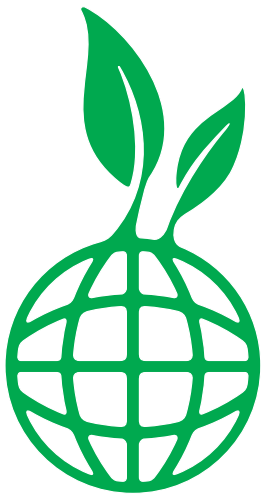


FUTURE SMILE



Meet the **GREEN** Generation



BY SHEILA KINKADE

Healing planet Earth is serious business. But that doesn't mean it can't be fun. Consider the experiences of dozens of Belgian youth engaged in Future Smile, a program that equips young people with the knowledge and skills to carry out socially and environmentally conscious projects.

In the city of Genk, young hip-hop artists produced a CD of their own songs about global warming. They packaged the CD in recycled materials and launched it at a local café serving fair-trade snacks. In addition to raising awareness, the group will donate a portion of all profits to support local environmental causes.

In Jambes, young people escorted disadvantaged adults on guided nature walks, teaching them how to identify edible plants. Afterward, they transformed what most might consider weeds into a nutritious meal.

And students at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve ushered in a new era of "green parties" on campus. Instead of drinking out of plastic cups, students now sip organic beer from biodegradable containers. They hope to prevent more than two million plastic cups from entering landfills annually.

All of these groups received support from Future Smile—through a global youth development initiative of the International Youth Foundation and Nokia. "We emphasize the importance of the 3Ps: planet, people and profit," says Kurt Peleman, Program Manager of the Foundation for Future

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Generations, the Belgian NGO charged with implementing Future Smile. “Projects need to demonstrate their environmental, social and economic benefits.”

Youth groups are chosen once a year through a competitive application process. Winners receive small grants ranging from US\$600 to US\$1,500. They also spend a weekend learning about various topics, from responsible consumption to effective team-building. The training workshop culminates in a ‘speed dating’ exercise, where young people discuss their plans in 10-minute sessions with experts in fair trade, social issues, economics and the environment.

Emanuel De Clerq, a 26-year-old biology major, applied what he learned to weave environmental awareness activities into a children’s summer camp. Now, young campers see firsthand how solar panels work and learn about the importance of recycling and healthy eating. “Belgium isn’t a very big country,” Emanuel says. “There isn’t much nature left. People are starting to be concerned and take better care of the environment.”

Adrien Lippolis, 20, an engineering student at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, agrees. With a grant from Future Smile, he and his peers integrated sustainable development concepts into an annual circus hosted on their campus. More than 2,500 people attended the event, which featured organic food served in recyclable containers and T-shirts made from organic cotton. “For us, the most important thing is that young people learn to think in systemic ways,” Kurt says. “They learn not to buy the cheapest T-shirt but the one that’s fair-trade. They think through how to reuse and recycle materials in a way that respects nature and society.” **Y**

Sheila Kinkade is Marketing and Communications Manager at the International Youth Foundation.

Learn more about Future Smile at www.futuresmile.be. For information on IYF’s partnership with Nokia, visit www.iyfnet.org or www.nokia.com/communityinvolvement.



Students at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve chop organic tomatoes to be served at their annual circus event.

ABOVE PHOTO: COURTESY OF FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Advocates for Earth

IYF's YouthActionNet®
Global Fellows
Lead the Way

Why do today's young change-makers place such a high priority on protecting the environment? How are they helping? The following stories illustrate the passion and commitment of just a few YouthActionNet® Global Fellows who work in their communities to promote a healthier, more sustainable planet.

Rachel Nampinga, 29 Kampala, Uganda

Rachel Nampinga knows climate change isn't a problem on the horizon. "It's already a reality in Africa," she says. "The evidence is here—floods, drought, famine, crop failure. We as young people cannot sit back and wait for others to act. Our future is at stake." Rachel helped establish the African Youth Initiative on Climate Change, which mobilizes young people to combat pollution and contribute to international environmental goals. She's also the founder of Ecowatch Africa, an NGO that raises awareness of the climate change threat and empowers people to live in environmentally sustainable ways. Among its activities, Ecowatch conducts advocacy campaigns and organizes Ugandan students to plant trees. Ecowatch has reached students in more than 200 schools so far. "Change starts with individuals stepping out and deciding to play a role," Rachel says.

Maritza Morales, 23 Merida, Mexico

In 2003, Maritza Morales started building the Hunab Theme Park to educate young people and adults about urgent environmental issues, as well as steps they can take to be part of the solution. The park, located on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, attracts more than 13,000 people a year. "We use games to promote the concept of taking care of nature," explains Maritza, who began working on environmental issues when she was 10. In 2007, she received funding from the World Bank to create a mobile exhibit that illustrates environmental challenges in the coastal area. Through the exhibit, young people in towns across the Yucatan learn about the biodiversity of coastal ecosystems and how to protect them.

Zablon Wagalla, 28 Nairobi, Kenya

While a university student studying agricultural science, Zablon Wagalla first learned about *Jatropha curcas*, a plant that grows in marginal soil and produces seeds that can be processed into clean energy. Working with farmers in rural areas northwest of Nairobi, Zablon encourages the cultivation of this plant to address poverty in the region while reducing greenhouse gas emissions from burning wood and charcoal. "My community has never had a cash crop," he says, "but now people are busy working toward the development of their society and are investing their energy in environmental conservation." Over the past two years, Zablon's Trees for Clean Energy project has engaged more than 950 local farmers in *Jatropha* production. He plans to reach 6,000 more in the next five years.