

INTRODUCTION

Youth participation leads to better decisions and outcomes. Many of the profound difficulties faced by young people around the globe illiteracy, poverty, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, discrimination and forced engagement in armed conflict are subjects of widespread concern at the national and international levels. In all regions of the world, young people are having to deal with increased unemployment and insecurity at work, greater family instability, and reductions in social welfare programmes. Youth is often characterized by uncertainty and risk. Effective strategies are needed to resolve these concerns. Young people have a body of experience unique to their situation, and they have views and ideas that derive from this experience. They are social actors with skills and capacities to bring about constructive resolutions to their own problems. Too often, though, there is a failure or even a refusal to recognize the benefits of participation Youth Participation in Decision Making, the legitimacy of young people's contributions to programmes, policies and decision making. Much of government policy has a direct or indirect impact on young people, yet it is developed and delivered largely in ignorance of how it will affect their day today lives or their present and future well-being.

Young people have become active in processes as varied as the following:

- ✚ Research: Many examples exist of young people being provided with training as researchers and then undertaking independent investigations focusing on issues of direct concern to them.
- ✚ Programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation: Young people share their views and experiences to help design and implement programmes that target their specific needs; by playing a key role in monitoring and evaluation, youth are able to help the programme meet its objectives and adjust to changing circumstances as necessary.
- ✚ Peer support, representation and advocacy: Young people are increasingly being provided with opportunities to elect or be elected by their own peers to serve as advocates, working with adult institutions to lobby for greater respect for their rights.
- ✚ Policy analysis and development: Many initiatives involve young people in reviewing existing legislation and policies from the perspective of their own experience.
- ✚ Campaigning and lobbying: Once young people are afforded the chance to come together and articulate their experiences and concerns, many are able to develop campaigns for the

realization of their rights, lobbying for the necessary changes from grass-roots to international levels.

- ✚ Development and management of their own organizations: Within a growing number of youth-led organizations throughout the world, young people are defining their own structures, policies and priorities for action.
- ✚ Participation in and use of the media: Young people have traditionally been excluded from active participation in the media, but in many countries they are receiving training as youth journalists, running their own radio programmes, developing video tools for the promotion of rights, and publishing journals and newsletters.
- ✚ Conference participation: Young people have participated in local, national and international conferences as organizers, speakers, delegates and rapporteurs, often with significant impact on the outcomes of such events.
- ✚ Youth councils and parliaments: In a number of countries, young people have participated in the development of democratic political structures that parallel those of the adult world and provide opportunities to inform and influence key economic, social and political agendas. All of these activities offer opportunities for empowering young people to take action to influence or change aspects of their lives for the better. However, several different models and structures are employed to achieve specific objectives. These may be conceptualized in terms of the degree to which control and power are actually transferred to young people in practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of collecting all important data and information required to be processed for establishment of this report content, secondary data collection is chosen to gather all available information regarding youth participation in decision making processes. Different sources from different web sites used to extract and gather all factual information regarding these issues related to youth globally. A similar method used to gather all responses from the various stake holders towards youths' participation in decision making processes. The sources are carefully chosen in order to ensure quality of the content, relevance, and ease of comprehension. Reason of choosing secondary data collection is based on a fact that varieties of sources are largely available in electronic network.

LITERATURE AND FACTUAL REVIEW

IMPORTANT GLOBAL FACTS

- ✚ Teenagers volunteer 2.4 billion hours annually – worth \$34.3 billion to the US economy.
- ✚ Youth volunteering has increased steadily over the past ten years, with 30% of youth participating in volunteer activities at least once a month in 2000.
- ✚ Out of 13.3 million youth, 59.3% volunteer an average of 3.5 hours per week, versus 49% of the adult population volunteer an average of 4.2 hours.
- ✚ Youth who volunteer just one hour or more a week are 50% less likely to abuse alcohol, cigarettes, become pregnant, or engage other destructive behaviour.
- ✚ Teens say the benefits received from volunteering are:
 - Learning to respect others.
 - Learning to be helpful and kind.
 - Learning to understand people who are different.
 - Developing leadership skills.
 - Becoming more patient.
 - Better understanding of citizenship.
- ✚ Youth who volunteer are more likely to do well in school, graduate and vote.
- ✚ Young people represented 9.4% of all people who had volunteered in the previous 12 months.
- ✚ 593,700 people aged 18-24 had undertaken voluntary work in the previous 12 months.
- ✚ Young people most commonly volunteered for groups related to sport and recreation.
- ✚ Volunteering participation rates were higher outside capital cities – inner regional and other areas 41-42% compared to 34% for capital cities.
- ✚ 58% of volunteers worked for only one organisation in the previous 12 months.
- ✚ There was some variation by age, with people 18-24 years of age more likely to work for only one type of organisation.
- ✚ Sport and physical recreation organisations were the most common type that people volunteered for (44% for males and 32% for females).
- ✚ Almost half of all volunteers in South Australia (47%) volunteered for sport and physical recreation organisations.
- ✚ In 2012, 64.5 million Americans (26.5% of the population) contributed 7.9 billion hours of volunteer service worth an estimated \$175 billion of service.

- ✚ The estimated dollar value of volunteer time in Connecticut is \$28 an hour.
- ✚ Volunteers have a better chance of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers.
- ✚ Parents with children under age 18 volunteer at a higher rate (33.5%) than the general population (26.5%). United Way of Greater New Haven's Hands-On Saturday, held annually in April, offers volunteer opportunities geared specifically to families.
- ✚ Adults who began volunteering as youth are twice as likely to volunteer as those who did not volunteer when they were younger.
- ✚ After fundraising, the most popular volunteer activities are collecting, preparing distributing or serving food (23.8%), contributing general work or helping out with transportation (19.85) and teaching/tutoring (17.9%).
- ✚ Research demonstrates that volunteering leads to better health and that older volunteers are the most likely to receive physical and mental health benefits from their volunteer activities.
- ✚ Non-volunteers say that they are more likely to serve if a trusted friend asks them to serve.
- ✚ Citizens who participate in one area of civic engagement, like volunteering, are more likely to get involved in groups, contact public officials, or work with neighbours.

RESPONSES FROM VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

In 2011, the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) issued a call for proposals from UNDP Country Offices in support of innovative and catalytic projects on youth to inform public policy-making, training youth as effective leaders, extending access to justice, opening space for youth empowerment and democratic governance. 37 proposals were accepted, out of which 9 are in Africa, 8 in the Arab States, 5 in Asia and the Pacific, 8 in Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States, and 7 in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In a number of project countries, youth exclusion was strongly evident, often crossing with other forms of marginalization linked to gender, location, culture and/or community. Across the projects, activities include strengthening youth advocacy groups, providing quality research to interact with public authorities, and fostering the creation of national youth councils and plans. Several projects place a strong emphasis on social media and information technology. Innovative strategies range from social partnerships for service delivery to provincial youth parliaments to a digital game on youth and local governance. This group of projects which is unique in themselves, has also helped to inform United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organizational lesson learning in terms of the design and implementation of youth centred initiatives, taking into particular consideration the development of appropriate and realistic youth indicators; institutional and contextual analyses (political analyses) during the programme design phase; and partnership building.

Country examples:

- ✚ Nigeria: Participation in Constitution-review process.
 - UNDP supported youth based CSO coalition to actively participate in the Constitution review process, including submission of memorandum to the constitution review committees of the National Assembly.
- ✚ Bangladesh: National Youth Parliament.
 - UNDP supported the establishment of a National Youth Parliament to empower active citizens at both local and national level and provide an opportunity for youth

to contribute to the framing of national policy through direct dialogue with parliamentarians.

- ✚ Jordan: Trainings to increase youth political participation.
 - UNDP has trained a core group of 15 young trainers and piloted two debate training programmes as part of its youth programme with the Ministry of Political Development to increase youth political participation.
- ✚ Lebanon: Strengthening public policy making skills.
 - The Lebanese Parliamentary Internship Programme has been expanded to a greater number of Lebanese graduates of all universities in Lebanon, offering them a real opportunity to participate in public policy making.
- ✚ Libya: Monitoring Transition and Reporting on Governance.
 - At a time when Libya is redefining its social contract, and revising core social and economic policies, reliable data is critical to informed decision-making, including on youth priorities.
- ✚ Moldova: Greater Justice for Disadvantaged Groups.
 - In Moldova, this UNDP-supported project mobilizes and links diverse vulnerable groups of youth around access to justice and fundamental human rights, in line with national objectives for better social and economic opportunities for youth, justice and social inclusion.
- ✚ Cambodia: Gearing up for local and national elections.
 - The ‘Strengthening Democracy Programme/Component: Youth Multimedia Civic Education Initiative’ aimed at reaching 3 million young voters. It is a series of TV and radio broadcasts developed in partnership with BBC Media Action, informed by a baseline study on youth knowledge, attitudes and practices in the context of public affairs.
- ✚ Mongolia: Youth Empowerment through Civic Education.
 - The project has developed recommendations for revising civic education curricula to better appeal to youth, trained young journalists, and set up a Facebook group ‘Demo Crazy’.
- ✚ Azerbaijan: Youth Participation in Decision Making and Policy Implementation.
 - This project has assisted Azerbaijan to develop its first assessment tool to examine how adequately national policies respond to youth concerns, as well as a draft monitoring and evaluation plan for the State Programme on Azerbaijani Youth.

