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A special thank you to the participants and e-mentors of our social innovation programs whose hard work and feedback have helped us evolve Sprout to meet their growing needs!

We gratefully acknowledge our funder Pearson Foundation for their support of our vision and work, with particular recognition to Debra Kagan and Mark Nieker for their guidance and collaborative approach.

Sincerely,

Michael Furdyk              Jennifer Corriero
Co-founders, TakingITGlobal

INTRODUCTION

In August 2012, fourteen Sprout graduates were selected to participate in the 2012 Pearson Fellowship for Social Innovation. The program offered a framework of support to fellows to leverage their existing plans, knowledge, skills and capital toward advancing their world-changing initiatives.

The impact stories that follow capture the outcomes, early impact and project evolution of seven high achieving fellows from the 2012 class. Ranging in age from 18 to 28, they hail from countries including Australia, Canada, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, and Senegal.

TakingITGlobal is pleased to profile these young change makers and their innovations:

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Sprout has been fortunate to benefit from a great team to guide its growth under the leadership of Kristle Calisto-Tavares who has offered her insights to our Pearson Fellows through coaching sessions along with managing this unique program. In addition, we thank our many team members for lending their creativity and brilliance to our work, especially Sara Hassan, Danielle Stacey Balkissoon, Jeff Clemens, Edgar Gonzalez, Sean Keith, and Francisco Pereira.

Social Innovation is one of TakingITGlobal’s key program areas. Through Sprout and the Pearson Fellowship, we’re proud to be supporting a generation of courageous young people in creating their own futures while addressing some of the world’s greatest challenges.

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Adama Diop is a young Senegalese man living and studying in Montreal, Canada. The impetus for his journey to Canada was a defining moment in his own leadership. Adama explains: “The most significant experience that has shaped me as a leader is when I went in my village in 2008 to meet all the community stakeholders’ and organizations to discuss community issues and find solutions together. I wanted to do something for my community. Through that process, I founded Pellital Microfinance Institution.”

Pellital Microfinance Institution is an online micro lending platform that helps the entrepreneurial women of the sub-Saharan village of Agnam-Goly to start or grow their small businesses.

Women in rural Senegal struggle to participate or generate economic activity to care for their families and contribute to their communities. Many women wish to start small businesses (i.e. selling products like fish, clothing, produce or providing services such as tailoring and hairstyling) as a means to end that struggle. Often traditional financial institutions will not lend money to them. Adama sought to address this need through the selection and distribution of micro loans. Once, an entrepreneurial woman is selected as a loan recipient, the Pellital team helps her in the successful planning or expansion of her small business.

With four years under its belt, Adama has been able to evaluate the impact of his small yet significant loan institution. The verdict is that Pellital is making difference in Agnam-Goly through the creation of sustainable self-employment and economic autonomy for women.

Since 2008, 28 entrepreneurial women were funded and got their small businesses started or expanded. Of that number, 27 have survived which translates into a 96% success rate. As a result of the increase in these entrepreneurs’ incomes, Pellital generated nearly 135 indirect beneficiaries.

Through the Pearson Fellowship and the seed grant of $1,000 USD, Adama was not only able to provide loans to 10 additional women entrepreneurs, but also contributed partially in funding his trip to the Agnam-Goly village for the development of a promotional video. Adama also worked with one of TakingITGlobal’s social innovation partners, Start Some Good, to establish a profile on their social enterprise-oriented crowd funding site for each active entrepreneur to collect online donations from supporters.

In early 2013, Adama was able to broker an important new partnership for Pellital with MEC Felo - a well-established micro-finance institution in the area where Pellital holds its own local bank account. MEC Felo will provide necessary human resources support to address one of the challenges Pellital has faced in past years. Now, all Pellital clients are monitored and managed using best practices in the field of micro-finance.

Adama invested every moment he could in his experience in the Pearson Fellowship. He had several specific goals before starting, including “benefiting from the tools that will be provided so I ensure the growth of my project” and “to learn and get inspired by other social innovators, my peers and program staff”. Adama credits TakingITGlobal and the Pearson Fellowship program staff with helping him “to be a more realistic and accomplished social entrepreneur”.

