Guide to Action

Simple Steps Towards Change

CREATED BY: TakingITGlobal
INSPIRE INFORM INVOLVE

This guide was created by young people
who have worked to achieve their goals
and initiate positive change in the world.

Introduction

Welcome to TakingITGlobal's Guide to Action. It has been designed to help you turn your dreams into reality. This guide is informed by the experiences of youth leaders from around the world and can provide you with the direction and support you need to better work towards making the change you want to see in the world. Good luck and remember to have fun!

Process Overview

1 REFLECT & GET INSPIRED

Think about the changes you would like to see happen, whether they are in yourself, your school, your community, your country, or even the world. Who or what inspires you to take action? Seeking out sources of inspiration can give you great ideas and help you to find the strength to turn your vision into a reality.

2 IDENTIFY & GET INFORMED

What issues are you most passionate about? Learn more by gathering information about the things that interest you. By informing yourself you will be more prepared to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

3 LEAD & GET OTHERS INVOLVED

Being a good leader is about building on the skills you have and knowing how to leverage the strengths of others. Write down the skills that you and your team members have and see how each member of your team can use their strengths to lead in different ways. Remember that good leadership includes good teamwork!

4 GET CONNECTED

Networking can give you ideas, access to knowledge and experience, and help in gaining support for your project. Create a map of your networks and track your contacts.

5 PLAN & GET MOVING

Now that you are equipped to take action, it's time to begin planning. Start with identifying the issue you are most interested in taking action on and one goal you can work towards. When you have your plan, stay positive and focused. Encountering obstacles is normal. You often learn more from things that are difficult than those that are easy!

6 HAVE A LASTING IMPACT

Monitoring and evaluation are important parts of project management. During and at the end of your project you'll want to identify the obstacles you face and the lessons you are learning. Encouraging other youth to get involved in the issue you care about is a great way to sustain your efforts. Remember, even if you don't achieve all of your expectations, you likely influenced others and experienced personal growth!

Guide available at: http://www.takingitglobal.org/guidetoaction

Reflect

Take a moment to REFLECT on the world around you. Think about what you see.

Imagine the world you would like to live in.

Now what would you need to change in order for the world to come closer to your vision?

Can you think of some things you would like to change or improve?

About yourself?

About your school?

About your community?

About your country?

About the world?

Get Inspired

The seeds of each new idea for a project or initiative are usually rooted in a source of inspiration. Take a minute to think about who and what inspires you. Do you have a mentor? Do you have a hero? Is there someone in your life who you really respect or someone that represents something important to you?

Write down the names of a few people who have inspired you and why. It could be someone that you know like a friend, teacher or family member, or perhaps a community leader, author, artist or activist?

Meet inspiring people

"As a member of TakingITGlobal, I experience the magnificent diversity of ways of thinking in the world. I believe that my experience in TakingITGlobal has impacted my personality and perception of others in a very positive way. Being part of this community has broadened my mind by participating in the discussion boards, improving my conflict resolution approaches. Through the Global Gallery, I share my artwork reflecting my cultural background with artists from around the world. Most important, the volunteer work I am engaged in inside my local community is provided with a new global dimension."

- Ayman, Egypt

Check out Featured Member stories on TakingITGlobal: http://featuredmembers.takingitglobal.org

Find young people taking action from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe by going to: http://members.takingitglobal.org

Sources of inspiration:

- Read stories about inspirational young people
- Spend time outside and connect with nature
- Surf the Internet and look through inspirational sites
- Go to your local art gallery, museum or cultural centre

Ways that young people change the world:

- As voices against injustice
- As promoters of environmental and social awareness
- As presenters at conferences, forums and summits
- As trainers, mentors, coaches and tutors
- As artists, musicians and actors
- As organizers of petitions, campaigns and protests
- As entrepreneurs creating businesses and jobs
- As volunteers and fund-raisers for charity
- As conscious consumers
- As responsible users of natural resources

Online:

Are you an artist, or inspired by the arts?
Visit TakingITGlobal's Global Gallery:
http://gallery.takingitglobal.org

