



**Community Building,
Leadership Development
and Youth Empowerment
in a “Glocal” Context**

Internship Program
Final Report



Prepared by TakingITGlobal
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Contact:

Chiara Camponeschi

Multilingual Programs Manager
Community Connector Internship Program Coordinator
Chiara@takingitglobal.org

Jennifer Corriero

Co-founder and Executive Director
Jenergy@takingitglobal.org

TakingITGlobal

19 Duncan Street, Suite 505
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 3H1
Canada

(T) +1 416 977 9363
(F) +1 416 352 1898
(E) info@takingitglobal.org
(W) www.tigweb.org

This report draws upon the pilot phase of the Community Connector Internship Program that was developed and launched by TakingITGlobal in the fall of 2008. Special thanks to Giorgio Tinelli for his HR support, Nigel Ayow for his design work and Jennifer Corriero for her invaluable feedback.

Table of Contents

I. Program Overview	5
II. Program Context	6
III. Program Structure	7
IV. Meet the Connectors	11
VI. Program Evaluation	14
VII. Lessons Learned	15
VIII. The CCIP Team	19

Program Overview:

What is the Community Connector Internship Program?

TakingITGlobal is an international youth organization that inspires, informs and involves more than 241,000 young people from over 260 countries. Launched in 2000, TakingITGlobal.org uses technology as a vehicle for youth empowerment. Our flagship program is the highly interactive online community www.tigweb.org that offers opportunities for youth to shape their world and express themselves through blogs, discussion boards, artwork, and other media.

From January to April 2008, TakingITGlobal undertook a research initiative to evaluate its impact for key stakeholders, including members of its online community, educators, and partner organizations. The project encompassed a member impact survey, which was released to all our on-line community members, as well as numerous in-depth interviews with active youth within the TIG community, teachers who utilize the TakingITGlobal educational program tools (TIGed), and organizations.

The findings¹ demonstrated that TakingITGlobal's greatest asset for all stakeholders seemed to be its vast network of globally aware individuals. For members and youth, the TIG network was key in enabling them to make friends (82.0%) and to find collaborators (71.9%); for educators, the community enabled them to facilitate global education for their students by connecting their classes with other classes from around the world; and for organizations, TIG's extensive and active membership presented a valuable network that they could tap into for outreach purposes.

"I always thought TIG was the best online network for active youth to get involved in. I have been a member since 2005, and throughout the years TIG has helped me learn more about activism, by developing my skills and knowledge and by helping me connect with youth and youth organisations sharing my same enthusiasm for social change." –Sarah, French Community Connector

TakingITGlobal also seemed to have a strong impact in terms inspiring and empowering members, such as greatly improving their view of young people as change agents (69.0%) or greatly increasing their sense of belonging to a community (57.8%) A second finding that emerged from the study was our member's desire to receive direct opportunities for professional involvement from the TakingITGlobal staff, and to find out more about the people behind the organization. It was interesting to note, in fact, that only a portion of the TakingITGlobal membership felt TIG's impact in terms of receiving support and recognition, as was demonstrated by the high enthusiasm that the active youth interviewed expressed at receiving appreciation, encouragement, and support from both TIG staff and other TIG members. This, in turn, motivated them to become more engaged, contrasting the lukewarm response from general TIG members (36.5%), who expressed wanting to receive more communication and encouragement from TIG.

For this reason, following the release of the 2008 Impact Research, the TakingITGlobal team began brainstorming ways to offer more opportunities for meaningful involvement to our members. The aim of the Community Connector initiative was to provide a space for professional and personal development to youth residing in three continents (Europe, Africa and Latin America.) Through the launch of the program, the TakingITGlobal team also wished to encourage its membership to use its various language platforms as a way for them to share their unique (cultural) perspective and to celebrate different linguistic heritages.

1 For more information on the findings, please consult our TakingITGlobal Impact Research 2008 publication available here: <http://www.takingitglobal.org/images/resources/tool/docs/1869.pdf>

Program Context:

Why Community Connectors?

