

DISCUSSION PAPER

**ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION
IN SITUATION ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS**

10 CASE STUDIES FROM THE FIELD

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1. Rationale and Methodology

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) supports the principle that all children have the right to have their opinions and interests heard and considered, particularly on the issues that affect their welfare; participation is a moral and legal right.

The practical benefits of upholding this right are many. Through participation citizens 'develop skills, build competencies, form aspirations, gain confidence, and attain valuable resources'. Importantly, these benefits go beyond the individual. Young people's level of human capital cannot fail to impact on the development of families, communities, and economies on the small and large scale.

In situation assessment and analysis, the most basic pay-off is *information* about the beneficiaries' needs, their opinions about proposed interventions, and by extension the likelihood of success for those interventions. Taking beneficiaries' views into account may also yield benefits in terms of *engagement*, so that community resources are mobilised behind the programme in question.

Policy-makers and development practitioners who undertake such a dialogue will often face constraints. In the case of youth development these can include defensiveness on the part of young people, or a culture of deference to elders. UNICEF and the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) commissioned this paper to aid discussion about how best to negotiate these kinds of constraints, and achieve effective participation by young people in situation assessment and analysis.

Methodology

Youth development practitioners were given questionnaires and asked to:

- 1) Identify specific programmes and projects that are designed to promote youth participation in situation analyses, decision-making and governance;
- 2) Outline the programme and project objectives;
- 3) Describe the strategies used to achieve the objectives;
- 4) Note the conditions that facilitated effective project implementation and the constraints to project implementation;
- 5) State how the constraints were or are being addressed; and
- 6) Comment on the lessons from the experience.

The most comprehensive responses received formed the material for the paper. An initial draft was then discussed by representatives from NGOs, civil society organisations, and national and international organisations. This took place at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, UK, in May 2001. The event provided further material for section three, "discussion topics."

2. Case Studies

A Comprehensive Approach to Youth Development: BARBADOS

Background

Barbados is an upper middle-income developing country with a per capita GNP of approximately US\$12,260. Compared with many other developing countries, Barbados has a reasonably sound economy and a well-developed social infrastructure. Health care is free and a range of social insurance programmes is available. Average life expectancy is 77 years.

Barbados has remained a stable democracy since independence. In the post-war period, the economy gradually diversified from sugar to light manufacturing and tourism. These developments undermined white upper-class dominance (which survived long after the end of slavery), though notable disparities still exist between the white elite and the majority black population.

In 1991 15-24 year-olds made up some 18% of the population. This is thought to have declined to about 15% today. There is universal access to education up to secondary level, and free education up to university level. The literacy rate (98%) is consistent with rates reported in more developed economies. Problems currently facing young people in Barbados include unemployment, crime, drugs and HIV/AIDS.

The Youth Development Programme

Aims include:

- Reach 9-29 year-olds, including those most prone to social problems.
- “Harness and channel the energies of the youth into the process of nation building;
- Build harmonious relations between Barbadian citizens and develop a more caring society in the process;
- Create an environment which will promote confidence in [the] culture, thus equipping the youth to deal more effectively with negative influences.”

Organisation:

The programme is administered by the Youth Affairs Department. 32 *youth commissioners* deliver services at the district level. Youth commissioners are required to be “resident in the district to which they are being assigned and to have a demonstrable record of working or interacting with young people in the community.” No academic qualifications are specified, however, commissioners are enrolled in the Commonwealth Youth Programme’s Diploma in Youth In Development (a tertiary level professional course, operating by supported distance education). There is a bias toward selecting young persons to fill these positions; commissioners are normally under 35.

The youth commissioner’s role is to:

- “Assist/work with youth related governmental and non-governmental agencies;

- Facilitate the realisation of the creative potential of young people by mobilising, guiding and channelling their access to the wide range of governmental and non-governmental services;
- Identify, collect and maintain basic information on all young people in the target age-range;
- Promote, mobilise and extend the activities and membership of youth groups and organisations in the district;
- Maintain a directory of all available services and programmes relevant to the needs of young people;
- Work with young men and women who are not members of an organised group; and
- Maintain a directory of youth and community organisations”

The Youth Development Programme undertakes a number of surveys and consultation exercises, detailed below.

The National Youth Survey

The Division of Youth Affairs considered it important to first collect reliable data on the status, needs, issues and concerns of the entire youth population. This was a “technically correct, though politically difficult” decision. Barbados maintains an efficient system for registering its population. Youth commissioners were therefore able to obtain a listing of all persons aged between 15 and 30, to locate them and administer questionnaires. Completed questionnaires were sent to the Division for analysis.

Profiles can be compiled using a number of variables, including gender, religion, educational level and geographical location. The Division is also able to derive valuable information from conducting electronic searches. For example, the Labour Department requested contact information on young people interested in working in the tourism sector. A number of young people were then able to take advantage of employment opportunities. Similar searches are conducted when there is need for specific skills.

National youth surveys are to be conducted every five years to ensure that the database remains current and to enable analysis of trends in the issues affecting young people.

The School Leaver’s Tracer Survey

This annual survey collects baseline data on those about to leave secondary school: their occupational status, plans for education or training, extra-curricular activities and career goals. This information is used to guide the Division’s planning activities. Survey results are also sent to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour’s Guidance and Placement Unit and to principals and guidance counsellors of the secondary schools. The idea is to assist in the process of transition from secondary school to higher education or work, a time when young people are especially vulnerable.

The survey is conducted in two phases. In the first phase, students are required to complete questionnaires during the final term of the academic year. The Division then processes the information using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The second phase of the survey is conducted after the examination period, when most students will have made their

choices about further education, training or seeking employment. The Youth Commissioners conduct this phase of the study. Commissioners visit the respondents' homes and where required, provide guidance on available opportunities, given the students' chosen career direction. Commissioners normally recommend approximately 10% of school leavers to education, training or employment opportunities, thereby ensuring that 'such young persons do not fail to advance their own personal development [because of] ignorance, apathy or lack of motivation'.