“The most significant experience that has shaped me as a leader is when I went in my village in 2008 to meet all the community stakeholders’ and organizations to discuss community issues and find solutions together. I wanted to do something for my community. Through that process, I founded Pellital Microfinance Institution.”

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ALISON BURKETT
Write to Remember 1994

“The Pearson Fellowship was a remarkable opportunity to address important personal and project needs. It gave me the opportunity to learn from more experienced people, to receive small amounts of funding, to practice management skills, and to develop a network for collaboration.”

— Alison Burkett

Nearly 20 years have passed since the genocide of millions of Rwandan Tutsi at the hands of the Hutu militia. For Canadian and 2012 Sprout graduate, Alison Burkett, the healing from the devastating destruction that occurred in April 1994 has brought with it gifts of love, personal purpose and partnership.

Write to Remember 1994 is a co-creation of Alison Burkett and her husband and genocide survivor, Emery Rutagonya. The project was designed to help Rwandan genocide survivors document their stories of tragedy, grief, and survival in a safe and supportive environment toward healing. Alison, a 28-year old educator born and raised in Toronto, believes that sharing these stories is not only key for the survivors but also for the “outsiders”. They have the potential to connect new generations of youth from vastly different walks of life “to the human heart, to the resilience of life and to our collective responsibility in the face of crimes against humanity.”

During their pilot program, Write To Remember 1994 delivered 8 dynamic and innovative workshops to over 600 Ontario high school and university students. Participants expressed both empathy for those who have experienced genocide and an impassioned commitment to preventing future tragedies.

Alison and her team have diligently pursued a number of partnerships with leaders in the field of genocide awareness and prevention in Toronto including Facing History and Ourselves, Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre and Professor Amanda Grzyb at Western University. Additionally, through collaboration with the Rwandan Diaspora Association, Write to Remember 1994 supported the coordination of the 19th Commemoration at Ryerson University in April 2013. Alison has noted the impact of these collaborations as having brought more opportunities to deliver workshops to students, resulted in several in-kind donations, and enhance professional visibility within the Toronto Human Rights/Genocide community.

As part of the evolution of their project, Alison and her co-founder have established a larger umbrella not-for-profit organization, Memory and Healing Foundation, under which Write to Remember 1994 will continue its work. The Memory and Healing Foundation exists to create well-being in communities impacted by genocide and war through offerings such as outreach support to survivors, collecting and preserving stories, and inspiring others to learn about and get involved in the cause.

Alison and her project have been profiled in an upcoming Sprout webisode series featuring social entrepreneurs as well as an article highlighting Write to Remember 1994’s unique approach to healing and reconciliation.

She says this about the role of the Pearson Fellowship in bolstering Write to Remember 1994’s success: “The Pearson Fellowship was a remarkable opportunity to address important personal and project needs. It gave me the opportunity to learn from more experienced people, to receive small amounts of funding, to practice management skills, and to develop a network for collaboration.”

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Republic of Rwanda

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It all began in Kisumu, Kenya in 2010. Brian Magwaro, who was then a 22-year-old addictions counsellor, noticed that youth in the slums of Kenya faced extreme situations of violence. Coupled with other challenges that youth face on a daily basis, such as a high crime rates, substance abuse, unemployment, and school drop-out rates, Brian wanted to make a difference in his community.

Deciding to take action on these community challenges, Brian joined the Sprout e-course in April 2010 with the hope of providing Kenyan youth with a positive and inclusive space. Later that year, he launched Football for Development – a project that uses football (known in North America as soccer) as a learning and outreach tool to promote peace and teach life skills to young people.

Nyalenda is the largest slum in Kisumu. A majority of the residents in this community live on less than a dollar a day and have limited or short-term employment opportunities. Most youth and children attend public schools, which struggle with high student-teacher ratios and a shortage of resource materials, books and technology.

