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Dear readers,

In this issue of Social Space, we address the ever-important subject of youth empowerment. Across the world, we see instances of young people coming together to address society’s most pressing issues, and how they, in turn, inspire others to be more innovative and entrepreneurial. Today, many young entrepreneurs who fill the numerous co-working spaces, incubators and accelerators are working on the next Apple, Facebook, Google or Uber. Indeed, innovation transcends culture, language and personal background—all that’s needed are a trusty laptop and Wi-Fi connection.

Yet, it is not easy to be young. People often discount a younger person’s opinion just because of his or her youth, and in some companies, a capable person may be passed over for a position simply because he or she lacks seniority. However, we at the Lien Centre for Social Innovation believe that in order to meaningfully enable youth empowerment, the youth themselves need to lead the change. More importantly, they should be empowered to do so.

A few years ago, I gave a TEDx talk at Harvard University on the importance of a mission-driven life. This message seems to have struck a chord with the audience—the filmed clip went on to garner tens of thousands of views on YouTube and was featured in Voice of America. In the same spirit, I encourage our readers, especially the younger ones, to think about what their life mission is. Rather than being too fixated on the idea of making money or chasing after prestigious titles, there should be a higher purpose behind their desire to succeed. Identifying that “mission” is a way for us to persevere in spite of life’s many ups and downs.

For this Editor’s Note, my team asked me to think about advice I’d give to my younger self. To this end, my words are: “Keep your chin up. There will be those who say you’ll fail, and these comments may even come from people closest to you. Be prepared to experience failure, rejection and disappointment. As long as you push on, you’ll discover that these setbacks are only readying you for better things that are coming your way.”

Jonathan Chang
Editor-in-Chief
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Hot Topics and Happenings
in Social Innovation

By Florian Parzhuber

WALK THE TALK
Do you take your ability to speak, sing or swallow for granted? For individuals with speech impediments, simple actions like taking a sip of tea or saying hello can be difficult, or even impossible. However, speech therapy can help strengthen the muscles responsible for making sounds and swallowing, and equips affected persons with strategies to improve verbal communication, and to make eating and drinking safer.

To combat Cambodia’s lack of speech therapy and therapists, Australia-born Weh Yeoh founded OIC Cambodia, a charity dedicated to making speech therapy available to the local people. Himself a professionally trained physiotherapist, he and his team plan to ensure that 100 local speech therapists are employed by the Cambodian government by 2030.

http://www.oiccambodia.org

STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE
With around 420,000 Singaporeans struggling to live on a monthly household income of under $1,500, as many as one in 10 people go to bed hungry, according to a 2016 report in The Straits Times. In spite of this, however, the average Singaporean wastes two bowls of rice a day, or the equivalent of 140 kg of food in a year. As far as good eating habits go, Food from the Heart (FFTH, a local non-profit which delivers surplus bread and non-perishable food items to low-income households) believes in starting young. In its annual Clean Plate Campaign, FFTH holds talks and exhibitions in some 35 participating schools to encourage children to return clean plates after meals and cultivate mindful eating. FairPrice Foundation has also come on board, pledging $10 to FFTH for every clean plate returned during these schools’ recess breaks.

https://foodheart.org
http://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/food/have-near-expiry-food-donate-it
**MILKY WAY**

When Marie Cavosora left her corporate executive job at an MNC and returned to her native Philippines, she was inspired to start a business that encouraged fellow Filipinos to “love local” and appreciate “export-quality” local products. The result was her socially responsible and eco-friendly dairy business, CalaBoo Creamery. CalaBoo’s products come from carabaos, water buffalos found only in the Philippines, and that are fed on nutritious grasses such as napier, legumes and fermented greens. In the same spirit of loving and appreciating the value in local resources and expertise, CalaBoo pays its local dairy farmers higher wages.

https://www.facebook.com/CalaBooDairy


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**THE YOUTH CODE**

Melbourne start-up Code the Future has ambitious plans for 2017: to engage 10,000 students in coding, eventually creating Australia’s youngest community of software developers. Its co-founder and director Will Egan recognised the need to revamp the nation’s coding and tech development curriculum after looking at his younger sister’s IT homework and realising that little progress had been made in the past seven years. In 2015, Code the Future’s open and free marketplace facilitated the exchanges of over 800 software developers and 2,000 teachers, who signed up to teach coding. The start-up was awarded $10,000 [AUD] at PwC’s 21st Century Minds Accelerator in 2016 for successfully targeting poor digital literacy and for empowering young people to pursue a career in IT.

LION QUEEN

Wanting to accelerate the progress of female entrepreneurship in Africa, Melanie Hawken founded Lionesses of Africa (LoA), an online platform that facilitates communication, knowledge-sharing and mentoring among women entrepreneurs. Through the support she received from LoA, designer Akosua Afriyie-Kumi was able to expand AAKS, her brand of luxury, traditionally handwoven handbags, to an international market while also providing employment in her home country, Ghana.

http://www.lionessesofrica.com

BOM APPETIT!

Singapore-based social enterprise Bomipi burst into the scene in early 2016 with a new and innovative twist to online grocery shopping. This online hypermart offers the same functionalities as other virtual marketplaces, but allows shoppers to offset a part of their bill through various volunteering with Bomipi’s partner charities. Through this unique reward system, customers are encouraged to give back to society while enjoying discounted prices on their groceries. The organisation is currently in the process of securing a new merchant, which will add more than 16,000 products to Bomipi’s product assortment.

http://www.bomipi.com
https://e27.co/rise-social-entrepreneur-will-good-good-business-20161121

Have a hot social change/innovation news story to share? We’d love to hear from you.

Email us at editor@socialspacemag.org

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Does “Squad’s OOTD on fleek, seriously goals!” have you straining your eyes and stifling a groan as you try to decipher millennials’ penchant for strange, new words?

Alongside a host of creative new vocabulary, millennials—generally referring to those born between the early 1980s and early 2000s—are an assortment of unique traits such as progressiveness, empathy and increasing awareness of social issues that plague not just the community around them, but also the world they live in. Inadvertently, these characteristics are reflected in the popular terms they use.

However, this can seem like endless pit of lingo for the uninitiated (millennials or no) so here’s a list of commonly known words, as well as new terms that may just be coming to a “millingo” dictionary near you.
generally an informal phrase, and commonly used between closer friends, rather than acquaintances, to avoid the risk of coming off distant or insincere. While “on fleek” started off as a compliment for perfect eyebrows, its usage has expanded to encompass other aspects of a person.

Example: “Your eyebrows are on fleek, where did you get them done?”; “Her personality is on fleek!”

4. OOTD

Definition: Noun; an acronym for “Outfit of the Day”.

Concept: With the advent of social media platforms, millennials have been geared towards visual expression through pictures and videos. “OOTD” is most often used as a hashtag on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, and accompanies a picture of the speaker’s impeccably stylish outfit.

Example: “Our outfit is goals today, let’s take an OOTD picture.”

5. SHIP

Definition: Verb; to pair two individuals together.

Concept: Millennials value close relationships, whether with their significant other, family, or friends. “Ship” is therefore used to affirm such connections, and often expresses how two individuals complement each other well in terms of personality, looks, or otherwise. It can also insinuate a romantic relationship, and is often used as a teasing remark, to imply that two people are/should become a couple.

Example: “Sandra and Frank look so cute together, I ship them!”

1. GOALS

Definition: Adjective; to describe something or someone as worthy of admiration and envy.

Concept: Similar to “on fleek”, “goals” is another expression millennials use to compliment and show support. However, “goals” connote good-natured jealousy, such that the object of admiration is representative of targets that the speaker would like to achieve. It can also be used to express confidence when the speaker uses it to describe himself or herself.

Example: “That friend clique is goals, I wish I were friends with them.”

2. LIT

Definition: Adjective; to describe something, such as an event or experience, as phenomenal and impressive.

Concept: Millennials love to have fun, often through new and exciting experiences. “Cool”, “awesome” or “amazing” are just several in a variety of expressions used to describe a thing or place they find interesting or enjoyable. However, “lit” takes the “cool/awesome/amazing” factor to the next level.

Example: “That concert was lit!”

3. ON FLEEK

Definition: Adjective; to describe a characteristic or feature of someone that is perfect.

Concept: Millennials use this term to foster a culture of mutual commendation. With a tendency to exchange praises and admiration for one another especially on social media platforms, “on fleek” is one such way they show support and encouragement. It is
COMING TO A MILLINGO DICTIONARY NEAR YOU

1. CRATES

**Definition:** Adjective; to describe something or someone that is all over the place in an unrestrained or chaotic manner.

**Concept:** Similar to “mess”, “crates” is used to describe when something or someone is not in tip-top condition. However, “crates” take on a much more frantic and wilder undertone. Conveying empathy and concern for someone, the term is also synonymous with an offer to help.

**Example:** “What happened to you? You’re crates!”

2. DESPIRIT

**Definition:** Adjective; a declaration to describe feeling a combination of disappointment and desperation.

**Concept:** As with life, it is only natural that millennials encounter disappointment and rejection even when they desperately wish for something to work out. This term expresses millennials’ frustration with not getting what they want, but their determination to try again.

