



ITU Youth Forum

Taking action for the future

The Youth Forum is an exciting ITU programme that aims to cultivate tomorrow's leaders in the world of information and communications technology (ICT). It introduces young people to a network of senior mentors from industry, to youth partners and friends, and to ways in which ICT can be used to produce positive change in their countries, and the world as a whole.

Since ITU TELECOM AFRICA 2001, the Youth Forum has been a regular part of ITU's TELECOM events, contributing to their energy and ideas. At each meeting, the Youth Forum develops a Declaration that is published to help improve ICT for everyone. With the support of the Youth Programme of ITU's Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D), forum alumni also engage in follow-up activities when they return to their home countries.

Participants sought for 2006 Youth Forum

The Youth Forum will celebrate its fifth anniversary during ITU TELECOM WORLD 2006 in Hong Kong, China, on 4-8 December next year. All ITU



Young leaders in ICT from all over the world take part in the Youth Forum

Member State administrations have been invited to organize essay competitions and to choose four semi-finalists (two women and two men), from which the ITU Youth Forum Programme Committee will select one man and one woman from each country.

The candidates who are selected will receive full fellowships to attend the Youth Forum at TELECOM WORLD 2006 in Hong Kong. There, they will

participate in a special programme, interacting daily with leaders in governments and industry, particularly from the technology and services communities. They will also attend the main TELECOM Forum and Exhibition. At the end of their week in Hong Kong, Youth Fellows will draft their own Declaration and present it to the full group of TELECOM WORLD 2006 participants.

Candidates to participate in the Youth Forum should be between 18 and 23 years of age and have completed two years of university (or at a higher technical institution) by 30 June 2006, in any discipline. For further information, please see <http://www.itu.int/WORLD2006/forum/youth.html>

A Glimpse into the activities of Youth Forum alumni

Michelle Fernando, who attended Youth Forum 2003 in Geneva, has begun teaching school students in Sri Lanka how to use computers. She says that despite the country's 90 per cent literacy rate, its level of ICT literacy is only 10 per cent, and economic

progress cannot be made unless this is improved. Ms Fernando offered to provide training at a girls' school in her hometown, Kurunegala. A group of ten students aged 12 and 13 took part in an eight-week course, learning how to access the Internet and use basic applications. Some girls had never touched a computer before, but all were keen to learn ICT skills. "The students' motivation and enthusiasm have, in return, motivated me to carry out many more workshops to teach them further," Ms Fernando says. With the help of other volunteers and experts, she plans to offer more courses, at several schools.



Walton Otunga developed a project to improve the security of stored information by granting access only to authorized individuals

In Kenya, alumnus Walton Otunga decided to tackle the issue of information security. Spurred into action by participating in the Youth Forum at Geneva, he developed a project to improve the security of stored information by granting access only to authorized individuals, keeping accurate records of access and raising an alarm in the case of an attempted intrusion. According to Mr Otunga, his system uses the versatile capabilities of a three-module electronic circuit, linked to a computer with database and user-interface programs. He believes that the project could help to

solve the growing problem of maintaining cybersecurity.

After Hurricane Katrina hit the United States in August 2005, alumnus Andy Redman (a New Orleans native) helped develop websites to list accommodations for evacuees. "I also worked on a team to develop a website of the most up-to-date information on available office space in Baton Rouge," Mr Redman says. "This was very important, because there

In Latin America, Luciano Ahumada of Chile, and other participants in the 2003 Youth Forum, have been investigating the status of ICT in their countries. They plan to analyse the results of their extensive studies and present a proposal to their respective governments on ways to tackle the digital divide.

And on a global level, Youth Forum alumni have initiated *Human Network*, an online community of more



Members of "Human Network"

than 100 former Youth Forum participants worldwide. Its purpose is to promote the exchange of ideas and offer practical assistance to ICT development projects initiated by young people. The network has nurtured a number of educational activities, and has seized opportunities at national and international events to advocate the role of young people in shaping the future of ICT, including their roles in promoting peace. According to one of its members, *Human Network* "is about taking advantage of the momentum created during the Youth Forums in order to lead real change for a better future for all." ■



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were over 10 000 New Orleans businesses displaced. The data that the site provided allowed them to relocate...in a matter of days."