

REPORT OF GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY

THEME: EMPOWERING YOUTH TO PLANT TREES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

CEREBRATION HELD BY THE YPWC MDGs CLUB AT BUNKPURUGU IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

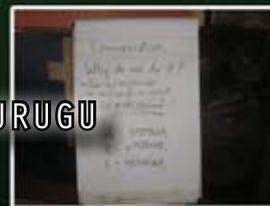


DATE: 24TH AND 25TH APRIL 2009

VENUE: ST. ANDREW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, BUNKPURUGU

TIME: 9:30 AM TO 2:30 PM EACH DAY.

BY:
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(YPWC NORTHERN GHANA MDGs CLUB CO-ORDINATOR)
EDITED BY GODWIN AND GAYLE OF YPWC



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ABOUT YPWC

Young People We Care (YPWC) is a youth-led, non-profit organization based in Ghana, which is entirely run and operated by university-aged young people. At YPWC, we are passionate about sustainable development, the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the promotion of a culture of peace and universal human rights for all.

Overall our mission is to:

- * Educate and inform the youth on global issues
- * Inspire youth to take action
- * Encourage youth participation in global issues
- * Identify and build sustainable partnerships aimed at youth development
- * Provide young people with tools and resources for effective action

Our vision is to provide a 'youthful voice' that seeks to address the numerous challenges facing leaders of tomorrow by effectively using young resourceful minds to influence the course of global policy formulation and development in a consistent and harmonized manner. Our philosophy is that through informing, inspiring and engaging youth in learning partnerships, they will be inspired to get involved and take action to improve their local communities and change the world. YPWC in this direction supports youth action, creates the platform for youth to translate what they have learnt or desire to do into action while at the same time involving youth in decision making and key developmental and global issues

Currently we are working on a number of exciting projects including Youth in Migration and Development, Global Sister School, MDGS Clubs and Youth Empowerment Platform. We are also making efforts to expand our local and international volunteer programmes and to improve the infrastructure and visibility of YPWC as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

This report covers the background of Young People We Care as an organisation, a brief concept of Global Youth Service Day (GYSD), the objectives of the programme, the activities marking the event, challenges faced during the programme, recommendations, financial details and appendixes.

Young People We Care (YPWC) joined the rest of the world to mark this year's Global Youth Service Day (GYSD). The GYSD is an annual event that recognizes and celebrates the contributions of youth towards sustainable community development through voluntary service, and the contributions made by the community (public, private, and nonprofit sectors) to empower young people. The day also provides a platform for young people in the world to take practical action that benefit their communities.

This year's event was hosted by YPWC MDGs club at Bunkpurugu in the Northern Region from the 24th to 25th of April, 2009 on the theme; "empowering youth to plant trees for environmental sustainability". The event was held at the St. Andrews Lutheran church and at the MDG club meeting shed at the club co-ordinator's family house, Bunkpurugu

The two days programme covered a capacity building session and a tree planting session.



A group picture of participants in front of the venue.



Members of the Bunkpurugu YPWC MDG Club constructing a nursery for the planting of seedlings as part of activities marking this year's GYSD.

YPWC MDG club executive members were the host participants while guest participants included church pastors from the Assemblies of God church, a representative from the Bimoba Literacy

Farmers Co-operative Union (BILFACU) and a representative from the National commission for civic education (NCCE)

Resource persons for the two days activities were Godwin Yidana and Gayle Pescud from YPWC headquarters.

The event was co-ordinated by the YPWC MDG co-ordinator for the area, Matthew Nyannube Yosah.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the event were:

- To empower participants for effective community development by equipping them with communication, leadership, time management and report writing skills and inspire them to take action locally.
- To construct a tree nursery in the community to provide young people with seedlings to encourage tree planting in line with the MDG 7 to ensure environmental sustainability.

ACTIVITIES: FIRST DAY OF THE PROGRAMME

Capacity Building Seminar

The 24th April 2009 marked the first day of the GYSD celebration which featured a capacity building seminar facilitated by Godwin and Gayle both of YPWC.

