

# Youth Participation in Development: Strategies & Best Practices



*Daniella Ben-Attar, MA  
International Development Consultant & Youth  
Specialist*

[daniella.benattar@gmail.com](mailto:daniella.benattar@gmail.com)

[www.daniella.ben-attar.com](http://www.daniella.ben-attar.com)

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*“Young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow;  
they can play a leading role in the development of  
their communities today. Let us hope that their good  
works today blossom into lifelong commitments  
that will benefit all the world's people.”*

*Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General, United Nations*



# INTERNATIONAL YEAR YOUTH AUGUST 2010-2011 OUR YEAR OUR VOICE

## UN General Assembly Resolution 64/134

### Objectives:

1. **Create Awareness:** increase commitment and investment in youth
2. **Mobilize and Engage:** increase youth participation and partnerships
3. **Connect and Build Bridges:** increase intercultural understanding among youth



website: [social.un.org/youthyear](http://social.un.org/youthyear) • facebook: [www.facebook.com/UNyouth](http://www.facebook.com/UNyouth)

# WHY YOUTH?

“By the year 2015, there will be three billion people under the age of 25. They are the future ... they are also the now.”

*James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank (2003)*



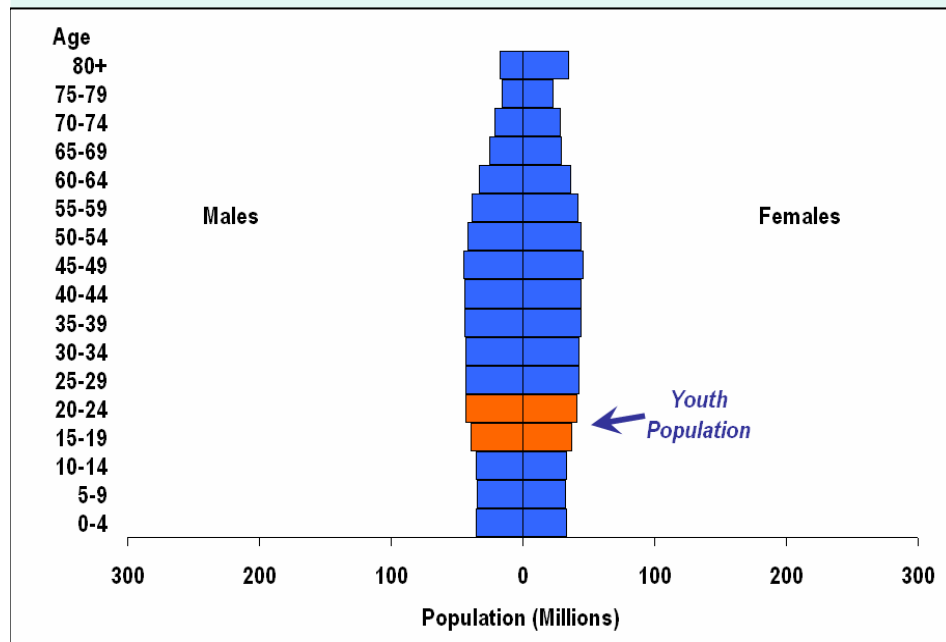
# Youth - Key Trends 2009

- UN Definition: Ages 15-24
- 1.2 billion youth (15-24) worldwide
- 87% (1 billion) in developing countries
- 8 in 10 live in Africa and Asia
- Nearly 50% of developing world population is youth and children
- More than ½ of all youth survive on less than USD\$2 a day.
- Over 3 billion people – nearly half of the world's population – are under the age of 25

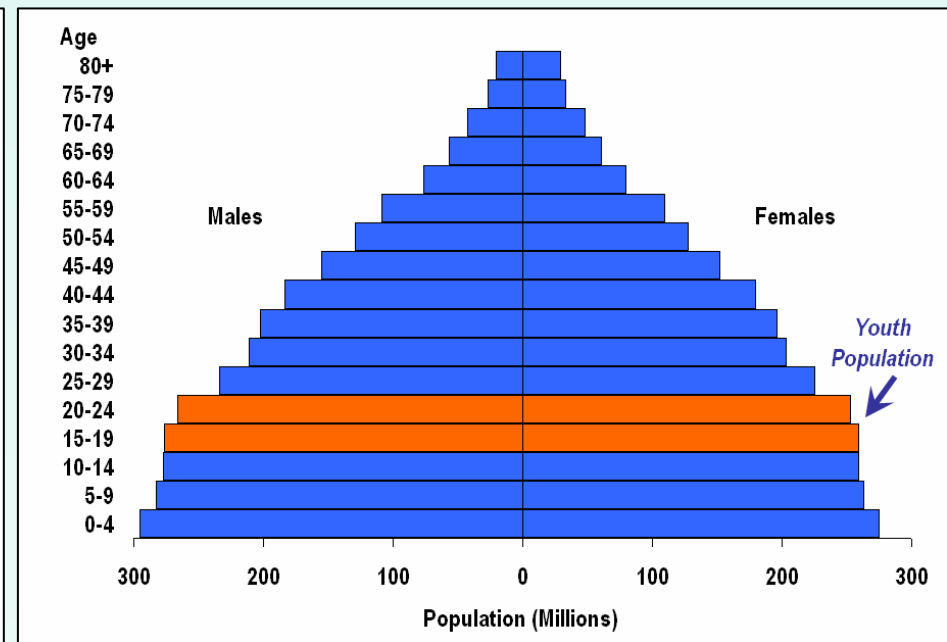
Source: Carl Haub and Mary Mederios Kent, Population Reference Bureau, *2009 World Population Data Sheet*.

