COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: LEARNING THROUGH SELF-ACTIVATION: C:F APPROACH

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Abstract: While a report by the United Nation’s Environmental Programme has revealed that only 4 out of the 90 most important environmental goals show significant progress, while CO2 emissions are the highest in history and while youth unemployment is reaching new peaks every month, it looks like the Rio+20 and Millennium Goals fail to get any half-way useful commitment agreed upon. The UN’s Millennium Development Goals give a good summary of most of the major challenges facing the world today but what we are short of are the ways to actually trigger and sustain sufficient levels of action to make change happen in a timely way. In respond, Challenge:Future (C:F) is turning talks into actions by collaborative action. Secondly, Challenge: Future focus is on global youth, the generation that is facing growing difficulties with obtaining appropriate education, jobs, entrepreneurial and leadership experiences. C:F is acting as a bridge between the years of education and real professional life by providing a place for developing skills and leadership potential through real-life challenges. Thirdly, C:F develops new bridges across economic, cultural, ethnical and generational divides needed for reaching social prosperity and stability.

Keywords: collaboration, co-creation, self-activation, sustainability, youth employability

Introduction

While a report by the United Nation’s Environmental Programme has revealed that only 4 out of the 90 most important environmental goals show significant progress, while CO2 emissions are the highest in history and while youth unemployment is reaching new peaks every month, it looks like the Rio+20 and Millennium Goals fail to get any half-way useful commitment agreed upon. The necessity to work together is increasing, pushing all the actors to take action in facing challenges such as economic crisis, the environmental pollution, health problems and global warning. With UN Millennium Development Goals (UN MDG) the world governments committed to improve wellbeing of the world until 2015 by urging the countries to take complementary action. There is a lot of research on the increased impact of NGOs in business, the sustainability, and corporate social responsibility related topics, although
the results are not promising and visible in terms of world conditions. Yet, the impact of youth and how cooperation of youth may contribute to the solution of those problems is less under projection with real impact.

Evoked by many existential challenges, caused by humans, Challenge:Future (hereinafter C:F) initiative was established in 2009 by TMK (Third Millennium Knowledge) Lab, a Slovenian company. Together with partners CEEMAN, a network of 200 business schools and universities; and IEDC – Bled School of Management, they have joined their interests in commitment to sustainability, prosperity and innovation and formed a not-for-profit consortium. Using the power of Web 2.0 technologies C:F developed multiple channels to connect creative students, schools, companies and ideas on a global scale. The initiative focuses strongly on youth, as C:F founders believe that young people are the most valuable source of creating future with fresh, inspired and revolutionary ideas. The second imperative is sustainability and social responsibility. Therefore, all ideas, projects and innovations must have long-term positive impact on society and the planet. This paper will explain how can the organization contribute to realization of UN Millennium Development Goals in terms of responding to some of the problems indicated by the UN.

1. UN Millennium Development Goals Framework
1.1. UN Millennium Development Goals Origins
As indicated in the work of Nelsen and Prescott (2008), the UN in 2000, with the participation of 189 heads of states, ratified the UN Millennium Declaration which foresees a global commitment to tackle some of the common challenges of the world. Sachs (2005) made 10 key policy recommendations to 191 world countries, which signed agreement with the UN, in order to make them contribute to the UN MDG. After a brief introduction of the goals, and the reason of lacking behind these goals worldwide, these strategies include the necessity for governance within the countries that will coordinate for the realization of UN MDG. However, considering the effect of all these independent actors one by one, it is not clear how they should be integrated in order to serve the UN MDG. This paper will focus on and present that kind of a sample model.

James (2006) suggests that governments should consider moving from means to end-based targets in order to achieve the targets until deadline. However, the situation is clearly behind the targeted scores and the aimed targets are realized by the governments.

Fukuda-Parr and Hulme (2011) interviewed 100 individuals who took part in the formation and development of UN MDG, and found out that there is a slow movement of the implementation of the UN MDG and that limited evidence for specific countries and specific targets suggest that poverty reduction is being accelerated. Still, there is an increased pressure all around the world about the necessity to take socially responsible action and sustainability oriented initiatives.

