



PROMOTING ADOLESCENT LIVELIHOODS

A discussion paper prepared for the
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1. Background

Promoting Adolescent Livelihoods was prepared for the Commonwealth Youth Programme of the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNICEF to examine an emerging theme in development literature. It seeks to contribute to the global debate on young people's economic contribution and livelihoods. The paper is based on a desk review of relevant secondary literature and was informed by a Review Meeting on Adolescent Participation and Development Issues convened by the Commonwealth Youth Programme on May 10, 2001. The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of participants in this meeting and feedback received from Commonwealth Secretariat staff members Jane Foster, Andrew Robertson and Andrew Simmons.

2. Introduction

For two weeks in April 2001, global attention focused on the plight of "child slaves" in West Africa. As it turns out, initial media reports about the human cargo of the Nigerian-registered ship *Etireno* were grossly exaggerated. Instead of 250 "child slaves" as reported, the ship was carrying approximately 23 unaccompanied children en route to Gabon to work. Interviews by aid workers with the older children suggested that they certainly knew why they were going to Gabon: They were going to work. Their families were poor and the prospects for them in Gabon seemed more promising than those at home (Astill 2001). Disturbing though it may be, the story of these children is not remarkable if taken in a regional or global context. And while it is easy to become outraged at what on the surface appears to be the barbaric practice of child trafficking, as each layer of this story is peeled back, as with an onion, another is revealed and the complexity of the issue becomes apparent. At the core of the story is the fact that the *Etireno* children, like millions of others, *must* work to survive. Children and adolescents the world over work, and although they do so for a variety of reasons, poverty is an important factor (Boyden *et al.* 1998, Blunch and Verner 2000, Esim *et al.* 1999, Green 1998). The International Labour Organisation estimates that approximately 250 million children and younger adolescents the world over between ages 5 and 14 work, and an estimated 120 million of them work full-time. This estimate excludes children who are engaged in full-time un-waged labour in their households (Ashgarie 1998).

This paper attempts to stimulate discussion on adolescent labour. Its findings suggest a shift away from viewing economic activity by adolescents as necessarily negative. Acknowledging that adolescents' work is a necessary part of many development processes can only improve efforts to change the nature of that work. Adolescents' livelihoods can be better reconciled with the time-demands of education, and they can be made sustainable, rather than exploitative. But these goals cannot be achieved if development strategies are premised upon work beginning at eighteen.

2.1 Why a focus on adolescents?

Adolescence is the collective term used to refer to the stage of human development between the ages of 10 and 19 years. It is generally accepted as an important stage of human development and recognised as a transitional process from childhood to maturity, rather than as a single stage or series of sub-stages (Coleman and Hendry

1990). How this period of life is understood has changed over time. Some theories of human development constructed adolescence as a period of problems, with their emphases on the stress, conflict, difficulty and upheaval of the transition to adulthood. More recent thinking de-emphasises the negative and conflict ridden aspects of adolescence and focuses on the negotiation of relationships within the family and the wider environment, the reciprocity of influences within the family unit, and the notion that the individual can actively shape her/his own development (Coleman and Hendry 1990:3 – 15). There is consensus that adolescence is a time of significant physical and emotional development and that it sets the stage for adulthood. The experiences, knowledge and skills (physical and emotional) acquired in adolescence have important implications for an individual's prospects in adulthood. Moreover, positive experiences during adolescence can counter negative experiences or deficiencies during childhood, thus reinforcing its importance as a key stage for interventions of all kinds, including "second chances." The reverse of the previous statement also underscores the importance of interventions during this stage of human development: positive development during childhood can be eroded by negative experiences during adolescence.

Adolescents face a range of challenges that children are not generally required to deal with during their first decade of life. These include such things as "sexuality, including early marriage, early childbearing and parenting; [...] livelihoods and economic activity and the impact of work on social status and personal identity; managing to sustain education and enhance knowledge and skills; maintaining personal health and confronting new morbidities, such as HIV/AIDS, drugs, alcohol and tobacco, suicide and unintentional injuries; learning to cope with violence, from organised gangs to armed conflicts; and assuming civic responsibilities, from involvement in voluntary organisations to voting" (United Nations 2001:7). It is on this basis that it is so important to differentiate between adolescents and children under the age of ten years.

