**M5-T6-H1-Youth-led Communications Overview**

Communications work (defined as engaging audiences through public communications channels like media, print, social, advertising, etc) may be used to communicate within youth programming (e.g. behaviour change, recruitment) or about programmes (e.g. marketing, thought leadership). Youth-led communications on youth-led programming/issues is the right of the young people involved as well as being a more effective way to reach those audiences.

**General Principles:**

* Young people are pioneers of the global trend away from broadcast communications (where you create a piece of content with a controlled message and try to get the website, media outlet or celebrity with the biggest audience to push it out) to social communications (try to stimulate a conversation that you cannot control the direction of). The global youth trend away from platforms like Facebook (even as it continues to grow with over 25s) to messenger-based apps like WhatsApp is one symptom of this for the platforms you can reach young people on.
* Any online communications work with young people needs to factor in the emerging challenges of Privacy (risks of public identification as well as the permanence of online content) and Echo Chambers (the trend towards all groups increasingly only talking to those who already agree)
* When creating content featuring young people, informed consent is a minimum - proactive co-creation should be the goal
* Don’t try to “Speak like youth”
* Don’t only enlist young people to speak to other young people - they are your most powerful messengers to decision makers, practitioners, donors, older members of the public etc.
* Don’t assume that young people are all on social media and experts in it, or that they should do it for you
* Examples of tactics that facilitate youth-led comms:
* Youth co-creation of your brand, messaging and content strategy at the scoping stage of a project. This is not just asking focus groups to feedback on your logo, but having young people [draw up the insight questions](http://restlessdevelopment.org/big-conversation) and use human centered design techniques to [experiment with how they want to tell the story](http://restlessdevelopment.org/news/2016/05/22/young-people-at-the-heart-of-humanitarian-action#strategy).
* Physical events which help young people to create content for your project through skills training, equipment, peer encouragement (and competition), dissemination platforms, and a ‘sense of occasion’. For example youth [storyboarding their own stories](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Y4qpcm4bbU) ([session plan and handouts here](https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BxO-7k657PNyeGtZdGVSdTVFOTg)) or [hackathons](http://wearerestless.org/2015/08/27/hacktion2015-london-showed-its-youthpower/).
* Youth takeovers of social media platforms (with training support and assignment structure) and youth as ambassadors (not just reading out scripts or put forward as ‘case studies’ but trained as spokespeople for your messaging)
* Youth reporters - either through [Mobile Journalism](http://wearerestless.org/2016/08/26/becoming-a-mobile-journalist/) in programming, [Capturing Stories toolkit](http://restlessdevelopment.org/file/capturing-stories-toolkit-pdf) and equipment for use by volunteers in their spare time, or a [Youth Newsroom at](http://www.theyouthsummit.org/) an event.
* Lifestyle relevance - young people telling stories which get across development messaging, but by focusing on the [music](https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/why-tanzanias-future-lies-in-the-hands-of-its-yout/), arts, food, culture that they relate to more naturally.

**Example: Mobile Journalism**

There are a *lot* of reasons why MOJO is so good, both for those creating the films and the organisations looking to share their stories; here are just a few.

1: It teaches young people new skills.

Everyone loves learning new things, but it is especially important for the young changemakers we work with (and not only so we keep the people who give us money happy!). Through mobile journalism, they learn not only the practical skills of working a camera, microphone and tripod, but also how to shape a story and get their opinions across in as concise a way as possible.

2: Young People choose what to say, and how.

Not all of us are born public speakers, but that doesn’t mean we have nothing to say. Mobile journalism gives young people the opportunity to control not only what they say, but how and where. Are they more comfortable sat at home alone? Or with a small group of friends around them? Do they want to talk about gender issues in their community? Or how they had no choice in what they had for breakfast?

