



RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

REPORT #1 OSLO YOUTH AND GOVERNANCE PLATFORM



UN-HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

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FOREWORD

Throughout modern history, urbanization has been a major driver of development and poverty reduction. However, there is a growing consensus that the form and functionality of cities and towns has to change as societies and their demography change.

Globally, more people live in urban than in rural areas, with 54 per cent of the world's population residing there in 2014. By 2050, 66 per cent of the world's population is projected to be urban. Parallel to the movement towards urbanization is the increase in the number of youth globally where, in absolute numbers, there are more people under the age of 25 today than ever, totaling nearly 3 billion or half of the total global population. These youth live, by and large, in cities and towns; the cities of the developing world account for over 90% of the world's urban growth and youth account for a large percentage of those inhabitants. It is estimated that as many as 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030 (Cities of Youth, Cities of Prosperity, 2012).

These two trends combined with technology advances, globalization and lack of attention to youth centered development have among other factors contributed to an increased level of youth unrest, spanning from the Middle East and North Africa, to Latin-America and Europe. The increased presence of youth demonstrating in the streets and public squares is a manifestation of the many challenges facing youth in urban settings, including lack of inclusion in governance, meager economic prospects, the battle for access to public space and land, and inadequate security and safety. To change the future we need to have more focus on youth

participation in processes where sustainable urbanization is discussed and decided upon. Issues such as connectivity, density, public space utilization and planning in advance are all topics where youth involvement from the very beginning to implementation will create more ownership and sustainable urbanization.

At the policy level, the past decade has witnessed a change of approach to the issue of youth, locally, nationally and internationally. The understanding has moved from regarding youth as a vulnerable client group, to one in which youth are valued as an asset and a resource that have the commensurate right to participate and be meaningfully engaged in decision-making. The current approach considers the value of youth's contributions not solely as an investment in future adulthood, but rather as well as a means to improved living standards and quality of life for youth and their communities, through ensuring youth voices are heard in economic and policy development and decision making at all levels.

Norway has a long history of independent youth movements that take part in shaping civil society. Youth have in recent history been recognized and supported by the government. Since 1971 Norwegian youth delegates have been included as part of the official delegations to the major United Nations meetings. In the government white paper "Sharing for Prosperity" (2013), democratic youth organizations are highlighted as an important development actor and integral to building a strong democracy. The enhancement of the participation of youth in political processes is a key way to ensure their real and meaningful involvement. Another example of this is the

United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) to take place in 2016. UN-Habitat and LNU are partnering with youth civil society agencies and governments to develop and strengthen youth participation in this process.

Democratic youth organizations want to take responsibility and be part of the solution to the challenges facing our common future. This joint report pinpoints some of the principles that must be present in order for youth participation to be real and meaningful. These principles stem from the work done by LNU and UN-Habitat, as well as by researchers such as Roger Hart (1992). We

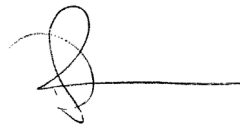
believe that these basic principles can be applied on every level and in different parts of the globe. Our wish is that this report can inspire civil society, countries and the UN and multi-lateral agencies to integrate these principles in their work.

The principles laid out in this report should be the subject for fierce discussion and not only acceptance. We want to see more engagement, more participation and more inclusion of youth organizations in every political process at local, national and global level. We invite all of you to give input and discuss the principles we present.



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01: ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS



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The Norwegian Children and Youth council (LNU) is an umbrella organization for more than 90 Norwegian non-governmental organisations for children and youth. Among our members are organisations working in a wide range of areas: from education and politics through culture and music to scouting. LNU represents the youth organisations views towards authorities and other important institutions. LNU is also a center of competence on questions regarding children and youth. The Norwegian Children and Youth Council utilises this competence on two levels.

Firstly by providing politicians the knowledge they need to produce a comprehensive policy for children and youth. Secondly by providing service for our member organisations. Our guiding principle is that children and youth are to be included in all decision making-processes that concerns us, on a local, national and international level.

UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities. The mandate of UN-Habitat is laid out by the Habitat Agenda, passed at the Habitat II conference in 1996. Central to the Habitat Agenda is its recommendation that there be a participatory approach, that being the inclusion of youth, women and other marginalized groups, to promoting employment, training, and crime prevention. It also stresses the role of young people in the alleviation of poverty and inequality.

The UN-Habitat youth programme is one of the longest standing youth programmes in the UN system. LNU and the UN-Habitat youth programme have signed an MOU to advance the knowledge and practice of youth participation at all levels of governance. UN-Habitat promotes youth-led development, which is development centered on the needs and capacities of youth, recognizing their ability to affect positive change in their communities. Youth-led development is the cornerstone of UN-Habitat's programmes such as the Urban Youth Fund and the Youth 21 initiative on youth and global governance.

