

# 2008 International Essay Contest for Young People

## List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 137

No. of entries: 4,711 (Children's category: 2,036 / Youth category: 2,675)

### 1<sup>st</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (1 entrant)

- *Joined by a Cookbook*  
Martin Kotarski (Age 13, Croatia)

#### Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Cargados de Vida*  
Valeria Cortez Vaca Díez (Age 17, Bolivia)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Andrychow – two cultures, two hearts but one little homeland*  
Justyna Wróblicka (Age 14, Poland)
- *My project on Archeapple plantation and the need to foster it for sustainable development in my community Sombo*  
Timothy Nambazing (Age 14, Ghana)

#### Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Homeless in Seattle*  
Claire Carlson (Age 18, U.S.A.)
- *Elite Youth Coalition for Development*  
Mukiibi Lawrence (Age 21, Uganda)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (5 entrants)

- Ryuji Aoki (Age 10, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Miyuki Horii  
(Age 11, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Saradha Weerasekara (Age 12, Sri Lanka)
- Chua Jun Yan (Age 13, Singapore)
- Akio Harigaya (Age 14, Japan)

#### Youth category (5 entrants)

- Sophia Palenberg  
(Age 16, U.S.A. & U.K. <Living in U.K.>)
- Asuka Nagatani (Age 19, Japan)
- Abhishek Nayak (Age 20, India)
- Lamia Niazi (Age 19, Pakistan)
- Christian Rusangwa (Age 24, Rwanda)

### Honorable Mention

#### Children's category (25 entrants)

- Rira Miyake  
(Age 7, Japan / USA <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Axil Kollist ((Age 8, U.S.A.)
- Clarissa Sakura Costen  
(Age 10, UK & Japan <Living in U.K.>)

#### Youth category (25 entrants)

- Park Jungmin (Age 15, South Korea)
- Ayana Takizawa  
(Age 16, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Junpei Matsumura (Age 17, Japan)
- Chelsea Mobley (Age 17, U.S.A.)

- Tabatha Holz (Age 10, Germany)
- Lynnette Penjueli (Age 11, Fiji Islands)
- Kaho Enari (Age 12, Japan <Living in China>)
- Rosarin Hataiseree (Age 12, Thailand)
- Iulia Milenova Piskuliyska (Age 12, Bulgaria)
- Ashmita Dhakal (Age 13, Nepal)
- Kanehira Kiyo (Age 13, Japan)
- Yuriko Hirose (Age 13, Japan)
- Ananya Shrestha (Age 13, Nepal)
- Anna Zhao (Age 13, U.S.A.)
- Charlene Sharmini Fernandes (Age 14, Malaysia)
- Khadidiatou Kane (Age 14, Senegal)
- Pavel Mikhnevich (Age 14, Belarus)
- Ayano Naito (Age 14, Japan)
- Erika Sato (Age 14, Japan)
- Petya Georgieva Shishiteva (Age 14, Bulgaria)
- Su Yeon Kwon (Age 14, Korea <Living in China>)
- Oscar S. Tanum (Age 14, Norway)
- Kei Tatsumi (Age 14, Japan)
- Kazuko Teshima (Age 14, Japan)
- Rena Yokokura (Age 14, Japan)
- Mana Yahagi (Age 15, Japan)
- Yukari Nemoto (Age 17, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Hitomi Takashima (Age 17, Japan)
- Mizuki Mazuka (Age 18, Japan)
- Patrick Komora (Age 18, Kenya)
- Victoria Mihalachi (Age 18, Moldova)
- Emmanuel Obiora Nwakeze (Age 18, Nigeria)
- Ramon Lorenzo Luis Rosa Guinto (Age 20, The Philippines)
- Gladys Rudo (Age 21, Zimbabwe)
- Zhao Huan (Age 21, China <Living in Japan>)
- Adzua Peter Terseer (Age 21, Nigeria)
- Sheraan Amod (Age 22, South Africa)
- Cristina Sevillano del Aguila (Age 23, Peru)
- Ashis Himali (Age 23, Nepal)
- Anna Keene-Winsor (Age 23, U.S.A.)
- Nan Dar Aye (Age 23, Myanmar)
- Robert Okodia (Age 23, Uganda)
- Robin Achah Arifique (Age 24, Cameroon <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Charmaine Ihuhua (Age 24, Namibia)
- Urom Nnenna Obele (Age 24, Nigeria)
- Jelena Rajcevic (Age 24, Serbia)
- Shinetsu Sugawara (Age 24, Japan)

### **Best School Award**

No School Applicable

2008 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – 1<sup>st</sup> Prize]

## Joined by a Cookbook

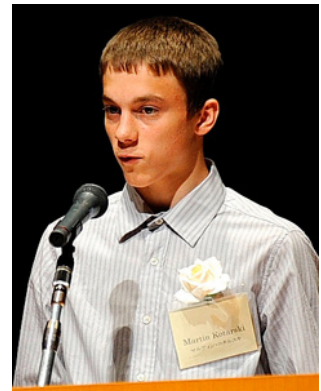
(Original)

*Martin Kotarski*

*(Age 14, Croatia)*

*Ksaver Šandor Gjalski Primary School, Zabok*

Society, culture, ecology, economy, citizen responsibility ... all the words which I, a fourteen-year-old boy, don't know much about. But, a sad friend with no proper food on his table, nice clothes to wear, pocket-money, toys to play or computer for studying, sounds familiar.



One day I came to school and saw that my friend was sad. I asked him about it. He wouldn't tell me at first, but I found out that his father had lost his job and his mother were about to give birth to a new child. He was very depressed because his parents couldn't pay the bills, food, give him money for his school lunch. So he lost some weight, his clothes were worn out and other kids started picking on him. He became aggressive and he fought all the time. He lost his friends and started getting bad marks. He desperately needed help. I wanted to help him but I didn't know how. I had known before about the kids with the same problem but I didn't think about it so much till now. Then I came up with an idea how to solve such problems in my school.

Why don't we make a cookbook with traditional meals cooked by our grandmothers and mothers? We could sell that book and get money for poor people of our school. And not only that. We would bring old meals back to life and throw fattening and unhealthy fast food away. Say hello to delicious food my parents used to eat when they were little. I found a solution for two problems: how to help the poor people and dump fast food.

I knew I couldn't do it without help. I went to the school pedagogue and told her about my idea. Since she is a volunteer for the Red Cross (and she deals with the social problems of school

children all the time) she liked the idea. We made an action plan and she put it in motion. She decided to involve students, parents, grandparents and the whole community to collect recipes for the cookbook. She informed teachers and then they threw themselves to work. They motivated children to talk with their grandparents about the forgotten “old ways” and write down their stories in local dialect. With students’ help a recipe pile was bigger and bigger. Even my friend, an excellent footballer, brought a whole bunch of old recipes. My Croatian teacher, pedagogue and librarian took a big part of whole job—they read the recipes, prepared the dishes, took photographs, wrote introduction, all in all, gave their precious time. The National Foundation for Civil Activities, located in the capital of Croatia, stepped in with a donation of 10,000 kuna (\$2,000) for its publication. The Town Hall, Red Cross, Folk Group Zabok, regional newspapers, ecological organizations and some companies gave us a hand, too. After all, Zabok is a Town Friend of Children. That means that it supports all the programs of our schools, creative workshops and sports clubs.

When it was finally published we presented it to the public. The presentation was held in our school on May 30. Some mothers and grandmothers got themselves involved by cooking some old strudels, local cheese and corn cakes and so on. Two couples performed traditional dances and made the event even more special. I had a small part as well. I had to recite a poem. I forgot some of the words, but never mind. I felt great on the stage when they said it had been my idea. The whole bunch of people came to see the cookbook and taste the meals that were served at the end of the presentation. Many people have bought a cookbook as a gift, souvenir and some were trying to cook a meal using the recipes. My friend's mother at first bought three cookbooks and then she wanted five pieces more. “It is excellent! I really like the design—the photographs and the way it is written in the local dialect. That’s a nice touch. I can almost hear my old grandmother teaching me how to cook,” she said. Others agreed with her so we have sold five hundred cookbooks and collected \$3000.

