



"We believe in the possibilities that will emerge when combining the power of technology with rising social entrepreneurs and that is why we have chosen to invest in supporting the ideas of young people with world-changing aspirations."

— Akhtar Badshah, Senior Director,
Global Community Affairs, Microsoft

Sprout Stories



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WELCOME

Young people are faced with the greatest question of all: How can I create a better world? Many generation have inherited the challenge of improving society, but the newest generations have seen this challenge transform into greater, wider, interconnected webs, that impact every citizen in every community around the world. These generations have risen to the challenge and they are harnessing the power of technology to better the world around them.

Microsoft YouthSpark and TakingITGlobal bring together young social innovators around the world to be a part of a global community; a community where ideas, intentions and drive are what really matter A community where companies and young people work together to create positive change.

Through TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course, supported by Microsoft YouthSpark, youth collaborate, inspire and support each other while using technology to make a difference in their communities. With this book, we are pleased to introduce you to a few of the young people who have taken the Sprout e-course to enhance their skills as social entrepreneurs and received seed funding, mentorship and support to transform their ideas into action. We hope they inspire you the way they have inspired our team.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Corriero

Executive Director,
Co-Founder,
TakingITGlobal



Akhtar Badshah

Senior Director,
Global Community
Affairs, Microsoft



We are social innovators.
Here are our stories.

CARLOS ROJAS REYES

The ImaginARTE Project: Art as Cultural Exchange, Art for Change

Age: 22 Country: Peru

Microsoft YouthSpark is proud to support TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course as part of their global effort to empower youth to imagine and realize their full potential. Through this course, youth collaborate, inspire and support each other while using technology to make a difference in their communities. The Sprout global community of young social innovators benefits uniquely from Microsoft's expertise as a leading technology company since 1975 and TakingITGlobal's experience facilitating online communities for youth worldwide since 1999.

ImaginARTE is a set of school-based arts workshops for youth aged 10 to 16, with visiting artists from other countries and regions acting as facilitators. A key component of ImaginARTE is that artist/facilitators travel from other nations, a cultural exchange that benefits both participants and facilitators. Founder Carlos Rojas Reyes explains:

"I think this will make an impact not just for the art students but also the volunteers. They come here not only to teach art, but they come to Peru to learn about our culture and learn from the students too. So this culture exchange makes the project much more interesting."

Facilitators are being recruited through AIESEC, a student-run international organization that promotes the exchange of volunteers around the world. With more than 80,000 members in 113 countries, AIESEC is the world's largest student-run organization. Rojas Reyes, who is also involved in AIESEC, believes AIESEC has been key in recruitment, due to its unique effectiveness in global recruitment for volunteers.

In the courses, ImaginARTE youth explore art as a method of expression for exploring identity, and also for finding a way for getting the message out about what is going on in their communities and regions, in a way that only art can do.

"Art is not the goal, it's a mirror," explains Rojas Reyes. "The goal is a way to develop skills in critical thinking, being more expressive, and the relationship with your environment. Art is the way to get these skills."

Rojas Reyes, who is currently finishing his informatics engineering degree, is involved with several other Microsoft YouthSpark initiatives, including Imagine Cup, Microsoft Students partners and Dream Spark. He credits these programs will helping him to get the project off the ground.

The Microsoft YouthSpark event and Sprout gave Carlos the "motivation to start the project, not just on paper and on a plan, but run it in real life the project," he says.

After receiving initial funds during Sprout, Rojas Reyes' project is currently in the funding process and it is on Microsoft YouthSpark on Global Giving, a crowd-funding site.



Since attending the Microsoft YouthSpark event, he has been active online as a mentor and through various exchanges that have strengthened his and other projects: "The online community helped me make a commitment with my project. I think the online community is great for being engaged with other members to stay on top of our project and ideas. It's very easy to give up if you don't have someone tracking your progress... [This program] motivates you and keeps you going."

ImaginARTE keeps going. Its pilot phase will be finished by the end of 2013 and launched in Lima, Peru.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.globalgiving.org/microprojects/imaginarte/>

IVONNE CHAVEZ

The E-ecological App: Empowering Citizens to Protect The Rainforest

Age: 24 Country: Costa Rica

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A 24-year old Costa Rican has developed a smartphone app that allows visitors and residents of rainforest areas to report natural events or illegal activities that threaten the environment. Users can also track species sighted and changes in the habitat, as well

as accessing a database to learn more about the areas.

