

Chapter 8

Ensuring **YOUTH** development
around the world:
the way **forward**



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ore than 10 years after the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, many youth continue to have limited access to opportunities for self-development, which reduces the contribution they can make to national development.

The preceding chapters paint a mixed picture of contemporary youth development, highlighting visible progress in some areas but persistent challenges and obstacles in many others. Youth have a vital role to play in shaping present and future societies, and their transition to independent adulthood is crucial in this regard. More than 10 years have passed since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth, which emphasizes that “every State should provide its young people with opportunities for obtaining education, for acquiring skills and for participating fully in all aspects of society, with a view to, inter alia, acquiring productive employment and leading self-sufficient lives” (United Nations, 1996, paragraph 8(a)). Notable progress has been made in many areas; however, much remains to be done at all levels to translate this goal into reality.

The review of regional experiences suggests that young people the world over are in a better position than past generations of youth to contribute to development. However, there are still far too many who face barriers and constraints arising from their backgrounds or from the social environment in which they live. Regardless of their place of birth or current residence, young people continue to experience similar sets of difficulties that impinge on their healthy and timely transition to adulthood. Apart from health, education and employment issues, such areas as poverty reduction and the availability of opportunities for volunteer work and for the advancement of young women and girls continue to present a challenge. There are differences in the severity of the challenges and opportunities for youth in each of these areas of development. For example, developing regions have made considerable progress in education, but access has not expanded equally within or between countries. In sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, access to quality education, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels, is still a major problem for many youth.

Regional differences in the ability of young people to make the transition to adulthood are undoubtedly related to overall levels of economic development as well as the extent to which countries have invested in key areas of youth development. In both developed and developing countries, young people are increasingly finding mechanisms to overcome the challenges, but there are often costs involved. For example, many well-educated and well-qualified youth spend years “waiting” in further education, internships, or volunteer positions for job opportunities to open up. In developing regions, young people often migrate in search of better opportunities. Even in many highly developed countries, youth transitions have faltered or been delayed, and young people are increasingly experiencing a “failure to launch” into adulthood (Bell and others, 2007). Unfortunately, in the face of life’s overwhelming difficulties, some youth choose socially inappropriate options such as violence, drug use or other forms of delinquency with negative consequences for their future.

The core areas identified by this report as requiring attention—education, employment, poverty reduction, health, and promoting the rights of young women—apply to all world regions to varying degrees. National policy action inevitably requires adjustment to reflect specific regional and domestic circumstances. However, key interventions in all of these areas have been identified by the World Programme of Action for Youth (see box 8.1),

and they constitute the minimum set of actions upon which to build more specific recommendations. The recommendations presented in the succeeding sections must be considered in the light of the Millennium Development Goals, which provide the overall framework for the global development agenda in the next decade.

When the areas highlighted above are not addressed in a comprehensive manner with attention to all youth, regardless of their background, young people's ability to participate meaningfully in development is compromised. Although second chances to make up for missed opportunities are important, it is even more critical to take advantage of first chances. Losing out on these opportunities the first time around can be costly.

Many of the recommendations presented in this chapter reflect those emanating from the development dialogue and recognized analytical works. The recommendations do not address each region specifically; the fact that countries are at different stages with respect to the progress young people have achieved and the challenges they face must be taken into account in policy development and implementation, as there are no "one-size-fits-all" solutions.



Box 8.1

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IN CORE AREAS OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR YOUTH HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS REPORT

Education

1. Improve technical, secondary and higher education, maximizing the use of new technologies.
2. Preserve cultural heritage and diversity and encourage participatory dialogue.
3. Increase vocational, professional and life-skills training.
4. Promote human rights education, including among migrant and indigenous youth.
5. Facilitate the transition from school to work.
6. Train skilled guidance and vocational counsellors, as well as youth workers.

Employment

1. Increase microfinance and entrepreneurship programmes to benefit young people.
2. Target the unemployment of vulnerable and marginalized youth.
3. Encourage youth-led and youth-run voluntary service projects.
4. Promote youth employment and skill development in the context of globalization.

Poverty

1. Empower young people as key contributors in poverty reduction strategies.
2. Promote decent work with social protection schemes, even in the informal economy.
3. Increase vocational training and employment opportunities.
4. Foster rural development to include youth in strengthening food security and sustainable agriculture.

