**My City Real World Portfolio Review**

**March 2, 2015.**

My City Real World (MCRW) is a joint project of the Youth Initiative and the Justice Initiative’s Ethnic Profiling Project started in 2010. This portfolio review is timely given the Youth Initiative’s closure and 2014 transition to the Youth Exchange—a collaborative mechanism to promote and support promising youth work throughout the network. This review focuses on lessons learned from a shared strategy supporting young people in addressing ethnic profiling and improving relations with the police.

My City Real World builds the efficacy of young people as active protagonists in addressing ethnic profiling and improving relations with the police in Europe. Young people are the most targeted by police yet the least likely to be involved in discussions and initiatives to improve policing. MCRW identifies, creates and promotes innovative mechanisms for young people affected by policing tactics to advocate for the kind of policing they want to see. Our change hypothesis is anchored in the view that resolution of bias in policing requires external pressures from those directly affected by the practice, namely young people of color, with broader resonance in public support for equal treatment, and that these external pressures must be met with a discourse and set of practices that demonstrably contribute to fairer and more effective policing. The project incorporates both the notions of concept and support to the field: we have worked in partnership with young people and police to advocate for change and develop projects to improve policing, while simultaneously networking young people and practitioners, and developing materials to share across the field. Over time, the MCRW project evolved into three stages of intervention: a harm-reduction approach to know your rights training developed by and with young people; an arts-based approach to dialogue between young people and their local police; and training and support for young people to become long-term advocates and partners in broader policing reform efforts and research.

The strategy aligns around four mutually reinforcing elements:

* **Advocacy:** supporting young people in playing a central role as proactive advocates for change, and drawing on their expertise to inform meaningful remedies for lasting change.
* **Networking/communities of practice:** strengthening connections between practitioners from different countries to share good practices, research findings, tools and experiences, and provide these resources to the field.
* **Good practice:** developing and piloting partnership-based good practices to improve police-youth relations.
* **Research: creating the empirical basis for advocacy:** evaluating the projects and generating data to inform effective campaigns; engaging young people in participatory research; and assessing our approach and how our work with young people feeds into change in policy and practice.

MCRW has funded projects in Europe. Based on a mutually-developed conceptual framework, the Justice Initiative’s Ethnic Profiling Project team provided technical support for Youth Initiative grant-making, with OSIFE recently also coordinating some grant-making. The project currently has initiatives underway in France, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK and a network of contacts with young people, police and youth workers across Europe and New York with some contacts in Brazil.

**State of the Field**

My City Real World operates in an increasingly hostile environment. The economic recession has seen increasing xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants, national minorities, as well as other ethnic and religious minorities, most notably increasing Islamophobia. Counter-terrorism and concerns about border security have combined with increasing anti-immigration sentiment have added to the drivers of profiling. Across Europe, political parties trade on the politics of fear, reflected in a disturbing growth of nativist and populist political parties and candidates. Austerity measures are slashing government funding of civil society. Many organizations serving marginalized communities are struggling to survive and worry about working on “controversial” issues such as ethnic profiling or policing. Equally, police budgets are being cut, making it increasingly difficult to justify spending on projects perceived as ancillary or “soft community work.” The police are often caught in the middle of societal pressures. Progressive officers recognise the need to address ethnic profiling and work with young people and minority groups in creating safer communities for all, but are subject to policies that target young people, migrants and Muslim communities with tough tactics. Compounding these difficulties are the overarching challenges faced in supporting young people and youth organizations. Funding for youth programs that do not fit the traditional mold of educational supplementary programs are often the first to be cut. The inherent challenges of working with young people, including the transitional state of youth, the current high rates of unemployment, and other inequities that can drive apathy and resentment from youth towards their communities, and the lack of a robust network of youth-led organizations in the regions we work, has defined our work in this field.