Adolescence is neither a homogenous stage of development nor it is experienced uniformly. The needs of older adolescents (15 – 19 years) differ from those of their younger counterparts (10 – 14 years). The experiences of rural adolescents and urban adolescents differ. Levels of education, overall socio-economic status of the family and psycho-social factors all influence how adolescence is experienced. And cutting across all of the above is gender: the needs and experiences of girls are very different from those of boys.

According to the United Nations, adolescents comprise one-sixth of the world's population; of these one billion citizens, 900 million live in the developing world. Adolescents are an important entry point of development interventions, but all too often, they are unacknowledged in planning and macro-economic policy-making. There are very little data available on adolescents as a group or on the two cohort groups (younger and older). Data on adolescents are often subsumed in data on children (defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as people up to age 18) and in data on youth (commonly defined as age 10 – 24 years). Although they work, adolescents' contributions to Gross Domestic Product are not specifically calculated. In most national contexts, youth employment below the age of 14 or 15 years is not legal, so work force participation of younger adolescents is seen as contravention of labour laws rather than as positive economic and social

contributions. Moreover, many adolescents work in the informal sector or in household enterprises, which adds to the difficulty of counting their economic contributions. Adolescents are, however, important resources within families and communities; not only because of their potential as tomorrow's adults but also because they often make contributions to household livelihood strategies through their waged and un-waged labour and are part of today's human capital base.

2.2 Why adolescents work

Adolescents work for complex and varied reasons. Many of the reasons why children work hold true for adolescents (Myers and Boyden 1998). Adolescents may work out of necessity due to poverty but may value the experience for the learning it offers and for the family and self esteem they derive from the experience. They may work for spending money and to attain some level of economic independence, they may work because of opportunities for social interaction and companionship. They may work because it allows them to attend school, or because the education system has failed them in some way. Girls may work because of the opportunities to get out of traditionally oppressive homes or in some instances to ease the burden of marriage expenses on their families (Population Council and ICRW 2000). Girls may work in the home to facilitate their parents' income earning activities outside the home.

Adolescents may enter the labour force because of specific shocks or stresses. In response to the East Asian economic and financial crisis of the late 1990s, for example, total secondary school enrolment in the Philippines fell by 7.2 percent in 1998. Labour force participation by adolescents aged 10 – 14 increased from 9.63 percent in October 1997 to 10.6 percent in October 1998. For adolescents between 15 and 17 years, participation increased from 21.2 percent to 23.2 percent over the same period (Lim 2000:2). Structural adjustment and other austerity programmes and stresses such as HIV/AIDS and conflict also affect adolescent labour force participation.

Adolescents are economically active in industrialised countries as well as in developing countries. And although the incidence of adolescent labour may be high in industrialised countries, the motivation and context for such economic activity differs from that of countries in the South. In these countries, adolescents' work makes an important contribution to household incomes, rather than exclusively to personal consumption.

The relationship between poverty and child labour is indisputable and well established. However, it is important to reiterate that it is complex and is affected by social and economic factors and decisions at the macro-economic and household levels¹.

Conventional definitions of child labour refer to waged work that is undertaken outside the home or household enterprise. However, this paper acknowledges the economic contribution of both waged and un-waged work. While it is easy to place a monetary value on waged labour outside the home, the un-waged contributions of work within the home or family enterprise are more difficult to quantify. However, such contributions have real economic impacts on a household's livelihood strategy

¹ See Boyden *et al* 1998 and Blunch and Verner 2000 for a discussion of some of these issues.

and by extension on local and national economies. Boyden *et al* point to some of the limitations encountered by economists and sociologists in attempting to place a value on children's economic contributions. For example, security of a child's small but stable income may be disproportionately valued to its size. Likewise, children's earnings may be important to family subsistence because not all other income generated by a household may be available to meet basic needs. In many contexts, women's income is more likely to be used for meeting basic family needs than men's, and children's earnings generally flow to their mothers (1998:127-132). The contributions of older adolescents, whose income potential is greater than that of their younger counterparts, may also derive from their ability to meet some of their own consumption needs and relieve pressure on household budgets.

