

Fostering Dialogue

to Break the Cycle of Intergenerational Poverty





Photo credit: Intergenerational Dialogue photographs by Stephanie Alexander Rehmann

Design: Manu Badlani

ICRW's Intergenerational Dialogue Project was made possible through collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund and the generous support of the Turner Foundation and the United Nations Foundation. For more information, please visit www.icrw.org.

Copyright © 2003 International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). All rights reserved. Sections of this document may be reproduced without express permission of but with acknowledgement to the International Center for Research on Women.

Fostering Dialogue to Break the Cycle of Intergenerational Poverty

In 2000, the Millennium Summit of the United Nations General Assembly—the largest gathering of world leaders in human history—came together to make an historic global commitment to end poverty. They stated:

“We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women, and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.”¹

The leaders went on to pledge that they would reach specific goals for reducing poverty by 2015, resulting in a set of commitments that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals.² These goals can be achieved only if there is clear understanding of the underlying causes of poverty that points the way toward policies and actions to address those causes.

There are multiple dimensions to the experience of poverty, which are described in the World Bank’s *World Development Report 2000/2001*. The report identifies not only a lack of income and assets as aspects of poverty, but also low levels of health and education, vulnerability and exposure to risk,

insufficient political and social voice, and powerlessness. In addition, the report argues that “This broader approach to deprivation, by giving a better characterization of the experience of poverty, increases our understanding of its causes. This deeper understanding brings to the fore more areas of action and policy on poverty reduction.”³

This new approach by the United Nations signals a strong shift in the way that the problem of poverty is defined and, consequently, addressed. In addition to taking a narrow focus on income, poverty issues have typically been examined with a focus on discrete groups, such as children, women, rural, or indigenous people. In contrast, a broader focus on the interconnectedness of the lives of poor mothers, fathers, and children can lead to a greater understanding of the chronic poverty that is transmitted from one generation to the next. Meeting global poverty reduction goals will therefore require a closer look at how and why children born into poor families become poor adults and then raise children who also become trapped in a life of poverty. The Intergenerational Dialogue Project described in the following pages builds on this perspective, with the goals of expanding knowledge of and solutions to the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next.

Starting with Dialogue

A joint effort by adults and youth may be the key to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. To begin to build greater understanding of the experience of poverty, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) convened a five-day event with the

theme, “Common Interest, Common Action: An Intergenerational Dialogue on Overcoming Poverty.”

Voices from the Dialogue

“Essentially, there are few programs that take into account men, women, and youth. . . in reality, there are no programs or laws that address poor people because this would imply tackling poverty in all its dimensions. What does exist are programs that focus on single aspects of poverty.”

—Cristian Acosta, 15, Uruguay

¹ Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly, “United Nations Millennium Declaration,” United Nations Document A/55/L.2. <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>.

² More information on the Millennium Development Goals can be found at www.unmillenniumproject.org or www.developmentgoals.org.

³ World Bank, “World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty” (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

The Dialogue, held from September 12-18, 2001 brought together 15 community leaders—female and male, youth and adults—from 10 countries. For five days just outside New York City, participants learned from one another through drama, role play, music, research, and discussions. Their insights were formulated into a *Call to Action*, a document that seeks to draw the attention of world leaders and policymakers to the critical importance of factors that perpetuate poverty from one generation to the next.⁴

To build awareness of the intergenerational cycle of poverty and support for necessary action, Dialogue participants elected four representatives to present the *Call to Action* at the United Nations Special Session on Children in May 2002 and to members of the United States Congress.⁵ The presenters used drama to illustrate the problem in a multidimensional and nuanced way, engaged audiences in identifying

possible solutions, and described activities currently underway to address the problem in their own communities.

Participants in the Intergenerational Dialogue concluded that efforts to reduce poverty must give greater attention to the cycle of inherited poverty. The *Call to Action* states that “Every available resource must be enlisted to stop this cycle. Women and youth represent a vast source of creativity, energy, and knowledge that has been overlooked and excluded from poverty reduction strategies. Governments, civil society, international organizations, and businesses can break the intergenerational cycle of poverty by investing in women and youth (especially girls), affirming their rights, and accepting and valuing the resources that they have to offer. Women, men, and youth must come together to find lasting solutions.”