**Example:** “I really needed the money, but I didn’t get the job, I’m so despirit!”

3. PLAKE

**Definition:** Noun; an exclamation for when the speaker forgets something they wanted to say, or when they use a different word from what was intended due to distractions.

**Concept:** Have you ever wanted to say something, but blanked and lost your train of thought? Or did you ever get so distracted that you ended up saying something completely different from what you intended? Plake is a word that has no actual meaning in the dictionary, which is representative of the way words are meaningless when used incorrectly.

**Example:** “Plake, I meant to say ‘cheesecake’, not ‘bread’!”

4. WALLOUT

**Definition:** Adjective; a combination of “Wallet” and “All out”, to describe not having enough money.

**Concept:** Most millennials are still students or just starting out in their careers, and may have little to no income. This term depicts the cumbersome worry and fear of not having enough to spare or provide for oneself.

**Example:** “I haven’t gotten my paycheck yet, I’m wallout!”

Pingxuan Chye is a curious observer of the world around her, and likes to refer to herself as a student of life. In truth, she’s a media student who loves to think about things happening in the world, and is currently the Production Manager at The Hidden Good, where she produces exciting videos documenting the good in society such as through hidden camera shoots, events, and even community outreach. Her role at The Hidden Good has given her ample opportunities to tell stories through videos and use media to impact the people around her. She hopes one day to do what she loves in a way that changes people’s perspectives and encourages them to broaden their horizons. On the weekends, she can be found teaching piano to budding musicians, chronicling fictional lives in words, and pursuing her passion for learning different languages. She can be reached at chyeipingxuan@gmail.com
“THE YOUNG AND RESTLESS”

Re-examining Media Portrayals of Youth

By Shee Siew Ying
From TV programmes, to newspapers, books and magazines, traditional media’s depictions of youth have tended to dwell on either sides of two extremes: hapless victims or violent perpetrators.

In his 1998 seminal work, *Moral Panics*, social scientist Kenneth Thompson claimed, “No age group is more associated with risk in the public imagination than that of youth.”

Now, decades after this claim was made, it appears that little has changed. A simple Google search on “Youth in Singapore” yields reports pertaining to teen violence and misadventures on dating sites; in the United States, youth make the most headlines for school shootings; and in 2008 alone, more than half of the UK’s national and regional newspapers’ coverage of teenagers had to do with crime.

In recent years, a number of youth victimisation cases have also dominated Singapore’s news, involving cases of “none-the-wiser” teens being duped by cyber scams, and suffering sexual or financial exploitation as a result. Attempting to explain this trend, social workers attributed youth’s “often naïve, trusting” nature to their “especially vulnerable” position in society. Ironically, when not suggesting more should be done for these helpless youngsters, there are just as many news stories and national statistics on youth crime, delinquency and drug abuse, which present a darker side to this group.

As worrying as the “phenomenon” of youth violence and arrests may seem at first glance, the numbers, when presented in relative terms as a proportion of all youth in Singapore, paints a more optimistic picture. In 2016, only 0.5 per cent of all youth in Singapore were arrested for youth crime, which means that the overwhelming majority (99.5 per cent) were engaged in other, presumably non-law-breaking, activities.

Singaporean parents may also be glad to know that the vast majority of the nation’s youth are not “troubled”—in fact, with 74 per cent regarding “maintaining family ties” as a very important life goal, they are quite “homey”!

IT’S ALL RELATIVE

From TV programmes, to newspapers, books and magazines, traditional media’s depictions of youth have tended to dwell on either sides of two extremes: hapless victims or violent perpetrators. In Stanley Cohen’s 1972 work, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, he describes how these dismissive media portrayals of youth have fixed the public’s general perceptions of them in a particular way that has had lasting and far-reaching effects.

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WHAT’S AGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?
While society may have been quick to establish a direct link between age and delinquency, it is also worthwhile to examine the wider issues behind youth’s “susceptibility” to “acting out”. This point is supported by Mr Ho Peng Kee, formerly the Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs and Chairman of the Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime, who emphasised that “no single factor explains why youths turn to crime”.14

One view argues that, among affected children, parental divorce causes family instability and triggers “psychological problems such as separation anxiety, grief and lower self-esteem,”15 thus leading them to seek solace in “risky behaviours”. Yet, on the other hand, statistics reveal that troubled youth do not all originate from single-parent families:16 a study examining the family structures of young offenders arrested in Singapore between 2013 and 2014 showed that only 53 per cent17 came from families with separated or divorced parents. This is substantiated by Gus Martin’s point that it is the discord in a household, rather than family make-up, that can prove “much more disruptive” to a child.18

Besides family instability, the pressures of school and grades have also been identified as a major source of unhappiness for Singaporean youth aged between 15 and 18.19 This corresponds with the findings in a 2004 national report on marriage and parenthood,20 which highlighted how high parental expectations towards children’s academic performance contributed significantly to the latter’s stress levels.

In light of the above, I suggest that it is youth’s sense of disengagement—rather than age—that predisposes them to “risky behaviours” (online and off), but this is a separate topic that deserves closer examination, and the scope of it will not be covered in this article.

MINORITY REPORT
According to Philip Graham’s classifications of individuals, the youth population of most developed nations can be parked under the “problematic minority” group21—this applies to Singapore as well, whose 3,000-something “troubled” youth constitute a mere 0.5 per cent of its whole youth demographic. Considering its “minority” standing, the disproportionate amount of attention that traditional media pays to it is puzzling. It is plain to see that other groups [the elderly, children or adults] are not as closely associated with risk, crime and violence, and this leads one to wonder if a particularly ageist attitude against youth might be behind this obvious media slant. First coined by Robert Neil Butler in 1969 to describe discrimination against seniors,22 the term “ageism” has since expanded to encompass general age-related bias, stereotyping and unfair practices against individuals based solely on their age. Similarly, the traditional media’s tendency to portray young people as synonymous with traits such as powerlessness and vulnerability, as well as lacking in knowledge, experience and the capacity to resist temptation, is suggestive of an “ageist” stance.

Research shows that age-based stereotypes lead some youngsters to believe they are of lower status, have fewer rights, and cause them to feel less motivated to speak out in general.
Traditional media’s negative typecasting of young people influences not only public perception, but has an impact on youth’s self-image as well. Research shows that such age-based stereotypes lead some youngsters to believe they are of lower status, have fewer rights, and cause them to feel less motivated to speak out in general. In many countries, youth are seldom given the opportunity to contribute to decisions about public policies (e.g. national budget and urban planning), although Boston has proven a positive exception (see boxed story: “Boston: Doing Right by Youth”).

BRAND NEW YOUTH
While an image overhaul of youth is long overdue in traditional media, one need not hold his breath. With the emerging generation of millennials eschewing printed newspapers and magazines and turning instead to online news sites, blogs and social media for information and entertainment, the Internet and new media are giving traditional media a run for its money—as well as providing youth an alternative platform to be seen and heard. And with that, a different picture of youth is emerging.

Founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates, was a teenager when he discovered his forte in programming and wrote his first tic-tac-toe computer programme. That was several decades ago, when such remarkable cases were few and far between. However, today’s youth-led entrepreneurship scene is thriving by leaps and bounds: unlike before, when founding a start-up straight after graduation seemed like a foolishly risky endeavour, it is today viewed as something commendable—even viable. To meet young people’s growing interest in entrepreneurship as a career, more specialised courses are being taught by business schools and educational institutions.

Today, armed with suitable knowledge and by being at the right place (read: online platform) at the right
Alongside IT-savviness and a keen entrepreneurial spirit, there is yet another positive trait often attributed to today’s youth: their social consciousness and desire to contribute towards positive social change.

Back home, it appears that the younger generation is just as acutely aware of prevailing social issues. Desiree Yang, a 23-year-old Singapore Management University undergraduate, became aware of low-income families’ inaccessibility to fresh food and dry rations during her internship at Beyond Social Services. Feeling for their plight, she and her father Mr Roland Yeo, 55, set up Singapore’s first social supermarket. Named Saltsteps, it sells goods and groceries rejected by regular supermarkets (for reasons such as mislabelling and torn labels) at significantly more affordable prices to low-income families, while reducing food wastage at the same time.

Examples like these, set against the rapid rise of youth-led social enterprises around the world, suggest that youth may indeed have found a way to satisfy their dual passions for entrepreneurship and social change.

CONCLUSION
While it is not the intention of this article to downplay the severity of youth-related crime, I hope to have encouraged readers to put aside preconceived notions about young people (vis-à-vis the traditional media) and to make up their own minds about them based on youth’s continuous strides towards meaningful change in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world.

Going forward, I hope both traditional and new media will cultivate a more inclusive environment for youth to express their ideas and opinions, especially in such areas as public policy. In Singapore, it is heartening to see the government placing a new emphasis on listening to young people’s feedback—as evidenced by the rising number of youth-centred dialogues and conversations in recent years—and to witness the growth of youth-led start-ups that have been incubated through initiatives such as the National University of Singapore’s Overseas Colleges and SMU’s Ashoka Changemaker Campus.