Issue-Specific Surveys

These seek young people's views on new initiatives, particularly those that have not been sufficiently researched. For example, prior to delivering a community-based or national workshop, the Division would normally conduct a survey of a sample of the intended audience. Young people are given the opportunity to define subjects for discussion. The Division also asks young people to evaluate training activities, workshops and other programmes both at the design stage and on completion. 'In this way, young people...actually determine the course of action for the division.'

On certain national issues, opinions across the whole age group are sought. One example concerned a proposed National Youth Service scheme, which would require all school leavers to perform a number of hours of community service, with a more intensive programme for those who had committed an offence.

National and Sub-National Consultation Workshops

Through national and sub-national consultations, feedback is sought from the group rather than the individual. The workshops are designed to encourage young people to objectively assess their social, political and cultural contexts. There are also specific workshops to build participants' capacity in project formulation and development.

Sub-national consultations, which take place annually, are based on a division of the island into four zones. Workshops target youth and community organisations, although they do not exclude 'unaffiliated' young people. They normally include 60 representatives of the 120 formally organised youth and community groups. Prospective participants are asked to complete questionnaires and, based on the results, discussion themes are formulated. Facilitators make thematic presentations and these are followed by general discussion.

The issues arising at sub-national level are sent on to the national consultations for further discussion. National workshops involve 240 representatives, two from each of the organised groups. The representatives are selected by young people, although the Division may encourage certain groups to participate, depending on the issues to be discussed. The Division also sets the agenda, together with the Barbados Youth Development Council - the umbrella agency for youth organisations in the country.

Community-Based Interaction

The consultations described above focus principally on those who are part of organised groups. Since almost 75% of young people don't belong to such groups, the workshops alone are insufficient for participatory policy-making.

Through community-based interaction, young people benefit from a personalised approach to programme formulation. The island is divided into 32 districts, with care taken to ensure that the geographical integrity of the communities is preserved. On average, there are 2,500 young people in each district. The youth commissioners have the important role of developing a relationship of trust with the young people in their district. Young people are given the opportunity to voice concerns, interests and ideas directly to the programme planners.

Within general policy guidelines provided by the Division, young people are able to develop projects at the community level. Projects are designed with assistance from the local youth commissioner, and are then submitted to the Division for approval and funding.

“This particular sub-programme has seen the development of a number of innovative projects with high levels of youth participation, especially among a segment of the youth population traditionally characterised as disengaged and apathetic.”

Assessment

Being small and relatively well resourced, with wide social support networks and a small youth population, Barbados is well placed to carry out a comprehensive youth development strategy. It also benefits from a relatively high acceptance of the importance of youth involvement within the government,* and the absence of any ingrained abuse of young people’s rights in Barbadian culture.

However, these advantages do not of themselves ensure receptivity to the programme. Because the Youth Development Programme is a government initiative, many young people are sceptical or cynical about its motives and proposed outcomes. Some, particularly among the white upper middle-classes, consider the programme unnecessary. Among the more needy groups also, self-development is not always regarded as necessary or urgent. Accordingly, one of the greatest challenges facing Barbados is one shared by less well resourced countries also: building trust between programmers and young people. The report’s observation on community interaction is pertinent to this theme:

“The environment is one in which young people are themselves sovereign: the interaction takes place on their ‘turf’; there is no intimidation of an expert or a lengthy, incomprehensible questionnaire, and there is actually the capacity for dialogue and negotiation as to the shape a programme should take.”

*Although a) final project approval rests with the Permanent Secretary, which is problematic if he or she does not identify with young people’s social needs or their socio-cultural context; b) Government regulations and procedures are excessively cumbersome and centralised, causing delays in resources, approval for expenditure etc.

Fact-Finding for Youth Empowerment: ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

Background

Thirty percent of Pakistan's population subsists below the poverty line. Of the 30 million 10-19 year-olds in the country, approximately 8.7 million have never attended school and another ten million left school during their primary education. However, there are notable geographic and gender disparities in educational levels. In the rural areas, the literacy rate is 62% (48% female and 75% male), while in the urban areas it is 77% (69% female and 83% male). About one third of adolescents are working, and there are an estimated 3 million child labourers. 50% of all new HIV infections occur among young people.

The Fact-finding project

UNICEF Pakistan expressed a commitment to design and implement programmes that empower young people, particularly the most marginalized. The principal goal was to assist young people to change their circumstances. Given these larger objectives, UNICEF's first task was to understand the concerns young people have, including their perceptions and ideas on how they could change their lives. An exploratory fact-finding project was designed. This preliminary study focused on young people, aged 12-21 years, in 75 villages in Islamabad. The aim was to involve between 3000 and 5000 young people in situation analysis and to focus especially on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

UNICEF collaborated on project administration with Pakistan's Federal Ministry of Social Welfare and BEDARI, an NGO in Pakistan that works on women's rights. UNICEF's role was to provide overall management and funding. The Ministry of Social Welfare was responsible for community mobilisation since it had a network of contacts throughout the villages. BEDARI provided technical support. The work plan, methods, budget and timetable were agreed collaboratively.

