

## Forgotten Diaries - Empowering Youth in Conflict Zones

Australia  
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### Project Summary

#### Elevator Pitch

**Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.**

An online initiative shedding light on the most underreported conflicts, crisis and issues by involving those most affected by these: children and young people

### About You

#### Location

**Project Street Address**

**Project City**

**Project Province/State**

**Project Postal/Zip Code**

**Project Country**

### Your idea

#### Field of Work

social justice/human rights

**If Field of Work is "other" please define in 1-2 words below**

**Year project started (or projected start date) (yyyy)**

2008

#### YouTube Upload

**Project URL (or link to any media coverage)**

<http://www.forgottendiaries.org>

**What is the primary problem your venture is trying to address and how are you addressing it (or planning to address it)?**

There are now over 100 ongoing conflicts and crisis in world, and despite the fact that some of these have been going on for over ten years and have claimed several thousands lives, they have received very little coverage by mainstream media (over 25 years in Sri Lanka & 40 in Colombia, for example). This has made them, de facto, shunned by the international community at large and are referred to as 'forgotten conflicts'.

Several millions children and young people are confronted daily with war, and have no chance to tell the outer world about their lives, hopes and expectations, nor the way they perceive conflicts and their struggle to survive.

Forgottendiaries.org aims at providing young people living in areas affected by neglected conflicts with the possibility to make their voice heard in the media and through the media, by reporting on their daily life via an especially dedicated platform for the exchange of information and analysis of critical situations, expressing their right to peace while engaging their peers and the global audience into concrete actions.

### Innovation

#### Project Description

An online initiative shedding light on the most underreported conflicts, crisis and issues by involving those most affected by these: children and young people

#### Unique and different

This idea is unique as it is the first time that young people have come together at a single virtual venue from several conflict zones around the world to share their stories and engage in a dialogue with other young people around the world raising awareness on these terrible situations while also sparking partnerships and the potential for increased support for youth projects in their countries. The project is also unique as it puts a direct face to the conflicts around the world and allows those affected to directly communicate their views. Furthermore, the project will also run a training course to help the youth participants from conflict zones design and implement local youth and community building projects.

#### Project plan

As the website has been receiving a huge flow of interest in recent months and the project has been covered by many media outlets, the next stage involves leveraging of this attention to ensure more awareness can be raised on forgotten conflict zones through creative means and also

progressing to further empower the youth participants from these conflict zones. Training programs, support for participants community projects, a documentary and other ideas are being planned.

### Partnerships

For this particular project we managed to establish partnerships with Oxfam OIYP, VITAEurope and managed to offer activities in cooperation with the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, among others.

We were able to establish such partnerships by creating ongoing dialogue with potential partners and by showing the potential and uniqueness that this project offers young people worldwide.

### Impact

#### Impact

Creating global awareness on the livelihoods of young people living in numerous forgotten conflict zones while empowering these young people with the tools to share their stories with the world and also develop projects to improve their communities.

#### Effectiveness

Forgotten Diaries mainly targets children and young people living in conflict and post conflict areas, aged 15-29.

#### How do you engage and impact the community?

The project directly engages the community which includes a small group of selected youth participants from each of the conflict zones who regularly blog and contribute material to the [www.forgottendiaries.org](http://www.forgottendiaries.org) website. Their interactions with their communities, their reflections and thoughts about life in their communities are directly communicated through this means. It is anticipated that as interest in the project continues to rise, donations can be raised online for projects in each of the communities, some which may be initiated by the participants themselves.

We have identified ten of the most neglected conflicts and crisis worldwide (including Kosovo, Chechnya, Kurdistan, Timor Leste and others). Anyone with internet can currently participate in the project, however we aim to broaden the mediums of access. We carefully selected 34 participants from these conflict zones after an application process looking at communication skills, community involvement and youth work. Our secondary target are young people living in other nations, both peaceful and not and adults in general. Our project is aiming to carry the voice of young people from forgotten conflict zones to youth around the world and engage them in a learning experience while also raising money for youth projects in conflict zones which will have numerous community benefits.

#### How do you measure this impact?

The impact of current activities is measured through the activities of the participants which are described and regularly updated on the website. Projects implemented will be tracked and monitored by our team, and guidance and mentoring will be provided regularly to ensure the successful completion and positive of all projects. en completed

### Obstacles

Currently, one of the significant obstacles limiting the project's capacity has been its ability to raise further funding for expansion and for the creation of new services. Further to this, the project has also experienced difficulty in breaking into the mainstream media outside of Europe. The project team is currently working on resolving these issues.