We raised enough money to help twenty–five needy families of our school friends in our region. My sad friend was happy, too, because his family was one of them. And not only that. We have become aware of the unhealthy food we eat every day and of the forgotten traditional values. Realizing that, we started visiting our grandparents more and enjoying their old stories and meals. Who knows? Maybe we will “dig out” some more good books.

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[Youth Category – 1<sup>st</sup> Prize]

## **Cargados de Vida** (Original)

*Valeria Cortez Vaca Díez*  
(Age 18, Bolivia)  
*Colegio Alemán*

De ida al colegio, al cine o al centro, donde quiera que vaya, me encuentro con un paisaje desgastado de mi ciudad “Santa Cruz de la Sierra”. Bolsas plásticas flotando en el aire, en medio de parques públicos, trabadas entre árboles y cables de luz. Éstas se encuentran en todas partes, pues su distribución es irracional, generándome gran inquietud por la concienciación que tienen los ciudadanos con el cuidado de nuestro medio ambiente.



El año pasado tuve la experiencia de vivir un intercambio estudiantil de seis meses en Alemania. Lo que más me impactó fue la preocupación de la población por el medio ambiente. Todas las familias separaban la basura, evitaban los plásticos, e incluso en mi familia sustituta buscaban pasatiempos relacionados con la naturaleza.

Si pudiera hacer algo que ayudase a mi ciudad, que ya cuenta actualmente con más de 1.500.000 habitantes y que es la de mayor crecimiento de Bolivia, según los grandes valores medio ambientales que aprendí en Alemania, sería lograr que el consumo excesivo de bolsas plásticas disminuya sustancialmente.

Las bolsas plásticas tienen un efecto altamente contaminante para nuestro medio, debido a que provienen del petróleo, un recurso no renovable que se está agotando. Éstas demoran aproximadamente entre 100 a 400 años en descomponerse y en algunos casos nunca sucede. A pesar de esto en el mundo se siguen produciendo entre 500.000 millones y un billón de bolsas plásticas por año, sin tomar en cuenta que éstas incrementan las posibilidades de riesgos para los seres humanos de padecer enfermedades cancerígenas por sus compuestos químicos tóxicos.

La propuesta que tengo para ayudar a mi comunidad consiste en descartar las bolsas plásticas y que la población de mi ciudad reciba educación en el cuidado del medio ambiente promoviendo el uso de bolsas de tela con el apoyo de estudiantes de todos los colegios.

El plan consiste en capacitar a dos estudiantes de secundaria de cada escuela, y quienes se constituirían en “vidalumnos”, nominativo que los identificaría entre los demás alumnos del colegio. Los “vidalumnos” darían charlas en su colegio a los demás estudiantes y profesores sobre la necesidad de cambiar las bolsas plásticas que siempre reciben en los supermercados y tiendas por bolsas de telas.

Las bolsas de telas pueden ser financiadas por los empresarios y estarían impresas con el slogan “Cargados de Vida”, además llegarían a todas las familias mediante los alumnos de secundaria de los colegios motivándolas a parar el uso indiscriminado de bolsas plásticas.

En la ciudad de Santa Cruz de la Sierra los estudiantes de secundaria son alrededor de 150.000, distribuidos en 500 escuelas aproximadamente.

El proyecto consiste en producir 150.000 bolsas de telas, capacitar a 1.000 estudiantes (2/escuela), quienes serían los facilitadores capacitados en la materia y se encargarían de la distribución de una bolsa con su respectivo folleto educativo a cada estudiante de secundaria para que el mismo la lleve e inculque el uso a su familia. Los alumnos facilitadores llevarían una polera y gorra que los identifique. El presupuesto del proyecto es de \$us.99.500:

<b>Material</b>	<b>Costo unitario (\$us.)</b>	<b>Cantidad</b>	<b>Total (\$us.)</b>
Poleras facilitadores	1.5	1.000	1.500
Gorras facilitadores	1.5	1.000	1.500
Capacitación de facilitadores	2.0	1.000	2.000
Folletería educativa	0.03	150.000	4.500
Bolsas de tela	0.6	150.000	90.000
<b>Total</b>			<b>99.500</b>

La campaña constaría de los siguientes materiales:



### **¡Cargados de Vida!**

¿Sabías que 1.000.000 de bolsas plásticas se crean por minuto y cuando las desechamos, éstas demoran entre 100 y 400 años en descomponerse y a veces nunca sucede?



Las bolsas plásticas contienen compuestos tóxicos que dañan nuestra salud y el cuidado de nuestra ciudad.

### **¡Cargados de Vida!**

Todos los humanos necesitamos llevar víveres a nuestros hogares, vital para la vida de las familias, así cargamos una responsabilidad, así cargamos vidas.



Es así que te proponemos que la siguiente vez que vayas al mercado a comprar frutas, verduras u otros alimentos, los guardes en tu bolsa "Cargados de Vida".

### **¡Cargados de Vida!**

Sé responsable con tu medio ambiente, aporta al cuidado de éste.



Sigue lo que dice el "vidalumno" de tu curso y no dejes de usar tus bolsas "Cargados de Vida".



Para mantener la motivación de la población en el cuidado de nuestro medio ambiente, los supermercados y tiendas deberán cobrar por cada bolsa plástica que se entregue y fomentar la compra de bolsas de tela que estarán a la venta a precios reducidos, gracias a los patrocinadores.

Para el acto capacitación de los mil facilitadores se invitaría a la prensa y a representantes de diversas instituciones del municipio para que apoyen en la difusión de la importancia del uso de la bolsa de tela para el desarrollo sostenible.

Cumpliendo con el proyecto, Santa Cruz de la Sierra se convertiría en una ciudad limpia con una ciudadanía consciente de la labor que tiene con su propio medio ambiente.

## **Carrying Life** (English Translation)

On my way to school, the movies or downtown, wherever I go, I find a worn out view of my hometown "Santa Cruz de la Sierra". There are lots of plastic bags floating in the air and in the middle of public parks, stuck in tree branches and electric wires. These bags are everywhere, because they're distributed in an irrational way. I find myself greatly concerned about the awareness and education of the citizens towards the environment.

Last year, I had the opportunity to participate in an International Student Exchange program, and I lived in Germany for 6 months. The thing that impressed me the most was the people's concern for the environment. Every single family would separate their trash, avoid plastics, and in my host family, they even sought for hobbies somehow related to nature.

If I could do something to help my city, which currently has over 1,500,000 inhabitants and the largest growth rate in Bolivia, I would apply the great environmental values I learned in Germany into an attempt to significantly reduce the excessive use of plastic bags.

Plastic bags have a highly pollutive effect for our environment, because they are made from an oil derivation (a non-renewable resource that is disappearing). These bags take approximately 100 to 400 years to decompose, and in some cases it never happens. In spite of this, between



500,000 million to one billion plastic bags are still being produced each year worldwide, ignoring the fact that these materials increase the risk of developing cancer, because of their toxic chemical compounds.

My proposition to help my community consists of discarding plastic bags, and providing the inhabitants with environmental care education, promoting the use of fabric bags with the support of students from every school in the city.

The plan consists of training two students of each middle school, who would become “vidalumnos (life-students)”, a nickname to distinguish them from the rest of the students. The “vidalumnos” would give speeches for the rest of the students and teachers in their schools, regarding the need of replacing the plastic bags they usually receive in shops and supermarkets with fabric bags.