No longer passive subjects of the traditional press, but active authors of the new media, today’s youth will soon be known for much more than what their historically negative stereotypes stood for.
YOUTH: DOING THE MATH

The United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture refers to youth as young people of both sexes between the ages of 15 and 24, although UNESCO accepts the 15–35 age bracket as defined by the African Youth Charter. This category of young people also dovetails with the group known as “millennials” or “Generation Y” (those born between 1980 and 2000). In Singapore, the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth defines youth as persons aged between 15 and 35 years, while the Singapore Police Force places them between the ages of 7 and 19. Its definition is also culturally specific: certain individuals considered to be “youth” in one country or agency may be legally recognised as adults or children in another.

GENERATIONS X, Y & Z

Other than age brackets, the letters X, Y and Z are also used to differentiate youth according to different time periods (or “generations”). Demographers William Strauss and Neil Howe believe that each generation—owing to their shared experiences of major events—has common characteristics that give it a specific character.

Gen X (b. 1960s–early 1980s)
The culture and upbringing of Gen X’ers were shaped by global political events such as the Vietnam War, global sexual revolution of the 1960s–80s, fall of the Berlin Wall, end of the Cold War, and the Thatcher-era government. Compared to the previous baby-boomer generation, Gen X is more open to diversity and embracing of differences in religion, sexual orientation, class, race and ethnicity. Gen X’ers are also known as the “latchkey generation” (growing up with a lack of adult supervision due to having two working parents). Some famous Gen X’ers include Barack Obama, Victoria Beckham, Ben Stiller, Robert Downey Jr., Robbie Williams and Gordon Ramsay.

Gen Y’ers are largely impacted by the technological revolution occurring since their childhood and teenage years. Numbering around 80 million, they are the largest age-specific demographic in American history.

Due to the rapid globalisation of this period, Gen Y’ers are more exposed to Western culture than their predecessors. They are unfortunately associated with traits such as self-centredness, a sense of entitlement and narcissism. Some famous Gen Y’ers include Britney Spears, Mark Zuckerberg, Taylor Swift, Emma Watson, Justin Timberlake and Beyoncé.

Gen Z (b. mid-1990s–present)
There is the least information available about this group because Gen Z’ers are still in their teenage years at this present time. Also known as the iGeneration (in reference to their IT savviness and ownership of iPhones), they have been exposed to an unprecedented amount of technology since birth—and are understandably adept in the latest digital trends and use of social media. Gen Z’ers are further known for their resourcefulness on the Internet: they self-educate with YouTube tutorials and seek inspiration from sites like Pinterest. Some famous Gen Z’ers include Malia Obama, Willow Smith, Maisie Williams, Zendaya and Maddox Jolie-Pitt.

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VOICES THAT CARE

Bringing Speech Therapy to Cambodia’s Youth

By Weh Yeoh
Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” The only issue is, not everyone has access to education.

I was born in the 1980s in suburban Sydney, Australia. A few decades ago, my great grandparents moved from China to Malaysia during a time of famine, and my parents later immigrated to Australia before I was born. Growing up, I attended a public school in Sydney with a good reputation. On my first day of school, I remember sitting next to a boy named Roger who, according to our class teacher, Mrs Pickering, was unable to see colours. My job was thus to help Roger pick out the right coloured pencils during the colouring activities. For grass, I would hand him the green pencil; for the sky, the blue one.

That year, Roger and Mrs Pickering taught me a valuable lesson about inclusion. I learned that not everyone is like me, and that some people have to do things differently—and yet, with a little bit of help from others, those people can join in with everyone else. That experience also made me realise how privileged I was and am. I knew that if my family had not emigrated twice, and made personal sacrifices along the way, I would not be in Sydney, at school, and helping a classmate with his coloured pencils.
I learned that not everyone is like me, and that some people have to do things differently—and yet, with a little bit of help from others, those people can join in with everyone else.

However, not every child is as fortunate as I was to receive a good education, and, in Roger’s case, blessed with an inclusive teacher like Mrs Pickering. Ouk Ling was one such example (see boxed story: “Ouk Ling’s Story”). Through his plight, I became emphatic about the need to make speech therapy more widely available in Cambodia and elsewhere, and to create greater awareness about this pressing social need.

**TALKING POINTS**

Communication goes beyond just talking—some people do not speak clearly, or at all, or have problems processing incoming communication. Sufferers of communication disorders are typically children with conditions such as cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, autism or intellectual disabilities, and they are just as likely to have problems swallowing. Without adequate therapy, they cannot communicate well enough to participate at school, or with their families and communities. Those afflicted by swallowing disorders face an equally uncertain future: instead of travelling to the stomach, swallowed food and liquid can...

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**OUK LING’S STORY**

In 2012, I met Ouk Ling. A bright boy with an infectious smile, Ling lives with his family in Siem Reap, home to the great temples of Angkor Wat, but also one of the poorest provinces in Cambodia. Ling’s speech is heavily slurred due to cerebral palsy, and as a result, most people in his community assume he is stupid. He therefore has never been given the chance of an education. Ling is one of many such children who, without the support needed, would never attend school and be given a chance to contribute meaningfully to society.

I came to know of Ling’s plight through my work with CABDICO, a small Cambodian NGO that provides services including physiotherapy, social work, home-based education and basic medical care, to help children with disabilities lead more independent lives. During a discussion, my CABDICO colleagues shared that they did not have the requisite knowledge and training in speech therapy to help local children such as Ling. They further identified that as many as 70 per cent of Cambodian youth require speech therapy, but no services were available to address this need.

Upon further research, I found that one in 25 Cambodian children do not have access to education, and as of 2017, the entire country did not have a single Cambodian speech therapist. This meant that there was no university course, no government policy, and virtually no awareness at both community and national level about communication disorders. Needless to say, nothing was being done about this issue.

Though Ling’s future looked bleak, I wondered if he might have a shot at a productive life if he received the help needed to speak more clearly.
I decided, then, to put my theory to the test, by enlisting the help of several Australian speech therapists to train my CABDICO colleagues in this area. One of those who underwent this training was a lady named Phearom, who went on to administer speech therapy to Ling. Gradually, word by word, sentence by sentence, Ling’s speech improved with Phearom’s help. His family began to understand him, and his cheeky personality, previously hidden beneath his communication difficulties, started to emerge. Finally, just months after commencing speech therapy, Ling was able to go to school. Today, at 13, he is not just participating, but excelling. On my most recent visit to Siem Reap, I learned that Ling had come in second in his class.

enter their lungs, and they are 13 times more likely than the average person to die from pneumonia at a young age.

**MORAL SUPPORT**

Ling’s story demonstrated the power of speech therapy, and its potential to dramatically change a child’s life. However, without a single speech therapist in Cambodia, many children are missing out on a precious education.

To this end, I established OIC Cambodia in July 2013, as a project under the umbrella of CABDICO, to address the yawning gap in speech therapy in Cambodia. “OIC” stands for that Eureka moment when you suddenly understand something you previously did not, and exclaim, Oh, I see! In a sense, that is very much what speech therapy is about—providing connections and mutual understanding.

One of the initial challenges we faced was building a network of support. In the beginning, I spoke to hundreds of people, from embassies, international NGOs and foundations, to small Cambodian NGOs and individuals. However, more often than not, the meetings would not result in anything tangible. As I considered Ling, and all the other children in need of speech therapy, I wondered how it was possible that so many people had been ignored for so long. Perhaps while the system of international development, charity work, and grant applications assists many people, others still get left behind. Eventually, I realised that in order to reach these people, we need have creative solutions and/or to create our own system, rather than rely on international development. We thus had to find a way to take OIC forward by ourselves.

For a start, we estimated the number of speech therapists Cambodia needed: if we compare the number of speech therapists to the general population, you’d need one speech therapist for every 2,342 people. When applied to the Cambodian context, we found that the nation is in need of 6,000 therapists when it effectively had zero.

Next, we considered Cambodia’s high dependency on international aid: an estimated half a billion dollars of aid money enters the country every year, and there are over 3,500 NGOs. Many volunteers visit Cambodia regularly to train local communities, but they come and go. When it came to addressing the dearth in speech therapy, we decided that we needed a solution that was infrastructure-focused. Rather than giving a man a fish, or even teaching him to fish, OIC would help Cambodians build their own fishing industry—i.e. grow the profession of speech therapists in the country—with the support of the Cambodian government. To this end, OIC’s work entails designing university courses in speech therapy, running training programmes, creating related jobs, influencing government policy, and ultimately letting speech therapy become a self-sustaining industry.

**MEANS TO AN END**

I believe it is just as important to know why you are doing something before you start doing it, as it is to recognise
Day Without Speech is an awareness and fundraising campaign taking place in schools, universities and workplaces. It challenges people to give up speaking for a part of their day, to learn what it is like to have a communication difficulty. By accepting this challenge, people learn empathy, mindfulness and creativity. At the end of the day, OIC’s speech therapy volunteers conduct debrief sessions with participants to help them reflect on their experience of not talking during the day. The sponsorship and donations from these participants, and those of their friends and family, help to fund OIC operations in Cambodia.

Happy Kids Clinic is a private practice in Phnom Penh, Cambodia that provides speech and occupational therapy. This practice allows OIC to generate profit by providing services to the locals that previously did not exist, and raises awareness of the need for speech therapy. With important assessment tools, Happy Kids Clinic shows Cambodians what speech therapy looks like in practice, and helps them to appreciate the value in it. OIC hopes that they would in turn be empowered to champion the cause of speech therapy in future.

Most non-profit initiatives run on the hamster wheel of getting funding to address a problem, spending the money doing good work, then justifying their work to get more funding. OIC’s funding model, however, is somewhat different since we do not plan to be in Cambodia indefinitely. At present, it is financed by two key initiatives: Day Without Speech and Happy Kids Clinic (see boxed story).
LOOKING AHEAD
Come April 2017, I will step back from the leadership of OIC. Thereafter, my Cambodian colleague, Pisey Soeun, will assume the position of Executive Director and lead the OIC team forward in its mission, though I will continue to support OIC from afar.

For the hundreds and thousands of lives OIC hopes to change for the better, the battle has barely begun. The organisation is almost four years old now, and while my team members and I have made some progress, there is still a long way ahead in terms of making speech therapy more widely available throughout Cambodia.

OIC’s immediate tasks at hand are to get more schools, universities and workplaces to sign up for Day Without Speech, and to recruit more volunteers\(^8\) in Cambodia, or remotely. We also cannot do without the regular support of donors.\(^9\)

ALL ABOUT YOU
When I was majoring in international development at university, I assumed that change was created through large organisations, such as via decisions made in Washington or Geneva. However, my experiences have showed me that change will only, and has only ever happened, through individuals—ordinary people willing to make a stand to help others. Whether it is for Roger, in suburban Sydney, or Ling in rural Cambodia, it is up to us to make sure every child is given the start they need to flourish.

If my time at OIC Cambodia has taught me anything, it is that real change begins with you.

Notes
1. CABDICO website, at http://cabdico.org
3. OIC website, at http://www.oiccambodia.org
8. OIC Careers page at http://www.oiccambodia.org/careers
9. Find out how you can support OIC at http://www.oiccambodia.org/donate

\(\)
Much has been written on social media and how it has positively revolutionised communication and information transmission. The influence of social media is indubitable—it reaches anyone with an Internet connection, no matter their geographic location or socioeconomic status. This means information that was previously out of reach for isolated and less well-off communities is now accessible by more people than ever before. For example, University College London’s “Why We Post” social media anthropology project—conducted by nine researchers in nine different communities over 15 months—found that communities that have traditionally received comparatively lower levels of schooling now have access to unprecedented amounts of information that allow them to improve their literacy and to receive informal education.¹ The democratisation of media has given rise to new occupations, such as YouTubers, digital marketers and bloggers, who—with some basic social media literacy—can enjoy viable and lucrative careers. For example, Felix Avrid Ulf Kjellberg, a 27-year-old Swedish video gamer with nearly 53 million subscribers on his YouTube channel “PewDiePie”, made more than US$15 million in 2016.²
The democratisation of media has given rise to new occupations, such as YouTubers, digital marketers and bloggers, who—with some basic social media literacy—can enjoy viable and lucrative careers.

However, social media does have its dark side in an increasingly volatile and uncertain world. With the power of publication shifting dramatically from professionals to consumers, there is an inevitable uptick in the production and dissemination of information of dubious origin and whose authors harbour questionable intentions. Increasingly, social media channels are under attack for contributing significantly to the “post-truth” era, a term that has been so widely discussed and debated that Oxford Dictionaries made it 2016’s “Word of the Year”, and defined it as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion or personal belief”. Consumers can now select from innumerable media courses, and tend to engage with news and content that connect with their own convictions. Additionally, social media platforms such as Google and Facebook feed users personalised information based on data mined from each user, thereby creating “filter bubbles” that shield users from having to interact with contesting ideas. Besides the filters and “customised” content, news feeds from some social media outlets—including Buzzfeed, Distractify and Upworthy—have also been criticised for relying on “clickbait” or sensational headlines to promote social media sharing, rather than direct page visits, in order to reach a wider audience. All these have made assessing the veracity of what is published online more difficult, and contributed to information pollution, or what child empowerment advocate and Ashoka Fellow Dr. Yuhyun Park calls “infollution”—which encompasses “addiction to violent computer games, cyber-bullying, sexual predators, obscenity and racism”.

As all media is arguably becoming social, producers and consumers need to be literate in social media tools in order to make sense of what they are engaging in, and to exploit the full potential of social media networks. Social media engagement can assist social enterprises, social sector organisations and non-profits in developing partnerships and in spreading their respective messages. It humanises organisations and their causes by making them more “accessible” and meaningful. Youth, and millennials in particular, are highly connected, technologically empowered and social justice oriented, and it is critical that organisations hoping to engage these demographics create strategic social media plans that are engaging (if not entertaining), have a clear message and express a clear call to action. Fortunately, there are many examples of organisations and campaigns that have successfully employed social media to engage and empower youth, as discussed in the next section.

**CASE STUDIES**

Three campaigns were particularly successful in engaging youth on social media: Greenpeace’s “Barbie, It’s Over”; the ALS Association’s “Ice Bucket Challenge”; and the Children’s Cancer Foundation’s “Hair for Hope”. These movements had the following in common: a strong social media strategy, a clear purpose linked to social responsibility and clear calls to action. In addition, they made it easy for anyone to take part (e.g. conveniently via mobile), the participation process was fun, and participants were able to share the campaign with others in a way that made them look and feel good about themselves. The first two campaigns, which featured extensive use of videos on social media, also managed to capture a larger audience, thereby suggesting that videos are one of the more effective means of capturing millennials’ attention.
Greenpeace’s “Barbie, It’s Over” campaign is an exemplar of a story-based initiative involving a highly recognised and well-loved character. Greenpeace, a global non-governmental charity that champions environmental issues, wanted to pressure toymaker Mattel into dropping Asia Pulp and Paper (APP) from its list of packaging suppliers due to deforestation concerns. Launched globally in June 2011 worldwide and in nearly 20 different languages, the campaign featured a short film of a visibly distressed Ken dumping Barbie after watching a video of her secretly killing Sumatran tigers in Indonesian rainforests. The campaign also included a microsite, as well as Facebook and Twitter pages made to look as if authored by Ken, containing gossip on the break-up drama. The video clip’s tagline, I don’t date girls who are into deforestation, has nearly two million views on YouTube. Instead of urging a boycott, the campaign focused on getting the audience to “unlike” Barbie’s Facebook page and to contact Mattel to ask them to cut ties with APP. By October that year, after temporarily shutting down comments on its Barbie Facebook page, Mattel released a statement on its commitment to not use products from controversial sources throughout its supply chain. Greenpeace further used the opportunity to highlight other major corporations committed to using sustainable sources of paper, in order to incentivise other organisations to do the same.
Youth, and millennials in particular, are highly connected, technologically empowered, and social justice oriented, and it is critical that organisations hoping to engage these demographics create strategic social media plans that are engaging (if not entertaining), have a clear message and express a clear call to action.

The ALS Association’s “Ice Bucket Challenge” took a different approach. Instead of telling a story, it focused on inviting participants to challenge their friends. In 2014, the Association wanted to raise awareness around Lou Gehrig’s disease, and got behind the idea of getting people to film themselves dunking a bucketful of iced water over their heads. After this, participants could nominate their friends and family to participate or donate to the Association, and these videos were shared on social media. The campaign went viral worldwide with high participation among millennials and made more than US$100 million in donations over eight weeks. The reason for its success was not only the “fun” factor or that many celebrities took part, but mostly because people could easily make donations, such as via cell phones. In 2016, thanks to the donations from the “Ice Bucket Challenge”, a project team funded by the ALS Association made a “significant gene discovery.”

The Singapore-based Children’s Cancer Foundation’s “Hair for Hope” campaign takes a more straightforward and traditional approach. In this annual initiative, individuals, groups and organisations volunteer to get their heads shaved and then collect donations in solidarity for childhood cancer. The campaign is typically held in the middle of the year, and participants, called “Shavees”, upload pictures of themselves on social media to both show off their new “hairdo”, as well as to spread awareness of childhood cancer and seek donations. In 2016, donations totalled nearly S$3.35 million, up from about S$1.5 million in 2010. The campaign’s successful ability to unite donors and participants for a common cause can be attributed to the personal nature of cancer (no one is immune, and most people know of someone with cancer), as well as the high visibility of participants made possible via social media sharing—while “Hair for Hope” is not strictly a social media campaign, it is mobilised by youth who share pictures of their shaved heads on Instagram and Facebook and encourage others to participate or donate.

CONCLUSION

Campaigns and organisations need to go beyond creating interesting and sharable content; they should also empower consumers by providing ways to share, participate and invite others. The more consumers have to talk about—and interact—with an organisation, the wider the reach and the deeper the impact. Social media, with all its challenges, presents tremendous opportunities to engage with people and issues from all over the world, not just for entertainment or employment, but also to learn about, organise, and take action on social issues.
• Align your campaign’s messaging with your organisation’s mission, vision and strategic goals.

