



# The Teen Guide to Global Action

How to Connect with Others (Near & Far)  
to Create Social Change



by  
**Barbara A.  
Lewis**

free spirit  
PUBLISHING®

*Skipping Stones* Honor Award  
VOYA Nonfiction Honor List

# The Teen Guide to Global Action

How to Connect with Others (Near & Far)  
to Create Social Change

Barbara A. Lewis

free spirit  
PUBLISHING®



Copyright © 2008 by Barbara A. Lewis

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Unless otherwise noted, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations or critical reviews. For more information, go to [www.freespirit.com/company/permissions.cfm](http://www.freespirit.com/company/permissions.cfm).

Free Spirit, Free Spirit Publishing, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Free Spirit Publishing Inc. A complete listing of trademarks is available at [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com).

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lewis, Barbara A., 1943–

The teen guide to global action : how to connect with others (near and far) to create social change / Barbara A. Lewis.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-57542-266-4

ISBN-10: 1-57542-266-2

1. Social action—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Social action—International cooperation—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 3. Young volunteers. 4. Teenage volunteers in social service. 5. Teenagers—Political activity. I. Title.

HN65.L4424 2007

303.48'4—dc22

2007027518

Free Spirit Publishing does not have control over or assume responsibility for author or third-party websites and their content. At the time of this book's publication, all facts and figures cited within are the most current available. All telephone numbers, addresses, and website URLs are accurate and active; all publications, organizations, websites, and other resources exist as described in this book; and all have been verified as of August 2013. If you find an error or believe that a resource listed here is not as described, please contact Free Spirit Publishing. Parents, teachers, and other adults: We strongly urge you to monitor children's use of the Internet.

The profiles in this book include information from interviews with youth as well as media reports, Web sites, books, and other secondary sources. Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the book's content.

Reading Level Grades 7 & Up; Interest Level Ages 12 & Up;  
Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading Level Z

Edited by Douglas J. Fehlen

Cover and interior design by Michelle Lee

Interior illustrations by Chuck U, [www.chucku.com](http://www.chucku.com),  
except on pages 29, 87, 103, and 121.

Cover images © istockphoto.com

10 9 8 7 6 5

Printed in the United States of America  
S18860814

#### Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

Minneapolis, MN

(612) 338-2068

[help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com)

[www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)



**Printed on recycled paper**  
including 30%  
post-consumer waste

Free Spirit Publishing is a member of the Green Press Initiative, and we're committed to printing our books on recycled paper containing a minimum of 30% post-consumer waste (PCW). For every ton of books printed on 30% PCW recycled paper, we save 5.1 trees, 2,100 gallons of water, 114 gallons of oil, 18 pounds of air pollution, 1,230 kilowatt hours of energy, and .9 cubic yards of landfill space. At Free Spirit it's our goal to nurture not only young people, but nature too!



**Free Spirit offers competitive pricing.**

Contact [edsales@freespirit.com](mailto:edsales@freespirit.com) for pricing information on multiple quantity purchases.

## Dedication & Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to courageous teens everywhere. Believe in your talents and abilities. Although you should not feel responsible for tackling world problems, you also shouldn't feel excluded from participating in the process of finding solutions. Many adults today have greater respect for your voice and your ability to think. The growing confidence in the youth movement empowers you to both serve and to be an activist for positive social change. As adults look on and see the gathering strength of the global youth movement, at the idealism, sincerity, and enthusiasm of teens, they must surely support this power or miss Earth's flight into the future.

### This book is also dedicated to:

Benjamin Quinto, a courageous youth founder of the Global Youth Action Network, a leader with vision, who won't accept "no" for an answer, when working for youth voice, positive involvement, and rights. He provided generous sharing of information and teen stories. Ben took the time to communicate with me during the many edits of this book, and his patient assistance helped to make it possible. He typifies positive youth action.

All of the young people featured in the book who have struggled to make our world a better and safer place.

Our present and future grandchildren: Jordan, Andrew, Adam, Maddy, Chloe, Anderson, Lizzie, and Ruby. They have already succeeded in making *my* world a better place.

And also to Skyler, Alexa, and Tiana.