The workshops were structured to deliberate on four important topics:

- Leadership and Time management Skills
- Report Writing

- Communication Skills
- Goal Setting

Participants for the capacity-building seminar were the MDG club executive members and other guest participants who included three Assemblies of God pastors, one representative from the Bimoba Literacy Farmers Co-operative Union (BILFACU) and a representative from the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE). The guest participants were five in number and the MDG club executive members who were the host participants were twenty bringing the total number to twenty-five

1. Leadership and Time Management Skills

This topic was the first on the schedule and was facilitated by Godwin Yidana. The seminar commenced at 11:30 am with ten participants after the welcome address was delivered by Matthew Yosah, the Northern Sector YPWC MDG Club coordinator. Self-introduction of participants was made followed by participants stating their expectations. The ground rules were then set for the session by participants and the facilitator.



Godwin Yidana at the capacity Building Session.

The facilitator adopted two-way method of delivering the topic where both the facilitator and participants discussed the issues raised at a particular time before moving to another. Upon receipt of various views on the topic from participants, the facilitator explained the terms leadership, time and management separately and then defined leadership and time management. He stated the different leadership styles and explained the various characteristics.

He hinted that everything or anything the leader does to accomplish the goal of gaining follower-ship merely defines the style of leadership. It does not define leadership.

He stated that a leader should have a vision and mission and model the way for others to follow. He also emphasize that the bottomline is that you understand the true meaning of leadership. The facilitator then took participants through the four most important leadership qualities of good leaders. According to him, these are:

- **Risk Taking**

He said a leader needs to be ready to take risks and explained this in detail.

- **Mental Toughness**

The facilitator said that a leader needs to be mentally tough and that no one can lead without being criticized or without facing tough situations. He also said that it is not possible for a leader to please everyone. “A good leader thrives on the energy of stressful situations not the negativity”, he added.

- **Superior Communication Skills**

The facilitator said that effective leadership requires good listening skills. A participant added that a leader has to be open to constructive feedback. Another participant said that leaders have the ability to convince others and also communicate their vision to their team. “They are en-

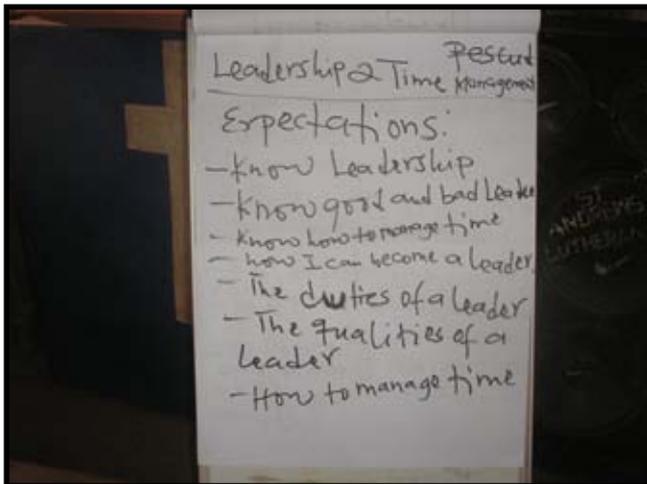
dowed with the ability to inspire others to work”, she said.

- **Trustworthy**

People will work well if they feel heard, if they clearly know what is required of them and if they feel that you understand that they are people too, and make decisions on a daily basis outside of work which affect them and their family. He quoted Pastor Mensa Otabil that “trust is the glue that bind leaders and their followers together”.

- **Time Management**

Time management is one of the critical qualities of leaders as they are required to set objectives for their organization and motivate and direct their followers towards the achievement of the set objectives.



Godwin's presentation on leadership and time management.

He then explained time management as follows:

Time management is

- a set of principles, practices, skills, tools, and systems working together to help you get more value out of your time with the aim of improving the quality of your life.

- commonly defined as the various means by which people effectively use their time and other closely related resources in order to make the most out of it.

- the art of arranging, organizing, scheduling, and budgeting one's time for the purpose of generating more effective work and productivity.

“Time management has become crucial in recent years thanks to the 24/7, busy world in which we live” he added. He further added that smart time managers know that there is much more to do than anyone could possibly accomplish. So instead of trying to do it all, smart time managers are very picky about how they spend their time. “They choose to focus and spend their time doing a few vital projects that will really make a difference, rather than spending all their time doing many trivial things that don't really matter all that much”, he added.