Costa Rica faces numerous threats from illegal logging, poaching, burning and other activities in areas that are often

distant from villages and ranger stations. As the government has cut the number of park guards and rangers across the country, responsibility for reporting poaching and illegal logging has fallen increasingly upon the citizens and visitors of Costa Rica. It is a day-to-day struggle to save indigenous species from poachers; for example, the jaguar population in the Corcovado National Park has dropped from 100-150 in 2000 to just 30-40 this year. In some areas, some native species have disappeared and must be reintroduced.

The app, which will launch in 2014, is called E-ecological and was developed by a team led by Ivonne Chavez, a computer engineer and Microsoft Student Partner from San Jose, Costa Rica. The app is dynamic and the technology could be applied in high-risk regions throughout the world. It uses Microsoft Visual Studio, Bing Maps, and MS Translator among other software, with connectivity to social networks like Facebook and Twitter.

Complaints from the general public can be made via email, with the ability to attach photos or other evidence of the reports. The app then sorts the report type and redirects the complaint to the appropriate agency. Chavez's team is working closely with Ranger Groups from Costa Rican Conservation Areas and governmental authorities as they enter the final stages of development.

In addition to reporting illegal activity, the app is also useful for reporting and monitoring natural disasters, such as fires, which can spread quickly if not detected by remote ranger stations. Chavez notes: "We cannot prevent natural disasters, but we can help to localize them using this technology."

The idea for E-ecological was presented by Chavez at a Microsoft YouthSpark event, which she attended in Mexico City last year. Through

it, Chavez had the opportunity to develop and share her idea with young people from across Latin America, as well as mentors from TakingITGlobal and Microsoft.

"Each of us had opinions, experiences, ideas and ways of being different," says Chavez. "I think that was the spark for each of us. That entrepreneurship and desire to change the world. We learned business, marketing, elevator pitches and how to use our technical knowledge to innovate for good."

Chavez then enrolled in a Sprout e-course by TakingITGlobal. Through that course, "I learned more deeply about how to market the project, how to organize, how to stay motivated in the project. I also learned how to get sponsors, and steps for how to get help."

Through the social networks that developed out of Microsoft YouthSpark and Sprout, Chavez and her team have connected with like-minded young developers to exchange ideas and refer one another to useful resources and contacts. Because everyone is working towards the same goal (protecting the environment), they are not hindered by any of the proprietary competitiveness that can prevent the free flow of ideas in other types of entrepreneurship.

As the project reaches completion, Chavez continues to be in touch with other Sprout e-course participants, whom she describes as family. "I love that we can share everything about our projects."

For more information about E-Cological, please visit:

<http://www.projectpage.info/e-cologic>



OMAR RABIE

Campaign for Mass Transit Launching in Cairo:
Sprout Played a Crucial Role in Project

Age: 21 Country: Cairo, Egypt

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Omar Rabie, a recent law school graduate living in Cairo, had an idea; like most great ideas, it evolved as he shared it with other social innovators. This growth process was essential to the success of the project, which has received wide support. Now, it is preparing to launch in September.

Called Kefaya Za7ma ("Not Crowded"), it is a series of videos promoting mass transit in one of the world's most congested cities, Cairo. While Cairo is designed to accommodate 500,000 cars, there are more than 4 million cars on its streets, and this number is increasing by 10% annually. In Cairo, 30% of all pollution is from car emissions, and it is a health and social issue that impacts every city dweller.

The idea was developed when Rabie attended a Microsoft YouthSpark event in Cairo and participated in TakingITGlobal's Sprout

e-course. Through networking, learning and sharing ideas, his project changed from the original idea, called 'AutoPeace' (a bus which provided services to its riders such as free WiFi, coffee, a library and solar cell mobile phone chargers) to a re-branded 'Pro-Bus', and then the video campaign.

For the video campaign, Rabie is partnering with an environmental group, Green Arm, which has matched his funds.

It was after participating in the Sprout E-Course that Rabie realized the funding challenge for the original 'Auto Peace' was too great at the present time, and reformulated his idea for the partnered campaign with Green Arm.

