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Dear Friends,

We are all looking for successful models, models that inspire us to strive for a higher level of excellence. RYS is one such model that provides people a life experience that is rich in promoting respect, cooperation and a level of unity beyond the ordinary. For 20 years, the RYS and its volunteers have been enabling individuals and communities to remove barriers of mistrust, ignorance and arrogance through the practice of selfless service.

So many young people today have heard over and over again the laudatory speeches, sermons and proclamations of people who are excellent at talking about peace. This is not what inspires them. Today's young leaders want to turn the lofty words and ideals into action. They yearn to be the helping hand, the willing caregiver, the friend and ally of those who are looking for such a person. The RYS is an experience that serves today's youth well for it creates a community where these ideals are lived and shared.

The year 2005 marks the conclusion of a twenty-year period when RYS grew from a simple challenge to a project that has attracted tens of thousands of people from nearly every nation. This year, some of our early RYS graduates began sending their own sons and daughters to our projects. To me, this is a clear indication of how deep an impact RYS has had on their lives and how much they want to share this great experience.

In 2005, we brought the RYS spirit of healing and reconciliation to areas such as Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Indonesia and Thailand, sites of recent religious and ethnic strife. The beautiful island nation of Palau hosted an environmental project. Creating community art for peace was an approach Rev. Carol Pobanz used in launching the RYS Peace Park project in Bristol, UK. While creating a mosaic at a local mosque, Muslims, Christians, Unificationists, Hindus and Jews worked as one team. At the same time, in stark contrast, a group of terrorists exploded bombs in the streets of London. Two visions of life are being presented to our youth - a clear indicator of why the RYS model is so vitally needed.

The cry for help following the killer tsunami served as a rallying point for many of our RYS alumni who quickly allied to support efforts by various NGOs. In Guyana, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand, RYS teams came in for post-disaster care as a way to stimulate the local community and show that people still cared months after the TV camera's left. Our projects in Mongolia, Zambia, Honduras and Australia were additional efforts at showing how people of all religions willingly and joyfully come together for the sake of those in need.

Please remember that it is your efforts that serve as points of light to a world that is in need of a vision. We want to offer our deepest thanks to our RYS family for all the time, talent, energy and financial support they have freely offered. Please get ready for a new year full of new challenges and adventures.

Sincerely







India "Youth for Peace"

The RYS India project brought together a multitude of volunteers from several institutions, religions, and countries. These participants began to build peace and harmony through respect and tolerance for all faiths and cultures as well as through selfless service to others.

After the three days of Value Education, the group began physical work. Everyday, before work, the group held morning meditation followed by prayers from different religions.

The completed project gave the participants not only an important education, but also new and precious relationships and experiences that will be long remembered.

India project details: Project Category: South Asia Regional Project, Country: India, Project Dates: September 23-30, 2005, Number of Participants: 80, Number of Staff: 5, Represented Religions: 5, Represented Nations: 5, Central Work: Value Education Workshop, building restrooms with sanitation, Key Sponsors: IIFWP

Nigeria project details: Project Category: 13th Africa Rising, Country: Nigeria, Project Dates: May 5-9, 2005, Number of Participants: 21, Number of Staff: 3, Represented Religions: 3, Represented Nations: 3, Central Work: Building a well, Key Sponsors: IIFWP

Thailand project details: Project Category: 40th As. Friend Project, Country: Thailand, Project Dates: May 1-10, 2005, Number of Participants: 63, Number of Staff: 6, Represented Religions: 7, Represented Nations: 14, Central Work: Building a clinic, local clean-up, Key Sponsors: IIFWP, Local Government



Nigeria "Peace: A Product of Interreligious Action and Understanding the Hope of the Nation"

"The Religious Youth Service has leaped where others could not dare," commented a journalist who followed the 5-day RYS program participants. Young people from across the country were mobilized to do community service in Kassa village in the Birkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Both Muslims and Christians formerly occupied this community. RYS teams assisted in providing a water well for the survivors. Surface water, which is the main source of drinking water in the area, became polluted.