1.2. NGO & Youth Impact Around the World for Social Action
As Guay, Doh and Sinclair (2004) point out, the UN (2003) defines NGO as any “non-profit voluntary citizens’ group which is organized on a local, national or international level”. But to highlight their most important effect on the way towards UN MDG, perhaps it is better to define them with the definition of Spar and Mure (2003): “non-profit groups that combine resource mobilization, information provision, and activism, to advocate for changes in certain issue areas”. Boli and Thomas (1997) paid attention to the period between 1875 and 1973 where the number of international NGOs increased. They studied how these organizations are distributed among major social sectors and reviewed historical studies showing the effect of these organizations on world culture.

The World’s Youth report prepared by USAID and Population Reference Bureau USA states that there are more young people in the world now than ever before. Youth spend a longer time in school, begin work at a later age, and get married and have children later than their counterparts did 20 years ago. While in many ways the lives of young people are more complex and challenging than ever, in most countries they are also more varied, full of opportunity, and more secure than in the past. In general, modern youth spend longer preparing for adulthood than their parents. However, they are one of the rare generations in history of humanity that will live below the standard of their parents’ generation. That is why mostly the “youth” is thought to be crucial for triggering change. As Nugent (2005) mentions, there will be about 72 million more youth in 2025 than at present, who will be facing the current challenges of the Earth even more.

2. Youth Challenge and Millennium Goals
Poverty is a global phenomenon affecting more and more categories of people. According to the latest World Bank Development Indicators, 2.6 billion people live with less than $2 per day. The poorest 40 percent of

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1 Magdalena Slowinska, Challenge:Future Communication and UX officer
2 World Bank Development Indicators 2008, World Bank, August 2008
the world’s population accounts for 5 percent of global income. The richest 20 percent account for three-quarters of world income.

According to the International Labour Organization: „The world is facing a worsening youth employment crisis: young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and over 75 million youth worldwide are looking for work. The ILO has warned of a “scarred” generation of young workers facing a dangerous mix of high unemployment, increased inactivity and precarious work in developed countries, as well as persistently high working poverty in the developing world.” Unemployment levels have been reaching new peaks in almost every country, hitting youth particularly hard. The global youth unemployment rate is historically high, 13.6 per cent in 2011 on global level and 22.4 per cent in European Union in June 2012. In Spain, unemployment rate for people under 25 is at an astonishing 53 per cent, in North Africa and Middle East 24 per cent and the only two regions with one digit youth unemployment are South and East Asia. It is expected that more than 1.2 billion young people will enter labor market in the next 10 years while only 300 million jobs await them. What can we do to take action?

Many young people all over the world are learning and mastering new and old skills for today’s economic challenges, problems with unemployment, business environment and for a sustainable future for generations to come. Global society, together with its communities, businesses, organizations and institutions, is witnessing a rise of a new youth culture. These young people are focused on processes and problem solving strategies that teach them how to make an impact by being critical thinkers, self-learners, freelancers, entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs and intra-preneurs (those developing a new service, product or system in an already existing corporation). Majority of today’s young professionals and public innovators function within social networks of peer learners so that they learn with and from each other by taking part in activities and initiatives which advance and shape their personal, social, professional and environmental identity. The two of the most prominent values of that youth culture are: a) good citizenship and b) social responsibility. These traits define the 21st and 22nd century mind and skill set, which is immanently embedded within self and knowledge-activation, ethics, community service, diversity, human rights and empathy. An important issue is whether these young people and others who will join them have enough support and persistence to carry out their promises and responsibilities to the public, their peers and the world. And also, who else and how is going to assist and mentor them in their journey?

2.1. Learning through Self-Activation: Challenge:Future Approach

Challenge:Future (C:F) is turning talks into actions by collaborative action. Challenge:Future focus is on global youth, the generation that is facing growing difficulties with obtaining appropriate education, jobs, entrepreneurial and leadership experiences. C:F is acting as a bridge between the years of education and real professional life by providing a place for developing skills and leadership potential through real-life challenges. Thirdly, new bridges across economic, cultural, ethical and generational divides are needed to reach social prosperity and stability.

Challenge:Future has developed virtual social community, youth engagement know-how and local network of 81 CF Hubs to develop global youth aged 18 -30 and create positive impact through FIVE STRATEGIC “CF” ACTIVITIES:

- **C:F Competitions:** the matrix of global, issue specific or local competitions. Competition invites students to find practical solutions to global environmental, social and business challenges through C:F online collaboration platform where they can get to know each other, create and form teams, interact with mentors, and receive feedback from experts.