⁴The full *Call to Action* can be found on the ICRW Web site: http://www.icrw.org/docs/IGD_Calltoaction_Spring02.pdf.

⁵The United Nations Special Session was originally scheduled for September 2001, but was rescheduled because of the attacks on the World Trade Center.

Facilitating Dialogue Between Generations

The Intergenerational Dialogue project faced the challenge of creating a process that would facilitate meaningful, shared reflection among individuals of different sexes, ages, nationalities, and cultural and educational backgrounds. Several strategies were used to meet this challenge:

1. **Participants were encouraged to gather and analyze both their own experiences and the experiences of their communities.** Before coming together in New York, each participant was required to prepare a short research paper on how the roles and responsibilities of men, women, boys, and girls in their communities contribute to or are affected by poverty. They also identified examples of government programs to overcome poverty in their communities. These collected experiences were drawn on throughout the Dialogue.
2. **Participants became acquainted and began their shared reflection *virtually*, through electronic discussions, prior to coming together in person.** The participants took part in three moderated electronic dialogues leading up to the Intergenerational Dialogue. These exchanges blended personal stories and both fun and substantive information and helped lay the groundwork for good working relationships during the Dialogue.
3. **Participants shared reflection during the Dialogue using participatory, popular education methodologies** that allowed for meaningful exchange and discussion in a relatively short period of time, built trust, and created an environment for collaboration, honest discussion, and mutual exploration.
4. **Participants took part in a skills-building session on youth-adult partnerships.** Adult and youth participants explored the nature of genuine partnerships based on mutual respect and understanding. Using simulations, they examined how traditional adult and youth roles and power relationships affect efforts to collaborate across generations. Participants also identified the specific and unique contribution of adults and youth to such a partnership.

Breaking the Cycle of Intergenerational Poverty

During their five days together, Dialogue participants identified and explored factors that perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of poverty, as well as ways of breaking the cycle. They identified four key areas that must be addressed to end the cycle of poverty, discussed in detail beginning on page 4. These key areas are:

- ▶ lack of equal opportunities for girls in education and women and youth in employment;
- ▶ the need to build intergenerational alliances within families and communities;
- ▶ inadequate sexual and reproductive health and rights options for women and youth; and
- ▶ the need to ensure a stronger role for civil society and for good governance.

Participants then carried the knowledge and experiences gained during the Dialogue back to their home communities, where they undertook activities that stimulated further dialogue among and between youth and adults. Each participant received a small grant to carry out projects designed to apply some of the insights that emerged from their participation in the Dialogue. By expanding discussions and community projects, the Dialogue participants effectively extended the advocacy networks necessary to end persistent, intergenerational poverty.

Dialogue Through Theater

The Intergenerational Dialogue incorporated the use of image and drama techniques based on the “Theater of the Oppressed” methodologies developed by Brazilian director and activist Augusto Boal. These methods provide a means of examining problems in a holistic and nuanced way that empowers participants to develop and pursue dynamic, innovative solutions. Within the context of the Dialogue, this approach provided a common ground through which young people and adults from different backgrounds could engage each other and rely more on non-verbal communication than other techniques that might have been used.

Specifically, participants used imaging exercises to explore power relations and their effects on both female and male adults and youth. They modeled images of women, men, girls, and boys in their communities and then sculpted changes they would like to see.

Working in small groups, participants organized around four key issues and developed five images or “plot points” that dramatized a real-life, personal story recounted by a group member. Each of the plot points was given a title and the images were presented by the small groups to the full group, a process that required reflection on what was observed in the images. The groups identified factors that affected the main protagonist (with particular reference to age and gender dynamics), including forces that perpetuate poverty.

Each group then filled in, or “dynamized,” their plot points to create a short play. Weaving the plot points into a short play helped participants understand and dramatize how various aspects of the issue being considered were related.