The organisations decided on a three-stage process, to be executed over a three-year period:

- The first phase (facilitated by BEDARI) would feature youth group discussions. Young people's views would be collected by volunteers brought in by BEDARI and students from Quaid-I-Azam University, and the agents of change from the community would be identified.
- In the second phase there would be four training workshops (facilitated by BEDARI) to prepare the agents of change for work in their communities.
- In the final phase, young villagers would be trained by representatives from BEDARI and the Ministry of Social Welfare to achieve personal and community development.
- Youth groups would help to develop life skill packages and training modules relevant to the communities they work in. For this, a 'door to door' approach was necessary the day before each discussion.
- Ideally, a group would include eight to twelve people in order to generate momentum and group dynamic. It would also be demographically and socio-economically homogenous. To reduce the likelihood of contrived responses, practitioners tried to ensure that groups

- did not include individuals in any way related to each other, such as friends, parents or teachers.
- Youth facilitators were to be provided with intensive training on how to encourage open discussion; how to promote and retain enthusiasm within the group; how to deal with quiet, shy or disruptive participants, etc.

The resulting situation analysis provided important insights on the issues affecting these young men and women. According to the report, all groups highlighted the physical issues that affected them, including inadequate food, shelter and clothing. Young people were clearly worried about their futures. Facilitators observed that they had ‘inherited tensions and worries from their parents.’ Males were particularly concerned about the need to make money. Traditionally, boys are required to bring home money ‘as soon as they are old enough to work.’ Education was not seen as valuable in itself but only as a means to get a job. Technical training was seen as possibly useful but other forms of study were seen as futile. Girls desired vocational centres, which ‘would provide a place for socialising and relaxing [and] where girls could utilise their skills in work and be with their friends.’ Vocational centres would provide a release from the home since girls normally have to remain at home and work.

The groups cited other concerns: inadequate transport; inadequate or non-existent health facilities; lack of water supply; lack of schools; abusive and ill-qualified teachers. The discussions revealed deeply entrenched prejudices, particularly against girls, and traditions that prevented young people from attempting to change their circumstances. In discussing marital problems, for example, girls described how they were forced into arrangements from birth and ‘are threatened and beaten by their father and brothers if they refuse a proposal, or locked in a room for days without food’.⁴ Girls are married at a very young age and abused if they cannot carry out what are seen as ‘marital/sexual responsibilities’. Violence against girls and women is common. Facilitators noted that many girls had accepted such patterns of behaviour and were somewhat averse to proposals that they could change their situation.

Assessment

Though the discussions were intended to be with and for young people, elders attended in order to reinforce their authority.

“Elders were not willing to leave their children with strangers who might manipulate their minds and cause them to become rebellious”.⁵

The elders’ presence was an obstacle to frank discussion: young people were obviously fearful of saying the wrong things and were stopped when they broached subjects that the elders disapproved of. Further, villagers were taught to uphold their honour. They were not to reveal their problems to anyone. This was a particular problem for participants whose relatives were included in the same group.

Accordingly, facilitators drew some of their conclusions from observing young people’s interactions with parents and guardians. This was a useful supplement to information communicated in discussion. It also provided valuable lessons for the design of future youth empowerment programmes. In some cases, communication was difficult because of the language barrier and because most of the group participants were illiterate.

Some of the villagers' scepticism about the exercise was reasonable – previous studies had been conducted in the villages without bringing concrete benefits. However, this situation analysis was used to produce well-grounded policy recommendations. Further, there are plans to expand and improve the programme. UNICEF is to strengthen links with the Ministries of Social Welfare, Education, Health and Youth Affairs and with agencies such as UNAIDS, UNFPA and the Population Council in order to consolidate strategies for the young people's development. Projects are to be continued within the selected rural communities, and there will be special focus on enhancing the protection of adolescent girls' rights. In conclusion the fact-finding project encountered serious constraints. Nevertheless, in the judgement of the organisations involved it produced enough information to inform policy.

Engaging with Children who Live and Work on the Streets: ACCRA AND TAMALE, GHANA

Background

Accra, the capital of Ghana, has approximately four million inhabitants. Over the last 20 years, there has been rapid economic and physical expansion in the city, and this has placed great burdens on already limited services and facilities. It is estimated that 45% of the population subsist on incomes that are below the World Bank's absolute poverty line.

Tamale is the regional capital of northern Ghana. Most of the inhabitants are engaged in subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Poverty is more widespread in Tamale than in Accra. Many of the children - some of whom have migrated from neighbouring districts - have poor nutritional and health status. Unlike Accra, however, children who work on the streets normally have places of residence.

Participatory Planning Workshops

In 1999, UNICEF Ghana, Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS), Children in Need (CiN), CENCOSAD and Street Girls AID facilitated two participatory planning workshops. Their purpose was to:

- Include young people's views in the development of the 2001-2005 country assistance programme.
- Seek children's views on issues identified in the participatory needs assessment;
- Obtain children's views about possible solutions and, particularly, the part that UNICEF and its partners could play in helping them to improve their circumstances;
- Make participants aware of their rights, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Ghanaian Constitution and the Children's Act.⁶
- Empower the young people to deal with their circumstances

UNICEF and its partners held meetings to prepare for the workshops. These considered issues such as preparing the children to participate effectively. Criteria for selecting participants for both workshops were established. It was decided that children should be selected from those areas in which UNICEF currently had a programme, as well as from those that both UNICEF and the

Government of Ghana had identified as requiring a programme. Children in need of special protection were also to be included. The preparatory team recommended that participants should preferably be under 19 years of age. They should also have expressed a willingness to participate in the workshops, having had the project's aims explained to them.

Importantly, workshop objectives were also explained to parents or guardians, and vehicles were provided to ensure safe transportation of the children. Some of the children were the main breadwinners for their families. In these cases UNICEF provided some compensation for the time spent at the workshop and the cost of transportation.

In the event, participants included children who lived and worked on the streets; children who had dropped out of school, most of whom were not in work; and children who were in school but were likely to leave because of their parents' inability to pay the school fees, or their dissatisfaction with their school and teachers.

Seventeen facilitators were selected from UNICEF partner organisations. These facilitators were already known to the children and had prior experience in working with children in vulnerable/circumstances. As part of conducting the exercise, facilitators attended to the young people, shared meals with them, and joined in the fun and games that accompanied the workshops. This was an attempt to establish trusting personal relationships. Many of the children were unaccustomed to this type of contact.

