

AFRICA:

CAMEROON

UGANDA

KENYA

TANZANIA

RECIPROCITY RISING: AFRICAN YOUTH ARE

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Food for a Meal. Seeds for a Season. Practice for a Lifetime.

Reciprocity is rising in more parts of Africa as more African youth leaders practice Timebanking. And, as is the case everywhere youth are, African Youth ARE: Assets Resources Energy. Hold that thought as we share how we came to make that claim.

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So many important things begin with a conversation. We come to know and understand each other better when we talk, spend time together, share a meal, and offer to serve each other.

In December 2021, Elise Edjang was working as a Unit Nurse at a hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. She was assigned to the care of several recently admitted patients, including one with the initials ESC. At the time, Elise did not know Edgar S Cahn any more than the other patients in her care. Within the next few weeks, strangers with a professional connection became acquaintances on a personal level. Elise met Edgar's wife, Christine Gray and his sons from his first marriage. A baton was passed, seeds of change were planted, a short intensive course on co-production was passed, and Elise was soon to embark on a practicum that continues in play in Cameroon. Elise became Edgar's last student of Timebanking...

About ten years prior to Elise's introduction, Jerome Scriptunas had a similar learning experience and was following an exhortation by Edgar Cahn to: "Do Something." Through the happenstance of COVID and the impossible to predict trajectory of networking, Jerome had introduced Youth TimeBanking to people in Mukono, Uganda who continue to apply the ideas of timebanking and co-production for positive youth and community development.

Christine Gray (Edgar's widow), a human catalyst for change and planter of seeds of change, introduced Elise and Jerome in March 2022. Their synergy has continued to grow as they continue to support local efforts in Africa to learn about, implement, and practice timebanking and co-production. As of this writing, Youth TimeBanking is finding traction with small groups of people in Yaounde', Cameroon, Kisubi and Mukono, Uganda, Kisumu, Kenya, and Mwanza-Bariadi and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

We celebrate any and every effort to introduce and nurture timebanking anywhere in the world. Our immediate focus is with the connections we have made in Cameroon and East Africa. We would like to share some of their experiences, common denominators and distinct approaches. Before that, here are some thoughts on how we present Youth TimeBanking or YTB to our new friends in Sub Saharan Africa.

YTB is a TimeBanking practice and community development network that builds strengths and social connections with youth-adult changemakers by providing training and resources for their community projects. YTB is Giving & Receiving for Connected Community where Youth ARE: Assets, Resources, Energy to Y-T-B_the_change. YTB augments the use of time as currency with options to earn time credits for in-kind gifts, project resources, introductions, new experiences, access to tools and softwares, and project and learning opportunities.

YTB was inspired by Chapter 12, Assets: A Social Justice Perspective, Schools and Throw-Away Kids, in the book *"No More Throw-Away People: The Co-Production Imperative,"* by Edgar S. Cahn. One of the goals of YTB is to encourage the establishment of timebanking across the lifespan with a focus on youth and peer-to-peer, near-peer, cross-age, youth-adult, and intergenerational service and civic engagements. YTB developed a project framework called YTB Community CALM to assist youth in determining their vision for how they wish to

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improve their schools and communities. In Community CALM, C stands for Care or service activities involving people, animals, or the environment. A stands for Apps or service activities involving technology for good and efforts towards digital inclusion. L stands for Learning and various kinds of Literacy, civic engagement and understanding, including learning about timebanking, community currency, mutual aid. And M stands for Make - those activities involving service with physical efforts to build, restore, and repair.

YTB is based on the *Five Core Values of Timebanking*, with an emphasis on youth and their need for belonging, inclusion, recognition, and opportunities.

YTB's Five Core Values:

Asset: Each youth is an asset with capabilities to contribute, build strengths, and social connections.

Redefined Work: Youth contributions are recognized and rewarded.

Reciprocity: Giving and receiving for connected community. We use the currency of service time, new opportunities, and shared resources. Money is still important, but we are bringing attention to alternative and community currencies to empower people.

Social Networks: Resource development - meet people, go places, do things. Building a bigger community of interdependence and trusting relationships.

Respect: Honor youth who and where they are - develop and support youth vision. Everyone can be involved. 'Giving opportunities' allow everyone to contribute.

YTB's Theory of Change: Youth as Co-Producers

If YTB coordinates opportunities where participants earn time credits for their service and contributions; then more people will have experiences with service to others and develop strengths and make social connections. More people will become community partners who co-produce sustainable, positive change in themselves and their communities, and who foster peer-to-peer, cross-age, youth-adult, intergenerational solidarity across their lifespan.

