



ANNUAL REPORT

2012

When Youth RISE was founded in 2007, its mission was to establish a youth-led network to promote evidence based drug policies and harm reduction strategies with the meaningful involvement of young people who use drugs and are affected by drug policies.

The year of 2012 has clearly demonstrated the significant steps Youth RISE continues to take towards this vision. With 200 core members from over 70 countries around the world, an active International Working Group with members from Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Canada, India, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Nepal, Slovakia and the United States, young people around the world are actively engaging, or challenging, the policies and programs that have often actively sought to exclude them. Our members are incredibly brave, as drug policy reform is not a popular topic. Youth RISE staff, IWG members and members at large risk facing disapproval, stigma, and even persecution for taking a stand for themselves and their peers.

In Nigeria, Youth RISE members are at the forefront of opening up drug policy dialogue in what is a particularly challenging policy environment. In 2012, Nepalese members carried out much needed research, addressing the needs of their community and finally allowing young people who use drugs to voice their needs and barriers that they experience in accessing life saving services. In Kyrgyzstan, Youth RISE members unveiled the abuses young people who use drugs face as a result of punitive drug policies and are undertaking peer education to ensure their peers know their human rights and can protect themselves from drug related harm. Women who use drugs in Lebanon are particularly marginalised and stigmatised, and recognising this our Lebanese members have been providing valuable education to women in prison and other settings. This is just an example of some of the incredible initiatives our young members are taking to challenge unjust drug policy and practices in their communities.

Youth RISE is also often the only network representing the needs of young people who use drugs in a number of key international processes. We are the only youth network that is consistently present at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and we represent an important platform for voicing the needs of young people who use drugs in human rights forums. Youth RISE also remains an invaluable presence in the global harm reduction and drug policy reform movement.

Despite our clear growth, we are still a long way from achieving the vision of our founding members, where young people can live and flourish in a society that responds to drug use among young people through humane and evidence based policy and practice, rather than the hurtful, criminalizing and dehumanizing approaches that are still all too common globally.

Youth RISE staff, Board of Directors, and IWG are committed to doing everything possible to ensure that this invaluable and incredibly necessary work continues. We want to extend a deeply heartfelt thank you to all of those who have supported us thus far and believed in our mission and vision, including our current and previous funders, our supporters and partners, and most importantly the young people who keep Youth RISE and the fight for our collective cause alive.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Padgett
Youth RISE Co-founder, current Board Chair

YOUTH RISE IS...

Mission

Youth RISE is a youth-led network promoting evidence based drug policies and harm reduction strategies with the meaningful involvement of young people who use drugs and are affected by drug policies.

Vision

Youth RISE envisions a world where society responds to drug use among young people through humane and evidence based policy and practice.

What we stand for:

- Youth participation and empowerment: We empower young people who are affected by drug policy to actively engage in drug policy dialogue and harm reduction interventions;
- Access to harm reduction: We call for the removal of age restrictions and other barriers that impede young people's access to harm reduction;
- Youth-friendly harm reduction services: We champion services that are relevant, accessible, and conducive to the overall health of young people, ensuring that young people are involved in service design and delivery;
- Human rights of young people who use drugs: We demand that the human rights of young people who use drugs are respected and protected;
- Eliminate stigma: We work for the elimination of stigma and discrimination of young people who use drugs.

Strategic objectives

Youth RISE key strategic objectives are to:

1. Increase public awareness on the ineffectiveness of current drug policies, in particular the adverse impacts of drug policies on young people;
2. Mobilise, engage, and facilitate youth involvement in the drug policy reform movement;
3. Facilitate engagement of young people who use drugs and ensure their voices are heard at all levels;
4. Promote evidence based harm reduction interventions for young people who use drugs;
5. Engage in targeted regional, national and issue related advocacy;
6. Increase evidence to support advocacy and inform an effective response.

YOUTH RISE IN 2012

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

Youth RISE Operations Coordinator Robin Pollard attended the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna, Austria in March and wrote for the CND Blog www.cndblog.org. The CND Blog is a collaborative project between the International Drug Policy Consortium and Youth RISE and provides the only comprehensive information on the proceedings of the meeting.

UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting

Youth RISE Executive Director Anita Krug was invited to participate in the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) meeting in Geneva, Switzerland in June. We co-organised and spoke on a panel on combination prevention for young people, and highlighted the barriers to HIV prevention for young people who use drugs, including policy barriers such as age restrictions and criminalisation of drug use. Recommendations from the panel have been included into a report to be considered by the PCB.

World Health Organisation HIV Expert Panel

Youth RISE was also invited to join the World Health Organisation HIV Expert Panel for the development of HIV counselling, testing and treatment for adolescents. Youth RISE participated online for a number of months, and also at the physical meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe in October. As the only participating organisation specifically active in the area of drugs, youth and HIV, Youth RISE highlighted how policy and practice excludes young people who use drugs from HIV prevention and treatment.

‘Youth RISE plays a very important role in the global drug policy debate. Protecting our youth is one of the stated goals of drug control but unfortunately counterproductive policies and programmes have had the opposite effect for young people. The lack of honest information, barriers to accessing harm reduction services and criminalisation all have detrimental impacts on young people who use drugs. Youth RISE brings their perspective and voice into this policy space to push for more balanced, more effective policies that do not harm the very people that they should protect.’

Ann Fordham, Executive Director, International Drug Policy Consortium

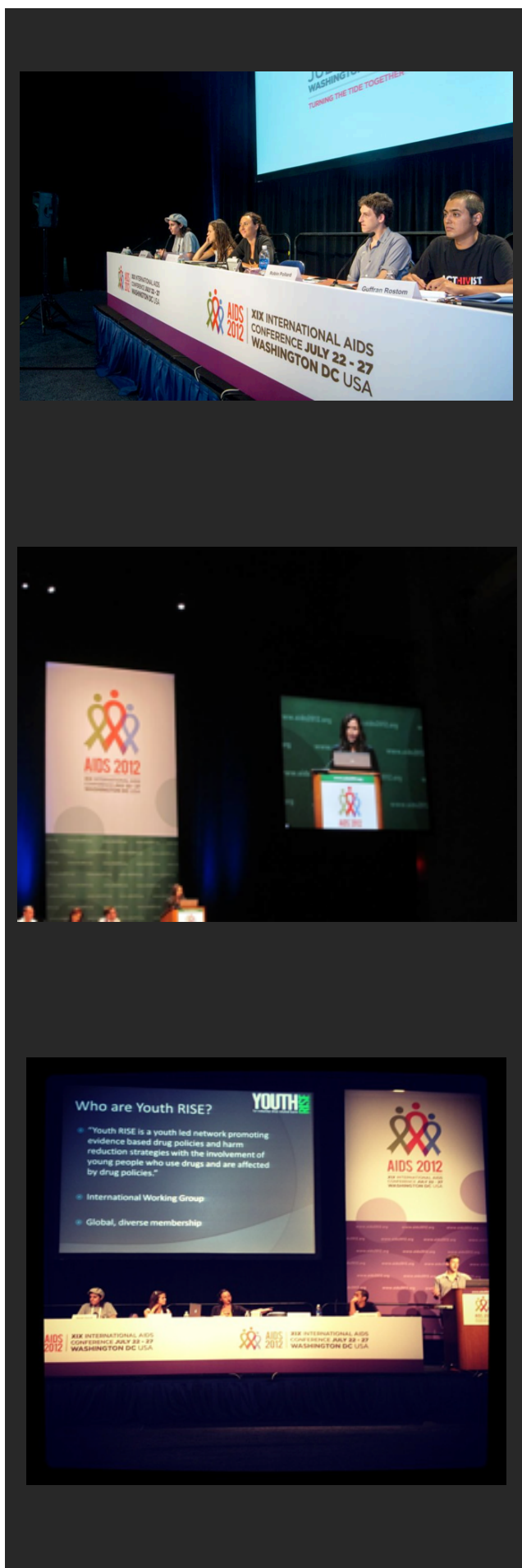
International AIDS Conference (AIDS2012)

The biannual International AIDS Conference (AIDS2012) was held in July in Washington DC in July. Prior to the main conference, Youth RISE co-chaired the pre-conference committee in partnership with Advocates for Youth, organising a 3 day event attended by 250 young activists. Youth RISE also facilitated a number of workshops at the pre-conference, building the knowledge of young people on drug policy and their capacity to contribute as informed advocates for reform.

