

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

ONLINE FORUM REPORT

FALL-SPRING

September through May

2004-2005

## **SECTION I: Crossing Boundaries: Youth in Dialogue about the Rights of the Child**

Crossing Boundaries(CB) is the youth component of the Center for International Learning's(CIL) "Communities in Dialogue" program. It links youth groups across nations and continents to learn ways of empowering themselves to promote the rights of children everywhere. Youth groups internationally are invited to engage in a CIL developed curriculum composed of six sessions which focus on the Rights of the Child and how change can take place. The learning sessions, introduce monthly, engage the youth in self-reflection. The sessions provide content, activities, and suggestions. Each group communicates with CB through the CIL website online forum. The goal is that the youth have a better understanding of the rights of the child in order to become more involved in the political process in their communities and countries. By "political process" CIL means the way in which people make decisions, who has the power and how power gets exercised. In Crossing Boundaries special emphasis is placed on the youth's right to participate in decision making. Overall, CIL hopes to engage youth at risk to become active citizens of the world therefore enhancing human dignity toward children internationally.

The Covenant of the Rights of the Child is the basis for this dialogue. It focuses on human rights as necessary for the development of peace. It aims at youth empowerment so that youth may grow in hope and learn to participate in democratic processes. The outreach to gain participants was primarily to those youth that are financially poor.

Thus Crossing Boundaries promotes dialogue, by confronting violence as a means of gaining what one needs. The groups involved at this time come from Harlem, St. Louis and Los Angeles in the United States, from Manila and Olongapo in the Philippines, from Ghana and Nigeria in Africa. Several other groups have indicated interest and plan to join the dialogue.

## **SECTION II: Participation in CIL's online forum (program activity from September 1, 2004- May 31, 2005)**

### **Forum Section Breakdown:**

**Section 1: "Introductions" which were made by the following people:**  
Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Active Participants:

Youth Practicing Democracy (YPD)-Sarah Stevenson	New York, U.S
Let's Start-Jacquie Toben	St. Louis, U.S.
A Place Called Home (APCH)-Monique Edwards	California, U.S.
Simba Friends Foundation-Kofi Essien	Ghana, Africa
Bahay Tuluyan-Catherine Scerri	Manila,
Philippines	
Gov't Science and Technical College-Iyke Chuks	Nigeria, Africa

Friends who introduced themselves:

Alexandra Badia	New York, U.S.
Mindy Sheinbaum	New York, U.S.
Cathryn Magno	New York, U.S.

Introductions pending:

PREDA-Erusa Catubig	Olongapo, Philippines
UTEC Lowell-Maanav Thakore	Massachusetts, U.S.

**Groups levels of participation:**

*Youth Practicing Democracy (YPD)*

CB Project Coordinator was in touch with YPD's facilitator through email, phone calls and personal contact. The facilitator was also involved in giving advice about the content on the forum.

YPD participated in Introductions, Sessions I -Identity, Session II - Identity and Session III -Family.

*Let's Start*

CB Project Coordinator was in touch with Let's Start through email and phone calls. The facilitator although not able to be involved in more than the Introductions section of the online forum was instrumental in her advice about ways to keep groups involved. They assured the coordinator that they have used some of the materials but due to changing attendance in the group were unable to participate more. They plan to be more involved in the fall.

*A Place Called Home (APCH)*

CB Project Coordinator was in touch through email and phone calls.

They participated in Introductions, Session I Identity, Session II-Identity, Session III-Family and Session IV-Everyday Heroes. They were able to be more active later in the process due to development of a weekly meeting.

*Simba Friends Foundation*

CB Project Coordinator was in touch through email. Facilitator was involved in giving advice on ways to make the forum a place where more back and forth dialogue could occur.

They participated in Introductions, Session I-Identity, Session II-Identity, Session III-Family, and Session IV-Everyday Heroes.

*Bahay Tuluyan*

CB Project Coordinator was in touch through email. Founder of CB was also a main point person with this group. They struggle with lack of access to technology and finances.

They were involved in Introductions.

*Gov't Science and Technical College*

CB Project Coordinator was in touch through email.