# Bulk of Youth in Developing Countries

Population by Age and Sex,  
More Developed Countries: 2009

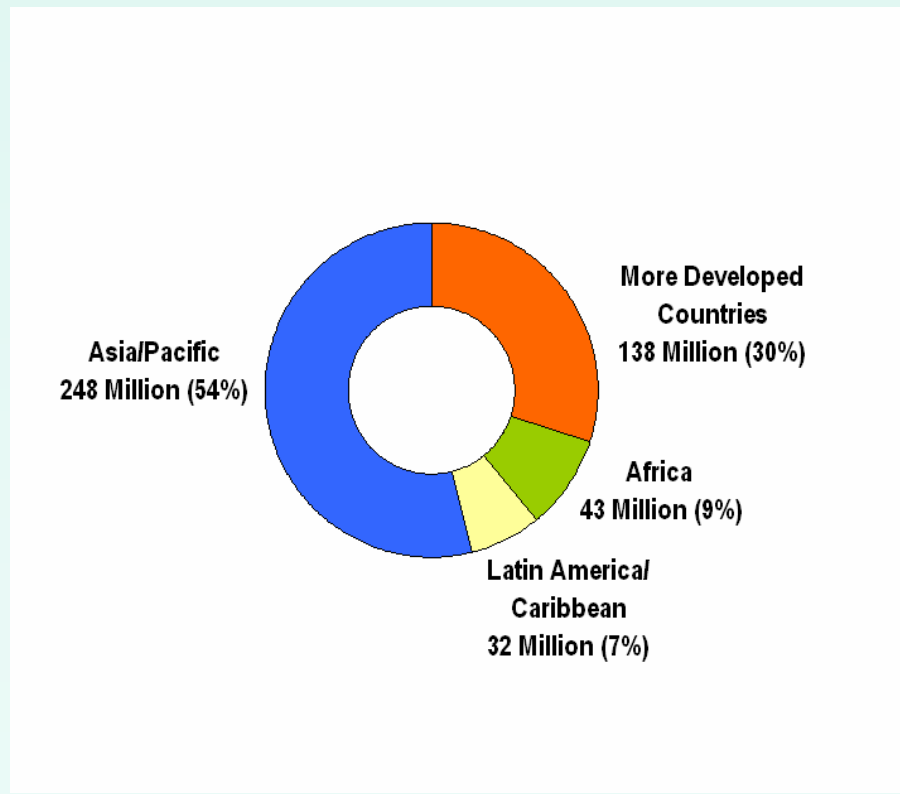


Population by Age and Sex,  
Less Developed Countries: 2009

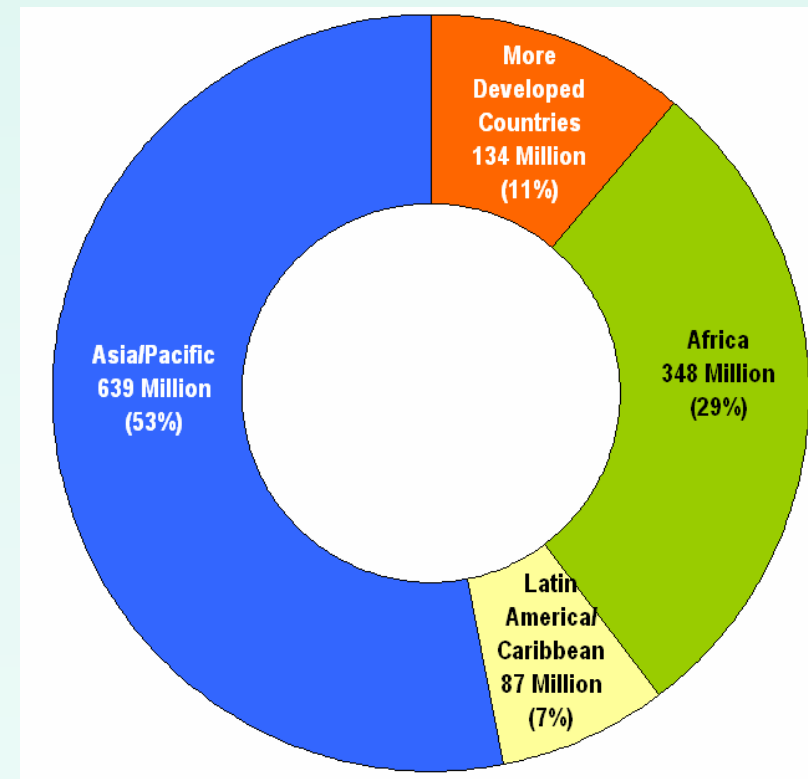


# The World's Youth Population Will Become More Concentrated in Africa and Asia

Population Ages 15-24 by World Region: 1950 and 2050



1950



2050

Source: UN Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision*, medium variant (2009).