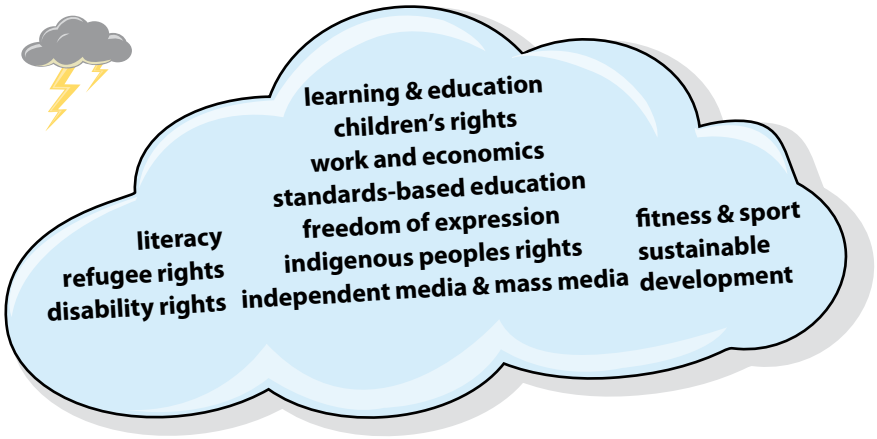
Identify Your Passions

Thinking back to your reflections on the things you would like to change or improve in the world, what stands out as most important to you? What issues are you passionate about? What would motivate you to act?

Take a moment to create a list of issues that are important to you. It is important to identify the issues that interest you most because they will help to guide your approach to change.

It could look something like this:	Now create a list of your own:
climate change	
culture & identity	
youth violence	
substance abuse	
peace building	
educational technology	
women's rights	

Brainstorm! What else interests or concerns you?



Online:
Learn more about different issues affecting our world.
Visit TakingITGlobal's Understanding the Issues
http://issues.takingitglobal.org

Get Informed

Develop your knowledge and expertise by getting informed about the issues that concern you. This will allow you to be more effective and have a greater impact as you carry out the changes you want to see take place. Based on the issues you have just identified…

Ask yourself

What more can I learn about the issues that concern me?

Develop a set of questions that you want to answer. Here's some you might want to use

- What makes this issue unique and important to address?
- Who is most affected by the issue and why?
- How does this issue differ locally, nationally, regionally and globally?
- What different approaches have been taken to understand and tackle the issue?
- What groups are currently working on addressing the issue? (consider different sectors such as government, corporations, non-profit organizations, youth groups, United Nations agencies, etc.)

List other questions here:

Find three websites related to issues you want to learn more about. List them here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How can I access more information?

- school or local library – check out books, magazines, films, and more
- surf the Internet – visit websites of interesting organizations, government sites, on-line newspapers and magazines. Be sure to evaluate the accuracy of the information you find on the Internet.
- Visit the Understanding the Issues section of TakingITGlobal http://issues.takingitglobal.org
- Family, friends and teachers – there is no harm in asking. You may be surprised by what they know.

Who would you contact?

One way to get information is to call an expert or an organization to find out what you need to know. We will talk more about networking in the *Get Connected* section of the guide.

Online:

Looking for a group that does work in your area of interest? Try: http://organizations.takingitglobal.org and search by category.

Lead Your Project to Success

Identifying your skills and characteristics will help you lead your project with success. Start by understanding your own strengths and needs, and then consider how creating a team could help to better achieve your goals. Helping your team members identify and leverage their own strengths and talents for the project is an important part of leadership. It is also important to ensure that all those involved are able to share in the vision of what you are trying to achieve.

Can you think of someone who shows strong leadership? What makes that person a good leader?

Reflect on the following leadership characteristics. Circle the characteristics that most apply to your personality and abilities and add any that you think are missing.

Able to accommodate diverse needs
Open-minded
Able to transfer skills
Fair
Patient
Able to work under pressure
Focused
Persistent
Able to initiate
Good at decision-making
Personable
Accountable
Good at listening
Responsive
Approachable
Honest
Seeks self-improvement
Charismatic
Humanitarian
Deeply committed
Compassionate
Talented
Creative
Humble
Team player
Dedicated
Imaginative
Intelligent
Understanding
Driven
Modest
Dynamic
Motivational
Visionary

Develop a Team

Teamwork involves having a group of people who work together towards a common goal, with a shared sense of purpose.

It is important to realize that everyone in the project can lead in different ways – and each member of the team can set personal improvement goals.