Health

1. Ensure the provision of youth-friendly basic health services, including sexual and reproductive health care.
2. Further the development of health education, including sexual and reproductive health education.
3. Scale up the prevention and treatment of HIV infection and AIDS among youth.
4. Promote good hygiene and sanitary practices.
5. Reduce preventable diseases and illnesses.
6. Eliminate the trafficking and sexual abuse of young people.
7. Reduce obesity, hunger and malnutrition.

Rights of girls and young women

1. Eliminate discrimination and ensure equal participation at all levels of society.
2. Increase levels of education and literacy, including non-formal education.
3. Develop gender-sensitive health programmes, including sexual and reproductive health programmes.
4. Increase employment opportunities and ensure equal representation at decision-making levels.
5. Eliminate all forms of violence against girls and young women and strengthen the family.

Source: Drawn from the World Programme of Action for Youth (A/RES/50/81).

EDUCATION

Access to basic education has improved, but youth need a higher-quality education, including greater access to tertiary education, to succeed in the global economy. In developing education policies, particular attention must be given to providing opportunities for disadvantaged groups in society. Young women in many regions continue to have limited access to quality education in relevant specializations.

Worldwide, perhaps the greatest progress with respect to youth development has been made in the area of education. More young people are completing basic education, making this the best-educated generation of youth ever. Although public sector funding for education has not kept up with demand, in many regions, private and transnational ventures have played a vital complementary role, and distance learning opportunities have expanded as well.

Many of the deficiencies in educational performance and attainment among youth reflect past and present inadequacies in education systems. Wide, entrenched gender gaps in access, the relatively poor quality of instruction in many settings, and the lack of relevant, up-to-date curricula prevent many students from acquiring the knowledge and skills they need to function effectively in society. Even the developed market economies, which offer many and varied opportunities for education, have not been universally successful in addressing the wide intracountry and intercountry disparities in access to schooling. Youth from disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to exclusion.

High educational qualifications do not necessarily guarantee decent employment. Increasingly, it is not just those with little education and training who are left behind, but also educated youth, whose knowledge, skills and attitudes may not be compatible with the needs of the global economy.

Recommendations

- Interventions in education must be geared towards providing students with the basic knowledge they need to function in society, but also towards furnishing the skills required to enter the world of work. In particular, there is a need to ensure that educational provision is aligned with and tailored to the needs of the global economy.
- Countries that have concentrated on providing basic education must now focus on improving quality and performance levels. Policies and programmes need to be geared not only towards ensuring universal primary education and strengthening literacy, but also towards improving instructional quality, educational facilities, and student proficiency levels. In the context of rapid globalization, it is especially important to ensure that secondary education becomes the new minimum level of attainment.
- To encourage the development of education and training systems that are better aligned with the current and future needs of young people and their societies, a wide range of learning options—including formal and non-formal education, literacy instruction, job-skills training, and lifelong education—should be made available.

- In developing countries in particular, education policies have too long focused on providing basic education as a sort of panacea for young people's development problems. Opportunities for young people to pursue university or other advanced studies, engage in research, or receive training for self-employment should be expanded in the developing world.
- Disparities in access to education prevent many young people, especially those from minority groups and migrant backgrounds, from participating fully in society. The educational needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups must be specifically addressed in national policies.
- Secondary and tertiary qualifications are becoming increasingly necessary for meaningful participation in an evolving global economy. Although undue emphasis on academic degrees must be avoided, it should be recognized that there is a basic level of academic competence youth must achieve if they are to succeed in today's globalizing world.
- Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in both developed and developing countries should work to create a supportive, enabling environment in which young people can obtain an education and pursue various forms of training at all levels. Arrangements should also be made to facilitate mutual academic exchanges among developing countries.
- There is a need for greater "youth sensitivity" and a "youth perspective" in a number of policy areas. Particular attention must be given to easing the school-to-work transition for young people. The needs of the job market should guide educational provision, since obtaining productive, decent employment is necessary for socio-economic stability and success.
- Public education is necessary and must be adequately supported and monitored. Governments must also introduce or strengthen quality assurance mechanisms for private education.
- A review and revision of educational curricula may be necessary to ensure that young people are provided with the academic, professional, entrepreneurial and job-search skills they need for the workplace. There should be close monitoring of labour market needs and trends, and educational curricula should be adjusted periodically to ensure continued relevance. Schools and other educational institutions should also provide youth with social, personal and other life skills that will benefit them and the wider community. Education must support active citizenship, intercultural learning, and social solidarity, ensuring equitable development, social justice, peace and social cohesion.