The fabric bags can be sponsored by different enterprises, and would be printed with the slogan “Cargados de Vida (Carrying Life)”. The middle school students would bring these bags to their families, motivating them to stop the reckless use of plastic bags.

There are around 150,000 middle school students in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, distributed in approximately 500 schools.

The project consists of producing 150,000 fabric bags and training 1,000 students (2 per school), who would be the facilitators and would make sure that each student in their school is given one fabric bag with an educational brochure, so they will then bring them home and explain its use to their families. Every facilitator would wear a special T-shirt and cap to be identified. The total budget for this project is USD \$99,500.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost per Unit (USD)</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Total (USD)</b>
Facilitator T-Shirt	1.50	1,000	1,500
Facilitator Cap	1.50	1,000	1,500
Facilitator Training	2.00	1,000	2,000
Educational Brochure	0.03	150,000	4,500
Fabric Bag	0.60	150,000	90,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>99,500</b>

The campaign would require of the following items:



**Carrying Life!**

Did you know 1,000,000 plastic bags are produced every minute, and when we trash them they take between 100 and 400 years to decompose—and in some cases this never even happens?



Plastic bags contain toxic chemical compounds that damage our health and our city.

**Carrying Life!**

Every person needs to carry food and supplies to their homes. This is vital for our family life. That’s how we carry a responsibility. That’s how we carry life.



We suggest that the next time you go to the market and buy fruit, vegetables or other supplies you carry them in your “Cargados de Vida” bag.

**Carrying Life!**

Be responsible to your environment. Cooperate with its care.



Follow your course’s “vidalumno” instructions, and don’t stop using your “Cargados de Vida” bags!



In order to keep the people motivated in the care of our environment, all shops and supermarkets should charge for every plastic bag they give to a customer, and encourage the acquisition of the fabric bags that will be available at a very low price, thanks to the sponsors.

Representatives of press and public institutions would be invited to the facilitators' training course, in order for them to communicate the importance of using the fabric bags to accomplish sustainable development.

By complying with this project, Santa Cruz de la Sierra would become a clean city with conscious people who are aware of their duty to protect their environment.

## **Andrychow – two cultures, two hearts but one little homeland**

(Original)

*Justyna Wróblicka*

*(Age 14, Poland)*

*Junior High School No 1 in Andrychow (Gimnazjum nr 1 Andrychowcie)*

I live in a little town of Andrychow located in the south of Poland. The first people to live here were settlers from Moravia, who came here in the 14th century. The town owes its development to settlers coming from different regions of Europe: Romania, Belgium, Saxony, Silesia as well as Jews and people from other regions of Poland. Gypsies settled in Andrychow as late as 1953. They were a family of five. At present there are 110 Gypsies including 28 children.

This community, which kept its own culture away from others, was rejected by the remaining inhabitants of Andrychow. Despite the fact that the inhabitants of Andrychow associate Gypsies with wistful music, fiery dance, a train of Gypsy wagons and flames of a campfire, the strangeness of their language, culture, race and mentality is a barrier not to be overcome. This isolation made the Gypsies of Andrychow a social group of low economic and social status. Uneducated, not understood by others and unemployed, they have to rely on welfare to survive.

But, as a Gypsy poet Bronoslawa Wajs-Papusza says in her poem *'I come to you'*

*I haven't come to you to get something to eat*

*I've come for you to believe me*

*I haven't come to you to get money from you*

*I've come so that you give it all away*

*(...) I've come so that you adopt everybody*

*So that you do not make a dark night*

*Out of a sunny day.*

This project is a vision of a train of Gypsy wagons in Andrychow. A train of Gypsy wagons is a place where Gypsies are the hosts and a place to which they invite the inhabitants of Andrychow to present their culture, history and customs. A train of Gypsy wagons is also a place of work for Gypsies. It is a place where they can use their imagination and creative thinking in arts and music for example. Being artistically gifted, the Gypsies could set up painting, sculpture and cabinet making studios as well as a smithy. Blacksmithing has always been Gypsies' traditional trade. Because of the fact that blacksmith's artistic products are in demand, Gypsies could sell their products, either directly or on the Internet, and earn their living. A train of Gypsy wagons is a place where Gypsies could present their customs, traditional dishes, poetry, fairy tales and stories sitting around a campfire and listening to music. Spending summer nights among friends and having barbecues is very popular in Andrychow. This is why I think a train of Gypsy wagons could be attractive to a lot of Andrychow inhabitants.

I imagine that the train of Gypsy wagons would be active all year round. Replicas of beautifully painted and decorated with carved dragons Gypsy wagons would be put in a circle and mark the magic space of influence of Gypsy culture. These wagons would at the same time be workshops and the place could also be used for various theme exhibitions.

I realize that putting my project into practice requires time, funds and overcoming some barriers. To do it, I am going to organize a group of volunteers including my Gypsy friends from my junior high school. This group would make presentations of particular items of the project to e.g. schools, culture centers and even state administration offices or factories where exhibitions of amateur works of art could be held. One of the reasons of such presentations would be to find sponsors and receive help from the local government. Instructors would be needed in the following stages of the project to help Gypsies organize their own workshops and shops to sell their products as well as to publicize this enterprise. However, in my opinion the instructors' activities should be discreet; it is the Gypsies who are to take decisions.

It is a long-term project and it makes both communities stay in contact with each other and learn about each other in different situations. It is meant to bring Gypsies recognition from Andrychow community and overcome culture barriers.

My town boasts a Group of Song and Dance 'Andrychow'. Its shows together with a Gypsy group would demonstrate that the two cultures could co-exist. Common singing could let

steam off. Singing and music, to my mind, could be the first common platform of agreement between the two cultures.

A Polish poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid said in one of his poems:

*'Go where you can hear people singing  
People there are kind-hearted.  
Believe me. Bad people  
Never ever sing.'*

I hope that my project can make both communities realize that they live in a town where people are kind-hearted and forget barriers and prejudice. Forgetting them will be a most positive change in my social environment.

## **My project on Archeapple plantation and the need to foster it for sustainable development in my community Sombo**

(Original)

*Timothy Nambazing*

*(Age 14, Ghana)*

*Wa Municipal Model Junior High School, Upper West Region*

The Archeapple tree has a lot of economic and social benefits to the people of Sombo. Sombo is a farming community located in the Nadowli District of the upper west region (of Ghana). It lives within the savannah grass land vegetation belt. The trees here are sparsely planted. They are mostly made up of trees which can withstand drought. The Archeapple tree is one of the common trees found in this area due to its desert-like nature. Another good reason why it is common is that it is a domestic plant and most households depend on it for shade.

I have a special interest in the Archeapple plantation because of the economic and social benefits it has. For example, some people depend on the Archeapple fruits for their lunch during the hunger season. The fruits are also sold for income and also dried for soup which goes powerfully with "Konkonte." The leaves are also used in preparing bele bele and its dry sticks for firewood.

Socially, the leaves are used to purify the xylophones after funeral rites. In fact, most deaths are laid in state under Archeapple trees in my village not to talk about the shade that are mostly used by the people on the funeral ground. It normally has a large shade that can contain so many people at a time. Children also use the cover to play Oware which is a local game.

Despite these economic and social benefits, the Archeapple trees are destroyed daily at an alarming rate. Human activities are the main causes of the disappearance of these important trees. They destroy them when they are building houses, constructing roads, clearing of farmland and cutting them for firewood and gardening. Another major source for its destruction is the weather conditions. Sometimes too much rainfall with heavy wind may destroy these trees. The other problem is pest and other caterpillars that sometimes destroy

the leaves. Bush burning is another source of the destruction. I was sad in 2006 August when I got to my village and two out of the four Archeapple trees that were around my house were gone. One was destroyed by wind and the other one due to the construction work in our family house.