Following their presentations, participants discussed each of the plays in great depth. Building on that discussion, they then brainstormed ideas for solving the problems surrounding intergenerational poverty, focusing on the household, the community, and the national level. Each discussion led to a wealth of ideas; participants themselves were surprised at the quality and quantity of what flowed from the dramas.



Dialogue participants act out family dynamics that lead to violence

1. Create Equal Opportunities in Employment and Education

“...girls’ opportunities in the labor market are limited to jobs within the informal sector or to those jobs that are linked to their reproductive roles. This arises partly because in this environment, the education of girls is perceived to yield low returns compared to allowing them to remain at home helping out in the family or marrying early...Girls operating in the informal sector are operating in a risky environment; often they fall prey to men who, covertly or overtly, coerce them into sex. Since the majority of the girls come from disadvantaged backgrounds, the inducement of money in exchange for sex is usually an attractive option. In our interviews we learned that every taxi driver has a girlfriend operating in the informal sector. Some of the girls...get involved for the simple reason of getting a lift from the taxi drivers.”

—Richard Mkandawire, 53,
South Africa

Traditional views of the proper role of women—who are seen primarily as wives and mothers—result in limitations on the educational opportunities for girls relative to those for boys. In turn, limits on education hamper income-earning capacity and increase the vulnerability of young women. Dialogue participants

from some countries reported that even in those situations where women and youth have greater access to education, they are often unable to secure a job because employment opportunities are so limited, their education does not prepare them for the job market, or they succumb to expectations that women should not work outside the home. Unmet education and employment needs are much more pronounced in rural areas.

“Argentina is characterized by a high literacy rate, but the quality of education is slowly deteriorating, particularly in the schools attended by the poorest. This implies that poorer youth will face increased challenges as they prepare to enter the formal labor market.”

—Blas Fernandez, 27,
Argentina

From Dialogue to Action

More than half of the Dialogue participants used their small grants to design and carry out projects that focused on providing training in enterprise development or enhancing skills to improve the employability of women and youth. The projects involved marginalized youth, especially school drop-outs, or were carried out in underserved low-income or rural areas. For example, *functional literacy and numeracy training* was offered to out-of-school youth from poor families in a rural area of Mauritius, while facilities were improved for a *vocational school* in Kenya that teaches catering skills to school drop-outs.

In Colombia, youth with a history of involvement in drug abuse and violence were organized into *Youth Business Circles*, which involved 135 youth who received business management training. A smaller group then went on to launch four small enterprises. These enterprises included a motorcycle repair shop, a landscape nursery and environmental education center, an egg distribution business, and a capoeira school.⁶

⁶Capoeira is a Brazilian martial art

Call to Action

To ensure equal opportunities for women and youth in education and employment:

- ▶ Eliminate discrimination against women and youth and ensure opportunities for education, training, and employment.
- ▶ Create employment opportunities for women and youth.
- ▶ Pass and enforce legislation giving women and girls property ownership rights.
- ▶ Improve access of women and youth to microcredit.
- ▶ Provide free, quality, gender-sensitive education.

In Argentina, the Center for Women’s Studies (CEM) established a Web site that provides user-friendly program resources based on the initiative “*Piloteando Futuros (Piloting Futures)*.”⁷ This initiative supports innovative youth training programs to increase employability, citizen participation, and leadership among 14 organizations in the Southern Cone countries. CEM is conducting outreach to public school teachers, encouraging them to use the resources found on the Web site and offering technical assistance to organizations using the materials in their programs.

A project in Trinidad and Tobago brought together two organizations to provide *human resource management and business development training* to support the establishment of an employment service within one of the organizations, *Women Off Welfare*. Members of the other organization, Women’s Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD), are high school students paired with mentors who are professional women. In addition to training

⁷ See <http://www.juventudcem.org>.

22 women, the collaboration between the two organizations has led to the establishment of relationships among women across generations and classes. This effort has in turn contributed to wider efforts involving consultations among more than 100 women to mobilize for political action on issues in Trinidad that affect women’s lives.