• Clearly define what success looks like: Enquiries? Number of views? Note that the number of Facebook “Likes” and Twitter “Follows” should not be the end goal, as these can be easily manipulated and “bought”.

• Know your audience: Don’t just say you are communicating to the “general public”; rather, experiment with post timing in order to most effectively reach your target demographics.

• Use the same keywords across your marketing strategy.

• Make it human, personal and varied: Using text, videos, photo essays, infographics and quotes, you can make your campaign fun. Remember to ensure videos are closed-captioned for them to be accessible to persons with hearing disabilities and to those using mobile devices as their primary means of accessing these videos, who may not have the sound on.

• Have a clear call to action.
SOCIAL MEDIA COURSES TO CHECK OUT

- Free massive open online courses on social media at FutureLearn (social science-oriented) and Coursera (business-oriented)
- Squared Online: This online digital marketing certificate programme, developed with Google, is CPD-accredited and taught by industry experts
- General Assembly: Offers online and onsite courses in digital marketing, analytics, user experience design and programming

Notes

5. Dr Yuhyun Park's profile at https://www.ashoka.org/en/fellow/yuhyun-park
8. Greenpeace, “Barbie’s Rainforest Destruction Habit REVEALED!”, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Txa-XcPvQkQ&t=4s
The Project Runway

Cheryl Chong on Getting Your Social Initiative Off the Ground

Cheryl Chong is co-founder of The Social Co., the team behind the 50 For 50 project that brought together more than 80 young people under the age of 35, and 70 corporations to raise awareness of and funds for lesser-known causes such as mental health, suicide prevention and charities that serve those with physical and mental disabilities. Cheryl currently chairs the Young Women’s Leadership Connection (YWLC) and lends a hand in programme development at Jia Foundation, a family foundation established by the Lim and Lin families. In her day job, she heads the private investor division of equity and debt crowdfunding platform, FundedHere. Here are Cheryl’s tips on how to give your social initiative a roaring headstart.

Best time to start?
Anytime, really. It’s about matching what you’re good at and the cause[s] that you’re passionate about. The youngest changemakers I ever worked with were 15 year-olds who raised funds and awareness for cancer research. It could be as simple as rallying your schoolmates to enact some kind of social change such as by clearing their own trays after their meals at foodcourts or fastfood restaurants, or bringing their own reusable bags when grocery shopping.

Any course of study that is most applicable for aspiring changemakers?
We can learn continuously but there’s no way we can know everything. What’s important is to find the right team of people who have complementary skillsets. In our team, we’ve got people who studied Accountancy, Business or Marketing, and volunteers who are trained in Law, Communications and various other fields. Other teammates are good at building presentation decks or have a flair for financial budgeting and Excel spreadsheets.
Character traits required to start and sustain a social initiative?

Passion, positivity, a can-do attitude, adaptability, ability to think out-of-the-box, empathy and authenticity.

How do you identify issues worth addressing?
It can be as simple as observing the different people you meet or being aware of your surroundings. It can also happen when you take yourself out of your comfort zone, whether in learning about social issues or interacting with different people. When I volunteered at my first camp organised for at-risk youth, I realised that there were many facets of society that we may not be exposed to if we didn’t get out there more.

What comes next?
Form a good team that shares and is committed to the same vision. Put together a council of advisors. Be constantly aware of why you are doing what you’ve set out to do. Research and thoroughly understand the needs you are addressing. The rest will fall into place thereafter.
What if I'm doing this on the side? How do I manage running a social initiative and a day job?

Arrange to have meetings with your "change" team at any time of the day, whether it’s over lunch, after work, over dinner or supper, and sometimes on weekends. At other times, communicate via Skype, shared drives and project management tools, so you can edit documents remotely as a team. Be prepared to receive emails at ungodly hours too. I suppose when you are passionate and remember why you are doing what you’re doing, balancing your social initiative with a full-time day job gets somewhat easier.

Haters gonna hate. How do you deal with naysayers?

We respect everyone’s points of view, but the only way to prove naysayers wrong is by the outcomes we produce. I always keep my focus on solving the issues at hand.

Plan Bs: When do you pull the plug and activate your backup plan?

Plans are always changing, so most of the time we find ourselves adapting and modifying our plans along the way. The sooner you recognise that what you’ve planned might not always work out and that there are always factors beyond your control that affect your plans, the better. Having said that, always have your Plan B, C, and even D at hand.

What are good milestones to set?

Your team’s goals, objectives and vision. Raising your first 100K, 200K or 300K for your beneficiaries. Make it a point to celebrate even the small wins like getting your first corporate sponsor or donor on board, or having successfully organised your first event.
What’s your single biggest piece of advice for aspiring changemakers? If they could only take one thing away, what would you want it to be?

Be authentic.

What’s in store for aspiring changemakers?

With greater awareness of social impact, there will only be more we can all do to become changemakers in our own ways. Work is no longer just about getting that dream high-paying job, but about contributing and creating positive impact in whichever organisation you join or any project you initiate.
Generation "P"
Philippines’ Millennial Impact Entrepreneurs
By Jinky Tuliao, Zen Bin and Vivienne Zerrudo
“Millennials”—broadly defined as those born between 1980 and 2000—are a dynamic driving force behind any country’s economic progress, but particularly so in the Philippines. Making up about 50 per cent of the national population, Philippine millennials are mainly employed in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which in turn account for over 99 per cent of all local businesses.

However, despite an IT-BPO sector driven boost in economic productivity, the Philippines still faces many social challenges. These include excessive corruption, high unemployment rates, and a quarter of the population still living below the poverty line. And since the benefits of economic growth have failed to extend to all corners of society, especially the poorest of the poor, millennials are increasingly taking up roles to improve the lives of impoverished communities.

In a 32-country survey conducted by Viacom, it was found that Philippine millennials were the happiest and “least stressed” in Asia. Known for being highly motivated and purpose-driven, this group features largely in the country’s growing labour pool of impact-driven entrepreneurs and social enterprises. A bustling social sector is the result—and this has not only helped to create wealth and jobs, but also contributes innovative solutions towards addressing social challenges.

Here, we feature three Philippine millennial entrepreneurs who have previously worked with IIX-Shujog. Through their work, they have displayed an unwavering commitment towards challenging conventions and creating new paradigms that positively impact the nation’s social and economic development.
Growing up in a family that ran a fabric business, Anya Lim, 37, is no stranger to the world of garments and weaving. Over the years, she observed how the traditional art of weaving was dying out as a profession, and grew concerned about its future. On a 2009 trip to Abra, she also observed that most fabric weavers were elderly folk and recognised that—with the younger generation of Filipinos migrating to bigger cities for jobs—the talent pool in this area was fast diminishing.

While Anya was eager to revive the country’s interest in traditional weaving, she also saw that its product—hand-woven fabric—had become outdated and undervalued in modern Philippine society. This led her to establish ANTHILL Fabric Gallery, a Cebu-based social enterprise, to promote weaving as a modern and viable commercial activity. ANTHILL converges various groups of weavers, sewers, signers, fabric communities and designers to transform Philippine hand-loomed fabrics into contemporary apparel and non-apparel items. Since 2009, ANTHILL’s activities have supported three partner communities, and impacted the lives of over 100 young women, who are now able to weave for an income to support their families.

To ensure ANTHILL’s sustainability and growth, Anya applied to IIX’s Impact Accelerator in 2015 and was one of the four finalists to receive technical assistance and connection to potential investors. The social enterprise also received complimentary impact assessment through Shujog’s ACTS Program.

Most recently, Anya was recognised as the 2016 Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) during the Grand Chamber Awards (GCA) in Cebu, Philippines. That same year, she received a special prize from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Efficiency and Success Target Awards in Lima, Peru, in recognition of her achievements as a next-generation female entrepreneur.
At college, Zhihan Lee, 31, led student teams to community service projects in rural villages and schools in Laos and Thailand. After witnessing many instances of rural poverty during his travels, he wanted to find a way to use his skills and knowledge to contribute to long-term solutions. At the same time, his internship experiences in Stockholm and India also exposed Zhihan to many social entrepreneurs, and he saw how they successfully employed sound business models to tackle social challenges.

In late 2010, Zhihan made like-minded friends in Ivan Lau and Ellwyn Tan, both 31, and they began working on a business plan together. After conducting a market study, talking to a few call centres, and discussing their plans with the local government, the trio co-founded Bagosphere, a vocational training school to help out-of-school youths gain fast employment in the burgeoning IT-BPO sector. As of 2014, the sector generated US$18.9 billion in revenue and provided 1.03 million jobs, and is expected to sustain an annual growth rate of 15 to 18 per cent, according to IT-Business Process Association of the Philippines (IT-BPAP).

In 2012, with assistance from IIX, Bagosphere raised a seed round of capital with Kickstart Ventures and other impact investors from Singapore and Manila.

Jamir Ocampo, 31, was growing restless with the seemingly intractable issues of displaced, urban poor communities. One of them—the National Housing Authority (NHA) Site 2—was a ghost town of neglected children and women. The men lived and worked in cities far away in order to provide for the family, while their wives who remained, despite possessing suitable skillsets for factory and administrative work, were unproductive.