3. Work versus Livelihoods

Work is not inherently harmful to adolescents, even younger adolescents. Work, waged and un-waged, can contribute positively to the development of life skills, human capital and self-esteem, and in some contexts, such as rural agricultural areas, is regarded as "essential socialisation" (Ennew 1994: 31). This is not to deny or downplay the fact that adolescents can and do engage in harmful forms of labour, as defined by the ILO. This includes labour that is physically detrimental, such as activities that expose them to biological and technological dangers, as well as activities that are mentally or emotionally damaging, such as forced labour and prostitution. While it is important to curb adolescent exploitation, it is important that efforts which seek to do so do not lead to an overall worsening of the standard of living of adolescents, or further render their labour force participation invisible by pushing them underground into potentially more damaging work conditions.

Harmful labour has also been defined as work that is undertaken at the expense of educational attainment and which therefore compromises human capacity development (Blunch and Verner 2000). In many families this is a trade-off that has to be made, or it is a trade-off that families, and/or individuals, choose to make for a variety of reasons. These include such pull factors as the need for additional income and push factors as the perceived marginal returns of education or structural obstacles to education such as distance from school etc. The work/education trade-off is made more often in the case of girls than in the case of boys (Ibid: 3 - 6).

Accepting that adolescents do and will work, it is useful to look at their participation in the labour force in the broader context provided by the discourse on livelihoods. This discourse can help de-stigmatise the issue of work for younger adolescents and place it in a framework that considers the whole person and seeks to address multiple (economic, educational, social, and health) needs. In the case of older adolescents, it more firmly places work in a capacity building context within national development strategies. A livelihoods discourse is also in keeping with contemporary theories of human development that reject positing adolescence as problematic.

Most interventions that target adolescents are formulated around addressing specific needs or problems, with the more visible needs or problems being the ones that receive attention. The 'problem-fixing' approach has resulted in fragmented responses and a series of vertical programmes that have not been without deficiencies. Although

numerous youth development programmes have been introduced over the past two decades, the level of economic enfranchisement among youth has remained low. Similarly, increased educational opportunities have not resulted in improved income-generating possibilities across the board for youth (Commonwealth Secretariat nd).

4. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and Adolescents

The contemporary discourse on adolescent livelihoods² is generally framed within the definition of sustainable livelihoods developed by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway (1992:7 – 8):

“... a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shock, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.”

Although the term ‘sustainable livelihoods’ is variously interpreted as an approach, a framework, an objective or a set of principles, for the purpose of this paper it is considered a set of approaches to development which embody principles within a framework and call for the use of a range of analytical tools and methods³. The concept of sustainable livelihoods is “a composite of many ideas and interests, the coming together of different strands in the development debate” (Scoones 1998:7). Sustainable livelihoods approaches have been employed in poverty-focused development by a range of organisations, including bilateral agencies such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID), multilateral organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and NGOs such as CARE and Oxfam. DFID has articulated a set of core sustainable livelihoods principles, which include:

- Putting people and their concerns at the centre, recognising their current livelihood strategies, social environment, and adaptability;
- Using responsive and participatory processes to identify priorities;
- Working at multiple levels to ensure that micro-level activity informs policy development and an “effective enabling environment and that macro-level structures and policies support people to build on their own strengths;”
- Working in partnership with multiple sectors: public, private, and non-profit;
- Supporting sustainability and finding an appropriate balance between economic, institutional, social and environmental sustainability; and
- Recognising the dynamism of livelihood strategies and developing longer-term commitments while responding flexibly to changes in people’s situations (Ashley and Carney 1999:7).

² See for example Bennell 2000; Esim *et al* 1999; Greirson 2000; and Population Council and ICRW 2000.

³ See Ashley and Carney 1999:8 for a brief discussion of these interpretations.

Sustainable livelihoods approaches are asset-based and promote a holistic rather than sectoral view of livelihood development. These assets encompass a broad range of resources, including material, social, tangible and intangible capital held within and available to individuals and communities. These are elaborated as:

- Natural capital - the natural resource base and environmental services which can be used to generate a livelihood;
- Financial capital - available financial resources including savings, access to credit, remittances;
- Human capital - skills, knowledge, ability to work, including good health;
- Social capital - networks and social relations that can be tapped; and
- Physical capital - infrastructure and production equipment.

The livelihoods approach has been critiqued for its limitations at policy level. These are discussed by Ashley and Carney (1999:19 - 22) and include:

- the impracticality of the analysis for a nation;
- the difficulty of disaggregating and understanding macro level ‘structures and processes’; and
- the lack of direction provided in bringing about the needed changes in structures and processes that it advocates.