Training in basic computer skills was provided to young women in a rural village in Lebanon, where vocational training options are quite limited. The project assisted the local Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)—which offers traditional skills training in language, typing, sewing, and weaving—to purchase computers and train three young women to serve as trainers for ten older women. The computer skills that these women gained enhanced their employability, particularly in sectors traditionally dominated by men. The training also enabled women in this rural area to participate in the “information revolution,” which had otherwise passed them by.

2. Build Intergenerational Alliances Within Families and Communities

The family is the arena in which cultural expectations about the roles of women, men, boys, and girls are introduced, taught, and reinforced. Dialogue participants agreed that these expectations narrow the choices and opportunities that are available to women and girls. Expectations about particular roles result in work burdens that cannot be carried out by only one person. In order to complete their work, women rely on their daughters, often withdrawing them from school to help at home. The constraints that are created by such expectations therefore hinder women’s efforts to provide for the health and welfare of their families.

“All of us believe in the ancient traditions and it is because of these that working women are not accepted culturally. Some members of my community would rather accept poverty than allow their women to work.”

—Kanchan Kumari Jha, 15,
India

“Women often encounter great obstacles in participation because society dictates that women alone should only do household chores. Women are placed in boxes of cultural expectations and are only allowed to work within the domestic sphere by feeding their kids, doing home chores, and the like.”

—Anchalee Phonkling, 40,
Thailand

The family also transmits society’s expectations about the proper role and behavior of youth. In many countries, the expectation is that young people will obey the authority of adults and will not seek to make independent decisions.

“Adolescence is a critical period in the span of life. Adolescence, the transition between childhood and adulthood, is a stressful period of life characterized by many needs and discernible physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioral changes that place specific demands on the individual. If due attention and importance is accorded to this group, it will nurture more confident, healthy, and responsible adults. Adolescents constitute over one-fifth of the entire population, but in India, the nutritional, educational, health, guidance, and counseling needs of adolescents have not been given due importance.”

—Anjali Agarwal, 38,
India

Families often need support to maintain a healthy, safe home environment. Poverty creates additional sources of tension and stress for families, but support services often don't exist for poor families. Such services can provide information, help improve communications, and provide non-violent ways of resolving conflicts within the family.

“We had a focused group discussion with the female members of the family only, and later on with the whole family. Indeed it was appreciated that when they as parents felt the need to talk to their children on these [sex education] issues, they really

didn't know how to start...The mother of this family was worried that unless the family [living] standards improved, there is no way her children would go to school. Since she has more female children than male, she was certain they would turn to 'other' ways of looking for money. 'If my children knew the dangers maybe they would cope with me here even if we don't have food to eat.'”

—Catherine Njoki Kamau, 22,
Kenya

“Cultural practices hampering the progress and development of girls and women in the community should be addressed and if possible done away with. Such practices include FGM [female genital mutilation], early forced marriages for schoolgirls, polygamy, and others. These practices not only deny women access to progress and development, but also increase their vulnerability to sexual and reproductive health problems, including HIV/AIDS.”

—Sammy Oinyiaku, 24,
Kenya

Partnerships between youth and adults can be a means of breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Genuine partnerships require adult willingness to listen to youth and to share power. Effective partnerships can help youth to become better problem-solvers, strengthen their sense of identity,

Call to Action

To strengthen family life and build intergenerational alliances:

- ▶ Establish local community resource and training centers to provide a comprehensive range of family support services, including sex education and information about pregnancy prevention; support to keep young people in school and training for those who have left school; and awareness-raising on the rights of women and youth, ways to end or transform harmful cultural practices, and alternatives to domestic violence.
- ▶ Examine and reflect on the consequences of prevailing expectations of the proper roles for men, women, girls, and boys.
- ▶ Involve youth and adults in developing a curriculum to teach basic life skills, such as improving communication, developing self-esteem, taking responsibility, making decisions, and solving problems.
- ▶ Foster partnerships between youth and adults.
- ▶ Develop life skills and create or strengthen networks for mutual care, support, exchange, interaction, and reflection.

and become leaders. For adults, partnerships can provide inspiration and motivation, along with new ideas and fresh perspectives.