Have an open discussion with your team to allow each person to share some of the characteristics that they would like to develop and improve upon on both an individual and group level.

Great teams are those that allow for:

- A sense of trust and belonging
- A shared sense of ownership
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Effective and ongoing communication
- Respect for diversity
- A sense of fun, creativity and openness
- A space for ongoing learning and growth

All team members can also fill out a chart, similar to the one below, in order to identify the ways in which each person can best contribute to the project. First discuss this in your group and then fill in the chart. You will find that each member of your team brings a unique set of skills and experiences to the table. This is good! It makes for a stronger team, and will ultimately help you to reach your project goals and objectives.

Name	Things I like to do	Words that describe me	My skills	What interests me most about this project
Example: Moustafa	Writing for the school newspaper, school plays	Hard working, creative, outgoing	Writing documents, presenting in front of audiences	Gaining practical experience
Example Vera	Checking out cars, playing video games	Competitive, athletic	Organizing a car wash or sports tournament to rase money	Having an impact on an issue that concerns me

The Importance of Networking

What is a network?
A network is a group of people or resources that can help make information and opportunities more accessible to each other.

How can this help me to take action?
Networking can give you ideas, give you access to knowledge and experience, help you gain support for your project, and finally, take the best action possible.

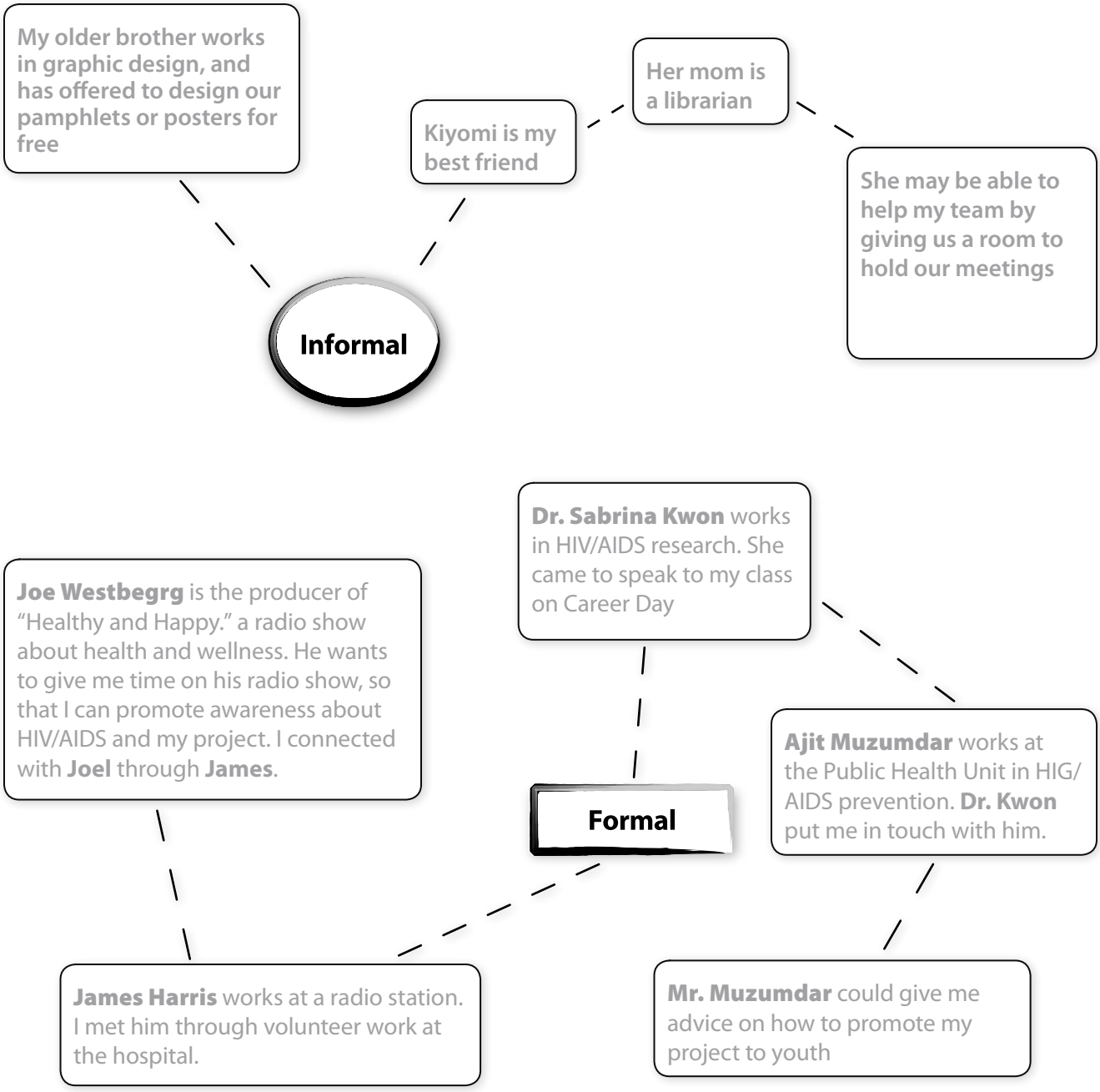
TIP: Networking means using your contacts, so that you can exchange information, share ideas and ultimately strengthen the quality of your work. Building and maintaining your network is also a vital part of networking.