These limitations notwithstanding, the approach can be useful at policy level in that it can be used to point to deficiencies in policy, it can “provide a common-language for policy makers from different sectors” and can “help policy makers move beyond sectoral concerns to viewing policy change from a people perspective” (Ibid:18)

A focus on adolescent livelihoods within this framework would therefore:

- engage them in identifying and addressing their livelihood priorities;
- recognise the importance of adolescent work as part of household livelihood
- be sympathetic to special needs populations;
- place needs and responses in a holistic framework that recognises the opportunities and constraints of their households, communities and the wider economy;
- recognise the opportunities that adolescent work presents and not just the needs;
- advocate the building of their asset or capital base, predicated on their strengths;
- promote livelihood resources **and** outcomes; and
- create linkages between the micro-level realities and situation of adolescents and policies at the macro-level, as well as between micro- and macro-level action.

A sustainable adolescent livelihoods approach can provide a strategy for empowerment that aims to give young people the means for making informed decisions about their lives. It is compatible with a rights based approach to children’s development as advocated by the 1998 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of the strengths of the approach is that it promotes inter-disciplinary collaboration (Ashley and Carney 1999). This makes it particularly useful for adolescent-focused interventions as the needs of working adolescents generally span more than one sector, for example, education and income generation, health and income generation. However, it is important to recognise that livelihood interventions in isolation can have limited impacts if broader policy-making at the macro-economic level does not explicitly address issues that affect adolescents.

4.1 Gender and livelihoods

As mentioned earlier, gender cuts across all facets of adolescent livelihoods and in developing approaches and responses, it is essential to understand the differences between male and female labour force participation and how girls' needs differ from those of boys.

According to the ILO, more boys than girls work for wages, but more girls than boys perform full-time unpaid work in the home. Such labour supplements adult household work or makes it possible for their parents to go out to work. It is estimated, however, that if girls' work in the home were to be counted in economic surveys, there would be little or no variation in the numbers of working boys and girls, and possibly girls could outnumber boys (Ashgarie 1998).

Most countries have no specific policies for adolescent girls, with the exception of mandatory, but un-enforced primary education. Little attention has been paid to preparing girls for future livelihoods in a context that promotes mobility and leadership and to safety, physical development, reproductive health and choice (Bruce and Mensch 1999:153).

Married adolescent girls are a particular sub-group whose needs tend to be ignored (Ibid). Early marriage is akin to employment for some girls, where they join families in which they are expected to make contributions, but are not given the opportunity to develop basic skills. In some countries early marriage is actively promoted as part of a strategy for family income and social security. Few adolescent girls in the South continue with their education after marriage (Population Council and ICRW 2000). It should be noted that in some countries, however, work delays marriage for girls.

Research has also shown that "poor women in developing countries are more interested in skills training that meets their own 'practical gender needs' as opposed to longer term 'strategic gender needs'" (Bennell 2000:15).

Unequal gender relations and power relations between men and women in particular increase the vulnerability of poor adolescent girls.

4.2 Enterprise and sustainable livelihoods

The issues of enterprise and entrepreneurship capabilities have been linked with the sustainable livelihoods approach due to the overlaps between the two. The Canadian Institute for Enterprise Education defines enterprise as "the ability to take initiative to achieve a self-determined goal that is part of a future vision, in order to achieve one's own meaning in life, while sharing achievements with others in the community" (cited in Grant *et al* 1999). Enterprise and sustainable livelihoods are relevant in light of the dynamism of the physical, social, and economic environments and relate directly to the ability of individuals to recognise, predict, and adapt to these developments in order to sustain economic returns from their livelihood practices (Grant *et al* 1999; Grierson 2000).

4.3 Education and livelihood outcomes

Education makes a general contribution to asset enhancement. A solid foundation provided by education enhances virtually all other efforts to build human capital

assets. It also contributes to life skills, i.e., how to be a good citizen (Greirson 2000). Education can also contribute directly to the development of marketable skills. This is so particularly in the case of technical and vocational education, which impart knowledge and skills that are directly transferable to a work environment. The inclusion of enterprise and entrepreneurial training as a key element of the educational process holds great potential for empowerment. It is akin to life skills in some respects, but also imparts practical knowledge, such as business management, accounting etc. (Grant *et al* 1999).

