Empowerment of youth

UN DESA’s Expert Group Meeting on ‘Policies and Strategies to Promote Empowerment of People’

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Why talk about youth empowerment?

• Demographic argument
  – 25% of the world’s population today is between ages 10 and 24, that is 1.8 billion young people

• Developmental, life-cycle argument
  – A period of social, economic, psychological, physical and behavioral transitions
  – A time when some rights are often irremediably violated, and a time after which some rights are hard to recover

• A time of preparation for adult roles
  – Schooling
  – Health

• And a time of adult role acquisition
  – Work
  – Citizenship
  – Marriage
  – Parenthood

• Next – Examples of evaluated programs that try to equip youth for these four roles or directly facilitate a successful transition to these roles
The transition to work

• Transition from being dependent on the economic support of parents or other adults --- to being economically productive in their own right with the ability to support themselves and others

• Transition can be supported in many ways:
  – Vocational education and training
  – Information sharing through job counseling and registries
  – Job creation through public works projects
  – Self-employment and enterprise-creation through livelihood schemes
Youth empowerment and the transition to work

Vocational education

• Egypt
  – Large system of technical secondary schooling
  – Mubarak-Kohl initiative piloted in some of Egypt’s new cities in 1995, hoped to create a cooperative system of internship training using public-private partnerships
  – Has not taken off and is unlikely to spread beyond some sectors

• India
  – 1992 revision of National Policy on Education assigned high priority to “vocationalisation” of secondary education,
  – Subsequent follow-up shows sluggish progress and weak links between schools and industry

• Mexico
  – National College of Vocation Studies provides technical training at postsecondary level
  – Criticized for its inflexibility and its inability to build an adequate relationship with the private sector
  – Most firms in the formal sector have relatively few employees and a growing number of young people work in the informal sector
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Vocational training

• Distinguished from vocational education by being outside formal school system (but also outside workplace. In-service training occurs in firms.)

• Chile
  – Chile Joven program successfully combined training and internship
  – Has now been replicated in three other Latin American countries

• Argentina
  – Programa Joven, targeted to poor young people with low levels of school and no work experience, showed positive wage effects for young men and adult women (as well as positive employment effects for adult women only)
  – But effects ascribable to differential market conditions faced by groups. And it would take 9-12 years for net present value of program to become positive
  – Given relatively modest returns, IADB recommends that governments move away from direct provision of training, and improve incentives of firms, workers and training providers to fund, seek and provide high quality training
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Job counseling and job registries

• Can improve effectiveness of search process through information sharing and better matching of jobs with potential applicants.

• India
  – National employment service operates over 900 employment exchanges
  – Overwhelming majority of registrants are young people ages 15-29 in search of their first jobs
  – But employers do not find that registries meet their needs
  – So in 1995, there were 5.9 million job seekers registered but only 386,000 vacancies listed

• OECD countries – Evidence suggests job registries can be cost-effective if properly managed
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Public works projects

• Long-standing approach to job creation

• Egypt
  – 1991 Public Works Programme to apply and institutionalize labor-intensive techniques in infrastructure projects to create employment in rural areas.
  – While young people have not been specifically targeted, young men have been the principal beneficiaries

• India – National Rural Employment Guarantee Act often cited but doesn’t address chronic poverty because it doesn’t grant productive assets

• Long-term success of such programs significantly enhanced if there are spillover effects in the local economy that encourage sustained employment and growth
Livelihood schemes

• Livelihood schemes promote self-employment and entrepreneurship, and can encompass development of capabilities, resources, and opportunities

• Often directed towards traditionally disadvantaged groups, and recently been promoted as a promising approach to the integration of girls and young women into informal labor markets

• Fertile arena for NGOs in many settings

• Training + access to financial services and markets, creation of safe spaces, protection and promotion of rights

• Integrated approach to address simultaneously many traditional disadvantages that women have faced in making the transition to adult work roles and responsibilities
Transition to citizenship

• Citizenship for young people involves
  – Acquisition of civic rights and responsibilities
  – Assumption of legal rights and responsibilities in relation to the state
  – Heightened social, civic, and political participation.
  – Forging of identities and relationships with society and groups outside immediate families