They were involved later in the forum process and completed Introductions. They are planning to do the Sessions in the following months.

*PREDA and UTEC Lowell*

CB Project Coordinator is in touch through email and phone calls. Both groups have articulated wanting to be involved in a more substantive way.

**Breakdown of curriculum activity in the forum by group and individual responses:**

**Section 2: "Session One –Identity" (Posted November 17, 2004)**

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Participants:

YPD-Sarah Stevenson (U.S)

APCH Monique Edwards (U.S.)

PREDA-Eresa Catubig (Philippines)

SIMBA-Kofi Essien (Ghana)

Friends:

Virginia Dorgan (U.S.)

Kathleen Kanet (U.S.)

Laura Fernandez (U.S.)

**Section 3: “Session Two-Identity” (Posted February 2, 2005)**

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Participants:

YPD-Sarah Stevenson

SIMBA-Kofi Essien

APCH-Monique Edwards

Friends:

Kathleen Kanet

**Section 4: “Session Three-Family” (Posted March 23, 2005)**

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Participants:

YPD-Sarah Stevenson

SIMBA-Kofi Essien

APCH-Monique Edwards

**Section 5: “Session Four-Heroes” (Posted March 23, 2005)**

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Participants:

SIMBA-Kofi Essien

APCH-Monique Edwards

**Section 6: “Session Five-Rights of the Child” (Posted May 6, 2005)**

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

**Section 7: “Session Six What does Human Rights mean to you?” (Posted May 6, 2005)**

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

**Activity in other areas of the forum (These are additional areas of the forum that were developed by participants.)**

**“Project Announcement”**

Created by PREDA-Eresa Catubig

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Nine different responses from nine different people inquiring about CB.

**“Other Youth Interested to Join the Forum”**

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Six other responses by four different people.

**“Announcement about the Project”**

Created by Mohamed Mahmoud

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Two comments by Mahmoud and One by Kathleen Kanet

**“Introducing Myself with my action plan”**

Created by Kamran Shaqat-in Lahore Pakistan

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

Three comments by Kamran and one by Kathleen.

**“Volunteers in the Developing World”**

Created by Shay Cullen-PREDA

Facilitated by Samara Shapiro

**SECTION III: Outcomes and Goals**

**Outcomes: A variety of groups participated in the forum. Below is a list of goals for the forum and an evaluation for each session as to whether or not they have been met so far.**

**Goals:**

Beyond the overall goal of having youth enhance their knowledge about the rights of the child and engaging in ways to create change in their lives and the lives of those around them the six sessions outlined contained:

1. a beginning meaningful activity that helped group cohesion and connectedness
2. activities that connected directly to one of the themes; Identity, Family, Heroes, Rights of the Child and Making a Difference.
3. activities that encouraged creative expression and thinking outside of the box

#### Session I-Identity-

Four groups participated in this Session. They each did the activities thoughtfully and reflected back in a variety of ways. Each group spoke about what identity meant to them and how they saw themselves in the world. One group from Africa had some trouble with what the word identity meant but was able to sort it out and do some meaningful reflection about who they are. Each group creatively interpreted and then expressed how looking at identity is an important part being reflective.

#### Session II-Identity

Three groups participated in this Session. The beginning activity was hard for one of the groups and the other two were excited by it. They were all able to understand the importance of using metaphors when describing themselves as individuals and as a group. The timeline activity was a meaningful way for all the groups to express both personal and revealing things about themselves. Groups got to know one another better and see things they had in common.

#### Session III-Family

Three groups participated in this Session. Only one of the three groups reported back on doing the opening activity. They created some thoughtful and interesting questions that all of the students participated in. Two of the three groups responded directly to the family tree activity and were able to discuss what family meant to them and who they included in that tree. One group was creative and talked about employment as an important part of how they saw families.

#### Session IV-Heroes

Two groups participated in this Session. One group did the barometer activity in a creative way. Both groups struggled with what it means to be a Hero and came to all kinds of conclusions. They learned about each others opinions and were able to explore how they could be everyday heroes and how some people might be destined for greatness. One group did this

through exploring one individual's choice at making a difference. The other group identified what Hero meant for them and who in their lives were everyday heroes.