**An evolving model of collaborative practice**

In 2010, the Youth Initiative and Justice Initiative, with further inputs from At Home in Europe program, together developed My City Real World seizing an opportunity to combine the interests of the three programs and their range of operational and grant-making capacities. The Youth Initiative hired a Program Assistant based in London, who was supervised for a period by JI staff in the London office and tasked to develop this portfolio. The development of the MCRW strategy and collaboration as a distinct field of work for the Youth Initiative suffered from a lack of clear guidance and management from former Youth Initiative leadership and, as a result, beyond some attempts to integrate the Critical Encounters workshops (described below) with IDEA’s broader debate work, there was never a clear “fit” in the Youth Initiative for the policing work prior to 2013. However, the MCRW project did become an integral part of the Ethnic Profiling Team’s strategy and became a critical pilot project as the Youth Exchange developed its new mandate to support youth integration into OSF program strategies in 2014.

The 2013 closure of the Youth Initiative coincided with Justice Initiative’s shift to emphasize support for the field of ethnic profiling over the prior operational leadership role, and the early phase of OSIFE grant-making for profiling. A model of collaboration has evolved that is not being based in a formal joint strategy (which we would be hard-pressed to align with each entities’ timing in the new OSF strategy cycle), but through the inclusion of YE staff in the regular meetings and retreats of the profiling team. Profiling team bi-annual retreats also include joint sessions with OSIFE staff, and are complemented by roughly quarterly calls to review the status of grants and communications with grantees. The specifics of the strategy and objectives are reflected in JI and OSIFE’s distinct strategy documents. Because of the close working relationship between JI, YE and OSIFE staff, this arrangement has worked well in a second phase of collaboration. Moving forward, a priority is to identify how the Youth Exchange, in its role as a support resource for the OSF network, can and should continue to support this field, with OSIFE grant-making and Justice Initiative’s technical support.

**Scope of the Portfolio Review**

The following sections of this portfolio review draws lessons from the last four years through the lens of three transition grants: to Release for their StreetLaw Program; to StopWatch Youth (Runnymede/Release); to IDEA-NL for the Critical Encounters Toolkit; and one event, the My City Real World Policing Conference in Belfast in 2014. In total, Youth Initiative made six grants grants at the end of 2013 as part of Youth Initiative’s wind-down:– three for active MCRW projects (to Runnymede, IDEA-NL, and Release) and three for related projects (Fully Focused, Streetwise and Safe, and BreakOut![[1]](#footnote-1)). Youth Exchange also developed a plan with the Ethnic Profiling Team, and committed resources to explore repositioning some work in 2014 with OSIFE.

Each project will be assessed and reviewed against the following criteria:

1. How well did MCRW develop and support mechanisms and opportunities to inform young people about how they are policed? With what relation to other community-based, legal, and policy efforts to confront ethnic profiling?
2. Did MCRW-related projects or opportunities bring about changes in the policing of young people?
3. Finally, we will reflect on how the project has built youth leadership and the careers of the young people who engaged in this work.

This document is largely retrospective, but attempts to draw possible lessons for future collaborations as the Youth Exchange develops a new role supporting the network’s integration of strong youth partners into program and foundation strategies where appropriate, and fostering collaboration across the network.

**CRITICAL ENCOUNTERS: DIALOGUES BETWEEN YOUTH AND POLICE**

Critical Encounters was originally developed by the youth arts organization “Second Wave” in Southeast London in 2005 to improve relationships between young people and the police. In 2010, the Youth Initiative commissioned a project evaluation after anecdotal reports that Lewisham was a rare area in London where stop and search numbers were reducing and relations between the police and young people were positive.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Critical Encounters project involves a series of workshops, designed by young people, which use a mixture of drama-based games, trust exercises, and role-play scenarios to explore street encounters, combined with in-depth discussion of police–youth interactions. Distinct to other projects that bring police and young people together through sport or debate, Critical Encounters took a sustained therapeutic approach recognizing the vulnerabilities of both groups and designing the process to empower young people and support the police officers.[[3]](#footnote-3) The evaluation demonstrated positive changes in how both the police and young people perceived each other and improvements in trust and confidence on both sides. The research found that the project also had wider impact engaging larger groups of young people through outreach and symposiums.