With members in over 200 countries, TakingITGlobal understands the importance of developing a multilingual platform that is accessible to all users and of providing a resource to showcase local opportunities, expressions and perspectives that truly reflect the diversity of our network. Our site is currently offered in 12 languages, though the majority of events and opportunities available on the site are run in English. Other multilingual events often revolve around the same key languages such as French, Spanish and Arabic and seldom target members who speak the remaining 8 languages. While we successfully provide access to information that is relevant to our international community, we wanted to take the opportunity to further develop our multilingual capacity by focusing on our remaining 8 languages, thus solidifying the reach and impact of our language platforms to foster a sense of inclusivity.

As a consequence, the Community Connector Internship Program (CCIP) was developed to facilitate “glocal” communication between our members, and thus encourage a type of multilingual participation that is at once a reflection of our members’ culture and its place in the world.

Overall, our goals for the program were five-fold:

1. Strengthening the activities of our language communities

- Encouraging multilingual participation;
- Providing support to (new) members;
- Celebrating a ‘glocal’ culture.

2. Promoting relevant local content on our language platforms

- Encouraging youth to contribute to the site in their maternal language;
- Allowing youth the opportunity to strengthen their local networks while showcasing their culture on our international platform;
- Providing access to opportunities and meaningful content to non-English speakers;

3. Make TakingITGlobal.org an even more inclusive community

- Encourage leadership skill development;
- Allow opportunities for capacity-building;
- Expose young leaders to local and international professional opportunities;

4. Growing our offline presence so to reach youth with limited Internet access

- Remain mindful of the digital divide;
- Foster a sense of collaboration between youth and local organizations;
- Strengthen local youth leadership networks;

5. Leveraging the power of technology to address increasingly complex global issues

- Combining the off-line and on-line realities to enhance youth participation;
- Supporting youth in their role as stakeholders and decision-makers.

Program Structure:

How are the Connections created?

The CCIP structure builds upon existing TIG efforts and the key figure, the Community Connector, was modeled around what are now called Platform Facilitators & Moderators. The job description for this internship was developed by taking the innovative approach of combining what are often considered 'contrasting' elements: the on-line and off-line world, the local context with the global one, personal leadership development for regional youth empowerment, and a language-based approach aimed at encouraging intercultural dialogue among the TakingITGlobal membership.

"The fact that I had to combine online work with offline engagement was the best thing that I have ever wanted from an internship."

—Rada, Romanian Community Connector

The internship position was available for a period of six months, starting in mid-August 2008 and ending in mid- February 2009, for a weekly rate of 5-8 working hours. After a rigorous selection process, 10 promising young leaders were selected to join our pilot program. The job description was divided into on-line and off-line tasks: on-line tasks were on-going, whereas off-line were arranged proportionately to difficulty so that those requiring a higher level of skill and expertise could be scheduled towards the end of the internship.

TakingITGlobal's tools and on-line platform provided the ideal support system for Connectors to affect change in their community. As a consequence, connections were created in a variety of ways:

- Community Connector activities benefited our on-line community immensely because they provide multilingual content that was more relevant and up-to-date. This, in turn, encouraged existing members to participate more actively on the site by getting informed on global issues and becoming active participants in their respective language platforms.
- At the local level, Community Connectors were responsible for the development of one Workshop and one Open Forum intended to train youth on Web 2.0 tools for social change. The aim of these sessions was to empower youth to make their voice heard, and to provide a collaborative space through which they could come together and discuss issues of local importance.
- Community Connectors focused on strengthening on-line and off-line youth networks by providing opportunities for local engagement and skill development, as well as acting as "role models" for the community. This, in turn, acted as a catalyst for more online engagement and intercultural exchange between our international members.

Some of the tasks included in the job description involved:

"I met some great leaders through the TakingITGlobal network!"

- Paulo, Brazilian Community Connector

ON-LINE

Being an active TakingITGlobal user by:

- Responding to local TIGblog entries and posting one original entry on a weekly basis;
 - » the aim of this task was to initiate a dialogue between members of the same region and to raise awareness on global issues popular within the region;
 - » the task was also a way for Connectors to reflect on their 'lessons learned' and share 'best practices' with the rest of the community.
- Leaving Global Gallery comments on artist pages, particularly artists from the same country/region;
 - » the aim of this task was to encourage multi-media expression and to create a culture of support for members posting personal artwork from or about the same region as the Connectors'.
- Finding interesting external content regarding events, initiatives, organizations or opportunities that could be of interest to the local community;
 - » this tasks was a way to learn more about the TakingITGlobal platform while being exposed to multilingual user-generated content.
- Using TakingITGlobal's Project Page to record personal activities: from monthly reports, pictures, contact information to blog entries, videos and more.
 - » This task was included so to help Connectors improve their organizational and time management skills. The Project page was used as a sort of on-going 'archive' of completed activities and lessons learned. Its features allowed Connectors to share their documents, photos and videos, as well as

to communicate with the Program Coordinator through blog posts.