YTB pays it forward by contributing to a positive upward spiral of responsible and accountable interdependence. YTB addresses a latent need for sustaining youth involvement in civic engagement in Africa and elsewhere. This focus contributes to positive youth and community development across the lifespan of participants. YTB seeks to especially involve transition age youth and young adults (15-35) and their support teams. YTB is especially interested in involving youth and encouraging youth-led community engagement along with youth-adult partnerships. Youth awareness of their right to advocate for and participate in co-production endeavors is paramount.

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Youth TimeBanking tends to involve as much or more group-oriented projects and activities vs person-to-person service exchanges. Some YTB involvement includes occasional coaching on Resource and Vision Development to stimulate the confidence and courage of youth to appreciate their inherent power to be forces for good in their communities. Resource development includes a basic understanding and appreciation for the importance of people, places, and things in our life. Each of us needs a support team of people we can trust and confide in as part of our social capital network. We are enriched by increased awareness of the places and safe spaces where we live to find help and support as needed. We benefit by having knowledge of things, tools, skills, and capabilities to give us more ways and options to contribute to others and our communities.

A recent addition to YTB is the application of a method we call photovoice for YTB (PV4YTB). Photovoice is a community-action participatory method for using photographs and narratives to identify and advocate for improving, changing, or preserving important things in our community. PV4YTB is the application of photovoice in support of youth voice to be the change through service to their communities. Youth may respond to requests for service and may also identify a request as speaking to them from the inanimate community. Youth have an awareness of community needs and sense community as an entity whose health we need to care for.

As with person-to-person timebanking, YTB seeks to measure outputs as hours of YTB activity or service, number of activities or projects, and kinds of activities. We are refining our methods of collecting this information with groups in Africa where in many locations digital inclusion and internet access is limited and fragile. At this time we have some physical data recording and an anecdotal understanding of involvement as we move towards implementing simple methods of data collection with a mobile app. Rural areas in Africa share ongoing needs for both technology inclusion, as well as access to books, software, and flexible learning options.

YTB coordinators and participants are observing significant outcomes from youth participation in timebanking. These outcomes include improvements in mental health, an increase in strengths-skills, more social connections; increased confidence, increase in risk taking to lead projects; increase in opportunities, involvement, or new experiences (travel, training, responsibility). We are slowly implementing tools to measure these outcomes via use of a simple YTB mobile app or web forms, and simple YTB check-in (assessment) forms.

Ultimately, YTB's shared vision is that all youth have opportunities for social-digital-educational inclusion; and are supported and recognized for developing their voice and vision for being meaningfully involved with improving conditions where they live, learn, and work. In the near future we would like youth in Africa to have the technology and training to be operating YTB program networks in their communities.

Perspectives from Cameroon: Youth ARE in Yaounde'

YTB Cameroon applies the concepts of timebanking-driven co-production in how they put YTB into practice. For example, towards the latter part of 2023 the YTB Coordinators in Yaounde',

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along with Elise, through self-funding and donations, were able to rent space for a combination YTB Office and Drop-in Center. Youth were involved with refurbishing the space to convert it into a social place for storing goods sent to Cameroon, working on projects, and having a safe place to “hang out” during unstructured time.

YTB members in Cameroon have been working on skills development projects including hat making, soap making, organizing a community library, learning to build outdoor stoves - things that are useful for others, as well as themselves. YTB gives youth opportunities to share their skills in providing instruction and coaching to peers, near-peers, as well as adults.

The soap making workshop was an especially meaningful experience for the trainers and learners. Akin to: giving a fish feeds someone for a day, whereas teaching someone to fish sustains them ongoing - learning soap making provides a basic need for personal care and household cleaning ongoing. This new skill is useful for YTB members and is also something that can be pursued as a trade to sell the soap and gain some degree of income.

Another project and service activity by YTB members has been visiting a local jail to visit with the people who are incarcerated and learn from their experiences and to make different choices. Some of the youth also visited a local health clinic to deliver donated medical supplies and visit some of the patients. These activities help expand youth awareness and help them to develop civic engagement. These kinds of activities help participants to see that regardless of their circumstances their community needs them, and they can contribute and make a difference.

Participating in YTB service activities has provided safe opportunities for youth to express themselves and communicate where they see the community going. Youth cultivate their vision for creating the kind of community they want to live in. Youth in YTB Cameroon sense the collective power they have for impacting their community.

