

Executive Summary

Expert Group Meeting on Young People in Emergency and Transitional Situations

11-13 December 2006, New York

1. Introduction

In December 11-13, 2006, more than sixty people from a wide range of UN agencies, international and national NGOs and academia, including a group of young people attended an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Young People in Emergency and Transitional Situations. The EGM was convened under the joint auspices of UNFPA and UNICEF, with the support and involvement of several members of a Global Steering Group (GSG).¹ This diverse group of participants set out to refine and update an outline of key elements of a framework for working with and for young people in such contexts. In addition, the meeting had the following objectives:

- To map out strategies to ensure that young people's rights and needs are systematically and appropriately addressed by humanitarian actors in emergency and transitional situations,
- Inform the process of conducting regional and country-level consultations to further develop a draft Framework led jointly by youth and other partners and to map good practices in the field,
- Discuss relevant follow up actions, including the on-going role of the Global Steering Group (GSG) and the preparations for the launch of the draft Framework at a Global Conference by the end of 2007.

2. Background

In recent years, international humanitarian organizations have started to pay greater attention to young people, but experience has shown that most have a very limited understanding and appreciation of their realities and concerns. Young people's rights and constructive capacities are regularly overlooked in humanitarian and post-emergency development responses. Funding for programmes explicitly targeting young people in

¹ Member of GSG are: IRC, IFRC, Plan UK, Save the Children UK, UNFPA, UN Program on Youth/DESA, UNICEF, Women's Commission, Jane Lowicki-Zucca, Jason Hart

and after emergencies remain limited and too often consider young people as problems, not as essential resources with energy and capacities for creative solutions. Programming is also not well coordinated and the lack of collaboration among agencies and partners often results in the duplication of efforts.

In order to address these challenges, a consultative interagency process was initiated in 2005 with the aim of developing a framework for more effective and coherent programming responses for young people in situations of conflict, natural disasters and post-emergency transitions. The initial meeting on adolescent programming took place in Geneva (November 2005), with a view to reviewing case studies and lessons learned from all regions.

Since, the process has evolved towards the elaboration of a draft Framework aiming to:

- Build a basis for increased interagency collaboration, allowing for more comprehensive and holistic rights-based approaches to identifying and addressing the issues that affect the lives of young people during emergencies and transition,
- Strengthen young people's capacities as key constructive actors in emergencies and transition.

3. Outcomes

The EGM built upon the outcomes of the Geneva meeting in widening the participation of partners engaged in the process, strengthening the inter-agency dimension of this initiative, as well as enhancing the policy and programmatic foci. In addition, it facilitated a great degree of networking, provided a platform to exchange ideas and review current challenges and existing information from the breadth of experiences available from the participants. Finally, the EGM provided an opportunity to raise relevant issues to the notice of key policy and decision-makers, giving impetus for increased commitment and political will in a variety of agencies.

Despite the limited number of young people and lack of clarity around their participation, their contributions at the meeting were cogent, informed and invigorating. However, the unexpectedly large number of participants made it more challenging to address the varying expectations of those present and to conduct detailed, output-oriented discussions.

Agreements and Priority Next Steps

There was agreement that young people must play a central role in the production of any framework. The corollary to this strongly stated and supported view was the need for all relevant stakeholders to focus attention on the policy and advocacy work necessary for sufficiently robust institutional support for the work of young people on the framework and in other areas. Strengthened institutional capacity and greater human resources may also be deemed necessary to further any work on the issues raised in the Geneva, New York meetings and other fora. This includes a priority to influence policy makers and humanitarian mechanisms to increase focus and to commit resources for organizations working on the rights and needs of young people in emergency and transitional contexts.

The EGM recommended the following next steps:

- The need to conduct a series of country and/or regional consultations, with young people at the center, on the development of the programmatic framework for working with young people in emergency and transitional situations.
- The establishment of a number of virtual expert groups on the different elements of the framework identified thus far, particularly to discuss and develop recommendations on some of the more difficult questions discussed, but not given final formulation at the EGM due to limited time. These workings groups are to cover both programmatic and advocacy-based areas including:
 - Development of an overarching policy/vision statement to encapsulate the discussions,
 - Producing a consultation toolkit to guide the development of the framework,
 - Advocacy,
 - Resources,
 - Mapping good practice and lessons learned,
 - Strengthening mechanisms for evidence/data collection.
- Linking with other initiatives to identify potential opportunities, which may be informed by the findings from both country and regional-level consultations. The on-going 10 Year Strategic Review of the Machel Report, provides such an opportunity. Findings may not only feed into the Review process, but will also provide a platform for profiling issues affecting young people in emergency and transitional contexts with key policy-makers.
- Lessons should be culled from other UN and international processes that have led to the development of other programmatic frameworks or interagency policy guidelines, particularly those covering humanitarian issues and increased collaboration around HIV/AIDs.