Jamir Ocampo, extreme right (Source: Tsaa Laya’s Facebook page).
with IIX’s Impact Accelerator

Wanting to harness these women’s potential, Jamir partnered with the community’s caretakers, the Don Bosco Fathers and the Ayala Foundation, to transform three housing units into a tea-processing plant. Called Kapwa Greens, this impact enterprise uses organic local herbs, fruits and spices to produce premium tea collections that are uniquely Filipino.

In 2014, Ocampo launched Tsaa Laya, an exquisite collection of teas. This was the fruit of a decade’s labour by a community of mothers from Laguna who fastidiously tended their herbal gardens to produce this premium tea collection. The next year, Kapwa Greens won its finalist position with IIX’s Impact Accelerator, which will help the company expand its operations and positively influence local Philippine communities.

Jinky Tuliao is a digital media specialist, supporting both IIX and Shujog in reaching out to ecosystem partners and stakeholders on latest updates in the impact-investing field. As a globetrotting millennial, Jinky maintains her finger on the pulse of the latest Filipino trends and is a resident writer at Millennials.com, a lifestyle and culture site for millennials and by millennials in Manila. Jinky volunteers regularly in Manila, and now in Singapore too.

Zen Bin is part of IIX’s Corporate Finance team, where he works with impact enterprises to provide technical assistance to help them scale their business and positive impact. Prior to IIX, Zen worked in the investment-banking sector, covering family-owned businesses across Southeast Asia. Zen is an architect by training, and continues to enjoy art and architecture in his free time.

Vivienne Zurrado is part of the Research & Programmes team and supports the Shujog ACTS programme. Vivienne’s experience in the development sector started in the Philippines, spanning various roles from programme manager to fundraising consultant. Vivienne has worked with local and national organisations advocating for improved environment, education, health, children, persons with disabilities, youth and women.

Notes

2. IT-BPO stands for information technology and business process outsourcing.
5. IIX bridges the gap between finance and development, connecting capital with greater purpose and driving investments for social good. As a leading pioneer of impact investing in Asia, it builds pathways to connect the Wall Streets of the world with the backstreets of underserved communities. The company strives to achieve sustainable development and equitable growth through working with investors and entrepreneurs to raise capital, empowering its stakeholders with rigorous advice and research for sound actions, and pushing impact investing from the margins to the mainstream. Shujog is IIX’s non-profit sister organisation. Its mission is to empower marginalised communities and to protect the planet’s resources by magnifying the positive impact of social innovators. It achieves this by fostering growth, maturity and market readiness of Impact Enterprises and other social innovators, in turn building the impact investing ecosystem, and enhancing capacity and knowledge management in impact investing.

Though in the Philippines impact entrepreneurship is in its early stages of development, it is a vibrant and growing community—consisting of passionate and brave millennials who bring about innovative solutions to social problems—that creates jobs and empowers people to work towards improving the lives of those in need.

This article originally appeared as: Jinky Tuliao, Zen Bin and Vivienne Zurrado, “Philippines: The Rise of Millennial Impact Entrepreneurs”, Impact Quarterly, 26 July 2016, at http://impactquarterly.asiaiix.com/philippines-rise-millennial-impact-entrepreneurs/#WbYNNWR9Tu0. It has been adapted for Social Space with the kind permission of IIX-Shujog.

ANTHILL stands for Alternative Nest and Trading/Training Hub for Indigenous/Ingenious Little Livelihood seekers. For more information, see https://www.youtube.com/embed/2JSDcJUa2S8
8. Anthill Fabric Instagram shot, at https://www.instagram.com/p/BHcXI9Q0yS3/?taken-by=anthillfabric&hl=en
9. For more information, see https://www.youtube.com/embed/ACOTIaxyHgo
11. For more information, see https://www.youtube.com/embed/6XTTME7wev8
JOIN THE IMPACT INVESTING MOVEMENT

“
It is imperative to mobilize new global resources that can achieve scalable and sustainable impact and address large scale, persistent and emerging social and environmental problems that are straining the economy.
”

~ Durreen Shahnaz, Founder, IIX and IIX Foundation.

About IIX
IIX is a privately owned and operated company established in Singapore in year 2009. IIX bridges the gap between finance and development, carving out a third space for global social and environmental solutions. As a leading pioneer of impact investing globally, IIX builds pathways to connect the Wall Streets of the world with the backstreets of underserved communities.

About IIX Foundation
IIX Foundation empowers marginalized people and protects the planet by scaling the positive impact of social innovators.

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info@iixfoundation.org www.iixfoundation.org
As a volunteer, I’m one of many in the world. Data from Figure 1—a survey about volunteering among a number of OECD countries—shows that at least one-fifth of the population in many countries engages in volunteer activities.¹ Though Figure 1 does not provide details on the amount of time spent volunteering—or indeed if this volunteering is one-off or recurring—we see that volunteering rates in Australia, Canada and the United States stand out for being particularly high, whereas those in Italy, Spain and Sweden are remarkably lower than the OECD average.²
FIGURE 1. Proportion of people who volunteered time to an organisation in the past month, 2015 or last year available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of total population</th>
<th>Percentage of 15–29 year-olds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD Average</td>
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</tbody>
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Adapted from the Gallup World Poll, at https://www.oecd.org/els/family/C04.1-Participation-voluntary-work.pdf

Though Singapore does not feature in this poll, slightly older data (2012) suggests that 32 per cent of its total population volunteered during 2012, with 43 per cent of 15–24 year olds and 28 per cent of 25–34 year olds giving their time to volunteering; both well above the OECD average. The Singapore data also shows an interesting decline in volunteering between the ages of 25 and 34, and this could be due to the life transitions during those years. Whereas until the end of high school or college, youth were required to engage in some hours of volunteering, those of the 25–34 age group are now entering or have entered employment, and thus have fewer opportunities and/or less free time to volunteer.

But volunteering trends aside, why is volunteering important and why should youth be involved?

MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

I was seven when I first joined the Girl Guide movement as a Brownie, and through the experience, I grew in confidence, and acquired skills such as teamwork and leadership. My time as a Brownie and then Girl Guide also afforded me the opportunity to participate in numerous activities I wouldn’t have otherwise had the chance or courage to be a part of.

At 17, inspired to impart to other girls and young women my skills and knowledge, I embarked on what would become my now 15-year volunteer journey with Girlguiding. Since relocating from the UK to Singapore for work in 2014, I have been helping to run a local Brownie Guide unit. Every week, I work with others to bring a programme of activities to support girls in their emotional, intellectual, moral, social, spiritual and physical development. At least once a year, we take the girls away for a weekend, usually somewhere in Singapore, to enjoy activities, adventure and friendships. Additionally, I have, over the years, taken various roles to support other adult volunteers, assisting with training, administrative support and event organisation for girls and young women aged from 5 to 25.

In my opinion, it is not enough to document one’s academic abilities alone on a resumé: particularly so with growing numbers of university graduates entering the labour market amid current economic challenges, job competition is stiff. Educational qualifications might tick one requirement box, but for fresh graduates with limited to no work experience, hobbies/interests and extra-curricular activities—including volunteer work—will make their CVs stand out from the pile. The key here, however, is the ability of volunteers to recognise and articulate the benefits and impact of such activities. Volunteering need not be life-changing, but is likely to be life-enhancing—and the job applicant who can successfully convince their potential employers that their volunteer experience has equipped them with qualities which are transferable to the working environment will put themselves in a stronger position to clinch the job.

Besides employability, the benefits of volunteering are numerous and well documented. Alongside building confidence, individuals can develop organisational, leadership and teamwork skills in the process, and practise the ability to demonstrate commitment over weeks, months, or even years. In my experience, volunteering with the Girl Guides has enabled me to venture out of my comfort zone, whether it involves visiting unfamiliar, overseas locations, or being responsible for large-scale events. As a part of this global organisation, I’ve also witnessed how social barriers are broken down when people of all ages and backgrounds are united for a common purpose: for instance, it is not unusual to see 18-year-old Girlguiding volunteers working alongside experienced 60 year olds, each learning skills and knowledge from the other. At the end of the day, it is not their jobs, educational qualifications or household income that bind the volunteers, but the organisation’s mission, identity and values.

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Increasingly, educational institutions around the world are appreciating the importance of exposing youth to volunteer work, and are therefore setting “volunteer/service hours” requirements to complement their academic training. For example, all high-school students in Ontario, Canada have to complete 40 hours of service in order to graduate. Similarly, high-school students of Maryland, USA are to fulfil 75 hours of service before graduation, while some schools in other American states offer credits towards graduation to students completing a certain number of hours of volunteer service. In Singapore, students, too, have to participate in a mandatory Community Involvement Programme (CIP), during which they are to clock a minimum of six hours every year throughout their primary and secondary school education. Moreover, the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme includes a compulsory element covering Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS) that calls for its 16–19 year-old students, as part of the “service” element, to complete unpaid and voluntary service, in order to develop civic responsibility, an ethic of service, and grow in self-confidence and maturity.