OFF-LINE

Open Forum

Open Forums were an opportunity for Connectors to meet TIG members and other young people in their local community. Meetings normally took place in schools, community centers, or other public venues. By holding an Open Forum, participants had the chance to share possible ideas on how to affect change and take action around today's major challenges: from poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS, and education, to environmental sustainability and other local issues. Open Forums were one of the ways local youth networks were strengthened and a way Connectors connected with individuals with limited or no Internet access. Open Forums also offered a space for idea-sharing and innovative brainstorming, learning from other organization's programs and generating ideas for potential future projects.

"Thanks to the internship, I had the opportunity to learn more about climate change for my Open Forum, which was very good. This sparked some ideas for projects I will try to get funding for in the future. I was also able to help TIG as a volunteer, not just as a active member, and that's good empowerment!"

–Jonas, Swedish Community Connector

"The interviews are about people with influence, who are successful in what they do and have worked hard to become leaders in their community. Their human capital and expertise can definitely help promote positive involvement."

–Rada, Romanian Community Connector

Workshop

The workshop was included to empower youth and inspire them to take action both locally and globally. Through the workshop, Connectors explored the world of interactive « Web 2.0 » tools and explained how Internet-based technologies can be used to "inspire, inform and involve" future generations of young leaders.

Interviews

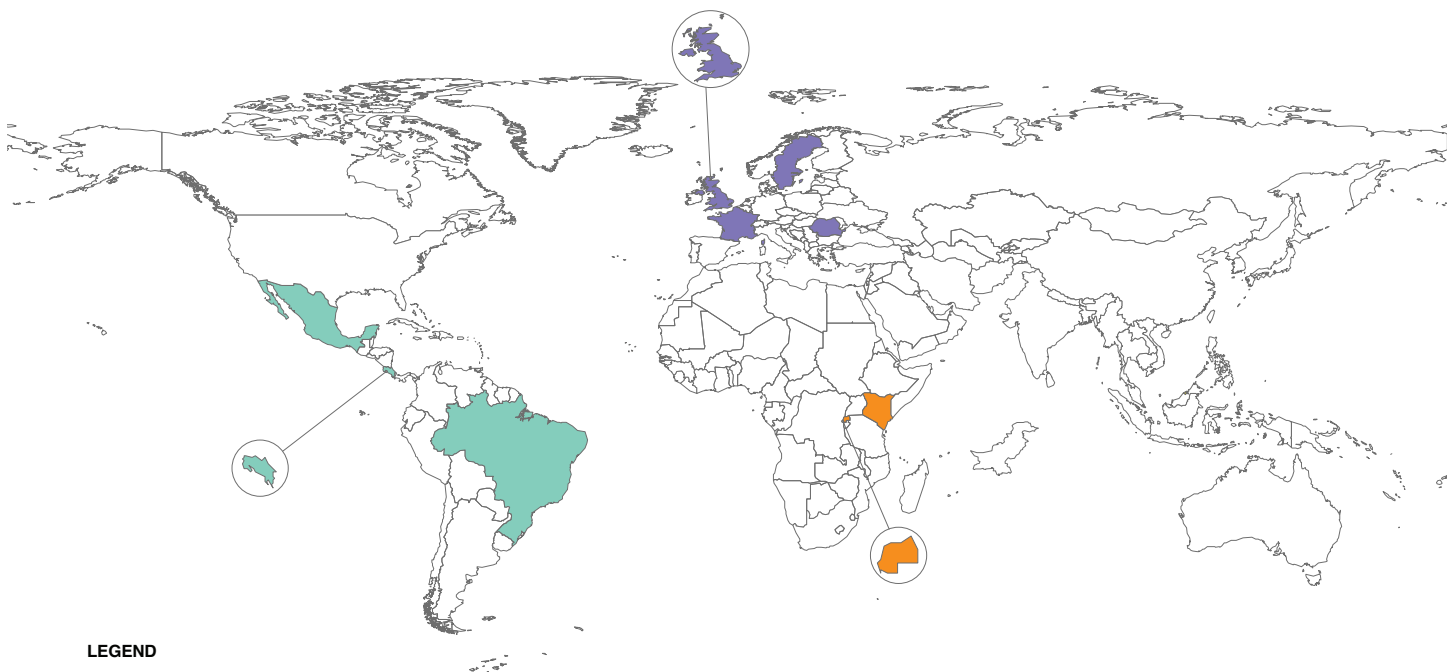
Interviews were a chance for Connectors to share different perspectives and give more visibility to interesting local initiatives. The interviews were published in Panorama, our monthly on-line magazine, and showcased stories of positive leadership on global issues told from a youth perspective.