# Opportunity or Threat?

- In order to benefit from young people's capabilities, communities must ensure opportunities for youth to be engaged in development processes.
- Failure to do so can lead to the exclusion and marginalization of youth while depriving communities of their energy, dynamism and innovativeness.
- While youth can form the most energetic and innovative segment of the population, if unemployed and excluded, they can be a source of social disruption
- Doors must be open to youth participation in employment, civic engagement, political participation, etc.
- **NEEDED:** The creation of an *enabling environment* for youth participation.

# Social Exclusion

Despite their numbers, today's youth are socially and politically marginalized:

- Traditionally viewed as part of the problem or program beneficiaries
- Youth have not been successfully integrated into civil society and decision-making frameworks which affect their present and future.
- Youth are most vulnerable to social problems, with almost no voice in governance
- Negative implications for communities and countries
  - Multiple forms of exclusion can lead to youth engagement in violence and conflict:
    - **Sierra Leone:** social exclusion found to have been a major cause of prolonged civil war, to a greater extent than the diamond trade or political instability – 8 years of conflict helped provoke revolt of youth who turned to guerilla insurgency in reaction to political, economic and social exclusion.
    - **Central America:** young people who feel alienated from society and excluded from job opportunities and decision-making turn to violence, crime, gangs.
- Young women are doubly disadvantaged



# Social Challenges

- More than 500 million youth live on less than \$2 per day
- 130 million youth are illiterate
- 10 million live with HIV
- Six thousand young people are infected with HIV every day.



## Youth Employment Crisis:

- 88.2 million youth are unemployed worldwide – 47% of all unemployed (ILO), yet youth make up only 25% of working-age population.
- *Over 90% of the world's unemployed youth live in developing countries. The regions with the largest shares of youth within the working age population fare the worst in terms of youth unemployment.*

# WHAT?

## DEFINING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

- The active, informed and voluntary involvement of people in decision-making and the life of their communities (both locally and globally). Participation means work **with and by** people, not merely work **for** them.
- The human rights approach to development acknowledges that youth have the right to participation, including under-18s who have the right “to express...views freely in all matters affecting [them], the views...being given due weight in accordance with [their] age and maturity” (Convention on the rights of the Child 1989, Article 12).