Thanks to these educational institutions, more youth are exposed to a vast array of social causes they could give their time to, and in some cases, ignite in them a passion for volunteerism. Such “outside-the-classroom” learning undoubtedly makes them more aware of the impact that their actions can have on their wider community. By developing social consciousness from a young age, I believe individuals can begin to explore their life priorities and set goals based on these unique experiences.
Bernice Yau, 22, is a final-year law undergraduate at the Singapore Management University (SMU). In addition to her academic requirements, SMU necessitates her to complete 80 hours of service before she can graduate. In her freshman year, Bernice joined SMU Pendeza, a community service project that works with a girl’s home in Kenya to provide education and skills programmes. She is one of a handful of students who continued to volunteer time to the service project in subsequent years. In her second year of involvement with SMU Pendeza, Bernice took on the position of Operations Head. Her ability to build rapport with the locals in Kenya facilitated the successful implementation of new initiatives that were developed with her Kenyan friends. Bernice continued as a mentor in her third year, clocking many hours of service beyond the 80 required by the university.

Bernice considers SMU Pendeza to be a safe platform in which she could grow and learn, especially since the project is part of her university. Through this experience, she was able to engage with a different side of society, and now sees herself not just as a citizen of Singapore, but that of the world. She’s now equally keen to impart her knowledge to others as she is to learn from those around her. Her service in Kenya has also broadened her focus beyond just grades and prospective employment: she has come to develop a deeper appreciation for her family, friends and the value in serving others. Through this experience, she was able to engage with a different side of society, and now sees herself not just as a citizen of Singapore, but that of the world. She’s now equally keen to impart her knowledge to others as she is to learn from those around her. Her service in Kenya has also broadened her focus beyond just grades and prospective employment: she has come to develop a deeper appreciation for her family, friends and the value in serving others. Upon graduation, Bernice wishes to work for an international NGO where she can apply her strengths and skills gained from SMU Pendeza to embark on a career in service work.

However, in all of these school programmes, the term “service” is used rather than “volunteering”; it can be said that those who have given their time without financial reward have given it for free; however, the compulsory component to schools’ “service” programmes also means students may not have necessarily freely given their time. Some youth who are already involved in numerous extra-curricular activities, or who work part-time/weekend jobs (for financial independence, or to supplement their family income) simply cannot afford the long-term commitment of volunteering. As such, organisations may find themselves having to repeatedly train new batches of young volunteers because some cannot give of additional time beyond the mandatory requirements. In fact, according to research, the act of enforcing volunteerism may actually cause long-term volunteer rates to decrease: it showed that youth who considered themselves unlikely to volunteer but who were required to do so had less intention to continue volunteering after completing their stipulated hours. This was in contrast to their peers who also thought themselves unlikely to volunteer initially, but who had a stronger intention to continue volunteering after freely giving their time to service. Another study revealed that the students who benefitted the least from Ontario’s compulsory service were those who only completed the required number of service hours in order to graduate.
Of course, the kinds of service opportunities provided to these youth make a difference in how much they take away from the experience. Good-quality, service-learning projects—whereby students are taught at school about social issues, and then take up a relevant service project to gain further knowledge in a real-world situation—can have more relevance and applicability compared to ad-hoc volunteer placements. Perhaps if young people can see volunteerism as a “journey” towards acquiring life skills and building community awareness, instead of an enforced obligation, it would feel less like a duty and be a more empowering experience.

On that point, I believe it is more effective to “incentivise” youth to “service” rather than to mandate it, so as to promote longer-term and more meaningful volunteering. For instance, in many districts in America, credits are offered to students who complete volunteer hours, though it is not compulsory to do so in order to graduate. In addition, some youth organisations offer awards that incorporate volunteering-based clauses—such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award in the UK—to allow the youth working towards these accolades to acquire many life skills and experiences in the process. Consequently, these awards also speak volumes on college, university and job applications.

In 2014, the Singapore government established the Youth Corps Singapore. This organisation, targeted at 16 to 35 year olds, aims to provide “meaningful community service”, to “ignite transformation in society” through “catalysing collaboration between youth, community service organisations and society”. With the Youth Corps, young Singaporeans can—through participation in ad-hoc or regular volunteering, leadership programmes and overseas expeditions—recognise that they are not passive citizens, but instead be empowered to work with like-minded youths to make a positive difference in their community. By giving youth a voice and an active role to play in improving the world around them, I trust that they are much more likely to develop a passion for volunteerism, because it will stem from a deeper desire to engage with others and to contribute towards making a meaningful impact on society.

In essence, youth volunteerism comes down to the quality of

At the age of 16, Lucy Traves embarked on her Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, which required her to complete six months of service. She chose to volunteer with Girlguiding, the UK’s largest girls-only youth organisation. Lucy was nervous to step into this service role, so she chose an organisation that she already had knowledge of and therefore felt comfortable joining. Five years later and now aged 21, Lucy’s role has grown beyond that of an ordinary “helper”. Presently in charge of a group of 7 to 10 year olds, she holds weekly meetings and handles all administration, including the annual accounts, for the group. Lucy shared that volunteering has helped her grow in confidence and overcome her fear of public speaking. Running a village youth group has also enforced her sense of belonging within her local community: when out for walks, shopping or a meal, Lucy often bumps into someone who knows her due to her volunteering, and a friendly chat usually follows.
engagement. Whether it is tending a community garden, coaching at a local sports club, providing tuition to those unable to afford it, fundraising for a charity, or serving food to people who are homeless, if volunteers understand their part in the community and the impact of their service, then their introduction to volunteering at a young age will probably continue to impact on them throughout life. School “service” programmes, mandatory or not, give youth a good headstart in terms of understanding their wider community, issues within it, and how each person can make some kind of difference. Although not all students go on to volunteer throughout their lives, those introduced to service from their youth are all the more likely to appreciate their potential to make a positive impact on their community and develop a sense of social responsibility—qualities that are greatly valued both at the workplace and in society.

Emma Glendinning is Research Fellow at the Lien Centre for Social Innovation. Her research interest lies in community development, and she is currently conducting research into food needs in Singapore. Emma previously worked for local Government in the UK before moving to Singapore in 2014. She holds a PhD from Cardiff University, and during her course of study, she explored the communities within UK farmers’ markets. As a volunteer, Emma is both a leader with a Brownie Unit in Singapore as well as a District Commissioner to British Guides in Foreign Countries (BGIFC), Singapore. She can be reached at eglendinning@smu.edu.sg or via her LinkedIn page: https://sg.linkedin.com/in/emma-glendinning-70969ba2

Notes

1. “The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (French: Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques, OCDE) is an international economic organisation of 34 countries founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.” Taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development

2. “The OECD average, sometimes also referred to as the country average, is the mean of the data values for all OECD countries for which data are available or can be estimated. The OECD average can be used to see how a country compares on a given indicator with a typical OECD country.” Definition from https://www.oecd.org/edu/school/programmeforinternationalstudentassessmentpisa/35002965.pdf


10. Ibid.


13. For more information on SMU Pendeza, see http://www.smupendeza.com


16. Ibid.


20. The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award homepage, at http://www.dofe.org


22. For more information, visit http://girlguiding.org.uk

The Might of Millennials

By Christopher Cheok

"Millennials" illustrated by Joseph Tey
@ http://skullbase.blogspot.sg
Throughout history, young people have been the energy and driving force of change in society. Today, that is all the more true. With the prevalence of social media, youth and young adults have the unique ability to influence others, and to a greater extent than parents or schools can. Since they are able to shape attitudes and values so greatly, it is important to empower youth with the necessary knowledge and tools to be a force for good, and to make positive contributions to society.

Young people have shown their ability to create change and broad awareness of social needs through their involvement in volunteer welfare organisations (VWOs) and civil society groups. In Singapore, citizens often look to their government for solutions, which it is able to provide, though only at the “macro level”, i.e. issues that concern a large segment of society. However, there are many other “micro-level” problems affecting smaller groups that can be better addressed by self-organised interest groups. Examples of these include causes for animals, issues that concern a neighbourhood rather than a country, and support groups for special populations—for example, loved ones of persons who have committed suicide. These interest groups, which can be composed of young adults and youth, can generate awareness among their peers and family about various issues, including the need for recycling, renewable energy, or the respectful treatment of domestic workers, to name only a few. Many causes benefit from the amplifying voices of youth and the new forms of information exchange of which they are masters.

In Singapore, citizens often look to their government for solutions, which it is able to provide, though only at the “macro level”. However, there are many other “micro-level” problems affecting smaller groups that can be better addressed by self-organised interest groups.

Millennials, those born between 1980 and 2000, seek a broader definition of success, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the workplace. Besides job security and career progression, research shows that millennial workers prefer to work for organisations that radically promote personal growth, support social causes, and blur the boundaries between work and play. For these youth seek meaning and purpose through self-growth and new experiences, the daily routine of an office job alone will not sustain their interests. As such, many companies that are unable to provide millennial workers with a clear career development plan may find that they have trouble retaining them. On the other hand, corporations that actively involve their millennial workers in their corporate social responsibility efforts are able to harness the energy of these youth through a shared sense of purpose and mission. Further, team-bonding activities like social events, group sports or hobby groups allow millennial staff to treat the office—that place where many of us spend over a third of our lives—as a place for both work and socialising.

Health—both physical and psychological—is another area in need of contributions from young people. As a developed nation with high life expectancy, the diseases affecting Singapore’s population are lifestyle-related and chronic in nature, such as diabetes mellitus, obesity, hypertension, substance abuse and depression. Equipped with the right knowledge on health and the benefits of exercise, youth can influence
Young people should be empowered with the right knowledge to become positive agents of health and well-being in their communities.

In my work, I have had the privilege of meeting and working with many youth with the desire to effect positive change. Spanning diverse backgrounds, they include span the individuals from Make The Change, to a group of young adults developing a smartphone application in aid of those with mental illness, to students who help their troubled friends via their schools’ peer support programme. These are two sides of the same coin: different initiatives that showcase youth using the tools at their disposal to promote health for the people around them.

There are several challenges to starting and sustaining an initiative directed at achieving a social impact. For one, there is the major risk of obtaining low-quality and unreliable information online. The Internet is a ready source of information, but there is a need to check their origins and interpret them in relevant contexts. Young people need to have a strong educational base, use context cues, and be discerning of online news stories put out by agencies with certain economic, commercial or political agendas. Self-organised groups may also find it hard to sustain themselves in the long run, especially with leadership change or stagnant membership, and limited financing. While youth can actively use the Internet to engage volunteer manpower and resources, these can dwindle over time, and a self-organised group may find it challenging to scale up beyond a certain point.

That being said, there is no better time in history for the young to come forward to be a force for social change, and work towards addressing the issues that plague society, from domestic violence, welfare of domestic helpers and treatment of foreign workers, mental health, physical health, to care for the environment and animals. Empowered by education, an open flow of information and social media tools, today’s millennials can reach and influence others like never before.

Notes
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
5 Make the Change (http://makethechange.sg) is an organisation that assists NGOs, charities and social enterprises to achieve their desired media exposure at lower costs through the help of volunteer staff from the creative industry.
The Food Bank Singapore is a charity that aims to fight hunger and reduce food wastage in Singapore. We acquire donated food, much of which would otherwise be wasted from manufacturers, distributors, retail stores, consumers and other sources, and make it available to those in need through a network of member beneficiaries.

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Your Burning Changemaking Questions—Answered

By Jiezhen Wu
To be or not to be? That may (or may not) be your question. In ASK ME ANYTHING, readers write in with their social innovation queries, and the Social Space team finds a changemaker to answer them. In this issue, we pose these inquiries to JIEZHEN WU of THE HIDDEN GOOD.

“In which moments do you feel the greatest sense of achievement in your job?”
—Li Xinwei, 22
I feel the greatest sense of achievement and satisfaction when I see the values and ideals that The Hidden Good stands for being put into action. I am especially inspired by the growth of our youth community (known as “Hoodies”). Seeing the good that each Hoodie brings to the table as well as to his/her own communities gives me great affirmation that The Hidden Good is making a meaningful impact on society.

“Do you think Singaporeans need to engage in more community service?”
—Harresh Krishnan, 26
I think we need a re-envisioning of what community service looks like in Singapore. Rather than asking if we should have more or less of it, perhaps the more pertinent question is to look at the issue qualitatively. It is often in the smallest actions—whether it’s behaving respectfully to an elderly person or extending a kind gesture to a stranger—that the greatest impact is felt. Perhaps then, this is where the conversation should begin: first answering the question of why it matters to engage in community service and doing good, before thinking about doing more.

Could you describe what a “social start-up” is? How is it different from other traditional NGOs?
—Neil Bore, 24
A social start-up, at least in Singapore’s context, concerns the underlying impetus of doing social good/pursuing a social cause and making it sustainable (financially, especially) to do so. It is often grounded in values of creativity, technology and innovation, and is lean and nimble. More traditional NGOs tend to be bigger and grounded in years of organisational history, which helps inform the work they do, though it sometimes makes it harder for them to pivot and respond as quickly. Many social enterprises are taking to running their social good organisations like start-ups, hence the “start-up” terminology. The Hidden Good is one such example—our work involves partnering with individuals or companies to spread messages of social good through video campaigns or social experiments. As an apolitical and non-partisan organisation, we are uniquely placed to engage governmental/non-governmental institutions, MNCs, schools or any other organisation or entity looking to do good or to create positive social change in Singapore. The permutations for partnerships are vast, and we are constantly on the lookout for patrons who value and believe in the work we do.

If you could make one change in the world, what would it be?
—Claudia, 22
I’d like to foster empathy in more people and have it become an intrinsic part of how we interact and coexist in this world. I see empathy as fundamental to being human—if we all saw one another as worthy givers and recipients of all things good, we could work so much more efficiently towards tackling social problems.

Jiezhen Wu is Director of The Hidden Good, a social initiative that aims to uncover the good in Singapore. Through the use of new media, guerrilla community activations, and innovative social experiments, THG serves as a platform for youth to create and celebrate the change they want to see in the world. Jiezhen graduated with double Honours from Wellesley College, where she majored in Political Science and Peace and Justice. Prior to moving back to Singapore to run THG, she worked in education in San Francisco. Connect with her at jiezhen@thehiddengood.com

Do you have a burning social innovation question or two? Email them to editor@socialspacemag.org and we’ll find a changemaker for the occasion!
Youth empowerment refers to young people embodying their agency and capacity to make decisions and implement changes in their own lives and in wider society. At its core, it is rooted in the attitudes, cultures and structures that young people participate in within society.

When youth acquire the authority and ability to envision, map, execute, critique and challenge their reality, it opens up opportunities to change the world as we know it. The materialisation of youth empowerment can lead to unparalleled social benefits, including reduced unemployment, poverty eradication, lower crime, improved governance, better education, and more sustainable national growth and technological development.

Since youth empowerment is not an outcome but an attitudinal, structural and cultural process, it can (like most things related to “social change”) get a little complicated. If you are an aspiring young leader or if you work with the changemakers of tomorrow, these six TED motivational talks related to youth empowerment will set you thinking, and hopefully, empower you on your journey ahead.
We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future. 

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

1. “BEING YOUNG AND MAKING AN IMPACT”
By Natalie Warne

At 17, and passionate about social causes, Natalie Warne decided to forgo university and to advocate on behalf of the humanitarian aid organisation, Invisible Children. During this time, she successfully led a nationwide campaign that got featured on CNN and the Oprah Winfrey Show. Presently a film editor in Los Angeles, Warne shares her inspiring story and the message that no one is too young to change the world.

Watch @ https://www.ted.com/talks/natalie_warne_being_young_and_making_an_impact

2. “MY WISH: ONCE UPON A SCHOOL”
By Dave Eggers

Accepting his 2008 TED Prize, author Dave Eggers asks the TED community to personally and creatively engage with local public schools. He shares how his 826 Valencia tutoring centre inspired others around the world to do the same.

Watch @ https://www.ted.com/talks/dave_eggers_makes_his_ted_prize_wish_once_upon_a_school
3. “KIDS CAN TEACH THEMSELVES”
By Sugata Mitra

Speaking at LIFT 2007, Sugata Mitra talks about his Hole in the Wall project. Young kids in this project figured out how to use a PC on their own, and went on to teach other children. In this talk, Mitra raises an important question: what else can children teach themselves?

Watch @ http://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_shows_how_kids_teach_themselves

4. “HOW TO EDUCATE LEADERS? LIBERAL ARTS”
By Patrick Awuah

A liberal arts education is critical to forming true leaders, claims university head Patrick Awuah, because it builds decision-making skills, an ethical framework and a broad vision. He left the US and his career at Microsoft to found Ashesi University, a liberal arts school in his home nation of Ghana, Africa. In this talk, he speaks passionately about dreaming, doing and leading.

Watch @ https://www.ted.com/talks/patrick_awuah_on_educating_leaders
When Memory Banda’s sister reached puberty, she was sent to a traditional “initiation camp” that teaches girls “how to sexually please a man” and got pregnant at the age of 11. Banda, however, refused to go. Instead, she organised others and asked her community’s leader to issue a bylaw to prevent girls from being forced into marriage before the age of 18. Banda, now an advocate for girls’ rights in Malawi, shares her incredible story in this talk.

McKenna Pope’s younger brother loved to cook, but was reluctant to use an Easy-Bake Oven because it was also a toy for girls. So at 13, Pope started an online petition for the American toy company Hasbro to change the Easy-Bake Oven’s pink-and-purple colour scheme, and to market it as a unisex product. In this talk, Pope makes the case for gender-neutral toys.
THE LAST WORD
By Florian Parzhuber

Solution Word

ACROSS
6 Number of bottom lines social enterprises should have
8 Biggest challenge for most social enterprises
9 Ability to understand and share the feelings of another
10 Raising capital through many small contributions
11 What the “O” in NGOs stands for
13 New ideas, devices or methods

DOWN
1 Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise
2 Last name of Ashoka founder
3 What the “R” in CSR stands for
4 Name of the bank founded by Muhammad Yunus
5 What the “I” in SIB stands for
7 Philippines-based movement that aims to end poverty
12 Last name of the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize Winner

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