



THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN ECONOMIC,
POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY
ACTIVITIES

Forum: ECOSOC

Issue: The role of youth in economic, political and community activities

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INTRODUCTION

We will probably all agree on the fact that the Sustainable Development occupies the highest levels of concern in the current days, as well as the need to rise a more developed and aware human speech; by ending hunger, poverty and illiteracy, respecting the only planet we live on.

Nowadays youth as active, energetic, creative and enthusiastic part of modern society play an important role in solving global problems. It's easier for young people to communicate, to share their ideas openly and to accept new things. We have always been fascinated by dreams of the future. *Dreams about better world* without evil and hatred where everyone has his own place, where there are a lot of opportunities for development.

Thus this is one of the reasons why the United Nations attaches great attention to young generation, giving us opportunities for the contribution towards global problems' solutions.

People under the age of 35 are rarely found in formal political leadership positions and pretty much any governmental position. In a third of countries, eligibility for the national parliament starts at 25 years or higher and it is common practice to refer to politicians as 'young' if they are below 35-40 years of age. Youth is not represented adequately in formal political institutions and processes such as Parliaments, political parties, elections, and public administrations. The situation is even more difficult for both young women as well as women at mid-level and decision-making/leadership positions.

Young people are critical thinkers, change-makers, innovators, and communicators; so, they play a pivotal and leadership role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. The future depends totally on

the choices made by the youth – and in turn, whatever the youth is doing now will ultimately have an impact on themselves in future, as they are the one who has the most time to spend in the future. To incorporate these Sustainable Development Goals in their work, life, and education – whether at an individual level or on a community level, youth have endless opportunities in contemporary time.

Young people play a crucial role in the prospect for development and should be included in all National Development Plans and Programmes. But reality shows that attention to youth has not been sufficient and more needs to be done considering the practical implications of shifting perceptions of youth.

The initial and perhaps the greatest step the youth and elderly can take is to spread awareness about the matter of fact. With an already established understanding of the youth important issues of interest may be addressed. We need to build trust to the youth in places that are in need and we need to bolster the already existent trust in youth to move forward.

However the opportunities of the youth engaging governance and to participate in political/mutual decision making processes depend highly on the political and socio-economic/cultural contexts. Social norms that are pre-existent in many member states result in discrimination against young people, especially women. The member states would require a mutual understanding of the impotence of youth and the most effective ways to use the youth to propel respective societies to a better, sustainable state of existence.

DEFINITION OF KEYWORDS

Youth:

The current UN definition of youth is “those persons between the ages of fifteen and twenty four years, without prejudice to other definitions by member states”.

However the definition almost always varies between member states mainly because of age parameters so the delegates are encouraged to revolutionize definitions.

Youth Empowerment:

A process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. They do this by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve their access to resources and transform their consciousness through their beliefs, values, and attitudes.

-Kar, Snehendru B; Pascual, Catherine A, 1999, Empowerment of women for health promotion: a meta-analysis

Empowerment theory:

Empowerment theory focuses on processes that enable participation; enhance control through shared decision making; and create opportunities to learn, practice, and increase skills. Empowerment theory suggests that engaging youth in pro-social, meaningful, and community-enhancing activities that the youth themselves define and control, helps youth gain vital skills, responsibilities, and confidence necessary to become productive and healthy adults.

Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others.

-Reischl, 2011, Youth empowerment solutions for violence prevention

Positive Development Setting(s):

Youth empowerment programs thrive in positive developmental settings. Positive developmental settings promote youth competence, confidence and connections. Two features of the positive developmental youth settings are supportive relationships and support for efficacy and mattering.

Supportive relationships are those that are between youth and non-familial adults that foster trust and respect. Support for efficacy and mattering specifically focuses on youth being active, instrumental agents of change in their communities, collective decision-making and adults listen to and respect their voice.