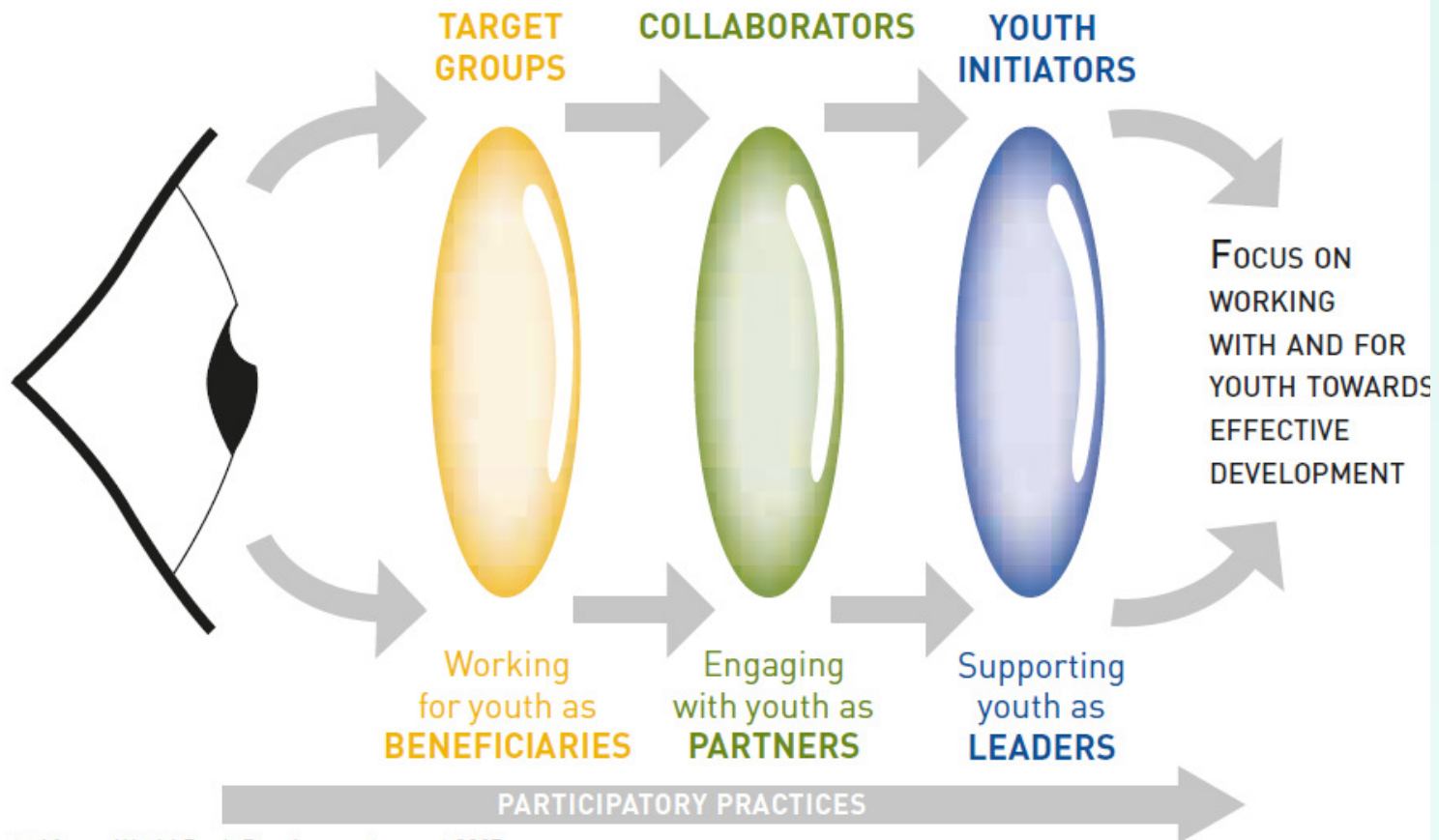


# Seizing the Opportunity: Youth as Assets in Development

- Youth as part of solution rather than part of the problem
- Vast potential for contribution to communities untapped
- Youth as drivers of economic development: Creation of decent work opportunities can turn current wasted productive capacity into positive force for development
- Need to be empowered to participate in decisions affecting their livelihoods
- **Going beyond “leaders of tomorrow”: youth as critical resources making an impact in cities TODAY.**
- Youth as participants in development:
  - Strengthens young people’s abilities to meet their own needs
  - Prevents/reduces vulnerabilities to political, economic and social instabilities
  - Builds young people’s commitment to solutions, promoting ownership and sustainability of interventions
  - Enables the exercise of citizenship, promoting learning, empowerment and greater control over lives.

# Three-Lens Approach to Youth Participation

Figure 1: The three-lens approach to youth participation



Adapted from: World Bank Development report 2007

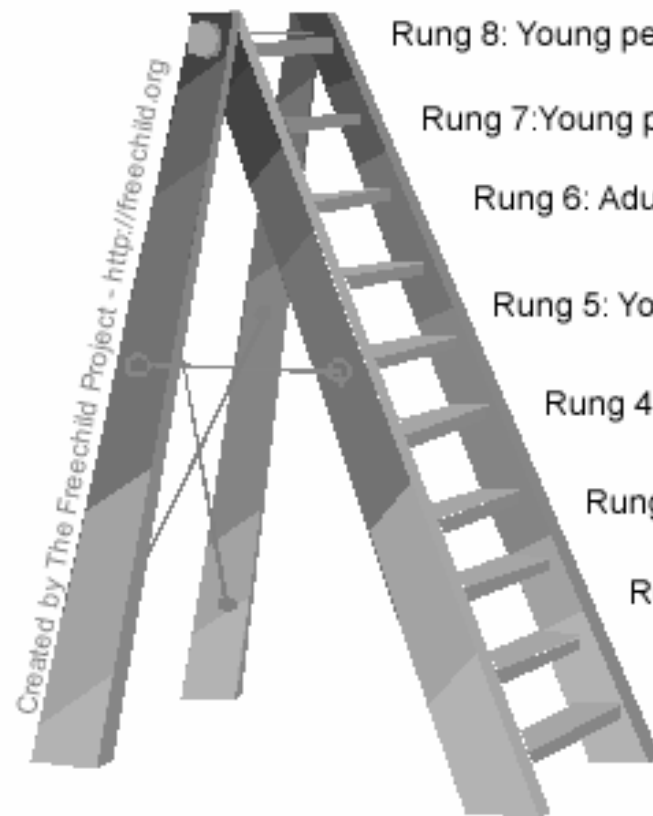
# From Beneficiaries to Leaders

Table 1: Definitions of beneficiaries, partners and leaders

<b>Working for youth as beneficiaries</b>	Defined as the basics of a good intervention for young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Youth as beneficiaries implies they are a <b>target group</b> and are adequately <b>informed</b>;</li><li>• Explicitly focuses on youth issues through documentation;</li><li>• Can <b>prepare the ground</b> for working with youth as partners.</li></ul>
<b>Engaging with youth as partners</b>	Defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Collaborative</b> interventions, where young people are fully <b>consulted</b> and informed;</li><li>• Implies mutual co-operation and responsibility;</li><li>• Recognises that young people generally need experience working at this level before progressing to becoming leaders and initiators of development (if appropriate) – a progression which not all will want or be able to make.</li></ul>
<b>Supporting youth as leaders</b>	Defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Enabling youth-initiated and directed</b> interventions;</li><li>• Opening up a space for youth-led decision-making (delegation) within existing structures, systems and processes.</li></ul>

