Policy Brief: Increasing Investment in Adolescent/Youth Development Programme

Introduction

This brief highlights findings from the Evaluation of the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MOWCYA)/UNICEF Adolescent/Youth Development Programme in Ethiopia (2007-2011) conducted in 2012.

The programme’s aim was to improve the life and livelihood skills of at least one million vulnerable youth so that they could participate more effectively in the decision making activities and livelihoods of their communities. The programme focused on five activities;

1. Youth volunteer service (internship, campaign, school scout members, club members);
2. Capacity building trainings for young people;
3. The provision of entrepreneurship training/start-up capital to help vulnerable youth to improve their livelihoods;
4. Youth centre activities and service delivery; and
5. Media activities at youth centres.

The evaluation was designed to feed into dialogue around how further to support the implementation of the National Youth Policy. The evaluation steering committee made up of membership from MoWCYA, MoFED and international partners came to the view that what is really needed is for the National Youth Policy to be updated with the development of a clearer implementation strategy clarifying results to be delivered and accountabilities for coordinating progress.

A key element of the revised strategy will be youth employment, how to scale-up vocational training and apprenticeships in the private sector and the eventual channelling of capital to young people with skills to stimulate new business development. This brief describes how the steering committee came to these conclusions.

Emergence of Adolescent/Youth Development Programme

The case for investing in young people is clear. Ethiopians are predominantly young and have a key role in both the current and future development of the country. Young people are at the heart of today’s great strategic opportunities and challenges, from building the economy, reducing poverty to strengthening democracy.

The government issued a National Youth Policy in 2004 with the aim of addressing the institutional and policy gaps concerning youth. The policy recognises that: youth, especially female youth, are facing unemployment; job opportunities in urban areas are limited; and sports and recreation time is essential for youth to develop their communication skills even though the necessary facilities are scarce. In “A Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) 2005/06-2009/10”, unemployment, under-employment, and limited job opportunities in urban areas were raised as issues of concern and job creation and the provision of skills training were taken as the solutions. The Adolescent/Youth Development Programme was designed in the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2007-2011 to directly contribute to the issues mentioned in PASDEP.

The focus of the programme design highlighted gender and girls’ empowerment. Young girls were prioritised in terms of provision of training and start-up capitals. Government-owned youth centres were chosen as the institutions through which services including training would be delivered by the programme would be accessed by adolescents and young people.

The programme was implemented directly by MOWCYA through signed AWPs by UNICEF, MOWCYA, MOFED, and BOWCYAs. Other partners working with the government include community based organizations, other UN agencies, small business enterprises and some NGOs. BOWCYAs at the regional level implement and monitor the programme.
The Effects of Adolescent/Youth Development Programme

Overall primary data was collected from total of 1,607 youth and 415 programme managers at regional and youth centre levels in Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Tigray, Afar, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The Adolescent/Youth Development Programme was generally rated positively with a consensus that UNICEF and government should continue if resources were available. Some detailed findings in the five areas of focus of the programme follow:

1. Youth volunteer service (internship, campaign, school scout members, club members)

Volunteer/internship activities were organised in three different ways; through the Kebeles; through the youth centres/youth clubs; and through the regional Bureaus of Youth and Sports (BOYS) except in Tigray and Oromia Region, which organised a volunteer activities during the summer holidays.

Over two million youth participated in some form of volunteer activity including tree planting, supporting orphans and vulnerable children, and blood donation during the programme period, making it a successful part of the programme in terms of number of people involved. However, few young women took part in activities. Reasons given for girls' limited non-participation included: unsuitable location of the activities conducted, safety concerns in travelling to the activity sites, male-oriented activities, social/family pressure not to participate in, and verbal and physical harassment from male youth.

2. Capacity building trainings for young people

Youth were given training in life skills, youth dialogue, youth leadership and club management, planning and supervision, and conflict management or resolution. The trainings were organised using a cascade model.

378,152 youths were trained (*1), the majority (212,189) being in Oromia Region. Participants believed the trainings were relevant to their everyday lives helping them increase their self-esteem, problem solving skills, assertiveness skills, dialogue management, decision making, and empathy. Some key informants noted that the cascade model decreased the quality of the training at the lower administration levels.

3. The provision of entrepreneurship training/start-up capital to help vulnerable youth to improve their livelihoods

To improve youth livelihood the programme employed two types of actions; providing training which enhances business skills especially entrepreneurship and marketing skills, and providing start-up capital to help the youth to begin Income Generating Activities (IGA).

The number of youth who received livelihood improvement training was 9,096, 89.1% of planned achievement, and the number of youth who received start-up capital for IGA was 13,381, 65% of plan (*1). Not meeting the targets was mainly due to underestimating the unit cost of training at the planning stage.

Of the 140 respondents (94 male and 46 female) who were the IGA beneficiaries, 111 of them (71 male and 40 female) affirmed that their own business were running successfully as measured in terms of having regular incomes and making profits, 20 beneficiaries (14 male and 6 female) experienced neither profit nor loss, and nine, all males, encountered loss (Figure 1). Therefore, in general, a higher proportion of girls were successful in running their business than boys. Among those whose businesses had been successful, the major success factor were the availability of low price of inputs and existence of demand for products. Seventy eight per cent (115 out of 147 respondents) of the IGA beneficiaries answered that their overall income had increased, which in turn had led to increased consumption and savings.

4. Youth centres activities and service delivery

The youth centres provided several services including: recreation (indoor and outdoor games); library services; Information Communication Technology (ICT); Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT); and Reproductive Health (RH) services for in-school and out-of-school youth. The most frequently used services were the library, indoor games, outdoor games and café.

Figure 1: Profitability of the Small Business of the Youth by Sex
In general many youth were positive about the role of the youth centre and the strengths identified were: (1) the centres provide services or trainings to the youth at minimal price (or free of charge), (2) the centres provide information and create awareness on various issues including HIV/AIDS and VCT, and (3) the youth get different services in one place.

However the majority of service users were in-school youth, not the out-of-school youths the programme was trying to target. While in-school users were getting beneficial services from the youth centres, for example, more adequate library facilities than they were provided within school, there remains the problem that the youth centres were not effectively reaching their target group. This was due partly to the low awareness of and low exposure to information about youth centres among out-of-school youths because the youths centres were usually advertised in the school programme. In addition, gender imbalance among users, geographic imbalance of the available centres (e.g. less youth centres in rural areas), and the adequacy of the facilities provided were the major concerns.

Cost Efficiency of the Programme

The programme was designed with a five-year budget of USD 4.9 million. At the start of the programme, the government allocations were less than USD 50,000 per year. By 2011, the government allocation was over USD 1 million per year.

The cost associated with each activity is summarized in Table 1. The total cost for deploying more than 163,398 youth volunteers and interns during the program period was USD 252,834.50.

With regard to the cost for capacity building training area, USD 420,497.20 was spent to train 257,301 youth for the life skills training. USD 479,770.98 was spent to train 135,115 youth on youth dialogue training. USD 196,827.92 was spent to train 15,054 youth for the leadership and club management training. The unit costs of the capacity building trainings were found to decrease over time.

In addition, 15,622 youths have benefited from the livelihood improvement and entrepreneurship trainings (including training on marketing skills, business skills and vocational training), and 18,661 have received start-up/revolving loan capital. The cost of provision of capital was far larger (USD 1,347,315.25) than the total cost for the training component during the five-year period, which was USD 333,835.80. There was a reduction in cost per unit head for the provision of the livelihood improvement and entrepreneurship trainings over time. On the other hand in most regions, for cost per head of provision of capital support showed either some increase or no significant change over time. This can be due to the rising cost of inputs across the country in this time of period.

The investment in capacity building and support to service delivery of a little over USD 1 million per year is only a small proportion of what is required to have an impact at scale. The issue however, is there is no consensus on what is required since the official policy and strategy documents do not go into these details.