The first workshop was held in Accra and included 50 children. The second was held in Tamale, with 78 children. They lasted for two and a half and three days, respectively. Informal ceremonies were held at the start of the workshop in order to develop a friendly, interactive atmosphere. Subsequently, children were given easy-to-understand cards, which explained their rights according to the CRC. Facilitators helped children to understand the information, particularly those who could not read. Each workshop also opened with a drama presentation in which the Children in Need Ghana (CING) depicted aspects of the 'life situation' of most of the children. This provided material for discussion.

Groups were given discussion guides based on information from the participatory needs assessments. Exercises were adapted from the Save the Children Alliance training kit. As well as discussing needs, groups were asked to determine who is responsible for meeting those needs. Facilitators explained how circumstances were influenced by the economic, social, political and cultural context, and explained the purpose and content of the CRC.

Throughout the workshop, regular meetings were held between UNICEF and the facilitators, at which project objectives and methodologies were reviewed and changes were proposed, as appropriate.

Facilitators noted regional variations in the responses. In Accra, children were more aware of their circumstances and had higher expectations than those in Tamale. They were also more spontaneous and better able to express their needs.

The major findings were:

- Children at risk have very low self-esteem;
- The term "street children" has a negative connotation;
- Commercial sex workers and adolescent girls normally experience 'very negative' attitudes from health centres and hospitals;

- Divorce, neglect, violence from parents and poverty are the principal reasons why young people run away;
- Parents sometimes force their children into commercial sex;
- Children who live on the streets are often attacked. They work in hazardous situations and sleep in unsheltered areas.
- Young people are vulnerable to drug and alcohol abuse, child labour, and HIV/AIDS;
- There is inadequate sex education and, particularly in the rural areas, inadequate provisions for young women during pregnancy and breastfeeding. In these areas, malnutrition rates are very high.

Assessment

The workshops provided useful information, and highlighted some issues in a way that was not anticipated by either UNICEF or the facilitators. Based on the findings from the workshops, UNICEF and its partners were able to formulate policy recommendations, some of which came from the young people themselves. Child rights awareness, informal education and micro-credit for young women were some of the themes that arose.

The project demonstrated the benefits of:

- collaborating with organisations that already have credibility and visibility within the communities
- involving parents and guardians, to ensure initial programme acceptance and also because parental attitudes may need to change if the programme is to be sustained
- rigorous planning and continuous programme evaluation

Cultural Obstacles to Participation: 1) The Naticileka Youth Club, FIJI

Background

Fiji has a population of approximately 800,000. It is a politically divided population, with the Indo Fijians and the indigenous Fijians maintaining separate languages, religions, and political identities. Over the past 15 years, economic growth has fluctuated, though currently it is especially low. There is negligible foreign investment and a growing unemployment rate, particularly in the garment industry. Unemployment among young people is high. It is estimated that approximately 10,000 school leavers compete for only 2000 jobs. Many young people migrate from the rural to the urban areas in search of employment. Once there, they often become involved in drug abuse or criminal activities.

The Naticileka Youth Club

Naticileka is a settlement of 15 households, with a population of eighty. The community has abundant land and sea resources.

The Youth Club was set up in 1994 by young people who were concerned about improving the settlement's income generating capacity, employment rate, and living standards. The club administers a fishing scheme, and the proceeds are used to benefit the village. Thus far, profits have been used to build a church, the pastor's house, and to provide farm equipment and school fees.

Many young people in the settlement are involved; only a few of those under 14 years attend school. However, membership is limited to men, as it is thought that women belong in the home. The youth club is run by a group of elected youth executives. These executives are responsible for encouraging young people to register as members. Executive members identify needs and plan activities.

Although members can air their views on a monthly basis, 'there is no structure in place to facilitate, encourage and train members in analysing their own situation'. At meetings, members feel powerless to change their circumstances.

Assessment

That young people are not involved in situation analysis is clearly related to cultural norms. Traditionally, young people grow up in 'a culture of silence'. They are not encouraged or expected to participate in decision-making; they are instead taught to be respectful and highly deferential to elders. The elders demand money from the fishing proceeds for social or traditional gatherings. This blunts the young people's initiative and the dynamism of the youth club.

Cultural Obstacles to Participation: 2) JORDAN

Background

The Kingdom of Jordan has a population of approximately 5 million, with 78% living in urban areas. Some 33% of Jordan's population are between 10 and 24 years of age. There are a number of social problems in Jordan: lack of economic opportunities, unequal educational opportunities, inadequate health education, family violence, and sexual and physical abuse.

Cultural and political traditions restrict young people's input in policy-making. There are a number of youth organisations in Jordan. These focus on education, health, child protection issues, income generation, recreation and participation. However, most youth groups are informal associations since under Jordanian Law, citizens under 18 are not allowed to form bodies or societies (In 1991, Jordan ratified the CRC, although it did so with reservations on the requirement for freedom of thought, conscience and religion).

Efforts at Participatory Situation Assessment

UNICEF, the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development, the Jordan Women Union and other organisations including the government are seeking to build some form of youth participation. The Ministry of Education provides training and seeks to engage young people in

productive activities; the Ministry of Youth is implementing a leadership programme that allows young people to meet with policymakers and academics. The UNICEF programme is designed to raise 'awareness, interest and commitment to the adolescent and young girls' and boys' needs and rights in the country.'

The preliminary task is to facilitate a comprehensive assessment of the situation, in consultation with young people, particularly those already involved in youth programmes. The programme is managed by a UNICEF Adolescent Project Officer, an assistant and a secretary. A steering committee for UNFPA/UNICEF projects has been formed. The committee includes two young people who represent the Youth Advisory Group. The steering committee allows stakeholders on youth issues to coordinate their efforts.