Connections were also nurtured between the team of interns and the TakingITGlobal staff. Support was received throughout the different stages of the program through various means:

Training: Training Documents were provided during the first regional training session, when interns were introduced to members of the same region and were encouraged to share information and keep in touch through MSN, Skype, as well as other TIG tools. A Welcome meeting was then organized to bring together the three regional teams through the use of our Live Chat tool.

Support: Additional support was provided on an on-going basis through an extensive report mechanism that included monthly reports, an evaluation by the Program Coordinator during the first half of the internship, the submission of a final report, as well as several team meetings, Group emails and regular feedback from both the Regional Coordinator and the Program Coordinator.

Evaluation: At the end of the internship, interns were evaluated based on their Project Page materials, monthly reports and final report. They were then ranked based on their performance and placed into one of the following categories: Overachiever, Energizer and Engaged. A celebratory Live Chat meeting was also organized to reflect on the overall experience and think of scenarios for future collaboration.



LEGEND

COUNTRIES

- **EAST AFRICA:** Kenya, Rwanda = 2 countries
- **EUROPE:** Sweden, Romania, UK, France = 4 countries
- **LATIN AMERICA:** Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica = 3 countries

TOTAL: 9 countries

Meet the Connectors

International Young Leaders from Brazil to Rwanda

On top of working on their regular tasks, interns had a chance to grow their own networks and take part in several international activities. Some Connectors were able to attend prestigious international conferences, others had a chance to combine the internship's focus with their other passions or projects, and some decided to submit project proposals to the Headquarters aimed at developing parts of the TakingITGlobal.org community in a locally-centered way.



Elizabeth Arceo

24, Mexico

"I think TakingITGlobal can help us learn how to commit to positive change, and show us how we can use technology and our time on the computer for something more useful."

Thanks to her involvement with the CCIP, Elizabeth was able to put her leadership skills in practice by attending several local university workshops and organizational meetings focused on political science and international relations.



Luciana Brasil Marques

Brazil, 24

learnt so many new things! I discovered online tools such as survey platforms, Google docs (I didn't even know the service existed) and Skype- all things that improved my communication skills."

Through her involvement with the CCIP, Luciana established connections with prominent youth media outlets such as Onda Jovem, where she published an article promoting ymex.org's Democracy Video Challenge.² Her passion for leadership also led to join the Make It Happen e-course³ as a pilot program participant, which allowed her to work on her social entrepreneurship project through the support of the TIGed platform.



Efraim Batista de Souza Neto

23, Brazil

"Thanks to the internship, I learned the importance of being in contact with the greatest number of cultures and of the value of local knowledge."

Efraim is a fervent believer in the power of local youth networks, and was able to use his experience as a Connector to develop a project proposal aimed at launching a version of TIG's Creating Local Connections⁴ program for Brazil. He was also successful in reaching out to local media by promoting press releases to important magazines such as Rebia, and has since used the TIG platform for a series of on-line trainings with the Environmental Youth Journalist network of Brazil.

² <http://www.ymex.org/discuss/thread/1038> and

³ <http://www.tigblog.org/group/makeithappen?post=team>

³ <http://projects.tigweb.org/clccanada>



Jonas Eriksson

26, Sweden

"The internship has helped me connect with the community and raise awareness on global issues. My goal now is to go from words to action."

During the course of the internship Jonas attended the European Social Forum as a TIG representative, and started working on a project aimed at launching Panorama5 in Swedish in collaboration with a member of the Swedish Youth Press.