Committed to building on his first initiative, Brian applied and was selected as a Pearson Fellow in 2012. Through his Football for Development program he learned that many of the children participating had difficulty in accessing textbooks to complete their homework, and in other cases, a limited supply of light at night made it impossible for them to accomplish the task. This then led to children falling behind, growing frustrated with school and wanting to quit.

During the Fellowship, Brian and his community co-created Nyalenda Community Library and Resource Centre. This place-based initiative was established to help Nyalenda children taking part in the Football for Development program along with other youth to access books, homework support, health education, and training in life skills. The project uses arts, theatre, sports and discussion as methods to empower the beneficiaries.

Brian’s first step was to build a team with individuals who could share this important responsibility and co-create the vision for the library and resource centre. Each team member invested efforts in seeking out resources such as unused land, building materials, book donations, financing, volunteers and partnerships. Brian says: “Sprout and the Pearson Foundation helped us go a step further to make the library function.” Additionally, a Canadian-based organization called Operation Groundswell, which offers volunteering travel experiences to young people, agreed to partner with the community to “beautify” the library and build washroom facilities.

The successful launch of the library, which saw the participation of three primary schools, encouraged their pupils to often frequent the library to get mentored, access learning facilities and reading materials that will be able to improve their performance in school. Now Nyalenda has a safe space where young people and children with limited school resources can get the educational support they need.

There are further plans for the library as new partnerships and fundraising efforts surface. In the meantime, Brian notes: “The library has brought the joy of having an avenue [of opportunity] closer to these residents.”
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Chijioke Obinna Okonkwo is a youth leader in Nigeria on a quest to reach out to young people in an effort to save lives. Chijioke is guided by the belief that “good information is highly effective in changing young people’s lives if properly acted upon”.

At the end of 2011, he enrolled in TakingITGlobal’s Sprout e-course and founded Youth Can – a peer education program to arm fellow youth with information to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Young people between the ages of 18 to 25 have the highest burden of HIV in the country of Nigeria. Some of the factors attributed to the spread among young people include a willingness to experiment with unprotected sex, emotional immaturity, and social taboo or outright denial related to HIV. HIV and AIDS care and treatment services in Nigeria have been focused mainly on facility-based models which are not youth friendly.

Leveraging Chijioke’s education in sexual and reproductive health, applied microbiology and HIV/AIDS, he worked with a team to prepare a practical and comprehensive curriculum for Youth Can. The program delivered to 18 to 25 year olds focuses on life-building skills such as goal-setting, interpersonal communication and decision-making in addition to the subject matter specific topics related to HIV prevention through abstinence, condom use and screening.

In November 2012, Youth Can conducted a three-day training of 14 HIV Prevention Peer Facilitators (12 in-school youth and 2 out-of-school youth). Following the well-attended training, facilitators were assessed through comparative pre and post-training tests. Based on their scores, these youth increased their learning and understanding of the issue of HIV by over 35%.

Ekweonu Perpetua, an 18-year-old student and Youth Can peer educator, knows that the test scores tell only a small part of the story. She knows that the transformative nature of the right kind of knowledge can lead to true empowerment. For Ekweonu, the impact of Youth Can is that “as a young girl, I am now empowered to help my peers to be free from this infection.” Along with 13 other peer educators, Ekweonu and the Youth Can team delivered outreach and training to a total of 535 youth in the first three months following the project launch. Of these young people, 60% were girls and 7% included out-of-school youth.

Chijioke says this about the role of the Pearson Fellowship in making his dream happen: “The skill building provided through [the Fellowship] was the game changer for the Youth Can project becoming a reality. Program development, management and coordination was simplified in such a manner that my confidence grew so much that I can convince the Nigerian National Assembly of the importance of [this] project...”
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Youth Can
Republic of Nigeria

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Daniel Um is an 18-year-old expatriate living in Makati, Philippines. In 2012, he received one of few coveted scholarships to the Sprout e-course through a TakingITGlobal partnership with the Global Issues Network. Not one to waste the opportunity, Daniel combined his passion for education and love of technology to create Video for Life.