### I also give special thanks to the following people:

- Judy Galbraith, who exemplifies both integrity and compassion, and who also manages to maintain a good sense of humor.
- Douglas Fehlen, for his advice, constant help, good ideas, patience, and understanding.
- The many organizations who have shared a story for this book. I especially want to express gratitude to: TakingITGlobal, Rotary International, Silvia Golombek and Youth Service America, Plan International of India, the Future Problem Solving Program, OXFAM International, Voices of Youth (UNICEF), the Special Olympics, and Free the Children.

# Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>What’s Happening Around the World?</b> .....	2
<i>Jyotirmayee Mohapatra</i> : A young woman from India works to improve the lives of girls and women through education.....	3
<b>Why More Youth Today Are Involved in Service and Social Action</b> .....	4
<b>How to Use This Book</b> .....	4
<b>Make Your Difference</b> .....	6
<b>4 Steps to Global Action</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Find Your Cause</b> .....	7
<i>Iqbal Masih and Craig Kielburger</i> : A young Canadian starts an aid organization in memory of a Pakistani youth who spoke out against child labor.....	10
<b>2. Research Your Cause</b> .....	12
<b>3. Plan Your Action</b> .....	13
<i>Standing Up for Their Rights</i> : Students in Poland and textile and mine workers in the United States protest violations of their human rights.....	18
<b>4. Take Action</b> .....	20
<b>Connecting with Others</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Why Work with a Group?</b> .....	21
<b>Should I Join a Group or Form My Own?</b> .....	22
<b>Joining a Group</b> .....	23
<i>Benjamin Quinto</i> : A New York City teen advocates for youth representation at the United Nations and founds a youth organization.....	28
<b>Forming a Group</b> .....	30



**Human Rights .....31**

**What Are the Facts?** .....31

**Keep It Local:** Address injustices in your community .....32

*Cindy Perez:* A Kansas honors student helps to open up higher education opportunities for immigrants .....34

*Florence Nabayinda Babumba:* A young woman from Uganda advocates for youth who have disabilities .....37

**Take It Global:** Promote the rights of people around the world .....39

*Wojciech Gryc:* A Canadian teen founds a human rights organization to honor his sister .....42

*Zach Hunter:* A seventh grader from Virginia begins an organization devoted to ending modern-day slavery .....44

**Hunger and Homelessness .....45**

**What Are the Facts?** .....45

**Keep It Local:** Volunteer in your neighborhood to help those in need .....47

*Ilona Seure:* A Dutch teen helps youth who are homeless in Amsterdam .....48

*William and Patrick Stoudt:* A pair of brothers from New Orleans, Louisiana, spring into action after Hurricane Katrina .....51

**Take It Global:** Help provide food and shelter for people around the world .....52

*Mihiri Tillakaratne:* A California teen helps Sri Lankans in the aftermath of a deadly tsunami .....54

*Nastassia Marina Bondarenko-Edwards:* An Australian teen works with youth in need living in Brazil .....56

---

## Health and Safety .....57

**What Are the Facts?**.....57

**Keep It Local:** Work to increase community security and wellness.....58

*Saul Alexander Torres:* A young man provides health emergency services to citizens of Nejapa, El Salvador.....61

*Shannon Sullivan:* A New Jersey teen informs young people about online safety.....64

**Take It Global:** Support international humanitarian aid efforts.....65

*Natsuno Shinagawa:* A young woman informs Japanese peers about AIDS and other health crises.....67

*Saroj Rawat:* An Indian teen addresses social injustices—including the mistreatment of women.....69

## Education .....71

**What Are the Facts?**.....71

**Keep It Local:** Teach others and promote learning in your neighborhood.....72

*Ram Gopalakrishnan:* A young man from India forms a garage school to educate underprivileged youth.....73

*Darko Lovric:* A Croatian teen works for improvements in the education of young people.....75

*Jacob Komar:* A Connecticut teen fixes up old computers and donates them to families in need.....76

**Take It Global:** Join the campaign to make education available to all.....77

*Zuhra Bahman:* A young woman from Afghanistan finds an organization that gives females more education opportunities.....79