Action taken:

- A desk review was undertaken on the situation of young persons in Jordan.
- A forum of 186 young people (96 females and 90 males) was then convened. The forum was facilitated by 30 youth leaders trained for the purpose. The major concerns identified were social pressures, lack of education opportunities, gender discrimination, unemployment, and health.
- A conference on the situation of young people (particularly girls) was convened to expand on the initial forum and to develop a network of groups and individuals interested in working with young people. Participants included various governmental and non-governmental organizations, legislators, teachers, academics, the media, community leaders and representatives from the youth forum.
- A second more advanced youth forum was then held (September 2000). Participants suggested 10 project ideas that are to be addressed in 2001.

Assessment

The programme is still in its initial stages, and faces considerable social and political barriers. The idea of youth participation is still new and has not yet been fully accepted by all principal stakeholders. The focus is on young people who are already involved in youth organizations and there are significant groups of young people who are not reached. The media is one avenue for changing this situation. Eight media programmes focusing on youth were proposed at a workshop of young people and representatives of the sector. UNICEF has since sought the media's commitment to develop these or similar programmes that advocate youth participation.

Cultural Obstacles to Participation: 3) BANGLADESH

Background

As in Pakistan, young people in Bangladesh enjoy limited social and employment opportunities, and gender discrimination is widespread. Two aspects of the latter are sexual abuse and mobility restrictions on girls. With rapid urbanisation social values are being eroded. Young people are drawn into crime, prostitution and alcoholism. Political violence perpetuates a climate of insecurity among young people, and boys in particular can be drawn into the disquiet. High levels of corruption and other weaknesses in the law also undermine efforts at social protection. In particular, young people's lives are constrained and threatened by criminal power structures.

Seeking Leaders among Young People

Action Aid is currently collaborating with seven local and national NGOs in order to promote adolescent development. Emphasis is placed on improving young people's capacity to claim their rights, advocating for a youth development programme at the national level, and fostering greater understanding of young people's needs within families and communities.

The programme focuses primarily on young people from urban and peri-urban areas, normally between 10 and 19 years of age. It also seeks to reach young people up to 24 years. This cohort is included in order that project leaders can continue to build leadership capacity among the young beyond adolescence. Between 2001-2003, the aim is to involve 42000 adolescents and young people in Dhaka and Chittagong City Corporation.

Within the selected urban communities, groups of approximately 15-20 adolescents are formed. Group leaders are responsible for educating their peers and encouraging non-members to participate. Issue-based forums are also formed with adolescents and young people at community schools and colleges. These community-based groups are to be linked to a central body, which will in turn be linked to the City Corporation Ward. This structure is meant to ensure that young people and adolescents are included in programme planning, budgeting, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Representatives should, thereby, be more responsive to young people's needs and rights.

Assessment

Action Aid and the collaborating institutions, despite their best efforts, have been unable to foster the kind of participatory environment envisioned. The project has not been able to reach the hard-core urban poor, and rural adolescents are currently excluded. The poorest groups require special programmes, direct NGO involvement and significant resources. However, these investments are difficult to achieve in conditions of inconsistent government policy, which in turn owes to frequent changes of government.

The Need for Clear Incentives: Salvador, BRAZIL

Background

Salvador is Brazil's third largest city, with a population of 2.4 million. Of these some 23% are between 15 and 25 years of age. The unemployment rate is about 25%, with informal employment dominating the job market. The average family in Salvador earns approximately US\$129 per month. Young people are forced to leave school early in order to help their families financially. Children and adolescents are exploited in the labour market and about 44% of those who are in school do not perform at expected levels.

In 2000, Brazil celebrated the 10th anniversary of its Statute on the Child and Adolescent. This emphasized the importance of youth participation in NGO and government activities and focused, specifically, on encouraging young people's involvement in the Municipal Child and Adolescent Rights Council. Five out of sixteen members are young persons aged 15 to 20 years. They are involved in programme planning, implementation and evaluation, and have a voice in designing public policies. In order to bolster support for youth participation, programme leaders have been spreading the idea of youth empowerment among government leaders and through the media.

However, projects designed to foster wider youth involvement encounter serious constraints. Given the demands upon poorer children to work, their participation in discussion groups is limited. In addition, many are frustrated with government performance and do not anticipate tangible benefits from participation. Young people in the middle class, on the other hand, are largely uninterested, often considering government youth policy as an issue for the poor only.

In response, some projects provide young people with scholarships so that they do not have to focus on earning an income. Others provide employment for young people when they are older than sixteen years. Additionally, there are continued attempts at stimulating group activities, emphasizing situation analysis, and encouraging young people to find solutions.

Assessment

On the strength of the information received, the strategies and goals of the Salvador project are inadequately defined, and it is not clear how current constraints are being tackled. These features are not conducive to successful situation analysis. This is a case where policy planners are required to secure both the government's and the young people's interest. An effective strategy would necessarily include advocacy, collaboration with relevant non-governmental agencies and closer consideration of the incentives facing potential participants.

Promoting a “Low” Priority in Social Services: RUSSIA

Background

15-24 year-olds make up approximately 15% of the Russian population. About 46% live in the large cities, 28% in small cities and towns and 26% in rural areas. There are growing numbers of low-income families. Drug abuse, prostitution, crime and STDs are on the increase. Although governments have not set a high priority on youth development, young people are involved in community councils that are attached to local government agencies. Through these channels they participate in solving problems at various levels.

The Young People’s Health and Development Programme

This programme has three components: youth participation, youth friendly environments/information/resource centres, and youth friendly medical and social services and education. The youth friendly environments/information/resource centres project aims to develop young people’s awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention measures and of lifestyle problems. The youth friendly medical, social services and education project facilitates medical assistance, social and psychological support and rehabilitation of young people.

The youth participation programme involves young people in determining which problems require urgent solution, and in developing and implementing the recommendations. Specifically, this latter is geared to street children, children in institutions, those actually or potentially in conflict with the law, drug and alcohol addicts, those with HIV and children who are not yet in difficult circumstances but at risk. A number of techniques are used to build youth participation. They include: discussions and interviews with teenagers and young people; focus groups; surveys; and use of young people as experts in project activities. The projects are all managed by young people (aged between 22 and 28 years) and staffed by project accountants (of about thirty years).

Assessment

The case report describes a development programme in which young people are integrally involved in decision-making and governance structures, and in situation analysis. Importantly however, the report does not provide detailed information on issues such as:

- how young people’s interests were sustained
- who was reached by the project and who excluded
- project outcomes
- the extent to which evaluation was and is built into the project and programme.

However, the report does note that the programme is constrained because there is no national commitment to developing a youth policy. NGOs have not prioritised youth development and young people are widely perceived as incapable of thinking about or expressing their problems, still less formulate solutions. Consequently, it has been necessary to educate parents and teachers about the value of youth participation and to build contacts with government agencies.

Raising Self-Esteem Among Girls: UGANDA

The 'Keeping Girls in School' Project

This project was started by an NGO in Uganda called Youth Concern (founded 1997). It is being piloted in two girls' schools in the Mbale district. Both schools were selected because they had low enrolment rates, high dropout rates and poor performance. Traditionally, the community placed little value on education and schools were poorly equipped. Early marriages and school-age pregnancies were common.

Keeping Girls in School was intended to empower girls to deal with a number of issues affecting their school performance, through:

- gender awareness seminars for teachers, parents and community leaders
- self-esteem and confidence building seminars for girls
- female role models

Youth Concern's executive committee consists largely of young people, and the project is provided through a fieldworker and assistants. The organisation collaborates with the District Education Office, the school administration and teacher-parent clubs.

Situation assessment is pursued in the confidence building seminars. Girls are required to express their expectations and fears and to discuss the problems that affect them both in and out of school. They are encouraged to consider how their situation could be improved, and their own role in the process. The girls are also invited to evaluate the seminars: to cite achievements, constraints and options for improvement.

Assessment

The girls' involvement in situation analysis has improved their self-esteem. They have proved able to analyse their situation, elect role models, form clubs, and initiate activities that generate income. The girls have organised seminars with other schools, although expansion is constrained by lack of resources. There is marked improved in the girls' behaviour and they have become more interested in school activities.

Youth Work Amidst Unemployment: SOUTH AFRICA

Background

Young people are especially affected by the adverse economic and social conditions in South Africa. However, the legacy of apartheid means that their experiences cannot be spoken of in general terms - there are vast disparities among the racial and social groups. Youth unemployment is estimated at 70% among blacks, 41% among those of mixed race and 11% among whites.

The Youth Services Initiative, Johannesburg

The Joint Enrichment Programme's Youth Services Initiative aims to equip young people for employment, particularly in community regeneration projects. The hope is to foster a stronger sense of responsibility to the community. The programme provides technical training, psychological and social support, basic education, life-skills and post-project support. At project inception, young people are encouraged through a variety of activities to recognize that they can contribute to changing their circumstances and those of their communities. 70% of the programme is dedicated to providing tuition and 30% to community volunteering.

The targets group is 18-30 year olds who are out of school and out of work. Participants have to have achieved at least Grade 9 (Standard 7) level of education. Recruitment is aimed at young people who have shown personal initiative and are willing to work in their communities. There is special emphasis on recruiting young people who live in shelters. Such individuals are likely to have come from out of town and be lacking family support. The act of living on one's own is also thought to demonstrate personal initiative. Successful candidates are involved for one year. The drop out rate is 15%.

The Youth Services programme is currently managed by a project coordinator, though there are plans to establish a community management committee which would include about 10% youth representation.

Assessment

Some of the young people continue to be involved in community activities after their departure from the scheme, and 50% of those achieving employment credit this to the programme. However, others remain disillusioned about their prospects. It is noteworthy that young people are not included in planning or decision-making within the project itself, and participation in situation analysis is restricted in scope. The project therefore works with a fairly modest interpretation of young people's participation in situation assessment and analysis. This raises the question whether low youth participation inside the project has a bearing on its level of success.

3. Discussion Topics

A) What is the purpose of participatory situation assessment and analysis?

Situation analysis should not be confused with other forms of youth participation. It has the special functions of a) accounting for the problems that young people face; b) understanding the broader context and how it affects young people's circumstances; c) identifying young people's strengths, weaknesses and capacity to assist with transforming their circumstances.

It may also begin the process of *building* the young people's capacity:

- Often the desired data and opinions are unobtainable without building the self-confidence and communication skills of participants.*
- The capacities required of participants in a situation analysis are very general ones. They overlap with life-skills needed outside the consultations, and the skills young people need to participate in the development of themselves and their communities.

Participatory situation analysis can be practised at various levels. Participants in the review of this paper agreed that it should precede the development of national policies and programmes. The Barbados report asserted that consultation with young people "is invaluable for social planning", and noted the advantages of sharing information across departments.

Participatory approaches occupy a certain position within information gathering. They often capture what is missed by mass questionnaires and focus groups. At the same time, participatory approaches ideally proceed on some background information. In this way, large-scale programmes designed to secure young people's involvement may benefit from multiple, mutually reinforcing approaches.

*Thus equipped, participants will be able to answer questions and highlight issues that programmers may not have considered (See Pakistan Report). Situation assessments should be

designed so as to enable this; it can be counter-productive to decide in advance exactly what a particular dialogue or exercise is going to produce.