- **C:F Commitments:** individual and mass actions upon selected topics and tips. Inspired by results of activities in 2011, we are aiming to create the hub for empowering tips, real commitments and to monitor these impacts from individuals, clubs, schools, organizations.

- **C:F Collaboration:** CF Hubs, CF Action teams, The Future Book. C:F is evolving competitors engagement towards collaboration for implementation of ideas, participation in projects and for creation of measurable impact. Collaboration could be global or local.

- **CF Conferences:** CF Summit, CFy events. Each year all activities conclude with a face-to-face challenge future SUMMIT, a life-changing event connecting youth, pioneering businesses, policy leaders and other change makers in dialogue, reflection, and action.

- **C:F Change:** CF Project of the Year, Humanitarian projects. Inspired by the results of a single Youth 4 Youth challenge where youth impacted 210.000 lives only in three months, we are starting with global support to few selected projects to help them survive, evolve and scale up on global level.

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3 Andreja Kodrin, Challenge:Future founder and president, C:F Time Magazine 2013
Since 2009 Challenge:Future has actively engaged more than 30,000 community members, successfully performed three competition cycles of global competitions with 11,287 competitors, attracted 3,500,000 page views from 202 countries and territories (Google analytics) and reached 8,000,000 individuals. In the year 2011/12 only Challenge:Future members created 1,469 innovative ideas and projects, invested 210,000 volunteering hours and improved 270,000 lives. Many competitions, actions and events have been organized in the partnership with prominent organizations, such as UN PRME, UNESCO, TEDx and under the wisdom and advice of C:F advisory board members, including Donald J. Johnston, Secretary-General of OECD 1996-2006, Joel Barker, futurist, Dr. Lučka Kajfež Bogataj, climatologist and VP of IPCC, Dr. Edward de Bono, prominent thinker, Sandi Ćeško, Founder and President of Studio Moderna, and many others.

2.1.2. Engagement through Online Competitions
C:F Competition invites students to find practical solutions to global environmental, social and business challenges through C:F online collaboration platform where they can get to know each other, create and form teams, interact with mentors, and receive feedback from experts.

In September 2011, C:F (together with the company Studio Moderna) launched, organized and mentored a challenge which tackled and encouraged global youth to create tangible impact for the underprivileged youth, from immigrants to disabled or abandoned. Participants were asked to create an action plan, inspire others, act and implement their idea, and finally, report it by preparing a max 10 slide PPT giving a clear image of their results and impact. 171 submissions from 36 countries were made for this, Youth 4 Youth challenge. The list included not only brand new projects, but also successful projects that have already been implemented. Ideas varied: from showing small tokens of appreciation to homeless children, to engaging Roma children in artistic classes.

The finalists included projects from Bulgaria, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Macedonia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Sweden, Uganda and USA (alphabetic order).

For example: Laura Garlo from USA submitted her MmofraTrom Bead Project, an enterprise designed by Bentley University students to provide sustainable, income generating project to fund education for children in Ghana. The MmofraTrom Centre is an elementary school near Somanya, Ghana. Income is generated through the sales of recycled-glass beaded bracelets. The children enjoyed spending few Saturday mornings stringing bracelets with the vibrant beads made by local artisans. The Ghanaian members of the project purchase the beads from the local bead makers, string the bracelets and send the bracelets to the United States. They learn how to run a business and most importantly, take ownership of improving their lives. American members of the MmofraTrom Bead Project attend Bentley University and learn the skills needed to run a social enterprise.

Sachi Bansal from India worked upon a project SWAPAN in which she and two of her college colleagues started teaching nearly 50 slum children who never went to school basic education. These kids were taught using interactive videos, audio lessons and pictures in order to impart knowledge and develop a mindset to create enthusiasm to learn conventional education. Slowly the number began to rise and in a time number was as high as 250. This concept has been used to help physically handicapped as well. Children who could not move properly were taught basic alphabets and poems to start with.