# Assessing Engagement

## Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Rung 8: Young people & adults share decision-making

← Youth Mainstreaming

Rung 7: Young people lead & initiate action

← Youth-Led Development

Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people

Rung 5: Young people consulted and informed

Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed

Rung 3: Young people tokenized\*

Rung 2: Young people are decoration\*

← Non-participation

Rung 1: Young people are manipulated\*

Note: Hart explains that the last three rungs are *non-participation*

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

# HOW?

## Youth Participation Strategies



# Complementary Strategies

## Rooted in Assets-Based Philosophy:

- Recognizing youth as leaders in their communities
- Emphasizing youth capacity and interest in contributing to decisions that affect their lives



## Complementary Strategies:

1. **Policy Level:** Youth Mainstreaming
2. **Local & National Level:** Youth-Led Development



# Strategy #1: Youth Mainstreaming

*Consistent, committed youth-adult cooperation at every level.*

- **Similar to gender mainstreaming: The process of assessing the implications for youth of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels.**

## **Beyond the “Youth Desk” or “Youth Ministry” -**

- Meaningfully engaging youth at all levels of policy development and governance.
- Youth recognized in the full spectrum of decision-making as stakeholders in every aspect of life, from waste management and energy use to housing, employment and transportation.
- Advocating a system-wide approach to young people’s participation in development, a broad integration of youth into the structure and activities of development organizations and the convergence of youth interests with those of other members of society.
- Youth exercising rights and interests will enrich the quality of life for all.

# Strategy #2: Youth-Led Development (YLD)

## Definition:

“An approach to development driven and guided by young people that draws upon their energy, creativity and skills to create positive change...it implicitly values young people as an asset for society.”

## Key Characteristics:

- Young people actively creating a better future for themselves and their communities.
- Projects and initiatives designed and implemented by young people addressing a broad range of community needs: HIV AIDS, environment, housing, health, etc.
- Youth taking leadership roles not only in the future when they become adults, but in the present.
- Going beyond adult-initiated, youth-serving programs to giving youth full ownership and thus full engagement.

# Youth Participation Methodologies



- Formal youth representation in decision-making bodies
- Consultations with youth on policy
- Adult-youth partnerships in planning & programming
- Peer-to-peer mentorship education and training (drug education, youth at-risk): builds on the shared culture of youth and their local experience, and is given in a non-judgmental way, information seen as credible.
- Youth involvement in developing and designing programs with local institutions (inclusive planning processes)
- Recognition and support of youth-led agencies/organizations (community based, national and multinational organizations)

# Youth Participation Approaches

- Governance – youth councils, delegates to international forums
- Participatory budgeting
- Policy planning and development
- Community development: education, health, food security, employment
- Violence prevention (youth-patrolling)
- Peacebuilding & conflict mediation
- Environment

# Benefits of YLD

- Organizations gain more effective and context-sensitive problem solving, leadership, communication methods and planning processes.
- Stronger commitment and more energy in community
- Greater understanding of the concerns of youth and thus more effective programs and services.
- Stronger feeling of connectedness by youth to their community.
- Youth development of valuable skills, boosting their ability to acquire jobs and participate actively in society.



# **Lessons Learned: Key Challenges**

- Lack of youth skills & capacity
- Lack of municipal leadership awareness, will and capacity
- Youth frustration and disempowerment
- Lack of integrative approach
- Limited scope of program impact
- Limited program resources
- Need for effective monitoring & evaluation tools to demonstrate program impact

# Lessons Learned: Recommended Strategies

- **Towards Mainstreaming:** country/city-wide strategies for youth engagement – increased coordination among all actors
- **Institutionalization** of inclusive local frameworks & policies
- Leveraging and forging strong **linkage to grassroots youth initiatives**
- **Increased funding allocations**
- **2-Pronged Capacity building:**
  - [For youth](#): skill-building, acquiring knowledge and tools to lead and engage in development processes
  - [For leaders & officials](#): sensitizing to youth issues, understanding the benefits of youth-led development, strategies for how to engage youth
- **Knowledge sharing:**
  - [Youth-to-Youth \(Y2Y\) Networks](#): global, regional, local
  - [City-to-City Networks & Programs](#): Y2Y, Municipality-to-Municipality, Community-to-Community (S/S, N/S, Global)
  - [International Program Frameworks](#): convening, on-line tools, training/exchange, study tours



# CASE STUDIES





## *Case Study: Participation in Policy Formation*

### **Youth Policy Consultation, Bahrain**

- **Actors:** Department of Youth and Sport in Bahrain, supported by UNDP.
- **Description:** 18-month nationwide process to assess situation, needs & aspirations of Bahraini youth in order to inform the country's first National Youth Policy (created in 2004).
- **Activities:** Over 100 youth were recruited and trained to coordinate the Youth Voice campaign, taking an active role in conducting and promoting the research. Youth sat alongside civil servants and ministers on 9 intergenerational committees. 16,000 youth were engaged as respondents through focus group discussions, surveys or consultations.
- **Outcomes:** an implementation plan was drafted incorporating the majority of recommendations made in strategy document, including the formation of: a national youth parliament, national youth commission, national youth development fund, inter-ministerial committee for youth affairs.