Networking increases your chances at accessing resources that can help you to achieve your project goals. Check out the following resources:

- Volunteers, Mentors or Advisors: people who are willing to help out by sharing their skills, knowledge and experience.
- Organizations: that may be able to provide technical assistance, legal support, access to office supplies or materials and access to workshops or skills training
- Libraries or Community Centres: who may provide access to meeting places
- Funds: people who may be willing to make a cash donation or offer suggestions about where to apply for grants, scholarships or events
- Media: connections to journalists who might offer to promote your efforts through the radio, in print, on television, or over the internet

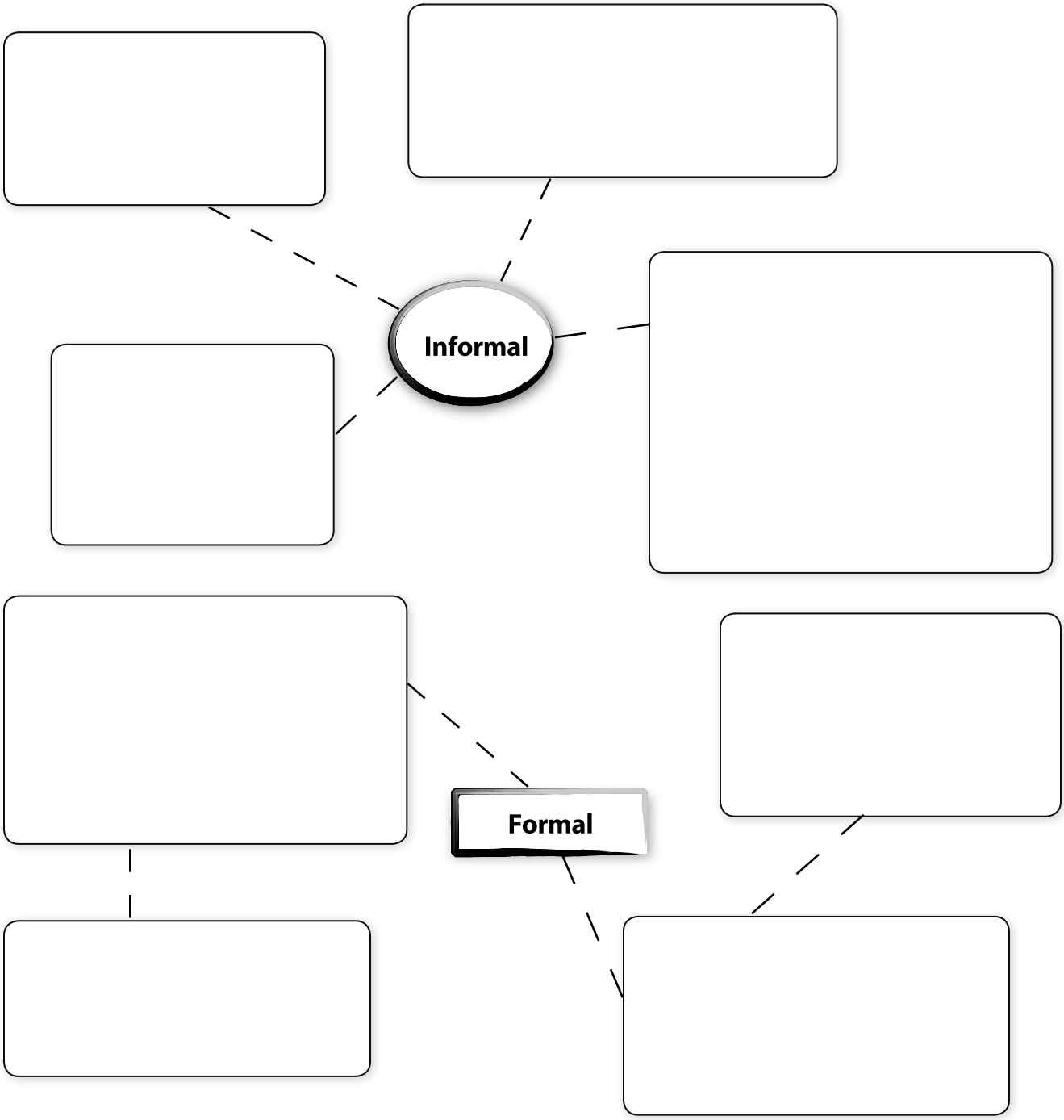
Identify Your Networks

There are many types of networks. Informal networks include friends and family, and more formal networks include business contacts, people you meet at conferences, or people you know through volunteer work. Check out the examples of informal and formal networks below.



Map Your Networks

Draw a map of your formal and informal networks. As your project progresses, you will notice that your networks grow as you connect with more people.



Develop Your Relationships

When building your network, keeping track of contact information is essential. The following chart shows examples of potential collaborations. Use the remaining space to keep track of your own contacts.

Name of Person	Where I made the contact/How I know them	Contact Information (e-mail address and/or phone number)	Potential collaboration
Merek	I met him while Volunteering at St. Joseph's hospital	marek@network.com (905) 555-1234	Marek works in Radio, and he can give use time on the air to promote our project

When you meet people who express an interest in your ideas, be sure to follow-up and maintain ongoing communication to keep them involved over time.

Plan & Get Moving

By now you have identified issues of concern, you've learned more about the issues, and have recognized your skills and those of your team. You have also learned about the importance of networking and connecting with those who can help you to achieve your goals. You are ready to develop and implement an action plan.

Keeping in mind the issue you identified, what goal will you work towards in your action plan? Here are some possible examples:

Increased…

- Representation of children and youth in decision-making processes
- Feeling of responsibility for future generations