2.1.3. C:F Chapters and Local Impact Outputs
The C:F Chapters Network currently present 31 teams of young people in 25 different countries. The Network is fast-growing and providing tangible results in terms of local action and/or global projects co-organized by the partnership of many countries. Being part of a global community, the Chapters bring and solve world problems on local level. All the events organized by the Chapters have one ultimate aim: to create awareness, increase conscious action, and realize real projects that will result in positive outcome for the local/global problems. Aside from the local events, the Chapters Network each year implements a global project - an action or project that is replicated in all the chapters’ countries, thus investing more volunteering hours, engaging more young people and impacting more lives around the globe. The global projects are future oriented, and yet also addressing the local needs of the community. One such project was “Random Acts of Kindness” where C:F Chapters helped different group of
underprivileged youth in their ordinary lives by implementing various acts of kindness like Help Youth to Learn, Read to Youth, Play a Sport with Youth, Help to Clean a Room, Organize a cooking class for youth etc.

2.1.4. Local Career Bootcamps

As many consulting companies suggest, “… optimizing human potential will be the single most important determinant of future business success and growth”. The key to sustaining a competitive enterprise over the long-term means that companies worldwide must aggregate the right tools, mindsets and job training alliances to ensure that young and promising talent is enterprise-ready and will succeed over the long-term in an increasingly complex economy. In order to speed up that process, ensure career and personal development as well as nurture new skills and competencies, Challenge:Future developed Local Career Bootcamps, local events that move from country to country. In the first half of 2013, two such Career Bootcamps were organized in Turkey and India (within the Youth in Action Program), both of them challenging the basic and common problem of these two countries: youth unemployment.

Izmir Career Bootcamp - The Future of Jobs: Y Generation Co-Creation Process

“You stepped out of your comfort zone by using this weekend for a learning experience. That is why I would call you winners.” Andreja Kodrin, President and Founder of Challenge:Future.

On January 19-20, 2013, co-organized by C:F and Aegean Young Businessman Association, a local event in Izmir took part in Izmir University of Economics. A total of 90 youth from 5 different universities in Izmir attended the event, which was organized in partnership with a Non-Profit Organization founded by Young Businessmen in Izmir. The basic aim of the two days program was to create consciousness about the challenges the youth faces and to provide them with opportunity to meet local businessmen. Throughout the event, there were panel discussions about Y Generation, how they differ from the other generations, what sort of problems they face and how they can overcome these challenges.

Mine Erbaykent Uysal, founder and CEO of Mikor company dealing with coaching and HR consultancy led a creative workshop on X and Y Generation. Two workshops were specially designed for the topic of youth unemployment. The youth was asked what kind of a structure/organization they would build or prepare if the city was selected as the winner; how would they integrate the youth to the process, and how would they provide the future sustainability of this organization in the long run. A group of judges chose the best project and presentation, offering internships to the winning teams. Perhaps, the 12 internships offered to the youth was the best possible outcome of the event, responding to the unemployment challenge the youth currently face.

India Career Bootcamp – Creating Future with Creating Opportunities

A similar event was also organized in India on February 7-11, 2013. The events were organized in Rajkot and Ahmedabad. Through the local events, the youth was informed and presented about what C:F is, how the youth can find opportunities of employment, how they can design their own jobs, what they should do in order to be successful. A total of approximately 600 youth attended the events and 9 international speakers, including academics, C:F staff and youth, gave presentations about ways to create a better future, more jobs for youth and how to cooperate for creating a more sustainable world for all. For India, with high rates of population and unemployment parallel to this fact, perhaps the most important contribution of these events was that the youth showed a light in the darkness through seeing people taking a step in the real lives and changing something. The inspiration they received from the international participants opened a gate in front of them showing that they can achieve whatever they want as long as they dare to dream and act. Such events will also take part in the near future in countries including Nigeria, Uganda, Rwanda, Singapore, Denmark, and Romania.

2.5. Youth for Youth Events: Speeding Up Consciousness

2.5.1 Go-Green Events Macedonia

Challenge:Green Party is not about regular parties but about feeling calm and peaceful, and resign from the technology, Facebook and pollution. It is a party where people can see how much electric energy can be saved without listening to music on electronic devices, without wasting these 5 hours on computers, internet or mobile phones, and about the energy you gained being close to nature.