• Apart from legal structures – which are indispensable – a range of institutional forces shape formation of citizenship
  – Formal schooling system
  – Workplace
  – Civil society and NGOs
  – Media
  – Others such as military and national service, livelihood schemes
Youth empowerment and the transition to citizenship

Formal schooling

• Schooling facilitates the acquisition of important tools for participating in a changing society
  – Literacy, critical analytic skills, expanded vocabulary, and mastery of abstract concepts

• Movement in development field to acknowledge and promote the positive socialization and citizenship-building aspects of formal education, and not just human capital acquisition elements

• Chile and Colombia – schools that model democratic practices were shown to be most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement
Youth empowerment and the transition to citizenship

Non-formal schooling

• Zambia
  – Civics programs including street shows, and voter registration and turnout programs
  – Government radio broadcasts that encouraged citizens to register and vote, to refrain from violence, and to serve as democratic role models for the country’s schoolchildren
  – Programs had more influence on civic knowledge than on behavior, and impact depended on educational attainment of individuals

• Dominican Republic and South Africa
  – Civic education programs and democracy training
  – Positive effects on local-level participation in four of seven programs
  – Effects varied by length and intensity of the exposure, extent of the focus on fostering participation, extent to which training was participatory, and level of individuals’ prior participatory resources
Youth empowerment and the transition to citizenship

Work

• Egypt
  – Young women in four rural Egyptian communities used their positions as promoters for a local NGO to participate more fully in their communities and acquire valuable social and political experience
  – Although their participation was constrained by patriarchal and age norms, they were able to negotiate new public spaces and roles for themselves

• Bangladesh
  – Young women who enter labor force through factory employment had increased mobility and expanded social relationships beyond the immediate family
Transition to marriage

- Marriage with free, prior, informed consent
- This decade alone, 142 million girls will be married before the age of 18, and a substantial proportion of them before 15

Source: UNFPA database using DHS, MICS and other household surveys.
Youth empowerment and the transition to marriage

Five actions to end child marriage

1. Empower girls by building their skills and enhancing their social assets
2. Improve girls’ access to quality formal education
3. Mobilize communities to transform detrimental social norms
4. Enhance the economic situation of girls and their families
5. Generate an enabling legal and policy environment
Youth empowerment and the transition to marriage

• Ethiopia
  – In 2004, Amhara Regional Bureau of Youth and Sports and Population Council created the Berhane Hewan which means “Light for Eve” in Amharic
  – To establish appropriate and effective mechanisms to protect girls at risk of early marriage and to support adolescent girls already married
  – Four components:
    • Group formation by adult female mentors, including groups for married girls
    • Support for girls to remain in school through provision of basic school supplies, as well as support for elective participation in nonformal education
    • Community conversations to engage the community on key issues
    • Provision of an incentive or CCT for families that kept girls unmarried and in school
  – Results indicate that program was successful in delaying the age of marriage among young girls (but not among older girls)
Transition to parenthood

• Success as a first-time parent is more likely if other adult transitions occur *prior to parenthood*

• Because each transition prepares way and contributes resources for success in parenthood

• Policies and programs for promoting successful transitions to first-time parenthood include those that
  – Help young people have the option of delaying first birth until completion of education and training
  – Allow new mothers whose schooling, training, or work were disrupted by pregnancy to return if they wish
  – Support first-time parents in the adoption of family planning to allow proper spacing of a second birth
Youth empowerment and the transition to parenthood

Sexual and Reproductive Health Education in Schools

• Numerous examples across numerous contexts
• Somewhat higher levels of intervention success in developing countries in comparison to school-based programs in US and Canada
• Large majority of programs demonstrate impact in knowledge and attitudes
• Fewer demonstrate delays in age at first sex and reductions in numbers of sexual partners
• Majority successful in increasing contraceptive or condom use
• No evidence whatsoever of increase in sexual risk-taking
Youth empowerment and the transition to parenthood

Mass Media and Social Marketing Programs

• Botswana, Cameroon, Guinea, and South Africa
  – Mass media component as well as social marketing of condoms and peer educators selling condoms
  – In addition, referral to clinics (with dedicated hours for young people) and education sessions/clubs in schools
  – Achieved high coverage, and increased recognition of the brand of condoms being promoted
  – Increased self-reported condom use; delayed sexual initiation; and decreased number of partners
Youth empowerment and the transition to parenthood

Youth-friendly services

- Few are rigorously evaluated. Mixed results from evaluated programs.