Youth RISE staff, IWG and members also participated in a number of panels at the main AIDS2012 conference on issues such as: youth leadership in drug policy, night life harm reduction, young women who use drugs and children who inject drugs, and presented projects from various countries and regions that focus on harm reduction for young people who use drugs. As the leading youth organisation advocating for harm reduction at the conference, Youth RISE's presence at the conference was important for raising the rights, needs and challenges of young people who use drugs.

‘My experience as an International Working Group Member for Youth RISE was one of the most positive aspects for me of 2012.... Youth RISE is special because it enables connectedness among young people from around the world who would otherwise perhaps never get to know each other and learn about each others regional issues. It is unique and valuable as such.’

Yamina-Sara Chekroun, Youth RISE IWG North America



REGIONAL WORK

ASIA

Youth RISE Nepal: The Youth RISE team in Nepal has continued to engage in national advocacy over the past year. They have also undertaken research that aims to address the following questions: How well do drug related service organisations understand the needs of young people who use drugs in Nepal? What youth friendly services are implemented in Nepal? What is the initial age of drug use and what are the main factors influencing a young person's drug use? Data is currently being analysed and the full report will be completed in 2013 along with a short documentary.



Youth RISE team in Nepal conducting research with young people who use drugs

Through the HIV/AIDS Alliance Community Action on Harm Reduction project, Youth RISE established a relationship with **Rumah Cemara**, a community based organisation providing peer-to-peer HIV and harm reduction services for people who use drugs in Bandung, Indonesia. Whilst successful in providing services to 'older' injecting drug users, they were concerned that their programs were not reaching young people. Youth RISE travelled to Indonesia (Executive Director and Youth RISE member from Indonesia), provided capacity building training on reaching young people who use drugs, conducted focus groups with young people who use drugs in order to establish their needs, and supported the design and implementation of a youth specific program within the organisation. We are continuing to support Rumah Cemara to develop youth friendly materials and support their engagement in international advocacy efforts.

EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Peer education project, Slovakia: Youth RISE IWG Miroslava Zilinska led the implementation of the MTV Staying Alive Foundation supported peer education project, Youth RISE Up! for HIV Prevention. Evidence in Slovakia indicates that more and more young people are experimenting with drugs and the average age of first experience with drugs among youth in Slovakia is decreasing. Sexual health is also still a taboo topic in Slovakia, and there is a lack of sexual education and HIV prevention programs in Slovak schools. In partnership with the local NGO Odysseus, the peer education project trained young people who were excluded from school and young people attending open air festivals on safe drug use and sexual health.

Ganesha, Kyrgyzstan: Ganesha was founded in 2011 with the support of Youth RISE by a group of young women who use drugs. In 2012, the group continued to expand its activities and mobilised additional funds from the HIV Young Leaders Fund to support their work. In February 2012, Ganesha was registered as a public foundation in Kyrgyzstan. Activities in 2012 included: peer education training on harm reduction and sexual health; a study on the impacts of drug policy on young women who use drugs; production and dissemination of brochures; networking with other NGOs highlighting the issues specific to young women; and development of a [video](#) featuring leading government figures in the drug sector and interviews with young people who use drugs.



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

SIBA (Safer Interventions and Broader Acceptance): Youth RISE continued its support of SIBA, a youth-led NGO that advocates for just and humane drug policies and harm reduction in Lebanon. In 2012, SIBA launched two workshops, under the title "Harm Reduction & Sexual Health". The first was given to a group of people who formerly used drugs while the other was carried out at women's prison in Lebanon. The group of young activists presented various topics pertaining to harm reduction principles, issues related to drugs, and safer sex practices. Both workshops focused on life skills, motivations behind drug misuse and relapse prevention. In addition, a drug awareness workshop was given to women at risk in Sabra, an area in Beirut where drug use is escalating.