To foster sustainable development of the Archeapple tree, I decided to plant five to replace the two that were destroyed. When I nursed the seedling, two germinated. So I went to my grandmother who advised me to sow them directly. I did that and five of them germinated. I fenced them to prevent them from being destroyed by animals. However three of them have already been destroyed by cattle leaving two which are growing very well.

Another step I took to foster sustainable development was to encourage my friends to also plant some. So far three of my friends by names Herman, Joe and Abigel have also planted two each. Our aim is to make sure that that the future generation will also enjoy the benefits of the Archeapple which we enjoy today.

In addition to this I and my friend have taken upon ourselves to weed around the Archeapple trees to prevent them from the destruction by fire. We also make sure that the fire belt is wide enough to prevent the trees from burning.

Furthermore I intend to form an Archeapple protection club. The aim of the club is to give education to the people to always do well and protect the few Archeapple trees that are left. Another reason for the club is to do away with the traditional belief that if you plant a tree and it starts to bear fruit you will die. We have made people to believe that it is not true. It rather helps to prevent global warming and the greenhouse effect in the community. We have also held a discussion with the chief and elders of the village to make by-laws to protect the trees.

The fact is that people leave their animals to roam freely and thereby they destroy people's properties including plants. The other by-law that will also be very necessary is the indiscriminate bush burning of the bush to destroy the trees. They should make a by-law in this regards to encourage people to plant trees.

Lastly I will go round every household in the village and encourage people to plant Archeapple. It serves as a wind break to protect their buildings. If all these things were done, then the Archeapple will be the treasure chest of the future generation in Sombo.



## **Homeless in Seattle**

(Original)

*Claire Carlson*  
(Age 18, U.S.A.)

Seattle, Washington is the 10th most expensive city in the United States to live in. This is due to the fact that many major corporations, such as Starbucks, Boeing, and Microsoft, have established their headquarters here, which brings in more money. Along with a higher average salary comes a higher average real estate value. Currently the average home in Seattle costs well over \$400,000, leaving many low-income families in the dust. I feel that as a society, if we have the opportunity to help those less fortunate it is our responsibility to take advantage of that opportunity, even if all we have to give is very little.

Imagine finding a penny on the ground. Now imagine that that penny could provide a warm bed or affordable health care for someone in need. This is the concept I spent a lot of time thinking about last summer. My dad is a graphic designer who does a lot of work designing websites. The two of us started brainstorming ideas to create a website that would facilitate the exchange of one penny per day from a collection of people's bank accounts to the Penny-A-Day fund. In one month, if 100 Seattleites signed up to give one penny a day to help homelessness in Seattle, we would raise about \$30, which could buy about 15 much-needed pairs of socks. Now lets say ten thousand of the six hundred thousand Seattleites signed up for Penny-A-Day, in one month we would have raised \$3,000. That could buy about one thousand five hundred homeless people in Seattle a new pair of socks!

Currently there are about eight thousand homeless people in Seattle; meaning one out of every seventy-five people will not have a bed to sleep in tonight. Seattle has the ability to and drive to eliminate poverty; it just needs an easy outlet to do so. Penny-A-Day will give people the option to donate a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or even a dollar per day over the course of anywhere between a month to a year. Such a small amount of money as one cent often goes unnoticed in a coin purse or change pocket. I feel that this concept would appeal to many people because their effort is so simple yet the reward is so great.

I would like to keep the amount per day small, never exceeding a dollar. This way Penny-A-Day could still draw people in based on the fact that their effort is so small, why not help? Also, it gives a better sense that all of Seattle is working as a team, rather than a single person donating \$1,000 per day, making the rest of the donors seem obsolete.

There are a couple different options for how to use the money. First, the money could be donated to existing shelters and programs to help poverty in Seattle. I would like the money to go towards a cause that will progress the community, not just fund it to remain how it is. Habitat for Humanity, Real Change, and Solid Ground are organizations that help the homeless get back on their feet and I feel they have much to offer. Every year the money could be donated to a different organization.

The second option would be to set a goal and raise money in hopes of reaching that goal. Over the course of a year, with ten thousand members donating one penny per day, we would have raised \$36,000. That could be enough for a down payment on a house for recovering homeless families. Eventually Penny-A-Day could hand over some of the planning aspects of this project to homeless people looking for a way to get involved. This is a way to provide sustainability to the homeless environment in Seattle.

So what have I been waiting for all year? Well, with further research, I've figured out just how expensive it is to start a non-profit organization. The license, registration fees, and the domain names for the website. The list goes on. Altogether the bill comes out to be about six or seven hundred dollars aside from the free-lance work for the site.

It's funny how it takes money to raise money, but once you have the money it's great how you can make it work for you. Provided a little push, I feel this idea has great potential in my community. Thank you for this opportunity and I wish you the best of luck with your decisions.

2008 International Essay Contest for Young People  
[Youth Category – 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize]

## **Elite Youth Coalition for Development**

(Original)

*Mukiibi Lawrence*  
(Age 21, Uganda)  
*Makerere University Kampala*

Growing up in an impoverished community, a slum of a city suburb, was a story I had planned to share with others in the whole world once given an opportunity. This miserable childhood experience ignited a desire in my heart to improve the community and extend my efforts to the other communities of the world in similar predicaments.

A community ravaged by abject poverty, hunger, disease and the like... Imagine a society where people look at owning a toilet as a luxury, dumping of the human excreta into streams, feces scattered all over, domestic violence at its peak, children malnourished, young girls compelled to become prostitutes because of socio-economic pressure, boys forced to end up on streets as drug addicts and without access to education.

All these problems have been exacerbated by ignorance, environmentally irresponsible practices, and social injustices like corruption, poor education background and low quality of healthcare delivery. Every moment I sat down to watch news on the international scene, I came to realize that the same problems were being faced by majority of people in the whole country and beyond. I kept contemplating on how a mere small boy like me can address these predicaments when those in authority have not been moved by the sorry state of my community.

Like Mahatma Gandhi "be the change you want to see in the world." So I decided to take a step. After finishing high school, I and my colleagues initiated a youth coalition that brings together the youth from all walks of life and professions to complement each others efforts in development. Our vision is to create a society driven by self sustained youth: one world one civilization. I came to realize that bringing about change takes compassion, determination and commitment by looking far beyond individual interests, putting away profit oriented motives.

Since the vision was too big, yet resources were meager, we started with formal education for which the children on the streets and slums were the priority. We collaborated with a bible college director who provided the buildings to use as their home and also to use as classes.

We volunteer as teachers using skills we had acquired from school. We designed a simple curriculum, devised a program we called a “catch up” school. We rehabilitate them through teaching them life and communication skills, and nurture them spiritually. People with heart come to donate books and other scholastic materials; this makes them smile and it has made a huge difference in their lives. At the end, that is after transformation, we get them to sponsors and enroll them into private and public schools. We have extended our efforts to include the disadvantaged students that are performing poorly in class because of lack of attention from the teachers.

Guess what, in time to come, these people will be able to support themselves, and work as responsible citizens who can bring about changes in society. Indeed education is a life investment, so allow me to say that this is fostering sustainable development. We live in a paper and knowledge driven society.

In future we shall intensify our campaign in areas of the environmental conservation, health, and culture by building multicultural communities, learning how to respect one another’s culture and ethnicity, and child welfare development among others.

The whole notion is about bringing together young people with different professions, say lawyers, engineers, social workers, doctors, a few just to mention, to put their knowledge to use so as to address the problems of the community through different approaches.

