4ᵗʰ World Youth Congress
Post-Conference Report

Workshop Title: Youth and Social Enterprise

Presented by: Karim Harji, Raïmi B. Osseni and Chris Perrin, members of the Emerging Leaders Committee of the Canadian CED Network

Social enterprise has been the subject of increased interest and activity in Canada and overseas, as citizens strive to balance the economic, social and environmental outcomes of their activities. Among youth in particular, there is a sense that we cannot continue with "business as usual," as we seek innovative ways to address the challenges of global warming, a flagging global economy, costly conflicts, and globalization.

On Wednesday August 13, 2008, members of the Emerging Leaders Committee of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) conducted a workshop on youth and social enterprise in Canada at the 4th World Youth Congress, "Regeneration 2008," which took place at Laval University in Quebec City. Within the global context described above, the workshop's primary objectives were to introduce an international youth audience to how youth are engaged in social enterprise in Canada. The following is a summary of the workshop proceedings and outcomes.

1-Structure

This activity presented on the capacity-building day dedicated to Social Enterprise and facilitated by three youth from Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia, had five distinct sections:

Introductions

Approximately twenty youth attended the workshop. They were coming from all around the world, from countries such as Bahrain, Montenegro, Sri Lanka, Burkina Faso, Hawaii, Kenya, Slovenia and more.

Social Enterprise in Canada

Karim Harji sketched the Canadian context for youth engagement in social enterprise.

Since the term "social enterprise" has been interpreted differently in different countries, a key objective was to illustrate how the term has been applied using Canadian examples. Success stories of ways in which youth-led social enterprises, and other ventures that engage youth at multiple levels, were introduced. A series of 1-pagers profiling six of the best-known Canadian social enterprises that engage youth was presented and discussed in small group settings of 3-5 people. The presenters facilitated the discussions and rotated between the groups with probing questions around how the Canadian examples related to their own experiences.

Best Practices around Youth Engagement

Chris Perrin highlighted some of the best practices and lessons learned from youth engagement in social enterprise in Canada. This learning built specifically on the 1-pagers, so that participants were already aware of the context of the various initiatives.

Six key elements were discussed and related to the 1-pagers:

1. Understand the history of the organization. A social enterprise hoping to involve youth must recognize and understand how the past experiences and culture of the organization will affect the ability to include youth.

2. Make structural changes. Organizations looking to engage and involve youth must ensure that the structure of the organization is ready and willing to involve youth in a meaningful way.

3. Do not prematurely bring on youth. Ensure that there is a plan in place to accommodate youth before engaging them and make sure that youth have responsibilities and jobs before they arrive.

4. Find a youth advocate. If an organization is going to bring youth on board it is important to have a support structure in place that allows youth to be included and able to voice their opinions.

5. Utilize the potential of youth. When given more responsibility you respond positively and rise to the challenge. It is critical that an organization give youth the opportunity to take on tasks that will allow them to learn and flourish.

6. Continue consulting youth and re-evaluating. It is important for an organization to continue to assess the best way to engage youth and respond to the creativity and imagination that youth bring to the table. Connections to the work place must be developed over time to keep youth involved and contributing.

Tools and Resources

Raïmi Osseni introduced a number of web-based tools and resources participants could access from everywhere around the world. These web links led to guides to youth engagement and community development such as the one developed by the City of Calgary which showcases youth engagement practices as well as best practices for building a youth engagement strategy and measurement tools for youth engagement.

Other links include a wealth of articles, reports, events, books and workbooks to allow participants and their organizations to be more efficient in social enterprising. They were

showcasing technical resources and tools for successful business planning, strategic planning, social entrepreneurship and feasibility studies.

2-Outcomes

This seminar resulted in learning opportunities for both the participants and the presenters.

Participants

Participants were introduced to how the term "social enterprise" is being applied in Canada. This included an explanation of how the term is also used differently within the country (e.g. some initiatives profiled do not explicitly label themselves as social enterprise, even though their activities have elements of a social enterprise).

Within the context of a global conference on youth, participants developed an improved understanding of youth engagement in Canada. Many youth leaders also shared some of their own experiences within the smaller group discussions.

The workshop format deviated somewhat from the anticipated agenda, due to an unexpected positive outcome. The group activity ran on for longer than the allotted time, since participants enjoyed it and persisted with discussions. Also, most groups hit the relevant areas that were to be covered in the best practice discussion following the activity, which allowed for more time to answer questions towards the end of the session.

The compilation of tools and resources was stated as relevant and useful for when participants return home. Some youth leaders also indicated that they were excited to explore the potential of some of the ideas from the 1-pagers detailing Canadian social enterprise initiatives.

Presenters

The workshop allowed four youth to attend a global youth conference, and three youth to further develop their presentation skills. This was truly a "youth-driven" effort, developed and delivered entirely by youth.

