

YOUTH:

CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

Promoting Youth Civic Engagement
and Empowerment Under the
ConnectEd Program



The aim of ConnectEd is to help the most disadvantaged youth in Australia, Brazil, China, India and Indonesia to achieve better learning outcomes, learn skills in Information Communication Technology (ICT) and other skills that will make them better prepared for the world of work, and to be more active in their communities. Since ConnectEd began in April 2011 the program has reached 22,575 youth. Over that time, 3,537 volunteer placements have been filled by Alcatel-Lucent employees.

ConnectEd uses a range of interventions to reach these goals, from scholarships, coaching, life skills and personal development courses, to nonformal education programs for out-of-school youth, job skills training, work placement, and 'youth civic voice' actions. ICT is also emphasized to enhance learning. ConnectEd recognizes the importance of possessing basic ICT skills for fostering inclusion, giving disadvantaged youth a better chance to cross the opportunities gap and to access more and better employment options.

ConnectEd is a project of World Education and is funded by the Alcatel-Lucent Foundation.



YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Connecting disadvantaged youth to civic society and the wider world and emphasizing their role as catalysts for change

"By helping youth learn to be engaged with their communities, they gained confidence and learned important skills, like leadership and networking, that will help them later in life."

- Elisabeth Eude, Alcatel-Lucent Foundation Director

Too many of the youth in the communities where ConnectEd works remain on the periphery of civic and social life.

And yet, for these youth, meaningful engagement in their community and broader civil society can be an

important driver for turning their lives around.

Confidence, communication skills, planning and organization skills, and a sense of self-efficacy result from participation and organization of events and projects, youth groups, peer education and involvement in community or school decision-making. Extensive research demonstrates that girls and disadvantaged youth who are civically engaged achieve improved learning and life outcomes.

Civic engagement results in expanded social networks, contacts and support systems that allow girls and disadvantaged youth to break down the

An innovation and teamwork exercise in China.



In total over
5,000
youth participated in
civic engagement
activities



ConnectEd Indonesia
students participate
in a leadership
activity.

barriers perpetuating their exclusion.

It provides them their right to be heard.

World Education believes that it is youth themselves who offer the greatest potential for breaking the cycle of their own exclusion and disadvantage, if given the right tools, technologies, resources, skills and space to do so. From Australia and China to Brazil and France, ConnectEd has done just that.

Since 2011, the program has seen over 5,000 youth getting involved in their communities in new ways - volunteering at orphanages or elderly care homes, leading campaigns, calling meetings, using art, theater, video, photos and social media to express their values, ideas, concerns and dreams. ConnectEd

has enabled youth to enter a much wider public arena and have their presence felt. Testimonials and project data reveal that, as a result, youth have experienced new feelings of belonging, agency and responsibility .

In the pages that follow, we describe the foundations and inputs that were needed to foster these transformations; showcase some of the notable results; and, reflect on what was learned along the way.

"WHEN WE WALKED IN TODAY I SAW LIZZIE'S WHOLE FACE LIGHT UP WITH A BIG SMILE - IT WAS GOOD TO SEE HOW MUCH MORE CONFIDENT SHE IS"

Comment about a ConnectEd girl in Australia at her graduation ceremony

A ConnectEd Australia student working in a community garden.

THE INPUTS THAT ARE NEEDED

Bringing disengaged youth into civic and social discourse and community life does not happen overnight. Ongoing, scaffolded support is vital for youth to gain the necessary skills, interest and sense of self-efficacy. Technologies, tools, trainings, time and a safe space to experiment, fail and grow are all required.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS THROUGH LIFE SKILLS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CLASSES

Across all sites, the seeds of ConnectEd youth's civic engagement were sown during the program's general life skills and personal development classes. Through giving youth opportunities to examine their own beliefs, reflect on their own identity and community, and learn about rights and social issues, the initial steps began towards getting youth more 'connected' with their community and world around them.

For instance in India, Rishtaa group discussion periods provided a safe place for thousands of girls to discuss and practice life skills such as goal setting, problem solving and communication, and provided opportunities for discussing important civic and social issues around family, gender, abuse and cultural norms.

Life skills classes and personal development

activities have enabled ConnectEd youth around the world to develop skills as diverse as team building, cultural awareness, self-defense, empathy, anger management and conflict resolution. Courses have helped them develop new knowledge on topics that matter to them. Learning about HIV and AIDS; gambling; alcohol and drug abuse; debt management and financial competencies; online safety; sexual abuse, and much more besides, ConnectEd youth became better informed and thus valuable resources for those around them.

ConnectEd programs allowed youth to expand their sense of community from something broader than their immediate social group. In Australia,



ConnectEd Australia students spent a morning with the Shoalhaven City Mayor and learning about the community initiatives implemented by the City Council. The students conducted a mock council meeting and enjoyed going through the voting process.