3: It’s authentic (in theory…)

According to some clever people, UK public trust in charities is at an [all time low](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/28/trust-charities-low-charitable-work-public). In order to regain that trust, we’re going to have to do things differently, one way being to ensure what we say to people is authentic, honest and open. By allowing young people to speak for themselves, you take away the uneasy feeling that a lot of people have with charity communications – that of ‘how much of this is coming from the person, and how much from the charity?’. Having said that, are charities willing to share everything young people say? Even if it contradicts their values as an organisation? Hmm…

4. Young people know young people

We want young people to unleash their #YouthPower, and who better to inspire them to do that than their fellow young people? One thing I’ve become aware of in my time working ‘wiv da yoof’ is that if you try to be ‘hip’ and ‘cool’ young people will see right through you. There’s even a phrase for it: [try hard](http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=try-hard). And young people don’t need any help to be motivated to make real change, they just need to be shown that it IS possible, is happening all around them and is being carried out by people just like them.

**Example: Hackathon**

“Wednesday 12th August 2015 was the day that young people around the world made their voices heard on an unprecedented scale. As part of the action/2015 campaign, over 100 events took place across 5 continents, all championing #YouthPower in this pivotal year for people and planet.

From underwater protests in Sri Lanka to flashmobs South Africa, young people celebrated the fact that as the largest generation of young people in history, we have the power to hold world leaders to account for the commitments they make to tackle poverty, inequality and climate change at the SDG and Climate Summits later this year.

After [lighting up London with images of iconic global figures in their youth](https://www.flickr.com/photos/restlessdev/sets/72157657063889455) (alongside one of our very own inspiring activists Ladan Takow), over 40 young people arrived at Google Campus on the morning of International Youth Day. Why? Well ICS volunteers and ONE Youth Ambassadors had joined forces for HacKtion/2015- tasked with amplifying the voices of the hundreds of thousands of their fellow youth activists taking action around the world.

To help guide us all through our first hackathon, a range of digital experts joined us on the day. Including Richard Beer, Creative Director of [Don’t Panic London](http://www.dontpaniclondon.com/) – the masterminds behind The Revolution Will Be Televised and [this iconic Syria video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBQ-IoHfimQ); Helen Hector, Digital Campaigns Manager at [The ONE Campaign](http://www.one.org/international/); and Richard Roaf, founder of [Alter-Eco Communications.](http://alter-eco.co.uk/)

After technical training from our expert guests, the Hack began! Volunteers competed in teams for the largest online impact: frantically retweeting and engaging with global events whilst *also* creating and sharing their own digital content, using the Greenscreen, VoxPops and Photoshop stands dotted around the room.

The result? #YouthPower reached over **36 million people** on social media worldwide. Not bad for a days work?

From London to Lima, Nairobi to New Delhi, a powerful network of young activists came together on International Youth Day to remind global leaders that we’re a force to be reckoned with. We reminded them that we’ll be watching closely the promises they make at the two global summits this year, and holding them accountable to them post-2015.”

**Example: Mobile applications to support life skills and SRHR learning in communities in India**

The M-Sathi App aims to increase knowledge of Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and usage of appropriate services for young girls and women living in rural and urban villages in India. The knowledge of SRHR is very limited and access to services can be hindered by distance, unavailability of products such as condoms and sanitary napkins and negative attitudes of the family/community members. The app is currently available on Smartphones using Android mobile operating systems and offers the language option of Hindi or English. Restless Development provides SRHR education through modules, training and sessions focused on young girls and their environment. The app if presented by our volunteers to young girls, and are trained to use the app effectively for any information they require on their health, hygiene or rights. The app is also being included in our other programs designed for both boys and girls. We believe SRHR education is as important for young boys as for young girls and women. The aim of the app is not to replace the physical education our volunteers and team members provide at the districts of India, but to strengthen the knowledge and understanding of SRHR through a user friendly, 24\*7 app available on mobile phones.

M-Sathi App covers a broad range of topic areas such as:

* Growing up: Puberty, Anatomy & Menstruation
* Sex & Sexuality: Sexual Rights & Responsibilities
* Pregnancy: Conceptions, Safe Abortion & Contraception
* STIs: Sexually transmitted infections & symptoms
* HIV & AIDS: Transmission, Prevention & Consequences
* Gender: Gender bias, Abuse & Legal Provisions