- Knowledge of civil society
- Heath of a community
- Awareness about the environment
- Demand for fair trade products
- Employment capacity among youth (especially vulnerable young people)
- Literacy rates (reading, computer literacy, etc)
- Respect between youth and adults (intergenerational dialogue)
- Hope for country

Reduced…

- Number of people who smoke
- Number of HIV/AIDS affected people
- Cultural barriers, stereotypes and intolerance
- Poverty level
- Homelessness

Write your goal here

Now it's time to plan. How can you best use your skills and abilities? There are lots of ways to make a difference. You can work with others or alone. You can join an initiative or start one of your own.

Brainstorm 5 possible actions related to the issue you have identified:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Circle the ideas you would be willing to implement now, and draw a ☆ star beside the ones you want to work on as part of your action plan!

Develop Your Personal Action Plan

Everyday we make decisions that have an impact. How we treat other people, what we buy and the resources we use all have an effect. It is essential to set goals and always work toward them in order to ensure your impact is a positive one.

Every great action begins with a single step. As you begin your action planning, the best place to start is with yourself and personal actions that you can take.

Possible actions:

- reduce your energy consumption
- join a socially beneficial organization
- speak up when someone tells a racist joke
- wear a positive message on your t-shirt
- take part in organized peace marches and protests
- buy fair trade certified products
- create a website for charity
- run for student council
- give your opinion on a radio "call in" show
- educate your friends and get others interested
- participate in the discussion boards on TIG
- write an article for TakingITGlobal's e-journal Panorama

Fill out the chart below.

If your issue was environment your goal could be to reduce your energy use and your chart might look similar to this:

Steps toward achieving your goal	What help is needed?	Possible obstacles	How you will know you are successful?
Shut off the lights when I leave the room	Ask for reminders from family and friends	Forgetfulness and laziness	Money savings on the monthly electricity bill
Use more energy efficient light bulbs	Buying new light bulbs	Cost of new bulbs	Needing to buy less new bulbs in the future, lower energy costs

Now that you have identified possible obstacles, how might you overcome them?

