

NOKIA



By Sheila Kinkade

Connecting Youth to Positive Futures

Over the past decade, Nokia and the International Youth Foundation (IYF) have shaped and managed a robust portfolio of youth development initiatives that has impacted the lives of over a half million young people. The company's investment of US\$50 million has supported education, employability, and civic engagement programs in 68 countries. **How did it all come about?**

Above: Participants in the Dreams Workshop in Turkey display their artwork

The working relationship between a corporate funder and a nonprofit partner is at its best when built on a firm foundation of shared values. Ten years ago, when Nokia corporate social responsibility executives contacted IYF to explore the company's youth development focus, a synergy of values emerged from the start.

"Value fit is one of the reasons IYF ranked high on our list of prospective global partners," recalls Martin Sandelin, who was involved in the cooperation in the early 2000's. "IYF's core values fit with ours. They shared our interest in positive youth development and were particularly interested in preventive approaches."

From those early conversations, Nokia and IYF worked closely together in designing a series of youth development initiatives aimed at helping young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, successfully navigate the transition to adulthood.

Today, as a result, young people in Eastern Europe have fueled a wave of volunteerism in the region, formerly unemployed youth in Latin America now have the skills they need to get and keep jobs, students in the Philippines and Tanzania have improved access to science and math education through the introduction of mobile technology in the classroom, and young social entrepreneurs across the globe are exercising enhanced leadership skills.

Equipping Youth with the Skills to Succeed

From the beginning, local ownership was key to the Nokia-supported programs. IYF and its in-country partners worked closely with Nokia staff in designing locally-relevant, locally-branded programs. Employee engagement and communications strategies were also co-designed. Uniting the programs globally was an emphasis on helping youth to develop essential life skills, such as confidence, goal setting, conflict resolution, and teamwork. By developing such skills, youth benefitted from improved school performance, increased literacy, enhanced job readiness, and the ability to contribute to their communities.

While programs initially focused on engaging youth as active citizens, their focus eventually expanded to address the employment needs of youth. Throughout Latin America, for example, Nokia was able to leverage its investment through *entra21*, a youth employability program carried out by IYF with support from the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank.

Over a decade, what emerged was a vibrant mosaic of locally-driven programs spread across the globe. Today, youth in Chile and Colombia are benefiting from job training and placement services. In Brazil, youth mentors share the joy of reading with low-income children. And

in Nigeria, secondary school students address community challenges—from enhancing pedestrian safety to improving water quality.

Among the early Nokia-funded programs was the *Dreams Workshop* in

Turkey. Since 2003, the program has trained teenage volunteers to serve as teachers of their younger peers. Implemented by the Education Volunteers Foundation of Turkey (TEGV), a well-respected national NGO, the program supports both youth volunteerism and artistic self-

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—Conor Pierce, General Manager of Nokia Turkey

expression among disadvantaged children. To date, the *Dreams Workshop* has reached more than 70,000 young people in the country. It has also raised awareness of the importance of nurturing creativity among children through exhibitions of artwork displayed in subway stations and the national airport. What's more, the program has succeeded in capturing the hearts and minds of Nokia employees who volunteer their time and expertise.

"People tend to think big goals can only be achieved through large institutions," says Conor Pierce, General Manager of Nokia Turkey. "The *Dreams Workshop* demonstrates the difference committed youth make each and every day. The net effect is contagious. You want to help them succeed."

Supporting Young Social Entrepreneurs

In 2001, Nokia and IYF began exploring ways of recognizing and supporting the work of exceptional young leaders around the globe. Soon thereafter, *YouthActionNet*® was born. Originally conceived as an awards program, *YouthActionNet*® evolved into a multi-faceted global youth leadership initiative.

Each year, *YouthActionNet*® selects 20 young social entrepreneurs, ages 18 to 29, to participate in a year-long fellowship, which provides access to training, networking, and advocacy opportunities. To date, 160 young innovators from 58 countries have taken part in the global program, with an estimated 430,000 youth and community members having benefited from these young leaders' improved knowledge and skills. To further expand the program's reach, the *YouthActionNet*® web portal provides tens of thousands of youth each year with access to cutting-edge ideas and resources.

"It [the *YouthActionNet*® Fellowship] has been one of the most memorable experiences of my life," says Rama Shyam, co-founder of the Society for Awareness, Harmony, and Equal Rights (SAHER) in India. "A high point was the coming together of people who really believed in openness and creating a safe space for discussions, disagreements, and building perspectives."