1.1 WHO ARE THE YOUTH?

There is no legal or universal definition of youth as such, and in the absence of the latter and the variety of contexts, it can be helpful to look at other ways of defining youth. If one regards youth as a social, cultural, economic and political life stage, one can better conceptualize how to address youth-related issues and youth rights¹². By adopting a life cycle approach, one can avoid stringent definitions that can exclude groups of people. However, a life cycle approach can make it more challenging to understand youth from a legal perspective, e.g. when discussing making youth participation a legal right. On the other hand, a definition focusing on life stage rather than age as its criterion can help improve the understanding of youth's role in the practical development of policies. Another factor, which is in favour of this life-stage definition, is the realities of the youth in question. In most parts of the Global South, youth are often seen as

The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by other countries. Apart from that statistical definition, the meaning of the term 'youth' varies in different societies around the world. When the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond, it reiterated that the United Nations defined youth as the age cohort of 15-24.



World Youth Conference 2010, Leon, Mexico
© United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

“maturing” earlier because of poverty, shorter education, and increased responsibilities inside and outside the household of which they are a part (Punch 2002; Robson, 2004).

At an individual level, being young is often associated to adolescence, a period of transition from childhood to adulthood – from school to work force, from recipient to active participant and citizen in the society. It is a temporary phase which consequently distinguishes youth as a group from women, indigenous people and other rights-holders who have permanent characteristics that define them as a group. What all youth do have in common is that they are developing and maturing their identity, and are on their way to becoming someone else. At the same time, they have the right to and the need for being an active stakeholder in society right here and now. To give youth a true and meaningful way to do this, one need to establish permanent structures and mechanisms that allow that to mitigate the temporary state of the youth identify.

By applying a rights-based approach when working with youth, youth are recognized as a temporary phase for the individual, while at the same time acknowledging that youth make up a significant and permanent group in society. These demographic characteristics make it necessary to adopt a specific approach when working with youth. It is also important to recognise adolescence as a phase when youth become more independent, want to participate more actively in issues they care about and try to influence the society they have become an active part of. In this way, building a more coherent and stronger society where all stakeholders pull in the same direction, agree to common goals and objectives can be built.

To be an active stakeholder does not only entail having rights, but also implies having responsibilities and duties and playing an active role in society. If youth are given the opportunity to become actors, it will lead to a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for decisions that are made.

In human rights work, youth can often be caught between childhood and adulthood. In international aid and development policy, youth are often included in the same group as children. As children are more easily defined as a group and have corresponding legal rights, initiatives are often implemented on children’s terms. In work to ensure that human rights are protected, initiatives often target adults, and do not address the specific needs of youth.

1.2 WHAT WOULD YOUTH PARTICIPATION ENTAIL?

Youth should be regarded as agents of positive change rather than simply a target group in international development policy. Furthermore youth being such an important segment of the world’s demographic and representing the vast majority of the adults of tomorrow should be able to have a say in all the decision-making processes which will affect their lives and future. Both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights conventions confirm youth’s right to have their voices heard on matters that concern them. At the same time, securing youth participation is ~~about~~ more than just upholding human rights. Real and meaningful youth participation strengthens democracy by ensuring that decisions and projects have a basis in a larger proportion of the population. Participation also strengthens the quality of decisions made and the decision-making process by providing legitimacy and creating ownership. The distinct characteristics of youth and their fresh perspectives require policies, projects and structures to facilitate their participation in all stages of the decision-making process, from planning to implementation and evaluation.

The contribution of youth to the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of society should be seen with a long-term perspective, and as such youth participation should be enabled in all those areas. It is important to acknowledge the non-homogeneity of youth for this to happen so as to get an as broad as possible context for youth participation. It is also crucial that the different actors in democratic structures are

aware of the limits to their powers, and that the structures are open to debate. In a similar manner, youth participation initiatives must be organized in a manner that ensures real and meaningful participation for youth.

1.3 WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

Youth participation is essential for the development of young people themselves, and to a larger extent that of their communities. Youth who are able to participate in society have higher aspirations, not just for them but also for their fellow youth and their communities. They become self-assured because they improve their skills and broaden their knowledge and understanding due to exposure to every day life. A change of attitude is usually perceived as youth interact with adults and take on responsibilities.

Youth participation also fosters opportunities for youth to contribute more concretely to the family or the community. By encouraging youth

to participate, they become more responsive and flexible to the issues they face, while having a stronger sense of belonging and of purpose. Youth participation can contribute to young people reflecting more abstractly and reflectively on social problems, to being more engaged and enhance their creativity in engagement, and most of all, helps young people take initiative by fostering their capacity to set healthy goals and expectations.