-Krauss, 2013, Youth-Adult Partnership: Exploring Contributions to Empowerment, Agency and Community Connections in Malaysian Youth Programs

Dimensions of Youth Empowerment:

Youth empowerment examines six interdependent dimensions: psychological, community, organizational, economic, social and cultural;

Psychological empowerment enhances individual's consciousness, belief in self-efficacy, awareness and knowledge of problems and solutions and of how individuals can address problems that harm their quality of life. This dimension aims to create self-confidence and give youth the skills to acquire knowledge.

Community empowerment focuses on enhancing the community through leadership development, improving communication, and creating a network of support to mobilize the community to address concerns.

Organizational empowerment aims to create a base of resources for a community, including voluntary organizations, unions and associations that aim to protect, promote and advocate for the powerless.

Economic empowerment teaches entrepreneurial skills, how to take ownership of their assets and how to have income security.

Social empowerment teaches youth about social inclusion and literacy as well as helping kids find the resources to be proactive in their communities.

Cultural empowerment aims to recreate cultural practices and redefine cultural rules and norms for youth.

Through these dimensions of empowerment, programs can work on empowering youth in one or more aspects of their lives.

- Edralin, 2015, Initiating Women Empowerment and Youth Development through Involvement in Non-Formal Education in Three Selected Parishes: An Action Research on Poverty Alleviation

GENERAL OVERVIEW

I) Youth Participation Basics and the Current Understanding

Since the Arab Awakening many youth in the region have remained politically active through “political movements” instead of engaging with and in political parties. Young men and women are traditionally active politically in universities (when allowed) but very often disillusioned with political leadership and political institutions and excluded from policy development. As a result, political activism of youth is not organized according to formal groupings.

In order to respond to the needs of young people, and to guarantee that their basic human rights are recognized and enforced, young people’s active and meaningful participation in their societies and in democratic practices and processes is of crucial importance.

-UN Youth, 2014, Youth and Political Decision Making

Meaningful youth participation and leadership require that young people and young people-led organizations have opportunities, capacities, and benefit from an enabling environment and relevant evidence based programs and policies at all levels. Realizing young people’s right to participate and be included in democratic processes and practices is also vital to ensure the achievement of internationally agreed development goals and to refresh the development agenda.

Both formal and informal engagement can be understood as participation, and both are beneficial for a vivid and resilient sustainment and should be supported. There is strong evidence that the participation of young people in formal, institutional processes is relatively low when compared to older citizens across the globe. This challenges the representativeness of the political system and leads to the disenfranchisement of young people.

Youth comprise nearly 30 per cent of the world's population, these large numbers of young people are an opportunity; an investment to their country. Youth participation in nation building programmes/activities therefore is to:

- *Strengthens young people's abilities to meet their own subsistence needs;
- *Prevents and reduces vulnerabilities to economic, political and socially unstable environments;
- *Promotes ownership and sustainability of change interventions;
- *Helps gain entry into target communities and build up trust and social capital.

In countries emerging from conflicts, UN recognizes that young people can engage in peace building, leading non-violent revolutions, using new technologies to mobilize societies to bring about change. Young people have demonstrated the potential to build bridges across communities, working together, helping to manage conflict and promote peace. Young people are vital stakeholders in conflict and in peace-building, and can be agents of change and provide a foundation for rebuilding lives and communities, contributing to a more just and peaceful society.

However the opportunities of the youth engaging governance and to participate in political/mutual decision making processes depend highly on the political and socio-economic/cultural contexts. Social norms that are pre-existent in many member states result in discrimination against young people, especially women. The member states would require a mutual understanding of the impotence of youth and the most effective ways to use the youth to propel respective societies to a better,

sustainable state of existence. *(A repeat from the introduction part of this report because of its relevancy)*

II) Already Existent/Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue and Major Parties Involved

Nigeria:

UNDP supported youth based CSO coalition to actively participate in the Constitution review process, including submission of memorandum to the constitution review committees of the National Assembly. A Nigerian Youth Agenda on Political Participation is now being developed ahead of the 2015 election together with a Nigerian Youth Inter party Forum. The forum will primarily be used by youth members across party lines to come together and deliberate on issues of common interest and challenges among other things one being expanding the frontiers for youth political participation.