From Dialogue to Action

Several Dialogue participants launched projects to strengthen support for families and nurture positive intergenerational relations. For example, a *Youth Counseling Centre* was established in Madhya Pradesh, India. As part of the preparations for starting the Centre, meetings were held with principals, teachers, and parents in which the developmental needs of adolescents—a concept unfamiliar to most—were discussed. The Centre began working with eight schools to conduct group sessions in the classroom that involved more than 600 students, provided individual counseling to nearly 70 students, and made referrals to specialists. Counseling was also provided to 25 parents to help them support their adolescent daughters or sons. Subsequently, two schools made a commitment to establish counseling centers at their schools.

Another Indian Dialogue participant organized a *Bal Manch (Children's Forum)* as a way to enable young people in her community to discuss their concerns. The young people and women from the community worked together to establish a community library. With help from a local non-governmental organization, the participant also organized a Mother-Daughter Family Life Education workshop to discuss adolescent needs, health, hygiene, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The mothers and

daughters are working together to reach out to other women in the community on these issues.

In Vietnam, a young Dialogue participant expanded intergenerational collaboration by working with several of his friends and with officials in a primary school in a rural village to start a *school library*. They surveyed students to learn their reading preferences, which included an interest in travel literature and stories about other places in the world. Once the library was established, they also set up an art gallery, which later exhibited 50 works of student art (selected from 600 submissions) on the theme of opposing drug abuse.

An *information access center* was established in a rural Maasai community in Kenya. Equipped with telephone, fax, Internet, and e-mail services, the center was made available to women and youth in the community. Training on information processing was provided and forums of youth and adults, with representatives of more than 20 organizations, were held to share the information gained through the newly available technology. Sharing the information provided an opportunity for young people and adults to learn more about the development activities in which each group was involved. The information sparked new ideas for training opportunities, employment, small business development, and other kinds of rural development. It also led to the establishment of new youth groups and of networking and collaboration among existing community groups.

3. Improve Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

A lack of information and services on sexual and reproductive health—especially in rural and low-income areas—is an important contributing factor in the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Teenage pregnancy limits a young woman's access to education and training and, in turn, improved economic opportunities. Teen pregnancy threatens the mother's health and leads to infant health problems that translate into disadvantages, which often start before birth but can last a lifetime.

The inability to plan a family results in large families in places where the means to support many children are not available. In addition, repeated pregnancies can lead to disabling health problems for women and reduce their ability to provide for their families.

For adults and youth, the consequences of STDs have grown more severe because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. STDs increase the risk of HIV infection, and the fastest growing rate of infection for HIV is currently among those who are 15–24.

“The increase in teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections—including HIV/AIDS—directly undermines the few opportunities for study and work that young people have. Parts of Bogotá, such as the area of Ciudad Bolívar, where there is little access to economic resources and even fewer possibilities for education, demonstrate the need to reach young people with clear and timely information about their sexual and reproductive rights.”

—Leidy Marcela Gomez, 19,
Colombia

From Dialogue to Action

To provide essential information to young people, a project in Colombia organized *workshops and discussions on sexual and reproductive health and rights* for persons 13–19 years of age from a low-income community. Before launching the workshops, organizers met with adults in the community to explain their work and gain their support. The workshops, which were lively and interactive, were led by peers and focused on self-esteem, life skills, pregnancy prevention, sexual violence, and HIV/AIDS and other STDs.

An integrated income-generating and reproductive health project was carried out in Kenya. A Dialogue

Call to Action

To promote health and protect rights:

- ▶ Provide free and easily accessible contraception.
- ▶ Provide information about sexual and reproductive health and rights that is understandable to all citizens, regardless of their literacy level, age, or sex, and that reaches all citizens, regardless of their place of residence.
- ▶ Provide free medication, care, and support, including counseling, to persons living with HIV/AIDS, and endorse the predominance of the right to health care over intellectual property rights.
- ▶ Provide an inclusive and compulsory curriculum of sex education, including information about gender-based violence.

participant worked with a family to develop a poultry farming microenterprise. At the same time, she provided information and facilitated family discussions on reproductive health concerns, especially teenage pregnancies, teen prostitution, and HIV/AIDS. One outcome generated by this effort is that a daughter later became a volunteer peer counselor on teen pregnancy, while a mother now talks about these issues with other women in her church.

