

# WE HAVE THE POWER!

ACTIVITY

16

## AIM

To highlight actions being taken by young people around the world and explore what action young people can take in Ireland.

## AGE

12 years and older

## TIME

40 minutes

## MATERIALS

Paper, markers, copies of stories

## WHAT TO DO

Begin by asking the group if they think it's important that young people take action to change things affecting them. Why? Ask for examples of when they felt they took power and did something positive. How did it make you feel? Form small groups. Give each group a story and ask them to read it. Explain that they should illustrate the story to show how the young people involved used their power. This can be done using art or drama. Allow 20 minutes for this. Each group makes a presentation to the others. Was power used positively or negatively in the stories? Why?

In the large group, decide on one or more issues which affect young people in your area or club. Create a group charter or agreement on action you will take to make the situation better. Agree specific tasks that need to be done and who will do them. Leave a space for people to sign their names on the charter.

## ACTION

When you create your charter, host an evening to launch it. Invite friends and family, local media and other groups who hold power in your community, the Gardai and local councillors.

## SAGAR

Sagar lives in Nepal where people are divided into different categories called "castes". Sagar is a member of the Dalits which is the 'lowest' caste. The Dalits are also known as the "Untouchables". Sagar and his family are not allowed to enter the same temple or to eat with people from the higher castes. Sagar works on the farm of a rich family for very little money. Sagar and other people from the Dalit caste are trying to fight for more rights. They come together and sing about their struggles in their traditional folk music. Using their own music reminds them that they have a strong culture and that they are worthy of respect. Source: Making a Difference (NYCI, 2005)

## ARTHUR

Arthur, a young Traveller, participated in a project which brought together different groups of young people. The group included young asylum-seekers, young people with disabilities and young people who were gay. By participating together in different activities, the young people learned how much they had in common, while also respecting each others' different backgrounds and cultures. When the young asylum-seekers received letters from the government saying they were to be sent back to their country, Arthur joined their campaign to stay in Ireland. He distributed their petition and took part in a protest outside the Dáil. Source: Making a Difference (NYCI, 2005)

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## LALMUNI'S STORY

Lalmuni is 14 years old. Her parents decided she should be married as is common in her area, she knew it would be the end of her education. She was also worried about becoming pregnant and giving birth at such a young age. But her parents were adamant, the marriage would go ahead. Lalmuni took her problem to her "Child Club", her friends decided to meet Lalmuni's parents and to persuade them to change their minds. This was a highly unusual step for a group of young girls. Outsiders, especially a group of teenage girls, usually have no say in such matters. Lalmuni's parents listened to what her friends had to. Her father said "We would have to give a lot of money in a dowry if the girl marries at an older age, are you going to give us this money?" But the girls did not give up. They patiently explained the risks Lalmuni would face. They said that although the family might save money, this would be at the cost of their daughter's health and education, and it would affect her for the rest of her life. Eventually they changed their minds and let her continue her education. Today, Lalmuni is still attending school and is an active member of the Child Club. Adapted from a Plan Ireland case study

## CARINA'S STORY

Carina is from Guatemala in South America. She is a member of the local youth theatre called Iqui Balam. The group create performances for young people and street children in the city. "We use comedy because it is a way to speak to young people, when we speak directly about the topic they get bored so laughter is a better way to communicate with them." In one of their performances Carina plays the role of a house which is about to be invaded with HIV. She explains that it is a funny performance but she has seen young people with the disease who have to face the future without the support of their families and communities because of the fear people have of the disease. For Carina it is important that she helps change peoples attitudes towards people with HIV. Source: Global Movement for Children 2004

## AMARILLIS' STORY

Amarillis Martinez is a 17 year old girl from Honduras. She is the leader of a teenage peer education group called Childpro. The group identified binge drinking as a major problem affecting their lives and their community. They campaigned to have the bars shut down. The group lobbied decision makers and handed out leaflets and posters showing people how much harm alcohol was doing. They gave talks to the local community on alcoholism and children's rights. Amarillis says: "We have seen a lot of violence in our community due to the alcohol – and there were always a lot of drunk people on the streets. The effects were that children were going hungry and becoming malnourished and were not going to school if their fathers spent their money in the bars. Now the town is a much better place. People still drink but it is inside their houses, life has improved so much.

Adapted from a Plan Ireland case study

## KABBA

Kabba is from Sierra Leone. When he was nine years old a civil war broke out in his country and he was taken by the rebel army. At first he was used to carry water and wash uniforms but soon he was training as a soldier. Thousands of children were used as soldiers by both rebel forces and the government during the civil war. With the help of a charity, Kabba left the army and started school. Now Kabba and other former child soldiers make radio programmes which teach children about their rights through stories, quizzes and dramas. Kabba says "Even in the worst of all things something good must come out. I am a victim of the war. I should be able to challenge those who do this to children. The programme that I run there is called "My Story." I interview children affected by war. Without forgiveness there will be no reconciliation and without reconciliation there is no sustainable peace. Peace should not only be in our mouths but in our hearts." Source: Plan International