Young people are the key to peace

By James D. Wolfensohn,
Eduardo Missoni and
Giacomo Filibek

All of the world’s current crises—conflict, HIV/AIDS, unemployment—have one thing in common: they all involve young people who are burdened by the despair of these problems, but who are also a largely untapped source of change.

To many of us the world may seem like an old place. Yet there are 2.8 billion people under the age of 25 out of a global population of 6 billion. Nine out of 10 of these young people live in developing countries. They are not just the future but also the now.

And that is why this week 170 youth leaders from 82 countries are gathering in Sarajevo, at the invitation of the World Bank, the European Youth Forum and the Scout Movement. This is not just another meeting, it is a gathering of a group that is most at risk, and one that is key to reaching the world’s development challenges.

Take HIV/AIDS: Out of the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS, more than a quarter are in their youth. There are 121 million children of primary school age who are not in school—and more than half of these are female. Most of these girls will never learn to read or write.

With an alarming frequency, youth are becoming involved in conflict around the world, either as victims or, just as tragically, soldiers. More than half of those who are of working age are jobless, according to a new International Labor Organization report. Lack of jobs can lead to increased frustration and hopelessness on such a scale that ensuing social and political ferment can make tomorrow’s world far less stable and secure than today’s.

However, old solutions to old problems are not the key to peace. Young people are the key to peace.

World Bank team to work with Government on Phase II of Review to reduce risks in Bank-funded projects

September 27, 2004 - The Royal Government of Cambodia and the World Bank announced today that the second phase of the study, Reduction of Fiduciary Risks in Cambodia, was now starting. The first phase of the study was announced in June 2004 (see Cambodia Government, World Bank announce today new initiative to reduce risk in Bank-funded projects, 4 June, 2004).

The first phase of the study, completed in August 2004, focused on collecting information on 625 contracts under four World Bank financed projects and pre-selecting a number for detailed review. The second phase of the study consists of an in-depth review of the pre-selected contracts as well as reviewing in detail every aspect of project implementation to verify if funds made available for projects activities are being used for the intended purposes with due regard to economy, efficiency and transparency. The study should result in a series of recommendations on ways to tighten procedures, improve monitoring, and increase the understanding of how fraud and corruption may happen.

The study is focusing on four World Bank financed projects: Flood Emergency; Rural Investment and Local Governance; Road Rehabilitation; and Biodiversity and Protected Areas. These projects were selected based on the combination of the following criteria: advanced stage of implementation; various sizes; diversified sectors; centralized and decentralized management arrangements; and utilization of a wide range of procurement methods. The study team includes procurement, financial and project implementation experts from the World Bank and the Ministry of Finance and has the support of the Treasury Department.
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problems won’t work. Greater effort, in terms of research and resources, needs to be invested to better understand the hopes and aspirations of young people. After all, they are living in deeply confusing times. They are more exposed to the rest of the world as a result of globalization. But most do not have access to it. They are part of a strange paradox which is ubiquitous in the developing world: in villages in Africa, young people can buy Coca-Cola but they have no clean water. In small towns in Asia, youth enjoy internet access and the world is at their finger tips. Yet visa regimes will not allow them to travel very far.

While we must address these imbalances of globalization, we must also take advantage of the opportunities it presents. There is a universal feeling that more and more young people share—through internet, music and culture. We need to find ways to harness this, and let young people be conduits for peace and harmony.

The Sarajevo conference is a step in the right direction. The conference deals with education, conflict prevention and resolution, risky behavior and youth employment. The young representatives understand these issues are manifestly interlinked.

The concerns of today’s young people are heartfelt and urgent. In the next 25 years, 2 billion more people entering our planet will live in the developing world. We must set our priorities around their concerns for more opportunities, jobs and social justice.

James D. Wolfensohn is President of the World Bank Group; Eduardo Missoni is Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement and Giacomo Filibeck is President of the European Youth Forum.