*Ruth Bowling:* An English teen teaches young children in Ghana.....82



**Environment and Conservation.....83**

**What Are the Facts?**.....83

**Keep It Local:** Take community action to promote sustainable living.....85

*Gabriella McCall:* A high school senior advocates for sustainable development in Puerto Rico.....87

*Ben Banwart:* A dedicated scout adopts an 87-acre park in Shakopee, Minnesota.....89

**Take It Global:** Pitch in on worldwide initiatives to preserve the planet.....90

*Janine Licare:* A young advocate works to preserve Costa Rican rain forests.....92

*Hao Yan:* An 18-year-old takes on environmental issues and inspires his Chinese peers to join him.....94

*Future Problem Solving Program:* Two classrooms involved in the Future Problem Solving Program come together to clean up stockpiled chemical weapons.....96

**Youth Representation.....98**

**What Are the Facts?**.....98

**Keep It Local:** Work to advance teen rights and representation.....99

*Camilo Soares:* A teen leader of a Paraguayan student council helps to promote peace.....100

*Ben Smilowitz:* A young man advocates for student representation on the Connecticut State Board of Education.....104

**Take It Global:** Advocate for greater youth voice in world affairs.....105

*Ha Thi Lan Anh:* A teen assembles a group of young journalists to display the views of Vietnamese youth.....106

*Milos Jovana Savin:* A 17-year-old and his youth movement foster democracy in the former Yugoslavia.....109



---

**Peace and Friendship.....112**

**What Are the Facts?**..... 112

**Keep It Local:** Promote tolerance in your school and community ..... 113

*Not in Our Town:* Chicago youth protest hate-crime toward Muslim Americans in the wake of 9/11 ..... 116

*Juan Uribe:* A Colombian teen and the Children’s Movement for Peace work to end years of war..... 118

**Take It Global:** Foster peace and understanding across borders..... 119

*The Olive Branch:* Teens from Afghanistan, Israel, Palestine, Cyprus, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Jordan, and Turkey seek reconciliation through writing..... 120

*Annalise Blum and Katharine Kendrick:* Two high school students from California work to help people affected by genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan ..... 122

*Michelle Divon, Lana Ayoub, and Tara Ogaick:* Three teens from the Middle East meet in Canada and prove that people from conflicting regions of the world can get along..... 125

**Index .....127**

**About the Author .....135**



# Introduction

“Realizing that we have the power to make a positive change and going out and taking action, wherever it may be . . . that’s the most important thing.”

—Mihiri Tillakaratne, 18, Global Activist

Have you ever heard about some problem or injustice and thought, “I wish there were something I could do about that”? Well, most likely there is. Caring and committed young people are working around the world for a better future—and you can, too.

In fact, teens are some of the most active participants in service and social action. In the United States alone, over 15 million young people volunteer with community organizations each year. This doesn’t include people working on their own to help others and effect social change.

And it's not just in the United States where teens are involved in helping others. There's a whole movement of youth making a difference all over the globe.

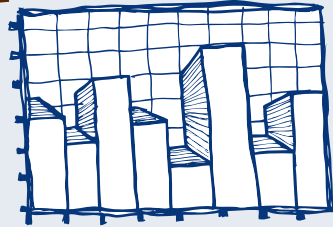
## What's Happening Around the World?

How exactly are young people getting involved? Zach Hunter, a seventh grader from Ashburn, Virginia, started Loose Change to Loosen Chains, an organization dedicated to ending modern-day slavery. After seeing how few girls in her Afghanistan village were allowed to attend school, Zuhra Bahman started an organization that gives females more education opportunities. Ilona Seure, upon returning from a service project in Vijayawade, India, became focused on helping youth who are homeless in her native Amsterdam, capital of the Netherlands.

What do all of these teens have in common? They all reached out—across a country or across the globe—to help make the world a better place. Connecting and working with other youth, they're making their dreams of a better future come true.

Zach, Zuhra, and Ilona are by no means alone. More and more teens are getting involved in their own communities and in places far from home. Some even oversee large organizations that have thousands of supporters in many countries. If this sounds intimidating, realize that most

## BY THE NUMBERS



### Youth Involvement:

Just how many teens are involved in service and social action? It's hard to come up with an exact number, but millions of young people turn out each year to participate in Global Youth Service Day. In 2006, for example, the Iraqi Democratic Coalition for Youth Empowerment brought together dozens of students on environmental and beautification projects at three Baghdad schools. In Gardena, California, Habitat for Humanity united Muslims, Jews, Christians, and people of other faiths in building low-cost housing for people in need.