B) In what circumstances does participation in the assessment serve children’s rights and the community’s “ownership” of the development process?

To involve young people in programme planning can be to uphold their rights under the CRC to participate in decisions affecting them. But rights are upheld only by the thoroughgoing assumption of responsibilities, in this case by programmers. It cannot be assumed that consultations *per se* advance children’s rights.

A number of issues need to be considered, including:

- What do human rights imply for beneficiary selection?
- Do all parties have realistic expectations about outcomes? “decisions affecting them”: *are* those involved in the assessment going to be benefiting from the programmes being planned? (See Pakistan report)
- How is young people’s opinion summarised and aggregated?
- How much agenda-setting power should facilitators exercise?
- What are the opportunity costs of the exercise – for agency funds? For the community? For the individual participant?

C) Working with young participants

The first requirement of any youth programme or project is for its staff and services to be approachable. Attention should be paid to the language used in documents and by facilitators. In some cases documents designed for youth programmes are incomprehensible to the young people involved. Rodney Green, in a report on youth participation in Northern Ireland states,

Organisations wishing to involve children and young people need to develop a ‘culture of involvement’ throughout the organisation. This culture requires new ways of working and consideration of language and jargon, timing of meetings and the environment required.⁷

Green adds, “The process of involving children and young people in decision-making is not resource neutral: it takes time, professional staff support, financial backing and good quality training.”

Rajani⁸ makes the point that an approach emphasizing investment in young people’s *assets* and “protective factors” is far more effective than focusing on young people’s problems. ‘Seeing adolescents as collections of discrete problems leads to fragmented, vertical responses.’

Participatory situation assessment and analysis works on the premise that young people have the capacity to understand and improve their circumstances, and that how their problems interact is best understood collaboratively, between them and the development practitioner.

Which young people?

Arguably all (or virtually all) young people have the potential to engage in such collaboration. But some require more preparation than others. Attention should be paid to varying levels of education and awareness among groups of young people (see the Ghana report). Programmers and practitioners make trade-offs between selecting the most willing and skilled participants, and investing time and resources in empowering those with most to gain (See South African report). In some cases there is a risk that participation remains restricted to the more fortunate groups who are already active in youth organizations.

The crucial issues here are these:

- What and who ought to be the priority where there are scarce resources?
- What 'entry points' facilitate the greatest participation?
- Which promise sustainable results?

One lesson of the case reports is that the most marginalized can participate. However, it may be necessary to first build visibility of, and receptivity to the programme. In a number of cases the most marginalized groups were best reached by other young people. In such cases, it was decided to first equip youth leaders and members of organised youth groups. Having been involved in situation analyses and programme formulation, they were able to subsequently foster the same type of participation among the disadvantaged in their communities.

ATD Fourth World has found this a valuable technique. In one project in Burkina Faso, the ATD team got valuable initial information from an informal groups and small organisations. However, it was the "street children" themselves who eventually identified the poorest among them. Sports and other recreational activities can be useful to stimulate communication within marginalized groups. In the Nima community (Accra), sport provides an opportunity for peer-education and peer counselling.

One reviewer of this paper observed that development agencies often ignore informal groups, such as gangs. It is necessary to appreciate the influence of informal power structures both on their members (who may have grave needs indeed) and non-members. The Bangladesh report noted that crime and corruption were obstacles to youth participation.

D) Effective situation analysis

Sensitivity to culture/community needs

Situation analysis can itself change a community, through building the self-confidence and self-awareness of participants. Parents and guardians of young people are legitimately concerned that this should not destabilise healthy relationships. It is therefore important to stress the practical, win-win benefits of empowering young people, and to offset any immediate burdens (taking participants out of work or school) as far as possible. In Ghana, facilitators discussed the programme with the parents and guardians, requested their permission to have their children attend, and provided financial compensation where appropriate. In Pakistan, given the culture, it was necessary to include parents in discussions. This was the only way the young people's participation could be secured.

One reviewer of this paper indicated that cultural change might well be a necessary precursor for youth development (culturally accepted abuse of children's rights). However, as another

practitioner pointed out, programmers will scarcely gain access unless they are willing and able to reach young people within their existing cultures. Progress in these difficult circumstances - as Action Aid has discovered in the case of Bangladesh - may be very gradual.

It is noteworthy that five of the case studies report *background* social or cultural change. This raises the question how participatory techniques relate to such change. The Bangladesh and Barbados reports see youth participation as a counter-balance to harmful cultural trends.

Collaboration

Collaboration with local and national partners can be instrumental in not only reaching the young people but also in gaining support for the project objectives. In Pakistan, BEDARI provided critical technical support. In Ghana, the Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS), Children in Need (CiN), CENCOSAD and Street Girls AID provided invaluable assistance to UNICEF. In Barbados, inter-departmental collaboration aids national policy. In Uganda, facilitators dedicated some time to preparing the community. Teachers, parents and community leaders were provided with seminars in order to build acceptance for the Keeping Girls in School project.

Fostering Trust/ Productive Group Dynamics

A number of case reports note that while young people were encouraged to participate in situation assessments, they were not coerced. Other approaches can hamper situation analyses and the projects they inform. A number of reports noted young people's distrust of information gathering, and the need to train facilitators in how to deal with shy or reluctant participants.

Participatory approaches crucially depend on the ability of all parties to work in teams. Where possible, it is often beneficial for participants to discuss issues outside their families. "Warm-up" exercises may be seen as unnecessary, but they are often the key to successful dialogue.

Monitoring and Evaluation.

In Uganda young people were given the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the project and to suggest how it could be improved. In many settings a role in evaluation has been shown to improve young people's receptiveness to programmes; youth organisations tend to assert that participation is incomplete without this component.