RYS and its mission in the state were later introduced to local civic and religious leaders. Responding to an explanatory speech about the RYS mission and activities, one religious leader expressed that he was amazed that "Young people like you could take on a mission of building peace beyond religious borders."

Peace becomes a mere word when it is not backed with genuine acts of selflessness and sacrifice. In support of this assertion, the Religious Youth Service team presented relief supplies to the displaced persons at a mosque immediately after the Islamic evening prayers.

Drawn by the force of love and admiration, Muslim youths gathered and listened to the program introduction presented by Amb. T. S. Kerim (a Muslim). They said they were ready to undergo training in building interreligious harmony, and serve as volunteers.



Thailand "Modeling the Ideals of a World Peace"

The Thailand RYS education program was designed to train participants to become future leaders. Based on the theme "Modeling the Ideals of World Peace," the activities focused on team building, conflict resolution, increased awareness and appreciation of interaction styles.

Participants woke up at 4:00 in the morning for devotions, had breakfast at 5:00 and arrived at the work site before 6:00. Educational programs scheduled later in the day included visits to the Buddhist Temple and Museum and the Mosque.

The participants were divided into three work groups: building a school clinic, painting the new school library, and cleaning up garbage brought to the seashore by the tsunami.



*"Creating Youth Ambassadors for Peace"* **Solomon Islands**

The RYS Solomon Islands project was held at St. Joseph's Secondary College in Tenaru, which is a prominent Catholic school in the area.

The work project consisted of two main activities: The first area of work was removing dilapidated wood frames and rebuilding them with new screens to keep insects out. In the process of repairing the screens, the dorms were swept and tidied for the coming school year.

The second part of the project was related to the upkeep of the grounds. Due to the large size of the school and the prolific growth rate of the plants, certain parts of the school had become abandoned where the grass had become overgrown. Over a number of years the same areas had become a dumping place for trash of all kinds, including broken bricks, glass, timber and metal. Not only were the lawn areas cut and cleared of trash, but other school properties that had fallen out of use were also restored. This increased the areas available for student use.

The Ministry of National Unity, Peace and Reconciliation supported this project because of the work RYS is doing to bring youth together from several island nations.

**Solomon Islands**

Project Category:	Solomon Islands
Country:	Solomon Islands
Project Dates:	June 13 - 19, 2005
Number of Participants:	27
Number of Staff:	2
Represented Religions:	3
Represented Nations:	3
Central Work:	Refurbishing a school
Key Sponsors:	FFWPU, Local Organizations



**Palau** *"The Environment As Our Spiritual Responsibility"*

The Palau service project consisted of painting a local high school, the toilet block, sun roof, the girls' sewing classroom and storeroom block. Participants also painted the roof of another school in the village where they were staying. The school had been given some paint for that project some time ago, but no one had ever used it, so the RYS arrival there was a blessing for all.

Participants stayed in the classrooms and were able to use the school's kitchen facilities. A local fisherman caught fresh fish for the young people everyday, and his wife and other community members helped prepare and cook all the meals.

Besides the work projects, the days consisted of educational presentations, games and activities designed to promote the ideals of RYS, such as planning and working together, gaining a more comprehensive understanding of each other's faith and challenging the individualism that sometimes isolates people from their fellow human beings.

The program ended with an overnight stay on one of the beautiful small islands of Palau. Koror state government offered a boat tour around some of the hundreds of nearby islands, giving participants the opportunity to go snorkeling in some of the world's most beautiful dive sites. RYS members went spear fishing and swimming. At night they gathered around a campfire for a time of sharing. Everyone slept on the beach, and officials brought breakfast and lunch by boat from the capital.

**Palau**

Project Category:	Island Friendship
Country:	Palau
Project Dates:	June 15-22, 2005
Number of Participants:	23
Number of Staff:	3
Represented Religions:	3
Represented Nations:	4
Central Work:	Refurbishing a school
Key Sponsors:	IIFWP



**Honduras** *"World Peace and the Role of the Youth"*

This project was built on the relationship with an Apostolic Church pastor with whom the Honduras RYS team had worked before. She was very much familiar with the goals of Religious Youth Service. The church offers its facilities as a service to the local townspeople and hopes to develop it more each year. They hold a kindergarten where the younger children can receive a thorough education, both intellectually and morally/ethically. Inside the church facilities, an earlier RYS has built a bakery, a dining area for the children, a dental and medical clinic and a small recreation center. During this project, the RYS participants helped paint the bathrooms, kitchen and dining area. Another group helped remove rusted and rotten materials to the garbage dump. A third group formed a line and carried 20-pound cement blocks to the playground that was being built. The last group assisted construction workers to lay the cement block walls around the recreational area where the children and all the village people will spend time together.

Working with the children to give them hope for a brighter future fits with the theme of the project "World Peace and the Role of the Youth." By working together with the children, the young people set an example of love and service. By the end of the project, many of the participants created strong bonds with each other through profound, prayerful, playful and exciting activities together. In addition, they could see and strongly appreciate the vision inherent in the theme of this year's project. Working with the children profoundly impacted the hearts of the RYS participants, enabling them to feel that such efforts could really give birth to world peace.

Several religions were represented, including the Mayan religion practiced by the indigenous people of Guatemala. This was the first time individuals from the Mayan faith were represented at a Friendship Americas Project in Central America.

Upon reflection, despite the hardship of adapting to the location, culture, schedule, vigorous activities, and variety of personalities and religions, many departed for home feeling that they had been able to accomplish goals and fulfill expectations on an internal level. In particular, they felt they had created sincere, heartfelt bonds with the village people and were able to work together harmoniously as a team.

**Honduras**

Project Category:	Friendship Americas
Country:	Honduras
Project Dates:	June 17-27, 2005
Number of Participants:	22
Number of Staff:	4
Represented Religions:	4
Represented Nations:	4
Central Work:	Fixing up/painting kindergarten
Key Sponsors:	IIFWP





**England**

Project Category:	Peace Parks
Country:	England (Bristol)
Project Dates:	July 1-9, 2005
Number of Participants:	21
Number of Staff:	4
Represented Religions:	4
Represented Nations:	8
Central Work:	Creating a mosaic
Key Sponsors:	IIFWP



*"Art as a Service in Creating Peace in the Communities"* **England**

Bristol city is marred by its high crime rate and violence. Its ill repute became more apparent as we visited the neighborhood around the Bristol Central Mosque. Some of the participants were skeptical that we could make a difference in such an environment. But, very quickly these doubts were proven false. On the first day, local children came out and joined in with the project. Soon the parents and other youths from the community came out in support of the project. For a brief period, this small part of the Bristol community came alive with laughter and happiness. There was some concern that mosaic pieces would be vandalized in our absence. But the local youth were inspired by the project, and they watched over the artwork.

The RYS project was not just about hard work. Participants were introduced to various places of worship: a Hindu temple, a Sikh gurdwara, a mosque, a Buddhist center and a synagogue. These visits helped correct misunderstandings and enabled participants to appreciate each other's religion.

As the project concluded, many local dignitaries expressed their support. Initially many had been skeptical about the project, including committee members of the mosque. When they saw the finished work they were surprised at the way the project had brought people closer together and inspired many diverse people to unite. Thus, while this project may have begun as a small group of people who were not a part of the community, by the time it concluded, local people had joined in, working together as a community seeking peace and harmony. Everyone witnessed how living for the sake of others can bring vitality to a community and spark love among neighbors.

**Indonesia**

Project Category:	Island Friendship
Country:	Indonesia
Project Dates:	July 5-9, 2005
Number of Participants:	40
Number of Staff:	5
Represented Religions:	7
Represented Nations:	15
Central Work:	Renovate a school near Jakarta
Key Sponsors:	IIFWP, Local government

**Indonesia** *"Back to Nature"*

Each day began with a 30-minute introduction to a particular faith followed by time for questions and answers. After breakfast, participants moved to the work site to make full use of the cooler morning temperatures. The project involved leveling a local schoolyard, laying a bed of sand and cement, and positioning new paving bricks. Also six "restoration teams" (of eight people each) gave the classrooms a much-needed face-lift. Others created colorful murals and information boards to brighten up the school and surrounding area.