The facilitator further told participants that improving their time management skills can even help them get better results by doing less work, because they are focusing on the things that really matter rather than all the low-priority busywork that just keeps you busy.

The facilitator proceeded to give the following listed 15 time management tips to participants:

1) Write things down

Using a to-do list to write things down is a great way to take control of your projects and tasks and keep yourself organized.

2) Prioritize your list

Prioritizing your to-do list helps you focus and spend more of your time on the things that really matter to you.

3) Plan your week

Spend some time at the beginning of each week to plan your schedule.

A key principle in time management is that important things are not always urgent, and urgent things are not always important. Learning to distinguish between the two is essential for effective time management.—the other facilitator focused on this in Goal Setting.

Carry a notebook

You never know when you are going to have a great idea or brilliant insight.

4) Learn to say no

Learn to say no to low priority requests and you will free up time to spend on things that are more important.

5) Think before acting

Before committing to a new task, stop to think about it before you give your answer. This will prevent you from taking on too much work.

6) Continuously improve yourself

Make time in your schedule to learn new things and develop your natural talents and abilities. For example, you could take a class, attend a training program, or read a book.

7) Think about what you are giving up to do your regular activities

In some cases, the best thing you can do is to stop doing an activity that is no longer serving you so you can spend the time doing something more valuable.

8) Use a time management system

Using a time management system can help you keep track of everything that you need to do, organize and prioritize your work, and develop sound plans to complete it.

9) Identify bad habits

Make a list of bad habits that are stealing your time. After you do, systematically eliminate them from your life—replace it with a better habit.

10) Don't do other people's work

Doing this takes up time that you may not have. Instead, focus on your own projects and goals, learn to delegate effectively, and teach others how to do their own work.

11) Keep a goal journal

Schedule time to set and evaluate your goals. Start a journal and write down your progress for each goal.

12) Don't be a perfectionist

Learn to distinguish between tasks that deserve to be done excellently and tasks that just need to be done.

13) Beware of "filler" tasks

When you have a to-do list filled with important tasks, be careful not to get distracted by "filler" tasks.

14) Avoid "efficiency traps"

Avoid taking on tasks that you can do with efficiency that don't need to be done at all. Just because you are busy and getting things done doesn't mean you are actually accomplishing anything

significant.

15) Apply the 80/20 rule

The 80/20 rule states that 20% of your tasks account for 80% of the value in your to-do list. Some tasks have a much greater return on your investment of time and energy than others. Using a prioritization system will help you to identify and focus your time on these high payoff tasks.

The facilitator ended his session by inviting questions, suggestions and answers from participants to make clarification. He also thanked the participants for attending the session despite a heavy downpour. The session ended at 12:30pm

2. Communication Skills

Communication in Ghana tends to focus on reading and writing. Very little attention is paid to non-verbal communication skills (body language) and active listening and, as a result, there are significant lost opportunities for effective communication. The facilitator chose to focus on non-verbal communication and active listening through a series of exercises to enable participants to learn experientially—understand its impact and power for themselves—so that they can use what they learn in all aspects of their life.

She began by doing an exercise that demonstrates how much we use non-verbal communication skills and how difficult it is to communicate through words alone. It is called the mirroring game. She

divided the participants into two groups—they made two circles. An inner circle and outer circle. The outer circle faced inwards, looking to the centre of the circle. The inner circle faced outwards—each participant was matched with a partner in the outer circle. The facilitator stood in the middle of the circles so that only those in the outer circle could see her. She then performed “complex” poses. She asked the participants in the outer circle to explain verbally to their partners in the inner circle to recreate the pose—the explainers were not allowed to use their body to show, just their words to tell the inner circle participants what to do.

Naturally, some in the inner circle were able to recreate her pose based on the words of their partners in the outer circle; others had trouble explaining what they wanted their partner to do. There was a lot of laughter and fun—and an important message was understood.

Afterwards, the facilitator asked if it was difficult to explain to the participants how to move their body to copy the facilitator’s pose, and they said yes. She then asked them if they would have found it easier just using their body to show and, naturally, they said yes. She explained that communication consisted of verbal and non-verbal, and we would focus on non-verbal today.