4. Ensure Good Governance and Stronger Civil Society

The actions of governments and civil society are critically important to overcoming poverty. Governments need to recognize the dynamics created by society’s different expectations of men and women, and take those into account when developing and implementing policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty. Governments should strive for representation that more closely reflects the sex and age balance of society. Civil society organizations need to become stronger and better able to identify problems, formulate solutions, mobilize resources, and work in partnership with governments.

“More and more women are now being entrusted with more responsibilities and opportunities to take part in community activities and projects beyond the domestic sphere. In addition to these, some more open-minded hill tribe members even start encouraging political participation of women in their communities. An example would be women’s participation in environmental management and general upkeep of the community.”

—Anchalee Phonkling, 40,
Thailand

“Gender and age discrimination are mutually reinforced. Strategies should therefore generate conditions that establish alliances between male and female youth so that together they can work on changes. In this light, I believe it is fundamental to link processes for strengthening citizenship to advocacy for sexual and reproductive rights.”

—Carmen Beramendi, 51,
Uruguay

From Dialogue to Action

Building the capacity of organizations to recognize and address the specific needs and opportunities of women is an important way to strengthen civil society. The Thai Dialogue participant therefore used her small grant to help her organization, Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture Thailand (IMPECT), *evaluate and distill lessons from the integration of gender analysis* into the organization’s work.⁸ IMPECT works with six tribal and indigenous networks from mountain communities in Northern Thailand that are struggling to protect their livelihoods and lifestyles from encroachment by outside influences. The communities are isolated, and the indigenous and tribal women lack access to

information that would help them understand the forces that undermine their livelihoods, such as government prohibitions on traditional food gathering.

Integration of gender perspectives ensures that IMPECT will support women’s efforts to address their own needs. As a result of this effort, all tribal networks have developed action plans related to women’s concerns and have organized women’s forums as an ongoing means by which women can identify and advocate for their interests and needs. Youth are involved in all steps taken throughout the initiative.

The youth and adult Dialogue participants from Uruguay teamed up to offer *youth workshops on citizenship*. The youth, aged 12–24, identified a problem in their community with which they were particularly concerned. Garbage had been filling up the open spaces, yet the community seemed unaware that this was making it difficult for young people to gather for recreation. To solve the problem, the group learned about recycling and set about to recycle the garbage from these open spaces. To raise community awareness of the problem, the young people staged a springtime parade, wearing costumes that they had made from recycled garbage. The activities involved

⁸ Gender analysis is a specific kind of social analysis. It focuses on the social, economic, and political differences between men and women to ensure that the potential differential gender-based impacts of policies, programs, and legislation are elucidated and that existing and proposed policies have the intended results for both women and men.

Call to Action

To foster effective and accountable government policies and programs:

- ▶ Formulate poverty policies and programs with a clear understanding of the relevance and impact of the roles each culture and society assigns men, women, boys, and girls.
- ▶ Establish sex-disaggregated targets for poverty policies and programs; formulate and use indicators that measure the impact of poverty policies and programs on men, women, boys, and girls; and regularly collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data.
- ▶ Ensure that representation throughout government—both elected and administrative—reflects the age and sex distribution of the larger society.
- ▶ Mobilize to bring about more participatory government and more diverse representation among government officials.
- ▶ Require more participatory political processes and more diverse representation as a condition of grants and loans by donors to governments.
- ▶ Strengthen civil society by providing resources for poverty programs designed and run by independent civil society organizations and by building alliances between representatives in government and civil society and across national boundaries.

both young men and women, despite the fact that in Uruguay such public activities traditionally involve only young men.