### Sustainability

#### Financing source

#### (or how do you expect your initiative will be financed)

So far the project has received kind contributions from UNFPA, the North South Centre of the Council of Europe, the International Youth Foundation, and the Global Young Leaders Conference. Subcontractors for services such as the website also have kindly offered their services at discounted rates.

#### Aside from financial sustainability, how do you plan to grow and sustain your project?

We are currently exploring opportunities to add new countries and conflict zones to the project however we are constrained by our budget. There are over 100 conflict zones and we currently cover 10.

We are also aiming to train our participants in basic project management and media skills so that they can continue to keep their new passions for communicating to the world about life in their conflict zones. The project training will teach them to develop new community building projects which we hope will continue to make sustainable changes in their countries.

We are also seeking innovative partnerships now to expand the level of outreach through a documentary and picture gallery.

### Finance details

So far the project has received kind contributions from UNFPA, the North South Centre of the Council of Europe, the International Youth Foundation, and the Global Young Leaders Conference. Subcontractors for services such as the website also have kindly offered their services at discounted rates. There are four people directly in the team coordinating the Forgotten Diaries project.

Selene Biffi – Project Manager

Silvia Raccagni - Outreach and Development Coordinator

Michela Bettinelli Rossi – PR and Communication

Shasheen Jayaweera - Strategy Adviser

Due to its unique, innovative and inspiring approach, 'Forgotten Diaries' has already received endorsements, support or help from numerous people

and organizations including:

**Advisers and Endorsers:**

- Mr. Arthur Gillette – Former Director of the Youth and Sport Division, UNESCO
- Mr. Kevin Sites – Former CNN and NBC war correspondent and instigator of the 'In the Hot Zone' feature on Yahoo!
- Mr. Charles London - Writer, author of 'One Day the Soldiers Came'

**Implementing Partners (training, general strategy):**

- Oxfam OIYP - the most respected program to empower young people to affect change in their communities
- Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting - has offered a chat for our participants
- VITA Europe - Media partner

**Creative funding**

We currently have a donations facility on the website and are hoping to be able to link this directly to projects led by youth in conflict zones.

**Other non finance needs**

We will soon begin searching for more volunteers to help run the project and more participants in the existing conflict zones and new areas. We are seeking partnerships for the provision of training to partners and for the production team for a documentary. We are also seeking new partnerships for increased outreach via the media.

**The Story**

**Motivation**

My motivation for FD was a result of my coming into contact with and hearing many compelling stories from many young people living in conflict zones. Originally from Sri Lanka, I have heard many stories of the hardships and challenges faced by youth, and through engaging in many youth projects such as the Oxfam International Youth Partnerships, I have met several other young people who have shown determination and strived to help their communities. I felt compelled to try and do something to assist and I was lucky to be able to collaborate with the team at YAC and assist in bringing this project to life.

The idea behind FD was born in late 2006, after a personal research on neglected conflicts and crisis areas, especially after having the chance to meet up with several young people from those very areas. It was initially conceived as a campaigning project, but then had to be left aside due to other initiatives. It was resumed in late 2007, and we decided we would have it as a collection of digital diaries instead, with impact and outcomes both online and on the ground.

**Awards**

The project was initiated by a team of which I am part of, from the organisation Youth Action for Change (YAC). Because of its groundbreaking initiatives, YAC has received several praises and awards from organisations the likes:

- The United Nations
- The World Bank (World Development Report 2007)
- Oxfam (Best Practice for Youth Empowerment)
- Ashoka Foundation (Changemaker of the Month)
- Nokia (Youth Action Net Award), and,
- The Council of Europe (World Aware Education Award)

YAC has appeared in countless articles, reports, radio and television programs (Associated Press, several UN and World Bank publications, OneWorld, Development Gateway, La Repubblica, Il Giorno, RAI International, SBS Radio and an upcoming documentary by the WWF). YAC has also delivered workshops in Europe and the US for the Council of Europe, the Province of Pesaro, OSCE and the US Congress-sponsored Global Young Leaders Conference.

**Broader context**

**Ongoing**

**What is your age?**

23

**How did you hear about this competition?**

An email from Changemakers.

**Source URL:** <https://www.changemakers.com/competition/staplesyv/entries/forgotten-diaries-empowering-youth-conflict-zones#comment-0>