The Philippines is an economically polarized country. Young children aged 5-12 who have little means will go to Smokey Mountain, a garbage dump, to scavenge for food or anything to sell. These children do not have access to education or skill-building opportunities. Inspired by Jane Walker and the Philippine Christian Foundation’s model of bringing innovative education directly to vulnerable children, Daniel has created “Video for Life” - using the medium of video to teach the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic to all grade level students.

Daniel created a partnership with Gitnang Bayan Elementary School to support their learning needs and ensure that under-resourced schools could still deliver complete education to their students. The chosen public school for the Video for Life pilot is located in San Mateo, Rizal and boasts a population of 2,400 students - 368 of which comprise the Grade 6 level.

Through Daniel’s participation in the Pearson Fellowship for Social Innovation, he designed, developed and produced two videos on math for Grade 6 students at Gitnang Bayan. The focus of these videos on fractions and basic geometric shapes was determined through a formal needs assessment carried out with teachers on the actual needs of their students.

Since the Pearson Fellowship, Daniel’s initiative has grown and so has its impact. Daniel notes: “Based on the pre-tests and post-tests, their performances were better than expected. Sixty-eight students were quizzed. Their scores went from 61.2% (pre-test) to 94.0% (post-test). The kids showed the most improvement in adding/subtracting fractions with different denominators.”

The initial Video for Life project has now evolved toward the development of more educational videos. As well, a kiosk, modeled after Dr. Sugata Mitra’s “Hole in the Wall Education” project, will be built and stationed in Gitnang Bayan school where students can access the videos at all times.
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DANIEL UM
Video for Life
Makati, Philippines

“I envision the poor children of the Philippines being able to break their social class barriers and be able to attain jobs that will enable them to comfortably provide for themselves and their families.”

— Daniel Um
In 2009, high school student Soo Jin Yun, was selected to participate in a unique regional version of the Sprout E-course sponsored by Microsoft Partners in Learning in the Asia-Pacific region. Through the e-course and the forum she attended, she began to appreciate that she had an important role to play as a young change maker in Brunei. “I observed how different leaders have different styles of leadership. [L]eadership is not just about taking charge, but taking responsibility to play a particular role (whether to voice out or to listen, to learn or to share, to lead or to be a team player) at a given time.”

It was through this realization that she and a stalwart group of youth established Green Brunei – an organization and online community dedicated to helping residents of Brunei take small yet important actions to learn about and protect their environment.

In October 2012, Green Brunei with the support of Heart of Borneo, Ministry of Industry & Primary Resources and Life List Chase, delivered a Photography Talk to 200 young nature enthusiasts, environmentalists and aspiring photographers. The talk featured international award-winning wildlife photographers, C.S.Ling and Ethan Lim from Singapore sharing their amazing photographic adventures documenting some of the world’s most magnificent and endangered wildlife in Asia. Their photographs speak in profound ways, highlighting the beauty of the natural world and raising awareness for the endangered animals, inspiring all to make a positive difference. Collectively, with a string of awards, exhibitions and publications notably in National Geographic Explorer magazine and BBC Wildlife (online), they are determined to make the world a better place, one photo at a time. The ultimate goal of this event was to instill a fundamental belief that photography can be a creative and powerful tool to raise urgent awareness of vanishing landscapes and endangered wildlife.

To leverage this learning and engagement opportunity, Soo Jin and her team then launched the Green Brunei Photography Competition to inspire young people to capture and submit photos of wildlife and nature.

Over 130 submissions were received through email and uploaded to the Green Brunei Facebook album to encourage discussion, comments and suggested captions by the community at large.

Building networks with other youth, environment, and photography-related groups was critical to the success of Green Brunei’s inaugural contest. Many of these partnerships and contacts worked to spread information about the project through social media, community events and schools.

During the Pearson Fellowship, Soo Jin was further exposed to the building blocks of social ventures and learned the importance of measuring the outcomes of each engagement opportunity created for the Green Brunei community. Through the use of an online survey, Soo Jin learned that through the contest 62% of the over 100 respondents had increased their awareness and interest in the environment, nature and wildlife and now felt compelled to carry out environmentally-friendly actions on a daily basis. Only about 20% of those who participated in the contest also attended the Green Brunei Photography Talk which meant that Soo Jin had been successful in reaching out to young people outside of their immediate network. When asked if those individuals felt that the photo contest had given them an opportunity to be more connected to the Green Brunei community, 93% answered yes.