Session V and VI-Have not have participants yet.

## **SECTION IV: Outreach, Obstacles, and Next Steps**

### **Outreach Efforts**

In addition, other outreach has taken place through:

1. Email-served to remind people to use sessions, introduce themselves, find out more about CB and ways to be involved, promote CB curriculum, stay connected to the missions of youth groups. Hundreds have been sent.
2. Phone calls-to evaluate the current process, find out how the process is moving along, remind people to participate, evaluate outreach and needs of groups. One hundred phone calls have been made
3. iEARN website-a link was created to the interactive project forum of the iEARN website in order to outreach to more teachers. Postings were made in the teacher's forum asking them to join CB forum.

### **Steps Coordinator of Crossing Boundaries (CB) took to make it happen:**

1. Spent up to seven hours a week, split into two days working at CIL office
2. Created long term and short term goals for the project
3. Worked closely with the Director in order to develop curriculum update process
4. Outreached to groups already connect with CB
5. Outreached to new groups in order for them to join CB community
6. Worked closely with iEARN in developing CB component of online forum
7. Updated and organized the online forum once it launched
8. Worked with participants in forum to introduce them to the technology
9. Stayed in close contact with participants
10. Collaborated in development of curriculum
11. Posted the curriculum online and outreached to have participants use it
12. Monitored content of the online forum

13. Continued to work with iEARN on outreach such as posting on iEARN e-newsletter, creating a link to the iEARN website, posting in the teachers discussion forum

**Obstacles in the forum development and ongoing group involvement:**

1. International outreach
  - a. Different time zones
  - b. Communication challenges
  - c. Language barriers i.e. translating materials for local groups which do not speak or read English.
2. Technology-access to it and knowledge of it
3. Voluntary participation
4. Developing a curriculum that was engaging and exciting for people from all over the world
5. Slow moving process
  - a. Moving from a beginnings stage in the process into content portions
  - b. Started from the ground up with a new project
  - c. New mode of communication for the groups involved

**Response to obstacles:**

1. Constant and reliable outreach
2. Step-by-step introduction to technology
3. Developing interesting and engaging curriculum
4. Encouragement to the facilitators through emails, phone calls, and personal contact.
5. Patience with the process
6. Seeking advice from others who are facilitating forums.

**Next Steps:**

1. Create dialogue between groups
2. Use iEARN email subscription to keep coordinators more involved

**(Here we should talk about the second and third years)**

**(Please also advise how we can incorporate the work of Crossing Boundaries Advisors. Check what I wrote and revise any way you think.)Advisors**

**Advisory Board Involvement:  
Kathleen wrote this up.**

## CROSSING BOUNDARIES ADVISORY GROUP

### Crossing Boundaries Advisory Committee Goals

The role of the Crossing Boundaries Advisory Group is to support the development of the program: Crossing Boundaries: Youth in Dialogue about the Rights of the Child program and to help in its evaluation and in communicating its outcomes to others.

The Advisory Group first met on **June 26, 2003**. The goals of the meeting were to introduce one to another and to the program to raise some questions regarding implementation and to determine how each could make a contribution as well as gain insight and learning for ones own work. They needed to determine if they wanted to continue as a group meeting several times in the year. This group felt they had experiences to share as well as being a resource for workshops etc for the new project and agreed to continue to meet during the coming year. Members currently are employed by Children's Defense Fund, Incarcerated Mothers program of Edwin Gould Services for Children, a professor from Southern Connecticut University, a post Doctoral Psychology worker from the Department of Children's Services in Connecticut and a PHD student from CUNY.

The second meeting was held on **October 20, 2003**. The Group advised the director in planning to invite youth from Incarcerated Mothers program to become part of the Youth Practicing Democracy teen group which was being organized by the Director of Crossing Boundaries. They affirmed also and advised in an upcoming celebration of all the youth groups from the Incarcerated Mothers Program from the past ten years. A main topic discussed among them was the knowledge they had of street children in the United States and what that means in a first world context.

Kathleen presented the goals for both Youth Practicing Democracy and Crossing Boundaries with the projected activities of the year. She had prepared these with the help and advice of Cathryn Magno, one of the Advisory members. Most of the meeting time was reflecting on how the YPD program is progressing in relationship to what was been planned.

The next meeting was held on **March 12, 2004**

One of the first questions asked was if the initial testing of how much the youth knew about human rights had been determined in an oral pretest. This was deemed important so that measurement of learning over a period of time could take place. This may have been accomplished when Cathryn Magno met with the group on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January. In addition Sarah Zeller-Berkman will speak with Dr Ruck who has done a lot of work on human rights with minority youth and has done such testing.

Kathleen reported that weekly meetings have progressed with a majority of the IMP YPD group present at each meeting. Careful records are being kept. The content has been on the issue of the rights of the child and human rights in general with some focus on the concept of change and how it can take place and what the youth themselves would like to change. In one sense Alexandra Badia, assistant to Kathleen Kanet, Director are determining the agenda for each meeting each week with a focus on the main goals.

It was suggested and agreed that the focus should begin with reflection on the local needs as experienced by the youth and then be led to the global. The groups spent some time discussing that it is often easier for one to be in touch with the grieves and pains of someone else rather than to be able to articulate ones own human rights violation. This could be a self defense mechanism that may be very important for one to have and not be overcome by ones pain. With YPD we also are trying to establish a safe place for the youngsters and provide some healing process for them.

In addition, it was again noted that the youth's participating in some activity that may change the situation might be very empowering. At the same time actions for change often don't always show much change in external situations. It was noted that one youth that had been to Albany several times to talk with legislatures regarding the Rockefeller laws said she felt that nothing has changed.

Mindy suggested a game she had done with youth at one time called the Jenga Game which gave participants experience of breaking a huge structure by continually removing small pieces until the whole thing collapses.

**Mindy said that she would come in for one session to play this game with YPD.** One of the issues that the youth spent some time discussing was to vote in a new president of the United States. It was also suggested that the Facilitators of YPD spend some more time on ascertaining by brainstorm what the youth would like to see changed from their experiences i.e. "What is the main issue in their lives where their human rights are violated?"

**Sarah has also agreed to do a session with YPD on RESPECT**

"What do you do when you are not respected?"

"What do you do when you don't get respected?"

"How do you get what you want in a non-violent manner?"

This came after reflecting on a comment about what was learned by an YPD member who after viewing Whale Rider was impressed that although Pai's actions and wishes were not respected by her grandfather, she did not get angry. Pai kept on trying to make a difference and to follow what she thought was the correct way. She also tried to see that her grandfather's perspective.

**Tricia said if time could be arranged she would be willing to come to give an Anger Management Workshop.** This could be done on a Saturday. She has been doing a lot of these with youth where she works. Other suggestions included using Hip Hop or making a movie.

The next meeting was on **April 23, 2004.**

Cathryn agreed to write an article for the next CIL newsletter whose theme will focus on "What does Democracy mean to you and how do you practice it?" It will highlight the work of Youth Practicing Democracy is doing. Cathryn will incorporate the interviews the youth did with adults at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party responding to these questions as well as the session she did with YPD youth in January. She will talk to Peggy Ray one of the editors for more input regarding the preparation. Hopefully, there will be another story about the IMP youth that voted for the Worlds Children prize including Idalmin Santana's participation in the Sweden the past two weeks. We hope that a youth will do this. Kathleen will speak with Idalmin.

Cathryn has submitted a proposal to the World Congress on Comparative Education, which will be held in Cuba in October. She will present a paper presenting learnings gleaned from Crossing Boundaries. In May and June she will also be present to interview the youth of Youth Practicing Democracy.

Kathleen will project a schedule with suggested topics for the next few months of YPD's Wednesdays' meetings.

### **Crossing Boundaries Update:**

Five of the seven groups have been in contact with one another. We have not heard from the youth group in Harlem or from the two African groups. Mindy Sheinbaum from Children's Defense Fund agreed to work with Kathleen on a regular basis sending out questions for the group to respond. This will hopefully engage the youth in an ongoing and growing fashion.