While the value of education is unquestioned, there are concerns about current forms of delivery and access, which relate specifically to adolescent livelihoods. In most countries of the South, formal educational programmes are not structured to allow adolescents to pursue livelihood strategies while in school. The reality is, however, that many adolescents must earn in order to learn, as their family budgets do not stretch to include school fees, supplies and uniforms. This situation is common in many countries where austerity measures have led to decreased social spending and increased unemployment. The poor quality of available education in some areas, difficulties in access, and its perceived (or actual) irrelevance push adolescents out of school and into work.

Education and livelihood strategies are sometimes forced into competition with each other. In some instances, adolescents are required to work in family enterprises during periods of high demand for the goods or services produced. Most education systems are not flexible enough to accommodate working adolescents. In the agricultural areas the world over, for example, school attendance falls dramatically on market days, but a flexible school week would allow for that time to be made up on another day, such as Saturday or Sunday.

Many working adolescents leave school with a basic education at primary level. But to what extent do primary school curricula prepare adolescents to enter the labour force or to engage in non-formal skill training? Similar concerns are echoed about literacy programmes for adults and young people in non-formal settings, which often fail to respond to their practical needs and relate to their body of experience and knowledge.

5. Selected Issues for Consideration

There are a range of factors and circumstances that increase vulnerability and exclusion of adolescents and which have particular consequences for livelihood practices. Two of these, HIV/AIDS and conflict, are briefly discussed below. Each of these phenomena prematurely thrusts adolescents into adult roles and can negatively affect their development.

5.1 HIV/AIDS

Twenty years after HIV/AIDS was first reported in US medical literature, it has become an epidemic with no signs of a decline in global incidence. Its consequences for developing countries are particularly deleterious. In sub-Saharan Africa it rivals poverty as the main scourge of the continent. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has important implications for national development as it generally affects people during their most

productive years: investments in training and educating a cadre of workers are lost and the provision of services and rates of production suffer. In countries that are hardest hit by the crisis, such as those in Southern Africa, the impacts at the household level are devastating. As adults fall ill and eventually die, family budgets are reduced and resources reallocated, sometimes to the detriment of children and adolescents who may be withdrawn from school because there is no money for fees, or because they must take on increased responsibility in the home. The implications for socio-economic development are also serious. In Zambia for example, 1,300 teachers were lost to HIV/AIDS during the first ten months of 1998 (SADC nd).

HIV/AIDS affects adolescents in two major ways. Adolescents can be affected directly through infection or indirectly through the infection and subsequent death of a parent or care-giver. HIV infection is increasing among 15 – 19 year olds in the Southern Africa region, with the exception of Zambia, where there is a decline in incidence in that age group (Ibid).

- On the surface it would appear that a part of the response to adolescent infection (i.e., infection acquired during adolescence) would lie in a livelihood framework that seeks to reduce poverty and ameliorate the economic conditions that make adolescents vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviours. However, the evidence suggests that the situation is far more complex. Grierson concludes that sustainable livelihood initiatives are “more likely to exert an *indirect* influence on HIV/AIDS (through contributing to poverty reduction) than a *direct effect* (by providing income and the economic basis for behavioural change). It is not clear, however, how significant the indirect effect is likely to be” (2000:19).
- Where adolescents take on increased responsibility in HIV/AIDS affected households, this sometimes means taking on additional economic and decision-making responsibilities or assuming the role of head of household. In so doing, many leave school and compromise their own developmental needs to become care-givers and providers. This has long-term implications not only for their own livelihood prospects, but also for their country’s human capital base. Anecdotal evidence from Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia suggests that it is increasingly common for siblings to maintain their households when both parents or primary care-givers die (SADC nd:8).
- When adolescents assume adult roles in the absence of a parent, they do so without guidance and support. They also miss out on opportunities for the intergenerational transfer of skills and indigenous and local knowledge. In the long term, this may result in the loss of specialised skills and practices (particularly in the rural sector) in some countries (White and Robinson 2000).
- In the countries hardest hit by HIV/AIDS, its impact on individuals, households and communities has systemic implications due to reduced productivity, a reduced labour force and reduced investment in services, such as education. This in turn has implications for an individual’s asset base and livelihood prospects.
- AIDS orphans (defined by UNAIDS, WHO and UNICEF as children who lose their mother to AIDS before age 15) are particularly vulnerable to poor nutrition and withdrawal from formal education. They can experience social isolation and

discrimination and are sometimes denied access to education and health services. In some instances, they are denied their inheritance and property. This is an issue when both mother and father die or, in societies where inheritance laws and practices are biased against women, the father predeceases the mother (UNICEF 1999).