GOVERNMENTS RESPONSES

- ✚ When local governments set out to involve young people in decision-making, this tends to be in relation to youth-specific policies, events, programs or services, or, less commonly, in relation to issues affecting the whole community.
- ✚ A minority of shires have also included in their youth strategies some undertaking to increase young people's presence in council itself through work experience, training, recruitment and volunteering.
 - Recommendation: That local governments take advantage of resource material available around supporting youth volunteering. Strategies might include marketing volunteering positions with young people in mind, involving current youth volunteers in the promotion and design of council positions, and creating roles with shorter commitment periods or options for working off-site or online.
 - Recommendation: That staff working with young people in rural local governments receive adequate support in the best-practice use of new technologies, in recognition that this is a growing area of importance in youth participation.
 - Recommendation: That further attention be paid to how young people's involvement in groups shapes the growth of youth participation in general, in rural local governments.
- ✚ Like many local governments, rural councils may struggle to engage young people from Indigenous, multicultural or low-income backgrounds. However, they also tend to experience particular difficulties engaging young people in the 18-25 age group, who are likely to leave their home communities for education or work, or become engaged in full-time employment locally, instead.
 - Recommendation: That mechanisms and resources produced to support local governments in youth participation take into account the particular challenges posed by rurality (notably geographical distance and the movement of many 5 young people in the 18-25 age group away from their home communities), and provide best practice examples of how to deal with this..
 - Recommendation: That rural local governments offer support to older young people who have been involved with council in the past to pass their expertise on to new arrivals.

- Recommendation: That these older young people be provided with opportunities to (if they wish) become the next generation of workers and mentors within local government.
- ✚ Youth councils, action groups and advisory bodies can provide valuable opportunities for young people and become a positive and informative presence in council, and in the wider community. However, it would be unwise to make such groups the sole focus for youth participation in local government.
- ✚ Youth councils and similar groups benefit from a range of supports. These can include adequate resourcing, whole-of-council backing and assistance to undertake more diverse recruitment, and opportunities to network and find out about best practice examples from other local governments.
 - Recommendation: That youth councils and advisory bodies attached to rural local governments be given adequate support to integrate their work, planning and reporting with that of the wider council. This might include opportunities to take part in wider council meetings and decision-making, to evaluate council's work, and / or to help shape wider council plans.
 - Recommendation: That youth councils and advisory bodies be supported to build strong and positive relationships with mayors, serving councillors and council staff, and to network with similar youth bodies across the state.

PRIVATE SECTOR RESPONSES

For a number of different reasons, it is incumbent upon today's private sector to form close partnerships with youth around the world. The private sector should conceive of young people not only as programme beneficiaries and corporate social responsibility targets, but also as partners in development and fellow leaders in the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. The current global "youth bulge" makes these imperatives even more pressing. Indeed, today's large working-age populations do present something of a challenge for many countries, but with proper policies and initiatives in place, Governments and private sector actors can turn this challenge into a powerful force. A country with a growing workforce must not necessarily be relegated to high levels of unemployment and widespread misallocation of human capital. Rather, by working proactively to form meaningful partnerships with young people, duty bearers can make the type of enduring, long-term investment that fosters social cohesion, and reduces economic and political volatility. However, if this does not happen, the impact of withholding investment from the largest youth population in the history of the world might be irreversible. Because human capital is something that must be acquired steadily and cumulatively, its development must begin at an early age, before the window of opportunity closes. Moreover, the current state of global demographics means that such investment must be made soon, before the current youth population yields to a smaller following generation.

NGO RESPONSES

Although an increasing number of NGOs are developing initiatives to promote children's and young people's participation, it is relatively rare for those organizations to modify their structures to the extent that the priorities identified by young people themselves are reflected in their planning and programming. As argued earlier, even well-intentioned and well-informed adults do not necessarily have sufficient insight and awareness of children's and young people's experiences to make appropriate decisions or develop suitable strategies. Involving young people as apprentices or interns, allowing them to serve on management boards, inviting them to participate in consultative workshops, and creating advisory forums are just some of the mechanisms that might be used to democratize organizations.