The projects in Accra and Tamale highlight the importance of a flexible approach to programming. Project implementation was characterised by continual monitoring to ensure that objectives were being realised and to make revisions, where appropriate. Where evaluation is not undertaken policymakers are liable to conclude that objectives have not been met and that resources have been wasted.

Some key issues for evaluations:

- Has the assessment produced results that were unobtainable by less labour/cost intensive means?
- Have concrete statistics been given for socio-economic status, age and sex of participants? How do these compare with initial targets?
- Have results been inferred as well as derived from statements, and if so, on the strength of what professional discipline(s)/local knowledge?

Conclusion

The case studies informing this discussion paper suggest that participatory approaches to situation assessment and analysis can produce valuable results, both in terms of information and engagement. Guided by the rights agenda, they can substitute fragmented, problem-based information gathering with a collaborative focus on the full range of human needs - how they interact, and how solutions might interact.

Case reports did note some community and individual resistance to the participatory approach, but in many cases this turned on issues relating to programme interventions per se, rather than participatory interventions specifically (Distrust of, or disagreement with, the motives of NGOs/government agencies; concern about the opportunity costs of contact time with development practitioners).

Further, participation in situation analysis tended to build rather than weaken consensus on these issues. Programmers and beneficiary communities both gained valuable information through interaction. Conversely, reports which showed a lower yield of information tended to display either a) an incomplete grasp/implementation of participatory strategies or b) constraints on interaction. In these cases it was not clear that there were viable alternatives to community interaction - grave social or political problems posed very general constraints for agencies.

The case studies highlight the benefits of strategic planning at the outset and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. They suggest a need to be sensitive to the culture, to be aware of and responsive to young people's needs (hence some background knowledge), and to develop young people's initiative. In broad terms facilitators should be prepared to reach young people where they are, geographically and developmentally. This may be best achieved through youth involvement in developing the assessment itself: young people proved useful in reaching the most marginalized of their peers.

4. Appendix

Questionnaire (A): Assessment of Young People's Participation in Situation Analyses

Background information

This would include:

- a. pertinent data on the political, economic and social context;
- b. the situation of young people;
- c. the rationale for the project/programme.
- d. description of the administrative structure used for managing the programme (please provide details on the management structure/organogram and specify whether young people are represented in administration; the age and sex of the young people who are involved; the percentage they represent of overall staff; and how the young people are elected or selected).

Programme/project objectives.

For example:

- e. What is the project trying to achieve?
- f. What groups does the programme/project aim to reach?
- g. How many persons does the project aim to include?
- h. What is the nature and levels of involvement desired?

Strategies(Situation Assessment and Analysis)

Outline the techniques used to achieve the objectives. (This section requires some detail as best practice recommendations will be derived from the information provided. The relevant questions/issues may include descriptions of:

- a. the methods used to reach the designated group(s);
- b. the tools/techniques and process(es) used to build youth participation in assessing and analysing their situation;
- c. how young people are being prepared (as researchers, respondents, or in other roles/capacities) to adequately assess and analyse their situation.
- d. how the issue being dealt with affects the nature, level, selection and process of young people's participation (e.g. if issues are sensitive such as sexual health)

Constraints and Facilitating Conditions. What sorts of factors/forces prevent effective programme/project implementation? What are the existing factors that facilitate youth participation?

How constraints are being/have been addressed. Here, it is also important to carefully document the measures used to overcome the constraints, as this type of information can provide more general guidelines to other countries.

Programme/project results (Situation Assessment and Analysis). It is important to assess the effectiveness of the programme. Pertinent questions/issues may include:

- a. Did the project reach the designated groups?
- b. What groups remain excluded?
- c. What are the reasons for the exclusion?
- d. What levels and types of participation were achieved?

- e. How did young people's involvement in situation analysis affect project outcomes? Please provide specific examples, if possible.

Lessons. What lessons would you recommend, given your experience?

Future Action. What sorts of activities are planned to improve/expand the programme/project?

Questionnaire (B): Assessment of Young People's Participation in Decision-making and Governance Structures

Background information.

This would include:

- i. pertinent data on the political, economic and social context;
- j. the situation of young people;
- k. the rationale for the project/programme.
- l. description of the administrative structure used for managing the programme (please provide details on the management structure/organogram and specify whether young people are represented in administration; the age and sex of the young people who are involved; the percentage they represent of overall staff; and how the young people are elected or selected).

Programme/project objectives.

For example:

- m. What is the project trying to achieve?
- n. What groups does the programme/project aim to reach?
- o. How many persons does the project aim to include?
- p. What is the nature and levels of involvement desired?

Strategies(Decision-making and Governance)

Outline the techniques used to achieve the objectives. (This section requires some detail as best practice recommendations will be derived from the information provided). The relevant questions/issues may include descriptions of:

- a. the methods used to reach the designated group(s);
- b. the tools/techniques used to build youth participation in decision-making and governance;
- c. how the programme objectives are promoted, particularly at the national and sub-national levels;
- d. the strategies used to secure wider support for the programme.

Constraints and Facilitating Conditions. What sorts of factors/forces prevent effective programme/project implementation? What are the existing factors that facilitate youth participation?

How constraints are being/have been addressed. Here, it is also important to carefully document the measures used to overcome the constraints, as this type of information can provide more general guidelines to other countries.

Programme/project results (Decision-making and Governance). It is important to assess the effectiveness of the programme. Pertinent questions/issues may include:

- f. Did the project reach the designated groups?
- g. What groups remain excluded?
- h. What are the reasons for the exclusion?
- i. What levels and types of participation were achieved? Were the designated groups involved in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of the programme/project?
- j. What sorts of decisions does the group make? Please provide specific examples, if possible.
- k. What sorts of administrative structures exist and specify the levels of youth involvement in these structures.

Lessons. What lessons would you recommend, given your experience?

Future Action. What sorts of activities are planned to improve/expand the programme/project?