The Sprout e-course was instrumental in Rabie learning "to tackle things that I hadn't thought about before, like how to analyze



stakeholders, how to make a marketing pitch, how to do lots of things concerning your project, how to make a budget and financial plan."

"It also allowed me to reformulate the project idea; to tackle the main needs, to be more focused, to specify my target segment."

In one Kefaya Za7ma videos, viewers are asked to imagine what would happen if one parking space were removed. What other public space uses could it be used for? Could city dwellers manage with one less parking space, or more? Greenspace and playgrounds are featured, and the video also highlights international research about the health and community benefits of pedestrianization.

The five videos are themed around: space and social justice, air pollution, the economy, health, and public transportation and carpooling. They will be released over a

staggered time frame to keep public interest in the campaign and convey information on all aspects of the issue of mass transit in the city. Rabie is continuing to work on Pro-Bus as well, and hopes to meet funding goals and launch a version of the project in the future.

For more information on the projects, please visit:

<http://greenarm.org/> and <http://www.projectpage.info/auto-peace>

RAMSES LOZANO RUEDES

The Solidariza-T Project: Building “A Culture of Blood Donation” Through A Rewards Incentive App

Age: 21 Country: Mexico

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How do you save a life? Sometimes, with an app. A 21-year-old computer technology engineer has found a way to save countless lives using nothing more than a simple phone app and his own ingenuity.

Solidariza-T is a points-based rewards system to encourage blood donation, providing donors with discounts in restaurants, bookstores, cafes, and cinemas. The project's goal is to raise the blood donation index in cultures where there are fears or taboos around giving blood. It is launching first in Morelos, Mexico, where its founder, Ramses Lozano Rueda, is from.

The need for blood is far greater than the rate of donation; in fact, hundreds of people die every day waiting for blood transfusions. In Mexico, only 3% of the population donate blood (and 97% of that is their own medical necessity). Lozano Ruedes' team is seeking to change that, and ultimately foster a culture of blood donation in Mexico.

“It all started with a real situation when a family friend was going to go through surgery and she needed a blood donor. It was really complicated to find them. The idea came out of that moment, why don't we do a project to try

and help the blood banks to get the resources to get the blood donations?”

Lozano Ruedes developed the project with a team for Microsoft's Imagine Cup competition, and used resources and information gathered though their involvement in Microsoft YouthSpark.

A model has been completed and the app will be ready to launch at the end of the year. The team first recruited businesses to donate rewards points by asking family and friends who owned their own companies. They were then able to leverage their success to recruit other businesses. Funding for beta testing and launch were raised through fund raising events and crowdfunding, as well as through a seed funding competition through Sprout.

They have partnered with the Blood Transfusion Centre in Morelos and are now approaching the Red Cross and other organizations together with the help of the government Health Secretary, a key partnership.

“It was hard to establish that relationship but it was all possible because of all the work I did beforehand, which involved the Sprout

e-course. The web page I developed for the course and having all that worked organized in a formal way was so important. We already had a model of the project and a strong idea of the business model but the Sprout e-course made me realize that it was not as strong as we thought -- and that we found we could improve a lot of things. It pushed me forward and helped me present my project to my partners and important people.”

Lozano Ruedes also credits his mentor at Microsoft and the YouthSpark event he attended for helping him to build a community of other social innovators that have given his team the essential creative support and feedback essential for making the project a reality.

“My expectation of the [Microsoft YouthSpark] event was a lot different than what actually took place. I expected there to be a lot of talks and that type of thing. But when I realized we were all there, as people of Latin America, to propose ideas and actually trying to develop them into real projects, that was actually one of the greatest experiences I have ever had.”



The Solidariza-T team wants ultimately expand the project throughout Mexico, where patients are often turned away from surgeries at public hospitals if they are unable to provide their own donors. “When you have this kind of problem, sometimes you have to buy blood, or find another inhumane way of getting the blood,” Lozano Ruedes explains. Once the project is up and running, the team will follow up on its success with blood banks and patients, and use this data to market Solidariza-T to more businesses and regions.

What is Lozano Ruedes' timeline for expanding throughout Mexico? Given the need and the reproducibility of the app, it will be “as fast as we can.”