For the presenters, "Youth and Social Enterprise" was a challenging opportunity to practice "thinking on your feet" – we had to respond to the questions of an international audience, often who spoke different languages, and to adapt the projected agenda to fit participant needs.

As an exercise in collaboration, this was a challenging undertaking. Weekly Skype meetings were held over the course of three months, with many emails shared between the presenters. This

was only the second time that the three presenters conducted the workshop in the same room. The first presentation had been offered at the annual CCEDNet conference in Saskatoon, where the presenters all met for the first time.

The material developed for the workshop will be shared with the broader CCEDNet community, including the rest of the Emerging Leaders Committee. This will include posting it on the CCEDNet and Emerging Leaders sites, as well as possibly other external sites.

Samantha Hodder is doing a CIDA-funded International Youth Internship Program with CCEDNet and its partner in Peru. She attended a large portion of the conference and represented the Network. Samantha describes the youth attending Regeneration 2008:

> "(They) were from all areas of the world and from a variety of backgrounds. Some had started their own NGOs before becoming teenagers. Some did grassroots education in their communities. Some were involved in prominent NGOs. Some worked with women. Some worked with indigenous peoples. Some worked with children. Some educated. Some created media to share the stories of those involved. All were making an impact."

She concludes:

> "The speakers repeatedly commended the youth present for the incredible impact they are already having on the world. The Governor General pointed out that youth are not only the leaders of the future, but they are the leaders of the present, and that we were excellent proof of the impact we can have today."

Long-term (Projected) Outcomes

We have collected emails of the participants, and will be sending the workshop presentation and tools, along with pictures taken during the session. We have already gotten some preliminary feedback from participants, and hope to foster on-going dialogue around youth engagement in social enterprise across various countries.

We are also exploring the potential of continuing this conversation online. The Emerging Leaders website is currently being revamped, and we are hoping to build in features where people can comment on content.

To our knowledge, no one else has collected information on youth engagement on social enterprise in Canada. We believe that building on this is important, and that there is a latent demand for this kind of information. Social enterprise has gained much interest from youth, particularly at universities and in business schools, and can be a critical dimension of a strategy to tackle youth unemployment and poverty in Canada.

Karim Harji

Karim Harji is an associate consultant at Aperio. He works with social sector organizations in the areas of strategic and business planning, social enterprise, and partnership development. Previously, he was a Social Finance Program Officer at the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation, where he explored innovative ways in which corporations engage with, and invest in, communities. He also worked as a researcher with the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP) on issues related to social impact assessment, blended value, and program evaluation.

Karim advises the Canadian Social Entrepreneurship Foundation on social impact and metrics. He has previously worked in human rights at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), microfinance in Pakistan, and community health in Kenya. Karim holds a Masters degree in Public Administration from Carleton University where he focused on international development and a BA in Economics from McMaster University.

Karim is a member of the Emerging Leaders Committee of the Canadian CED Network (CCEDNet).

Raïmi B. Osseni

Diplômé de HEC Montréal en administration des affaires, Raïmi a également poursuivi des études en développement international à l'université de Winnipeg, études durant lesquelles il s'est découvert une passion pour le développement économique communautaire (DEC) et l'économie sociale.

Féru d'entreprenariat social, il travaille comme consultant en gestion des petites et moyennes entreprises avec les entrepreneurs de communautés telles que les immigrants et refugiés, les communautés minoritaires, les personnes à faible revenu, les jeunes, les femmes et les organismes à but non lucratif venant en aide à ces populations. Il a collaboré avec le Réseau canadien de développement économique communautaire (RCDEC) et le Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM). Dans le cadre du Programme de jeunes stagiaires internationaux de l'Agence canadienne de développement international, il a apporté un appui technique en entreprenariat social, en gestion et en commercialisation à une ONG locale et à des groupes de femmes autochtones en Équateur.

Raïmi est membre du comité des Jeunes leaders du Réseau Canadien de DEC (RCDEC).

Charles C Perrin

Originally from Vancouver, Charles is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration at Queen's University. He holds an undergraduate degree in Political Science and Community and Public Affairs from Concordia University in Montreal.
During his time at Concordia University, he worked as a research assistant specifically looking at social enterprise in Canada and North America. Following graduation, he spent half a year in Quebec working to improve his French at both the Centre Linguistique du College de Jonquiere and Université Laval. Chris recently completed a six month work term with a youth career resource centre run by the YWCA of Vancouver. In the summer of 2006 he interned at the Environmental Youth Alliance in Vancouver, working as part of the World Urban Forum and learning about the many programs EYA runs to encourage youth through community economic development.

Charles is a member of the Emerging Leaders Committee of the Canadian CED Network