The C:F Chapter in Macedonia organized a local event throughout the summer time where they went to the deep forests in the mountain Vodno, found a good place to sit and started the party without any electronic devices, cameras, internet connections, etc. Talking about the projects they made the previous year, about their strengths and weaknesses, and their future goals, they increased their consciousness about the effects of technology and how a lot

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4 The Human Age Report, Manpower Group, 2013
connection can damage the human lives and sustainable health. Drinking ice tea and using the music talents of some members, they also contributed to their spiritual well-being and awareness about connection to earth. Going for a walk, and collecting tea, which will be dried and cooked for the next New Year party is another natural contribution the event resulted with.

2.5.2. Earth Day Events

On April 22, 2011 a live web cast, again to increase the local awareness of the youth about world problems, has been realized by Izmir Chapter. Supported by Izmir University of Economics Department of Media and Communications, a one and half hour of a live discussion has been on web where the youth discussed how they could contribute for the creation of a sustainable future, how art is related to sustainability, how they can use arts to create positive outcome, how youth can connect to create a change, etc.

2.5.3. Impact & Research through Global Youth Projects

Challenge:Future youth made a research on the youth all around the world and prepared a final report based on that research at the C:F Business Forum in 2012. The research is conducted in five C:F Chapter countries including Turkey, Slovenia, Montenegro, Costa Rica, and Russia. Later, the research opened up to the world through the online platform. More than 400 people from 8 countries took part in the survey, including 20 elementary school kids as a sample group representing the youngest youth who will have a very different perception than us. The total percentage of female participants was 44%, while the percentage of male participants was 56%. The research includes mostly the Y Generation; 73.5% of the participants were born between 1980 and 1990.

In the research, 21 different images were selected about future including both good and bad images such as robots, hyperspaces, megacities, flying people, new home designs, disasters, scarcity, droughts, and so on. The youth was asked to put “#” to the pictures which they think most likely to happen in the future, and to put “+” on the pictures they most want to see in the future.

Based upon their expectations of the future, we could claim that youth is not much different from one country to another. No matter how much they want to be optimistic about the future, they are more pessimistic now. Unfortunately, no matter how much the youth is willing to find high tech equipments (42,8%), megacities (20,1%), new types of energy resources (23,9%), robots and green sustainable planet conditions (59,5%) in the future, they expect catastrophes, disasters, floods, drought, etc. much more. 36% of them mentioned that they expect droughts, while 30,8% expect floods and 22,7% expect catastrophes and earthquakes. This perhaps shows how imaginations can differ from expectations, although this generation is told to be highly optimistic about future and willing to take socially responsible action.

3. Conclusion

The most important consequences of youth unemployment and other global challenges extend beyond the impact of temporary labor market fluctuations. The experience leaves a permanent imprint on both individual life outcomes and on the development of a nation’s workforce. A 2007 study by the Prince’s Trust (www.princes-trust.org.uk), The Cost of Exclusion, cites evidence of long-term impacts of youth unemployment: every 3 months of unemployment at age 22 is associated with an additional 1.3 months of unemployment between age 28 and 33. Extended unemployment also contributes to poverty and its lifestyle deficits—cognitive, health, nutrition and psychological issues. High rates of youth unemployment also represent a wasted resource.

In this paper’s broad overview of the statistics and cases explained, it is evident that the youth taking action against the world challenges is the youth that will trigger change. Challenge:Future as one of the largest global youth driven movements shows visible impact through the local and global actions, responding separately to the UN Millennium Development Goals. Let us never forget that “Young people bring energy, talent and creativity to economies that no one can afford to squander. Around the world, young women and men are making important contributions as productive workers, entrepreneurs, consumers—as members of civil society and agents of change. What our young people do today will create the foundations for what our economies will do tomorrow.”

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were eight international development goals for the year 2015 that had been established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. These were based on the OECD DAC International Development Goals agreed by Development Ministers in the “Shaping the 21st Century Strategy”. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) succeeded the MDGs in 2016. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are time-bound development targets that address many dimensions of poverty, such as hunger, disease, inadequate water supplies and lack of education. Claiming the Millennium Development Goals: A human rights approach. Table 1. Some possible linkages between the targets and human rights. Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which allocated eight priority goals for international development. The development of MDGs was based on eight chapters of the UN Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000. There is a need for exposure to globalization and other global processes through sustainable development, focused on comprehensive security and the survival of civilization. Moreover, in the above mentioned report “Realizing the Future We Want” the main task of the United Nations Development Program for the period after 2015 was seen in the fact that globalization becomes a positive force for all peoples of the world for present and future generations.