Top: Bridget, Tanzania;
Middle: Mudando a
Historia, Brazil; Bottom:
Tsunami Reconstructive
Initiative, India





Through their innovative approaches, *YouthActionNet*[®] Fellows inspire young and old alike with the notion that change is possible. “The *YouthActionNet*[®] Fellows are innovators on the cutting edge of designing low-cost solutions to complex social problems,” says Leo Fitzsimon, Nokia Vice President for Industry and Government Affairs in the U.S. “The passion and commitment of these young leaders is the spark that ignites others to take action.”

Pekka Lintu, Finnish Ambassador to the United States and host of the annual *YouthActionNet*[®] awards ceremony, is equally effusive. “Whether you’re talking about the next big environmental breakthrough or the use of technology for social change, there’s a good chance it’s going to come from a young person,” he says. “*YouthActionNet*[®] supports young leaders at a critical stage in their careers—when they need relevant knowledge, resources, and networks the most.”

Nokia’s pioneering support of *YouthActionNet*[®] paved the way for other sponsors to get involved. In 2006, with support from the Sylvan/Laureate Foundation and others, the program started expanding at the national level and now supports youth leadership institutes in Australia, Brazil, Israel, Mexico, Spain, and Turkey—all modeled after the global program. Starbucks joined as a partner in 2008, creating an innovation fund to support Fellows’ projects.

Post-Disaster Responsiveness

Flexibility and adaptability have been hallmarks of the Nokia-IYF partnership, with Nokia expanding its CSR focus in response to unforeseen disasters. Such was the case on September 11, 2001 when IYF and Nokia executives, seated at a meeting in Dallas, learned of the terrorist attacks in New York City. That afternoon they conceived of the Nokia Education Fund which, to date, has provided more than 330 children of victims with college scholarships.

Again, in 2004, Nokia responded swiftly to meet the needs of survivors of the Asian tsunami. After an immediate donation of in-kind and financial support, the company began exploring how it could contribute to long-term reconstruction efforts. Needs assessments conducted in the aftermath of the disaster underscored the urgency of supporting youth, given that many had suffered interruptions in their educations and a loss of livelihood opportunities.

To help young people rebuild their lives, Nokia and IYF launched the *Tsunami Reconstruction Initiative*. Carried out in tsunami-affected areas of India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand between 2006 and 2009, the program provided over 12,400 youth with training, jobs, apprenticeships and/or loans.

With the support they received, young people created a range of enterprises—from processing cashews to bottling juices, from producing handicrafts to promoting tourism. The economic ripple effect is now being felt through the creation of jobs and business sector growth.

In India alone, 1,500 youth-led enterprises were started, with 11 percent of these businesses creating jobs for five or more employees.

In Pursuit of Mobile Solutions

In recent years, Nokia has sought to more fully integrate its innovative technologies into the company’s social programming. “If we want projects that resonate with youth, we need to recognize that technology is an important part of their everyday lives. This should not be about introducing ‘technology for technology’s sake.’ Rather, it is about increasing the relevance of projects in the eyes of young people,” says Gregory Elphinston, Director, Corporate Social Investment at Nokia.

The result has been the creative application of mobile technology in delivering youth development programs. A potent example is *Bridget*, an initiative that uses Nokia solutions to bring interactive, multimedia education programs to teachers and students in underserved areas. Launched in 2003 in the Philippines under the name *text2teach*, *Bridget* was made possible through an alliance between Nokia, IYF, the Pearson Foundation, United Nations Development Programme, and local partners. To date, more than 976,000 5th and 6th graders have benefited.

Building on this success, *Bridget* is now being implemented in Tanzania in collaboration with the Tanzania Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. Once again, Nokia and the Pearson Foundation are key partners in the effort, with IYF successfully garnering the financial support of the U.S. Agency for International Development. A key goal is integrating the approach into the education system at low cost. Since 2008, the program has reached 150 schools, training 1,020 primary school teachers and benefiting 60,540 rural and urban students.

Through forging this and other dynamic alliances, IYF and Nokia have leveraged valuable resources and expertise—expanding the reach of effective programs and integrating proven approaches into government services that serve real human needs.

The tangible benefits of Nokia’s support is perhaps best captured in the reflections of program ‘graduates.’ Said Veronika Dvorakova, a participant in the *Pripoj Se* program in the Czech Republic, “Although we were doing voluntary activities for others, I got so much in return. We learned how to deal with authorities and work as a team. And, the program prepared me for a new job as project assistant in Prague.”

Adds Adail Cano Martin, an *entra21* graduate in Colombia who now runs his own clothing business, “The program taught me that it’s possible for young people to go forward without being part of the conflict and violence around us. *Entra21* helped me develop business and IT skills and taught me that young people can achieve their dreams.” **Y**



Top: *YouthActionNet*[®] Fellows; Middle: Adail Cano Martin, *entra21*, Colombia; Bottom: *Dreams Workshop*, Turkey

With IYF, collaboration is organic.

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