Within the research community there has been a growing recognition that youth are not simply “adults in training”, but have their own agency and ability to take on leadership roles in their own lives and that of their communities. Building on this recognition, UN-Habitat working with its partners have created the Youth-Led Development framework through which to understand the ways in which youth can be recognized and respected as capable of being leaders in their communities.

Findings from UN-Habitat experience with young people in the Urban Youth Fund indicate that youth-led projects have many positive outcomes for other young people and their communities. In their initiatives young people have a strong belief that they can make a difference for both the target beneficiaries of their programmes, but even more so the communities in which they are working. Youth participation allows the community to perceive young people as responsible and competent individuals, hence providing young people with a viable means of expressing their needs and concerns and to work with the community. The learning process is dual as young people benefit from the perspectives of adults in the community to inform their choices, whilst adults gain a better understanding of youth's concerns and receive new ideas from different youth perspectives.



Library at Mohammed V University at Agdal, Rabat. © Arne Hoel / World Bank

02. ENABLING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

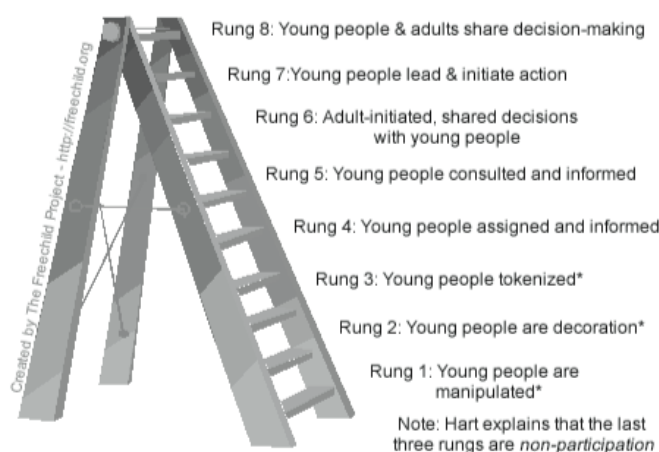
2.1 HOW IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION ENABLED?

LNU and UN-Habitat believe that youth participation can be enabled through the design of programmes to benefit youth, and that these programmes should have input and involvement of the youth on how they are developed and administered. Moreover, both organisations also support that youth participation is a means of helping institutions, policy-makers, etc. to achieve their programme goals for youth and communities.

The basis of both organizations work has been work done researchers such as Hart and his Ladder of Young People's Participation.

This model of participation reflects a continuum of “meaningful” engagement, demonstrating that not all engagement is the same or of equal authenticity. It is self-evident that it is better not to manipulate, tokenize or use youth as decoration (“non-participation,” according to Hart). Making choices among the higher rungs of the ladder – levels Hart calls authentic participation – is more difficult: is it better to assign youth roles or consult them? Let them take the lead or share decisions with adults? These questions are often where the conflict arises in youth research and practice, because each authentic level of participation can be beneficial in different circumstances.

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

New streams of research and practice have emerged to answer the question about what qualifies as meaningful youth engagement. Assets Based Youth Development (ABYD) is based on work by John McKnight at the Asset Based Community Development Institute (www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html). ABCD focuses on mapping or inventorying youth personal and community assets. What is unique with this stream of research and practice is that it starts with the premise that youth are assets to their community no matter what their social, cultural or economic background. Instead of the needs assessment being the primary tool to gather data, needs assessments are balanced with asset assessments or asset mapping, to give a more holistic and positive picture of youth within the context of their community. Participatory action research methods are used as well, to recognize youth as experts in their community, giving them the responsibility to gather, analyze and interpret their own data in partnership with researchers.

A second stream of research has been that of youth engagement and social inclusion. Groups such as the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement and the international UNESCO Growing up in Cities projects have been researching how to best engage youth, and how engagement affects communities and the psycho-social behavior and well being of youth. This research goes a long way in expanding upon Hart's ladder, allowing researchers, practitioners and policy makers a chance to better understand the different qualities of youth engagement, and the impact of that engagement on communities.

This new research has begun to influence the general practice of youth work primarily in the developed world – with the increased focus on mentorship, both peer- to-peer and adult-to-youth, and asset based community development. What is less evident is the influence of this new research on youth development practice in the developing world, which is ironic, considering that youth make up such a significant percentage of developing country populations.

This situation began to change on the international level with Peacechild International's (www.peacechild.org) entrance onto the international stage, and their coining of the term youth-led development at the Third World Youth Congress in Scotland in 2005. Peacechild took on the task of promoting and supporting youth-led programmes globally. UN-Habitat has build upon the concept of youth-led development adopting the UN-Habitat adopted the Kampala Principles for youth-led development which outlines youth leadership role in development.