- Zimbabwe – Mass-media-based program that also included training of health service providers in youth counseling skills had positive impacts.

- Ecuador – Education, counseling, and clinical services provided by trained clinic personnel in service delivery and reproductive health issues did not increase the number of new clients visiting the project clinics, but it did increase the number of young people who returned.

- Zambia – Three models of services with varying degrees of youth friendliness had no impact.
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Peer promotion strategies

• Positive behavioral outcomes in several studies

• Peru – Program in secondary schools in six cities in Peru demonstrated a positive association with age at sexual initiation, and use of a contraceptive method at last sexual encounter

• Nigeria and Ghana – Peer-based program delivered by youth-serving organizations in three types of sites: secondary schools, postsecondary schools, and out-of-school sites, resulted in greater use of protective methods against STIs only among young people from intervention schools

• Cameroon – Community-based peer education strategy to promote contraceptive use and reduce the prevalence of STIs/HIV and unintended pregnancies among young people increased current contraceptive use and use of condoms at last sex

• Recurring costs of peer programs are high, largest program impacts are on the peer educators themselves (exacerbates ‘elite’ capture)
Youth centers

• Inadequately documented but widely recognized that they have limited effectiveness

• Majority of youth center use is for recreation rather than for health services

• People coming for clinical services tend to be older (and more often male) than the target age range for programs focused on teenagers
Youth empowerment and the transition to parenthood

Workplace-based Programs

• Essential in places where large numbers of young people do not attend school

• Thailand
  – National 100 percent condom promotion program to increase condom use among visitors to brothels
  – One aspect emphasized conscripts into the Thai army (ages 19-23)
  – Communications strategy, free condom distribution in brothels, and promotion of condom use at brothels, especially among men previously treated for STIs
  – Tenfold decline in STI incidence and lower HIV incidence
Youth empowerment and the transition to parenthood

Multi-component community-based programs

• Kenya
  – Multi-component community-based model of youth services designed with input from the local community
  – Trained community-based counselors drew on existing community structures to meet with young people and provide educational and motivational activities, while also working with parents, schools, teachers, and service providers
  – Results showed females at project site were more likely to adopt secondary abstinence and less likely to have had more than two sex partners
  – Males at the project site were more likely to use condoms
Some programming principles for youth empowerment

• Begin with what young people want and what they are already doing to obtain information, services, and opportunities

• Build their protective, positive assets and skills

• Engage adults and institutions to create a safe and supportive environment

• Use a variety of settings and providers, and make the most of existing infrastructure
Understanding “youth” in order to empower youth

• Youth are not a homogenous mass with homogenous needs

• Immense diversity not only in the 1.8 billion, but within country, within region, within community

• The concept of youth and the data on youth must be disaggregated by sub-national area, age, sex, and other variables

• Why is it important to disaggregate? Because successful approaches to youth empowerment
  – are based on a thorough understanding of the varying needs of different segments of youth
  – prioritize sub-populations
  – create tailored programs that meet the specific needs of those sub-populations
  – and drive investments directly to young people
UNFPA’s new
Adolescent and Youth Strategy

• Five prongs
  – Youth leadership and participation
  – Marginalized adolescent girls
  – Evidence-based advocacy
  – Comprehensive Sexuality Education
  – Adolescent sexual and reproductive health services
What Is Needed?

Correct the current investment failure to reach the critical bottom 40 per cent of adolescents and youth.

What is needed includes:
- Secondary school
- Youth center
- Community center
- Roads and market
- Health center
- Playing field
- National savings
- Local committee

Poorer Girls and Boys (cut off from access to information, services, participation)

Better-off girls

Better-off boys

Slide courtesy of Judith Bruce, Population Council
This presentation draws heavily on the study “Growing Up Global – The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries” written by the Panel on Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries, and edited by Cynthia B. Lloyd. 2005.

Please cite their study as well as any original sources (available in the text of the study) when using any of the material presented here.