Plan: Group Project Plan continued...

Break it down

You know your mission. Now, use the chart below to break your project down into specific activities. Completing these activities will ensure your project is a success. If your goal is to promote energy conservation, your chart might look similar to this example:

Activity	Resources	Responsibilities	Deadline
Create posters about energy conservation	Art supplies/materials (paper, paint, markers)	Kareem: write content for posters Jessica & Kaleb: design and paint Michael: photocopy and post	May 1, 2004

Completing this chart will help you in identifying your next steps. As you work towards implementing your project activities, go back to the various sections of this guide to support you in moving along.

Helpful Hints:

- Have a check-in buddy to bounce ideas off of
- Set weekly and monthly goals
- Reward yourself for achieving your goals
- Network and connect with those with similar interests
- Be sure your objectives are realistic and measurable
- Don't give up!

Raise Awareness

It can also be helpful to get publicity and let people know about your project! Word of mouth is one of the strongest marketing tools. Be enthusiastic! Let others know how and why they should get involved! One way to promote your project is to add it to TakingITGlobal: http://projects.takingitglobal.org

Create Project Materials

As you begin to explain your project plans and ideas to people, you may find that people ask for further information. It is always useful to create 1-page description of your project. You may also feel the need to create a more in-depth Project Proposal. Typically, a project proposal will include sections such as:

- Background (highlight the needs being addressed)
- Mission and Objectives (what you want to achieve)
- Activities (how you will achieve your goals)
- People Involved (include a short description of you and your team members)
- Partners (you can add to this list as you find organizations willing to help)
- Timeline (mention key milestones)
- Budget/Resources (what you need in order to carry out your activities)
- Evaluation (how you will measure the success of your project)

If you choose to develop a project proposal, it can be shared with potential supporters of the project.

Implement

Now that you have a plan, it's time to implement it! You might encounter obstacles along the way. That's normal. Remember, with strength and perseverance you can succeed. Constantly surround yourself with positive influences and connect to helpful resources.

Here's a list of the types of challenges that other youth from around the world have encountered in developing their projects:

• Lack of previous experience and feelings of intimidation
• Lack of infrastructure to support operations (facility to meet/work, electricity, internet, telephone, fax)
• Team dynamics (recruiting, managing and motivating volunteers, structuring the group and decision-making, working virtually, internal politics, building trust)
• Lack of understanding by others
• Other issues receiving more attention
• Bureaucracy, paperwork, registering the organization with the government, etc.
• Language barriers (ie: translation of communications)

Problem solving

When faced with a problem, it's important to stay focused, committed, enthusiastic and determined! What challenges do you think you may encounter as you implement your project?

Think of three possible solutions.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Here are a few additional tips:

- UNDERSTAND the problem. You may need to gather information. It will also help to articulate the problem in your own words.
- BRAINSTORM possible solutions. It is useful to do this in a group. There are many creative ways to come up with possible solutions.
- CHOOSE the best strategy from your list above and try to solve the problem. You may need to modify your plan depending on how the solution plays itself out.
- EVALUATE the outcome of the solution you choose. If you have the same or a similar problem in the future would you choose the same solution?

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer." -**Albert Einstein**

Have a Lasting Impact

Monitoring your project throughout each stage will help you to best respond to changes that occur along the way. It is helpful to set out indicators or measures of success to make sure you stay on track. The more specific your "indicator," the easier it will be to evaluate your achievements.

Example: **Objective**: raise funds for an HIV/AIDS Charity **Date** – August 25th	**Possible Indicators of Success:** • the number of people who have attended your event • the amount of money you raised • the number of people who said, in an evaluation form, that they learned from your project • the number of people involved with your project team members and participants • how many other projects have been inspired by your work

Create your own list of success indicators based on your goal:

Objective	Possible Indicators of Success
	• • •

Personal Growth

Taking action on an issue that you care about is no easy task. It is especially difficult to move from the idea stage to the action phase. Along the way, through all the challenges faced, one of the most rewarding parts of taking action is what can be learned along the way.

