# PRACTICE NOTE
# YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

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Oaktree

AUSTRALIAN
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# CONTENTS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## 01. PURPOSE, AUDIENCE AND BACKGROUND

What is the potential for youth participation in fighting global poverty? This Practice Note articulates why it is important to involve young people in addressing poverty, and provides practical guidance for Australian development actors on how to leverage the unique perspectives and insights of young people throughout all stages of the development process. It identifies specific contributions that young people can make in different development processes, provides advice in key thematic areas where increasing youth participation is particularly important, and provides initial guidance for organisations wanting to develop a youth strategy. Young people may lack experience and confidence and be perceived to be unreliable. These are legitimate concerns that may diminish the value of youth participation. However, this Practice Note is deliberately taking a positive approach, acknowledging that there is more that can be done to overcome these barriers and increase the positive contributions that young people can make to international development and humanitarian assistance.

The Practice Note is intended to support staff in organisations involved in international development, humanitarian and advocacy programs for them to consider how youth participation can increase the impact of their work. It will be useful for actors across the development sector including NGO practitioners, government agencies, managing contractors, consultants and academics.

This Practice Note was developed by Oaktree with guidance from ACFID's Development Practice Committee. It has been informed by feedback from a number of groups working in the youth space in Australia, including ACFID's Child Rights Community of Practice. This Practice Note has been informed by academic research, government policies, online commentary and Oaktree's own practices in youth participation.

## 02. WHY YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

*"Some may argue that youth are not interested in politics and are too young to be participating in decision-making processes - that they lack expertise, experience, capacity or drive. This perception of 'young people' has contributed to the creation of a generation that feels they have nothing positive to contribute to the development of their country. I object to that perception."*

> - **Arianne Kassman, Youth Against Corruption Association, Papua New Guinea**

The world now has the largest generation of young people in history with 90% of this population living in the Global South.[1] This means that young people make up more than half of the population of the Global South, and this population is still growing.[2] Despite this, young people are not represented in development programs and processes in a way that reflects their population size and potential. Systems and services have been unable to meet the needs of young people, excluding youth from vital opportunities in areas such as education and employment.[3] This exclusion results in more people falling into poverty and could lead to disenfranchisement on a generational scale.

Despite these risks, the youth bulge represents a massive development opportunity. In order to harness the potential of young people and mitigate these risks, it is crucial to dramatically increase the participation of young people in development programs and processes. Young people are in the best positions to come up with effective and creative solutions to issues that affect them. Including youth in development programs allows young people to realise their rights, increases the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of programming, and represents

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[1] The World Bank. "The World Bank Development Report: Development and the Next Generation." (2007).
[2] DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies & Policymakers," (2010).
[3] Cheryl Lim & Andrew Grant, "Unleashing Youth in Asia," (2014).

an opportunity to invest in the current and future capabilities of social change agents in the development sector and beyond.

Youth participation is not another box to tick, but an essential area of prioritisation if the aid and development sector is serious about impact, innovation and remaining relevant and responsive to the rapidly changing world..

## THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION: NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

Given the population size of youth in many countries in the Global South and the inherent interests young people have in the future, they will invariably be affected either directly or indirectly by all development interventions. And yet young people are underrepresented in decision-making at all levels.[4] Affording young people greater decision-making power and influence will enliven their right to participate in decisions that affect them. As with all participatory development approaches, this will also foster greater trust, accountability and transparency, and will ultimately prevent young people from feeling either that they have nothing valuable to contribute or that their perspectives and priorities are not being taken into account.[5]

## IMPROVING DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

While every adult has the lived experience of being a young person, the rapid rate of technological and global changes renders the current situation for youth as unique. Many young people will have a combination of energy, optimism, adaptability, and creativity as well as an affinity with mobile technologies and platforms, which enable them to support innovation, harness emerging technologies, and increase the impact of development outcomes:[6]

- **Young people know how to craft changes that are appropriate for young people**: Young people are best placed to identify their own needs and priorities, and make assessments about whether project or policy plans will successfully address these needs and priorities. With support from experienced partners, space to have their opinions heard, and power to influence decision-making, young people will ensure that programs that affect them are relevant.[7] Studies have shown that youth participation will also lead to greater ownership over, and legitimacy of programs,[8] both of which drive the sustainability of positive social changes.[9]

- **Young people experience connectivity like no other population group**: Never in history have young people had such easy and rapid access to the world around them. Through technological advances and increased availability of mobile phones, internet and social media, young people are able to connect with one another, their own communities and the rest of the world on an entirely new scale. This allows for young people to both access and disseminate information faster and further than ever before, creating new opportunities for how young people can increase participation and ownership at the community level, and strengthen accountability at a local, national and international level. This connectivity means that young people are well positioned to be responsive and adaptive to changes in their environments.

- **Young people readily adopt the new**: ACFID's 2016 paper, Innovation for Impact notes a number of 'megatrends' and 'disruptive changes' that have and

[4] Restless Development, "Follow-Up and Review: How to Scale Up Ambition on Youth-Led Accountability for SDGs," (2015).

[5] ACFID, "Learning and Development Note: Participatory Approaches to Development," (2013).

[6] DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policymakers," (2010).

[7] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Youth, Political Participation and Decision Maker" (2013).

[8] Hoy et al., "Building Capacity And Community Resilience To HIV: A Project Designed, Implemented, And Evaluated By Young Lao People," (2008).

[9] London et al., "Youth-Led Research And Evaluation: Tools For Youth, Organizational, And Community Development," (2003).

will transform the landscape of aid and development at all levels.[10] While innovation is by no means the exclusive domain of young people, they are one of many important groups that can contribute to a greater diversity of thinking on how to respond to this changing landscape. Young people have an intuitive understanding of, and are readily able to adopt new technologies that can be key to unlocking development gains.[11] Those privileged to have received a higher education will also be key agents in the translation of research and theory into practice. These traits mean that young people have unique skills and ways of thinking that, if nurtured and supported, can be leveraged to challenge the status quo and contribute to the innovation agenda.

## LEVERAGING EARLY INVESTMENT FOR LONG-TERM CHANGE

Young people are our future leaders; investing in them is critical.  When it comes to investments in individual capabilities, the earlier the investment, the greater the return.[12] Young people, through their involvement in the design and implementation of policies and projects, can benefit from education, training and experience that is positive for their professional development.[13] Furthermore, inclusive and participatory development practice can instil a passion in young people to take action on a cross-section of social justice issues. This has significant positive effects, whether young people go on to work in international development sector, the public sector, or the private sector. It can also drive intergenerational behavioural change, reshaping the way that entire constituencies think about corruption, human rights and social change. Including young people in development organisations and programs can create spaces for them to build

networks with other young people in the same or similar fields. It will also build an understanding of development as a complex system, helping people to identify how they might position themselves to best contribute to positive social changes early in their lives.

## ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

*"The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations."*

 - **2030 Agenda, Paragraph 53**[14]

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commit to 'leave no one behind' in ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity. Twenty of the SDG targets are youth-specific, and 65 out of the 169 targets refer to young people either explicitly or implicitly. These targets will only be achieved if today's generation of young people are meaningfully engaged and active in pursuit of the goals that will impact their future in a critical way.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the predecessor of the SDGs, failed to meet many of its targets. Post-MDG consultations revealed that young people felt excluded from the process and were calling for more transparent and responsive governments. The SDG document however recognises that "children and young women and men are critical agents of change" (emphasis added) To achieve the SDGs by 2030 it is vital to have strong youth-led accountability mechanisms in place to hold governments to the commitments they have made.

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10  ACFID, "Innovation for Impact: How Australian NGOs nurture and scale up new ideas" (2016).
11  Marie Puybaraud, "Digital Natives: A Tech-Savvy Generation Enters the Workforce," (2012).
12  The World Bank, "The World Bank Development Report: Development and the Next Generation" (2007).
13  DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development" (2010).
14  United Nations "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," (2016).

# 03. DEFINING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

## A. YOUNG PEOPLE

Definitions of youth are contextually specific and can be conceptualised in different ways. Broadly however, youth can be understood as the period of time in which a person makes various life transitions from dependence to independence. It is during this period where young people make important decisions about studying, finding employment, starting a family, taking responsibility for their health and lifestyle and exercising active citizenship. In different cultures and social contexts, these stages might take place at different ages. They might occur simultaneously, or gradually over many years.[15]

There are many different definitions of the youth age bracket. The United Nations defines youth as people between 15 and 24 years of age.[16] In contrast, the African Youth Charter defines youth as 'every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years'.[17] Ultimately, the age bracket adopted should have regard to how young people define themselves, the unique development challenges for youth, and the unique skills, knowledge and insights that they possess.

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## B. PARTICIPATION

**Participation refers to a stakeholder's ability to influence a particular process, their power or authority in making decisions, and the collection and analysis of information.** The categories listed below provide a conceptual framework for the different types of participation of young people in development processes:[18]

- **Passive**: Passive participation occurs when young people are the targets of a initiative but have no opportunity to influence outcomes or decision-making. This includes initiatives that treat youth as the target stakeholder of a particular change or benefit without including these stakeholders in the decision-making. It also includes situations in which young people are informed about decisions and processes that have, or will, occur. Passive participation may also be tokenistic - where young people are made to feel as though they are contributing to decision-making, but their involvement has no meaningful impact on outcomes.

- **Consultative**: Consultative participation involves the sourcing of information from young people by an external actor. The subject matter of a consultation can be limited or broad in scope, and consultation may occur once or multiple times. While the information provided by young people will be considered, it will not necessarily determine the ultimate decision.[19]

- **Partner**: Viewing young people as partners in a development process involves collaboration with young people through sharing decision-making power and providing opportunities for young people to actively influence how decisions are made. Either youth representatives make particular decisions, or decisions are made through a collaborative process where young people are considered partners.[20]

- **Youth-led**: Young people are leaders when they initiate a particular process, or when ultimate decision-making power and authority is transferred to them. While other stakeholders may still have a significant role in influencing decision-making, young people will have ultimate ownership and control over key decisions.[21]

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15 Oaktree, "Participation of Young People in Development Processes" (2016).
16 United Nations, "Definition of Youth" (Undated).
17 African Union Commission, "African Youth Charter" (2006).
18 Cheryl Lim & Andrew Grant, "Unleashing Youth in Asia," (2014).
19 Ibid.
20 Restless Development, "Follow-Up and Review: How to Scale Up Ambition on Youth-Led Accountability for SDGs," (2015).
21 Ibid.

While the list above articulates the different types of youth participation, it is not hierarchical in that different forms of participation will be more or less appropriate in different circumstances. The following critical questions should be considered when determining which form of participation is most appropriate for a particular intervention:

- **To what extent are young people being affected by this intervention?** Generally, the more that young people are being affected, and the more they are beings specifically targeted, the greater their level of participation should be.

- **What skills, attributes or perspectives will benefit this intervention?** Some interventions will have easy entry-points for young people to add value, while others may require specialised experience or expertise. While extensive youth participation may not always be appropriate, creative thinking will often reveal approaches to youth participation that will add value at little cost.

- **What barriers might young people face in participating, and how can these barriers be removed?** It is important to identify key barriers that may prevent young people from participating, such as the opportunity costs of participating (e.g - money and time) or a lack of confidence. Addressing these barriers to create an 'enabling environment' for participation should be viewed as the responsibility of those leading the particular intervention.[22]

- **How will young people be affected by participation?** Participation should always have a benefit on an individual level, through positive experiences, building networks or strengthening the capabilities of young people. Due to hierarchical social structures, in some contexts young people will be particularly vulnerable to exploitation. As such, it is essential that the benefits of participation received by individuals always outweigh the costs of participating.

To promote effective participation of young people, a twin-track approach is necessary. This requires both youth-targeted programming (programs or projects that focus directly on building the capabilities of and opportunities for young people) and youth mainstreaming (the inclusion of young people in internal governance or programmatic decision-making processes outside of youth-targeted programs). Each of these approaches may adopt different types of participation, though partner and youth-led participation will generally lead to results that are more appropriate and meaningful for young people.

## 04. INCLUSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION

When considering youth participation, organisations must recognise that young people are not a homogenous group. Therefore, when analysing the barriers that exist for young people to participate, organisations should examine the diversity of identities and circumstances of young people and strive to include young people that are representative of this diversity.[23] Young people may identify as belonging to more than one identity group, which may compound barriers to participation. Further, organisations should be wary of only selecting youth who already have leadership roles in society when engaging with youth. While these young people have a valuable contribution to make, it is also important to seek out young people who are marginalised and may not be accustomed to participation in public life to ensure that their unique insights are contributing to decision-making.[24]

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[22] ACFID, "Youth Engagement in the Australian Aid and Development Sector: Discussion Paper" (2012).
[23] World Conference on Youth, "Colombo Declaration on Youth: Mainstreaming Youth in the post-2015 Development Agenda" (2014).
[24] Ibid, 20.

When identifying the barriers that young people face in participating in development processes, the following intersectionalities should be considered:[25]

- **Youth and class**: From the outset, youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds face disadvantage in the limited educational, health and social services and opportunities available to them. They are more likely to be expected by their family or community to work from an early age, and worldwide there are low participation rates in education for this demographic, especially at the tertiary level. Social and economic characteristics have a significant bearing on achievement rates, and there is a strong correlation between people from lower class backgrounds and low literacy and numeracy levels.[26]

- **Youth and gender**: Girls and young women across the world continue to face gender-specific discrimination and disadvantage. When families have limited resources, sons are often favoured over daughters to receive an education. Although significant progress towards the goal of universal primary education has been made in most regions, disparity remains at secondary and tertiary levels.[27] More than 700 million women today were married as children, and globally, 35 per cent of all women and girls experience gender-based violence.[28] Unemployment among young women is higher than among young men, and young women make up more than 60 per cent of young people living with HIV globally.[29]

- **Youth and disability**: Young people with a disability face many barriers every day – from physical obstacles to systemic barriers and discriminatory attitudes.[30] Discrimination arises as a consequence of lack of understanding and knowledge of disability, as well as cultural views of disability. This is further compounded by poverty, social isolation, humanitarian emergencies, lack of services and support, and often hostile and inaccessible environments.[31]

- **Youth and sexual orientation**: Young people who identify as LGBTIQ+ experience discrimination, harassment and hostility in many areas of everyday life; in public, in school, accessing health and other services and securing proper recognition of their sex in official documents. LGBTIQ+ youth are more likely to experience bullying at school, family rejection and homelessness.[32]

- **Youth and other minority identities:** Young people from ethnic, racial, linguistic and other minorities continue to face discrimination and marginalisation. Obstacles to participation may stem from language and communication barriers, a lack of cultural understanding, and feelings of isolation.[33]

## 05. WHERE YOUTH PARTICIPATION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

Young people should be considered in all areas of the development process, including both the internal operations of organisations as well as programmatic areas:

- **organisational governance;**
- **research and analysis;**
- **program design;**

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[25] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, "Diversity and disadvantage in Australia" (2015),
[26] Ibid.
[27] International Labour Organization, "Breaking gender barriers for young women and men," (2008).
[28] United Nations, "Concept Note Session 4 Gender Equality and Youth: 20 Years ..." (2015).
[29] UN Women, "Facts and Figures: HIV and AIDS | UN Women – Headquarters," (2013).
[30] NCWD/Youth, "Attitudinal Barriers for People with Disabilities," (2009).
[31] UNICEF, "Children and Young People with Disabilities Fact Sheet," (2013).
[32] National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, "3 Barriers that Stand Between LGBT Youth and Healthier Futures ..." (2014).
[33] HRCouncil.ca, "Supporting Employees From Different Cultural Backgrounds | Diversity ..." (2008).

- **program implementation;**
- **monitoring, evaluation and learning;**
- **policy development.**

While young people have unique skills, capabilities, and perspectives that are valuable for development broadly, it is useful to identify the specific value proposition of young people to each of the above components of the development process and understand how organisations might best leverage this value.

## A. ORGANISATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Youth participation in organisational governance refers to the involvement of youth in the internal processes, systems and decision-making in an organisation. Currently, young people predominantly work in volunteer and intern roles. These can be passive positions, in that they are often short-term and do not provide opportunities for young people to contribute to the organisation's broader strategy and policies. While these roles may be appropriate in many circumstances, there is a greater opportunity for young people to contribute to the strategic decision-making of an organisation.[34]

### How can youth participation improve outcomes?

**Effective new strategies, policies and processes**: Youth participation provides young people with the opportunity to bring , creative, and innovative perspectives to organisational decision-making. These perspectives can generate effective new approaches to daily organisational practices.

**Long-term investment in human resources**: Building the capacity of a new generation of development practitioners is a long-term investment in an organisation's human resources. Training young people and involving them in

an organisation from an early age means that they become more experienced and effective practitioners as they mature.

**More relevant programming**: Youth participation supports organisations to develop youth-targeted programs or advocacy work that are more tailored to those who will be affected by these programs.[35] Involving young people will increase the likelihood that these programs capture the interests and priorities of young people, and use approaches and tools (including technologies) that will be appropriate for young people.

Critically, an organisation needs to understand the value of working with young people at all levels of management - not just in volunteer or internship roles. Appropriately skilled young people should be considered for professional positions, as well as members of advisory and governance boards. This requires the removal of barriers to youth participation in organisational governance, ensuring that young people are valued and respected throughout the organisation and support from the organisation's leadership team. The participation of young people should not displace others, nor should it be viewed as a substitute for hard work. Instead, participation is about bringing a greater diversity of views and perspectives to the table when making decisions.

### EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*Plan International has included young people in their internal governance structures by establishing youth advisory panels in 24 of their 51 national and country offices. Further, Plan has a Global Youth Advisory Panel contributing to the organisation's international governance and strategy. The youth advisory panels have the opportunity to participate in decision-making and key advocacy and campaigns work.*

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34 ACFID, "Youth Engagement in the Australian Aid and Development Sector" (2012).
35 DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies & Policymakers" (2010).
36 Ibid, 21.
37 Kudva Neema & David Driskell. "Creating Space for Participation: The Role of Organizational Practice in Structuring Youth Participation," (2009).
38 Ibid, 40:4
39 Ibid.

*KEY STEPS*

1. **Develop a youth participation strategy**: Examine an organisational structure and identify where young people can be involved. Ensure that the focus on youth participation is evident in the organisation's mission and goals. It is also valuable to develop the strategy in partnership with young people.

2. **Appoint a staff member**: It is useful to appoint a staff member to oversee the strategy and ensure that it is prioritised and delivered.

3. **Develop a recruitment strategy**: Develop a recruitment strategy that promotes inclusivity and attracts competent and engaged young people. This would include communications, recruitment and interview processes that are designed to engage a diverse range of youth. Be mindful of the language used in position descriptions, and advertise through social media and youth organisations.

4. **Train youth**: Lack of information and access to education has been identified as a key barrier to youth participation.[36] In order to overcome this barrier, invest in training young people about the organisation and programs, key development theories and hard skills. Ensure that adequate resources are allocated to training youth so that they can reach their potential.[37] Young people are highly capable and may need additional training to ensure they are most effective in their role.

5. **Train staff**: Staff may be sceptical at first about the involvement of young people, which may be a barrier to youth participation. Take the time to address any prejudices or scepticism. Invest in training staff to work effectively with young people.

6. **Create enabling environments**: When recruiting a group of young people, it can be useful to provide them with a 'youth-only' space to discuss their ideas and issues together as a group first before presenting them to the broader organisation. This allows young people to build their confidence and further develop their ideas.[38]

7. **Create a platform/space for youth to voice ideas**: Ensure young people are afforded the space to voice their ideas and opinions with staff and key decision-making bodies. Empower youth to define agendas and facilitate meetings.[39]

8. **Avoid jargon**: Avoid using highly technical language or jargon that will exclude young people from conversations - this can inhibit their ability to meaningfully participate.

9. **Establish a mentor or buddy system**: It is often useful to establish a mentoring/buddy system between younger and older staff within an organisation to foster connections and build the confidence of young people.

10. **Re-evaluate frequently**: Regularly evaluate the involvement of young people in decision-making in your organisation, ensuring young people are involved in this process, and modify accordingly. It may be useful to conduct a youth audit.

*As an organisation that champions a child-centred development approach, Plan's involvement of young people in their internal governance strengthens its legitimacy and accountability to target stakeholders. Involving young people has contributed positively to Plan's work - for example the youth advisory panel in Sierra Leone played a crucial role in the organisation's response to the Ebola crisis. Young people raised awareness of the disease through creative and accessible ways such as blogs, the radio and developing a film. Plan's long-term goal is to have youth representatives sit on the International Members Assembly and the National Boards - this would represent an immense achievement for youth participation.*

## B. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Youth participation in research refers to the way young people are involved in conducting studies which investigate the nature of development issues in particular countries or communities. Currently, young people's perspectives are often overlooked in research. It is vital to engage young people in research as they can greatly improve the way that data is collected, and provide unique insights into the analysis of information. If appropriately trained, young people have the capacity to be involved in all types of research that adopt various methodologies. Some approaches lend themselves particularly well to research with and by young people, and leverage the skills young people have to offer.

### How can youth participation improve outcomes?

- **Increased validity**: Young people are uniquely able to identify themes and draw conclusions from research that explores youth issues; informed by their lived experience.

- **Strong rapport with participants**: Youth-led, peer-to-peer research is a powerful way to collect nuanced responses because of the trust and rapport developed between researchers and participants. Young people may feel more comfortable sharing more intimate details with young researchers. This leads to more accurate data that best reflects young people's priorities and perspectives.

- **Embrace new technologies**: Young people can add value to research that involves the rapid collection of data from remote communities using technology, as they are generally able to understand and utilise new technologies more readily.[40]

### EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*Save the Children conducted participatory action research in late 2012 to better understand the lived experiences of 'street present' young Aboriginal people in Perth. The project involved 120 young Aboriginal people through semi-structured interviews and a further 20 through the research technique Photovoice.[41] The latter involved providing 20 participants with cameras and asking them to take photos that reflect their daily experiences and the issues they face. The narrative that emerged contradicted the common perspective that 'street present' Aboriginal youth are involved in antisocial and criminal behaviour. A more nuanced understanding of issues that the participants faced emerged as a result of meaningful and empowering engagement. This technique facilitates more productive and targeted approaches in programming. Importantly, the perspectives that emerged differed from wider community perspectives, highlighting the critical need to involve young people in research. Additionally, Save the Children established a Young People's Aboriginal Advisory Group for project oversight, solidifying the research's collaborative process with young people.*

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40 Marie Puybaraud, "Digital Natives: A Tech-Savvy Generation Enters the Workforce," (2012).
41 Save the Children Australia, "Identity on the Line: An Alternative Perspective on Aboriginal Young People's Street Presence in the South-east Corridor of Perth", (2013),
42 DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies & Policy Makers" (2010)

*KEY STEPS*

1. **Train youth:** Ensure that young people have the practical skills and knowledge of the theories that are key to performing the research. However, it is important to ensure that this training does not stifle their creativity and willingness to approach the research from a unique perspective.

2. **Address power dynamics:** Before young people conduct research, it is also important to consider the power dynamics in the communities they will be working in.[42] In some cases, youth will have a strong advantage when conducting research with their peers, however, they may not be equally respected when interviewing adults.

3. **Explore various methodologies:** Some methodologies involve youth and facilitate their creativity and input better than others. Take this into consideration, and investigate various approaches with young people before making a final decision regarding methodology.

## C. PROGRAM/PROJECT DESIGN

Youth participation in program/project design refers to young people's involvement in planning and designing initiatives to address particular development challenges. It is commonly understood by development practitioners that communities must play an active role in the design phase of a project. However, the youth perspective is often ignored as a discrete category, despite that many of these projects have a unique impact on young people.

*How can youth participation improve outcomes?*

• **Ensure that the youth perspective is considered**: Given young people's strong relationships with other young people in their community, they are able to determine what young people's priorities are, and therefore the issues that must be addressed by the project/program.

• **Develop creative solutions**: In program/project design, young people can offer creative solutions that seek to address issues faced by their community. For example, young people may have a more nuanced understanding of how social media can be leveraged to conduct a broader consultation of youth that could inform project design and build community ownership over a particular project.

• **Introduce modern approaches**: Young people who have recently graduated or are currently studying have a strong understanding of modern approaches to project design that they have learnt through their education and can help bridge the gap between research and practice.

It is important to reflect on how planning process and practices can be adapted in order to facilitate the appropriate level of involvement from young people, and leverage the value of working with young people.

**KEY STEPS**

1. **Train young people:** Introduce young people to the basic theories and techniques used in program design. The organisation they join will often have its own theory of change and approaches to program design, for example log frames. Adapt the training to be age appropriate. Do not focus too much on technicalities, as this can stifle creative thinking.

2. **Deconstruct the problem in partnership with young people:** Facilitate a process in which young people are able to break down the problem that the program seeks to address, for example by developing 'problem trees'. Problem trees identify the root causes of a particular problem, and how they manifest at different levels within society. Ensure young people's voices are captured during this process.

3. **Align goals:** If young people and organisations have different goals that they intend the program to achieve, tensions will likely arise later in the project cycle. Ensure that the goals of young people and the development organisation are aligned during the design phase by facilitating discussions with young people and reaching consensus about the key goals.

4. **Identify solutions:** After deconstructing the problem and aligning the goals/intended outcome of the program, identify potential solutions. Solution trees, and design thinking are useful for this process. Ensure that facilitation is inclusive and allows young people to actively engaged in conversation. Allow for ideas to be developed before restricting the scope of solutions on the basis of practical constraints.

5. **Test solutions:** Test the potential solutions by helping young people to translate their ideas into formats such as program logics or theories of change. Ask young people about their preferred approach, and facilitate accordingly. For example, some young people may favour visual or oral approaches.

*EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE*

*Oxfam's International Youth Partnerships (OIYP) Program connected 300 young people (Action Partners) from across the globe at a conference that focused on skill building and networking.[43] Following the conference, the Action Partners attended e-workshops/online forums, skill shares and cultural exchanges. The program gave young people the knowledge and training in project planning and implementation so they could implement projects in their own communities.[44] They were encouraged to maintain their relationships with their fellow Action Partners from around the world, which enabled them to seek*

*support and share ideas regarding the design and implementation of their projects. Action Partners were eligible for grants, which allowed them to expand and grow the impact of their projects within their communities.*

*Out of this process a young Mexican woman developed a project that worked to achieve justice for mothers of female murder victims. The young woman who developed this project was able to connect with the "Gender Learning Group," a sub-group of OIYP action partners who exchanged letters to support and inspire each other to work at their gender-focused projects.[45]*

*The OIYP program demonstrates an effective approach to youth participation, because young people were not just the targets of training, but were also empowered to design projects in their own communities and established networks, which will be beneficial later in their working lives.*

## D. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Youth participation in program/project implementation refers to the role that young people can play in the execution of program/project plans. It is important to consider the role of youth in this practice area, as engaging youth in more active roles throughout program and project implementation can improve the quality of projects.

***How can youth participation improve outcomes?***

- **Effectively communicate with young people**: When young people are leaders, they are able to communicate the strategy effectively between the organisation and the young members of the community.[46] Young leaders can show understanding and empathise with the target group, positioning others to develop greater trust and ownership over a project.

- **Facilitates community-wide adoption of novel approaches**: Young people are often more adaptable and receptive to new ideas. Therefore, when young people have strong, positive relationships with the older members of the community, they can act as go-betweens, to help communicate the purpose and advantages of these novel approaches.

- **Embrace new technologies in program/projects**: New technologies present a massive opportunity to increase the efficiency and scale of programs/projects. Young people are particularly well positioned to adopt new technologies and determine which technological tools or platforms will be most readily adopted by their peers.

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**KEY STEPS**

1. **Offer support and guidance:** Whether young people are involved in the implementation stage as consultants, partners or leaders, they can benefit from constructive feedback on their performance and recommendations about how they can be more effective in their involvement.

2. **Encourage improvement:** Create a positive feedback culture whereby improvements to project implementation can be discussed - by both young people and older adults.

3. **Strengthen relationships between young people and other stakeholders:** Encourage young people and other stakeholders to build relationships, through recognition of each other's strengths and unique inputs.

4. **Mediate tensions:** At times, there may be conflict between different stakeholder groups. Resolve conflicts as they arise.

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43 John Prince and Kerri Wellington, "Oxfam International Youth Partnerships: 10 Year Impact Assessment," (2010).
44 Ibid.
45 Oiyp.oxfam.org.au, "Oxfam International Youth Partnerships" (2016).
46 DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policymakers," (2010).

*The National Youth Movement in Papua New Guinea facilitated the participation of young people in community infrastructure projects. Young people were empowered as leaders of a water project in Pachen Village, East Sepik Province. They were involved as part of the coordinating committee - the decision-making body for the project. The village elders worked alongside young people and acted as advisors to guide them through this process, while allowing young people to maintain control over the project.[47]*

*The program had long-term effects.  Seven years later it was noted that young people had more influence on decision-making within the community.[48] The relationship between young people and elders was transformed following the project as community elders had newfound respect for young people and the meaningful contributions and perspectives that they could offer.*

## E. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Youth participation in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) refers to the involvement of young people in conducting research to determine the extent to which a policy or project has achieved its goals. Youth can participate in MEL, as both subjects and leaders of the MEL process.[49] Young people are able to lead MEL themselves, by facilitating focus groups and conducting peer-to-peer interviews. Youth-led accountability through MEL is a powerful tool to ensure promises are delivered, norms are challenged and the best outcomes are achieved. Enabling youth participation can improve all stages of MEL processes.

### How can youth participation improve outcomes?

- **Evaluation planning and design**: The impact of a project or a policy on youth can be dramatically different to the experience of adults and it is therefore vital to capture youth perspectives when evaluating effectiveness of these projects/policies. Young people should help to develop indicators that are more relevant and reflect young people's needs and priorities.[50]

- **Data collection**: Youth-led peer-to-peer MEL activities provide young people with the opportunity to feel comfortable and develop trust and rapport;, helping to alleviate researcher-participant power imbalances and can lead toleading to responses that are more honest and nuanced.[51] Additionally, young people may be equipped with social media and mobile phone technology that enables them to provide a rapid feedback loop with implementing organisations.

- **Data analysis**: Young people offer unique perspectives and insights to data analysis and interpretation. They can identify various themes that adults may not readily identify with, leading to more accurate analysis that better reflects the experiences of young people.[52]

- **Review**: Once a report has been written, young people should provide feedback on whether it adequately captures their voices and perspectives.

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[47] Jane Foster and Kumi Naidoo, "Young People at the Centre: Participation and Social Change," (2001)
[48] Ibid, 67.
[49] DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies & Policymakers" (2010).
[50] Ibid, 71.
[51] Restless Development, "Follow-Up and Review: How to Scale Up Ambition on Youth-Led Accountability for SDGs," (2015).
[52] United Nations Development Programme, "Youth, Political Participation and Decision Maker," (2013).
[53] DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies & Policymakers," (2010).

1. **Train young people:** MEL is a specialist skill, so young people will likely require training before undertaking this activity. Train young people in monitoring and evaluation techniques and theories - consult with them regarding the standard of difficulty, and adapting to an age-appropriate level where advised.

2. **Address power dynamics:** Consider the power dynamics that exist that could make it difficult for young people to lead MEL. In certain local contexts the position of youth in society may make it inappropriate for young people to run MEL sessions with older generations. It is vital to have an understanding of this from the outset.[53]

3. **Choose effective, relevant techniques:** Consider which MEL techniques might be most appropriate for young people to carry out, being mindful of contextual factors (for example, cultural age-related power dynamics). Involve young people in the development of evaluation plans and ask for their input regarding what techniques they would consider to be most effective. This can include traditional MEL techniques as well as more visual methods such as storyboards, body-mapping and role-playing.

4. **Offer support and guidance:** Provide young people with feedback on their ideas and performance, for example ideas about indicators, execution of focus group interviews etc. Giving advice and feedback is valuable to their development as a leader in MEL.

5. **Encourage young people's unique ideas and interpretations:** Be mindful that dismissing young people's methodology ideas or interpretations of data may be disheartening for young people. Nurture new and unique ideas, and workshop them together to build young people's confidence.

*EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE*

*Young volunteers from Oaktree attend annual review trips to evaluate their education partner projects in Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia. Prior to the review trips, Oaktree volunteers were trained in monitoring and evaluation techniques and theories and develop evaluation plans for the target projects. This process is supported by development experts from Oaktree's Development Sub-Committee and through consultation with project partners. Importantly, it is led solely by the young volunteers themselves. The project beneficiaries are predominantly young people, making the monitoring and evaluation largely peer-to-peer. Peer-to-peer semi-structured interviews and focus groups provide qualitative data that has depth*

*and detail. In practice, it has led to interesting project insights that have improved projects. Additionally, the experience builds the capacity of the young volunteers and supports their professional development.*

*The following is a statement from an Oaktree volunteer, reflecting on participating in an evaluation and what she gained from the experience:*

*"The experience I gained at Oaktree in leading an evaluation of a partner project overseas has been invaluable. I was able to learn how to prepare for the trip within a budget, develop terms of reference and design an evaluation incorporating a range of participatory qualitative and quantitative methods. Conducting and supporting every stage of*

*formative, mid-term and summative evaluations in Cambodia was a terrific professional development experience in-country, which has had profound impact on all my consequent career opportunities in the sector.."*

*- **Kim Ho, Oaktree Volunteer, Cambodia***

## F. POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This section refers to youth participation in the development of policy at the local, national and regional levels, and the role development organisations should play to ensure young people have access to these decision-making structures. Young people are often excluded from policy development processes, even when these policies directly affect them.[54] As government ministries are often the key group tasked with developing policies, it important that their competencies and confidence in working with youth is also built.[55] When young people are involved in policy planning and development, there are many positive impacts.

**How can youth participation improve outcomes?**

- **Accurate insight into young people's needs and priorities**: Working with young people ensures that policies encompass their ideas and perspectives, increasing the reach and effectiveness of policy outcomes.[56]

- **Strengthens inclusivity**: When young people and other underrepresented or marginalised groups are included in policy-making processes, it strengthens inclusivity, and ultimately policies are more representative of the interests of the wider community.

- **Cultivates ownership and leads to sustainable outcomes**: When young people are involved in policy development, they feel a sense of ownership. Their priorities

and interests have been considered in the development of the policy, and they therefore have a vested interest in ensuring effective implementation in the long term.

Practitioners must be mindful of avoiding tokenistic consultation processes for policy development.[57] Young people cannot simply be present at discussions regarding policy development, but instead their suggestions and inputs should be considered and inform the final policy.

### EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*The Government Department of Youth and Sport (GOYS) in Bahrain developed its first National Youth Policy from 2004 to 2005 with involvement from young people, with support and funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).[58] Over an 18 month period, an action plan was developed to attend to the needs and aspirations of Bahraini youth. The action plan detailed the introduction of a national youth parliament, a national youth commission, a national youth development fund, and an inter-ministerial committee for youth affairs.*

*Young people were involved in the development of the policy through participation in surveys and focus groups, community outreach and the review of the final policy. The research component engaged with young people on a number of issues. Young people benefited greatly from the training, which aimed to build their skills and capacity to have an input in policy development.*

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[54] Franklin Obeng-Odoom, "Youth Participation in Local and National Development in Ghana: 1620-2013," (2013).
[55] Ibid.
[56] Kate O'Malley, "Children and Young People Participating in PRSP Processes," (2004).
[57] DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies & Policymakers" (2010).
[58] Ibid, 41.

*KEY STEPS*

1. **Address barriers for marginalised groups:** All young people, regardless of their background, should be afforded the right to contribute to policy development. Advocate for the selection of youth who represent marginalised groups to be involved in the process, particularly for policy areas that affect that marginalised group. Ensure that appropriate support (including financial) is provided to facilitate their involvement.

2. **Strengthen civic education:** Educate young people on democratic processes and conduct skills training so that they are able to exercise their civic rights. Ensure that young people have the tools to move beyond a superficial understanding of government policy and practice so their advocacy efforts can be professionalised and effective.

3. **Conduct research:** Conduct participatory and inclusive research with a broad cross-section of youth to identify and include young people's perspectives on key challenges and priorities for national development.

4. **Mobilise young people:** Mobilise young people to come together to amplify their voices on issues that affect them, and issues they want government policy to address.

5. **Support coordination and collective action:** Provide support to develop effective communication channels and facilitative processes for young people to foster collective action. This should embrace diversity and distill priorities and focus areas.

6. **Open dialogue:** Establish means of constructive (rather than adversarial) dialogue with key decision-makers where appropriate.

7. **Support ongoing accountability:** Policy change is often a slow process. Young people should be supported to strengthen ongoing accountability for policies and promises made by officials at local, national and regional levels.

# 06. KEY THEMATIC AREAS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

## A. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

At present, young people and their interests are underrepresented in government institutions and political processes across the world. Governance programming should consider youth participation in two key ways:

1. Improving the relevancy of government services through youth participation in formal decision-making processes
2. Strengthening social accountability through youth advocacy and strengthening civil society.

The case for including young people in decision-making, particularly in decisions that affect them, is articulated in Chapter 2 of this Practice Note. Their participation is is important to ensure that public institutions are delivering services that are appropriate for their constituencies in a representative and transparent way. Youth participation in this area should place particular emphasis on not only including young people in decision-making groups, but also on providing them with the skills, confidence, and space needed to enable them to contribute to decisions meaningfully.

Young people are also well placed to strengthen institutional performance through increasing social accountability for those institutions. Youth involvement in civil society helps to keep governments accountable and responsive to the needs of the population they serve. This is particularly crucial in contexts where public and private corruption and nepotism are endemic. Moreover, through strong engagement with youth, the unique challenges, interests and priorities of young people can be understood and, ideally, represented at the policy and political level to create positive systemic change and more representative and responsive institutions. Involving young people in governance processes entrenches values of good governance from a young age - driving intergenerational change. In particular, practitioners should consider how new technologies and social media – a great strength of youth - can support collective advocacy or accountability objectives and support coordination and online community building.

## EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*The Vietnamese Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was developed with close engagement from young people, giving youth the opportunity to contribute and actively review its implementation. Save the Children was commissioned to perform three consultations with children and young people over five years, with a particular focus on disadvantaged urban communities.*

*This process ensured that the government explicitly considered the impact of poverty on youth. This proved to be important through the consultation process with young people, as themes emerged that had not previously been considered. Moreover, declarations in the PRSP allow for greater government accountability to young people and rural communities. In addition, local officials learnt about the significance of youth participation, and were able to apply this knowledge to other projects.*[59]

## B. HEALTH

Young people can particularly strengthen health programming in areas that may be socially taboo or stigmatised in certain cultures, such as adolescent sexual and reproductive health, drug and alcohol abuse or gender-based violence. In such circumstances, peer-to-peer project implementation may allow young participants to engage more openly with the project.

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[59] Kate O'Malley, "Children and Young People Participating in PRSP Processes," (2004).

Youth participation is also advantageous when biomedical understandings and public health messages conflict with traditional customs or cultural understandings. Young people are generally more receptive and welcoming towards public health initiatives as customary practises and beliefs are less entrenched. Moreover, young people can be great mediators between key stakeholders, as they are able to balance a progressive approach with the contextual understanding of their community. This was demonstrated during the Ebola virus epidemic in 2015. USAID documented how young people were trained in Liberia to distribute lifesaving information through social media. These young people were able to rapidly communicate in a culturally sensitive manner about Ebola prevention in their communities.

### EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*The Victorian AIDS Council's 'Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS (YEAH)' initiative harnesses peer education to prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections amongst young Australians. It is a youth-led and youth-focused sexual health promotion and education program. It leverages the power of role modelling and deploys a peer-to-peer model to make a somewhat taboo subject more accessible and age-appropriate.[60] Not only does it improve health outcomes, but the process itself has been beneficial for the educators, as they have developed skills in leadership, communication and health literacy.[61]*

### C. EDUCATION

Young people are typically the direct beneficiaries of education-focused projects and as such they should have a say in the planning, implementation and evaluation of education systems and programs. A young person passively receiving an education does not have the same transformative power as a young person

influencing the terms of their own education - from an intimately invested position.

Child-centred, participatory learning environments are typically seen as the benchmark for successful education programs. Establishing such an educational environment fundamentally requires the active engagement of young people. While teachers can be trained and provided the resources to encourage student participation, without youth participation in program processes, techniques are unlikely to be appropriately targeted and students are less likely to engage as they may not understand their 'role' in the classroom. For example - if students understand the purpose of participatory learning and how their education can affect their future life options (fostered through participation in program processes) - they are far more likely to take a stewardship role over their own learning.

Further, youth participation can strengthen the governance of education programs for example through student-led accountability mechanisms. Young people holding leadership and management positions within schools helps to ensure that schools and education projects are responsive to the needs and priorities of students, and develops the capabilities of the individual. Increased youth participation is proven to decrease rates of early leavers from the education system, fosters a greater sense of life and career direction, and increases overall academic performance.[62]

### EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*In Colombia there is a network of schools under the Escuela Nueva (New School) program. Acknowledging that insufficient resources and low academic achievement contribute to high early leaver and repetition rates, the Escuela Nueva strategy is fundamentally flexible and adaptive in a multi-grade learning environment.[63]*

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[60] Red Aware, "All About YEAH," (Undated).
[61] Ibid.
[62] Aileen Shaw et al., "'Youth Civic Engagement in Non-Formal Education': Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation," (2012).
[63] Sara Hamdan, "Children Thrive in Rural Colombia's Flexible Schools," (2013).

*In these schools, teachers receive training on how to facilitate self-guided learning. Students are engaged in individual and small-group exercises that prompt the learning and application of new skills, rather than passive presence in a larger lecture-style lessons.[64] Moreover, school governments and committees encourage involvement of students to inform and steer the school's management and organisational functions.[65] In this instance, allowing young people to participate not only creates space for young people to craft appropriate changes, but also instils collaborative and democratic approaches.*

*Overall, Escuela Nueva schools report high levels of engagement from students and much greater student satisfaction with their education as a result of this initiative. The Escuela Nueva model has since been implemented in over 20,000 schools in Colombia, and is expanding internationally to 19 countries, including Brazil, India and the Philippines.[66]*

### D. CLIMATE CHANGE

Young people will be disproportionately affected by climate change compared to older generations. Consequently, their long-term interests are crucial in efforts to address climate change, particularly in catalysing stronger coordinated action.

Psychological distance from climate change is a massive factor regarding inaction on the issue. This distance can be broken into four distinct dimensions - temporal, social, geographic and uncertainty.[67] In every single one of these dimensions, young people are closer to the issue:

- **Temporal**: the effects of climate change will be felt within their lifetime.

- **Social and geographic**: young people's use

of technology and access to various media outlets in a globalised world means that they are more attuned and empathetic to what is occurring globally.

- **Uncertainty**: young people tend to be more accepting of the science behind climate change.

Lower psychological distance correlates with higher concern, therefore young people are more likely to pursue climate change mitigation and adaptation activities. An essential component of development projects and policies should incorporate addressing climate change. As such, youth participation is critical, as young people are uniquely motivated to drive these actions.

### EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*The Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) is a youth-led movement campaigning for action on climate change. AYCC mobilises young Australians to take action within their schools, universities and communities and to participate in campaigns that put climate change on the political agenda.[68] Some of their recent campaigns that garnered considerable traction include the 'People's Climate March' and 'Don't Risk the Reef.' Importantly, AYCC encourages and supports the participation of a diverse group of young people, including their Indigenous youth climate network, SEED.*

### E. EMERGENCY, TRANSITIONAL AND FRAGILE SETTINGS

Young people are extremely vulnerable in conflict, emergency, transitional, and fragile settings, as they are more likely to:

- be at risk of missing out on education;
- be recruited as combatants or supporters for armed groups;
- experience sexual abuse or exploitation;

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64 Patrick J. McEwan, "Evaluating multigrade school reform in Latin America," (2008).
65 Ibid. 470-471..
66 Sara Hamdan, "Children Thrive in Rural Colombia's Flexible Schools," (2013).
67 Alexa Spence, Wouter Poortinga, and Nick Pidgeon, "The Psychological Distance of Climate Change," (2011).
68 Australian Youth Climate Coalition, "About AYCC," (Undated).

- be engaged in exploitative labour; and
- become embroiled in civil unrest.

Development organisations must actively engage young people in their response to humanitarian crises to help mitigate these risks. Young people can play a vital role in the survival and recovery of their communities. In emergency responses young people are able to access and leverage social media platforms to rapidly disseminate information to their networks and the wider community. For example, online social network sites such as Facebook are being utilised to mark people as 'safe' during natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

Youth participation is extremely important in peacebuilding and nation-building activities in post-conflict societies. Failing to do so risks young people engaging in violent civil unrest if they feel excluded and disempowered by the post-conflict processes. Conversely, when actively engaged, young people provide insight regarding how trauma uniquely affects them, and therefore are in a position to shape projects that address their specific needs in these contexts.[69] Particularly, young people should be involved in the design and implementation of projects relating to:

- education and vocational training with a catch up focus, as young people have often missed out on opportunities due to protracted crises;
- education and dialogue specifically regarding rights and responsibilities to be able to participate constructively in transitional societies; and
- rehabilitation programs for young people directly affected by conflict (for example those recruited as child soldier combatants).

Further, young people can play a constructive role in reconciliation processes - helping to mediate ethnic or religiously motivated tensions. Social divisions based on ethnicity, religion and other marginalising factors are less entrenched in younger populations. Young people developing one-to-one relationships with each other can help to bridge the divisions within societies - fostering greater understanding and tolerance for peacebuilding and circuit-breaking intergenerational conflicts.

## EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*Youth for Peace in Cambodia initiated the Youth for Justice and Reconciliation project to educate young people on the history of the Khmer Rouge and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, with the aim to include youth in reconciliation processes.[70] While young people in Cambodia are still affected by the legacy of the Khmer rouge, the formal education system fails to provide education on this issue - this project therefore aims to bridge this gap.*

*The project uses memory culture and outreach activities to promote understanding and encourage young people to actively engage in the processes of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia.[71] It opens up intergenerational dialogue, allowing young people to participate in transitional justice processes. The project has not only successfully contributed to intergenerational reconciliation, but has also improved the leadership capacity of young participants and allowed for greater social recognition of the role of young people.*

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[69] DFID–CSO Youth Working Group, "Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies & Policymakers," (2010).
[70] Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, "Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note," (2016).
[71] Ibid.

## 07. DEVELOPING A YOUTH PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

A first step that organisations can take to increasing the participation of young people in their work is to develop a youth participation strategy. This process will support organisations to consider and understand:

- The unique qualities and attributes of young people in their practice and geographical areas.
- The major challenges that young people face in their practice and geographical areas
- How young people are affected, directly or indirectly, by their programs and projects.
- The opportunities and benefits of having greater participation of young people in advancing their vision and mission.

- Ways in which their can remove barriers that prevent young people from participating in:

  - organisational governance;
  - research and analysis;
  - design;
  - Implementation;
  - monitoring, evaluation and learning;
  - policy development.

Organisations should consider both specific youth programming (programs that target young people as direct beneficiaries) as well as youth mainstreaming (increasing youth participation across both internal processes and programming). This process of strategy development should be led by or be developed in partnership with young people.

***KEY STEPS***

1. Identify and engage appropriate youth organisations or young people to partner with or lead the development of a youth participation strategy..

2. Provide key staff with training in youth participation to build understanding of the importance and approaches to youth participation.

3. Conduct an organisation-wide youth audit, including projects, to determine how the orgnanisation is currently approaching youth participation.

4. Articulate the purpose, objective and vision for youth participation in your organisation- this will guide the development of the strategy.

5. Map the organisational structure and identify where young people can be involved (internal youth participation).

6. In current programs and new programs identify where in the program cycle young people can be involved (external youth participation).

7. Identify all of the potential barriers to youth participation using both the internal and external examples derived.

8. Design mitigation strategies for these barriers.

9. Agree on key areas of focus, considering youth-targeted programming and youth mainstreaming.

10. Appropriately allocate resources (both financial and human) to the implementation of the strategy.

11. Provide further training and professional development opportunities for staff in youth participation.

## TOOLS & RESOURCES

*Country Information*

1.  **Global Evidence Base for Youth Policy**: http://www.youthpolicy.org/.

*Examples of Youth Strategies*

2.  **Oxfam Youth Participation and Leadership Theory of Change**: https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Oxfam-Youth-Participation-Theory-of-Change.pdf.

3.  **Child and Youth Participation Strategic Direction**: http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Strategic%20Direction%20Child%20and%20Youth%20Participation%202015-2020%20World%20Vision_1.pdf.

*Examples of Youth Audits*

4.  **Youth audit tool for strengthening youth engagement in your work**: http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Session-7c-Youth-Audit-tool-handout.pdf.

5.  **Youth Participation in Development**: http://restlessdevelopment.org/file/youth-participation-in-development-pdf

*Other Tools & Resources*

6.  **Youth Engagement: ACFID Discussion Paper**: "Youth Engagement in the Australian Aid and Development Sector": https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/ACFID-Youth-Engagement-Discussion-Paper.pdf.

7.  **Participatory Approaches**: ACFID Learning and Development Note: "Participatory Approaches to Development": https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/acfid-ld-note.pdf.

8.  **Youth and Gender: ACFID Outcomes Paper**: "Gender Equity Working Group-DFAT Workshop: Challenges and Opportunities for Integrating Gender Policies across Organisations and Programs", section: 'Addressing intersectional disadvantage': https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/Outcomes-statement-ACFID-DFAT-Gender-Workshop-June-2015.pdf.

9.  **Innovation for Impact**: ACFID Research Paper: "Innovation for Impact: How Australian NGOs nurture and scale up new ideas": https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/ACFID_InnovationForImpact.pdf.

10. **Disability Inclusive Development**: ACFID Practice Note: "Disability Inclusive Development," section 5(g): "Age and disability inclusive approaches":https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/Disability-Inclusive-Development-Practice-Note.pdf.

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