2.2 PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE UN SYSTEM

The Habitat Agenda commits UN-Habitat to work in partnership with youth in human settlements management and development; empowering them to participate in decision-making in order to improve urban livelihoods and contribute to sustainable urbanization.



Youth musical performance during the WUF7 in Medellin, Colombia.
© Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat

The Youth Empowerment Programme of UN-Habitat bridges an important gap in youth participation and involvement in development by mobilizing young people through engaging them in a variety of empowerment initiatives such as youth-related policy formulation, capacity building and meaningful engagement in decision-making and other governance mechanisms, as well as in the design and implementation of urban youth-led development initiatives.

The Urban Youth Fund partners directly with young people in the implementation of sustainable development projects. Through the Fund, UN-Habitat capitalizes on the dynamism of youth-led organisations to bring about change. Through financial and human support to actively participate in development issues and address the challenges they are faced with in their own way. The Urban Youth Fund fosters youth participation in addressing issues which the youth themselves think are important to tackle considering their own realities.

Another way by which the Urban Youth Fund promotes youth participation is through the data it gathers from the different youth-led activities supported by the fund. This data gives first-hand information on youth's needs and concerns and on the ways young people address development issues, and this can be integrated in the policy and programming processes of the agency.

One way of promoting youth participation in the UN is by sending youth delegates as part of the official delegation. The Norwegian Government, in cooperation with LNU, has sent youth delegates to the General Assembly since 1971. This is one way of ensuring youth participation in global decision making processes. LNU are developing and expanding the youth delegate-program, and currently have youth delegates to the High level meeting on climate, the post2015-process and UN Habitat. The delegates are nominated by member organizations in LNU, and they are also part of our working group on UN-work, together with young representatives from our member organizations. The work that the delegates do

are founded in the political instruments that have been debated in the organization, which ensures real representation and a broad youth involvement. This program increases youth involvement in the Norwegian delegation and in the United Nations as a whole. To ensure real and meaningful participation, it is crucial that the UN and the different governments facilitate the youth delegate program in a way that makes it possible for the youth to influence the decision-making processes.

2.3 WHAT CAN ENABLE YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

Civil society includes a range of organisations and movements which differ greatly in purpose, size, level of professionalism and geographical reach. Civil society actors can be everything from political parties to independent media and voluntary organisations¹. What most civil society organisations and movements have in common is that they play an important role in the democratic process through constructive participation and as schools of democracy for members.

Public engagement and participation is important for the role of and possibility for democracy in all countries. Civil society is understood as the diverse arena where the regular citizen, alone or together with fellow citizens, can further their interests and needs on behalf of themselves and others. A diverse and dynamic civil society gives a government the opportunity to understand, explain and adapt the way it implements policy in key areas. Civil society can create public debate and provide a voice for different groups in society.

The same goes for the international development processes. The Post-2015 and Habitat III development discussions will not produce legitimate and good results if it does not have strong civil society participation in the process. A participatory process not only improves the process and result but ensures also a stronger ownership to the result thus building more sustainable policies.

UN-Habitat as well assures that youth are engaged structurally in the agency. The UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is a globally elected body of one male and one female from every region of the world, plus two representatives from informal settlements. The YAB advises the agency on issues pertaining to youth and urbanization. The World Urban Youth Assembly, held during UN-Habitat's World Urban Forum, gives youth an opportunity to express themselves on a variety of issues and to present and discuss various youth-led initiatives and approaches to development issues.

Robert Putnam developed the concept of social capital and the link between organisations and the level of trust within a society. Research has shown that a strong and wide-reaching civil society contributes to increased trust within a society⁴. A diverse range of organisations and a high level of volunteering can help enhance trust and reduce levels of conflict within a society. Civil society organisations can at the same time contribute to the development of a political culture where citizens have a critical view of the government and politicians.

Civil society organisations often emphasise their role as schools of democracy for their members⁶. This idea goes back to the classical description of modern democracies and the French political thinker Toqueville's argument that voluntary organisations operate as learning spaces for members to debate, make compromises and work together for common goals⁷. This role is realised in several ways; firstly, organisations usually offer their members training courses on organisational development and how to maintain democratic structure. Furthermore, organisations offer direct and indirect training for members on how to operate within the organisation's democratic structures. The indirect learning takes place as members participate in the internal democratic process, learn to argue their case and promote their opinions, providing them with useful experiences of democracy in practice⁸. This democratic expertise can be utilised in their wider role as active citizens in society as a whole.

Moreover, civil society organisations can be regarded as schools of democracy because they are important arenas for political socialisation and finding good solutions to complex problems. Almond and Verba put forward the idea that such organisations introduce their members to a political culture. This makes members more aware of their role as voters and it means they will be more likely to hold their politicians to account – also after elections have taken place. The internal democratic processes in voluntary organisations such as elections or statutes can be regarded as 'mini constitutions' that help train members in political work and foster a democratic mindset⁹.