‘As a young drug user, my experience with Youth RISE has been awesome. I have been given opportunities to share my own and my community’s experiences and challenges in a way I never imagined and I felt truly heard. At Youth RISE we work as a family; share, learn and care for each other in every step. Really, it is a great platform for youth and I am honored to be part of it. ‘

Bikash Gurung, Youth RISE IWG South Asia

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa has been one of our most active regions in 2012, with substantial growth in membership, new partnerships, expansion of activities, and the formation of a new national organisation in Nigeria. With drug use and the need for development of effective responses increasingly becoming an issue on the continent, we look forward to continuing our engagement and expanding our presence in the region.

Youth RISE Nigeria was formed following a sharp increase in drug use among young people in the region and the need for youth leadership in advocating for drug policy reform in the country. Youth RISE formed a new organisation in Nigeria. "Youth RISE Nigeria" will remain part of Youth RISE yet will legally operate as a separate organization.

YOUTH RISE NIGERIA

Organisation objectives:

1. Reduce drug related harm amongst young people who use drugs in Nigeria;
2. Open dialogue space on effective, evidence-based and rights-based drug policies;
3. Reduce stigma and discrimination experienced by young people who use drugs in Nigeria.

The initial role of Youth RISE Nigeria is to engage in advocacy with policy makers and key stakeholders, to support and engage in capacity building activities supporting local community organisations and undertake research in the region to uncover a greater understanding of the populations most at risk, risky behaviours associated with drug use and the drug harms faced by young people in the region.

Youth RISE Nigeria is currently hosted by: Civil Society on Health and Rights of Vulnerable Women and Girls in Nigeria (CISHRWIN).

In 2012, Youth RISE engaged in series of activities in Nigeria, including:

Partnership with a media-focused NGO in Nigeria to produce a documentary film titled 'Everybody takes drugs' a thirty minute film which examined the reality of drug use in Nigeria, challenges faced by young people who use drugs and the need for policy reform. The film is now being used as an advocacy tool among different stakeholders to generate debate for reform in Nigeria. One of these events was a media round table dialogue for media practitioners in September 2012 which involved representatives from National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Human Rights Commission, and leading NGOs.

Mapping and Research: Youth RISE Nigeria also concluded a research study on HIV-risk related behaviours among young people who use drug in two urban communities in Nigeria. We also partnered with Population Council Nigeria to map some selected sites where young people who use drugs converge in order for services to be made available to them.

Community Outreach: The year was rounded up with a community outreach to other youths during the 'Area A' youth carnival in Nyanya, Abuja which took place from 14th-17th of December, 2012. Over three hundred youths who use drugs were reached with information on how to reduce drug related harm. Information shared at the event centred on safe injecting practices, poly drug use, sex and drugs and general health. This was also well captured in a flyer/handbill produced and shared by Youth RISE Nigeria.

Our Youth RISE Nigeria project Coordinator, Adeolu Ogunrombi, is also appointed to the West Africa Drug Policy Commission, providing an exciting opportunity to engage in high-level discussions.



In **East Africa**, partnerships were formed with the Ugandan Harm Reduction Network and Kenyan Network of People Who Use Drugs. Executive Director Anita Krug travelled to the region in December, met a number of drug using communities and explored the specific needs of young people who use drugs.

In **Mauritius**, Youth RISE partnered with [SAFIRE](#) - Service d'Accompagnement, de Formation, d'Intégration et de Réhabilitation de l'Enfant (Association for the Support, Education, Integration and Rehabilitation of the Child)- to deliver a peer to peer harm reduction project with the support of MTV Staying Alive Foundation. SAFIRE is a local organization and their goal is to rehabilitate Mauritian street children and integrate them into society. Drug use among young people, particularly among street children in Mauritius, has increased in recent years. There is a dire lack of services and non-existence of 'youth friendly' harm reduction tailored to the needs of youth.