5.2 Conflict-affected adolescents

Most of the world's estimated 300,000 child soldiers are adolescents (Machel 2000). However, they are an overlooked population, despite the fact that they have distinct experiences, needs and capacities for recovery. Adolescents' experiences in war can have important implications for their livelihood prospects. On the one hand, conflict can force adolescents to enter the labour force, but the disruption and trauma of the experience affects their possibilities to learn vocational skills or gain knowledge through the educational system.

- Educational opportunities for adolescents are limited during conflict. This is so not only because of disruption to systems and the breakdown of infrastructure, but because adolescents are sometimes themselves combatants, or are recruited (forcibly or otherwise) to service adult combatants in such capacities as porters, cooks, messengers and, in the case of girls, sex workers.
- Girls in particular miss out on educational opportunities because their "education may be valued less by some refugee communities, they may have inadequate security and be pressed to marry or may be confined to their homes" (WCRWC 2000).
- As with the ravages of HIV/AIDS, adolescents may become heads of households after losing their parents or caregivers to violence or disease. In Rwanda, for example, an estimated 65,000 child-headed households remain a legacy of the 1994 conflict. Adolescent heads of households, as the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children points out, "may not have rights to family lands and they often miss out on traditional opportunities to learn a trade, such as through apprenticeships and to develop a productive role in their community." This situation can pose a dilemma for adolescents who, lacking opportunities for employment in their communities, may turn to combat, prostitution or crime (2000:4).
- Conflict can prompt premature adolescent entry into the work force to supplement household incomes. Alternatively, adolescents may take on increased responsibility within the home to help the family compensate for lost income or the loss of a wage-earner.
- The dire need to generate an income can expose adolescents to economic exploitation. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation (Machel 1996).
- Displaced adolescents are faced with challenges to earning an income and to benefiting from education and skills training programmes.

6. Programmes that Contribute to Developing Adolescent Livelihood Skills

There are a range of interventions that target adolescents, either as a discrete group or through programmes for children or youth. Existing programmatic interventions that contribute to developing adolescent skills can be divided into four main categories, based on the typology below developed by Paul Bennell (2000).

6.1 Emotional/health needs

6.1.1 Types of interventions

- Sexual and reproductive health (SRH): school-based programmes; clinical services; social marketing; mass mobilisation; and multi-service centres.
- Life skills: civics; literacy; numeracy; and management skills.

6.1.2 Livelihoods lessons learned

- Programmes that link SRH and livelihoods may be of greater importance to adolescent girls than boys “due to their more vulnerable condition with regard to risks of unplanned pregnancy, contraction of STDs, or generally inferior status” (Esim *et al* 2001:4).
- Preliminary analysis of linked SRH livelihoods programmes in India by ICRW suggests skills training can be used as an entry point for reproductive health interventions (Esim *et al* 2001).
- Although a strong case can be made for linking SRH and livelihoods interventions, approaches that package the two may not be the most effective means of linkage; possibilities for increased institutional networking need to be explored (Greirson 2000).
- Clinic-based SRH programmes in sub-Saharan Africa have little or no youth involvement because they ignore issues that youth consider to be important (Bennell 2000). This situation is likely mirrored elsewhere.

6.2 Economic needs

6.2.1 Types of interventions

- Capabilities and assets: basic education (formal and non-formal); training services (vocational/technical, management, life-skills, entrepreneurship); financial services (credit, savings schemes, grants); information/advisory services (technical assistance/extension activities); and provision of assets (capital – equipment, vehicles, buildings; land, material inputs).
- Structuring economic opportunities: improved employment opportunities (small enterprise development, income generation projects); improved access to resources (land, infrastructure, services); improved access to markets (products and labour – employment, career services); and protect and promote rights (property, employment, education, state benefits).