In future we intend to establish it as a huge youth organization that will extend beyond the borders of my community to the whole world to those experiencing similar problems. We shall make outreaches in schools, colleges and universities, because we young people are the now and the future. What we should know is that no one is born compassionate, caring, loving or cruel, but it is historical and environmental circumstances that shape our personality.

The picture may appear complex, but to make it simple, let me use the metaphor of a body built from microscopic cells. A group of similar cells form an organ for a special function, and

finally a system each with a specialty. All these systems are under coordination of one system—the nervous system—all working in harmony for a common goal and no organ or cell can work independently, as we participate in the process of life. Let me end by quoting Valerie Casey, “the shared mind is more powerful than the individual alone.”

So through combined efforts the vision is realistic and achievable, despite of the huge task and the long way to go.

## **Water Project**

(Original in Japanese)

*Ryuji Aoki*

*(Age 10, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)*

*Chicago Futabakai Japanese School*

There are many problems in the world, and the most important one is water. It will be a big problem if all the water is gone. All living things need water. Recently, I learned on the news that water is polluted, and I thought that we would face serious trouble if the pollution got worse.

I made some researches about water on the Internet. I found out that 97% of water on the Earth is seawater, and only 3% is freshwater. In addition, the amount of water people can use is less than 1%. That means people in the world have to share that 1%.

I made some more researches to find out that people in Tokyo use as much as 242 liters of water a day per person. 28% of that is used to flush toilets, 24% for bathwater, 23% in the kitchen, and 17% for washing. In developing countries, children have to fetch water a long way and there are many children who cannot go to school. I also found out that if we keep on using 242 liters of water a day, we will suffer water shortages in 2025 and water will be even more polluted by then.

What I am going to tell you now is a way to solve all of the water problems. First, we go to the bathroom to pee and poop, and use water to flush the toilet. Instead of using water, my idea is to use wind. We can use very strong wind to blow it away, and then add various things to it to make soil and fertilizer. This way, we don't have to waste water and it's easy.

Another idea is a new washing machine. This machine does not use a lot of water. It looks like an ordinary washing machine. It has a hole where you put your clothes. The hole is bumpy inside with large bumps, and many small bumps made of sponge are on them like shark teeth. Hot mist jets out of the sponge. The machine rotates so fast that it finishes quickly and uses

only a small amount of water. This way, we can reduce the amount of water we use by about half, and make it available for people in countries that have no piped water. We will put water pipes to as many houses as possible, so that children will not have to go far to fetch water. Then, they can go to school and get smart and be able to have many dreams when they grow up.

Through this project, I learned about the inconvenient life of people who live in countries that have no piped water. From now on, I will use water sparingly and I hope children all over the world will be able to go to school.

## **Our Earth**

(Original in Japanese)

*Miyuki Horii*

*(Age 11, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)*

*Pleasant Hill School, Illinois*

What are the problems facing the world today? There are many, but among them, I am especially concerned about global warming and about children in Africa.

If global warming progresses further, there will be some serious problems. First of all, the sea level will rise. If the sea level rises, low-lying lands, such as the Netherlands, will be submerged. There will also be a significant change in the way the rain falls. It is said that areas that receive a small amount of rainfall will have less rain, and on the other hand, areas that receive a large amount of rainfall will have more rain in the future. Climate changes like this will have grave influences on agriculture, forestry, and fishery.

Global warming will affect Africa as well. Even now, people living in Africa are suffering enough. I read a book titled *Totto-Chan's Children*, and I learned for the first time how much African people are suffering. Africa is facing serious food shortages due to droughts, and there are many people who do not have enough to eat. The quality of available food is not good either, and many children are malnourished. Water is muddy, and when children drink the muddy water and become sick, they cannot receive sufficient treatment because there are not many hospitals. Innumerable people die through lack of proper medical treatment. So, if global warming progresses further and plants stop growing due to less rain, what will happen to Africa?

Despite this fact, people in the United States where I live use a lot of electricity as if they do not care. In summer, schools and supermarkets are air-conditioned excessively. Americans seem to be fine, but it's unbearably cold for me, so I need to carry around a jacket. Also, people in the United States do not recycle things as much as they do in Japan. Paper and plastic bottles are the only things they recycle. In my school, we have one day every month when we recycle



as much trash from school lunches as possible. My class examined things that were recycled through this program and we found out that many aluminum lunch plates were recovered. It made us realize that our school had been discarding such a large amount of aluminum. If all the schools in the United States are doing this, they are wasting a large amount of aluminum that is essentially recyclable.

My idea to solve this problem is to sell this aluminum to companies that buy metals for recycling. Instead of collecting aluminum only once a month, we should do it everyday so that we can recycle more aluminum. If it becomes successful, I think we can make a difference in preventing global warming even if only slightly.

Also, we can help children in Africa with the money we get from recycling. In Africa, thousands of children lose their lives everyday because they cannot afford to buy a vaccine that costs only 20 yen. The amount of aluminum we collect in our school is worth about 5 dollars a day, so if we collect it everyday, it will be 900 dollars a year. If we buy vaccines with that amount of money, we can save as many as 4,500 lives. It's scary to think that so many lives are being lost because we are not taking action.

The Earth is our home. We put furniture and make some alterations to our home to live comfortably, but it gets old and damaged over the years. When our home is damaged, we normally repair it. But, residents of the Earth do not take normal action, thinking that someone else will do it. Every resident is accountable for the damaged home, so I think everyone should be concerned about it and make efforts to repair it little by little.

## **How I foster sustainable development in my country**

(Original)

*Saradha Weerasekara*

*(Age 12, Sri Lanka)*

*Children's Art Circle, Colombo*

Environment means the surrounding we live in, which includes people, plants, animals and every other living and non living things in the world. Environment is very important as it helps us to live in peace and harmony and health.

As it is a developing country, Sri Lanka needs to pay a lot of attention to the environment. Today Sri Lanka faces many problems regarding the environment. Soil erosion, deforestation, pollution, sea erosion, high temperature, food problem are some of them.

After the Tsunami tragedy in 2004, the problems got worst. The government of Sri Lanka tries their very best to get rid of those problems. Out of those problems, food problem is the most important one. Because anyone cannot live without water and food for days. Today some countries like Sudan, Ethiopia are suffering from starvation. Sri Lanka is not like that, but if the conditions continued, there will be a danger in the near future. As an example, the oil price is going up than ever before.

As a government, it is very difficult to face all those problems. So as citizens we should help. And I think it is our duty too. After thinking about all those things and the future of ours and younger generation, I have started a small project.

With the help of my parents, I started growing some essential vegetable plants in my home garden. First I prepared the earth for the plants. I bought seeds from the market. My agriculture teacher at school helped me by giving instructions to prepare vegetable beds.

Earlier I had only four or five types of vegetable plants like spinach, green chilies, brinjals and capsicums. Now there are many other vegetable plants like ladies fingers, drumsticks, sweet

potatoes, lot of greens and some few spices. I added herbs too, because it can be useful any time.

I have two types of fruit trees in my small garden. They are papaw and banana. These days we are having fruits on my papaw tree. So I am very happy. My father told me that we are about to have a flower on the banana tree too.

The plants grew very well as I used only carbonic manure. For that I dug a pit and put all the dried leaves into it. This also helps the environment. It stops the environmental pollution. Burning the garbage pollute the environment.

Now I am going to say how I devote my time for gardening. Before that I must thank my little brother who helps me a lot. Returning from school, I spend some time for gardening. I water them. I do weeding. Recently I made a fence around the plants. It helps me to protect the plants from animals like dogs and hens. And it looks nice too.

The most important thing is that I am helping the family economy by supplying vegetables. Those vegetables are fresh and free from chemicals. My mother is very happy about it. And I sell the rest to my neighbors too. From that I earn some money. So now I do not want to trouble my father to buy story books for me and my brother.

As I was getting good results, I thought of telling about it to the others. First I told my best friend. Then to the teachers. Teachers praised me a lot. My best friend got interested and started planting in his garden too. Now my plan is to tell my other friends and neighbors too.

Like this if all can grow something useful for the home, it is very helpful for a country's economy. As Asians we are used to eating a lot of greens and vegetables. They carry a lot of Vitamins.

I would like to introduce this as a project. It is a useful hobby too. By this we can foster sustainable development in our country. If everyone joins with us, it will be very easy to be a developed country.

## **The Car Crisis** (Original)

*Chua Jun Yan*  
(Age 13, Singapore)  
*Raffles Institution*

As I write this essay, the road outside my school is choked with private cars. The newspaper on my table screams: Cars Sales Reach Record High! Figure after figure show the drastic increase in private vehicles over the past few years. But this is not just a statistic made up by some researcher. This problem is very real. The exhaust fumes in the air, the honking and screeching of cars, the jammed neighbourhood roads—these are some of the tangible effects we face everyday.

This situation is clearly unsustainable. As more cars hit the roads, our country will become increasingly congested. There will be an increase in air and noise pollution, and consequently, a decrease in quality of life. I certainly do not want to live in a neighbourhood where I have to wear earplugs and masks to go out!

On a larger scale, global warming will be accelerated since cars are a major source of greenhouse gasses. Unlikely as it may seem, Singapore—an island state—could well be flooded as a result of climate change.

As such, it is clear we need to take action to fight this pressing matter. The answer: take the bus and the train!

The case for public transport is pressing. Public transport can help foster sustainable development in the local and global community, both of which we belong. At the local level, choosing the bus or train over the car can help ease congestion, reduce air pollution and improve quality of life. At the global level, it will help in the fight against climate change and global warming—a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) train is carbon neutral while a bus emits three times less carbon dioxide per passenger compared to a car.

However, the inconvenient truth is that a private car is still more comfortable and handy. As such, my project aims to encourage individuals to take the bus or MRT by giving them an incentive to do so. And since sustainable development is about thinking globally but acting locally, I believe that we should start small—in schools.

My idea draws inspiration from airlines' frequent flyer programmes. Instead of promoting air travel (which is not environmentally friendly), this initiative will promote public transport. Teachers and students will accumulate points when they take public transport to and from school. The points can then be exchanged for benefits such as concessionary travel on busses and trains or perhaps even discounts for buying a bicycle (another form of green transport). Over time, this programme can be extended to the general public as well.

Given that children's habits are easier to change, this initiative will help promote public transport amongst the young. By reducing the number of students "chauffeured" by their parents, we will help take many vehicles off roads. In the long run, however, the future generation will become accustomed with taking the bus or train—any alternative would be unthinkable. Hence, this will reduce the number of car sales and promote Singapore's highly-developed transport system.

At the end of the day, I recognize that the success of this project depends on many organizations and individuals. I realize that booming car sales are caused by a multiplicity of factors, and that I alone cannot solve the problem. But I believe that I have a right and a responsibility to play a leading role in creating positive change in my environment. I know that I cannot change the world, move mountains or make all the difference. However, I also know that I am empowered to take a step in fostering sustainable development.

## **What I think is most important today**

(Original in Japanese)

*Akio Harigaya*

*(Age 14, Japan)*

*Honjo Higashi Senior High School Affiliated Junior High School, Saitama*

In order to make this world a better place, I think it is important to make a system to distribute food to every person, because we all need food and no one can live without it.

The present state of the global food problem is serious. The price of Thai rice has gone up sharply, and consequently, riots and looting are breaking out especially in developing countries, causing death in places like Egypt. Vietnam and other rice exporting countries have decided to give priority to domestic supply, and they are taking action to implement export restrictions one after another. Furthermore, rice and other grain prices are taking a jump, as a result of rapid increase in grain consumption in countries like China and India. In addition to this fact, it is projected that rice crop will decrease by 80% in China within the next 100 years. Global warming is believed to be one of the factors that are contributing to food shortages. However, it is said that there is enough food to feed the entire population of the world at least for the present. And yet, about 800 million people are currently suffering from food shortages. If nothing is done, there will be even more people who suffer from food shortages and many people will die. What then should we do?

First of all, we should make a system to distribute food to every person. We cannot achieve this goal without the cooperation of the United Nations. As for funds required by the UN, each nation should reduce its military-related national budget and allocate that amount to the service provided by the UN. I think the United Nations should be the only organization to possess military forces. Then, if a country is found to have military forces, the international confidence in that country would drop, and should the international community decide to impose restrictions on food exports to that country, fears and anger among the people of that country would grow, and the military forces of that country would be demobilized by natural

consequences. We can achieve peace by demobilizing military forces in this way, and furthermore, we can solve the problem of food shortages. So, it serves a dual purpose.

Secondly, if things stay the way they are now, we will end up having not enough food to feed all the people on the earth. In order to prevent that, governments should offer more support.

To be more specific, once military forces in all the countries are demobilized, ex-soldiers can engage in agriculture. Some of them may join private-sector businesses, but since the number of employees in private-sector businesses is fixed, I think there will be some overflow of personnel who will naturally turn to agriculture supported by governments.

Thirdly, we should store food little by little every year in case we suffer from mass famine due to natural disasters such as heavy rains.

For example, in the past few years, milk is being dumped due to overproduction. Instead, if they had been preserved as cheese or butter, it would have become very useful in an emergency. Also, in Japan and in other industrial countries, food that would pay little when sold in large quantity due to downslide of prices, should be turned into a storable form and kept for emergency. There is a lot of food like this in the world, and the time will surely come when stored food will become useful. In preparation for such occasion, I think it is important to store food and keep it.

Food is the most important thing for human beings. Without food, we cannot live. However, there are many people in the present world who die because of lack of food. In order to help these people, it is important to make sure food is distributed to everyone. For the present, as well as for the future, it is important to ensure a sufficient supply of food for all the people on the earth. To this end, I think we should make every possible effort with agriculture as the central focus.

## **It's All About Perspective**

(Original)

*Sophia Palenberg*

*(Age 16, U.S.A. & U.K. <Living in U.K.>)*

*The American School in London*

He was around my age at the time of his death. He was bright, and loved by his family, but that was all that I knew and would ever know about him. Perhaps I would have met him on a train to some nearby destination, or read about him 20 years on, widely acclaimed for his cure of a disease. Instead, he had become a number. A statistic. A figure to add to the list of young victims of teenage violence in London this year.

Here, in an urban community formed of many different cultures, teenage murders are not a rare occurrence. But what really is a "community?" Perhaps I was living under the delusion that it always had a happy connotation. A community could range from people living in the same area to the senior chess club down the street. In essence, I thought, it is a place where we can belong. By this standard, a community that I would be part of would be that of the teenagers of London. However, when what a community has in common is malice, damage is inevitable. Teenagers who attack others for reasons ranging from personal differences (such as school resentments or prejudice) to being simply at the wrong place at the wrong time, can create a poisonous environment.

I believe that many of the teenagers and youth involved in gang violence have a hard time finding an alternate route out of their groups. Many times, the gangs provide the sense of belonging that the teens cannot find elsewhere. All human beings have an innate desire to belong. These gangs can be very appealing to those who want to be accepted.

My proposal is to start an alternative community to which young people can turn early on. It would be a bimonthly photography group of teenagers from different schools and areas of London. If the schools consent to the idea, the school would nominate three to four willing students to participate. The total number of teenagers would be about 20 students, so that it



remains a somewhat small group. The cameras will be lent to and shared by the students throughout the year. The first few sessions will be dedicated to quick tutorials on basic photography and meeting one another. From then on, the meetings would be more casual and free-style: stating bi-monthly themes (such as "five pictures depicting your life up until yesterday"), and discussing and commenting on each other's work. Everyone will be required to take photographs during the time in between sessions. If a participant does not wish to continue, the participant can leave but will always be welcome to return. At the end of the year, the photographs would be made into personal portfolios and the strongest ones displayed in public outlets as well as the participants' schools. Every year, there would be new students.