The peer education training was held in a residential setting over a weekend, training 25 street involved children on harm reduction, sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention strategies. The training has now become part of their program with all street children. Following the success of the project and needs identified by the participants, SAFIRE is now leading national advocacy efforts to remove age restrictions on harm reduction services that currently exist in Mauritius.

TRAINING

Youth RISE co-facilitated an internal training on young key affected populations for **UNESCO** staff in Paris, leading the session on young people who use drugs. The aim of the 3-day training was to ensure UNESCO projects are aligned with messages supporting evidence based drug policy, and to advocate for UNESCO to revise its drug education curriculum to ensure it is not only prevention focused.

SUPPORT. DON'T PUNISH: PROTECT OUR YOUTH

Youth RISE officially launched its 'Support Don't Punish: Protect our Youth' global campaign, which calls for the decriminalisation of drug use and possession of drugs for personal use. It is part of a joint campaign with the HIV/AIDS Alliance, IDPC, INPUD and HRI in which Youth RISE is the only organisation focusing on young people who use drugs.

To support the campaign, we launched an animation video that highlights the main messages around the damaging impacts of drug policy, and the need for drug policy reform. You can view the video [here](#).

VOICES FROM THE GROUND



As part of the 'Support don't punish' campaign, we have been collecting stories from young people around the world who have been affected by drug policy. Of the over 30 stories shared by young people from all continents of the world, we heard of the discrimination, denial of health services, impacts of criminalisation and incarceration, physical and sexual abuse young people who use drugs experience.

The next phase of the campaign will also involve case studies that highlight the specific impacts drug policy has on young people in select countries.

'I began using drugs when I was 9 years old. I first began using cannabis, and then at 11 I started using heroin. I have been injecting heroin since I was 14 and I started selling sex at 15. I found out I was HIV+ at 16. This is the life I now know, but this is not who I am.'

Maureen from Kenya tells her story

RESOURCES

Youth RISE developed a number of resources in 2012:

[Ain't I a woman? Recognising the rights and needs of young women affected by drug use and HIV:](#)

Youth RISE partnered with the HIV Young Leaders Fund to develop the issue brief that highlights the intersections between age, gender, and drug use, making the case for why young women who use drugs are particularly vulnerable to HIV and not adequately reached through mainstream health services. The brief also offers some recommendations for how our HIV response can better meet the needs of young women affected by HIV and drug use.

[New Psychoactive Substances: The need for policy reform:](#)

Addressing the rapid escalation in consumption of new psychoactive substances among young people around the world, we produced a report outlining what the main government responses to this new phenomenon have been, why current approaches at dealing with increased consumption of new synthetic psychoactive substances has failed, what barriers currently exist to improving the harm reduction interventions for young people who use these drugs and our recommendations for better policies.

Harm reduction resources:

As part of the 2012 project, the team in Slovakia developed 'Party hard, party safe' resources, providing party goers information on how to keep themselves safe in a recreational drug using environment. The resource is available in [English](#) and [Slovak](#).

The project team in Mauritius developed an advocacy video which highlights the challenges that street involved youth who use drugs experience when accessing harm reduction services.

To mark Overdose Awareness day, Youth RISE released two overdose prevention videos, providing information on how to spot and respond to an [opiate](#) and [stimulant](#) overdose.

SIBA in Lebanon also developed [Overdose Prevention](#) resources, providing advice to young people how to avoid and/or handle a drug overdose.

We also expanded our online harm reduction resources which includes information on different drugs, their effects and how to reduce their harm. These pages are at the top of our most accessed web pages on our site.

[Global State of Harm Reduction- Excluding Youth? Global review of harm reduction services for young people:](#)

For the first time, the Global State of Harm Reduction, data was collected on age restrictions for accessing harm reduction. A thematic chapter on youth was also included in the report, which was co-authored by Youth RISE and Adam Fletcher from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University of London. The chapter highlighted the unique barriers young people face in accessing harm reduction services, and reviewed data from around the globe.