Check out Solidariza-T on Global Giving with this link:

<http://www.globalgiving.org/microprojects/solidariza-t/>

CHUKA PATRICK EKWEOGWU

The “Free X” Project: Empowering Dubai Women to Find Employment After Incarceration

Age: 31 **Country:** Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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The “Free X” project takes on the many issues facing Dubai women prisoners when they are released. With a lack of resettlement services and job training for women, the result is often poverty and an increased likelihood to re-offend. One reason women may end up in prison in Dubai is debt (within the UAE, debtor's prison is a legal institution); in addition, financial difficulties may lead a woman to enter the underground economy and, as a result, the criminal justice system. The broader society's disregard for ex-convict women makes it difficult for women to re-integrate, and without job skills it is very difficult to gain financial independence and thus break the cycle.

Free X uses volunteers to teach female inmates job skills to help them to re-enter the work force, as well as working with institutions to create a support network for resettlement. It is designed as a 3 month training program to develop literacy, public speaking and computer skills towards employability and self-reliance as they exit the criminal justice system.

Project founder Chuka Patrick Ekweogwu, originally from Nigeria, is studying for his M.Sc in Project Management in Dubai. He has a Bachelor's degree in Engineering, is a coordinator at a breast cancer foundation and a youth program coordinator for the World Safety Commission in Nigeria.

Free X was first developed at a Microsoft YouthSpark event by Ekweogwu and 3 others. When members of his original team left to pursue other interests, Ekweogwu used the YouthSpark network and his own network to build a new team of 5, 4 of whom are women in Dubai. They are currently holding planning and training sessions and recruiting volunteers. The team has met with Dubai Central Prison in Al Aweer and another prison also in Dubai, seeking approval and a license to get free visitations and free sessions with the prisoners in order to launch the program, hopefully this year.

Through the successful resettlement and employment of ex-convict women in Dubai, the team hopes to make an economic as well



as a social impact on the lives of the women. Explains Ekweogwu: “They need to know that there are people out there to listen to them; there are people out there that feel that they should still have a sense of belonging in society.”

By integrating the women back into the work world, Free X also challenges the rest of society to re-think their stereotypes about ex-convict women, and women in the workplace. Ekweogwu and his team are building upon a broader shift in the culture around women working outside of the home, that has been encouraged in part by expatriate women's increased visibility in the workforce of Dubai.

“I think things are changing and I believe with time people will learn to accept ex-convict women into society,” says Ekweogwu. The Microsoft YouthSpark event and its virtual community were essential to Ekweogwu in developing his project, as was the TakingITGlobal Sprout e-course, which helped him to organize, market and manage Free X.

“It was a very good platform from the period of brainstorming and addressing of issues, forming goals, and even making the marketing campaign and pitch. Because of it, right now I can get an idea and dissect it and put it into proper formation. Being in my field, of being a project manager in the making, it was very valuable.”

For more information about Free X, please visit:

<http://www.globalgiving.org/microprojects/free-x/>



PERLA TAPIA MEDRANO

Social Innovation Centres in Mexico and Latin America: An Inspired Project to Launch its First Site in San Luis Potosí, Mexico

Age: 24 Country: Mexico

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Perla Tapia and her team are about to launch a social innovation centre in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. It is the first of its kind in the region, and the team has plans to launch others in Costa Rica and Colombia in the near future.

Modeled on social innovation centres in other cities, the centres bring together young social innovators and experts in a range of fields, including engineering, medicine, technology and marketing. Tapia and her team are currently on waitlist for a space in The Center of Innovation and Transfer Technology, which provides space for entrepreneurs. The City of San Luis Potosí, where Tapia lives, is also interested in partnering.

The idea for her project began at a Microsoft YouthSpark event in Mexico. It provided key inspiration as well as support for Tapia and other innovators. Says Tapia: "Meeting people that have that same interest as you, in person, is the best part of the [YouthSpark] event. We have a group on Facebook, where people post ideas, comment on project advances and share many things. It is like adopting a family."

In addition to YouthSpark, she credits her TakingITGlobal Sprout e-course with helping her develop a vision of her project. While her college offered many courses on entrepreneurship and innovation, only the Sprout e-course did so with a social innovation emphasis.