*“The participation of youth, in large numbers and from diverse backgrounds, was the number one achievement of the process.” Amal Al-Dossary, GOYS project focal point*



## *Case Study: Youth-led crime & violence prevention*

### **Youth and the Police Project - Brazil**

- **Actors:** AfroReggae Cultural Group founded in Rio slum, Center of Studies on Security and Citizenship of Candido mendes University, Secretariat for Social Defense and Military Police of Minas Gerais, support of Ford Foundation.
- **Description:** Grassroots youth initiated project aimed at establishing dialogue between culture of young and police culture, bridging gaps through music and art.
- **Activities:**
  - 1) workshops led by young slum dwellers (including victims of police violence) of AfroReggae for 140 policemen
  - 2) training of 40 policemen by AfroReggae and CESeC, with police working as instructors on percussion, graffiti art, street basketball, street theatre for young slum dwellers
  - 3) institutionalization of project by government and joint police-youth presentations at public events and inside police premises
  - 4) replication of program in Rio, documentary produced and aired.
- **Outcomes:** strong positive impact on changing image of police among young slum-dwellers and wider population; moderate but positive impact on police improving image and understanding of youth:
  - 71% believe that youth and police project helped integrate police and community
  - 80% believe cultural workshops favor police-community integration
  - 80% of youth said their image of the police changed after project

*“This is working to humanize policemen, to bring society closer, sending us a teacher, a young guy from the slums. And they are seeing another side to the policeman: us shouting, singing, dancing ... it must be different for them as well”*

**Sergeant of the 34th BPM – Belo Horizonte, PMMG.**

## *Case Study: Governance/Participatory Budgeting*

# **Participatory Youth Budget - Rosario, Argentina**

- **Actors:** Municipality of Rosario, Argentina
- **Description:** Municipality engages youth from across its six districts in democratic processes to select representatives and decide upon budget allocations for youth services on an annual basis.
- **Participants:** 1,000 young people per year engage in the control and distribution of resources, co-managing decision-making processes. Funded services are used by wider youth population.
- **Activities:**
  - Neighborhood assemblies set up in each district
  - Youth identify neighborhood priorities and elect delegates to each district's Youth Participatory Council (YPC).
  - Training/orientation held for budget delegates
  - YPC's meet regularly for several months to develop project proposals based on priorities.
  - YPC's present proposals to district assemblies where local youth vote on which to implement

**Outcomes:** meaningful youth participation in municipal governance (going beyond "tokenism" to concrete participation through budgeting).

- gaps in provision were identified and addressed; funding was allocated to new workshops, recreational sites and community library.
- Inspired new youth projects in adult participatory budgeting process.
- Development of new democratic skills, knowledge and attitudes. The elected representatives are considered ambassadors.
- Linking of youth from different areas
- Program undergoing scaling up process

***“Where local young people are involved in budgetary decisions there is the potential to develop creative solutions to issues that can result in cost savings and better value for money.”***

***-Government Official, Municipality of Rosario***

*Case Study: Youth-Led Community Development*  
**Slums Information Development & Resource Center  
(SIDAREC)**

- **Description:** Community-based, youth-led organization located in the urban slums of Nairobi established by a group of young people in 1996 to identify resourceful youth in the slums and engage them in the betterment of their own community.
- **Participants:** Serves population of 500,000
- **Activities:** SIDAREC pillars (programs) include: Youth Reproductive Health and Development, Early Childhood Development, Community Media and ICT, and Livelihood.
- **Outcomes:** Addressing the issue of urban violence and crime prevention through participation, community development and slum upgrading.
- **Website:** <http://www.sidarec.org/>

**WHY SIDAREC?**

*SIDAREC was formed after the realization that there are too many young people idling around the communities with little or nothing to do after completing their education or dropping out of school for various social reasons.*



*The organization was established by youth with an aim of tapping and consolidating skills and talents existing within the community especially the youth, for the common benefit of slum dwellers.*

*“Community problems need community solutions.”*

*Case Study: Urban Planning*

# IMAGINE DURBAN – A Community Engagement Process for a 100-Year Vision

- **Actors:** eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, CIDA, International Center for Sustainable Cities
- **Participants:** Thousands of children and youth of Durban
- **Activities:** Multi-stakeholder engagement of youth in urban planning and municipal visioning process. Conducted through community events and schools. Capacity Building workshops for youth.
- **Outcomes:** Long term sustainability process owned 'by the people, for the people'. City plan built on widespread community and stakeholder engagement, and on gender equity policy.