Excited by these results, we felt the approach could address some of the attitudes evident in police personnel elsewhere in Europe. We also thought that it might represent a first – perhaps easier – step for police forces wanting to do something to improve relations but not ready to address ethnic profiling more directly. The Critical Encounters project was replicated in Gouda, the Netherlands, beginning in 2011. Gouda has national prominence in highly racialized national debates about “Moroccan criminals” which make broad generalizations about offending rates of young men of Moroccan heritage. Police relations with Dutch-Moroccan youth had deteriorated seriously, and ID checks were escalating into hostile interactions. The project engaged independent facilitators (with IDEA NL acting as fiscal agent) as mistrust was high, not only in police but also between youth workers and the local municipality, none of whom trusted the other to run the project. As with the Second Wave project, the independent facilitators used improvisation, trust games and role plays to create an atmosphere that included and connected all members of the group, while communicating feelings and opinions about sensitive issues in a safe but engaging way.[[4]](#footnote-4) During the first year, 15 young people and 10 police officers participated in the project meeting monthly for workshops and other activities. The police and local municipality were pleased with the project and its impact, co-funded the second year and also implemented specialized non-discrimination training for the entire police force in response to issues raised in the workshops.

A key element of the MCRW strategy is research and evaluation to evidence the impact of projects and support advocacy. We commissioned the University of Oxford and the London School of Economics to develop an evaluation tool for Gouda and others replicating Critical Encounters. A local academic was chosen by the partners to conduct the evaluation. The evaluation of the first year showed positive results but the research was poorly conducted and not useful. Nonetheless, we could share the experience in Gouda at networking events and publicize it through police and youth-work channels. Interest in replicating the project emerged in other parts of the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Spain.

We developed the “MCRW toolkit” to support replication. Despite their limited role in the initial phases in Gouda, IDEA- NL were keen to work on this project, and with one of the aforementioned Youth Initiative grants, facilitated the development of the toolkit and launched it at a May 2014 “introductory weekend” in Amsterdam. The facilitators, police and young people from Gouda, and a former Second Wave youth worker led workshops for police, youth workers and young people from Amsterdam and The Hague in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain and the UK. While both JI and Youth Exchange staff were disappointed by the lack of depth in the workshop (both in terms of connecting Critical Encounters explicitly to ethnic profiling, and in outlining the challenges and lessons learned from previous Critical Encounters workshops, particularly in regards to evaluation), the workshop successfully presented the toolkit which is an appealing, engaging, well-organized step-by-step guide to activities and tips for organizations interested in starting their own Critical Encounters projects,[[5]](#footnote-5) and most participants left expressing interest in developing their own Critical Encounters projects.

In late 2013/early 2014, the Justice Initiative, the newly formed Youth Exchange and OSIFE conversations about possible Critical Encounters projects in France and Spain. OSIFE had made a grant earlier in 2013 (with co-funding from the Youth Initiative) to MDS Intervention, a community-based organization in Paris which worked primarily with migrant youth, to replicate a Critical Encounters style project in Paris 11 and 12. Unfortunately MDS collapsed as a result of a wave of cuts in government funding that forced nearly a third of the community associations in France to shut down (and MDS may also have been targeted for their visible engagement on profiling – a controversial topic in France – as the two staff people both appeared in JI’s report “Egalité Trahie”[[6]](#footnote-6)). Despite the collapse of MDS and return of grant funds, the staff continued the work and their outreach revealed a pattern of discriminatory ID checks being accompanied by systematic fines against young people, creating financial hardships for their entire families. With a newly formed association called Parapaz, the staff is now working with youth and parents association to document cases for strategic litigation. Justice Initiative is supporting this effort and linking them with legal assistance. Parapaz hopes that these actions, and ongoing debates about police-youth relations in France, may yet lead to dialogue and the possibility of a Critical Encounters pilot down the road. OSIFE is currently considering a grant to continue financial support for this project, pending review of the organization.

In January of 2014, Justice Initiative, the Youth Exchange, and OSIFE met with representatives from the Municipality of Barcelona who were interested in the Critical Encounters model, and in expanding the program to include teachers as well as police. The Critical Encounters project in Barcelona began in 2015 funded by the Municipality. It includes a Spanish translation of the MCRW toolkit, and OSIFE and the Youth Exchange are funding an independent evaluation that aims to: 1) develop a monitoring and evaluation plan using a participatory evaluation methodology; and 2) assess impacts and challenges in improving relationships between young people, teachers and police participants. The evaluation will support assessments of further replication options in other areas of Barcelona and Europe.