'Rishtaa' discussion session about social issues with youth in India



ConnectEd emphasizes the importance of mentoring youth, forging bonds, and providing encouragement.

Brazil, Cambodia, China and India target youth have conducted research about various aspects of their communities including history, culture, health, education and jobs, and presented their findings of the current situation and priority needs to others. These have provided the building blocks from which youth then plan their own projects to get actively involved in bringing about change to their communities.

Specific youth leadership and team building courses have a role to play too. Youth have participated in workshops to identify and develop skills in working in effective teams; to learn about qualities of effective leaders; and to identify personal leadership style and competencies. Students are being given

opportunities to work within teams or lead small groups to manage particular activities or projects.

ROLE MODELING AND MENTORING TO BUILD CONFIDENCE AND A SENSE OF AGENCY

Self confidence has emerged as the common factor shared by all the different ConnectEd youth across the globe who came out of the program successfully, and who became civically engaged. Since ConnectEd's inception, World Education and its partners have recognized that disadvantaged youth, more than anything, need someone who believes in them, respects them, who identifies their strengths and helps them build on them. Teachers and facilitators - the frontline implementers of ConnectEd - are the ones, more than anyone else - who are the lynchpins here.

Nalesca, a ConnectEd student in Brazil commented how she was very lucky to work with teachers that believed in her and motivate her all the time.

"On Thursday, I go into a bright room, full of smiling faces and people who care about helping me be successful," said a ConnectEd Australia girl, when talking about her experience of the classes run by ConnectEd partner, YWCA NSW, facilitators.

Staff, teachers and Alcatel-Lucent employee volunteers across ConnectEd have acted in the role of counselors and mentors to ConnectEd youth, forging



WATCH a video of a leadership skills training in Indonesia.



No mountain too high: Indonesian youth on a team building and leadership exercise



Digital training in Cambodia.

bonds and providing encouragement. From the start of their participation in ConnectEd, youth are given as many opportunities as possible to identify positively with school and learning, particularly through the use of ICT, performing arts workshops, sports and other community events.

It is this confidence and sense of agency that sets ConnectEd youth on a new road ahead, not just making them more employable and helping them secure decent work or persist in their studies, but also giving them the push towards greater civic engagement.

PROVIDING APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITAL SKILLS

Information Communications Technology (ICT) has enormous potential for enabling the civic engagement of youth, and ConnectEd has used this to the full. With its focus on digital inclusion, ConnectEd in all countries has provided youth with what it takes to interface with their community and beyond. Youth in ConnectEd's life skills, personal development and leadership trainings are exposed to the potential of technology for leading their own campaigns, highlighting the needs of youth, or exposing rights abuses or malfunctioning government services. Whether being taught how to create class videos on YouTube, use cameras and presentation software to show photos of issues in their communities during public forums, how to blog or how to post to

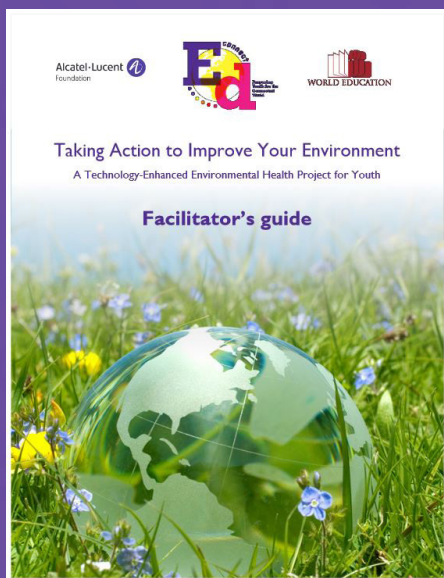
Facebook - the technology and social media tools taught through ConnectEd have provided youth with the skills and resources to access information, create content and network with others.

TRAINING FOR TEACHERS AND IMPLEMENTERS TO ENSURE AN 'ENABLING ENVIRONMENT' FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

In many countries where ConnectEd works, providing youth with more power in decision making does not sit well with cultural norms. Over time, through a purposeful approach of building relationships, exposure, trainings and ongoing support, ConnectEd helped improve receptivity to youth participation and built the skills to make it happen.

ConnectEd recognizes the importance of instilling a culture of youth participation within the classroom,

as well as out in the community. Across ConnectEd, teacher trainings and on-the-job support helped teachers and facilitators improve skills in experiential, active learning methodologies. The program also developed concrete resources and tools for teachers and practitioners to demonstrate how to foster youth participation and civic engagement. For instance, a facilitators' guide exposed teachers to the potential of project-based learning (see below for detailed description) and led them through the process of doing an environmental health project with their class. An online toolkit was developed that offers links to tools, additional training, and resources <http://cedu.pbworks.com> to give more support to teachers and trainers in project-based learning and the use of basic and emerging technologies.