Employing a facilitation style (rather than lecturing), she demonstrated how powerful body language is through a skit in which she deliberately chose to ignore the speaker by checking her watch and turning around to do something else. She asked the participants what they thought she was feeling. They responded with “bored,” “not interested,” etc. She then acted out the skit again, this time paying attention to the speaker by using active listening techniques and positive body language. This time, the participants responded that she was “interested”.



Gayle Pescud, Consultant, YPWC facilitating capacity building seminar.

She then talked about body language and explained that we all use it, although we may not be aware of it.

Then, she explained that they would break out into groups and practice non-verbal communication and active listening. In each group there would be a speaker, who would speak passionately about any topic of their choice for 3 minutes, a listener, and an observer. The speaker's role was to talk no matter what the listener did. That is all the information the speaker received. She then took the listeners aside and explained that the listener would be given a specific "word" to act out in body language, and the observer was to watch how the speaker reacted to the listener's behaviour.



Gayle Pescud, YPWC facilitating the communication skills session of the capacity building seminar.



Gayle Pescud of YPWC setting up communication skills session with a section of the participants.

The facilitator gathered the listeners together and briefed them on their role. They were each given one word on paper that they had to perform while the speaker talked. Some of the words were "uninterested," "very interested," "bored," "irritated," "tired," etc.

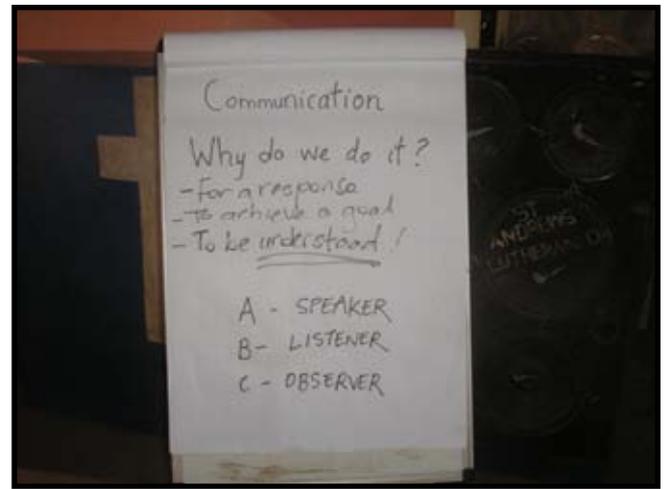
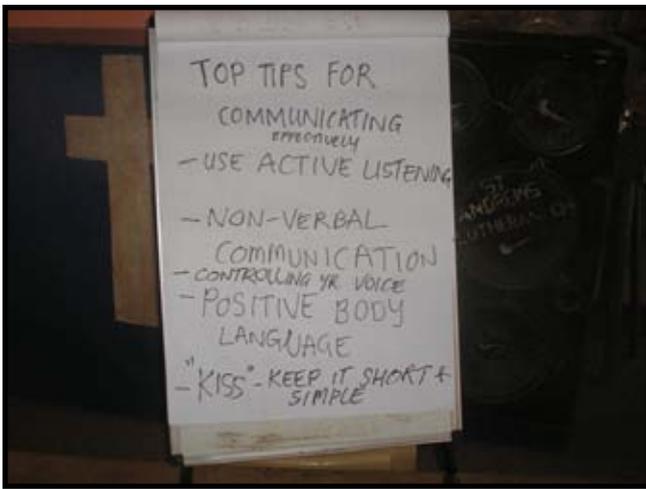
She then created about ten groups of 3—speaker, listener and observer—and gave them the go-ahead. She walked between groups herself observing the behaviour of speakers and listeners. There were many bewildered speakers who often, out of frustration, turned towards the observer as they were not being heard.

Afterwards she debriefed for about fifteen minutes. She asked the speaker how they thought their listener felt. And then the listener to reveal the word they had been given. She asked the observers what they'd noticed. All of the groups picked up the non-verbal cues and the speakers spoke with a mixture of disbelief and surprise at how difficult it was when the listener ignored them. She asked how they knew this. Often they said no eye contact. Observers noted that some speakers stopped talking altogether.