As part of the original project design, a book would be published featuring photos from the Green Brunei Photography Competition. Soo Jin and her team are still very committed to this deliverable and hope to distribute an e-book that spreads the word about conservation along with equipping people with important facts about nature, wildlife and biodiversity in Brunei.

The most important take away from the Fellowship for Soo Jin has been: “…the valuable suggestions from my mentor. From a wide scope of ideas, my team eventually managed to find a focus.”
In 2009, high school student Soo Jin Yun was selected to participate in a unique regional version of the Sprout E-course sponsored by Microsoft Partners in Learning in the Asia-Pacific region. Through the e-course and the forum she attended, she began to appreciate that she had an important role to play as a young change maker in Brunei. “I observed how different leaders have different styles of leadership. [Leadership is not just about taking charge, but taking responsibility to play a particular role (whether to voice out or to listen, to learn or to share, to lead or to be a team player) at a given time.”

It was through this realization that she and a stalwart group of youth established Green Brunei – an organization and online community dedicated to helping residents of Brunei take small yet important actions to learn about and protect their environment.

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In late 2010, Julian O’Shea joined the Sprout community with a passion for the environment and a desire to help Australians understand their role in creating and using sustainable technologies. His original project developed through the Sprout E-course was a modest one to deliver environmental education programming. Fast forward 2 years and Julian found himself leading a multi-year, large budget project with a big mission under the umbrella of an international organization, Engineers Without Borders (EWB).

Regional and rural residents of the country remain under-represented in higher education particularly science and engineering programs. To address this challenge, Julian was tasked with the design, coordination and delivery of an innovative, hands-on science outreach program called the Regioneering Road Show. This program connects inspiring technical professionals to community, youth and school groups across the remote communities of Australia.

In its inaugural year, the Road Show travelled an impressive 3,000 kilometers across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to deliver science education and activities in 35 rural locations. This program was designed to leverage a strong collaborative approach and draw on EWB’s existing partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, educational institutions and industry organisations.

Julian’s project relied heavily on the coordination and training of volunteers supplied through EWB’s networks in Australia. He and his team successfully trained 77 Road Show Ambassadors to execute this important initiative. Over 70 science workshop sessions engaged over 2,100 students, teachers and community members in Australia.

The impetus to target educational outreach to Aboriginal youth as part of this initiative came following a research study by Elizabeth Godfrey and Robin King in 2010. They discovered that of the total 53,000 university applicants across the country seeking admission in 2009 to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs, self-identified Indigenous students accounted for less than 0.5%.

Through a partnership with the Aboriginal Corporation Gurawal which works with the people of La Perouse Land, the Regioneering Road Show was brought to Australia.

JULIAN O’SHEA
Regioneering Road Show

“"The Pearson Fellowship for Social Innovation is an outstanding international professional development program and is the perfect way to take your initiative to the next level. If you are a change maker that cares about having a big impact – this is the program for you.”

— Julian O’Shea

Family Fun Day event attended by approximately 1,000 indigenous children and their family members. Road Show Ambassadors undertook demonstrations of appropriate technology including a solar cooker, a rope pump and a pulley system that could be implemented at the community level.

Since Julian wrapped up the Pearson Fellowship, he was selected as the Pacific Region winner of the Commonwealth Youth Award for Excellence in International Development. He believes that the recognition that came from being selected as an international fellow as part of the program by Pearson Foundation and TakingITGlobal encouraged others to take notice of his team’s important work.

Reflecting on how he would describe his experience as a Pearson Fellow to other aspiring social innovators, Julian says: “The Pearson Fellowship for Social Innovation is an outstanding international professional development program and is the perfect way to take your initiative to the next level. If you are a change maker that cares about having a big impact – this is the program for you.”
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