Paulo Ricardo Farine Milani

21, Brazil

"Thanks to the internship, I was able to bring people together to discuss issues that matter to us and think of solutions to address them."

Through his position as a Connector, Paulo attended several local and national events focused on the Millennium Development Goals, and was also invited to take part in an on-line course called "Escola de Rede" organized by OASIS Mundi in Brazil.



Rada Cristina Irimie

23, Romania

"The internship was an enriching experience, both personally and professionally. I particularly enjoyed connecting with other members, the content found on TIG, the task we had to work on and the people I met along the way."

During her time as a Connector, Rada attended the Balkan Youth International Dialogue Conference in Turkey and was inspired to apply to several programs such as the Model United Nations in Bucharest. Thanks to her outreach efforts, TakingITGlobal was promoted several times on a Romanian radio program, and many Romanians studying abroad like her were exposed to TakingITGlobal through her on-line "promotion campaign.



Angela Murugi Kimani

23, Kenya

"Thanks to the internship I have managed to encourage more youth to come out of their comfort zones and be part and parcel of development in their community. I have been able to instil hope and courage to young people and reminding them that they can still make it!"

During the course of the internship, Angela attended the YARD Peace Tournament Event, where she represented TakingITGlobal and talked about the potential of Web 2.0 tools for building a culture peace. She was also able to attend the Student Peace Festival in Trondheim, Norway and join local Kenyan organizations for several networking and brainstorming sessions.



Johanny Arilexis Perez Sierra

20, Costa Rica

"The internship was very interesting: I connected with a lot of people and shared my opinions with them. I also had the opportunity to visit various countries and attend several events... and this is just the start!"

During the course of her internship, Johanny traveled to several countries to attend conferences such as the World Youth Congress in Quebec City, Canada, a leadership workshop at Purdue University, Indiana, and the Conferencia Internacional de las Americas, where she held her Connector workshop. She is the recipient of the Heliconia Award from Earth University in Costa Rica, as well as a finalist for National Youth Prize competition in the Dominican Republic.



Sarah Toumi

21, France

"TIG is very useful in helping youth connect with other active young leaders."

During the course of the internship, Sarah represented TakingITGlobal at a series of events such as the EUforIA conference in Geneva, Switzerland and the EU Development Days in Strasbourg, France. In Strasbourg, she joined the Plan International Youth Journalist team and posted several interviews with key figures in the development field on the joint TakingITGlobal- Plan International group blog6 (6- <http://www.tigblog.org/group/planyouth>). She was also inspired to join the Make It Happen pilot e-course as an e-mentor, to organize a Fair Trade Awareness event at Sorbonne University in Paris, France through DREAM, her NGO, and to apply for a Humanity in Action Program in New York City.

Jean-Luc Ugirashebuja

25, Rwanda



"Before the internship I did not know enough about the world of ICTs, but now I am familiar with all the useful tools that are available on TIG. More importantly, I know how to benefit from them."

During his time as a Connector, Jean-Luc attended several local conferences and decided to get involved as a volunteer for organizations based in Rwanda. His passion for involvement prompted him to create various TIG Project and Group pages in support of his activities and to maintain connections with local young leaders.

Evaluation

When asked to evaluate, on a scale from 1 to 10, the overall quality of the program, the items below ranked as follow:

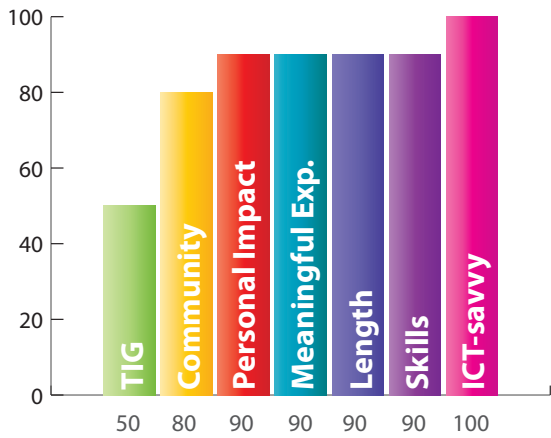
Satisfaction	Quality	Materials	Assistance	Usefulness of Tasks
7.8	7.8	8.5	8.8	8.3

Best Task	Good Task
OUTREACH	INTERACTION

"The internship was a really joyful experience for me."
 –Luciana, Brazilian Community Connector

OUTREACH was considered the best task in the job description, followed by **INTERACTION** with the community. When asked which task should stay in the job description for future runs of the **CCIP**, the overwhelming response was **WORKSHOP**.

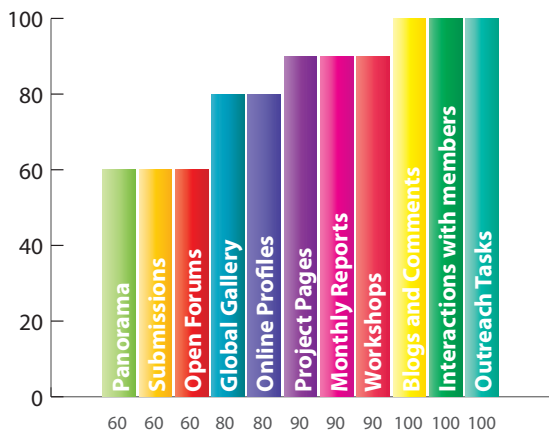
The CCIP Experience:



- 50% of the Connectors: Feel more connected to TIG
- 80% feel more connected to their community
- 90% Believe the CCIP had a positive impact on them
- 90% found the CCIP to be a meaningful experience
- 90% found the length of the program to be adequate
- 90% Believe they have learned new skills
- 100% Feel more confident in their use of ICTs for social change

As a result of their involvement in the CCIP program

Percentage of tasks completed by Connectors:



- 60% Panorama Interviews
- 60% Database submissions
- 60% conducted an Open Forum
- 80% Global Gallery comments
- 80% Other on-line profile activities (petitions, discussion board, etc.)
- 90% Project Page “archive”
- 90% Completed their monthly reports
- 90% Conducted a Workshop
- 100% Blog entries, comments
- 100% Interaction with members
- 100% Performed their outreach tasks

Lessons Learned

Reflecting on the Connectors’ Feedback & Potential Next Steps

During the course of the Final Report evaluation, several themes emerged based on the Connectors’ feedback.

Flexibility

Connectors come from different cultural and regional contexts, and have different interests and passion. These elements call for greater flexibility in the structure of the program, allowing for different leadership styles and managerial competencies to emerge. The internship was designed in such a way that it allowed interns to pursue their passions while also getting exposed to consistent kinds of experiences (such as running a workshop or interviewing remarkable members in their community.) However, some Connectors seemed to privilege particular tasks, especially the off-line engagement ones, over content submission or regular blog posts. For this reason, a potential next step would be to come up with a series of different job descriptions targeting different “personality traits” or “expected outcomes”. These flexible job descriptions would have a series of consistent tasks, but their central components would focus on different aspects

of the Connector role (for example: greater focus on engagement and facilitation work; planning and implementing project-based activities; or allowing a personalized approach to the job description, giving Connectors a predetermined list of various tasks arranged by 'type', and allowing them to pick a certain number of options per type.)

Time commitment

Similarly, while the Connectors found the duration of the internship proportionate to the amount of monthly tasks, they also seemed to prefer having less weekly tasks (such as regular Database submissions and blog posts). A more flexible model would be a potential way of overcoming this challenge, especially if Connectors are given the chance to personalize their job descriptions. Others also expressed the desire to be partnered with a second Connector from their same country, which is an arrangement that would foster a greater sense of collaboration between young leaders while also maximizing the use of Connectors' time.

Transition Opportunities

Another theme that emerged was having the opportunity to prolong one's involvement with the organization, either through an on-line volunteering role (as was demonstrated by Efraim's and Jonas' eagerness to contribute to the evolution of their respective language platforms through project-based activities), or by allowing Connectors that ranked in the "Super Achiever" category to complete a second phase of the internship directly from the headquarter. Another potential transition opportunity would be to ask former Connectors to mentor Connectors during future runs of the CCIP program.

Challenges of working in a virtual team

Being part of a global on-line team is a rewarding experience, but not one free of challenges. Connectors reported feeling more connected to TakingITGlobal and its community as a result of their involvement in the program, but they also expressed the desire to meet team members and TIG staff in person at least once. Possible solutions to this request range from organizing more interactive on-line meeting, particularly through audio- and video- enabled platforms, to, when possible, awarding scholarships that would allow interns to attend international conferences co-organized by the TakingITGlobal. Meeting at events such as the World Youth Congress would provide Connectors with the chance to be trained in person by TIG staffers while also kick-starting the internship experience by attending an important youth conference.

