-employment and sustainable income generation in the informal sector. The key factors predicting success are likely to include age (eg 20 to 24 years or 25 to 29 years), previous experience in wage employment, existing amount of capital, the viability of a business plan - even if only verbally presented, access to a mentor and social network support.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Curtain, R, 2002, p 14-15.

<sup>37</sup> C.K. Prahalad and Allen Hammond, 2002, *What Works: Serving The Poor, Profitably A Private Sector Strategy for Global Digital Opportunity*. Markle Foundation and Digital Partners.

<sup>38</sup> Curtain, R, 2002, 'Youth in Extreme Poverty: Dimensions and Country Responses', Paper prepared for the Experts Meeting on Global Priorities for Youth, Helsinki, 6-10 October.

### **Attachment 3: Suggestions for indicators**

One indicator could relate to the relative share of employment going to young people and take the form of the proportion of new hires who are young people. This could be based on aggregate data if available or on enterprise level data. Indicators of what constitutes decent work also need to be developed and what proportion of the new jobs taken up by young people can be categorised as decent work.

Indicators of youth self-employment are also needed. As young people are looking to be in a dynamic situation, data that reflects what is happening to them over time is also needed. Cross-sectional survey data, therefore, are more likely to misrepresent what is happening to young people compared with other age groups.<sup>39</sup> So duration based measures are needed such as income earned for a designated time period.

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<sup>39</sup> Curtain, R, 2002, 'Youth in Extreme Poverty: Dimensions and Country Responses', Paper prepared for the Experts Meeting on Global Priorities for Youth, Helsinki, 6-10 October, p 17.