One of the Dialogue participants serves as the co-chair of the Youth Caucus of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). She used her small grant to bring another Dialogue participant from Kenya to participate in the *intergenerational workshop at the 46th session of the CSW*. The workshop, entitled, “Change or Status

Quo: The Role of Older Players,” was jointly organized by the Youth Caucus, the Subcommittee on Older Women, and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women. The workshop, which was lively and well-attended, succeeded in launching the idea of multigenerational work among those organizations that participate in the work of the CSW. It also served to remind non-governmental organizations of the importance of involving young women and men in education and advocacy work at the United Nations.

Insights from the Field

The small grants program provided an opportunity to put into practice some of the insights gained from participation in the Intergenerational Dialogue. The following review of the supported projects reveals some commonalities that exist across continents.

Integrated Programs

Dialogue participants found that an integrated response to the multiple dimensions of the problems they were addressing was necessary to ensure effectiveness. Enterprise development and business training in Colombia, for example, was accompanied by a focus on human development, particularly in projects that help young people to develop self-esteem and explore their leadership capabilities. The poultry microenterprise in Kenya was accompanied by support for family communication and information on reproductive and sexual health.

“A holistic women-focused development program is the only sure option for women’s development. Such a program should encompass access to capital and credit, information on sexual and reproductive health, education, collaboration, and networking. Such a program should be implemented and managed by local women from the particular target community.”

—Sammy Oinyiaku, 24,
Kenya

Information Technology and Artistic Expression

Training in the use of computers and information processing proved to be a particularly effective way of engaging youth in a number of the projects. In Mauritius, participation by out-of-school youth in functional literacy and numeracy training was greatly enhanced by simultaneously providing an opportunity to learn to use computers. Providing women and youth in rural areas with access to information and communications technology was the focus of projects in Kenya and Lebanon. In organizing these projects, the participants acted on their conviction that people in rural areas deserve to have access to the opportunities afforded by the information revolution.

Other projects incorporated forms of artistic expression, which appears to be an important means of engaging young people. Whether it involved constructing parade costumes from recycled materials in Uruguay or organizing a student art competition in Vietnam, the arts provided an important opportunity for intergenerational communication and dialogue.

Networking and Collective Action

Creating connections and collaborations with other individuals and organizations was a key feature of a

number of the projects. Young people in Kenya came together to exchange information that they had gleaned from the Internet. The information and discussions that this process sparked resulted in the generation of ideas for action, some of which were later pursued collaboratively. In Colombia and Trinidad, organizations representing individuals from different economic classes came together through projects to jointly develop community-oriented activities. In each case, they expressed great satisfaction in bridging the economic differences that typically prevented them from interacting.

Leadership and Leveraging Resources

Each of the participants achieved significant results with only limited resources. Small though they were, the available resources nonetheless helped youth participants to engage adults in their community in a serious way and to enlist their support for their projects. In a number of cases, the small grants provided through the Dialogue functioned as seed money, enabling participants to raise additional funds from other sources. This suggests that even small funds can produce results when coupled with leadership, vision, and commitment.

Conclusions

The Intergenerational Dialogue on Overcoming Poverty helped to create greater awareness about the factors that contribute to the perpetuation of poverty from one generation to the next. ICRW is confident that the dynamic leaders who participated will continue to build on the insights and experience that

they gained during the Dialogue and in the projects that they subsequently carried out in their communities. In turn, they will be better equipped to identify and promote program and policy interventions needed to break the cycle of poverty.



Portraying a community member without access to decision making

Participant List

Africa

Catherine Njoki Kamau, 22, from Nairobi, Kenya, is a youth advocate for International Planned Parenthood Federation, Family Planning Association of Kenya, and the Kenya Association for the Promotion of Adolescent Health.

Sammy Oinyiaku, 24, from Kajiado, Kenya, started the organization Maasai AIDS Prevention Network (MAPNet) and is a youth leader in rural areas.

Mahendranath Busgopaul, 50, from Curepipe, Mauritius, is the secretary general of Halley Movement, a non-governmental organization working to improve the welfare of children and families in the Indian Ocean region. He leads an intergenerational dialogue throughout the region's islands and has worked with youth groups in Mauritius.