**Website:** <http://www.imaginedurban.org/>



Imagining tomorrow, today



*Case Study: Youth-led crime & violence prevention*  
**Patrullas Juvenilas Program (Youth Patrol Program - Peru)**

**Community Peace Workers Program (S.Africa)**

**Patrullas Juvenilas**

- **Actors:** Department for Citizen Participation, National Police of Peru
- **Description:** Initiative set up in 40 of Lima's poorest districts between Neighborhood Organizations, local police departments and violent youth gangs
- **Activities:** participation and collaboration of youth gangs through training, activities and community patrolling. Uses sport, cultural activities, recreation, income generating activities and dialogue to help enlist youth gangs in constructive activities.
- **Outcomes:** 40 wards involved, over 1,200 youth have gone through program, residents found decline in violence

**Community Peace Workers**

- **Description/Activities:** Young women and men patrolling in various townships of South Africa's cities. In the capital Tshwane, community peace workers are now an established component of preventive work - project is integrated into the Tshwane Metropolitan Police Department's crime prevention unit, and the mayor has already announced her intention to send community peace workers onto the streets for the 2010 Football World Cup.
- **Outcomes:** Crime rates fallen by average of 30% in districts where implemented.
- Effective model of youth-led program to fight urban violence, with statistically proven reduction in crime and replication across cities, gained municipal support and integrated into municipal crime prevention structures.



## *Case Study: Youth Mainstreaming*

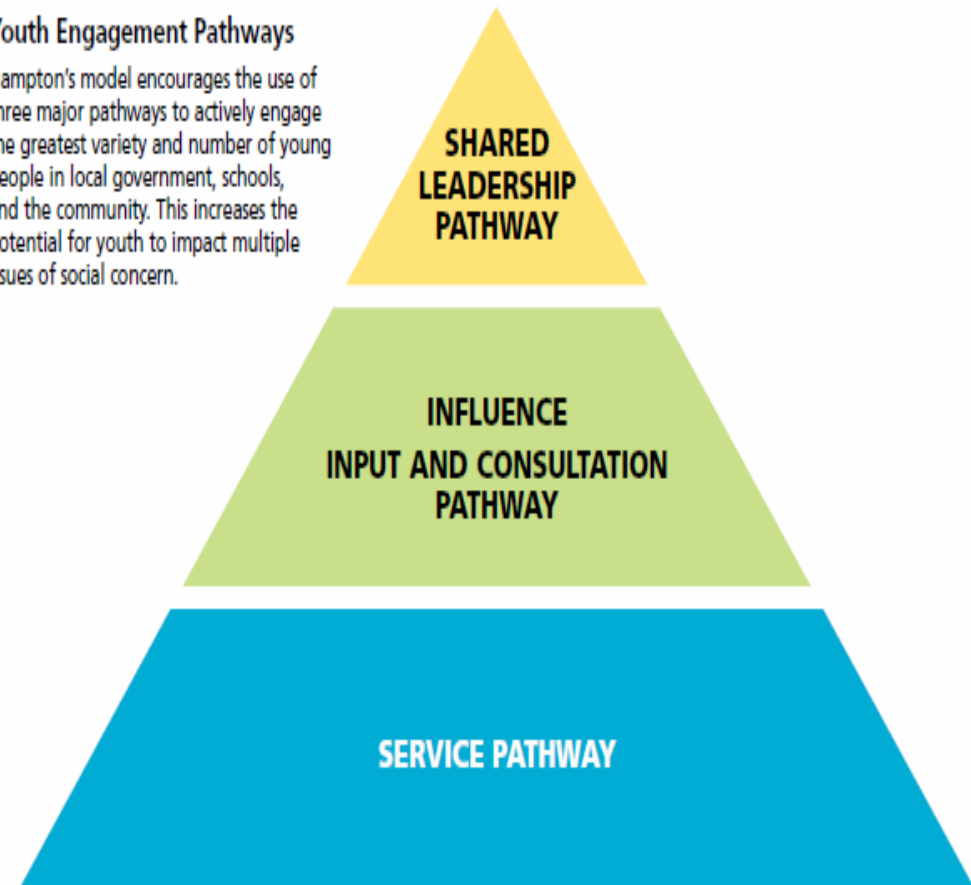
# Hampton Youth Planner Initiative

### A Model for Youth Engagement in Urban Decision-Making

- **Description:** comprehensive approach to meaningful youth engagement and participation throughout municipal institutions, organizations and decision-making structures.
- **Activities:** Young people serve as planners, organizers, advisers, policy-makers, advocates, citizens, and vital change agents in the city. The city of Hampton has developed a strong system for youth engagement in decision-making at all levels.
- **Models for Accessing Decision-Makers:** 6 boards and commissions – incorporate young people as advisors or voting members
- **Resource Allocation:** Youth Planners are given a portion of the Planning Department's budget for their work (have appropriated \$100,000 to date).

#### Youth Engagement Pathways

Hampton's model encourages the use of three major pathways to actively engage the greatest variety and number of young people in local government, schools, and the community. This increases the potential for youth to impact multiple issues of social concern.



*Case Study: Governance/Participatory Budgeting*  
**Children's Participatory Budget Council (CPBC)**

- **Actors:** Barra Mansa City Council, Brazil
- **Description:** This Council (formed in 1998) is composed of elected children and youth representatives from the municipality with power to decide how to spend their percentage of the municipal budget.
- **Participants:** Over 6,700 young people have taken part in this initiative, with 6,000 involved each year in the assemblies.
- **Activities:** Council determines how a proportion of the municipal budget (equivalent to US\$ 125,000 a year) is spent on addressing children's priorities; its child councilors are also involved in other aspects of government.
- **Outcomes:** meaningful youth participation in municipal governance (going beyond "tokenism" to concrete participation through budgeting).