Finally, IDEA-NL and the Gouda facilitators have just begun Critical Encounters type projects in The Hague and Amsterdam West and Antwerp and Vilvoorden in Brussels. IDEA NL has also integrated some of the arts-based activities into their broader Debate in the Neighborhood portfolio of work which looks at everyday community topics including financial advancement and stability, youth participation, and issues of policing.

**Achievements & Challenges**

The wider interest in Critical Encounters reflects successes that were visible despite the lack of empirical evidence we had hoped to obtain through the first evaluation. The project provided opportunities for young people to engage directly with police; it gave young people leadership in the workshop process in establishing positive relationships with the police. In Gouda, the first year showed a high level of youth commitment, and significant personal growth and development among youth participants. For the police participants, the evaluation showed a reduction in negative stereotyping of young people and evidence of improved interactions on the streets. Despite thin empirical data, telling anecdotes abound. One young person with learning difficulties refused to take his cap off or speak in front of adults in the first workshop, but in the last workshop he led the debate, and invited his teacher and students from his school to participate. The police lead on the project was promoted to lead a community team in Oosterwei, an area in Gouda of tense relations between the police and largely Dutch-Moroccan residents. Several incidents also show changed police practice and sustained relationships between the police and young people. In one incident, the police responded to a report of a burning car (a not uncommon incident during episodes of public unrest), but when they saw one of the workshop participants in the vicinity, had a conversation during which he explained what was going on, enabling police to minimize arrests, disperse the crowd peacefully and avoid escalation. On other occasions, police frequently arrested large numbers of young people at such scenes. Measuring the long-term effect of involvement in this project is challenging, but we’ve seen some examples which could inform further project development by OSF partners. In both Lewisham and Gouda, some young people stayed on after the first year to work as trainers for the next group of young people. In both London and Gouda, we saw examples of young people using this first-step engagement with police and their communities as a stepping stone to other advocacy efforts around policing and profiling.

One of the biggest challenges of the Critical Encounters project was the amount of OSF staff capacity needed over the first three years. This raises questions about its “payoff” given the relatively small numbers of people it reaches and the lack of documented outcomes. In Gouda, for example, extreme levels of mistrust between project partners meant that we played a hands-on facilitation role – being the trusted partner that could pull the others together. Finding strong implementation partners in new regions was also a challenge, particularly in a sparse funding field for work on policing. Efforts to expand the work into France were particularly problematic, as noted above. Another crucial issue is access to the police to win their trust and willingness to engage (it is a substantial undertaking involving 8-10 officers for 4 hours once a month and coordination time). In many countries, this remains a laborious task requiring considerable effort by local groups with no guarantee of success. Projects also need partners with roots in local communities as winning trust on both sides is key to this project. These challenges may be eased somewhat as further initiatives progress, particularly if we obtain empirical evaluation results as well as a growing number of police and young people who act as spokespeople for the experience. The pickup of the project by Barcelona is promising, although it will be harder in Barcelona to measure success in changing perspectives around ethnic profiling, as the municipality has shied away from the issue of profiling per se, preferring a “soft focus” on youth/policing relations,.

**STREETLAW PROJECT – PILOTING A HARM REDUCTION APPROACH TO KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**

In 2012, former Youth Initiative Director Noel Selegzi requested that the StopWatch Youth group conduct a mapping of “Know your Rights” (KYR) materials and training in the UK to determine what other resources the Youth Initiative might support in partnership with JI.[[7]](#footnote-7) The amount of information available to young people on their legal rights is extensive, yet young people regularly find themselves unprepared for encounters with the police with negative results. Existing KYR training was failing to get to the target audience, and sometimes was inaccurate or out of date.