Youth that have run action projects tell us what skills they have developed by taking action:

- in-depth knowledge about an important issue
- leadership, communication and management skills
- teamwork and organizational skills
- how to recruit participants
- learning to interact with people from different backgrounds
- advocacy skills
- determination, patience and clarity of purpose
- how to handle pressure
- how to be more confident in your ideas

Evaluate Your Progress

Taking time to reflect on what you have learned throughout each stage of your action project is an essential part of ensuring that your efforts have a lasting impact. Evaluation can help to improve upon the process of implementing your project, as well as the outcomes that have been achieved as a result of your project.

Ask yourself the following questions.
If you worked in a group, discuss the answers with your entire team.

- In what ways were you successful? Were you surprised by any of your successes? What outcome are you most proud of?

- Were there any goals that you didn't achieve? What were your obstacles? What could you do to overcome these obstacles in a future project?

- Who did you reach in the process of implementing your project (this can include those who helped along the way as well as those who were able to benefit)?

- What skills have you developed by taking action?

- If you were to repeat this project, what would you do differently? This will help you with your recommendations for similar projects in the future.

Tips for Evaluation:

- Keep your evaluation simple and relevant
- Try to gain inputs from a lot of different sources. Ask your participants, your partners and your team members what they thought.
- You will probably learn that the project has unexpected outcomes, both positive and negative. Think about how the project has influenced and affected the participants, your community, your organization, and even yourself.
- Include details on factors that negatively impacted your project (were these truly outside your control, or were they risks that could have been avoided?).
- Spend some time highlighting recommendations for the future, so that when similar projects are launched, they are more likely to have greater impact.

Sustain Your Action

Now that you have made an impact, how can you sustain it? Each project or initiative has its own unique lifespan and has the potential to expand or emerge in new forms. Read the 5 points for sustainability and write down 3 ways you or other youth could sustain interest in taking action on the issue you chose.

Sustaining a project for a long time can be a major challenge. Even if you decide not to continue your project, think about the ways that people involved in your project can sustain their interest in taking action on the issue you looked at with your project.

Sustainability is about:

1. **Having a clear timeline:** Creating goals that are to be achieved by certain dates will help you keep on track and not lose site of your greater goals when you get really busy.

2. **Collaborating with other organizations:** By spreading responsibility for your project across several different groups, you're building a stronger support structure for the future. If one group discontinues their support, at least there are others who can take on more responsibility.

3. **Building strong alliances with adults & mentors:** Adults and mentors can be a vital source of wisdom, financial resources, and technical expertise that is often required to take a one-time project to a more long-term venture.

4. **Planning for leadership transition:** You may not always be the person in charge of your project! Leaving the right information so that a new leader can take over is essential. Put together a package of useful information for the next project leader.

5. **Keeping good records and managing knowledge:** Keeping good records of your contacts, how you do things, and your achievements will help you to sustain the effect of your project in the future. This includes documenting what you have learned through the process of evaluation.

3 ways to sustain interest in your project

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Background on TakingITGlobal

TakingITGlobal (TIG) is an international organization, led by youth, and empowered by technology. TIG is at the intersection of three major global trends - the international scope of major issues, the information and communications technology revolution, and the demographic force of young people. TakingITGlobal aims to help youth develop their potential as creative, technology-enabled and globally-aware citizens through:

- Strengthening the capacity of young people as leaders and stakeholders
- Fostering cross-cultural dialogue and understanding
- Increasing awareness and involvement among youth in global issues

The TakingITGlobal Web Site
http://www.takingitglobal.org

Often described as a 'social network for social good', TakingITGlobal.org offers extensive social networking tools ranging from member profiles, blogs, wikis and podcasts to an online gallery and e-zine for expression. The site is your gateway to:

Make Connections http://www.takingitglobal.org/connections/
- Connect with more than 139,000 members, from over 250 countries and territories, to share thoughts, perspectives and experiences!