Richard Mkandawire, 53, from Louis Trichardt, South Africa, is the director for academic programs, research, and outreach at the Centre for Youth Studies at the University of Venda and is a youth policy advocate and researcher.

Dinah Kivuti, 63, from Embu, Kenya, is the director of the Kamuthuago Christian Women's Group. She has started many income-generating initiatives, including a catering school for women and girls, and attended meetings for the five-year follow up to the World Conference on Women (Beijing plus five).

Asia

Anjali Agarwal, 38, from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India, is the project director for Better Life Options, a program for girls and young women that is part of the non-governmental organization *Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Sangh* (BGMS).

Kanchan Kumari Jha, 15, from New Delhi, India, is a founding member of the Children's Parliament (*Bal Panchayat*) in her community and has represented the non-governmental organization Community Aid and Sponsorship Program (CASP) at various national youth camps.

Xuan Linh Le, 16, from Hanoi, Vietnam, attends Hanoi Amsterdam High School and is active in the Youth Coordination Center International, Asian Youth Network, Youth Workshop Asia, and Save the Children.

Anchalee Phonkling, 40, from Chiang Mai, Thailand, is a gender section supervisor for Intermountain People's Education Culture and Tradition (IMPECT), which seeks to revitalize and apply indigenous and tribal knowledge in all areas of development.

Europe and Australia

Mirjana Arsic,* 19, from Belgrade, Yugoslavia, is the education department coordinator at the Youth of Yugoslav Association against AIDS (Youth for JAZAS).

Franziska Brantner, 22, from Freiburg, Germany, is vice president of the Youth Caucus of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). She initiated the Youth Parliament in Freiburg and has worked with youth environmental management in Germany, France, and Israel.

Georgia Heath, 18, from Salisbury, South Australia, is currently a student at the University of Adelaide and is also the youth governor for the South Australia youth government.

Grace Kyriakos, 29, from Beirut, Lebanon, started out as a youth volunteer coordinator for the National YWCA of Lebanon and is now program coordinator for the organization. She was also involved in the World Youth Forum of the United Nations, representing World YWCA.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Cristian Acosta, 16, from Montevideo, Uruguay, is part of the organization *Mujer Ahora* (Woman of Today). A high school student, he has initiated many activities, including a sports club in collaboration with his mother.

Carmen Beramendi, 51, from Montevideo, Uruguay, works with the organization *Mujer Ahora* (Woman of Today) and with young people in grassroots and urban settings. Her interests include gender issues, information technology, and domestic violence.

Blas Fernandez, 27, from Buenos Aires, Argentina, works with the *Centro de Estudios de la Mujer* (Center for Women's Studies) and has worked in economic development, education, and social programs in grassroots and urban settings.

Leidy Marcela Gomez,* 19, from Colombia, is the national coordinator for youth at the family planning organization Profamilia and attended meetings for the five-year follow up to the World Conference on Women (Beijing plus five) and the United Nations Special Session on Children PrepCom.

Folade Mutota,* 41, from San Juan, Trinidad and Tobago, is a founding member and Coordinator of Project Affairs at the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD), a national non-governmental organization that prepares young women for leadership roles.

Gustavo Albert Rios Cardona,* 26, from Medellin, Colombia, is the facilitator for the organization *Grupo Fenix Confama*, as well as a youth mentor and activist.

* Several participants were prevented from attending the main Dialogue meeting in New York because of transportation disruptions resulting from the events of September 11. They otherwise have been active participants in the activities that preceded and have followed the Dialogue.



International Center for Research on Women

1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

Suite 302

Washington, DC 20036, U.S.A.

Tel: (202) 797-0007

Fax: (202) 797-0020

e-mail: info@icrw.org

<http://www.icrw.org>

India Office:

Number 42, 1st Floor

Golf Links

New Delhi 110003

Tel: 91 11 24654216

Fax: 91 11 24654217

e-mail: info@icrwindia.org