In 2011, Release, a prominent UK-based organization working on drug policy and a member of the StopWatch coalition, proposed a new multipart program to: a) map young people’s experiences of stop and search; b) provide thoughtful Know Your Rights training to lessen the risk of hostile encounters; and c) provide comprehensive resources and connections to a broader network of legal and advocacy experts. Phase one of the project, which the Youth Initiative supported in 2012, developed comprehensive Know Your Rights training through a new peer-learning based training curriculum called “Y-Stop” which provides young people with tools to deal with an interaction with the police as safely as possible, reducing risks of confrontation, escalation and ultimately arrest or injury. YStop was grounded in intensive consultations with 60 young people across London, first listening to their experiences of stop and search and discussing what information and tools would help, and in a second phase, working with six youth organisations to develop the materials. Young people were involved in every aspect of the project – developing the materials, writing the training, choosing the designs, testing the tools and even choosing the name and mnemonic for helping young people deal with the police:

**YSTOP**: **Y**outh **S**olutions **T**o **O**ver **P**olicing

**SEARCH**: **S**tay calm **/E**ye Contact **/A**sk questions **/R**eceipt **/C**onfidence /**H**old to account

The Youth Initiative gave a final grant at the end of 2013 to Release for the second phase of Ystop. This grant was to take the research from trainings and community outreach from phase 1 (funded in 2012) to build an online platform. The online space,[[8]](#footnote-8) launched in December 2014, provides a forum for young people to safely air their frustrations and ask questions, and is also designed to facilitate longer-term conversations and actions with policing authorities through the development of a police misconduct submission section. Young people who wish to file a complaint will fill out a web form and submit (anonymously if they prefer) to a monitoring team. Release will collate these complaints and work with StopWatch legal advocates to identify legitimate complaints, and submit these to local police forces, keeping where requested youth themselves anonymous.

**Achievements & Challenges**

Release’s consultative and collaborative approach developed materials that speak to the needs of young people, and the project has broad support and ownership from diverse stakeholders. Ystop has developed a wide range of materials including an interactive training programme (with sessions for young people, train the trainers and peer trainers), training manual, oyster wallet cards and search cards[[9]](#footnote-9), and an online platform. Forty five peer trainers and 46 youth workers and teachers have received train-the-trainer sessions. The YStop peer trainers have delivered peer sessions in youth clubs, supported housing, pupil referral units, a university, to 395 young people in total with more dates planned. The training program has been positively received, with those who have received the training noting that it has provided them with transferrable skills to manage their interactions not just with police, but with teachers and classmates too. Some of the peer trainers note that they have gained confidence as a result of getting involved in the project, motivating them to pursue other goals in performing arts and public speaking. One was recently stopped, searched and arrested for a drug offence, and after applying the SEARCH principles, was released from the police station after 20 minutes.

The consultation highlighted the need for other materials and YStop obtained funding from other foundations (such as Trust for London) to develop a parent’s guide, as some of young people consulted mentioned misunderstandings and tensions with their parents around stop and search; a mobile phone app, based on the NY stop and frisk app that will record the stop and allow people to make either direct or third-part complaints; and a film that explores stop and search scenarios using the SEARCH principles.

Assessing systematic impacts of training is inherently hard, and, as the website has just launched, it’s hard to say how successful it will be at capturing data, linking young people to new resources, and helping them complain about poor policing. The fact that other players in the field who currently deliver pretty poor KYR training have asked to be trained in the YStop approach is positive. Other online forums and apps (for example the NY-based CopWatch database and stop and frisk app) show similar challenges although they have had important advocacy impacts. Related challenges include sustained use of these tools; extra capacity is needed on the ground to ensure that these technology options are used by the community over time and not just an activist fad.

**YOUTH-LED ADVOCACY – STOPWATCH YOUTH**

In 2010, the Justice Initiative supported the creation of StopWatch, a coalition comprised of leading civil society, judicial, and academic organizations to push back on the conservative government’s proposed reduction in recording of stops by police and consequent erosion of accountability given the ongoing profiling shown by data. Structured around three sub-groups covering research and advocacy, litigation and youth activism, StopWatch works to reduce ethnic disproportionality in stop and search, ensure effective monitoring and external accountability, promote research on stop and search practices and alternatives, and provide a voice to those most affected by stop and search. In 2011, StopWatch formed a Youth Group made up of over 20 young people from London which the Youth Initiative began to support in 2011. As the original cohort has “grown up,” it has become a looser group of young people contributing to all of StopWatch’s work and supporting the Ystop project. With the support of other StopWatch members, they provide training to help young people take part in public policy advocacy. The youth group documents and shares young people’s experiences of policing, participates in meetings and conferences; visits schools and youth clubs and writes articles and blogs for various media outlets. This adds a powerful dimension to events and initiatives, which usually exclude the young people most stopped and searched by police. The youth group devised, directed and filmed a short film, “profiles of the profiled,” organized a stop and search dance flash mob, and hosted a large “share your experiences event.”