Bangladesh: National Youth Parliament UNDP supported the establishment of a National Youth Parliament to empower active citizens at both local and national level and provide an opportunity for youth to contribute to the framing of national policy through direct dialogue with parliamentarians.

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Mongolia:

The Youth Empowerment Through Civic Education project has developed recommendations for revising civic education curricula to better appeal to youth, trained young journalists, and set up a Facebook group 'DemoCrazy'. Greater national attention to youth issues is evident in the Ministry of Social Welfare's decision to develop a youth policy.

USA:

Educational activities that cite youth empowerment as an aim include student-centered learning, popular education, and service learning. Free schools and youth-led media organizations often state their intention to empower youth, as well as youth voice, community youth development, and youth leadership programs. Youth empowerment is studied by a variety of scholars.

OPT:

“Supporting Dialogue” UNDP helped train University councils to develop a stronger culture of dialogue among their youth members to better influence Palestinian political and social leadership. The Project also worked with SHAREK, a Palestinian Youth NGO, to engage with students in Palestinian universities and their leadership in students’ councils. UNDP targeted seven student University councils across Palestine with the aim to promote their role in enhancing a culture of dialogue which political parties have failed to do in the past 6 years since elections have stalled. This work included enhancing capacities of student council members to articulate, effectively communicate and persuasively argue issues that affect them as active individuals and engaged citizens. Special attention was given to reinforcing the role of young Palestinian women in political leadership.

Acquired from:

http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/projects_and_initiatives/dggyouth

III) Statistics for Context

-In the area of political participation, in a third of countries, eligibility for national parliament starts at 25 years old or older .

- 1.65% of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20s and 11.87 % are in their 30s.
- The average age of parliamentarians globally is 53 (50 years old for women parliamentarians)
- Young people between the ages of 15 and 25 constitute a fifth of the world's population.

CONCLUSION, POSSIBLE SOLUTION REFERENCES AND REMARKS

A strengthened, coordinated and effective UN action is essential to achieve the overall goal of progressive and substantive inclusion of young people in political and decision-making processes at all levels. To reach this long-term objective through the definition of tangible objectives, a system of wide articulation for youth may be put in motion.

Two main points need to be addressed:

- 1) Support to young people's participation in inclusive political and social processes
 - I) Enabling legal frameworks, policies and order. Basically environment
 - II) Promotion of young people's skills and capabilities
 - III) Promoting against the oppression of the youth in countries, especially against young women

- 2) Support the youth's inclusion in decision making of all levels of development and sustainment processes
 - I) Establishment of effective young people led organizations such as young people led media and environment groups
 - II) The ability of young people led organizations need to contribute to the achievement of durable and sustainable solutions
 - III) Young women and men need to be actively supported to become active individuals in global efforts

Please keep in mind that coming to a mutual understanding is key when tackling an issue of such.

RELEVANT UN DOCUMENTS AND TREATIES

World Programme of Action for Youth

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf>

Celebrating a Decade of Youth Participation

https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=qTZy6fsMx_cC&pg=PR1&lpq=PR1&dq=youth+participation+chart&source=bl&ots=89DIacs_6L&sig=D9DysNvvUYkyqGtqoS5MESLE6H0&hl=tr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwib1Mzjsb_bAhUGkCwKHS7CCoQ6AEIdzAM#v=onepage&q=youth%20participation%20chart&f=false

Academic Model Attempts for Youth Participation

<http://www.myd.govt.nz/working-with-young-people/youth-participation-in-decision-making/youth-participation-models.html>

Empowering Young People to Participate in Society

http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/events/documents/youthweek_brochure_en.pdf

UNDP – Youth GPS

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/Youth-GPS.html>

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<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf>