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Power Users of ICT Pose Strategies to Solve United Nations Millennium Goals

Who are Power Users of ICT?

Power Users of ICT are individuals who break out of the confines of traditional learning, demographic or technological barriers by constantly using, sharing, creating, producing or changing information in creative, innovative and/or unintended ways so that they become force multipliers in their own environments (Power Users of ICT Global Advisory Committee, 2002).

In August 2005 45 youth from 15 countries participated in the First International Symposium on Power Users of ICT. These youth, chosen for their technology skills and interests, developed their own responses to some of the world's big problems. The six teams of youth were joined online by a team from China presenting their solutions to an audience of lead education researchers, IT industry experts, news media, and government officials in attendance at the Symposium.

- **Australia Team:** *developing a global warning system for tsunamis and other natural disasters*
- **Costa Rica Team:** *focusing on the culture of Power Users*
- **Global Team:** *focusing on universal primary education*
- **Nordic Team:** *using technology to help eradicate hunger and extreme poverty*
- **Philippines:** *creating a global society dedicated to peace*
- **US Team:** *addressing infectious disease issues with technology*

A topic of significant interest, the Power Users of ICT Symposium was covered by 22 national and international media organizations including 9 radio and television stations and 13 newspapers/news services. See the Online Symposium Conference Archive at <http://home.learningtimes.net/symposium>

Symposium Results and Next Steps in Research:

- Power User teams have been recognized for their achievements. The Australian team was recognized through a LOLA (Learning Online Award) for the most “compelling and engaging online learning moment” (<http://www.thelolas.com/edcaustralia.html>). The Philippines team has continued their project on creating a global culture of peace by working across the religious/cultural divide with children from the southern islands of their country.

- Researchers validated and refined the emerging research agenda and have identified interesting new areas for further investigation. Reviews of the interviews with Power Users generated new ways to think about these youth as learners, problem solvers and evaluators.
- Public awareness was raised about the capabilities of youth who are natives to the information society.
- The Power Users community of practice was expanded to include policy makers, practitioners, researchers, youth and representatives from the business and foundation communities world-wide.

Emerging Framework - Preliminary findings are giving us a clearer picture of:

- *Power Users as learners* who learn by experimentation, are self teachers, build on the knowledge of others, share information, learn from friends and peers and pass on information/learning to each other.
- *Power Users as youth who reject limits*, who are problem solvers, creators of their own paths, and engage in “out of the box” thinking.
- *Power Users as users of technology who consider the iterative relationship between themselves and the technology* such as how the technology benefits them both as current user and how technology will benefit them later, how they develop other interests through technology, and how technology allows for improvement of products and processes.
- *Power Users as Evaluators* who assess validity of information, know their audience, make distinctions around technology use, understand their own technology skills and capabilities, select and use both technology and traditional methods of acquiring, using and producing information.
- *Power Users as people who see ambiguity in a positive light and who are comfortable defining what comes next; who recognize cultural conflict between formal and informal technology learning, as well as the social connections technology brings; and put in significant investment of time to learn through or about technology.*

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