This summer YTB Cameroon is participating in photovoice for YTB. We are all very interested to see how this develops and what topics the youth will select for this project. To paraphrase what Edgar Cahn was fond of saying: Let's set this in motion, get out of the way, and see where the youth take it! One topic the youth may decide to take on is food insecurity in Cameroon. Youth are learning to make traditional cement cooking stoves to cook using wood or charcoal vs gas. The youth will be building these stoves in a joint effort, one household at a time.

Another point about the activity at the end of 2023 is that Elise had shared with people local to her in Maryland, USA about what she was doing in collaboration with her sisters and YTB members in Yaounde'. Many people in Maryland were amazed by the vision for YTB Cameroon. They offered different in-kind donations including many books to send to the YTB Store in Cameroon. Improving literacy is a shared interest of YTB groups in East Africa. YTB participants are earning community service time credits and using those credits to select things they need from the YTB Store: clothing, shoes, household appliances, books, learning materials. Youth earn time credits for participating in service activities, projects, workshops. Eventually, the youth themselves will be able to replenish items in the store by things they are learning to make with crochet, cooking stoves, soap, hats, art and other things they can do with the skills and strengths they are building.

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One of the collateral advantages of YTB Cameroon is that youth participation decreases child labor. Youth can stay in school longer rather than leaving school for minimum levels of paid employment to help their families. YTB Cameroon is giving youth access to things that would otherwise require payment with the national currency. The community currency of time credits applied to in-kind donations is supporting the safety, growth, development, and maturity of youth. YTB credits used as a community currency allow youth to develop teamwork skills, critical thinking skills, and have practice with youth-led, youth-operated programs that increase their qualifications for eventual paid employment. By working together with others in YTB the youth have a greater chance of doing the right things as YTB provides a protective factor against the attraction of joining gangs or being involved with prostitution or selling drugs. YTB helps youth meet their legitimate needs and avoid the dangers of unmet needs leading to undesirable behaviors and outcomes.

YTB Cameroon welcomes youth leadership interest, adult partnership interest, and organizational collaboration inquiries. Please write to us at team@youthare.org

YTB in Cameroon - see [Cameroon video](#), YTB Cameroon segment from [ITBD video](#) - International Timebanking Day 2024, YTB Cameroon [radio interview](#).

Voices from Uganda: Youth ARE in Mukono and Kisubi

Voice of Kiggundu Bruno Isaac, Director of YTB Kisubi, Founder and Director of Bright Parents Nursery and Primary school in Kisowera, Mukono and Director of Kisowera Rural Communities Development Organization. Mission states that "COMMUNITIES EMPOWERED WITH KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND WOMEN". Since 2002, Bruno has been supporting and guiding youths to enable them to achieve their goals; mainly those who seem to have lost hope. YTB gives opportunities to youth for them to experience a sense of accomplishment and being needed by their community, which reduces the gap between the reality of the present moment and the hope for a better tomorrow.

At many times it seemed to be hard to help youths really discover their confidence, strength and abilities, which at times made me feel like I am doing nothing in their lives although I had to cling on to my calling and vision. A friend of mine told me about Youth TimeBanking and all it does. The fact is that I did not understand it at first and having worked in this area with youths and children for a long time, there are many organizations that came showing like they could help me to change the understanding of these children and youths but there was no outstanding impact and they all left without showing any positive changes in the lives of the youths. This made me think that YTB may be like those organizations I interacted with at first.

But after talking about YTB with my friend for some time, I decided to allow some of YTB activities in our primary school such as crocheting, community cleaning drives and discussions were all done and I started observing some changes in the children that participated. Eventually, I got the chance to talk to Jerome Scriptunas who gave me a broader picture of YTB and its activities.

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Later, I shared with Annitah, my wife and work partner, about it and she advised me that we collaborate with YTB not only for primary children, but we also introduce it to other youths under our organization who are based in Kisubi. The majority of these youths are teenagers, and some have had traumatizing experiences. We decided to have them active in YTB. We started hosting Zoom meetings with them being facilitated by Jerome Scriptunas based in the USA.

After some time, we started observing some positive changes in the youths. They started developing self-confidence, becoming more creative and free to show up and develop their talents like art and crafts, music, dance and drama, expressing themselves when given a chance to speak and many others. Above all, YTB activities helped us discover something we least expected among our children/youths and that is the spirit of "youth initiative and leadership"! Youth felt how "Helping others helps us." Youth can lead now. No need to wait.

We have some skills development activities like digitizing & embroidery, tailoring, vegetable growing, bakery work, which they do with Annitah. Initially, Annitah had to make all the decisions, and the youths only followed her instructions since they lacked confidence to share their views. But after working with YTB and having some talks with Jerome who always encouraged them to share views and also getting involved into some programs like planning the setting up of a YTB library, which YTB through Jerome, we want to establish at Kisubi for the community youths.

The youths got so much involved in decision making which triggered their confidence. Other activities like photovoice and other Zoom meetings have really helped these youths to discover their abilities. Our youths have come to discover that they can have a great impact on their communities, which can change many things positively and also the wellbeing of their families and to help their fellow youths who are experiencing different challenges.

Through their youth leadership spirit, our youth are now able to address some community challenges such as basic sanitation where they go on community cleaning exercises, which has helped to improve sanitation in the community.

Now, I have two basic visions to work on with Jerome and YTB and these include;

To start moving around the world in countries where YTB or Timebanking is active starting with USA so that I can physically meet several Timebanking experts and to learn more how they are able to implement other TimeBanking programs, share our achievements and challenges, mobilize more opportunities for youths in not only Uganda, but Africa, which can be a door for them to modern technology; and introducing Youth TimeBanking in countries where it is nonexistent.

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Building a Youth Time Banking Centre in Africa having the following facilities;
 A centre for Information & Communication Technology training for the youths,
 A farming skills training centre, and sport and physical development centre,
 A conference hall where youths share ideas from,
 Accommodation for visiting youths from Timebanking and YTB clubs around the world.

Voices of other members of YTB Kisubi who can add their testimonies as follows:

Voice of Agira Annitah, currently working with Kisowera Rural Communities Development organization and YTB Kisubi. I have been working with Bruno for children of various ages, youths and communities. One of our friends, having realized our efforts and commitment towards working with children and youths, recommended we link up with YTB, which opportunity we embraced. Bruno was introduced to Jerome who has been a good person that opened our eyes and called for many Zoom meetings involving the youths.

Before working with YTB, I had been training teenagers and the youths in different skills such as digitizing & embroidery, tailoring, baking, [crocheting](#), some computer basics and some agricultural skills, mainly backyard gardening. Initially, the youths and teenagers could make various things like bathing sponges, sanitary pads, etc. and we really did not know how to turn them into income-generating ventures. This could make the youths lose interest in participating and learning. But as we started interacting with YTB, we discovered that there are ways the youths' outputs could benefit them in their daily lives by either getting cash or through unpaid community work as the communities started showing appreciation.

In addition, through the different assignments like going to town to make research on items we need in our YTB activities, Jerome always encouraged me to bring the youths, which I used not to do, since I did not know its importance. When I started bringing them, they started getting exposure in various ways which include;

Going to town to buy books for the YTB library, [crotchets](#) and shirts and others.

The youths now have access to technological devices such as a tablet and a smartphone which were funded by YTB.

They can now go for youths' workshops and participate, which was not easy before.

My dream is to see that we improve the youths' status both within and outside Uganda.

Voice of Denise Mwebe, a youth in the Kisubi community. I have been under the mentorship of Bruno and Annitah for about three years and they encouraged me to join Youth TimeBanking. First of all, I personally thought I was among the neediest people who could not help others in their communities. But, through YTB activities I realized that I am of greater importance in the community than what I thought. In YTB, I have learnt that through YTB Leadership I benefit a lot of fellow girls for whom I make sanitary pads using my tailoring skills. The other thing I am proud of with YTB is that they facilitated a library at Kisubi, which is acting as our resource Centre.

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Voice of Madrine Nassuna. Youth TimeBanking has helped me to learn how to deal with social media through which Jerome helped me with basic knowledge concerning that. YTB has helped me to create peace and unity among my fellow youths in our community who come to the library to read books since we keep interacting. YTB has provided us with a tablet and a smartphone that helps us to research for work in given subjects given to us by the teachers at school. The challenge I have faced in YTB activities is limited space in the library compared to the number of people that use it, and also limited number of technological devices.

Voice of Akram Mugalula. Youth TimeBanking has helped me gain in a way that I can now access a library from where I get different kinds of books, which have helped me improve my vocabulary. Through YTB engagements, I have managed to improve my English speaking skills through the various Zoom sessions with Jerome and others. I have also gained basic knowledge on how to play chess due to the provision of chess boards by YTB, and the chess instructions by another YTB member. Through skills gained from YTB activities, I have also managed to encourage my fellow youths from around Kisubi community to desist from various antisocial behaviors especially truancy, disobedience among others, and maybe use of drugs. The challenge I have faced is poor Internet connection, especially during online meetings with Jerome, and limited space where we sit for the online meetings, plus limited number of electronic devices to use when having online meetings.

Voice of another youth changemaker in Kisubi is Victoria Nantumbwe who has been instrumental in advocating for safety, protection, and health education for girls where she lives and attends school. [Listen to Victoria, Madrine, and Akram talk about the early stages of their vision](#) for improving health education and reproductive rights along with greater access to books and opportunities for developing literacy skills. This short video shows the strengths building, teamwork and "Giving and Receiving for Connected Community" that happens with YTB. This was the first opportunity these youth had to pursue a vision for improving opportunities and quality of life where they live; the first opportunity to collaborate on a technology project; the first opportunity to collaborate with people in another country; the first opportunity to be involved with decisions for the selection of books to start a community library. Their community work is making a difference in their community and in their lives. This is YTB, and this is how timebanking weaves community. Note: Victoria taught herself chess during COVID and is the YTB Kisubi chess instructor mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Voice of Lusaka Ryan in Mukono, Uganda. My experience with Youth TimeBanking and "Give A Hand Uganda" ([GAHU, was inspired by YTB](#)) has been incredibly great. As a trainer in sculpture and welding, I have had the opportunity to help others build their skills and strengths. Seeing the progress and growth of my students - Trevor, Patrick and Jacob - has been incredibly rewarding and has further strengthened my own skills and abilities. Note: Trevor, Patrick, and Jacob expect to participate in PV4YTB in Summer 2024 – more strengths building, more social connections, more community development, more confidence... via Y-T-B_the_change.

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One of the best experiences I had was attending the [YTB Youth Humanitarians Event in February 2024](#). This event brought together young people from different backgrounds and allowed us to share our experiences and learn from one another. During the event, I had the opportunity to network with like-minded individuals, gain valuable insights and perspectives from experienced YTB members. I left feeling inspired and motivated to make a positive impact in my community. I also had the opportunity to participate in the Timebanking retreat meeting last October 2023. I was able to connect with other members of the worldwide Timebanking community who were interested in sharing their skills and knowledge. Through this event, I was able to connect with YTB members all over the world, learning from each other's experience and building more confidence in myself. *Note: YTB builds strengths, connections, confidence.*

In addition to these advantages and benefits, my experience with YTB and GAHU has shown me the power of community and the value of sharing knowledge and resources. Through these programs, I have developed new opportunities and have a better understanding of my own potential. Thank you Youth TimeBanking.

YTB Vision:

Youth are traveling to the US and other countries from Africa for 3-6 week internships and experiential learning.

African Coordinators obtain visas to meet with potential sponsors in the US and learn about US-based Timebanking, photovoice, and student-operated youth courts.

Youth in Africa are digitally included-equipped-trained to manage the YTB website, conduct virtual meetings, lead the YTB group on LinkedIn, collaborate virtually with youth in other countries.

All girls participating in YTB have hygiene products freely available.

All African youth participating in YTB have the opportunity to complete secondary level education and continue to tertiary level education.

All African youth participating in YTB have access to books, learning games, and software.

All African youth participating in YTB have the opportunity to participate in photovoice and build strengths and social connections.

[YouthTimeBanking](#) focuses on using ideas from timebanking, co-production, and community inclusion currency to support transition-age youth, in mostly vulnerable circumstances, with transformational opportunities to lead and join community development projects. These youth are intrinsically motivated. They need and want opportunities to continue their education, make a difference, and live lives as free as possible from the physical and environmental threats they face daily.

YTB is a TimeBanking practice and network that builds strengths and social connections with youth changemakers by providing training and resources for their community projects. In 2019 an international accrediting agency recognized YTB as an exemplary practice for youth with complex needs. Exemplary means that YTB creates positive clinical outcomes, is innovative, and is worth sharing with others doing work with youth with complex needs and/or a history of trauma.

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YTB involves participants from middle school, high school, college age into young adulthood and older. YTB's design includes youth-adult partnerships, as well as youth-led and adult-led training and cross-age coaching activities for youth. YTB has supported activities and pilot projects in seven countries over the past four years.

YTB increases social, digital, and educational inclusion, as well as the confidence and courage of youth participants. YTB is working to show this impact with simple, periodic check-in assessments. Youth receive coaching on resource and vision development and select the activities they want to do to improve life where they live. *** YTB transforms lives & preserves futures. Youth who ARE: Assets, Resources, Energy say so.

Resources: See [YTB Explainer video](#) and <https://youthare.org/resources> and [YTB Brochure](#) and <https://www.linkedin.com/company/youthtimebanking/> and <https://every.org/youth-timebanking> and [YTB Tanzania Little Library project](#)



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