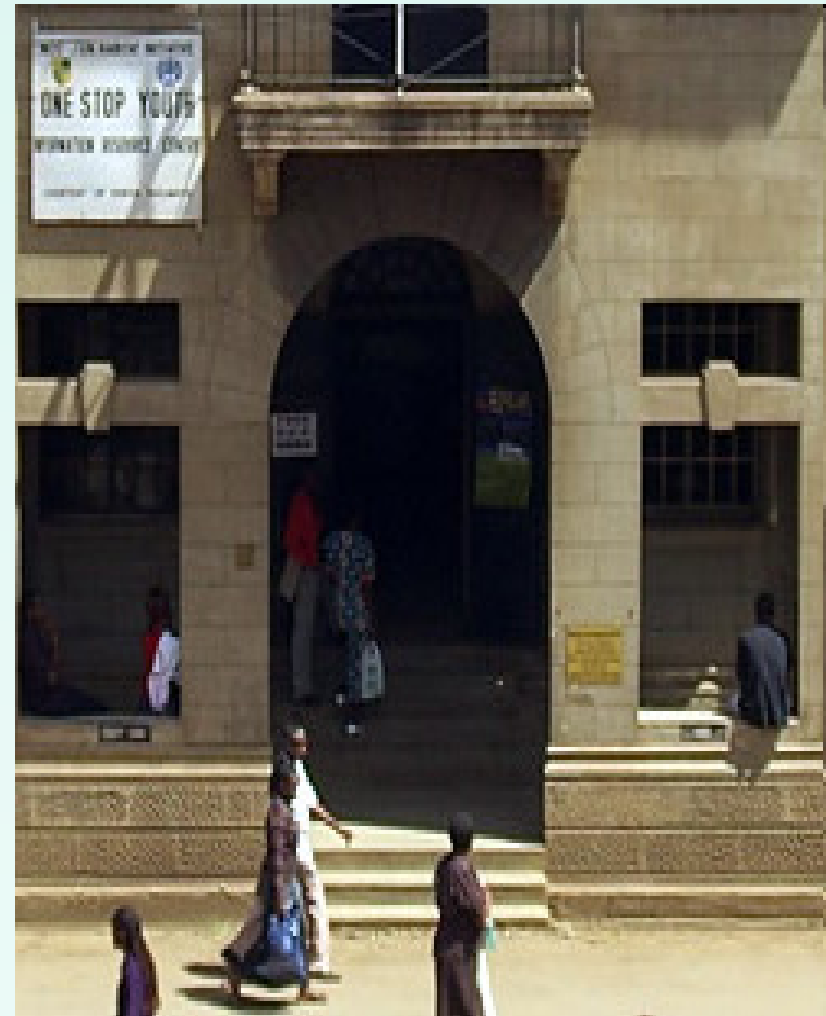
***The CPBC experience shows both that it is possible to integrate the participation of children and teenagers into the public management process and that young people can and should play an active role in urban management.***



*Case Study: Youth-Led Development, Mainstreaming*

## One Stop Information Resource Center Model

- **Description:** One stop shop for youth participation, involvement & growth in cities  
- The centers provide youth with safe spaces in urban settings where they can meet and take the lead in their own development as well as that of their urban environment.
- **Actors:** Municipalities of Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam and Kigali, UN-Habitat
- **Activities:** Employment and entrepreneurship, reproductive health and HIV/ AIDS, drugs abuse, counseling and rehabilitation referrals, governance and advocacy, ICT, environment
- **Outcomes:** A holistic and institutional approach to youth participation and crime prevention in urban areas with cross-cutting urban framework. Hundreds of youth passing through centers leading and benefiting from programs and services.



*Case Study: Youth Participation in Governance*

## **Local Government Youth Councils**

*Involving youth in the governance process has been achieved in a number of countries through the use of youth councils, youth action groups, youth fora and workshops, and newspaper, film and video projects.*

### **MAZINI JUNIOR COUNCIL (Swaziland)**

- **Goal:** youth engagement process
- **Activities:** Effective articulation between the junior council and the decision-making process relating to the municipal budget; and capacity building to deal with this theme inside local government, schools, the community and with urban actors.
- **Outcomes:** Promotion of youth participation in the local development process to engender a feeling of community belonging and citizenship and with an eye to breeding a new type of leadership for a participatory democracy.

### **MALINDI YOUTH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (MYCC) or “Junior Council” - Kenya**

- **Description:** Elected youth reps from each of Malindi’s 12 wards trained and embedded in local governance.
- **Activities:** Involved in council policy and decision-making processes affecting youth. Priority on Malindi Council budgeting process and exploring ways to increase youth employment.
- **Outcomes:** MYCC firmly embedded in local wards and has strong relationship with City Council.