Youth participation in decision-making

Discussion Questions

1. Three levels of youth participation were identified: adult-led, adult initiated, and youth-initiated and – led. What is the value in each of these approaches? Which in more predominant in Africa? Why? How can each approach contribute to an effort to transform governance systems so that young people have access, feel included, and can be represented.

2. In order to strengthen youth participation in society, there is a need “To create an understanding that young people are a diverse group with various needs based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, geographical location and the economic development of the countries in which they live”. How can we create this understanding?

3. Several examples of youth participation in decision-making were discussed: youth parliaments, national youth councils, regional and sub-regional youth networks, participation in conferences, management of youth-led organizations, participation on advisory committees, and participation in political processes (such as NEPAD, ECA, and African Union). Can you think of any other examples? Which do you think are most effective? Do you have examples of best practices?
Youth and Poverty

Discussion Questions

1. It is important to differentiate the various subgroups found within the youth category. What subgroups do you think exist? What special needs might they have in relation to combating poverty?

2. “The existing coordinating structures for youth development in Africa are invariably weak, both politically and in terms of resources. In particular, ministries that bear the word ‘youth’ in their titles have very limited personnel and other resources that can be devoted to supporting youth development”. What can be done about this?

3. The poverty situation among youth has not been a major focus of the current Poverty Reduction Strategy papers (PRSPs) and other national poverty measures in many African countries. Why is this and what can be done about it?
Youth Employment and Education

Discussion Questions

1. Young Africans face many difficulties in gaining a foothold in the labour market. How can governments promote decent employment in both urban and rural areas? How can governments put youth unemployment and underemployment at the centre of policymaking? How can African countries better utilize the work of the Youth Employment Network?

2. If given the chance, young people have the potential to be innovative entrepreneurs. What are youth doing to generate employment for themselves; what support are they getting, and what are the best practices and lessons to be learnt?

3. Education and training are essential for young people to gain the skills demanded by employers in a globalised world. However, basic education alone cannot achieve this objective. How can governments promote skill development? Are there ways to combine vocational training with formal education? How can ICTs be harnessed for quality youth education? What lessons can we draw from existing programmes and policies using ICTs for youth employment and education?
Young People’s Health

1. How do youth share information about health issues and how can this be disseminated in parallel to life skills development? What experiences and lessons could be learnt from youth-led initiatives?

2. Globally it is estimated that out of the 35.7 million adults (aged 15-49 years) living with HIV/AIDS by the end of 2003, 10 million are young people between the age of 15 and 24. Even more daunting is the fact 75% of the young people living with HIV/AIDS found in Sub Saharan Africa are women. Are preventive measures working for the youth? What else should be done?

3. What coping mechanisms exist for victims of AIDS, especially for youth household heads?
Youth and armed conflict

Discussion Questions

1. Is youth participation in situations of armed conflict due to a crisis in citizenship, i.e. a way for young people to express a real desire to participate in decision-making? What are other motivations or causes?

2. Whereas young people with limited education will sometimes meet their basic needs through illegal activities, better-educated young people (graduates of secondary school or higher education) will choose to leave chronic unemployment and participate in conflict situations in order to claim leadership or possibly secure power and better positions within the establishment. Are there sub-groups of young people that are more preponderant to becoming involved in conflict situations?

3. Conflict often destroys the safe environment provided by a house, a family, adequate nutrition, schooling and employment. During conflict, health risks increase, especially for young women due to surges in sexual violence. Youth affected by armed conflict may be refugees, internally displaced persons (IDP) or returnees. What measures need to be put in place in order to identify and protect the most vulnerable of youth in situations of armed conflict?