Taking Action to Improve Your Environment A Technology-Enhanced Environmental Health Project for Youth Facilitator's guide

Designed for youth leaders, teachers, and facilitators who work with youth under the ConnectEd Program, this guide is for people who are able to meet regularly with a class or group and have time and support to implement an in-depth project. The guide is presented in such a way that neither facilitators nor youth will need to use a computer. For those facilitators who do wish to use technology, however, the guide provides alternative activities in each module that do.

The guide is organized into four modules that build upon each other. Module 1 provides background and calls upon participants' experience and prior knowledge. In Module 2, participants investigate a problem and find solutions to the driving questions 'What are the health risks in our local environment? What can we do to prevent them?' In Modules 3 and 4, participants work together and present their findings.

[Download this guide >>](#)

THE TRANSFORMATIONS THAT OCCUR

Once the foundational supports have been put into place, students develop the confidence and ability to speak up for themselves and their communities. ConnectEd has seen youth energized to participate in the development of their communities, with remarkable results.

HELPING OTHERS AND COMMUNITY PROJECTS

ConnectEd youth's social actions have ranged from helping at orphanages and day care centers, to taking children on outings and organizing donation drives and environmental projects. Youth practice their new skills in teamwork, budgeting, planning, and communication, with high levels of 'cross-over' and application of learning from one ConnectEd component to another. For instance, in Brazil one group decided to use what they had learned from their Labor theme studies to fundraise for a leisure and beauty afternoon they were planning with the elderly at a shelter in the neighborhood. Using their new business skills, they produced and sold truffles to raise funds to purchase nail varnish, creams and disposable materials for manicures on the elderly ladies who live at the shelter.

RUNNING CAMPAIGNS

Social issues such as poor community sanitation,

gambling, environment, bullying, exploitation and gender discrimination all became rallying cries for newly engaged ConnectEd youth. For instance, youth in Cambodia mobilized themselves to mark the World Day Against Child Labor. After some initial support from ConnectEd staff and facilitators, these youth dealt with all logistics on their own, invited guests, planned the agenda and so forth. With an audience of nearly 500, including local leaders, youth conducted role-plays, songs and question-answer sessions to highlight issues around child labor.

EDUCATING OTHERS

Peer education was witnessed across ConnectEd sites, with youth sharing knowledge and key educational messages with other youth and community members. ConnectEd Indonesia youth, for instance, after going through their own workshops on drug abuse and HIV and AIDS went on to take part in a poster design competition with the theme of anti-narcotics and AIDS; a song writing competition on the theme of anti-narcotics; and created the design for a pin and brochure to raise awareness

This "Open Day" forum organized by ConnectEd Cambodia youth provided a space for youth to discuss important issues in their lives, from academic success to the risks of scammers and trafficking. This young girl is asking about the world of work.

In China, youth participate in a peer-to-peer reading program.



The Bee's Wings Youth Action Group Are the Bee's Knees!

Out-of-school youth participating in China's ConnectEd youth action group, Bees' Wings, were provided with laptops, a digital camera and computer access to conduct action research, collect materials for a youth conference, and establish internal and external communication mechanisms by using instant messages, emails or blogs to exchange, communicate, and disseminate ideas. It has been exciting to note how they went on to actively utilize social networking platforms, QQ and Wei Bo, to broadcast their group's actions and to recruit volunteers to join their monthly activities. Members learned to record video clips to introduce Bees' Wings to other youth as well as to use videos for campaigns.



WATCH a class video created and uploaded to YouTube by ConnectEd Australia students



ConnectEd Indonesia youth participate in a rally to save their education center from commercial development.

of HIV and AIDS and narcotics and then distributed these to people in their communities. Through these types of follow-on activities, ConnectEd youth were putting into practice much that they had learned in their leadership training, and were stepping into their roles as peer mentors to pass on their new knowledge to others, and to promote the wellbeing of their community.

SPEAKING OUT

A group of girls in India had a great chance to practice their new communication, self-confidence and knowledge about important social issues when got selected for an interview with Radio Australia on 'A Dialogue on Justice in Childhood- End Child Marriage'. Later on, a session with ConnectEd youth on HIV and AIDS was also recorded live, and again aired on Radio Australia.

UTILISING ICT TO GAIN VISIBILITY, GET CONNECTED AND HAVE A VOICE

Across all countries, ConnectEd youth have been using technology to **become more visible**, to voice

their ideas and concerns.

Internet research was a key part of youth's preparations in identifying social issues, local organizations and opportunities for helping out.