The reason I chose photography is that while photograph is a personal art, others can appreciate it as well. While what we see is the same, we all interpret it in a different manner. In a way, it is similar to how we perceive people. Imagine a roomful of people observing a scene. Everyone would see the same scene, but perhaps one observer would see something about the scene that the others could not. It is when someone else can see something that you cannot that you start learning. My hope is that the photography will open everyone's eyes to seeing through different perspectives. Everything can be seen from different angles, but there is often not a right or wrong way of interpreting, only different ways.

By having this mini-community of young photographers within the London youth community, students will, I hope, learn to see the world in a different way and feel closer to each other through common interests, closing gaps created by economic, cultural and social differences.

W. Eugene Smith once said, "Photography is a small voice, at best, but sometimes one photograph, or a group of them, can lure our sense of awareness." Photos allow the photographer a visual look into who she or he really is. This group would provide an alternative place to belong and a sense of achievement. Knowing that there are others like you who love the same thing and that you can pursue it for your own happiness is a very empowering realization. I hope that the students can go back to their schools and spread this understanding. Even if the result is a simple, kind word, it would be a step in the right direction.

## **Tourism Nation, Japan!!**

(Original in Japanese)

*Asuka Nagatani*

*(Age 19, Japan)*

*Nara Prefectural University*

I believe we are entering an age in which regional communities will be sustaining the nation of Japan. This trend is apparent in today's society, which is headed toward greater decentralization and support of regional system. I realized through my own experience that regional communities in Japan are full of wonderful vitality. I think that by promoting "tourism," we can capitalize on this vitality and build a society where people can respect themselves and respect others.

Last year, I was involved in rural development of a village adjacent to Nara City. At first, I thought that the village had nothing to offer, and the village people were closed. However, the village people's consciousness about their own community began to change when they started accepting visitors for extended-stay tour program, which offered experiences in farming and homestays in farmhouses. They began to show some definite changes—for example, arranging tours voluntarily, and making preparations to receive visitors. Furthermore, unity was born in the village where community links among the people had been weakening, and a bright atmosphere began to prevail in the village.

Through this experience, I sensed the great potential of a community to make full use of the resources they already have. The village is not particularly famous as a tourist destination. They have neither a national treasure nor a world heritage site, but they proved that such a community without particular distinction could sustain and revitalize itself. Surely, the overall atmosphere of the village became positive. I think it is attributed to the fact that the people gained pride and confidence in their own community, and realized they are needed by others who say, "I want to go to your place." I guess the community energy devoted to sustaining itself works to enliven the whole place.

From this experience, I say that "tourism" is one of the effective means for a community to survive and have leverage. I am not talking about developing new tourist attractions like a theme park, but about promoting a "tourism that utilizes existing resources." Otherwise, it will not lead to sustainable economic development or genuine progress of people who live there. Then, what are the specific things I can do? I think I can "bring a breath of fresh air to the community" by working together on ideas to capitalize on the resources that are available.

I once had a chance to meet a director of a nonprofit organization that was established to promote tourism in my city of Nara. He cooperates with college students to plan projects to boost the economic development of the city. For example, they open an old house as a bar on high days and days of festival. He told me that the creativity of college students and young people in general can turn tides in a community.

So, I wish to cooperate with businesses and community groups and offer my ideas. Nara City, for example, has a number of local industries and traditional handicrafts including Japanese vermicelli, textile, and Yoshino cedar craftwork. In cooperation with businesses in these industries, I want to bring a fresh sensitivity to the community through activities like arranging experiential tours and designing products for young people. For example, I have an idea of a tour for participants to experience the processes of making vermicelli and to enjoy eating it afterwards. Another idea is to have tour participants draw a pattern on paper, scan it into a PC, and make socks and T-shirts. Since my college cooperates with local businesses and communities, we have many opportunities to visit factories, and we have more chances than students of other colleges to offer our suggestions and ideas. Therefore, it is possible for me to cooperate and work with local communities and businesses on site, and I think the above ideas are quite feasible.

As I said at the beginning of this essay, I think that Japan will be supported by regional communities in the future. And, it is the power of the ideas of young people that will lead the communities. That power will change the direction of the wind that blows in the community, and build confidence and pride among people who live there. If people can take pride in their own community, they will feel secure about recognizing other communities. In other words, tourism can foster mutual respect. This will lead to consideration and compassion towards other people and the entire community. Therefore, I think tourism will be a driving force to build a better society where people respect themselves and respect others. I hope to work closely with my community and contribute as much as possible to its tourism development.

## **Promoting moringa tree as a nutrition source through women groups**

(Original)

*Abhishek Nayak*

*(Age 20, India)*

*BITS-Pilani, Andhra Pradesh*

### **Introduction:**

I'm an undergraduate student at a technology university based in the rural town of Pilani. The economy of the town and surrounding villages is majorly agricultural. Being in a dry region, the returns on agriculture are extremely low and majority of the population is impoverished with limited buying power. This affects the health of the children and women especially. A large number of children are malnourished and stunted because they eat the same under-nutritious food that their parents consume. The effect is especially brutal on children who are in an important stage of development. Also culturally women of a household eat after everybody else has eaten, when mostly leftovers remain and thus are undernourished. Their nutrition affects the health of the child they bear and the vicious cycle continues.

As a student of biological sciences, I've always been interested in finding solutions using science that would lead to achieving the goal number four (to reduce child mortality) of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) quickly, firmly and in an economically sustainable way.

### **The Problem:**

Malnourishment has been the single biggest cause for infant deaths in India since the past few decades. The survivors of malnutrition have weakened immune systems and more susceptible to diseases and afflictions for the rest of their lives. The macro-economic consequences result from lost productivity, reduced learning capacities and burden on the health care system.

Solutions being called for are normally fortification of available grains and spreading of awareness. But these methods are quite slow in producing results and unsustainable.

### **Moringa tree:**

The Moringa Olifera is a plant that is being used for solving chronic malnutrition problems in many areas. Importantly it is a native species of Pilani whose leaves are locally known as Shajna saag. Its leaves can be consumed by cooking them with spices, or drying and grounding them for soups, while it's mature pods are consumed as a vegetable.

It is being used as a major combater against malnutrition in African countries instead of using more expensive products. Researchers say moringa leaves have four times as much vitamin A as carrots, seven times more vitamin C than oranges, four times more calcium and twice the number of proteins in a glass of milk. A hundred grams of the leaves will give a four month to three year child all their daily requirement of vitamin A, C and calcium; 75% of iron requirements and 50% of protein [requirements](#).

The tree can grow in sandy soils with a little compost for optimal growth. The leaves can be plucked when they are about a meter tall. The tree is very resilient to droughts and requires very little water for growth. In about nine to ten months it reaches heights of thirteen feet. Its branches need to be chopped regularly to ensure fresh supplies of leaves.

### **Benefits:**

The moringa leaves are a very concentrated source of micronutrients required for development. Their consumption will raise nutrition levels of children and adults alike. Children suffering from chronic malnutrition will get relief and mothers will be healthy enough to give birth to healthy infants.

Their plantation will increase vegetation in Pilani and positively affect the population of birds. Growing them in family gardens will create a shaded and cool atmosphere around the house.

Its pods can be consumed as a vegetable or exported to cities to generate income.

### **Proposal:**

Moringa pods will be sourced from various agricultural research centers in India. These will be used by various student groups formed to run a campaign to sow moringa trees in community gardens.