In 2013, the StopWatch Youth Group expanded its scope beyond London, and helped set up local youth groups in Bristol, Nottingham, and Cardiff, providing peer training on stop and search and helping develop advocacy campaigns on a local problems in each place. For example, in Nottingham, young people flagged the use of traffic stops for non-traffic reasons that disproportionately targeted young minority drivers. As traffic stops are not routinely recorded, the youth group developed a form to record these and build a snapshot of their experiences that informed meetings with the police lead on stop and search and with the Notts Police and Crime Commissioner.

**Achievements & Challenges**

The StopWatch Youth Group is an integral part of the coalition, and takes the lead on the website, social media and community events for the entire group. This uniting of academics, lawyers, civil society and young people, has proven highly effective in meeting advocacy and education goals and challenging the disproportionate, ineffective and unaccountable use of stop and search. In July 2013, the Conservative Home Secretary announced a public consultation into the use of stop and search, which has resulted in a widespread reform package including strengthening the regulations, a best practice scheme, introduction of a lay observer scheme and a national police training package. It was a surprising development after years of denial, reflecting ongoing public pressure and research showing that the ethnic minority vote might swing the next election. Stopwatch met with the Home Office and submitted a comprehensive report with input from across the membership. The police themselves have recognized the problem and begun to change practice. National data shows that the police are using less stop and search, using it slightly more proportionately and increasing effectiveness. Stop and search in London is down by a third, section 60 (the exceptional non-reasonable suspicion power) is down by 96 per cent, disproportionality is lower and effectiveness has more than doubled – all while crime and particularly youth violence continues to fall. This trend (although less marked in other places) is evident across a number of others forces, a number of whom have contracted new research and training programs (including the London Metropolitan Police and West Midlands Police, who are using the joint StopWatch-OSJI film, “Viewed with Suspicion” to train frontline officers on the impact of ethnic profiling).

The StopWatch Youth Group is a strong example of sustained youth engagement, and the support provided by the wider group of experts was important. Over four years, 40 young people have been involved in London, 15 in Bristol, 6 in Cardiff, 10 in Nottingham, with over 500 young people indirectly reached through outreach and engagement sessions. StopWatch’s youth volunteers have presented, hosted and participated in many events.[[10]](#footnote-10) Members of the Youth Group also sit as StopWatch representatives on several high-level police scrutiny panels in the current reform process.

The StopWatch Youth Group has supported young people’s personal development, providing them with access to a range of legal and academic experts, and opportunities to develop skills, contacts and knowledge. One young person received film training from StopWatch, developed his experience through filming and editing several StopWatch events and films and recently started his own production company. Another Youth Group member was inspired by his experiences with StopWatch to do a Masters in social development, and is getting support from some of the academics. Another was interviewed for Channel 4 pilot documentary on racism in Britain and StopWatch negotiated with producers to provide this aspiring young performer and screen writer with work experience in exchange. Youth participants have gained media experience through interviews on BBC Northampton, Inspiration FM and Ujima radio.

StopWatch and StopWatch-Youth were hosted at Runnymede Trust, a respected race think tank. London, for three years with OSF grants to Runnymede. In early 2014, Runnymede revealed a misuse of funding, and likely falsification of reporting to their board (Justice Initiative staff were in regular contact with board members who had no knowledge of misused funds). Runnymede suddenly cancelled the StopWatch program, laying off the StopWatch Youth Program Coordinator, and cancelling all activities. It is difficult to determine what we could have done to anticipate Runnymede’s misuse of our funding. We had an established donor relationship with no indication of past misuse of funds. Past audits showed no indication of deficit or other financial risk. The wider environment was one of significant funding reductions, particularly around youth development, race and/or policing, which certainly affected Runnymede’s financial health. That being said, other UK organizations that OSF has funded have faced similar challenges and not resorted to dishonesty, and in the case of the MDS project in France, funds were properly returned after the collapse of the organization. We have recommended ineligibility for Runnymede for any future grants.