- Establishment of an actual or virtual youth advisory/implementation board to guide the consultation development and delivery process.
- Clarification of the ongoing role of the GSG, including the establishment of an appropriate and effective management/steering structure to promote the Framework development process and oversee implementation of the meeting recommendations.

4. Discussions

A draft outline of an interagency programming framework for working with and for young people in emergency and transitional situations was developed as a background document for the meeting ². The meeting was structured in line with this framework, with plenary sessions and group work discussions on each of the suggested elements. These elements were:

i. The Rationales for a programmatic framework

In the discussion on the need to work with young people in emergency and transitional contexts, four elements of the rationale were identified:

- Population and demographics - the percentage of young people in focus populations and more generally, plus the importance of linking numbers to strategic arguments and local contexts
- Human rights and ethics - that young people have rights to survival, development, protection and participation that must be protected and promoted in all situations
- Working with the most marginalized and vulnerable - that young people are often more exploited and at greater risk than the general population in situations of emergency
- Utilizing all resources to maximize impact and progress in emergency situations - that young people are a key source of ideas, strength, innovation and care, and that their physical and intellectual contributions to recovery are crucial for the whole population

It was argued that the lack of consistent language and the varying age groups used to describe ‘youth’, ‘young people’ etc. increases the difficulty in planning, policy and advocacy in relation to these groups.

² See attachment 1 for draft framework document Working for and with Young People in Emergency and Transition Situations – A Discussion Document’

ii. Guiding Principles

The following key sets of principles were identified to guide work with young people in emergency and transitional contexts:

- Principles of positive adolescent development
- Humanitarian principles
- Human rights principles
- General programming principles in emergencies and conflict transition studies.

It was emphasized that the key challenge relating to these principles was the lack of their implementation.

iii. Programming Areas

Participants supported that effective programming for agencies' work with young people in emergency and transitional contexts needed to be: multi-sectoral; holistic; long term; dynamic; evidence based; age appropriate; and appropriate to the phase of emergency/transition.

Interagency or organizational rivalry and competition for resources sometimes placed obstacles in the way of good multi-sectoral implementation, which needs to be approached through interagency collaboration to promote maximum effectiveness. Lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation to guide the establishment of new programmes or adaptation of the existing was also addressed.

Specific programmatic areas discussed included:

- Education
- Health and reproductive health/HIV/AIDS (combined groups)
- Sexual and Gender Based Violence
- Water, sanitation and hygiene/Livelihoods/Nutrition and Food Security (combined groups)
- Recreation and Psychosocial Wellbeing
- DDR and Juvenile Justice
- Peace Building
- Civic Participation
- Communication and Advocacy

It was recognized that the lack of awareness or understanding of young people's needs and concerns by authority figures, whether government bodies, agencies or civil society. Participants, particularly the young people, thus emphasized the subsequent consequence of programming that was less relevant to the realities faced by this age-group. This was strongly echoed in the presentation by young people. They also argued that existing programming suffers from unrealistic time scales; inaccessible focal points; a tendency to underplay or ignore economic-oriented programming; facilitating a dependency culture and a lack of their meaningful involvement in peace building initiatives.

iv. Implementation strategies

The session on the implementation strategy concentrated on how to ensure young people's concerns and contributions are included on the humanitarian and recovery agendas of UN agencies, governments and international organizations. Using social mobilization strategies, framing advocacy and action in ways relevant to current policy and funding trends were all ways in which young people's concerns and contributions were more likely to be acknowledged and acted upon.

The advocacy group emphasized the importance of identifying the different audiences for the range of priority messages highlighted, plus the need to better integrate local learning with international advocacy, the importance of consistent involvement of young people in the development and transmission of messages and the potentially groundbreaking role to be played by raising effectively the profile and understanding of young people's issues in emergency and transitional settings.

Finally, the mobilizing resources group highlighted the need to work with new sources of funding in innovative ways and highlighted a range of funding partnerships that could bring human, information and financial resources to work with young people.

5. Conclusion

The EGM renewed the commitment of those present to work within their respective organizations and in collaboration with their partners to raise awareness around the issues affecting young people in emergency and transition contexts and to turn these efforts into a global campaign improving the lives of young people in such situations. This commitment was matched with a recognized need to strengthen resources required for more effective programming and the widely held view that these efforts were to be

initiated in direct partnership with young people. The next steps of the process will build on the collaborative nature of the EGM to enrich the draft framework and to work towards its eventual global launch.