The facilitator then changed roles so speakers became listeners, observers became speakers, and speakers became observers, and ran the exercise again, to give everyone a taste of the roles. She then debriefed again for fifteen minutes. Again, there were similar responses.

Finally, with the partner facilitator, she demonstrated positive body language in listening by leaning forward, nodding, making eye contact, and so on.

She then ran the exercise for a third time in which all listeners were instructed to be interested, and debriefed on the difference when you were listened to. She asked the speakers how they felt now. They said they felt the person was listening to them. She asked why. They said because they



Gayle's presentation on Tips for Effective Communication. made eye-contact, etc.

Gayle's presentation on communication.

After all the exercises, she asked the participants to help make a list of "Top Tips" for communicating effectively. They were able to say: Use active listening, positive body language, control your voice, non-verbal communication, and KISS: Keep it short and simple. She then asked for "Top Tips" for Active Listening. They said: eye contact, nodding head, hands to express, "mirror" others' position, lean forward.

3. Report Writing

The third topic for discussion on the day was report writing and was facilitated by Godwin Yidana.

One over-riding principle that you should aim for in all report writing is to report on the results of your activities. This requires some analysis on your part that goes beyond a mere description of your activities.

You are working for a project that has several donors, and is channelled through an agency that needs to be informed about some specific things going on in the field. Your reports are the main pathways or channels of information to the people who decide to fund this and other such projects.

Each separate report should be correctly identified. At the very beginning are the main identifiers, including the title (period and location the report covers) and the author. Each report should include the following:

- The name of the author(s) and what it is all about should be clearly marked at the beginning of the report. The "What it is all about" should include the geographic area and the time period about which you are writing. You should include your title and position as well as your name as author

The essence of a good report is that it compares results attained with results desired.

As part of the introduction, the facilitator said that his presentation asks the questions: "Why?" should reports be written, "What?" should be included, then goes on to discuss the "How?" they can be written well.

He asked these questions one at a time and allowed participants to provide responses.

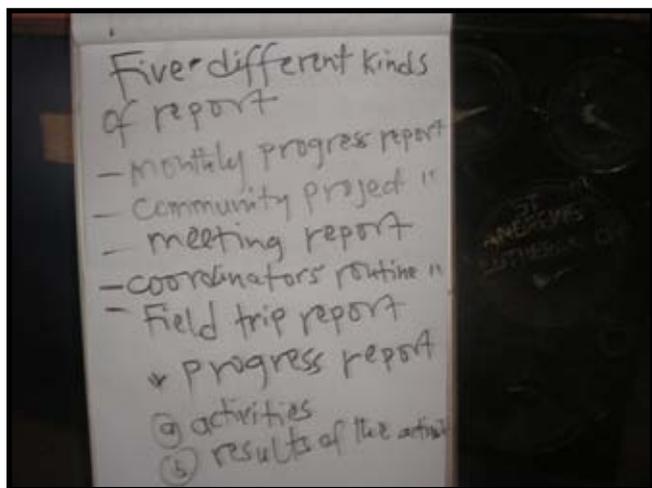
Why Should Reports be written?

- to enable us to keep records;
- to inform all interested individuals;
- to tell about failures and successes;
- for ourselves, to keep on knowing what we are doing;
- to communicate to donors and funders (how the project progresses);
- so donors could be encouraged knowing what happened with their donations;
- to let other people know about the developments of a project;
- so other people can be encouraged to do their own projects;
- so community members would be encouraged and informed;
- so other people can learn what we did;
- to help researchers to do their work;
- to determine further actions;
- to use for evaluation; and
- for the Government.

What Topics Should Be Included in a Report?

The facilitator asked participants what topics should be included in community project reports and most of them offered the following responses:

- Background, introduction;
- Project successes!! Why? (factors, causes);
- Project failures (in reaching objectives) why? (reasons);
- The community's participation (decision making);
- The community contribution (donations, inputs eg. labour, sand, cash);
- Needed changes (eg changes in strategies);
- Unanticipated problems;
- Lessons learned;
- Recommendations (specify to whom).



Godwin's presentation on kinds of reports.

“That forms the basis of a good check list, and you can turn it into a check list to review any report you write, or teach a community committee to write” said the facilitator.

