Follow-up: how to keep in touch with the Youth once they leave the program?
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INTRODUCTION

With Y4CN, we have the chance to be in contact with many NGOs working with Youth all over the world. Through the discussions we have with them, we realized that some challenges are regularly coming back and especially one, regarding the follow-up of the youth.

HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE YOUTH ONCE THEY LEAVE THE PROGRAM?

As we deeply believe that we could benefit from the best practices from our network members to get ideas in order to face this challenge, we decided to organize both workshops and webinars on this topic. With these events, we aimed at gathering Y4CN members to brainstorm on:

Their challenge(s) of keeping in touch with the Youth leaving the program
Their solutions put in place to face these issues

During these rich discussions, we realized that the inputs and solutions shared would certainly interest other organisations working for Youth Inclusion around the world, and that is why we decided to compile everything in this report.

We hope that you will find this guide useful.

The Y4CN team
### FIRST STEP - ALUMNI NETWORK

**Team Spirit & Feeling of Belonging**

### SECOND STEP - HOW TO MOBILIZE THIS NETWORK?

**Diversification of Actions: Combining Online & Face to Face Contacts**

- **Online**
  - The essential use of social network
  - Email
  - E-magazine

- **Face to face meet-up**
  - In person or with a group
  - Few hours to several days
  - Professional or convivial

### THIRD STEP - WHICH ACTORS TO MOBILIZE?

**Empowerment of the Youth**

- **Ambassadors**
  - How to choose ambassadors?
  - How to involve them?

- **Skills development**

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Preparation beforehand
- Impact of the location
- Link with the companies
- Relationship of trust

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**Follow-up: how to keep in touch with the Youth once they leave the program?**
An essential step is therefore to go through the creation of an alumni network. This network regrouping the former youth, will allow you to maintain this feeling of “batch” that existed between the youth as they were still being followed by your organization.

Keeping in touch with those who have shared the same experience is precious for many of these young people, and the alumni network is a good tool to facilitate this task.

**TEAM SPIRIT & FEELING OF BELONGING**

The feeling of belonging is one of the first key elements allowing you to keep a connection with the young people on the long term.

**FIRST STEP - ALUMNI NETWORK**

key words: feeling of belonging, alumni, mobilization

**What to do with this Alumni network? How to mobilize them? How to make them involved? How to keep the link with these youth?**

**Article 1**

A french organization working for a society where orientation, success in studies and professional integration do not depend on social origins

- Development of an Alumni directory - including those who agreed to share their contact details - accessible to all alumni.
- A tool highly requested by the youth themselves (following a questionnaire shared to all the alumni.)
DIVERSIFICATION OF ACTIONS: COMBINING ONLINE & FACE TO FACE CONTACTS

Diversifying means of communication and the forms of meeting is the second step in order to reach more and more youth. This diversification will allow everyone to find their interest and be reached according to their habits.

SECOND STEP - HOW TO MOBILIZE THIS NETWORK?

key words: network, diversification, communication, meets-up

Online

- The essential use of social networks

At a time when social networks are at the heart of young people’s communication, it seems essential for the organizations to get started too. This is the best asset for reaching more young people.

The central role of Facebook

- The use of groups and pages which can welcome up to thousands members to gather all the alumni: a good way to share information / news / job opportunities or best practices.

- The use of Messenger to have one to one and group discussion with the alumni.

Other conversation tools: the use of Whatsapp

Depending on the country and habits, whatsapp - or other applications - can be used more widely than Facebook. It is therefore a question of adapting to what is favored locally among the youth.
Email

Emails are less and less used by young people as a daily means of communication in a spontaneous way (unlike the social networks) but still remains a strong professional tool that is useful for them to master.

Continuing to contact the alumni via email on certain occasions allows them to develop this skill and create a certain habit.

(Note, as explained below, that it is important to diversify the modes of communication and not be limited to the sole use of emails).

E-magazine:

To publish articles, results of research, job offers, etc.

CHALLENGE

It can be really difficult to track the data: it is common amongst the young generation to change their phone numbers, have many facebook accounts with different names and not keeping the staff up to date.

ADVICE

Online exchanges are a good way to share professional opportunities!
TO KEEP IN MIND

It is also really useful to remind the importance of the use of different channels simultaneously to keep in touch with the Youth.

When the communication is only based on email, it may sometimes be really hard to move on (according to NAYD - Network of African Youths for Development). When an email is going to be sent, a good tip would be to send a message on a Facebook group / WhatsApp first. It will ease the communication and you can announce that an email will be sent.

The use of social networks, emails or other online communication channels is also the most effective way to inform young people of upcoming face-to-face meetings!

*CATHIA DIRATH, COORDINATOR AND FOUNDER, IS TALKING ABOUT “EMAIL REFLEX CULTURE”*

- Some Youth don’t have an email address or don’t know how to use it. The real challenge is to help them develop this email reflex culture, so that they can be able to use it independently.
- Make the oldest ones work with the youngest ones: transfer of knowledge.
SECOND STEP - HOW TO MOBILIZE THIS NETWORK?

Face-to-face meets up

While for some Youth online exchanges are sufficient and can already represent a great effort, for others, face-to-face meetings are better sources of motivation and allow to keep a deeper and stronger link.

Just as there is a wide variety of young people, the possibilities for meeting are wide. From a small meet-up of one hour to several days, with only one youth or a hundred, around a meal or in a more professional manner, etc…

The type of meeting needs to be defined according to the objective sought - but again, it is important to diversify the ways of gathering.

- In person or with a group

The one to one meetings are more intimate, for individual and personalized follow-up, to talk more specifically about the challenges and successes of the youth, his/her particular needs.

- This type of meeting can be done within your organization, or outside such as in a café.

When it comes to a larger group, the objective is to gather all the young people, to allow them to exchange with each other, get connections or even share on specific themes.

- It can also be within your organization (depending on the capacity), or in an outdoor location (park, beach, restaurant, etc…)
SECOND STEP - HOW TO MOBILIZE THIS NETWORK?

- **Few hours, one day, several days**

  Short meetings are generally more suitable for **one-to-one exchanges** while longer meetings are more appropriate for **group gathering** (see examples on the next slide).

  Once again, it is a matter of determining the most relevant duration on a case-by-case basis, depending on the location available and the goal sought.

- **Professional or convivial**

  Seeing the youth through **recreational activities** is a real asset in order to make them come back into the organization, to give them some interest. It is motivating for them to get out of their daily work.

  However, **professional meetings** are always essential, to exchange on their respective jobs, meet employers, participate in mock interviews and/or write a cover letter.

**ADVICE**

It emerged from the various discussions that the **presence of food** during events organized for Alumni is often seen as a little extra that can be motivating (for example, meeting around a meal!).
SECOND STEP - HOW TO MOBILIZE THIS NETWORK?

Below, some examples of gathering organized by different organizations:

**Together for Africa**
organization empowering the youths to become fully responsible citizens of the nation, in Uganda

**HOW TO MOBILIZE THE UGANDAN YOUTH?**
- 3 hours meetings to gather the Youth on different topics.
- Selecting all together the theme that will be discussed in the next meeting.

**Simplon.co**
network of social digital factories in France and abroad, providing free and intensive trainings related to the digital

**HOW TO MOBILIZE THE FRENCH YOUTH?**
- Various possibilities of meeting, among which movie projections followed by a discussion time.
- Meet - in a different and more convivial way - while exchanging seriously afterwards on some topics depending on the theme of the film.
SECOND STEP - HOW TO MOBILIZE THIS NETWORK?

Life Project 4 Youth (LP4Y)
NGO working toward professional inclusion of excluded young adults

HOW TO MOBILIZE THE ASIAN YOUTH?

- Organization of seminars between the Stars (the Alumni network) over 2 days in Vietnam and in the Philippines
- Get together, prepare the next steps and next activities for the year, in a friendly setting nearby the beach for instance.

Learn patience!
EMPOWERMENT OF THE YOUTH

To coordinate this network of alumni, organize events and offer activities, it is important that at least one of the staff members is responsible for this network. However, we need to keep in mind that the youth remain the first concerned: nothing like young people to exchange with other young people! One advice would therefore be to highlight the youth themselves, include them in the organization of events, in the reflection and thus take advantage of the power of their voices.

This allows some of them to be valued by being able to give their opinion, others to be more motivated by being able to identify themselves to other young people.

Ambassadors

The youth themselves are the best ambassadors to both promote your organization outside but also and in particular with the youth. Several examples have shown that when the youth who have finished the program are taking part in the animation of the network, the others are more easily involved and motivated.
THIRD STEP - WHICH ACTORS TO MOBILIZE?

● How to choose the ambassadors?

The involvement of these ambassadors can be done on a voluntary basis, often linked to a feeling of recognition. Those who wish to get involved even after the program, are usually the ones who feel gratitude towards the organization, who want to give back what they have acquired.

● How to involve them?

These ambassadors can participate in diverse activities:
  ● Testimonies for the other alumni and/or youth currently in the program
  ● Management of the full organization of an event
  ● Giving advices on how to mobilize the other youth, on which topics to approach them...

LACK OF LEGITIMACY?

In Article 1, there is a group of ambassadors leading the alumni network.

Difficulty encountered: among the alumni, some do not yet feel legitimate to be considered as mentors for the others, at least at the beginning.

How to face this lack of legitimacy?

To face this challenge, the main role of ambassadors is to make the new alumni feel supported & legitimate to inspire others, to involve themselves into more concrete actions.
THIRD STEP - WHICH ACTORS TO MOBILIZE?

Skills development

The youth also have a lot of varied skills and we have a lot to learn from them!

This part is about bringing attention to the enhancement of young people’s skills, in order to highlight their full potential and not to miss this opportunity!