These are only two of countless global projects sponsored by Youth Service America, Global Youth Action Network, and a coalition of world partners. Over the years, Global Youth Service Day has involved more than 30 million young people from virtually every nation. The event takes place annually in April. You can learn how to participate by visiting [gysd.net](http://gysd.net).

of these efforts started small—one visit to a shelter, research on the world's refugee crisis, a demonstration in support of preserving rain forests.

# DIFFERENCE MAKER

## *Jyotirmayee Mohapatra*

How important is fighting for the rights of women and children? Very important, according to Jyotirmayee Mohapatra of Kendrapara, India. As a teen, Jyotirmayee became fed up with being treated as a second-class citizen and decided to do something about it. She began to work with Nature's Club, an organization focused on improving the lives of girls and women through education.

It turns out Jyotirmayee's work with Nature's Club was just a stepping-stone for bigger things. She decided she wanted to form her own organization, one with a wider focus. And that's what Jyotirmayee did. Meena Clubs are village-based groups working to improve the rights of women and children. The clubs also address challenges facing all of a village's people. Big issues for the groups include equality, education opportunities, improved living conditions, and other important rights.

What started as the passion of one girl has grown into the commitment of many. Thousands of people volunteer at Meena Clubs in Jyotirmayee's district, and there are more than 300 clubs across India. For Jyotirmayee, her action isn't a choice, but a duty—a duty to fight for justice for all people.

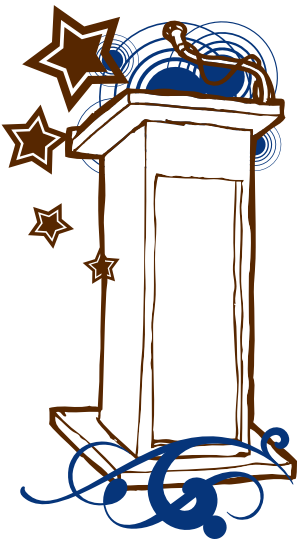


The fact is you can take any action of your choosing and on any scale—big or small, alone or with a group. To use this book, it's not necessary to start your own organization or fly to another corner of the globe to make a difference—though both of these things can be really great. You'll find many small, but important, actions you can take to improve your community. And your project may just take on a life of its own.

## Why More Youth Today Are Involved in Service and Social Action

Young people today more than ever are seeking opportunities to create a better future. There are a number of reasons for this. One is that as nations become more developed, people often gain more individual rights. There

is more awareness of injustices, and more people are working to correct them. Another big factor is the emergence of media outlets—including television, the Internet, and other new technologies. It's now possible to learn about situations all



over the world by simply turning on the TV or clicking on a Web site.

The Internet also provides new opportunities to help others without leaving your chair. You can advocate online by spreading the word about a cause and connecting with others to come up with solutions. Social-networking sites give you the opportunity to communicate in new ways—by sharing video, building coalitions, and even holding global meetings via Web conferencing. There are countless other activist applications of the Internet, with many more likely on the horizon.

## How to Use This Book

While there are many people working for social causes, much injustice remains in the world—which is where you (and this book) come in. *The Teen Guide to Global Action* can help you make nearly any difference you set your mind to based on your interests and time commitment. Here's what's in this book:

**4 Steps to Global Action:** This section provides you with background information on service and social-action opportunities. You'll find ideas for deciding which opportunities are best for you, as well as tips on doing research and planning projects.

**Connecting with Others:** Here you'll discover helpful suggestions for finding and joining groups of teens—those who have similar service goals. There are also steps

you can take to create your own organization.

**Issues:** The rest of the book outlines seven areas in which you can make an impact: Human Rights, Hunger and Homelessness, Health and Safety, Education, Environment and Conservation, Youth Representation, and Peace and Friendship. For each of the issues there are service ideas for smaller home, school, or neighborhood actions (“Keep It Local”) and big world contributions (“Take It Global”).

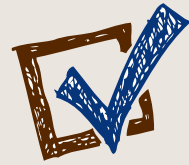
Throughout you’ll find a number of different features:

**Difference Maker:** True stories of today’s teens making a difference in the world. These inspiring reads can give you many ideas for taking your own action.

**Activist Flashback:** Stories of teens from the past who have made a big impact on today’s world.

**Point & Click:** Web resources for finding more information on causes, organizations, and helpful tools.

## QUICK TIPS



### What’s in It for You?

The best thing about service and social action is the positive difference you can make. But you may also benefit. You have the opportunity to:

- make friends (maybe even for life)
- learn about other people and cultures
- build new talents and skills
- appreciate life in new ways
  - build confidence and leadership abilities
  - gain recognition for your service
  - have a lot of fun

**Connect:** Youth organizations you can contact to get involved.

*Connect*

**Quick Tips:** Lists, tips, and other information for making your efforts effective.



**By the Numbers:** Statistics and other information on issues people face.



**Activities:** Quizzes and Action Plans to help you decide on and map out your action.



## Make Your Difference

We live in an amazing world. It's an awe-inspiring planet full of diverse people, a place that provides for us all. It's also a place that needs to be watched over, its people and resources protected. Whether it's preserving the environment, promoting public safety, or ensuring equal opportunity, I encourage you to find your place to contribute.

Many young people have come before you. I hope that you are inspired by their stories in this book. Countless opportunities to make an impact remain. I hope you will take advantage of those presented—or come up with your own. Regardless of the contribution you choose to make, I'd welcome hearing from you. I may even be able

to include your story or organization in a future edition of this book. You may email your stories to [help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com) or mail them in care of my publisher.

Free Spirit Publishing  
217 Fifth Avenue North, Suite 200  
Minneapolis, MN 55401-1299

Best wishes to you,  
Barbara A. Lewis

### QUICK TIPS



#### Where Is Action Needed?

Some people believe that only certain areas of the world are in need of development and social movements. The truth is, each nation and region has challenges—large and small—that it must face. No matter who we are or where we live, we can make things better.



# 4 Steps to Global Action

“ Young people do care; it’s just a matter of providing opportunity to get involved. ”

—Annalise Blum, 18, Global Activist

## 1. Find Your Cause

The first step toward getting active in service or social action is to figure out where you want to make your mark. You might start by thinking about what issues are important to you. Also consider your interests and where they might lead you.

For example, if you really love wildlife, you might enjoy working on a campaign to save a certain species or a habitat that is home to many animals. You might volunteer at a nature center or test for pollution in local lakes or rivers. The opportunities truly are limitless.





## What's Your Issue?

If you're not sure where you want to make a difference, try taking this quiz. On a blank sheet of paper, give each activity that follows a number based on how much it interests you.

### Scoring Key

1 = No thanks.

2 = Maybe—could be cool.

3 = I'm into it.

4 = Sign me up now!

- A.** researching human rights violations
- B.** organizing a food drive
- C.** petitioning for a traffic light at a dangerous intersection
- D.** raising money for schools
- E.** conducting a neighborhood campaign against animal cruelty
- F.** serving in school government
- G.** protesting against war
- H.** marching for equal opportunity
- I.** starting a public awareness campaign on poverty
- J.** organizing a fund drive for the prevention of cancer
- K.** writing profiles of young people who have no access to schooling
- L.** informing people about global warming
- M.** serving as a student ambassador in another country
- N.** volunteering to build infrastructure in a war-torn country
- O.** lobbying organizations for equal compensation regardless of race or gender
- P.** working in a shelter for people who are homeless
- Q.** organizing an anti-drunk-driving campaign
- R.** tutoring children in reading or math
- S.** organizing the cleanup of a local park
- T.** setting up a youth chapter of your local government
- U.** creating a Web site that outlines your views on conflicts

## Scoring

When you are finished with the quiz, use this scoring key to find your preferred topics. On your sheet of paper, add up the numbers for the follow groups of letters:

**Group 1:** A + H + O = \_\_\_ (Human Rights, pages 31–44)

**Group 2:** B + I + P = \_\_\_ (Hunger and Homelessness, pages 45–56)

**Group 3:** C + J + Q = \_\_\_ (Health and Safety, pages 57–70)

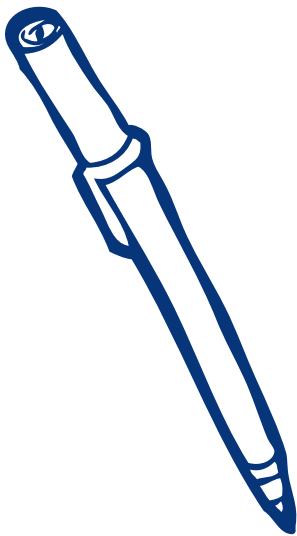
**Group 4:** D + K + R = \_\_\_ (Education, pages 71–82)

**Group 5:** E + L + S = \_\_\_ (Environment and Conservation, pages 83–97)

**Group 6:** F + M + T = \_\_\_ (Youth Representation, pages 98–111)

**Group 7:** G + N + U = \_\_\_ (Peace and Friendship, pages 112–125)

The point totals among the groups can give you an indication of your deepest interests and concerns. For example, if you have 12 points for a group, it's pretty likely that a project involving that topic would be a fit for you.



## QUICK TIPS



### Sources of Inspiration

Where do people get their ideas for service?

- hobbies, talents, or subjects at school
- concerns about global or community challenges
- interests of friends or family
- news items on TV or the Internet
- information from meetings, assemblies, or faith services
- articles in newspapers or magazines

# ACTIVIST FLASHBACK

## *Iqbal Masih and Craig Kielburger*

The 1995 newspaper headline read, “Battled Child Labor, Boy 12, Murdered.” Craig Kielburger, from Toronto, Ontario, was shocked when he read the article. He was the same age as Iqbal Masih, the Pakistani youth who had been shot dead while riding his bicycle. Iqbal’s story was a very sad one. At age four, he was sold into bonded labor—a form of slavery. Chained, beaten, and poorly fed, Iqbal was forced to work in a carpet factory for 12 hours a day, six days a week. All he really wanted to do was go to school, but it seemed Iqbal would grow old in that factory.

But life held more in store for Iqbal. At the age of 10, he escaped his captors. By 12, with the aid of a human-rights organization, he began speaking out and leading children against child labor—not only in Pakistan, but also in countries far from home. People from many nations began to stop buying the carpets produced by slave

labor. Unfortunately, this angered many in Pakistan—especially the powerful factory owners who were losing money. Some people believe those factory owners were responsible for Iqbal’s murder, but no one knows for sure.

Fast-forward ahead to Craig Kielburger’s reading about Iqbal’s death in the newspaper. Craig didn’t know what child labor was. It did not take him long, however, to find out. It also did not take him long to begin sending letters, giving speeches, passing petitions, and fundraising on behalf of enslaved youth. A visit to south Asia helped Craig better understand some of the harsh realities many young people face. The trip also strengthened his resolve to make a difference in their lives.

With the support of family and friends, Craig founded Free the Children—an organization based in Toronto and dedicated to ending the mistreatment and

exploitation of youth around the world. Over 10 years later, the organization is no longer made up only of Craig's family and friends, but over 100,000 youth. Programs have supplied education materials, medical supplies, sanitation systems, and other necessities to over one million people in nearly 50 countries.

All of this came from the imagination of one 12-year-old boy, Craig Kielburger, whose actions have in turn inspired countless other youth to take up the cause. One young girl released from bonded labor described it best: "The day Iqbal died, a thousand more Iqbals were born."

## Connect

### Free the Children

[www.freethechildren.org](http://www.freethechildren.org)

Iqbal Masih's spirit lives on in the work of Craig Kielburger and this organization. Log on to the Web site to learn how you can get involved in one of the many programs geared toward educating and empowering youth.



## 2. Research Your Cause

You may already know a lot about an issue and have many ideas for potential projects. Maybe you don't. Regardless, putting time into research is very important. The more creative and tenacious you are, the better. To get others' support, you'll need to know your topic well.