Visual media, including photos, videos, presentations, posters have all been created using new ICT skills as part of youth's civic engagement actions:

To document the unhygienic condition in their communities, cameras and tablets were used by 200 students in India as they worked on an environment project and with the help of the ICT teacher they made PowerPoint presentations using their photographs.

ConnectEd China developed a course called Small Eyes Big World, a life skills program for migrant school students from excluded, isolated migrant communities on the periphery of city life. The program provides these students with basic photography skills, offering a platform to document and record aspects in their lives they consider important and to tell others their stories. The program also gives them the opportunity to consider and present their perspective on issues



International Day of the Girl Social Media Campaign

In celebration of International Day of the Girl on October 11, ConnectEd launched an online social campaign to encourage people globally to take a simple picture sharing why a day for girls is important. Almost 250 people from 11 countries, including students and staff in five ConnectEd countries engaged with World Education and shared their photos. The campaign helped students to engage in discussions around gender issues and helped raise awareness around girls' issues on the International Day of the Girl.

See the photos submitted for the campaign on [ConnectEd's Facebook page >>](#)



WATCH a video of the Bees Wings Youth Action group helped make their community healthier and greener by planting trees.



WATCH a video one group of ConnectEd Brazil youth created about their project with children at an orphanage



WATCH a video on the successes and life changes for 5 young women from Indonesia and India.



ConnectEd Indonesia students participate in a leadership skills training.

or concerns as they observe and interact with the outside world. Alcatel-Lucent Shanghai Bell employees, after a training from ConnectEd China, played a important part in facilitating the course. A strong example of the power that ICT can have in allowing excluded youth to have a voice, the course ended with two major photo exhibitions at high profile locations in Beijing and Shanghai that allowed ConnectEd youth to present their lives and opinions to a broad audience.

A number of countries were able to **exploit social media**. ConnectEd youth group members in China became particularly active on social networking and micro-blogging sites, providing an important outlet for expression.

Girls in India contributed to the 'Girl's Speak' message board on local partner ABHAS's website.

ConnectEd's social media campaign on International Day of the Girl saw hundreds of ConnectEd youth taking up the chance to express their views on gender and education. In India alone 328 boys and 523 girls took a picture holding up their signs.



A ConnectEd India student raises her hand, showing her confidence to engage and raise important issues.

WHAT DO YOUTH THEMSELVES SAY?

Gaining new skills, new perspectives

Overall, reports have shown that civic engagement left a very strong, positive impact on the youth involved. Many of the youth revealed that they had reviewed their own values, after being asked to put themselves in the position of a person who was generally less privileged than them.



"The Ethics and Citizenship theme was one of the most interesting topics that we have had... Working on something for other people is much more enjoyable and rewarding than I had imagined. The pleasure, the feeling of a duty fulfilled and the possibility of seeing the children's happiness... This theme helps us to understand the feeling of altruism in practice, of social work and commitment with our community's well-being and society as a whole and of how these actions can make us better people and humanity more contented."

– Tamyriz Domingues, ConnectEd youth in Brazil



"Through Bees' Wings, I got to know my good partners, I learned the knowledge and skills to organize events, and the experience enlarged my circle of friends, and I met many people from different walks of life. I am really grateful and feel contented."

– ConnectEd China student talking about her youth group



WATCH A VIDEO showing ConnectEd students in Australia reflecting on their volunteering at an Aged Care Center.



"I am more confident, and study harder ... I am now the head of my class, and am active in student councils."

— Gani Gaffari, ConnectEd scholarship recipient in Indonesia



"It's been years since I talked about myself and what I want to do, nobody seemed to care, not even my mother. It felt so good that ConnectEd wanted to listen to me. I so much wanted to go to school, I wanted to learn something that will help me to learn."

— Sajda, ConnectEd India student

SUMMING IT ALL UP

Civic Engagement & Empowerment

Lessons learned from ConnectEd:

- Fostering real youth civic engagement and participation takes time .
- It takes considerable human resources to reach and build the skills of youth to a point that they have a sufficient sense of self-efficacy to take on new roles.
- This is especially true if a program is to reach, and succeed with, the most excluded, disengaged and vulnerable youth, rather than youth who are already on the way to being civically engaged.
- Youth need facilitators, teachers or mentors who believe in them, who provide a safe space and who help them build on their strengths.
- Digital technology can be a powerful tool to enable youth to become more connected, visible and be heard.
- It can take a great deal of human resources and time, too, to convince adults that youth can and should be given space to take on these new roles.
- Cultural norms are often challenged in places where youth are historically encouraged to stay silent and listen to adults.

BUT, CHANGE IS POSSIBLE, AND YOUTH THEMSELVES CAN BE THE BEST CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE



A student in China paints a mural at a school supported by ConnectEd.

Thanks to ConnectEd's local partners:

YWCA NSW
Supporting people at critical times

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WORLD EDUCATION

Every success has its network