5. Media activities at youth centres

Youth centres are mandated help youth express and exchange their opinions, and expand their opportunities to participate in advocacy, decision-making and development using multi-media tools and channels (i.e. online, TV, radio, and print), as well as visual and performing arts and culture.

The evaluation revealed that there were needs from youth for training on media production and more air time to express their views among themselves through improved technological facilities that will be operated by youth themselves. However systematic media focus training, and media production and dissemination within the youth centres was found to be almost non-existent. A lack of training inhibited the youth from producing media and communications products and this area needs improvement in the future.

(*1): Total number of youth beneficiaries in this section is from the monitoring report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Total Number of Youth Beneficiaries (*2)</th>
<th>Total Cost for Five-Years Programme (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer/internship activities</td>
<td>More than 163,398</td>
<td>252,834.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building training (life skills)</td>
<td>257,301</td>
<td>420,497.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building training (youth dialogue)</td>
<td>135,115</td>
<td>479,770.98</td>
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<td>15,622</td>
<td>333,835.80</td>
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<td>18,661</td>
<td>1,347,315.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*2): The total number of youth beneficiaries in the cost analysis is from the then MOYS/BOYS report.

Programme and Policy Options

Large numbers of unemployed youth with secondary and tertiary education are a risk for destabilising many societies around the world. Government’s seeking electoral support from youth need to allocate increasingly large portions of their
Budgets for helping to stimulate youth employment and to provide diversion for the many youth that will inevitably be only partially or totally unemployed.

To improve the Adolescent/Youth Development Programme, four principle implications for policy were developed:

1) Updating National Youth Policy and Youth Development Package

The National Youth Policy, endorsed in 2004, must be strengthened by aligning with government priorities. What is lacking is a youth strategy with targets and budgets based on national requirements that can give a comprehensive overview of the key youth issues and manage an annual review process that can give relatively real time updates on progress with addressing the issue. The assessment on National Youth Policy and Package was conducted and the findings indicate the need for revision to clarify who is accountable for what youth-related results and what resources they will be allocated for each result area.

2) Scale-up the Provision of Start-Up Capital Scheme

The evaluation noted that on the whole most businesses started had been successful, however, the current policy is not clear with respect to how much capital will be made available and from what sources to scale-up this kind of support for young people. MOWCYA will develop a youth livelihood implementation guide and help youth develop job skills not only through government organised vocational training but also reaching out to the private sector and other government enterprises to scale-up mentoring and apprenticeships through provision of incentives to the private sector. Work needs to take place together with the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) and MoFED to develop a scale-up plan for micro finance targeted at youth with bench marks and targets in place.

3) Encouraging Girls' Participation in All Activities

The gender imbalance in voluntary activities and use of youth centre services needs to be addressed by raising awareness among girls who had never participated in the services, among the parents, and among the community; by implementing activities targeting girls; and by developing guidelines for out-of-school girls. Youth centre standard service guidelines are being revised and manuals for establishing out-of-school girls forums in the youth centres are being developed.

4) Improving Youth Centre Service Provision and Financial Sustainability

The youth centres should become financially independent and owned by youth themselves. This can be done by developing self-sustaining financial management guidelines for youth centres to generate their own revenue for running the centres and promoting youth ownership and leadership of youth centres. To address the issue of geographical imbalance of the availability of youth centres, to build youth centres in rural areas should get due attention by the government as a priority. In addition, it is important to promote youth centre services to the current non-users since some of the non-users of the youth centres including out-of-school youth are not well informed regarding the services.

The UN system and other partners need to come together in a more coordinated manner to help the Government fine-tune the articulation of their youth development policies and strategies, making use of classic strategic planning tools to set targets and define budget requirements now that a better understanding of costs exists. The strategic alliances will promote sustained and scaled-up investments to increase coverage of evidence-based programming interventions with and for the development of youth as a central strategy to achieve the global targets of the Millennium agenda.

References:


Contact:

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