MEDIA RESPONSES

At the very core of Youth Media are the relative roles that youth and adults play in decision-making. Who decides the topics to be covered, the perspectives to be represented and when, or if, something is good enough to go says much about the program. The degree to which, and how, youth determine what topics are covered may even be a defining factor as to whether a program can be defined as Youth Media.

There are many things that influence the role of youth in the determination of content, one of which is whether the program is school-based or not. Under this decision, public school administrators can censor student "speech" in official school publications or activities, including newspapers and other publications, if the officials think students are saying something inappropriate or harmful even if it is not vulgar and is not disruptive of school functions. To do this, school officials need to show they have a valid educational purpose for their censorship and that the publication is not a "forum for student expression" where students have been given the authority to make content decisions.

Youth Media programs working in schools or with in-school programs have had to find ways of dealing with the "muting of youth voices." To prevent principals or teachers from pulling pieces for "petty" reasons, PACERS Community Newspaper Project (AL) set up a project agreement with participating schools. Under this agreement "principals have a right to pull stories, but they better know why and it better be a good reason."

In spite of the differences across programs and the difficulties and limitations, what underlies so many of these programs is a need to, as Don't Believe the Hype (MN) explains, provide a venue for "unheard voices."

YOUTH RESPONSES

Youth typically spend a substantial amount of time in activities extracurricular to school, including involvement in community-based organizations, school and local sports teams, and school-based clubs. All of these, and the interaction with individuals within them, directly influence youth involvement in their communities.

Previous research supports the premise that participation in community activities is associated with behavioural well-being among adolescents. Influences on youth becoming involved, such as increasing academic performance during high school, increasing the likelihood of college attendance, greater school engagement, and reinforcing positive social values or setting an example, have been found to affect involvement.

Other factors have been reported by youth as influencing their need for and willingness to be a part of a greater good through involvement. These include: feelings of efficacy the need to be valued and taken seriously by others in the community increasing their own self-esteem, and having a responsibility toward society by performing a public duty. Recognition by the community at large is part of feeling valued.

Finally, other factors, such as parental involvement, can facilitate influences on youth involvement. Youth whose parents are actively involved in the community are more likely to become active themselves. Youth whose parents do not participate in civic activities may still become active in their communities; however, a supportive and reinforcing parental relationship may have a greater contribution to civic engagement than parental modelling. Perhaps as a result of an increased awareness of the advantages for adolescents, parents play an important role in linking their children to the world around them.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated in this report, the value of youth participation is now recognized at levels ranging from the local community to the international arena. However, recognition is not the same as action, and progress in the area of practical implementation has been slow. Even in those countries that have achieved the most, participation remains piecemeal and insufficiently integrated into all areas of young people's lives. Many organizations are still unconvinced that youth can play a leading or supportive role in helping them achieve their programme goals. Initiatives may be limited to seeking the views of young people on particular issues; their involvement in decision-making is rarely sought. Young people therefore remain marginal to most democratic processes. Token participation is meaningless, as it does not empower young people to influence outcomes and achieve real change. The frequent and widespread failure of the adult world to act in ways that promote the welfare of young people is well documented. Efforts must be made to listen to youth and engage them in the process of strengthening participatory democracy. Their involvement can lead to better decisions and outcomes.

Participation promotes the well-being and development of young people, strengthens their commitment to and understanding of human rights and democracy, and provides them a form of protection; it also allows them to take part in decision-making processes. Youth participation is an essential strategy for ensuring young people's optimal development and for achieving wider development goals for society. The progress made to date in promoting participation should be sustained and enhanced. Youth participation must become an integral component of, local, national and international policies for youth, and should provide the framework for decisions and actions that affect the daily lives of children and young people. Only then will the traditional approaches towards youth begin to evolve and the oft-stated commitment to their participation begin to have meaning. The approach must promote respect for them as social actors, as agents in their own lives, and as citizens of their own societies.

Recommendation

Responses of World Assembly of Youth

World Assembly of Youth upholds aims of promoting the democratic participation of young people both in their own organisations and in the life of society as a whole and encouraging the full participation of young men and women in the development process of their countries. To strengthen these aims, WAY organises events to educate and raise an informed youth generation on participation.

In 2004, WAY planned an event called Melaka International Youth Dialogue (MIYD) where youth from different parts of the world convened on the issue “Youth participation in decision making process”. It was the youth that came up with suggestions which are drafted into a declaration of what people want to see. The declaration was sent to national youth councils and governments as suggestions to include in their policies.

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