6.2.2 Livelihoods lessons learned

- Traditional, sector-specific vocational training initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment ignore the realities of young people's lives and fail to make the link between young people's living circumstances and livelihood needs (Population Council and ICRW 2000).
- Interventions for girls often focus on low-skill and/or traditional female activities with little regard for prospects for mobility over the long term.
- Training and skill building needs to link into the growth sector/areas of local and national economies.
- The provision of basic technical or other income generating skills is sometimes not enough. Where opportunities are limited, such as in rural areas, training in business development, niche marketing, market access, and product diversification is also (Bennell 2000).
- Though widely promoted as a means for adolescents to take control of their lives, self-employment and entrepreneurship training is not appropriate for all adolescents and has limitations. They are more appropriate for older adolescents or adolescents who are no longer in school. It should also be noted that youth can be a handicap in enterprise development because of low levels of skills, experience, networks and status—all of which are important assets for enterprise (Grierson 2000).
- It is important to create linkages between the formal educational system and livelihoods. Because many of the most disadvantaged adolescents do not make it to secondary schools, it is essential for these linkages to be made from as early as the primary level.
- Micro-credit schemes work best when linked to training programmes in business and life-skills (Sutherland and Richardson 1998).

6.3 Capacity building

6.3.1 Types of interventions

Institutional development to service delivery organisations (indirect services to youth)

6.4 Empowerment

6.4.1 Types of interventions

- Youth participation
- Advocacy

6.4.2 Livelihoods lessons learned

When adolescents participate in programme design, the interventions are more likely to meet their needs and they are more likely to comply with terms and conditions associated with their involvement in the programme (Sutherland and Richardson 1998).

7. Livelihoods Approaches in Policy and Practice

7.1 Linked interventions

Several of the lessons above point to the need for linked adolescent interventions. Livelihood approaches present opportunities for linkages with interventions that address other social and developmental needs. The International Centre for Research on Women is currently engaged in research in India on linked adolescent health and livelihoods programmes (Esim *et al* 2001). Findings of that work support the premise that linked programmes are desirable and can be effective. The preliminary findings also include the following:

- Linkages were established between vocational and reproductive health training as part of a strategy to generate interest in the latter. Among the linked programmes surveyed, the impetus for linkages came from reproductive health interventions, based on requests for vocational training from parents and adolescents. In most cases, however, the vocational training aspects of the programme were not adequately conceptualised as this was outside the service providers' areas of expertise.
- The empowerment effect of linked programmes is greater than that of vertical, single sector programmes. Integrating livelihoods training with health education has a positive impact on "young people's, especially young women's, self confidence, negotiation and decision-making power within the household and community" (Ibid:9).
- Linked programming can stimulate innovative approaches to delivery, but innovation is more likely to occur in newer programmes than in more established interventions.
- The replication of linked single-entity programmes can be limited by scale and as with other development interventions, mechanisms for the sustainability of such work is a concern.

This ongoing research by ICRW will likely continue to provide useful information for the livelihoods and linked programming debates.

7.2 Towards an enabling environment

Without an enabling policy environment, the impact of sustainable livelihoods interventions will be limited. Adolescent livelihood needs are currently not mainstreamed. They are typically not taken into account in the design and delivery of public services and social development interventions. The challenge is to find ways of integrating adolescent-friendly approaches into existing policies and practices.

The adoption of youth policies is an important entry point for the integration of adolescent issues into national agendas. A youth policy with specific reference to adolescent issues is necessary for creating the conditions in which a livelihoods agenda can be meaningfully promoted and adopted at national level. An undifferentiated youth policy which fails to distinguish between the multiple sub-groups that comprise "youth" and the distinctive needs of each, fails to adequately serve all parties.

Policy should be informed by accurate empirical information about adolescents, their work and their lives, preferably with input from adolescents themselves (Myers and Boyden 1998:18-19). As with any development intervention, livelihoods activities must clearly identify targets and periodically verify that the target audience is being reached.

Educational reform to accommodate adolescents' work, where and as appropriate, is another important element in creating an enabling environment for the adoption of adolescent livelihoods approaches. Reform may be needed at the level of curricula or in forms of delivery in order to overcome not only the competition that sometimes exists between work and education, but also to eliminate those factors which push adolescents out of school and into work. These range from such things as ensuring that where primary schooling is the only level of education attained, the curricula prepare children for the working world; to instituting flexible school days to allow adolescents to fulfil their financial obligations to their families; to work-based formal education.