2.4 YOUTH-LED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The role as schools of democracy is particularly pertinent to youth-led organisations. Such organisations often have a relatively high turnover in membership as members are replaced as they grow older and are no longer eligible for membership. As a result, youth-led organisations and networks have to offer their members comprehensive training programmes in the democratic process to maintain internal democracy and ensure continued organisational development. In addition, the high turnover of members requires organisations to have a strong democratic foundation for their policies and goals. Consequently, members gain valuable experience of political work by helping to shape the policies of organisations.

Research from UN-Habitat shows that organised youth most often work for positive change in society as a whole, rather than for solely promoting the interest of youth. Examples of this are youth-led organisations' involvement in major social issues such as climate change, corruption, fair trade and peace work. Most demographic groups share this tendency, but the trend seems even stronger among youth-led organisations. Few, if any, of these organisations exist to promote the interests of youth alone. One reason could be that adolescents are aware they will not stay young forever, while at the same



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time they feel uncertain about what the future will bring. This starting point makes youth more likely to care about all parts of society to ensure it works well and improves further. This is a real strength of youth-led civil society organisations and can be used in international development work, even beyond measures that are directly targeting youth. The right of children and youth to participate should not only be confined to youth-related issues, rather it should be seen in the context of society as a whole as something that concerns youth.

At the same time, the relatively short life of being active in society as a youth and with the high turnover, necessitate creating permanent structures and mechanisms that will allow youth to play an active role in their society, at local, national and international level. The nature of transition gives a need for permanent structure to mitigate the challenge. Without such mechanisms, a society will not harvest and gain the best from youth participation and by that miss out the perspectives from a large majority of the population.

03. REAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Strong models of real and meaningful youth participation are crucial to secure an effective international development policy for youth. While youth make up a large proportion of the population in developing countries, they are often under-represented in decision-making processes. This is particularly evident in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), where youth are only regarded as a target group and not actors in the international efforts to meet the goals, even though youth make up a large proportion of vulnerable (demographic) groups around the world

If youth are involved in decision-making processes, the manner in which this is organised can vary greatly. Both how and how much youth are engaged determine how real and meaningful the initiatives to facilitate participation are. Often youth experiences that decision makers, both at national and international levels, do not understand why they raise critical questions about who the youth representatives involved in participation efforts are and what they represent.



Delegates discussing resolution proposals at the One Young World summit 2010
© www.oneyoungworld.com

This display of interest in youth is encouraging, but it needs to be followed up with action. It is crucial that youth, together with representatives for the government and international development organisations, develop a shared understanding of what is required to ensure real and meaningful youth participation in international policy.

3.1 THE ELEMENTS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

To ensure that youth participation is real and meaningful, certain requirements must be in place. One challenge is to envisage real and meaningful participation that is relevant in a range of contexts and situations. Yet, certain elements can be drawn from our experiences and relevant theories. We have tried to encompass this and summarized it in five big categories.

3.1.1 INDEPENDENCE

First and foremost, it is important to establish that youth should independently choose what issues they want to engage in. It is youth's right to be involved and have their voices heard in decisions that will impact on them as well as decision-making processes for issues youth are concerned about in general. Which processes youth are able to participate in, should not be decided by the government and international development organisations. This point is particularly pertinent with regards to international development projects, where donors often have a powerful position and can replace youth's priorities with their own.

Using independent youth structures as a starting point for models of participation can give youth's contribution greater legitimacy. Robert Hart's ladder of participation – a typology for thinking about children and youth's participation – shows that models of participation that are youth initiated and where decisions are shared with adults turn youth into citizens with real influence.

3.1.2 REPRESENTATION

Youth have the right to represent themselves in a similar manner to other groups in society. Youth themselves have a wide range of perspectives and opinions and are best placed to establish dialogue with other youth. Some UN agencies have argued for the inclusion of youth representatives in its own bodies and stresses that youth participation is important to its work. At the same time, it is vital to ensure that any youth participation initiative has a critical view of the issue of representation. A young person cannot represent youth merely by being young if (s)he is not seen to have legitimacy among the youth (s)he is supposed to speak on behalf of. Youth should themselves have the opportunity to select who is going to represent them. To represent youth carries with it the responsibility to promote youth's views and opinions. It involves having knowledge about the specific topic; having an insight into what policies would be in youth's best interests, and having an overview of youth's opinions on the topic. It is possible to argue that everyone who meets these criteria, no matter if they are youth or adults, can represent youth. However, in our opinion, youth have the right to represent themselves along the line of other groups in society.