He reminded participants that every report should compare what was expected or desired with what happened. Emphasize results of actions taken over description of the actions themselves. So those are the topics that the different kinds of reports should contain. Finally, we go through some tips and advice on making reports good. A report is good (a) if it is read and (b) it is acted upon. How do we write good reports?

What is A Good Report?

A good report is one that clearly explains the topic or subject the report relates to.

Your reports should be concise—brief--and complete. Short reports are more likely to be read than long reports. But reports that miss important information are disappointing. One important way to

shorten your reports is to cut repetitions of things included elsewhere in each report.

The facilitator told participants that “a report is easier to read when it is written in simple, straight forward language, with correct grammar and words easily recognized. Do not try to impress anyone with flowery language. Use short, simple sentences,” he added.

“Remember that many of those who read your report have English as a second language. Always use the famous “KISS” principle (“Keep It Simple, Sweetheart...”) when you write any report,” said the facilitator.

A Report must be Easy to Read

Some Useful Tips in making a Report easy to read:

- Short but complete (concise);
- Containing only what is necessary;
- Simple; written in good language;
- Having no repetition;
- Containing relevant information;
- Well structured and organized;
- Neat and tidy (typed or well printed/written).

What Makes a Report Good?

The facilitator asked the participants to tell him what made good reports. They suggested the following:

- Straight forward, honest, no deception (no lies)
- Interesting illustrations, designs. (colour if possible)
- Brief, short
- Neat and readable (good handwriting)
- To the point
- Simple English (or whatever language)
- Well spaced
- Has title and sub titles
- Organized or structured.

The facilitator told participants that the lists above can be combined to make an overall check list for checking through any report that one may write, and for holding a report-writing workshop with community members.

He told participants that writing reports need not be boring, and that they should look upon the task as a challenge.

He also told participants to emphasize results over activities in their reports. “Go beyond description; be analytical. Know your audience and the needs of your readers. Write in easy to read, simple language. Avoid the passive voice. Write concisely (briefly but completely). Organize your reports by using an outline and by using subtitles. Write several drafts before the final one”, he added.

“By using these tips and guidelines, you can teach yourself and your community clients to improve your report writing.”

After the presentation, the facilitator divided the participants into four different groups gave them take home assignment, which they presented the following day.

The following were the groups and their respective questions:

- “Group A- Why do we write reports?”
- “Group B- To whom do reports go to?”
- “Group C-What should be in a report?”
- “Group D-How are reports written?”

4. Goal Setting

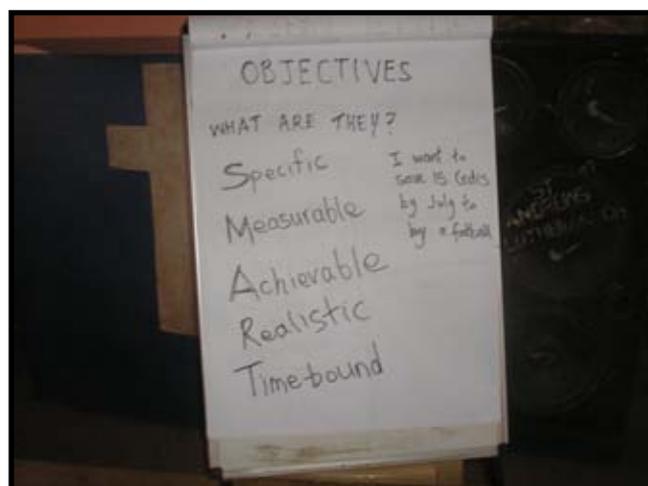
Before beginning, we played a warm up exercise that illustrated an important point about setting goals.

The facilitator moved the podium to the floor. She placed a bucket out of view on the other side of the podium. She asked one volunteer to come forward. She instructed her to throw 8 pieces of balled paper into the bucket. The thrower did her best, but only got one in. She couldn't see what she was aiming for. The facilitator asked how that was. The thrower said tough. She then removed the podium and asked her to try throwing the balls again. This time she got 7 out of 8 in. Asked how it was, she said easier because she could see it.

The facilitator explained that goals are like the bucket: They're easier to achieve when you can “see” or know what you're aiming for.



Demonstration time during the Goal Setting session of the capacity building seminar.



Gayle's presentation on Goal Setting.