Beyond the institutional challenges, this raises the challenge of supporting informal networks, particularly informal networks of youth, through traditional grant-making. The “easiest” approach is often to fund a formal organization as an “umbrella” for the youth network and we have seen successful examples of these formal organizations acting as a formal mentor for youth networks. An added benefit of this from a youth perspective is that at times this opens up opportunities for full-time, paid work for youth activists – a frequent challenge ion sustaining young people in civil society work and activism. While Runnymede’s actions highlighted an extreme risk, the more general downside of supporting youth projects through an umbrella organization is the risk that the larger organization will not allow ownership or authority from youth themselves in the structure of their activities or network. The organizations that work best as umbrellas generally have some larger commitment to youth and youth engagement in their overall mission or strategic vision. We have also seen examples of youth have some representation on the board of an organization that hosts them providing an extra level of accountability in the organizations’ treatment of youth-led or developed projects.

StopWatch Youth, and the broader StopWatch network, are being temporarily hosted by Release. OSIFE supported StopWatch’s broader work – through Release – in 2014. With Release’s guidance, StopWatch has received funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation to formally register as an independent organization; and should be fully independent by April 2015.

**RETHINKING SUPPORT - MY CITY REAL WORLD 2014 CONFERENCE IN BELFAST**

My City Real World has created spaces for young people, police and practitioners to meet, network and share good practice through three international events in London (June 2010), Rotterdam (October 2011) and Antwerp (December 2012)[[11]](#footnote-11). In discussions about repositioning and/or winding-down the My City Real World portfolio in late 2013/early 2014, the Youth Exchange and the Ethnic Profiling Team decided to host a – potentially final – event for grantees and partner organizations. Participants included past grantees, consultants, and potential new partners identified by Latin America Program and OSIEA. The event was designed as a skills building exchange across a range of countries and to focus on youth and policing and the use of new technologies and use of social media to challenge ethnic profiling and ineffective policing. Participants shared information on existing projects and lessons learnt; held practical skills-building workshops on ethnic profiling, fundraising, and evaluation; and the event supported networking and relationship-building with others working on similar issues, and stimulated joint project ideas both regionally and internationally.

A youth and civics organization, Public Achievement, hosted the event in Belfast. The organization has a highly developed model of youth engagement in public policy with valuable insights into evaluation and sustaining support for youth-driven projects., and the policing reforms in Northern Ireland offered an unusual and thought-provoking backdrop to the discussions. Public Achievement organized a high-level panel and site visits for participants to see models of police-community engagement.

**Achievements & Challenges**

In the moment, the conference was a “success” and participants were overwhelmingly positive. Participants came from 15 different cities across 11 different countries including Germany, Brazil, the Netherlands, Kenya, the UK, Spain France, and the US. Tools presented included mobile apps and social media tools to monitor profiling, advocacy videos, and assorted training workshops/tools; exchange was facilitated through “speed networking” presentations and informal gatherings. Some collaborations have already developed: several participants who are current OSF grantees (through OSIFE and/or Youth Exchange) attended the Youth Exchange’s Annual Youth Forum in Istanbul and re-connected on planned projects; a French participant traveled to Kenya to discuss media-based collaborations and support for a project run by an OSIEA recommended participant. Another French participant now has funding from the European Civil Liberties Platform for a mobile app and mobilization project. A group from the UK brought their film on the 2011 London riots to Washington DC and New York during the #blacklivesmatter protests and hosted discussions of trans-Atlantic commonalities. Conversations have begun with US Programs partners, the Youth Exchange, and Ethnic Profiling Team staff on a follow-up event to be hosted in the US but to bring in international partners from the Belfast event.

The biggest challenge with any conference/event is sustaining momentum. While we find that young people tend to stay engaged longer than older counterparts after a meeting, we still need to figure out a better way of supporting emerging communities of practice and collaborative efforts born at these events. We have started to explore options for a simple platform (either a facebook page or a simple wiki or list-serve) which can support ongoing conversations, resource sharing, and learning from each other’s continuing projects. An additional challenge of global conferences is the adaptability/relevance for some aspects of the program. Particularly around policing/profiling work, one piece of feedback we often receive from the Global South is that the work has little to no relevance to settings characterized by extreme corruption in government and policing bodies. Moving forward with this work, it’s worth discussing how much this matters – and what the focus of support for networks might look like.

**LEARNING LESSONS & LOOKING FORWARD**

1. How should we structure collaborative undertakings between Youth Exchange and other OSF entities? What strategy development cycle or approach is most helpful? Strategy development through a combined process was helpful to setting the ambitions and structure of MCRW, but may not be entirely necessary if staff relations and understanding of a common undertaking is incorporated into each distinct OSF unit’s strategy.
2. This portfolio review was initially spurred by concerns with problems in several of the tie-off grants. The challenges faced by MDS appear a more common concern than the management failures that precipitated crisis at the Runnymede Trust. Yet, in each instance, the work on MCRW projects continued despite organizational crises, and has become stronger over time despite the institutional weaknesses. How then do we best support youth work? Faced by choices between small and often fragile organizations, or placing youth work under an umbrella organization that may have little commitment to work at hand, how do we best judge the trade-offs? If we opt for organizations that struggle to meet OSF grant-making requirements, what explanations are valid to ask for those to be loosened in some cases? Do we really want an organization to prosper in every case or are we also happy to see work proceed, and young leaders prosper and grow into new challenges? If we place work under larger organizations, are there good models to protect the work and the young people’s engagement in NGOs that may not have a strong youth focus? One model is asking or requiring that boards or governance structures include some youth participation. What might be others?

1. The lingering question from the MCRW Belfast conference that ties back to the long-term future of MCRW is how do we move from providing grant-support for projects to supporting networks of young people to engage in broader policy conversations around policing?

1. After initial review and discussions, we have opted to not focus on these three grants as part of this portfolio as they were deemed a bit out of the scope of a retroactive look at the My City Real World project as a joint JI/Youth Initiative portfolio. In brief, Fully Focused participated in the YStop Project and has developed a YouTube platform for youth-generated video content on profiling and policing (a project co-funded by PIJ). The two grants to Streetwise and Safe and BreakOUT! were Youth Initiative funded project grants to support follow-up from SAS’s involvement in Communities United for Police Reform and launched a new national platform of resources and network-building tools for LGBTQ youth groups working on policing reform. All three projects were generally successful, and participants from each organization attended the MCRW Belfast Conference in June 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. C. Baugh (2011) *Working across boundaries with young people and the police: an evaluation of “critical encounters,”* (NY: OSF). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Please see short film “My City Real World: Critical Encounters between and the Police and Young People” for flavour of the project and impact on those involved. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7mfamn7cXA> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Please see short film “Second Wave in Gouda” for flavour of the project and impact on those involved. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEICFx4D65k> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Youth-Police Workshop tool kit is included in the appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Omer Capitolin, head of MDS and now Parapaz, has also been key to obtaining permission from Paris city hall for an exhibit based on Egalité Trahie in the Place de la Republique, one of the most traversed spots in Paris, in May-June this year. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. I. Odogwu “Know Your Rights on Stop and Search: A Mapping of Rights Information for Young People” (London: Stopwatch), at: <http://www.stopwatch.org/uploads/documents/Know_Your_Rights_on_Stop_and_Search_-_A_Mapping_of_Rights_Information_for_Young_People.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ystop: <http://y-stop.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. To date, 7,000 oyster wallets and 15,000 search cards have been distributed. The search card has been downloaded 12,138 times via the Y.STOP, Release and StopWatch websites. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In 2014, for exampley: OSF youth and justice forum; Home Office International Crime and Policing conference; All Party Parliamentary inquiry on children and police; University of Northampton stop and search debate; Bristol Police and Crime Commissioners “stop and search summit”; Independent Police Complaints Commissioner youth consultation on complaints; ITV televised “Big Talk” at Ravensbourne College, Greenwich. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Please see short film on the Antwerp workshop: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5AyNf10yIw> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)