Thanks to their passions and interests, they can bring a lot to each other, through workshops / sharing of skills for instance. Via our organizations, we can provide them with a favorable framework for such an exchange.

Simplon.co
network of social digital factories in France and abroad, providing free and intensive trainings related to the digital

DEVELOPMENT OF ENHANCED SKILLS WORKSHOPS BETWEEN ALUMNI

- The youth have the opportunity to suggest a workshop to the others
- Topics are completely free (use of photoshop, manga drawing...)
- Providing a room for these event + snacks
How to prepare for the departure of the youth beforehand, for a more effective follow-up?

- **Through testimonies** of youth who have already completed the program: they are role models, can share their experience and the benefits of the alumni network;

- **Through meetings with the family**, so that they can also feel involved in the integration of their children;

To note, the family topic differs depending on the environment and the local context. In some countries, keeping a good contact with the family is essential to maintain a link; in some others, it would be seen as a lack of independence given to the youth;

- **Through the organization of a graduation ceremony** at the end of the program, which marks the end, but also symbolizes belonging to a group.
Does the location of your organization have an impact on the efficiency of the follow-up?

Whatever the location, it is not impossible to follow the youth: there are various means of communication with them (especially through the contact online, as discussed above).

However, it often emerged that the geographic proximity to the place of residence of the youth could favor long term contact. The choice of location, when it is possible, can be strategic.

**BRAZIL**

*Arca Do Crescer*

NGO providing vocational training to young adults in vulnerable situation

Located in the heart of the favelas where the youth are living

**ASIA**

*Life Project 4 Youth (LP4Y)*

NGO working toward professional inclusion of excluded young adults

Located directly in the slums where the youth are living
Create a relationship of trust to keep the link? With whom? What are the risks?

When a strong link is created between the staff and the Youth, it often seems easier to keep this link on a long term basis. At Article 1 for example, via the mentoring program, there is a real one-to-one relationship. The mentor, as a volunteer, accompanies the young student throughout his/her university years and acts as a guide. When the mentorship relationship is anchored in trust, the bond often transcends the programme duration leading to a long term relationship.

Challenges:

- When there is a turnover, when the ones with whom the link was created leaves: loss of trust, the link can be broken and it becomes harder to bring back the youth;
- On the departure, this strong link can also lead to some difficulties: staff can be seen as the mother the youth didn't have/lost. It is difficult for youth who have lost almost everything and do not trust easily, to meet someone new every time there is a new person joining the team (staff and/or youth).

⇒ Therefore, it is even more important to find other links and activities to allow the youth to come back, in order not to depend only on the relationship with one of the members of the staff.

IkamvaYouth (South Africa)

NGO enabling youth from under-resourced communities to access tertiary education or employment through tutoring, mentoring, and life skills programmes.

- many of the volunteers tutors are actually previous beneficiaries
- feeling of duty towards their community
Should we get in touch/keep a link with the companies in which the youth are hired?

2 different answers depending on the local context:

It came up from the various exchanges that in the European countries, getting in touch with the company means a loss of independence for the youth while the objective sought was a kind of emancipation. It can damage the credibility of the youth. Once the youth is integrated in a company, it’s time for him to stand on its own feet, which does not prevent doing a follow-up, outside of the framework of the company (via all the means seen previously).

Elsewhere, mainly in Asia, contact with the companies is perceived differently:

- In the Philippines, for instance, in order to have feedback from the companies, the idea is to create a form in which the companies are able to share information about the youth. It helps the NGO’s staff to know when a youth is feeling different and might need more help.
- Life Project 4 Youth (LP4Y) staff organizes visits of the youth in their company in order to see them in their professional environment, discuss with them and their manager, make sure that everything is doing well, and especially that the job is decent!
- CGI, a worldwide company (member of the Youth Inclusion Network) is organizing a system of buddy (mentor) to look after the youth once in the company - at least at the beginning. He can help him to feel supported, and more confident. This could be a good practices to be shared with others NGOs for them to initiate this kind of practices with the companies.
Follow-up: how to keep in touch with the Youth once they leave the program?

Even if the youth have been supported all along the training with good contact, it is often more complicated once the training is over; and it can be hard to keep this link. However, the follow-up of these young people once the program is over is just as important, allowing a real impact on a long term basis.

In this report, we shared with you the different practices implemented by each other in our network, what seems to work well; in order to best answer your questions and ensure an effective follow-up. Virtual exchanges via social networks, group meetings at the restaurant or at the beach, young people themselves acting as leaders of workshops or events... the choices are multiple! The key word is surely to diversify the possibilities, and allow each of these young people to find what suits them best, motivate them the most.

TRUST THEM, CONSIDER THEM AS THE ADULTS THEY ARE AND MOST OF ALL, EMPOWER THEM!

Let’s all keep working together and keep supporting the Youth even once they have finished the program.

Have a nice day,

Y4CN team
THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS

Youth 4 Change Network (Y4CN) is an international network of support and exchange between organizations working in favour of the inclusion of Youths who are victims of exclusion.