To ensure effective representation, youth participation initiatives should use existing youth and youth-led organisations and networks as a starting point. These organisations and the networks that represent youth have mobilised on issues they care about and believe in under their own initiative. Youth representation should be regarded as any other democratic institution. Representatives should be elected by their constituents. If existing youth networks do not include marginalised groups, it is important that the youth organisations themselves are responsible for including such groups. It is not the government or international development organisations which should choose representatives for such groups; rather they should try to encourage youth organisations to be more diverse and inclusive.

3.1.3 EXPERTISE

Decision makers and international development organisations should regard youth as a professional resource with the necessary expertise to strengthen international development work. This expertise underlines the need to include youth in a wide range of decision-making processes.

However, it may still be necessary for bodies that would like to embed youth participation in their work to set aside time and space for initiatives that will increase youth's expertise. There are several aspects of the participation process that can be challenging due to lack of experience and a lower degree of professionalisation among youth compared to other organised groups.

Youth-led organisations often spend a large proportion of their time and resources developing project management skills and strengthening their internal processes, leaving political lobbying and research activities in a vulnerable position. Considering the high turnover of members in youth-led organisations, it is particularly important to prioritise on-going organisational development initiatives. In this way youth can reach a level where they can be effective contributors that can impact on and influence the processes in which they participate.

The government and international development organisations which would like to engage youth in their projects must consider the need for training and capacity building and acknowledge that such activities are necessary when working with youth compared to other, more professionalised organisations and networks.

3.1.4 SUFFICIENT INFORMATION

Governments and international development organisations have the responsibility to facilitate comprehensive and inclusive information sharing with youth who are participating in political processes. The information should be relevant, accessible and shared well in advance to enable youth-led organisations and networks to process it in a timely and detailed manner.

Voluntary organisations require more time to carry out consultations and make decisions jointly than other, more professionalised bodies. Unlike professional international development actors, voluntary and democratically-based organisations need to ensure that their policies have strong support among their members. Without legitimacy and ownership, these organisations will lose their members. This need for legitimacy and ownership should be seen in context of the requirement for on-going capacity building and support for organisational development.

3.1.5 CONTINUITY

Most political decisions are reached following a comprehensive process. Often, youth are brought in towards the end of the political process, almost to provide a youth alibi. To ensure that youth participation is real, it is important to refrain from such tokenistic measures, and rather make sure youth are involved in the process from the start. Youth should be part of the development, discussion, decision, implementation and evaluation stages of policy making.

As we are embarking on the Habitat III process, UN-Habitat and LNU for example are working with the Major Group for Children and Youth to ensure that youth are given the opportunity to participate in the process from the beginning and throughout the process.

3.2. A UNIVERSAL AND COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR PARTICIPATION

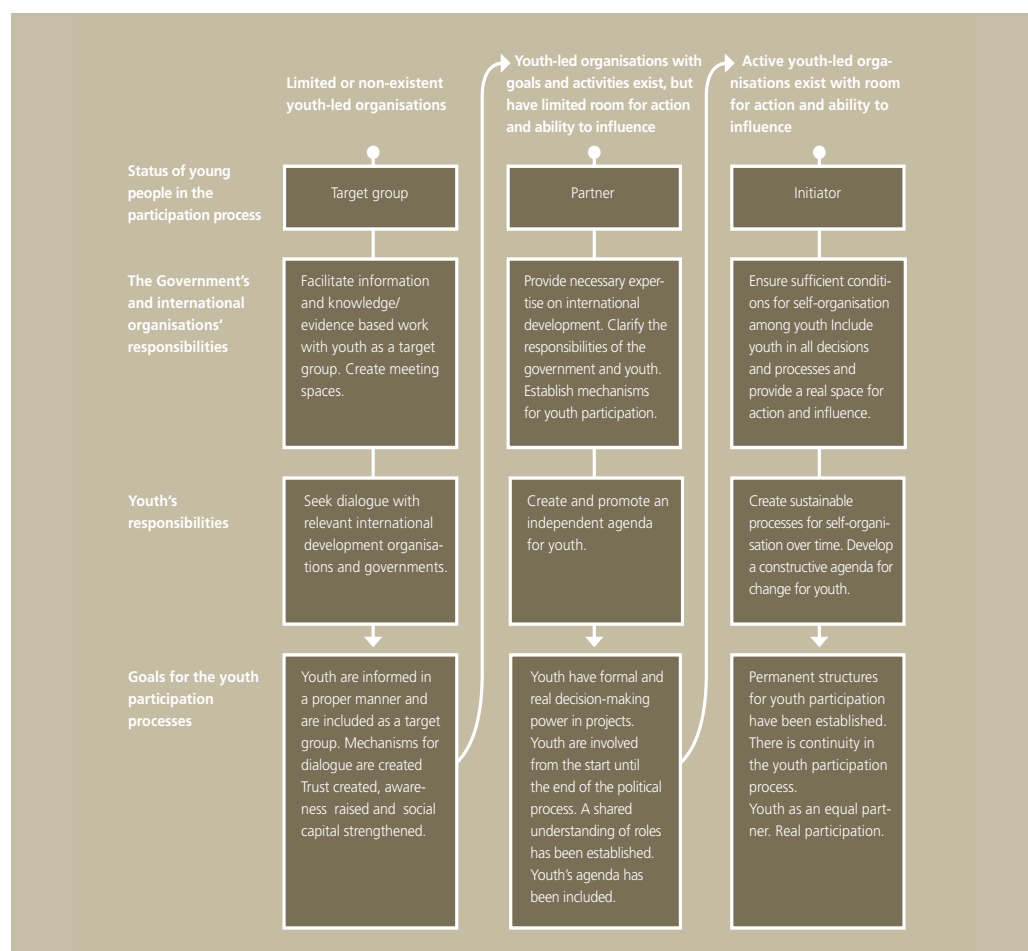
This proposal for a more comprehensive model of real and meaningful participation of youth in shaping international development policy is based on our joint experiences and other models, such as Hart's participation ladder²³. The aim of the model is to ensure that youth participation has a basis in representative youth-led initiatives, where youth actors have sufficient expertise and time to process issues throughout the political process. This approach helps secure real and meaningful youth participation. Within

this model, youth-led organisations and the government have a shared, but differentiated responsibility regarding the role of youth in a project or a decision-making process. To ensure real and meaningful participation of youth in this context, it is necessary to regard youth as a relevant stakeholder, either as a partner or initiator.

To develop a universal model, it is necessary that a framework can be adapted to different political, cultural and economic contexts. The model should set out the key principles for youth participation, while at the same time

being flexible enough so it can be adapted to the different cultural and societal contexts. To be relevant in different situations, the model should be capable of assessing how meaningful any participation effort is based on underlying conditions. The mentioned categories where youth are partners or initiators are dependent on the existence of active youth-led civil society organisations. Where such organisations do not exist, it is important to strengthen the role of youth in society by recognising them as an important target group for international development projects.

INCLUSION OF YOUTH IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES





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This model illustrates how the government and other actors involved in international development work can promote the inclusion of youth in decision-making processes. The transition between the different statuses of youth-led civil society organisations is gradual and the model is a simplification of reality. It can nevertheless be a useful tool. If few or no youth-led organisations exist, the opportunity for real participation will be limited as youth will lack experience and opportunities to organise themselves.

At this level, the government and international development organisations must focus on creating permanent mechanisms for dialogue and engagement that will help build trust and develop youth's social capital. This is necessary if youth are to become partners for the governments and international organizations and be able to develop and promote an independent agenda for youth. Taking the step from dialogue to permanent structures for youth participation requires a commitment to organisational development at the grassroots level. This work has to take place on youth's terms. Partnerships among youth-led organisations play an important part in this process, e.g. through capacity building and engagement in the process to set up potential mechanisms.

Without representative and independent youth-led civil society organisations that have the necessary expertise, any permanent structures for participation will be meaningless. It is the government's and international development organisations' responsibility to ensure that the necessary financial and non-financial conditions are in place to ensure that youth-led organisations can operate in a sustainable manner, and have a strong and independent voice in all processes impacting youth' current and future development.

To ensure that youth participation works, it is important to acknowledge that not all youth participation initiatives are positive. Youth representation can operate as an alibi for decision makers so they can say youth have been involved. A Norwegian researcher that have taken an extra interest in youth participation, Guro Ødegård has found through her research that youth who participate in structures with no real power find it more demotivating than not being involved in the first place. The belief that getting involved will make a difference is central to further political mobilisation of youth.

04. THE POST 2015 GOALS

Given their numbers and the impact they can have on international development policies, it is crucial to recognize youth's participation and partnership in the development of the Post 2015 Agenda. In the Post-2015 process, multiple national consultations, high-level panel meetings and regional forums on youth empowerment were carried out. One important element was the My World survey that provided a platform for young people to express their priorities and views so that world leaders can be informed in the process of defining the next set of global goals to end poverty how the global youth population assess the challenges for our common future. The largest contributors of My World survey have been youth worldwide. About 70% of respondents, both offline and online, are young people below the age of 30 years old. This global consultation with citizens, and specifically with youth, has highlighted a number of factors deemed to be of utmost importance in the Post 2015 Agenda.

Add here: The response from youth all over the world shows that young people around the world want to make a contribution to the Post-2015 process. We appreciate the effort to include young people and civil society in the process of defining the new development goals. However, in order to make this process inclusive we must make sure that youth have the possibility to set the agenda. We must make sure that the youth can take active part in the process, all the way from defining goals, as well as being stakeholders in the implementation of the goals. By doing so, we will also increase the legitimacy of the development goals, and enhance the likelihood of reaching the goals in the end.