### Sources of Information

**Magazines, newspapers, media reports, and books.** These are options for learning more about current events—just remember how Craig Kielburger read about the story of Iqbal Masih. The best approach

for lining up research materials can be to visit a library with a database that compiles document records. You can usually search these directories by subject, keyword, and many other criteria. Most larger libraries have their collections online so that you can search for resources from home, if you have Internet access, and request materials be transferred to a location near you.

**Internet.** There are many Web sites that compile media reports and allow you to sort through items at a rapid rate. Any search engine will also, with a few keystrokes, direct you to organizations and advocacy groups that collect information on just about any issue you might think of. You also can find films, interactive tools, and tons of other practical applications. For detailed Web research suggestions, visit [netforbeginners.about.com](http://netforbeginners.about.com) and search for "Internet research" to find articles about effective online research methods.

**Other people.** The Internet and print resources are great for many purposes, but sometimes it can also be helpful to talk with and learn from others. Think of experts in the community who might be able to give you information. Connect with people in a mosque, synagogue, church, or another house of worship. Talk with family members, teachers,

### QUICK TIPS



#### Research Pitfalls

When doing research, remember to collect information from a variety of sources that represent different sides of an issue. Web sites, print resources, and other people often are biased on issues and present only information meant to get you to think in a certain way. Newspaper editorials, for example, may take positions on issues to remain aligned with a certain political party. Many personal blogs are short on facts but full of strong opinions. Reference a number of different resources to make sure you're getting the full story on an issue.

local leaders, business owners, and others who understand regional concerns. For those people in faraway places, you might conduct interviews by email, instant messaging, or online chats.

### Questions to Ask

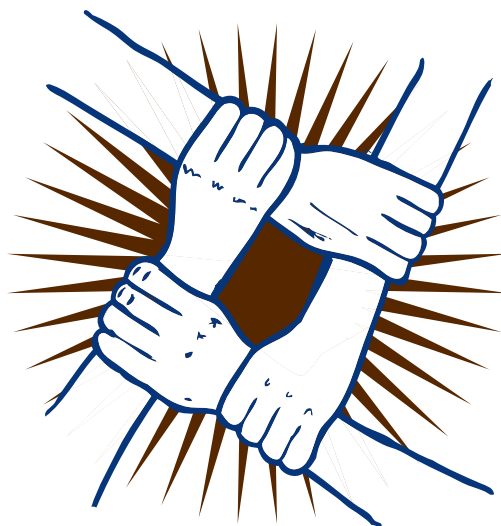
The questions you ask are often just as important as the sources you use in your research. What investigative approach will help you be effective with your action? Following are questions to consider as you track down information. It's important to write or type notes on what you find. The information will prove helpful when you're planning your action.

1. What is the situation you'd like to do something about?
2. Where is the problem occurring?
3. Who is affected?
4. Why is the situation happening?
5. Why does something need to be done?
6. What are the short- and long-term effects of the problem?
7. What do people in the affected community want to make happen?
8. What is already being done to address the problem?
9. What groups are involved in the effort to make a change?
10. What can you do?

## 3. Plan Your Action

Now that you've researched your cause, what action can you take to make things better? Each cause can call for a variety of responses. For example, many people are concerned about world hunger. How they address the problem, however, can vary widely—from organizing local food drives to fundraising for international groups that provide aid.

Following are just a few types of action you might take for a cause. Many other suggestions appear throughout this book.



## Volunteer

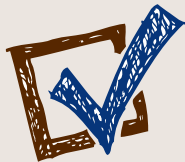
Volunteer work is one of the most common forms of service. You've perhaps already pitched in at some point to help in a community effort—say to clean up a park or help others in the wake of a natural disaster. Volunteering can take many forms. A pretty simple way to think about it, though, is giving your time to a cause without being paid or otherwise rewarded.

Much of the time, people volunteer with agencies or faith communities in their area to address local challenges. But there are also many opportunities to volunteer (online or in person) with national or international organizations.

Here are a few of the many ways you might give your time:

- Help on an agriculture project promoting sustainable living.
- Tutor children or adults in a school, library, or community center.
- Visit with senior citizens at a retirement center.
- Serve meals to people in need.
- Give your time to an after-school program.
- Work on a housing project for people without homes.