Three Cambodians attend Youth Conference

By Outh Renne
Director, Youth for Peace

As a follow-up to the 2003 Paris Youth Conference, the World Bank hosted a second Youth Conference in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The three-day conference, held from September 4 to 7, was aimed at encouraging youths to discuss how their organizations and the World Bank can work together to eradicate poverty and promote development.

Three Cambodians were among the 175 youth leaders and representatives invited from all over the world to join the conference. The three Cambodians were: Outh Renne, Director of Youth for Peace; Hap Omaly, vice president of the Cambodian Islamic Youth Association (CIYA) and Meas Chhinchakrya, women’s program coordinator of the Khmer Youth Association (KYA).

The conference was divided into several topics of discussion. The most significant—echoing the issues raised in Paris—were: education, employment, conflict prevention and resolution, at-risk behavior and HIV/AIDS.

For each topic discussed, a progress report was given since the last conference, priorities were set for the future and recommendations were prepared for president of the World Bank Group Mr. James Wolfensohn.

The Cambodian representatives agreed to establish a loose and informal network for dialogue, and regular interaction to disseminate information and knowledge sharing. This will facilitate joint positions on selected issues, as well as empower and strengthen youth organizations and youth networks. This will also ensure inclusiveness. A process for establishing proper institutional arrangements for these networks was agreed on. This will involve coordinating institutions for youth volunteer work and youth development.

A system will be set up to monitor the progress on the Sarajevo commitments. Holistic approaches in education, finding solutions to operate at community, national and sub-regional levels will be invested in.

At the end of the conference, Mr. Wolfensohn welcomed recommendations from the participants. He stressed that, although the World Bank ought not recreate the work already done by youth organizations, it will fully cooperate with existing youth groups and NGOs. He said young people of the world have the potential to foster and advance global development. “We need to recognize that young people have a role to fulfill. We need to give responsibility and opportunity to young leaders so they can help to build a world they desire,” said Mr. Wolfensohn.
World Bank team to work with Government on...

Part of National Road No. 3, one of the World Bank’s financed road projects

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tation specialists.

“The review is not a one-off study and other projects will be subject to similar reviews in the future. This is part of the World Bank’s overall strategy to strengthen its supervision and fiduciary responsibilities to its shareholders. It is a key component of the World Bank’s overall Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) which will focus on improvement of the governance environment” said Nisha Agrawal, Country Manager for Cambodia. Likewise, this study is also strongly supported by the Government of Cambodia. According to Dr. Aun Porn Moniroth, Secretary of State for the Ministry for Economy and Finance “This study comes at the right time when the Royal Government of Cambodia is putting good governance at the core of its new Rectangular Strategy. As Prime Minister Hun Sen said to the donors in his closing address at the pre-CG Meeting held on September 10, the Government is striving to make sure that donor assistance to Cambodia is well-spent and reaches the intended target. The Prime Minister also stressed that the Government should respond to donor generosity and support by delivering results and ensuring accountability.”

Initial findings will be discussed with the Government, and together a draft action plan will be developed to incorporate the recommendations emerging from the study. The findings and plan will also be shared with other stakeholders, moving towards the ultimate goal of finalizing an action plan and time frame for introducing into ongoing and future Cambodian projects.

At this point in the study, the World Bank team is not investigating any specific cases of alleged fraud or corruption. However, if the study uncovers indications of corrupt or fraudulent practices, as per our customary practice, the allegations will be referred to the World Bank’s Department of Institutional Integrity (INT), who would then carry out a separate investigation. The World Bank has established the INT to respond directly to allegations of corruption or misuse of funds in its portfolio. More information is attached below.

World Bank and Corruption

World Bank funds are provided to help developing countries reduce poverty. The Bank has the responsibility to ensure that the loans and credits it extends, and the trust funds that it administers, are used for their intended purposes. This policy is enforced through a comprehensive array of rules and procedures aimed at ensuring high standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in Bank-supported projects.