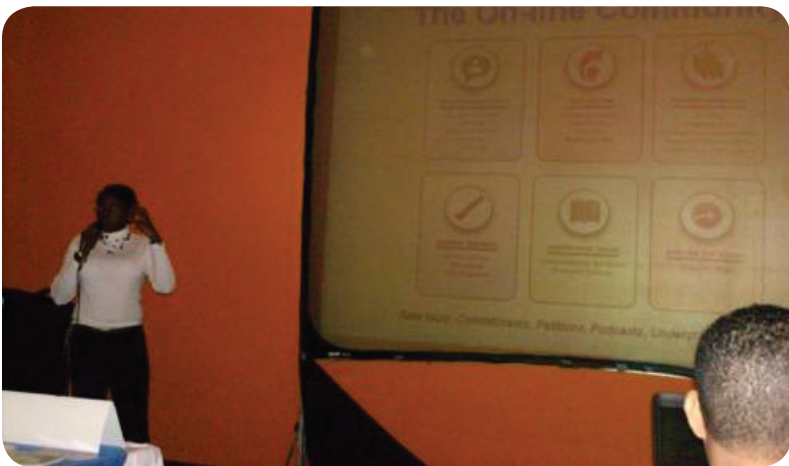
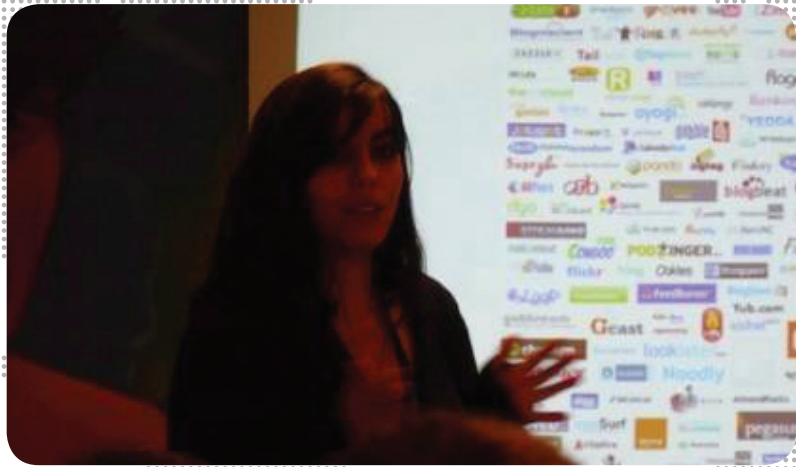
Moreover, while the program was developed so to encourage self-direction and self-reliance, more frequent team meetings and feedback would also be beneficial in developing a greater sense of team spirit. Lastly, while Connectors are required to be bilingual in order to join the program, developing multilingual training materials would also be of help in overcoming some of the understandable geographical and language barriers.



"Angela with Patricia Sudi, TIG's East Africa Engagement Coordinator, at the YARD Peace Tournament in Kenya."



Sarah running her workshop at the EU for IA event in Geneva, Switzerland.

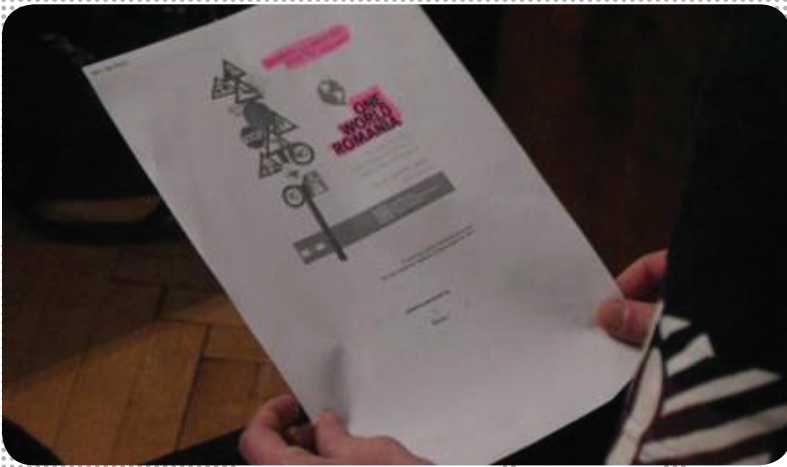


Johanny running her workshop at the Conferencia Internacional de las Americas 2008.

Elizabeth's workshop in Mexico.



Rada's Workshop in Romania



Angela during her interview



The CCIP Team

Thanks to our Regional Coordinators for their support, feedback and hard work during the course of the internship!



Damian Profeta

Latin & Central America Engagement Coordinator

Damian is a journalist from Argentina who has been socially involved in an impressive array of initiatives since 1995. At the age of 19, Damian founded the Vientos del Sur Association and served as its Executive Director from 2002 to 2005. He has also been a leader of national chapters of several world-wide campaigns, executing projects on youth empowerment, supporting emerging young leaders and collaborating with organizations such as UNESCO, the Inter-American Development Bank Youth Program, the International Youth Parliament, TakingITGlobal, and the Global Youth Action Network. As a result of his extensive social involvement Damian was awarded the “Top Outstanding Young Persons of Argentina” 2005 Award. He holds an International Diploma in Political Theory and Public Administration, and also studied television production.

His blog, Diary of a Participaholic, can be found here (in Spanish):

<http://damianprofeta.tigblog.org/post/645711?setlangcookie=true>



Patricia Sudi

East Africa Engagement Coordinator

Patricia is a lawyer from Kenya. She has been a part of the TakingITGlobal network for a number of years, training and supporting youth through a series of community-building and leadership programs. In December 2007, Patricia won the Global Young Social Entrepreneurs’ Competition and attended the GK3 Forum held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She was also chosen to represent Africa in a 2007 UN publication titled ‘Water Rights and Wrongs: A young people’s summary of the United Nations Human Development Report 2006’ and was recently a youth delegate at the UN Habitat World Urban Forum in Nanjing, China.

Her blog can be found here: <http://patsibo.tigblog.org/>

Toronto Headquarter Team Members



Chiara Camponeschi

Multilingual Programs Manager,
Community Connector Internship Program Coordinator,
Europe Engagement Coordinator

Chiara holds a Honours degree in Political Science and Communication Studies from York University, in Canada. Originally from Rome, Italy, Chiara joined the TakingITGlobal team in January 2007 as Communications Assistant and is now the Multilingual Programs Manager and Community Connector Internship Program Coordinator. Through her work at TakingITGlobal, Chiara manages a team of over 120 on-line volunteers who work to maintain TakingITGlobal's 12 language platforms. She has been a presenter at several international conferences such as the CIVICUS Youth Assembly and the International Meeting on Youth Policies in Urbino, Italy and is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Environmental Studies.

Chiara's profile can be found here: <http://profiles.tigweb.org/chiaramente>

Jennifer Corriero



Co-founder and Executive Director

Jennifer has a BA (Liberal Studies) with a focus on 'Business, Communications, Technology and Culture' and a Masters in Environmental Studies from York University. Jennifer is co-founder and Executive Director of TakingITGlobal. In 2003, Jennifer was a member of the Official Canadian Government Delegation to the World Summit on the Information Society.

She has presented and supported civil society engagement at events including the World Urban Forum, International AIDS Conference, World Summit on Sustainable Development, Youth Employment Summit and Global Knowledge Partnership International Forum. In 2005, Jennifer was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum and in 2007, as one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network and as a York University Bryden Alumni Award winner. Jennifer has also been a youth engagement strategy consultant for a range of organizations including Microsoft, TD Bank, VanCity Credit Union, Ontario Science Centre and the Canadian Government.

Jennifer's blog can be found here: <http://jenergy.tigblog.org>

Nigel Ayow



Graphic Designer

Nigel has graduated with high Honors in Graphic Design at Seneca College. Taking computer science for 3 years in high school, he found his passion in design. He has worked on various websites for different organizations and is knowledgeable in many design programs. After graduation in 2008, he joined the TakingITGlobal team as a Graphic Designer utilizing his strong design skills for different projects. His recent project in 2007 is the campaign for the Ontario Human Rights Commissions, which was well received by Barbara Hall, the Chief Commissioner of the OHRC.

Nigel's profile can be found here: <http://profiles.tigweb.org/yeloman>