The Sprout e-course was influential in developing their long-range plan for effective development. "The development of the project was slow," notes Tapia, "but the steps that we took to change the project were important."

Tapia is a recent college graduate and information technology engineer who is committed to using her education and creativity for social innovation. One of her earlier projects was a program that enabled the

blind to take high school and college courses online; it was donated to a nonprofit that serves the blind and has been highly successful.

Building on this earlier work, one of the first projects at the Social Innovation Centre is a learning tool that works for special-needs students as well as other preschoolers and kindergarteners, in developing literacy.

Social innovation centres work as a hub for creative people, especially youth, who want to network to make the world a better place. While it is more costly to have a physical space than a virtual space for the sharing of ideas, spending time in person and having a central meeting place is key for social innovators. With face-to-face connections, projects can take off more quickly and resources shared more readily, and the social benefit of the space is also easy to see. Perla observed this when attending the Microsoft YouthSpark event as well, which brought global youth together.

"One thing that I really liked was that we had classmates that are Microsoft Student Partners in other countries," says Tapia.

"They had the opportunity to come to Mexico and meet Mexicans, enjoy the food, the people, the places. I think it was different because they had the opportunity to travel to another country and meet and know the people, the food and everything different from their countries."

While they are starting in San Luis Potosí, Tapia hopes other new centres will open soon and that the team's project will be a model for youth in other parts of the world. Connecting through YouthSpark and TakingITGlobal is "incredibly" helpful for social innovators like Tapia.

"The technology is global, so your advances can help the whole world. Not just my country, or my city but you can help everywhere."



WAHYU PERDANA YUDISTIAWAN

The Politikus Online Project:
Tracking Corruption in Indonesian Politics

Age: 26 Country: Indonesia

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Politikus is an online tool that tracks political corruption and influence in Indonesia to promote accountability in politics. It is set to launch before the 2014 election in Indonesia.

It was started by Wahyu Perdana Yudistiawan, a 26-year-old Indonesian currently living in Singapore. Yudistiawan was inspired by the actions of the recently elected governor and vice governor of Jakarta, who have broken with tradition and post YouTube videos of their meetings as a way to promote transparency in politics. He explains: "This inspired us in asking, how can we make Indonesian politics more transparent?"

Political corruption is widely reported in the Indonesian media, but it is quickly forgotten by the public once the headlines have passed. There are no systematic databases (unlike in the US where websites such as opensecrets.org track the influence of campaign contributions on candidates). By the time a new election rolls around, most voters have forgotten about a scandal two or three years earlier.

Politikus provides background records of politicians, including any coverage of corruption or undue influence, to help voters make their decisions. It archives media coverage, voting records and relevant financial information that is part of the public record. It will be a powerful tool in 2014, and even more powerful in 5 years, on time for the next election.

While Politikus is set to launch in 2013, Yudistiawan explains that it is still in process: "It's a very tight schedule. So a plan B for us would be not to track all the candidates but rather to focus on the elected officials in 2014 and keep their records until 2019. This is a backup plan if we cannot [fully] chase the 2014 election."

Yudistiawan attended Microsoft's YouthSpark in Singapore (which he describes as "two intense days!") as well as TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course, which informed his team's process in planning, marketing and getting funds to complete Politikus.

"I've benefitted a lot from the framework and coaching given through the Sprout e-course," he says. It also helped Yudistiawan to streamline the process and make the website as accessible as possible, through peer review in the Sprout and TakingITGlobal online communities.

By making the acts of politicians more transparent online, Politikus puts pressure on politicians to clean up their image and rewards honest politicians by helping to inform voters. Politikus doesn't make endorsements but rather lets the record speak for itself, and the voters choose accordingly.

YAD FAEQ / DELKYS ORTIZ PENA

Two Success Stories:

Switching Gears When Your Project Doesn't Incubate

Age: 23 Country: Iraq / Age: 22 Country: New York, USA

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Not all ideas succeed, and even really great ideas don't always make it to project launch. There may be funding, organizational or feasibility barriers -- or it may simply not be the right moment. Two YouthSpark members took their project "failures" and turned them into much different, and successful, projects. Here is their story.

Yad Faeq is a freelance web developer and



Microsoft Student Ambassador. He recently gave a talk at Stanford University about the failure of his "Easy Route" project and the development of his new crowdfunding platform, "Know Fund".

"I realized there was a big problem in [Northern Iraq]," says Faeq, describing his initial project, "which was not having access to the Bing or Google maps to make use of GIS information. My solution was to create an application that would crowdsource information from anyone who had access to the GPRS: 'Easy Route'. You could pinpoint your position and send your info to the cloud I created. The mobile application could be used by drivers to pinpoint an accident, for example," providing direction for traffic as well as emergency vehicles.

The project was highly effective, and it was celebrated at several Imagine Cup competitions as well. Then....

"Unfortunately, when I came back I pitched it to a few investors [in Iraq], but it went downhill. Later on, I had

contact with a few of the Imagine Cup teams, and one of them knew someone who created an app called Waze -- the same idea we did but it was created after we came up with the idea. Facebook ended up almost buying that app for one million dollars."

Faeq could clearly see that in developing regions where investors do not invest in technologies, wider issues arise. Technology can solve problems related to economics, employment, health and community sustainability -- but young innovators are stifled when they lack funds. So he began a microfunding platform, Know Funding, based on his work at the Microsoft YouthSpark event in Cairo. Although the site is ready, Faeq is waiting to launch it until he relocates to Chicago, where investment and interest awaits. (He will be attending Columbia College there, studying game design.)

Much like Faeq, Delkys Ortiz Pena had to regroup when his project, another great idea, did not work out. Just three years earlier, Ortiz Pena had moved to New York from the Dominican Republic, he started working at McDonalds, taking courses from a non-profit that offered tech courses to low-income immigrants. He quickly landed a great job in IT, and received an award from the Robin Hood Foundation for his achievements.

Ortiz Pena was noticed by Microsoft and invited to attend a YouthSpark event in Redmond. There, he discussed his idea for his "E-waste" project (creative disposal of e-waste), then attempted to develop the project through TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course. It was through the Sprout e-course that Ortiz Pena realized he needed to change course.

"I wanted to be realistic, because one of the things that the e-Sprout course instills in you is that you choose something that you can

achieve. I realized through the course that even though e-waste is a huge problem in New York, it was just too vast and something that I wasn't sure that I'd be able to do."

He instead developed "Tech Culture Box", which empowers youth seeking future employment in IT. Tech Culture Box gives access to software and educational opportunities that are often not available in their schools. It serves as a clearinghouse and guide to existing resources by bringing them together so that they are easy for students to find. Ultimately, the project will be provided to New York City public schools, through a cloud system linking interactive classes for students.

Ortiz Pena is currently in negotiations with a college to partner on Tech Culture Box, and it will launch in 2014.

Both Pena and Faeq credit TakingITGlobal and Microsoft for inspiring them to make their projects happen. Referring to the online community, Faeq notes, "At some point I saw that it wasn't only me that was working so hard ... just seeing that and having the exposure of others that are in the same position is great. It had a really huge, positive impact on my life."

Pena agrees. "I learned it is better to do something you love and gain a legacy from it. It was life changing."





KAZI MAMUN UR RASHID

The Family Project: Volunteers from the Tech Industry Provide Training and Opportunities to Entry-Level Workers in Bangladesh

Age: 23 Country: Bangladesh

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In Bangladesh, many entry-level technology workers are unable to earn sufficient income to support all family members in their household. A computer operator inputting data earns \$80-\$100 per month, but the cost of supporting his or her family is \$200 to \$250 per month. Earning less than a subsistence wage leads to debt problems as well as perpetuating the cycle of poverty, because families cannot afford to send their children to school. Children often begin to work at a young age in low-paying and unskilled jobs, missing out on crucial education opportunities as well.

While workers want to gain new tech skills, they do not have money for education, because every dollar they earn is going to feed their family.

The Family project seeks to solve this problem. In its current pilot stage, ten workers in Bangladesh have been chosen to receive technical training from 15 volunteers in the tech industry. Volunteers are recent university graduates working successfully in the field, and skills include Microsoft Office as well graphic design and programming.

Project lead Kazi Mamun Ur Rashid explains: "If we can empower the key [earner] of any family, that helps a family to fulfill their basic needs like food, shelter, medication, education. So we are actually empowering the whole family through empowering one person."

Kazi recently graduated in Computer Science and Software Engineering and now works at a software firm. He was a Microsoft Student

Partner in Bangladesh for two years as campus lead and event and marketing lead. He attended a Microsoft YouthSpark event in Singapore, where he met a number of mentors and his team was inspired to develop the Family project: "The speeches from different people that are social innovators already were really inspiring to us," he says.

Microsoft YouthSpark has "inspired me to keep moving with my project. I was stuck with what to do next," says Kazi. "Especially the TakingITGlobal Sprout course: that course helped me a lot to organize the metrics of my project, of my organization."

Within 25 days of launching the Family project on Microsoft YouthSpark on Global Giving, the team reached its goal. The project's network became international and the team continues to engage in Microsoft webinars and social innovation seminars to help build their strengths and grow their project.

The team is currently campaigning on various university campuses to get more volunteers for the project, and hope to expand to 100 families and become a sustainable long-term organization, following its current pilot phase.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.projectpage.info/thefamily/about-us>

QUOC ANH NGUYEN MANH

Tech Tuesdays: Mentorship and Networking for Youth in Vietnam, and Globally

Age: 24 Country: Vietnam

Microsoft YouthSpark is proud to support TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course as part of their global effort to empower youth to imagine and realize their full potential. Through this course, youth collaborate, inspire and support each other while using technology to make a difference in their communities. The Sprout global community of young social innovators benefits uniquely from Microsoft's expertise as a leading technology company since 1975 and TakingITGlobal's experience facilitating online communities for youth worldwide since 1999.

Tech Tuesdays is a youth-created event that strengthens the technology foundation in Vietnam by bringing young innovators together to talk about tech, solve problems and share resources. Its organizers hope that Tech Tuesdays will spread throughout other developing countries and around the world.

This year, Tech Tuesday events have been organized five times in Ho Chi Min City, with more than 200 participants: more Tech Tuesdays are set to launch in Hanoi. Guest speakers and topics are chosen by participants to meet their needs and help their projects grow. Businesspeople, students and startups are among the attendees.

In Ho Chi Minh City, the group has partnered with Saigon Hub (a co-working space for tech startups and freelancers) as its official sponsor. Saigon Hub provides free space

for Tech Tuesdays. With no fees for meeting space, Tech Tuesdays is virtually no-cost, a model that can be replicated in other cities and towns.

Organizer Quoc Anh Nguyen Manh explains: "Tech Tuesdays is an open source for tech people to meet up, an open source for anyone who wants to organize tech events in other cities and countries."

Quoc Anh is 24 years old, a 5-time Microsoft Student Partner leader whose team won the first round of Microsoft Imagine cup in 2010 and first prize in the Blackberry Jam in Vietnam. Their creation is LifeBox, a popular life logging app ("Create a backup of everything you hear, see and do. Never forget anything again"). With his team, Quoc Anh has organized over 100 Microsoft events for more than 3,000 students in Vietnam.



He began Tech Tuesdays after attending a Microsoft YouthSpark event in Singapore. "I had the chance to meet a lot of highly passionate people who want to use technology to make people's lives better in education, employment, charity, the environment. [This program] helps connect young talented people all around the world. And we share our passions and contacts, help each other and advice each other on our ideas."

Quoc Anh then enrolled in TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course, which provided useful tools and "essential knowledge" for growing the LifeBox company as well as developing Tech Tuesdays.

The connections Quoc Anh has made through Microsoft and TakingITGlobal continue to be an integral part of his business as LifeBox

moves to a Singapore office and expands globally. These experiences also inform his team's projects that give back to the community, such as Tech Tuesdays, helping other young social innovators to strengthen their projects, together.



ADELE JOY ADVENTO

Inspired to Innovate for Good in the Philippines

Age: 26 Country: Phillipines

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Adele Joy Advento is from Manila, Philippines and attended the Asia Pacific Microsoft YouthSpark event through the msn.com wildcard competition. Her team's pitch for an online recycling initiative ("eBay for recycling") is no longer in development, but she has become connected to several other social innovations and remains active online with people from the event.

"Before [the event], I had very little exposure to helping people with social enterprises, so I am very thankful [this program] brought back my passion towards helping."

The event also lead her to enroll in TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course, where she learned a host of concrete skills related to project development and marketing, as well as the necessity of making connections. "I learned through the Sprout e-course that when you have your idea, it's just an idea but when you tell other people about it, it becomes a real project... it allows other people to give you feedback and the opportunity to pool your resources and spread awareness."

Currently, Adele is building a team to develop a project that leverages social media to provide free online education for underserved youth and adults. In the Philippines, low income and Indigenous groups often have limited access to formal education. However, they are often aware of and use social media.

Her team aims to use social media platforms to connect with underserved youth and teach English, Math and other skills.

In building the project, Adele has been deeply engaged online with participants in YouthSpark and TakingITGlobal programs like Sprout. She finds that people respond quickly, and are ready to share information as well as "tech savvy". The platform's free flow of ideas also provides her with inspiration to keep going, as she tracks other projects worldwide that are navigating difficult circumstances and yet managing to reach the launch stage.

Adele can connect throughout the region and globally with like-minded social entrepreneurs using TakingITGlobal online. Because she works full time and has other projects as well, she finds the online community is especially helpful because it is so flexible. Providing feedback on others' projects strengthens her own work as well.

"In the Philippines we formed an [online] group. There is also one for the Asia Pacific attendees of [YouthSpark]. We constantly contact each other if there are events so that we can encourage [this] to spread. If there is a project happening in Thailand or Cambodia, they will let us know through [YouthSpark communities] and that way we can share the news with other people as well."

KALINGA GUNAWARDHANA

The Handi-mart Project:
Sri Lankan Artisans Use Technology to Maintain their Craft

Age: 26 Country: Sri Lanka

Microsoft YouthSpark is proud to support TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course as part of their global effort to empower youth to imagine and realize their full potential. Through this course, youth collaborate, inspire and support each other while using technology to make a difference in their communities. The Sprout global community of young social innovators benefits uniquely from Microsoft's expertise as a leading technology company since 1975 and TakingITGlobal's experience facilitating online communities for youth worldwide since 1999.

Traditional artisans are often key providers for their communities, however their traditions can be quickly lost in a mass-produced and mass-marketed society. Most rural artisans do not have the means to promote their works online or enter the urban marketplace, and their communities suffer economically as a result. Often there are easy ways to use technology that can make an artist more productive, but they need training to do so.

Handi-mart is a social innovation project that responds to this need: helping local artisans sell their traditional artwork by creating marketplaces for them in village, cities and online. It also leverages technology to streamline some of the processes for making handicrafts, many of which have been a part of the community for thousands of years and can be labour intensive. Handi-mart is

set to launch in 2014, featuring five artists/artisans, in the province of Bandarawela Uva, Sri Lanka.

By giving artisans the right technology and marketing tools, projects like Handi-Mart empower and economically revive poor rural communities, while keeping traditional and indigenous art forms alive. Project founder Kalinga Gunawardhana has a personal interest in Sri Lankan arts, in his home village and throughout the country. He hopes his project (along with others in other regions) will inspire a global movement to protect and revive traditional arts and crafts.

Gunawardhana is a recent University graduate from Sri Lanka who has been a Microsoft Student Partner for the last three years and is a part of YouthSparks' micro-mentorship program run by TakingITGlobal.



He attended a Microsoft YouthSpark event in Singapore where he developed friendships and connections that have helped to guide him through the process of developing Handi-mart, from idea to launch.

After going through TakingITGlobal's Sprout e-course, his project team had all the tools it needed to launch. "Every milestone in the current project is there because of the Sprout e-course," says Gunawardhana. "I could not have proceeded with this project without it. It gave me a lot of knowledge."

"I think every idea needs to be incubated after being refined -- and the [this program] is really good for this as well. The project was incubated and is in a really good stage to launch. Anyone can start something, but the problem is [sustainability]."

Gunawardhana found the TakingITGlobal online communities especially useful for finding tech tools that can assist artisans in producing their handicrafts. Being active in the online communities helped him to learn from others' experiences and even avoid repeating their mistakes. He was also able to access resources on funding. "That knowledge is still helping make this project come to life," he notes.

Gunawardhana is looking forward to expanding Handi-mart to the commercial community as it continues to sustainably grow throughout Sri Lanka and online.