



Youth - Led Development

A Framework for Action

Policy Document of the World Youth Congress, Scotland 2005

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I. INTRODUCTION

Without Youth – MDG failure; With Youth – chance of success!

If current trends continue, the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] will not be achieved until 2147¹. If properly mobilised and supported, young people and youth-led development [YLD] can help to achieve the goals by the target date of 2015. This document shows how this can be done. By implementing the recommendations of this document, the energy, creativity and vision of the world's youth will be more effectively channelled into the global development effort.

And that's a lot of energy.

All over the world, examples abound of young people responding to the development challenges of their communities through social entrepreneurship and youth-led business start-ups. Youth want to be involved, and this is a call for all development actors to take YLD seriously and include them in their efforts to achieve the MDGs.

James Kamara lived in a camp for displaced people in Freetown, Sierra Leone - a slum with raw sewage flowing in an open drain outside his house. Adults in the community had waited for years to raise the \$10,000 it was estimated was needed to install proper sanitation. Fed up with waiting, James secured \$500 from Peace Child International, gathered recycled materials, bought 100 metres of plastic pipe and in partnership with a mentor from the City Sanitation Department got the job done.

Calls for youth involvement to be taken seriously have been made before, and we recognise and applaud them. We note, however, that youth-related recommendations in the Ad Hoc Working Group's *MDG Youth White Paper*, the TakingITGlobal-Global Youth Action Network (TIG-GYAN) *MDG Youth Action Toolkit*, the UN's *Agenda 21*, the UN *World Programme of Action for Youth*, the outcome documents from the World Youth Congresses in Hawaii and Morocco and the Commonwealth's *Youth Empowerment in the New Millennium* paper among others have not always been carried

through. Consequently the recommendations of this document are deliberately practical and actionable and can lead to nationwide programmes of YLD that can transform developing economies and generate positive futures for the young people living in them.

Young people should be not only the beneficiaries but also the implementers of development programmes

- When youth are involved, programmes immediately have long-term sustainability, because the next generation are already integrated into the framework.
- The ability of young people to effectively reach out and communicate with other young people cannot be over-emphasised. This is where YLD has a comparative advantage within development programmes.
- Because young people are happy to take their wages, not in cash, but in experience as volunteers, they are inherently cost-effective. Their desire is to help themselves and their communities.

¹ Millennium Campaign Statement, conference on financing the MDGs, European Parliament, Brussels, 2004

II. YOUTH COMMITMENTS

Youth acknowledge that we often lack experience. This obstacle can be overcome by constructive mentorship and equal partnership between youth and adults in the management of projects.

In recognition of this relationship, this document is not about making one-sided demands of decision-makers. Rather, we call upon our peers to make certain commitments as well.

We call on youth to commit themselves to:

- Seek out active partnership with adult mentors who have relevant experience.
- Undertake adequate research so that planned projects are relevant, appropriate and sustainable for the community.
- Create their own training programmes to ensure the viability and sustainability of their projects.
- Make greater efforts within and between youth organisations to engender a strong, collaborative institutional culture.
- Raise awareness of the MDGs and wider development issues among their peers on the local level.
- Encourage and recruit active volunteers among their peers to complete low-cost community development projects.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Active citizenship requires active support.

Consequently, we call on governments, inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector and civil society as a whole to partner with us and implement the following recommendations:

III.i Participation

When youth have been involved in development initiatives, it has almost always been as beneficiaries rather than as active and equal partners. Therefore, we request that:

- Governments, NGOs, development agencies, civil society groups and other stakeholders involve youth in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes.
- Devolved structures such as district development councils and HIV/AIDS committees incorporate youth representation and also make deliberate efforts to involve youth in the design and management of all their programmes.
- Inter-governmental agencies, central government and local government agencies create specific structures and processes to facilitate true and meaningful partnerships with youth. This could include the creation of

youth desks in the various ministries of national government and the different organs of regional and international institutions.

- Youth be involved in the consultation processes of individual country development strategies (such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Country Strategy Papers), and that the outcome papers acknowledge the role of YLD in national development strategies.
- National legislation governing the registration of NGOs be sufficiently flexible to enable young people to register their organisations and so be eligible for funding of YLD projects and other benefits.

III. ii Research

We welcome the initiative of the World Bank to devote their 2007 World Development Report to '*Development for (and by) the Next Generation.*' However, we note that, to date, young people have not been sufficiently involved in research into youth-related development issues. This has made it very hard to establish the evidence base that most institutions require effectively to engage youth as development partners. It has also served to cement negative stereotypes of youth. For example, banks are usually wary of giving soft loans to young people despite the fact that anecdotal evidence shows that young people have a high success rate with their projects and the repayment of loans. Young people therefore call for more research to enable institutions wishing to engage with youth to make informed choices. In particular, we demand that:

- Development research be disaggregated to show youth specific data. For instance, poverty-related research findings should be broken down to show youth specific poverty indices. This also applies to other areas including conflict, health, political participation and agriculture.
- A regular UN report, in the same vein as the UNDP Human Development Report, be commissioned in order to make credible information on YLD available to policy makers and other development actors. This report should track the progress made in involving youth in development at the national and international level.

III. iii Resources

Youth-led development calls for coordinated investment of financial and non-financial resources. In particular, we ask that:

- 0.7% of all Overseas Development Assistance [ODA] to be allocated to youth-led development initiatives, as called for in the Casablanca Declaration. In addition, we request that 0.7% of international NGO development funding also be invested in YLD.
- More emphasis should be placed on the training of young people in skills related to organisational management, human resource development and the media.
- National Youth Development funds be created to help create jobs and youth-led business start-ups, with participation from governments and the private sector through incentives such as tax rebates for participating companies.

- National donor consultative platforms be established to allow for a coordinated and efficient approach to funding youth led development initiatives.
- National governments support young entrepreneurship by fostering a culturally, educationally and politically supportive environment together with the financial capital to start up such enterprises.

III. iv Education

After the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, the new ministry of culture and education were smart enough to create literacy brigades to resolve the huge illiteracy problem amongst the most disadvantaged people of the country - running at 70% at the time of the revolution. After two years of youth touring the country teaching each other to read, illiteracy dropped to about 30% of the population - done at a tenth of the cost of a professional teacher led literacy programme.

Education must be appropriate both to a local and a global context, to raise awareness the MDGs and to equip students with the skills to implement their own YLD initiatives. In this context, we call for:

- Education that includes the principles of citizenship, human rights and sustainability. These issues provide the foundation for development and a framework in which to design projects. Particular attention should be paid to the principle of human dignity.
- The promotion of successful youth peer-to-peer education models and the provision of funding for their replication.
- National governments, NGOs and international agencies to include skills training in development issues in all primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions with a special focus on the primary level given MDG goal two.

IV. CONCLUSION

These policies will enable YLD and youth-led development projects to grow. By empowering youth, they allow the inspiration and energy behind youth-led development to flourish into real action for a better world. Working on the local level, youth can have an immediate and significant impact on their communities.

You can help us.

We have shown you how.

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