These student groups will target at educating women on cultivating and maintaining of moringa and on how to benefit from the leaves and pods. Generally women stay back at home to look after kids, cattle, etc. while their husbands work in the fields. Women's associations could be formed which take care of planting moringa pods and harvesting from the trees. The women associations would be trained by student groups in cultivating and promoting moringa as a nutritious food source.

These groups of women also take care of production of pods, ground leaves and advise other women on nutritious food habits and how to increase health of the family. The pods from one village could be planted in the surrounding others and start a revolution in increasing both nutrition and vegetation cover in Pilani.

The income earned from selling the leaves and pods as vegetables would add to the household income. Since the women add to the family income, they would have more control on spending. A lot of men are alcoholics and spend money at the cost of family welfare. The women would also gain self confidence, respect of local society and be more independent.

All these positive impacts would benefit Pilani a lot.

## **An echo of undying hope**

(Original)

*Lamia Niazi*  
(Age 19, Pakistan)

In order to turn the leaves for the better in society, it is pertinent to the discussion that a pragmatic approach should be adopted. An onerous plan is not the only way of bringing sustainable development in community. I believe few simple measures are required. The plan is a little daunting but not impossible. The hope of bringing a change fuels it, and there could not be a better renewable fuel than hope and the drive to foster development in the surrounding I thrive in.

First I would like to throw light on my community. I live in two kinds of communities: one is the City life where I have always lived and the other is the country life where my parents are originally from, so therefore every vacation and religious celebration is spent in my village Musakhel. I strongly affiliate myself with Musakhel. It comprises of myriad people from different social backgrounds, but the thread joining them all is the same culture. The population of my small village is almost 120,000 people and the majority is dwelling on the brink of poverty and illiteracy. With no specialized skills or education, every child's future is bleak. The educated lot of the community are mostly teachers who travel 15-30 kilometers daily to go to schools and teach for a small salary starting with \$50-\$60 a month.

Now after analyzing the deteriorating situation to the poverty, I believe the only way to counteract is through education, and education that should not exhaust with one generation. It has to be a continuous thread of high standard, unlike the schools in the vicinity which are not free nor up to the required standard. The standards can be reached with the right syllabus, books, guidance and staff. With education, it is necessary to also equip the people with skills, so that the fantastic example of country like China could be adopted where the sheer hard work and skills of the people have made them the fastest growing economy and have set precedence for others that nothing is impossible. Therefore small cottage industries could also

be made, but this is something I don't have enough finances for, so right now I am working on a plan that is within my limitations, financial and technical.

Now I plan to open an English medium school in Musakhel. I have planned out an agenda and I am just waiting to get a college degree, so I am financially independent. My father has a huge house in Musakhel and enough land to give me some area to start a small school. Temporarily I will use the rooms of the house as classrooms and this way save the startup cost. The seemingly main problem is of teachers, but I have already committed three very bright female cousins who live in Musakhel to teach. Hailing from conservative societies, they are not allowed to work or leave the house, but as families their parents are eager for them to teach at my school.

Now, how I intend to make it sustainable is that first I will start collecting sponsors from my school, family and business sponsors. I have talked to a few family friends who are in business and give charities yearly, and they will give some to me as well. Therefore there will be a constant inflow of money. Students who will be willing to pay will be encouraged to do so. My siblings and I will give special classes in vacations. Now sustainable changes occur over time, so when the students finish high school, I will personally make sure I get them into good colleges on financial aid, but they will be committed to a contract to teach at the school for 2 years at least after graduating from college. This way there will be no dearth of teachers.

One very important step that I intend to take is that I will ask the headmistress of my previous school, if students after completing a grade, could give their books to me instead of throwing them away. This way I will have good books and students at my school will have the same opportunity as that of a student who is privileged to be going to schools of very high standard.

Now Rome was not built in a day nor was the success of Grameen Bank culminated overnight. Therefore hard work and the perseverance is the key for expansion and success of the school. Where there is a will, there is a way and with God giving me so many opportunities I will make it happen.

Soon the echo of hope will reverberate in every nook and cranny of my community. It will be an undying echo that will last...forever.



## **My Place My Life** (Original)

*Christian Rusangwa*  
(Age 24, Rwanda)  
*National University of Rwanda*

Rwanda is a landlocked developing country in central Africa. It continues to recover from the 1994 civil war and genocide in which at least 1,000,000 people were killed. Its population is now evaluated at 9,000,000 habitants. Located in east-central Africa, it is surrounded by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi. Steep mountains and deep valleys cover most of the country. Lake Kivu in the west, at an altitude of 1,472 m, is the highest lake in Africa. Extending north of it are the Virunga Mountains where gentle silver back mountain gorillas are found, which include the volcano Karisimbi (14,187 ft; 4,324 m), Rwanda's highest point.

The civil war and the genocide made a negative impact on conservation and protected areas; the environment as a whole was seriously deteriorated as well. Now that the country is recovering from its past, it is important to put effort in restoring the environment and protecting it from further degradation. In a country with sixty percent of the population are living under the poverty line and experiencing high rate of illiteracy, it is crucial to consider the historical and socio cultural factors in order to carry out a successful sensitization.

The fore-described scenarios shaped my will to give my input in changing the Rwandan society starting from my community; my focus will be on children education about environment protection through a project named the GLOBE KEEPERS Initiative on the theme MY PLACE, MY LIFE. The project will be located in the southern province of Rwanda in the district of Huye in a village where people have been newly resettled. We will be working in primary schools of that area and interact with students and parents of teenagers to talk about appropriate environment protection education. There are more than 10 primary schools in the locality. It takes about 30 minutes to go to the village riding a bicycle from the Butare city (in which the National University is constructed), the second city of Rwanda. The project is about raising the

awareness especially of the younger generations about the urgent need to think and act responsibly about the destiny of Planet Earth by organizing peer education interactive sessions about environment protection.

Twenty volunteers will be recruited from the university students and follow a three days seminar on communication skills and environment protection issues then we will carry out a four month pilot project in three primary schools. The environment education will be conducted through two interactive educational sessions per week and 1 field trip per month in chosen primary schools. There is also an idea of creating environment protection clubs that will be led by youth for youth perspective. It is hoped that students will use the gained knowledge to spread the information to their peer in order to achieve a behavioural impact within the community and promote positive attitudes towards environment, through eco friendly activities like planting trees, protecting wetland, using reusable materials, using composted fertilizers in agriculture, protecting water spaces such as lakes and rivers; also through the promotion of ecotourism for young people in our region so that by discovering its richness they should act more responsibly towards the environment. During the pilot project the GLOBE KEEPERS Initiative will work in conjunction with local authorities, NGOs and all institutions which deal with the protection of the environment to promote and inform the general public on the issues affecting the environment today.

To assess the impact of these interactive sessions and field trips, different contests about environmental issues are scheduled; this will be done through Essay Writing, Photography, Arts, Music, Sports and Poetry Contests among others. This will serve as a pilot project before a bigger project that will run in December where we will be working with ten primary schools.

GLOBE KEEPERS Initiative, wants children and youth in general to recognize that they are important, because it is their responsibility to protect and sustain their own future. They cannot count on others doing it for them. It is also their job to inspire others to do the same. Since it is actually not just their future but our future.

I do believe that all children have the power to create change and deserve the opportunity to do so. The project is localized but with a global mission of creating a tangible contribution to systemic, massive change relating to the concepts of human reconnection to the earth, community, and its resources. Think about this: What would the world look like if every child on earth grew up with an experience of intense cultural exchange and global awareness,

through a hands-on program and understanding of how to take positive collaborative action?  
What would our politicians be like from a generation like this? Our business leaders?  
Engineers? Journalists? Farmers? Our citizens?