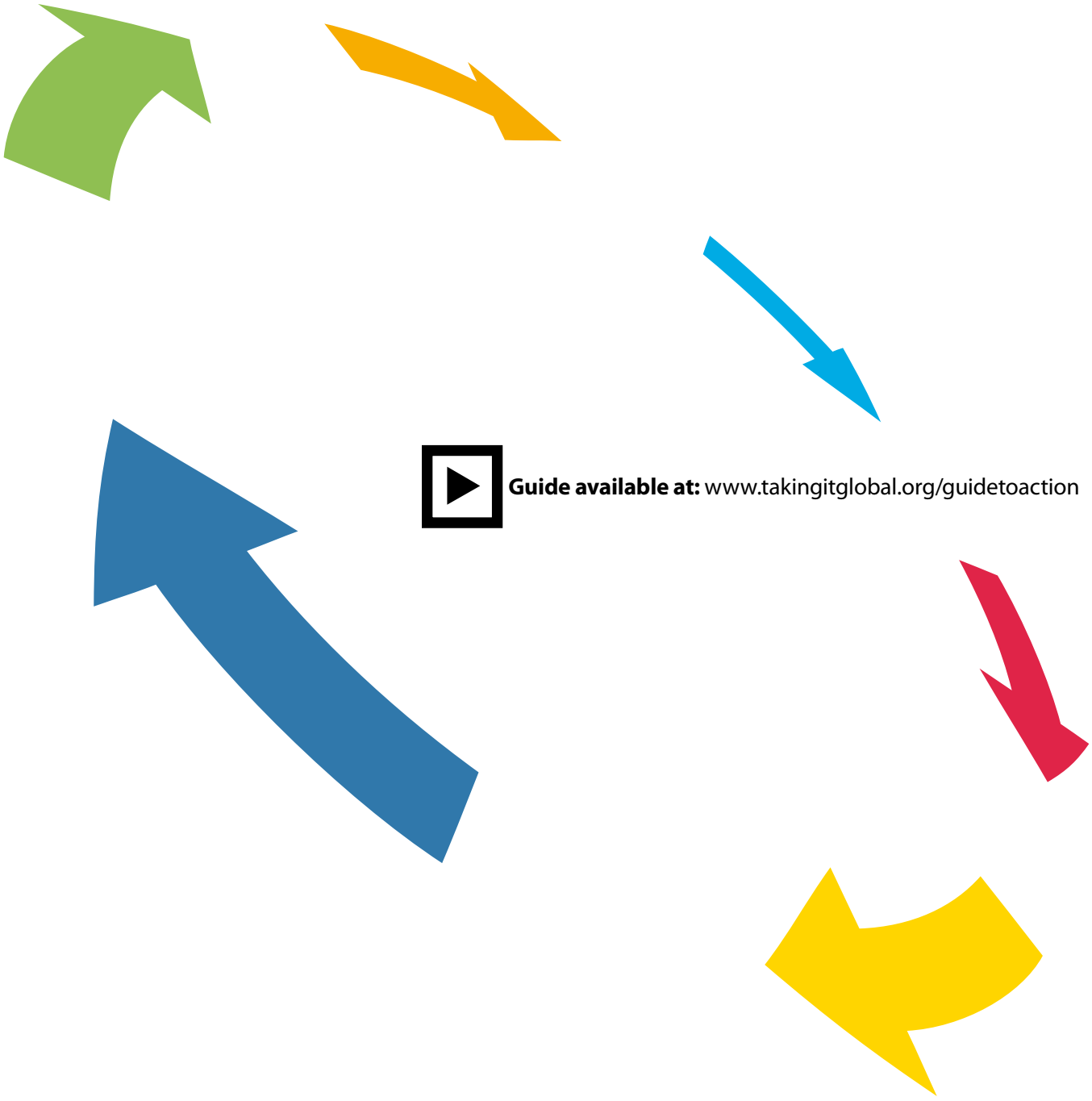
Express Yourself http://www.takingitglobal.org/express/
- Express yourself. You can write articles, stories, poems, and read the works of others in our online publication, Panorama. You can also create an online art exhibit and browse through a collection of cultural expressions in the Global Gallery!

Browse Resources http://www.takingitglobal.org/resources/
- Discover opportunities. Through our resource database, you can access information on thousands of organizations and events, along with professional and financial opportunities from around the world.

Understand Issues http://www.takingitglobal.org/understand/
- Inform yourself on important global issues. Featured Themes are focal points which spark dialogue on important topics.

Take Action http://www.takingitglobal.org/action/
- Take action. Using resources such as the Projects System, Workshop Kit, and this Guide to Action, TIG can help you initiate positive change!

Explore the World http://www.takingitglobal.org/explore/
- Browse country sites, and access country information using the flash map.



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