Policies and incentives that promote work-based academic learning within private sector enterprises is another mechanism that can be used enable the adoption of livelihood approaches.

However, it is not enough to attempt to institute and reform policies that directly promote livelihoods approaches to adolescent work or relate directly to adolescents. It is also important to recognise how macro-economic policies affect adolescents. Fiscal and monetary policies are not child and adolescent neutral. They can have profound effects on welfare if not formulated with a child/adolescent perspective. Policies that "influence inflation, unemployment, income distribution, foreign debt obligations, taxes, and subsidies [can] affect families' social and economic situation and consequently children" (de Vylder 2000:12)⁴.

7.3 Best practice and additional learning

The indirect and social effects of sustainable livelihoods interventions are considered important, but they are not well understood (Greirson 2000). Similarly, there is a need for the additional documentation and analysis of experiences for the purpose of learning.

7.4 Adolescent participation

When asked, adolescents can and will articulate their needs and priorities. Moreover, practice and research that are informed by user preference are more likely to be successful. The challenge is to facilitate true participation and to include adolescents in the design, delivery, and evaluation of interventions that target them.

Adolescents need to be widely recognised as stakeholders in the development process and to be engaged appropriately as such.

⁴ See de Vylder 2000 for a discussion on the direct impacts of macro-economics on children.

7.5 Forging partnerships for service delivery

It should be noted that “sustainable livelihoods approaches are more likely to be supported through [...] livelihoods-guided sectorally-anchored projects, rather than through sustainable livelihoods projects *per se*” (Ashley and Carney 1999:17).

The comparative advantage of existing adolescent interventions should be exploited for maximum gain in the context of cross-sectoral partnerships and networking for service delivery. Evidence suggests there is a need for developing linkages for research and practice based on institutional networking that builds on sector-specific strengths and that this is more effective than single-entity approaches that package cross-sectoral components, whether “as equal components or add-ons” (Greirson 2000:20 and Esim *et al* 2000).

ICRW’s research in India revealed that there is little collaboration and few partnerships across sectors among adolescent service organisation on the ground (Esim *et al* 2001). This situation is not atypical. The promotion and mainstreaming of an adolescent livelihoods agenda will require partnerships at national, sub-regional and even international levels. Structures at national level, such as youth units or focal points in government ministries can be useful in facilitating cross-sector co-ordination (Singh and Gilman nd). Inter-agency co-ordination and networking will, however, require a fundamental transformation in the way development organisations work on the ground.

Although government and NGOs are typically thought of as the main providers of services for adolescents, other civil society partners, such as the corporate sector and labour unions, also have an important role to play in putting livelihoods approaches into practice.

7.6 Forging partnerships for advocacy

Advocacy is an important element in promoting and building support for adolescent livelihoods approaches as good development practice. The concept of work suffers from a negative connotation based on Western notions of childhood and adolescence rather than on the economic realities of poor people in developing countries and other cultural contexts that define childhood, adolescence and adulthood differently from in the West.

Coalitions at national and regional levels have an important role to play in shifting the debate on adolescent livelihoods away from work as a negative towards work as a positive, affirming experience. At the same time however, it remains important to protect adolescents and children from those forms of work that are hazardous and have a negative impact on their lives and development.

Adolescent issues compete for attention with other development concerns. It is therefore essential for advocacy strategies to be developed and for explicit linkages to be made between adolescents needs and competing concerns and to position an adolescent agenda as an integral and mainstreamed part of national development strategies rather than as an add-on. Such advocacy must target national governments as well as the development assistance community.

Opportunities for advocating and mainstreaming adolescent livelihoods present themselves through the current interest in adolescent issues generated by the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children and other initiatives. Proponents of adolescent livelihoods approaches need to take full advantages of the existing possibilities.

8. Conclusions

The sustainable livelihoods approach provides a useful framework for moving beyond discussions on adolescent work as a necessarily exploitative and hazardous undertaking. Instead, it conceives of work as a positive experience as it constructs livelihoods as an opportunity for human development

As a holistic approach it provides opportunities for linkages that allow interventions to consider the whole adolescent in the context of her/his environment, skills and aspirations. The approach allows for the disaggregation of needs, and for focus on specific issues relevant to particular sub-groups.

Promoting an adolescent livelihoods agenda, however, requires changes in policy, practice and thinking. Adolescents need to be recognised as economic and development actors.

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