EMPLOYMENT

Many youth seek work but remain unemployed; many are well-educated but cannot find work in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing global labour market.

Productive employment represents one of the most fundamental and rewarding ways in which young people can become engaged in their communities while also making a positive contribution to development. Earning an income through paid employment strengthens self-esteem and independence and is an essential component of the transition to responsible adulthood.

Unemployment and underemployment among youth constitute a global problem. All over the world, young people are finding it increasingly difficult to break into the labour market. Youth make up 25 per cent of the global working-age population but account for 43.7 per cent of the unemployed, which means that almost every other jobless person in the world is between the ages of 15 and 24. A global deficit of decent work opportunities has resulted in a situation in which one out of every three youth in the world is either seeking but unable to find work, has given up the job search entirely, or is working but still living on less than US\$ 2 a day. To circumvent the difficulties associated with unemployment, growing numbers of young people are staying in full-time education for longer periods.

The disturbing reality is that economic growth is not always accompanied by growth in employment, especially decent employment. When jobs are scarce, large numbers of young people are deprived of the opportunity to secure independent housing or the accommodations necessary to establish and support a family and participate fully in society. Advances in technology and communications, coupled with improved productivity, have created new challenges but have also provided new (if somewhat limited) employment opportunities. If effective solutions to the perils of jobless growth are not found, the cost to society is likely to be extremely high in the long run. Unemployment contributes to a wide range of social ills, and young people are particularly susceptible to its damaging effects; lacking marketable skills, young people may experience low self-esteem, marginalization and impoverishment. Ultimately, to society, such a situation represents an enormous waste of valuable human resources and lost productivity.

Keeping up with an ever-changing job market is a challenge for even the most advanced educational systems. Schools and universities must not only provide academic, professional, and technical qualifications; they must also equip potential labour force entrants with the social, moral and attitudinal skills needed for meaningful employment.

Evidence indicates that educational gains among females around the world have not necessarily improved their position in the labour market. Young women face higher rates of unemployment and underemployment and are typically paid lower wages than their male peers.

Many young people throughout the world have limited options in the formal economy and may be compelled to work in the informal economy for low pay. Apart from inadequate remuneration, informal employment typically offers little social protection or job security, and working conditions may be dangerous. Youth often have trouble finding ways to build upon their education so that they can be better prepared to participate in a rapidly changing job market. Young women and young men are active participants in the labour force,

yet opportunities for decent work are limited. Many young workers, aware that they are at a disadvantage in the labour market, accept lower wages than older workers and are more willing to accept short-term contracts.

Recommendations

- Governments, with the support of the international community and other stakeholders, should design and implement programmes aimed at reducing the proportion of youth in vulnerable employment. The term “vulnerable employment” refers to inadequate working conditions and to the work of own-account workers, unpaid family labour and others without social protection. It is important to ensure that policies established to address this issue do not simply move youth from vulnerable employment to unemployment but rather create viable decent employment options for them. Only through decent employment do young people have the opportunity to work themselves out of poverty.
- The persistence of unemployment among youth vividly demonstrates that economic growth alone is not a panacea for youth employment problems. Policies must focus on improving the overall context of development as well as providing opportunities in the labour market for those who are most vulnerable to unemployment. It is important for Governments to offer incentives to private sector enterprises that are labour-intensive and could contribute to the alleviation of youth unemployment.
- Volunteer work should be promoted and encouraged. Efforts are required to ensure that these experiences are mutually beneficial for the volunteer and the entity benefiting from the assistance. Recognizing that volunteer opportunities help to hone the skills of youth while also enabling them to contribute to development, Governments should devise incentives for businesses that provide such opportunities for young people. The provision of inducements also allows better monitoring of how youth fare in these work situations and may protect those who are vulnerable to exploitation.
- Governments should involve youth, represented by youth-led organizations, in identifying those subgroups of young people in need of special attention. Youth should also be involved in developing innovative approaches to, and assist with the implementation of strategies for, creating opportunities for decent and productive work for young people.
- Policies designed to support youth employment must be tailored to individual circumstances, as the contexts in which youth live and the solutions required to address employment challenges differ. Youth living in slums require different employment policies than youth living in rural areas. Similarly, specific policies are needed to address the employment needs of young women, the youngest members of the youth cohort, migrant youth, young people with disabilities, youth from ethnic minorities, and youth living in areas affected by armed conflict.
- Governments should contribute to easing the school-to-work transition by creating a supportive learning environment and facilitating the provision of ongoing skills training that translates into poverty-reducing employment.