The World Bank Department of Institutional Integrity (INT) is charged with investigating allegations of fraud and corruption in Bank-financed projects. The department reports directly to the

President of the World Bank and is staffed by a multinational team of more than forty professionals, including investigators, legal specialists, forensic accountants, procurement specialists and experienced Bank project managers. Additional information can be found at: www.worldbank.org/integrity.

Allegations of fraud and corruption related to World Bank-financed projects can be reported to 1-800-831-0463 24 hours a day and an international AT&T operator with international translation is available. To reverse charges (collect calls) dial 704-556-7046. Reports may be anonymous, and can also be made in person or online at: investigations_hotline@worldbank.org

The sanctions process is an internal administrative process within the World Bank. It provides for due process of all parties involved in a dispute. For more information on procurement and sanctions, see: http://www.worldbank.org/procure

For more information on the World Bank’s anti-corruption policies and activities, see: http://www.worldbank.org/anti-corruption.

Water supply workers laying a pipe in Phnom Penh, another of the World Bank’s financed projects


Business Edge TV promotes successful business

From showcasing a successful fried-banana vendor to trumpeting the benefits of recycling car tires, Cambodia’s first business TV show is breaking fresh ground.

Business Edge TV, a half-hour magazine-style show broadcast weekly, is catering to the growing number of small and medium-sized businesses in Cambodia and helping the economy revive after decades of conflict that ended only in 1998.

The program, which kicked off a year-long series in September 2003 and is now in its second season, fills a gap on Cambodian TV, squeezed between glitzy variety shows, melodramatic soap operas and dry political commentary.

“This is the first and only program ever shown in Cambodia to provide people with both basic and in-depth information on the Cambodian business situation,” Ministry of Commerce Secretary of State Sok Siphana said.

“More business people are turning to it for business advice and students too, for practical examples of the theory they’ve learned in school,” he added. The program explores challenges faced by businesses anywhere, but with a Cambodian slant.

“Cambodian people here were just not reading enough ... and there were no radio channels professional enough to broadcast this kind of program,” said Lili Sisombat, MPDF’s senior business development officer.

Topics covered so far include securing finances, pain-free office relocation, the pluses of recycling—including car tires—and building loyalty among employees. Producer Dim Sovannarum said the show was blazing a unique trail in Cambodia.

“Our production is different from Chinese drama series, game shows and so on as we mainly focus on only three elements: information, information and more information,” he said.

Chhim Vannak, the owner of a now booming fried-banana shop in downtown Phnom Penh, that began as a humble street stall in 1994, has starred on the show and says he is picking up a few pointers himself from tuning in.

“I have watched about 20 episodes so far. They teach and explain how to run a successful business,” he told AFP, adding that he had learned to focus more on quality and service, while he has also decided against raising prices. The show is funded by the Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (MPDF), an initiative of the World Bank Group’s International Finance Corporation and backed by an array of donors as a means of promoting small and medium enterprises in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam.

MPDF’s senior business development officer Lili Sisombat said the show’s idea was hatched in 2001 when they were brainstorming how to spread business news in Cambodia, where most people are subsistence farmers and a third of the population survives on less than a dollar a day.

“Cambodian people here were just not reading enough ... and there were no radio channels professional enough to broadcast this kind of program,” she said, adding that television was the obvious next choice.

Media giant CNBC was also called in to provide advice on international angles for some segments of the program, which is broadcast across five of Cambodia’s 24 provinces and municipalities to an estimated 15,000 viewers. By the end of 2004, broadcasting will be nationwide.

The Commerce Ministry’s Sok Siphana hopes the show may help give Cambodian businesses an edge as they face up to stiffer competition when the kingdom accedes to the World Trade Organization within the next few months.

“The WTO will open the international market for Cambodia, but if Cambodian people do not understand business it will be very difficult,” he warned.

This article was written and distributed to newspapers around the world by Agence France-Presse (AFP)

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We Welcome Your Opinions and Comments
We welcome your opinions, comments and questions. Please send them to: Bou Saroeun, Communications Specialist, at 113 Norodom Blvd., Phnom Penh, email: sbou@worldbank.org. We very much appreciate your valuable assistance.