Youth do not constitute a homogeneous group; their socio-economic, demographic, and geographical situations vary widely both within and between regions. Notwithstanding these differences, regional-level analysis provides a general understanding of their development profile. The vast majority of the world's youth—some 87 per cent—live in developing countries and face challenges such as limited access to resources, education, training, employment, and broader economic development opportunities.



Millennials Jam Workshop, Youth and ICTs beyond 2015. © Worldbank

The My World survey has findings that give the world greater understanding of what is important to youth. The top three issues identified on a global level are education, health and good governance, with approximately 75% of respondents at the time of this writing classifying quality education as the number one priority.

By viewing the data based on conditions, like low HDI countries versus high HDI countries, it can be noted that factors like better transport and roads are more important for youth in lower HDI countries compared to higher HDI countries (45.3% of respondents classifying this priority as one of their choices in low HDI countries versus 9.4% of respondents classifying this priority in very high HDI countries). Performing such a thorough analysis from the *myworld2015.org* data can aid in developing agendas that suit various regions and demographics of youth.

The MyWorld Survey indicates that there is a strong willingness from youth to participate in decision-making processes. Young people are participating in MY World at twice the rate of other age groups. Not only are young people voting on MY World but they are leading outreach across the world by mobilizing their communities, including elders.

Young people's participation and inclusion in efforts to achieve all of the goals in the post-2015 agenda are crucial to ensure a successful and sustainable outcome. The post-2015 process has brought together different initiatives ranging from regional consultations to national consultation to thematic consultations, incorporating thematic inputs by the youth through online and offline platforms. It is crucial to recognize the youth's participation and partnership in development of the post-2015 agenda in the last stages of negotiations as well. The analysis of national consultations, high level panel meetings, thematic meetings and regional forums on youth empowerment show that a multitude of factors need to be addressed in the post-2015 agenda to ensure sustainable development.

Over the past few years, youth forums have taken place across the globe to identify barriers and suggest solutions towards empowering the youth. There was a clear consensus from these forums that youth voices and partnerships are strengthened when united. Providing the platform for youth to interact and develop such recommendations will not only empower the youth, but allow them to incorporate entrepreneurship in approaching solutions in the development discussions. It was noted that without employing youth to do so, implementation of related policies to address issues regarding the youth will not be efficacious.

The most important priority that needs to be addressed is ensuring the youth's voices and partnerships are taken into account in the implementation of the post-2015 goals. This fundamental step will provide the vision necessary to build a sustainable future. Moving forward, what is clear is that young people's participation is central in realizing the fate of the present MDGs and in both the development and the implementation of a youth led-post-2015. The youth population has to be recognized and their priorities must be addressed; strengthening youth participation through permanent structures in the development discussions is the best way for the implementations to be successful.



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05. CONCLUSION: WAY FORWARD



Sharing Prosperity, Delivering Results.

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Young people's participation is central in realizing sustainable development. To be more concrete, the fate of the present MDGs and both the development and the implementation of a youth led-post-2015 and Habitat III are reliant on youth's active contribution.

The youth population has to be recognized and their priorities must be addressed; strengthening youth participation in the development discussions is the best way for the implementations to be successful.

One important recommendation from the Post-2015 process is the need for permanent structures for youth participation. As the Habitat III process will be the first major international conference after the conclusion of the Post-2015 a major theme will be the implementation of the goals. Any discussion related to the implementation has to involve youth representatives.

Youth are one of the hardest hit demographic groups in regards to inequality. Inequality fuels poverty and undermining the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction. Age itself is a vector of inequality, excluding millions of young women and men from access to financial resources, work opportunities, social welfare mechanisms and decision-making spaces, despite their rights to all of these. Investing in youth has significant economic, social and human gains in the short and long term. It is estimated that even halving the world's youth unemployment rate may add an estimated US\$ 2.2 and 3.5 trillion, or between 4.4 and 7.0%, to the global GDP. Youth are essential partners across all aspects of international development, from formulating goals and designing policy, to implement programs and adopting lessons-learned.

The work UN-Habitat and LNU have done over the last decade has fostered a new understanding of youth as development partners, leaders in their own right at the local, national and international level, and not only as recipients of support. Within the UN system, a high degree of attention has been paid to youth as well in the past 4 years. In the word of UN Secretary-General, Ban-ki Moon, "Countries that don't invest in youth don't have a future, and don't deserve one either". The same goes without saying to UN agencies as well. A system, without prejudice of where in the world it is or at what governance level it is, will only be stronger and better by giving youth voice and exit, and creating permanent mechanisms that ensures their true and meaningful participation.

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