We focused on the SMART definition of objectives: Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound. And that these are what you use to meet goals. The facilitator gave an example of a SMART objective and then asked the audience to each write down one objective of their own that fits the SMART rules. They did so. She asked some to volunteer theirs. They did, and they all discussed them. The participants showed an excellent response to this exercise.

She then talked about problem prioritization using an example of a house needing repairs in the rainy season—it was pouring down that day. The house had a leaking roof with a foot-square hole in it, a small hole in a window, a stove that ran out of gas, and no charcoal.

She drew up a simple table as a tool to help prioritise problems. She then said you could use any criteria to prioritise the problem, but one of the most common ones was whether it was urgent or not urgent, and easy or difficult, so we would use those.

She asked the participants to decide where each of the four problems sat. They discussed and placed them as follows:

Urgent–Easy Hole in window No charcoal	Urgent–Difficult Leaking roof
Not urgent–Easy No gas	Not urgent–Difficult

She then asked them to decide which they would fix first. She let them discuss this among themselves, led by the older members. They did a great job. They decided that urgent and difficult was most important because it required more time and resources to fix. They decided that not having charcoal to cook with was a problem as was the hole in the window, but they were easier to fix: charcoal was in the market and the materials to fix the window were available. They decided that after they began work on the leaking roof they would then fix the hole in the window and buy charcoal, and return to the roof. They wouldn't worry about the gas now as they didn't need it urgently.

The facilitator explained that you can prioritize any problem in a simple table like this. Sometimes you can use expensive or inexpensive in place of easy and difficult, but any criteria that works for you.

SECOND DAY OF THE PROGRAMME

On the second day of the event (25th April, 2009), started with a reflection exercise, which provided participants with an opportunity to share what they learnt on the previous day with each other. They were also given the chance to present assignments that were given to them the previous day on a chart verbally. This was practical.

The next event was a time for learning about the MDGs, Climate Change and also giving young people the chance to practicalize their commitment towards the MDGs through a tree planting activity. There was also an erection of a tree nursery to keep seedlings that were bought. The tree nursery was successfully constructed and the seedlings kept in it. Forty-five seedlings were bought while twenty of the seedlings were nursed by the club members. In sum, seedlings kept in



A section of the participants during the reflection session with Godwin.



Group B presenting their work.

the nursed are sixty-five (five Tig seedlings and sixty Mango seedlings).

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

Though the programme was for only two days, it did make a lasting impact in the lives of the youth who participated.

The programme provided the participants with a platform to learn effective communication skills and apply this practically in their work. They learnt about effective communication and group dynamics on the 24th of April, 2009 and applied the lessons learnt on the 25th of April, 2009 during the construction of the seedlings' nursery and the transplanting of these seedlings in the newly constructed nursery.

It also strengthened the bond between the club and the YPWC national office. This was the first time that officials from the national office of YPWC visited the club since its inception.

Furthermore, the programme empowered members with leadership skills and time management tips. During the capacity building seminar, members were taken through series of important leadership, time management and effective communication exercises. For example, members were given group assignment on the 24th and they presented their work the following day (25th) before the members.

Some of them had the chance to stand before other people to do a presentation for the first time in their lives.



Members of the Bunkpurugu YPWC MDG Club preparing the seedlings for transplanting during this year's GYSD.



Members of the Bunkpurugu YPWC MDG Club in a group photograph during the construction of the tree nursery.

CHALLENGES

All though everything went on smoothly yet there were some challenges. Some of these challenges are:

- Late delivery of materials necessary for the smooth running of the programme.
- Inadequate funds, which led to our inability to provide lunch for participants
- Late arrival of participants—and managing our time well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above challenges, the following are recommended:

- Parents of the MDG Club members should be involved in future events. This would motivate them to support the club's activities.
- Early notice should be given to members of the club in future about an event such as this one. This will enable them to prepare adequately for the programme.
- There should be more of the capacity building initiatives for executive members of the club to enable them to function effectively
- Funds for any future event, such as this one, should be sent ahead of time to help in proper planning and budgeting.

FINANCIAL DETAILS

The programme was funded by Disney mini Grant of the U.S with an amount of \$500.00. This enables YPWC to organize the programme successfully.