### QUICK TIPS



### Five Quick Volunteer Tips

1. Be realistic about how much time and energy you will be able to devote to an organization. A good rule to keep in mind is to start with a small commitment and build from there.
2. Volunteer with others. Working for a good cause with family members, classmates, and friends can make your experience even more fun and rewarding.
3. Consider your personal goals when choosing an opportunity. Volunteer work is a great way to build new skills you can use in the future. Choose an activity you know will challenge you.
4. Reflect on your talents and try to match them with the right opportunity. For example, if you're a whiz on the Internet, think about doing Web design or research for an organization.
5. Have a passion for your cause. If you really like teaching others, you might help at a school or literacy center. If animals are more your kind of thing, a local shelter might be a better fit. Here's the bottom line: When you love doing something it's much easier to stay committed to it.

## Organize Service Efforts

To make the difference they do, community agencies, national nonprofits, and international NGOs (non-governmental organizations) need staffing, supplies, and funding for other operating expenses. This includes the efforts of many volunteers working behind the scenes to raise money, collect resources, and organize others.

Some ways to organize service efforts include:

- answering the phone at a health center
- finding a business or an organization to sponsor a cause
- taking pledges for donations at a phone bank
- walking, running, or riding a bicycle in a fundraiser for an important cause
- applying for grants or selling goods to help fund a local agency
- performing data entry for an organization

### QUICK TIPS



## Five Quick Tips for Organizing Service Efforts

1. Set goals. Whether you're raising funds, rounding up supplies, or recruiting people for a cause, set targets for what you would like to accomplish.
2. Advertise and seek media attention. One of the best ways to ensure the success of a campaign is to make lots of people aware of it. Provide some form of entertainment to draw crowds to recruiting or fundraising events. Don't forget to also involve people you know. Ask family members, neighbors, friends, and people from a church, temple, mosque, or another house of worship to join you.
3. When fundraising, make accommodations for handling cash. Know the procedures for collecting and storing money. It's a good idea, for example, to wear a badge or carry another form of identification from an organization to assure potential donors of your credibility. Be prepared to give donors a receipt for their contributions. Also have steps in place for safeguarding funds you collect.
4. If you collect clothing, food, or other items for people in need, make sure you have an adequate location to store goods. This place should be safe and secure from theft. Obtain permission to use the space—whether it's at school, in a community center, or within another neighborhood building.
5. Think about who will be your best volunteers and donors. Capitalize on the support of individuals and civic organizations likely to back your cause. You might contact a local agency to call for volunteers. When fundraising, ask donors whether an employer might match donations.



## Advocate for a Cause

Advocacy can include many different actions and be applied to almost any cause. Briefly, it means to work on behalf of a person, group, place, or campaign. Regardless of the issue, advocacy is often a crucial tool for effecting change because it can influence large numbers of people and help create improvement on a wide scale.

Here are a few ways you might advocate for a cause:

- Create a public service announcement (PSA) on a community issue.
- Circulate a petition about a local environmental concern.
- Testify before lawmakers about a piece of legislation.
- Write a letter to the editor in support of a cause.
- Join a public demonstration in support of open and free elections.
- Deliver a speech before a local organization.

## QUICK TIPS



### Five Quick Advocacy Tips

1. Use the Internet. You might post your views on a Web site. Or you could create your own. Social networking sites make it easy to share information with others and enlist their support.
2. Build public support. Bring your positive message out to the streets of your neighborhood by gathering signatures on a petition in support of your cause. (One great online resource for petitions is [www.ipetitions.com](http://www.ipetitions.com).) Put together a survey of questions to compile data on public attitudes about an issue.
3. Be aware of influential people who might not agree with your ideas. Building public support is crucial to advocacy efforts, but it's also important to contact people who have power to make high-level changes, including those who may have different views. Whether it's a public official or a company's CEO, try to engage important players and work together toward solutions.
4. Get the media involved. Work to get your message on TV, in newspapers, and on the radio by issuing press releases and inviting reporters to events. Media exposure can be an effective way to put pressure on decision makers.
5. Document your action. Film and take pictures of events that you participate in. You may be able to produce a public service announcement (PSA) or documentary that persuades others. Video pieces might include interviews with topic experts and supporters.