We have been somewhat hindered as our CIL website has not yet been updated to allow really good interchange. Thus far the communication has all been done by e-mail. We do have a benefactor who can contribute money for the update and for some supporting help. We set then end of May as then to have an updated website. In order to motivate response it was suggested that we buy cameras or camcorders to give to each group to help them with their being in touch with one another. It was strongly suggested that this benefactor be presented with a proposal regarding this need. This will be done.

### **Meeting October 7, 2004**

Present: Mindy Fernandez-Sheinbaum, Cathryn Magno, Laura Fernandez, Chia-Chia Wang, Tanya Krupat, Kathleen Kanet and Samara Shapiro

- I. Review of the "Crossing Boundaries: Youth in Dialogue about the Rights of the Child" short term and long term plan.
  - a. Samara took board members through the plan step-by-step, including updating them about the partnership with IEARN
  - b. Recorded feedback from members as well as reviewed goals
  - c. Members indicated that the plan looked sound but much of the discovery would take place once iEARN technology was in place
  - d. Youth Advisory council was suggested to be the YPD Youth
  - e. Looked at issue of sexual exploitation/trafficking as the theme for the first youth discussion

f. Discussed possible outreach to other Youth groups both nationally and internationally (**Tanya** has suggestions of a group Lowell, Ma, Kenya, Operation Crossroads in Africa, UN International School, **Laura** said she would look into a youth group from the Sweden festival, **Chia-Chia** mentioned a connection in Sierra Leone)

Right now CB Coordinator will continue to outreach to existing youth groups and help develop materials for first meeting  
Possible problems were seen with bridging cultural and psychological divide with youth from such different backgrounds-work need to be done to help avoid this, role of coordinators to help make connections for the youth

II. Laura reported on status of YPD

- a. Currently Michael Rodriguez(new teen director of programs) and Sarah Stevenson (IMP inter) are going to be running the YPD group
- b. The year plan is being set for YPD with the possibility of the year culminating in a trip to Miami for a conference(award to those invested in program, would need fundraising to make this possible)
- c. YPD will also be working on making a video with Downtown TV (?)-looking at leadership styles, issues of local and global legislatures etc...
- d. YPD is being honored by Edwin Gould this Fall

III. Cathryn and Laura gave brief description of their presentation on “We Can Hear You: Documenting Youth Voices for Social Justice” for the Cuba conference

- a. Their research shows that formal schooling must be supplemented by social service programs if students are to overcome the disadvantage and marginalization they face in their daily lives. Youth Practicing Democracy is the case model for the paper.
- b. This will be presented in late October

Meeting on **March 23, 2005**

Samara reviewed the Forum on line with the group and showed how it can be entered. A challenge has been to gain involvements of groups and individuals in the forum. CIL has only a few board members involved and not any of the CB Advisors. Are we doing the right thing? Can we communicate differently, what can we do?

How do we get the dialogue going!!!!

This generated a good and lively and insightful discussion

- Initially it is good to keep only the facilitator involved in the early discussion.
- It takes time to get acquainted with how it works, even those with some experience in web and forums
- The sessions are good, the openness to respond to what comes up in the group. They don't demand much pre time and one does not have to do it all.
- With busy people you should give deadlines and then follow up!
- Reminders, constant reminders!!!
- Begin a dialogue about not being able to get it started. What do people on their local level have to go through to get involved? This would be part of international learning. Ask them or if they have already told you, put it in the forum. The process of getting involved is very important.
- Ask for their gripes. Ask them again, what was the process of their getting involved in this program.
- Be more directive, exact in what you want
- Send a message each time to the groups from the Advisory Committee (Samara will follow up with this)
- Survey what other youth group with forums like ours are doing to keep it going
- Ask the Crossing Boundaries Advisory Committee to cast a wide net to gather more groups i.e. Social workers should be involved in groups!

Tanya Krupat volunteered to help with developing concrete outcomes for the CB program

There have been no formal meetings since March 23 but the advisors have been supportive on an informal basis to the program.