- Partnerships between educational institutions and the public and private sectors should be established to facilitate the exchange of information on labour market needs and trends. Educational institutions can then focus on providing skills in high demand in order to facilitate the flow of labour to expanding industries where youth will be most productive.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that young people have access to information, knowledge and financial services that will enable them to establish their own business enterprises if they so choose.
- The private sector must be encouraged to make apprenticeship opportunities available for youth. Adequate remuneration must be provided to ensure equal access.
- Active labour market policies for youth need to be carefully and objectively evaluated to determine which are particularly effective in promoting youth employment.
- In many countries, facilities for vocational training are insufficient and need to be scaled up. Technical and vocational training is an important bridge between education and the world of work. Vocational education can provide targeted training for those young people who lack marketable skills, improving their chances of securing productive employment.

POVERTY

Youth in many regions experience poverty; many decide to migrate, regardless of the costs, to find greener pastures.

The World Programme of Action for Youth identifies poverty and hunger as one core priority area, noting that more than 1 billion people in the world today live in unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing countries. Poverty has multiple manifestations, including hunger and malnutrition, ill health, a lack of (or limited) access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness or inadequate housing, unsafe living conditions, and social discrimination and exclusion; it is also characterized by the absence of opportunities to participate in decision-making and in civil and sociocultural affairs. Hunger and malnutrition remain among the most serious and intractable threats faced by humanity, often preventing children and youth from taking part in society. Hunger is the result of many factors, including incompatibilities between traditional and modern production systems, excessive population growth, the mismanagement of food production and distribution, poor accessibility, the maldistribution of financial resources, the inefficient or excessive exploitation of natural resources, unsustainable patterns of consumption, environmental pollution, natural and man-made disasters, and armed conflict.

Poverty is inseparably linked to a lack of access to, or the loss of control over, resources, including land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections. Without those resources, individuals and their families have limited access to institutions, markets, employment and public services. Young people are particularly affected by this situation.

In the context of poverty and lack of opportunities, migration has become one of the coping mechanisms used by young people across the world to improve their livelihoods. Though much of this migration may initially be for educational purposes, many youth remain in their host countries in search of better-paying jobs than they would find back home. The exploitation of young migrants by traffickers, unscrupulous employers, and agents needs to be addressed as a stand-alone policy issue. Unfortunately, both internal and international migration among youth tends to be neglected by policy makers and researchers, even though members of this age group are known to be among the most mobile.

Recommendations

- Poverty among youth is closely tied to their unemployment and underemployment. Policies to address youth poverty must therefore focus, as a matter of priority, on eliminating barriers to youth employment.
- It is imperative that the multidimensional aspects of poverty be addressed to ensure that a deepening of poverty does not occur during the transition from youth to adulthood. A broad approach should reflect the understanding that monetary poverty among youth can interact with and intensify other aspects of poverty in significant ways.
- Governments, with the help of the international community, should intensify efforts to provide all households with access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, adequate health care, and other basic services in order to relieve the burden on youth—especially young women, who often suffer most from the lack of access to these facilities. Special attention must be given to improving access for youth living in rural areas and young people with disabilities.
- Youth perspectives should be considered in evaluating the progress achieved in addressing poverty issues, and especially in the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Youth poverty should be specifically addressed in these policy papers.

HEALTH

All regions have made progress, but young people remain vulnerable to many modern health risks. Health policies must evolve in response to changing global challenges; in all regions, policy makers must respond to the growing HIV/AIDS-related threat among youth.

The period between the ages of 15 and 24 is typically one of the healthiest in the life course of an individual. However, young people in both developed and developing countries are currently facing a number of serious health risks that can derail their transition to healthy, productive adulthood. In developing countries, and in many of the economies in transition, HIV/AIDS represents perhaps the greatest risk. Around the world, the reproductive health needs of adolescents have been largely ignored. In many countries, regardless of the level of development or well-being, there is a lack of information and services to protect youth from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Young people around the world are also exposed to other health threats that can seriously affect their welfare. Many are associated with contemporary lifestyles; for example, poor nutritional practices are contributing to the growing incidence of obesity and related diseases among youth. The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug use and the high rates of morbidity and mortality associated with accidents and violence among youth are also a source of grave concern.

The recommendations regarding health in the World Youth Report 2005 (United Nations, 2005) remain valid today. In order to reduce the vulnerability of young people to infection, steps must be taken to ensure the provision of high-quality primary health care (including sexual and reproductive health care) that is accessible, available and affordable. Community-based interventions should be used more effectively to ensure that an appropriate environment exists for reducing young people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and for implementing targeted interventions. The findings of the present report suggest additional areas of attention that should be addressed by Governments, the private sector, individuals, and other stakeholders.

Recommendations

- Countries should work on developing and implementing policies aimed at improving youth access to information on nutrition and healthy lifestyles. The promotion of poor dietary practices and unfavourable lifestyles and behaviours—especially tobacco and alcohol advertising—should be the focus of regular attention among national authorities and in many cases should be regulated, with appropriate taxation of the tobacco and alcohol industries.
- Demand reduction is a critical component of any drug control strategy. National efforts should involve collaboration with young people and their communities in identifying the factors that encourage young people's drug habits, with a view to arriving at a comprehensive and realistic intervention strategy.

- In regions where the HIV/AIDS epidemic is severe, the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases must be the mainstay of health services targeted at young people, especially young women. Health education and ensuring access to condoms are essential elements of any prevention strategy.
- Strategies and programmes designed for specific purposes, such as preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV or reducing HIV transmission among injecting drug users, are appropriate in all contexts. It is important to establish an environment in which youth can receive confidential HIV testing without prejudice so that those who are infected can be treated early and reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
- Sexually transmitted disease prevention and treatment efforts must be youth-sensitive. Experience has shown that peers are often the most effective deliverers of HIV prevention messages and services if the social environment is conducive to prevention strategies and efforts.
- Continued international cooperation and collective global efforts are necessary for the containment of HIV/AIDS among youth. A full range of prevention options should be presented to youth, with messages focusing broadly on developing a healthy lifestyle and more specifically on abstinence, delayed sexual debut, reducing the number of sexual partners, and correct and consistent condom use.

RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

Progress has been achieved in many areas, but young women still face greater employment and wage discrimination than young men.

Young women continue to face barriers in many areas of development. Although progress has been made in providing schooling opportunities for girls and young women, secondary and tertiary education remain elusive for many. Young women face special challenges with respect to education. In developing regions, levels of educational attainment still tend to be higher among young men than among young women. In many developing countries, young females are more likely than young males to drop out of school at times of acute financial need or during family crises. Early marriage and childbearing remain impediments to school completion for young women. In some areas, substantial numbers of young women drop out of school to help with domestic and other chores.

In most regions, unemployment is higher and wages are lower among young women than among young men. The educational choices made by (or for) girls and young women often limit their access to certain types of employment and cause wage differentials to become entrenched. These choices are sometimes encouraged by the stereotypical casting of women in textbooks and other teaching materials in primarily domestic roles. Even in regions where levels of educational attainment in primary and secondary education are higher for females than for males (such as in Latin America), labour force participation rates are much lower and unemployment rates much higher for female youth than for male youth.

Recommendations

- Gender analysis must be incorporated into all youth development strategies. Special attention should be focused on marginalized young women, especially those living in rural areas.
- Governments should devise effective policies to enhance the involvement of girls and young women in the global economy and ensure that educational and employment policies and practices do not discriminate against young people on the basis of gender.
- Governments and other development partners should strive to adopt and implement innovative policies that create an enabling environment for young women to break out of poverty. These policies should be sensitive to the social and cultural contexts in which young women live while also enabling them to take action regarding their own welfare.
- Effective strategies should be developed for the provision of training at the national, regional and international levels to enable young women to acquire business-related, financial management and technical skills and to participate in economic policy-making in their communities. Approaches must be designed to enhance the capacity of young women who wish to return to work after childbearing to take full advantage of opportunities in the labour market, and policies and programmes that support maternity leave should be implemented or strengthened.
- Governments and civil society should contribute to efforts to achieve gender equality, in part by promoting women's studies and by keeping abreast of the results of gender research and studies in all areas, including economic, scientific and technological fields.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION: A KEY TO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Youth participation is more than just political engagement. It includes the empowerment of young people through capacity-building and increased access to human development opportunities. It represents a situation in which young people are no longer seen as passive recipients of resources or as the cause of society's problems, but rather as important contributors to their countries' development—contributors whose efforts are recognized and whose involvement is nurtured.

Young people's ability to contribute to development and reap the "demographic dividend" is hindered where investments in youth are limited or where the doors to their development are closing as a result of changing global markets or restrictive national development policies. Because young people constitute a relatively large share of the population, especially in developing countries, the failure to ensure that young people—and the families in which they are raised—have access to resources and opportunities for health, education, employment, leisure, poverty reduction, and the development of girls and young women will derail future national and global development.

The effective engagement of youth as equal partners requires recognition of the rights of all young people to participate at all levels of decision-making and to make productive use of their knowledge, perspectives and experience. It is a process from which both youth and non-youth stakeholders benefit. It also represents a situation in which young people are no longer seen as passive recipients of national resources or the root cause of society's problems; instead, they are regarded as vital participants in society who can make an important contribution to their countries' development and whose involvement must therefore be appropriately nurtured and cultivated.

Youth participation must be regarded as the active and meaningful involvement of young people in all aspects of their own development and that of their communities, including their empowerment to contribute to decisions about their personal, family, social, economic and political development. Although civic participation, political decision-making, and opportunities to vote for elected officials are important channels for youth to become involved in development, full participation requires their empowerment through capacity-building to ensure that they have the skills needed to participate in society in their capacity as individuals, as members of families, communities and organizations, and as citizens. Youth participation is incomplete without adequate empowerment through access to human development opportunities such as education and health, and to adequate resources through opportunities for productive employment and poverty alleviation.

One of the most striking and positive aspects of the recent behaviour of young people in all regions is their increasing involvement in volunteerism. Youth today are ardent volunteers in many sectors, contributing to societal development while also gaining valuable skills and experience that can facilitate their transition to the world of work. Whether pursued as a way to gain practical skills, as a form of leisure, or as an avenue to influence the community, volunteerism has become a key part of youth life cycles. Young people in both developed and developing countries are increasingly volunteering for various causes, and many participate, with little or no remuneration, in activities that shape their societies.

In developed market economies, young people often treat volunteer work as an intermediate activity in the transition from school to further studies or regular paid employment. Even in sub-Saharan Africa, where youth poverty is high, many young people engage in volunteerism and, in the process, contribute to development. Although volunteers may earn little or no income, they gain important workplace skills and experience that can improve their chances for securing decent employment. The emotional dividend, including the deep sense of satisfaction that accompanies giving, also constitutes an important part of the transition to responsible adulthood.

Volunteerism is a clear manifestation of youth participation in society—one that is often altruistic and devoid of immediate selfish interests. Given its enormously important role in building interpersonal and social skills and in strengthening individual human potential, it is essential for society to promote volunteerism and to expand other opportunities for youth participation in development. Ensuring adequate and appropriate volunteer and other participatory opportunities for youth is highly beneficial to society and can form part of a strategy to combat social ills such as drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and other deviant behaviour. Where possible, Governments, the private sector, civil society, and other

stakeholders should provide support for youth who cannot undertake volunteer activities because of the private costs associated with such endeavours. Communities should also develop low-cost volunteer programmes that enable youth to provide services in businesses and locations close to where they live so that the costs of transportation can be eliminated or reduced for participants.

It should be emphasized that there is no single effective practice or structure for youth participation. Participation is, in essence, a way of thinking that incorporates young people as partners all the time and in as many ways as possible. The focus should be not on one specific approach to or level of involvement, but rather on creating channels for the expression of young people's opinions and their dynamic participation in daily interactions, in service delivery or project implementation, and in more formal structures at all levels. Giving young people a chance to take part in decision-making contributes to their own development; this, in turn, enables them to contribute to the development of their societies, eventually creating a better environment for youth participation—a virtuous circle. One-time interventions or isolated structures that support youth participation are not sustainable; there must be broader, synergistic feedback mechanisms that include input from and dialogue between young people, their families, local councils and other community institutions, national Governments, and the international community.

Given the varied nature and intensity of some of the problems faced by youth around the world, it is clear that interventions should be tailored to individual circumstances within a particular country or region. Policies should be designed, however, with full acknowledgement of the fact that young people do not constitute a passive group, waiting for resources and opportunities to be handed to them; in all regions, there is clear evidence of young people's determination to make a better life for themselves, their communities and their countries. What young people need in this process is an enabling environment that provides opportunities for them to be seen and be heard. Giving youth greater visibility and a role in the development process strengthens their resolve to contribute to the advancement of a world in which they are equal stakeholders—a world for which they will be responsible for many decades to come.

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