It was moving to see the school children "rolling up their sleeves" to assist. They were happy to take ownership of the jobs at hand and participate in the renovation of their school.

Each day after lunch, volunteers divided into teams to participate in various activities, which were not only fun and entertaining but also educational and instructive in nature. There was time most afternoons to visit various places of worship within the local vicinity. Indonesia, although predominantly an Islamic country, promotes a policy of "unity through diversity" and has many different cultures and ethnic groups among its population. This was evident from the different places of interest visited within a two kilometer radius of the work site: a Buddhist temple, a Catholic church, a Confucian temple, a Hindu temple and mosque - all within walking distance of the RYS base-camp.

After dinner, there were lectures, skits and discussions on topics such as team building, conflict resolution, drug abuse, AIDS prevention, family values and life coaching. Each evening, there was a cultural program mined from the rich vein of talent among the participants. The day closed with everyone holding hands in a "circle of prayer."

To mark the conclusion of the project, there was a special celebratory concert at the Confucian school. A stage was erected for the colorful two-hour program of song, dance and reflections. Many members of the community attended, including some of the local dignitaries.

**Mongolia**

Project Category:	Friendship Americas
Country:	Honduras
Project Dates:	August 7-13, 2005
Number of Participants:	17
Number of Staff:	4
Represented Religions:	3
Represented Nations:	3
Central Work:	Construction and Restoration of Religious sites
Key Sponsors:	IIFWP, Local government

**Mongolia** *"Quest for the role of religions in contemporary society and significance of their harmony"*

The participants and leaders of this project came from the diverse religious backgrounds of Islam, Buddhism and Christianity.

Participants partnered with the provincial government in the area. The head of the legal department and the city mayor of Khovd played key roles in facilitating the project. Mr. Ganbaatar, who serves as the social policy advisor to the president of Mongolia, also helped by translating and giving presentations.

The participants were generally unfamiliar with even the terminology of "interreligious work"; however, from the first day of introducing the concept, many changes were already perceptible. As a result of small but growing changes throughout the project, participants were able to grasp some of the meaning of RYS.

The work consisted of constructing a wall at the local Buddhist temple, and remaking the interior of the local Islamic mosque. Both were completed with satisfactory success. The project was covered by the Mongolian National Radio as well as on television.



### “Education for All” Zambia

This project was started with the support of the Zambian chapter of the International Relief Friendship Foundation (IRFF), an RYS partner and with other international support. In 2000, a foundation was laid for a community school serving vulnerable children, mainly orphans in the Mackenzie community in Ndola, located in the northern part of Zambia. The main focus of this RYS project was to have the participants from the different nations and religions cooperate to further build the school, providing a reasonable learning environment for the orphans.

In the morning on August 10, 2005, the Mackenzie community and students prepared a welcoming program for the RYS. In the afternoon, participants of the service project began an orientation program, which included a walk throughout the community to understand the local situation better. During the following days the youth demonstrated high standards of cooperation as they worked diligently to finish building two classrooms of the school. The work involved plastering walls, installing windows, and painting the school building. A fence was also built around the school grounds. On Sundays, the RYS volunteers visited to local churches, HIV/AIDS homes and other orphanages in Zambia.

Participants built strong relationships with the community by visiting the residents' homes and organizing various games for and with the children. They concluded their community activities with a sports and games competition, during which one hundred students were awarded prizes. One of these competitions was a drawing competition. Students were awarded notebooks, toys, clothes, and other school necessities. The Slovakian volunteers collected donations and purchased the prizes for the students. On the final day, the participants went sightseeing and in the evening shared in fellowship during an international culture night.

The project was especially successful in that the RYS participants were able to build good relationships with the people of the Mackenzie community of Zambia and they could see how wonderful the community school looked as a result of their labors. Plans are being made to continue with this project.

**Zambia**

Project Category:	Africa Rising
Country:	Zambia
Project Dates:	September 16-24 , 2005
Number of Participants:	40
Number of Staff:	4
Represented Religions:	4
Represented Nations:	9
Central Work:	Building a school
Sponsors:	IIFWP, IRFF



### Guyana “Youth Modeling Good Citizenship Through Responsible Service”

Guyana is located in between Dutch-speaking Suriname to the east, Spanish-speaking Venezuela to the west, and Portuguese-speaking Brazil to the south. To the north there is the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, to be in Guyana feels like being on an island. The participants in this project experienced a strong sense of solidarity almost instantly under the guidance of Nora Mullen, the education director for the project. It seemed like the group members had known each other for ages. Honorable Hamilton Green, the former Prime Minister of Guyana and the current mayor of Georgetown, the capital city, explained in one of his several talks to the RYS participants that it was no small feat to forge such fast friendships. This is especially true considering the demographic and geographic reality of Guyana. Historically, relationships between neighbors have not been the best and, even today, border disputes still remain unresolved. Therefore, RYS volunteers from neighboring nations provide invaluable examples of peace, cooperation, and altruistic service.

Guyana is a poor nation with problems with drugs and corruption. Even though it abounds in natural beauty, Guyana has not been able to attract tourism or other business that would help the nation make progress economically. This difficulty has been compounded especially following the devastation of the January 2005 flooding, where so many people lost their homes, and in some cases, their lives. Therefore, the RYS participants helped by working with Habitat for Humanity on a housing project on the outskirts of Georgetown.

Guyana is a very multi-cultural nation, including people of different ethnicities and religions. The leaders and congregants from a local mosque, a Hindu temple and a Christian church hall within walking distance from one another warmly greeted participants and shared their traditions and food. Deep memories and friendships were made wherever RYS members went. The project also benefited from the generous donations and contributions of local business people and peace activists such as Peter Ramseroot.

**Guyana**

Project Category:	Friendship America
Country:	Guyana
Project Dates:	August 11-23 , 2005
Number of Participants:	40
Number of Staff:	3
Represented Religions:	9
Represented Nations:	6
Central Work:	Clearing the land and building a house
Key Sponsors:	IIFWP, Pure Love Club, Habitat for Humanity, Peter Ramseroot, Ambassadors for Peace



### Sri Lanka “Rebuilding through Interreligious Harmony”

An RYS project was held in “Bata Atha,” a remote village in the southern part of Sri Lanka, about 225 kilometers from the capital city Colombo and 8 kilometers from the southern coastal city “Tangalle.” This area was the worst hit area by the tsunami in December 2004. The local government with the assistance of NGOs has constructed a model village called “Ruvina Gama” to resettle families affected by the tsunami. But this village had no community center where families could go for health clinics and other activities. Therefore, the RYS committee decided to build a community center for the “Ruvina Gama.”

About 40 participants joined this international project, 8 from Germany, 1 from Thailand, 17 participants and staff from southern Sri Lanka and 14 from northern and eastern Sri Lanka. For the first four days, the participants worked together at the site with the local people enabling them to understand the situation of the village. After this initial work the exhausted participants went back to their residences to refresh themselves and prepare for educational programs, and other exciting activities. The leadership training program helped them to learn more about themselves and strive to become people of good character who can build a peaceful society.

Morning meditations helped participants understand each other's religious traditions and worship. Local participants had the opportunity to live within an international community, which encouraged the dynamic of interreligious education and intercultural exchange. During orientation, this was presented as one of the goals of the project as well as something worthwhile for every young person to strive to fulfill. Working together with people of different backgrounds challenges participants to solve conflicts between races, religions and cultures and to seek the path to achieve peace.

**Sri Lanka**

Project Category:	Island Friendship
Country:	Sri Lanka
Project Dates:	September 16-24 , 2005
Number of Participants:	40
Number of Staff:	5
Represented Religions:	7
Represented Nations:	7
Central Work:	Building of a Community Centre in a Tsunami Resettlement Village
Sponsors:	Key IIFWP, Asian, German Sports Exchange Program





“The year 2005 marks the **conclusion** of a twenty-year period when RYS **grew** from a simple challenge to a project that has attracted **tens of thousands** of people from nearly every nation.”

- Rev. John Gehring

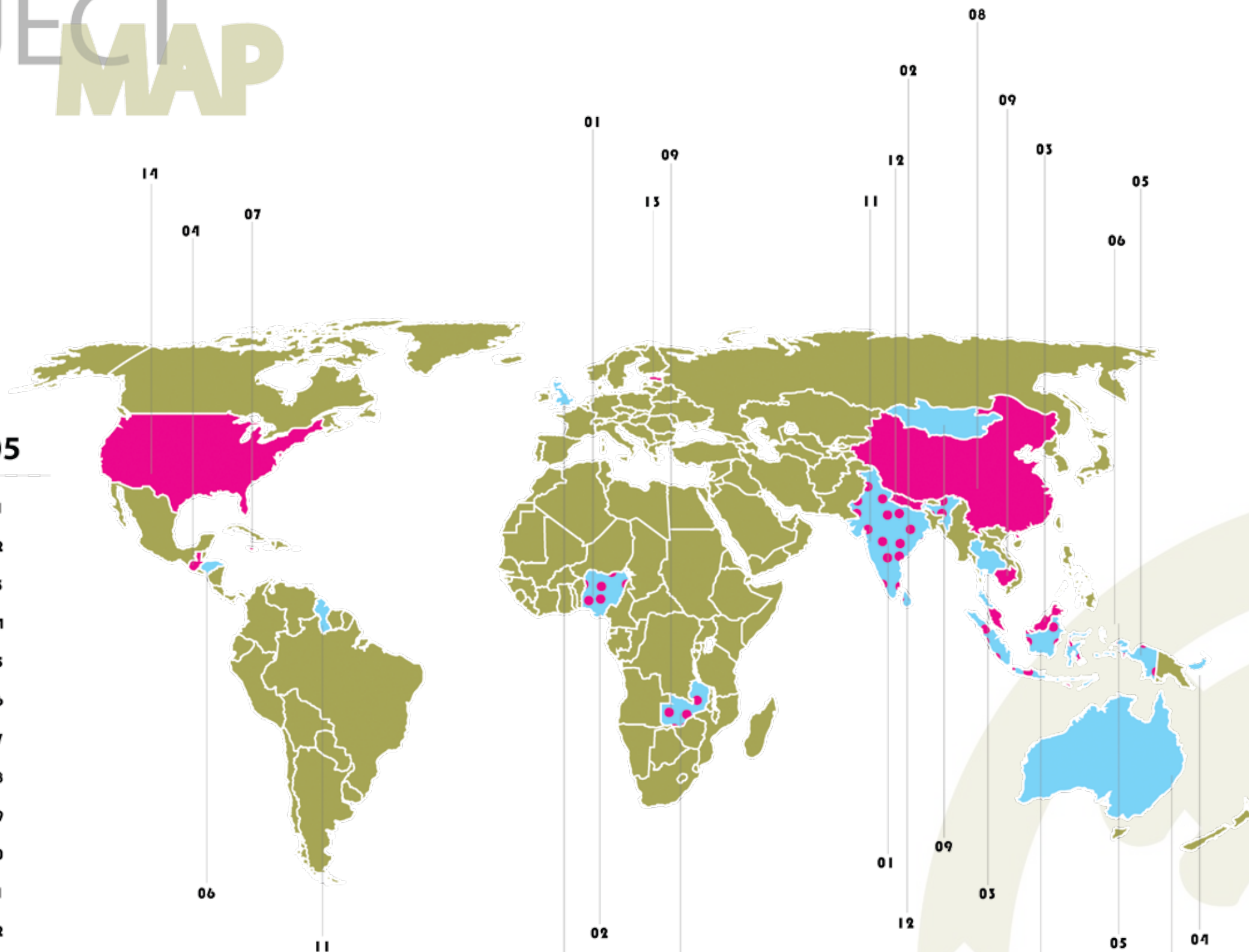




# PROJECT MAP

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