PARTNERSHIPS

Youth RISE continued to develop partnerships and participate in external working groups.

Youth RISE continued its active participation on the Steering Committee of the **HIV Young Leaders Fund**, a funding mechanism that distributes grants to projects led by and for young key affected populations affected by HIV. In addition to regular tasks, Youth RISE also co-facilitated the pre-implementation grant workshop for grantees from South East Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok. We are also on the advisory group for the new round of grants that fund projects for young women who use drugs in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, and provide continued support for these grantees.

Youth RISE is part of the **UNAIDS Inter-agency Task Team on HIV/AIDS and Young People (IATT/YP)**, contributing as experts on young people who use drugs on initiatives, publications and reports. We participated in the annual meeting in Zimbabwe in November, and Youth RISE was once again elected as co-chair of the harm reduction working group.

Youth RISE continues to be actively involved in the development of the **UNAIDS New Generation Leadership Strategy**, and the CrowdOutAIDS project which has been used to develop the strategy.

Youth RISE is also participating in a number of other advisory groups or committees, including: International Harm Reduction Conference Programme Committee; Club Health International Steering Group; Plotting a New Course Programme Committee.

DONORS

The work of Youth RISE has been possible due to the generous support of:

Open Society Foundation is one of Youth RISE's strongest financial and strategic partners, and supports Youth RISE through its Global Drug Policy Program and Youth Initiative.

MTV Staying Alive Foundation's mission is to encourage, energise, and empower young people who are involved in HIV/AIDS awareness, education and prevention campaigns. The Foundation supports the Youth RISE Up! for HIV Prevention project.

Harm Reduction International is the leading non-governmental organisation working to promote and expand support for harm reduction worldwide.

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the department of the United Kingdom Government that manages Britain's aid to poor countries and works to eliminate extreme poverty.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Caitlin Padgett, Independent Consultant and Youth RISE co-founder (Chair)

Damon Barrett, Deputy Director, Harm Reduction International

Aram Barra, Drug Policy Programme Director, Espolea

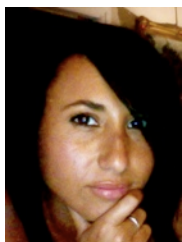
Ilona Szabo, Coordinator, Global Commission on Drug Policy

Niamh Eastwood, Executive Director, Release

VOLUNTEERS

Youth RISE would like to thank the many young volunteers that have invested their time and energy into our work, including our interns Max Lansman, Ben Fitzgerald and Madeleine L'Anson who have provided our Secretariat with volunteer support.

STAFF



Anita Krug
Executive Director



Robin Pollard
Operations Coordinator

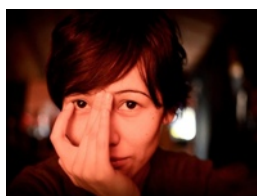


Adeolu Ogunrombi
Project Coordinator-
Nigeria

INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP



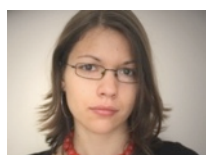
Bikash Gurung (Senior IWG)
Asia



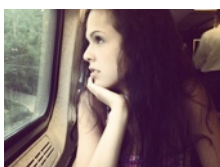
Zulaika Esentaeva (Senior IWG)
Central Asia



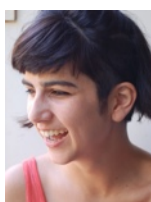
Lisa Campbell (Senior IWG)
North America



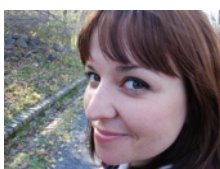
Miroslava Zilinska
Eastern Europe



Yamina-Sara Chekroun
North America



Maria Marta Zabala
South America



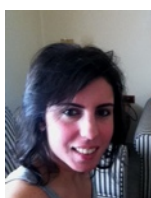
Kate Wood
North America



Jamshid Azimy
Central Asia



Gautam Sharma
South Asia



Sariah Daouk
Middle East



Hugh Stephens
Australia Pacific