

## Helpdesk Research Report

# Youth initiatives: Supporting citizen engagement with government and civic life

Anna Ornnert

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## Question

*Please identify examples of successful youth initiatives which support citizen engagement with government and civic life, in similar contexts to Papua New Guinea.*

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## 1. Overview

There is a large volume of literature on youth participation in development, including on the benefits of involving young people in local, national, regional and global governance initiatives. Although not as voluminous, there is also a significant body of work on youth participation in civic life, though much of this focuses on issues of education and employment (Oxfam 2016) as well as health (particularly initiatives related to HIV/ AIDS). It was not possible to identify a large body of literature around more multi-faceted and holistic initiatives (for example, involving different themes and connecting at different levels).

### The overall literature

A number of reviews incorporate qualitative case study material to illustrate examples of good practice (DFID CSO 2010; Asker and Gero 2012; UN-Habitat 2013; French et al 2014; Walker et al 2014; ActionAid 2015; ACFID 2016; Oxfam 2016). Many reviews emphasise the findings of positive outcomes (e.g., Asker and Giro 2012; Perezniето and Hamilton-Harding 2013; Walker et al 2014). Some commentators (Balcalso et al 2015; Farrow 2015) note that the impact of youth participation remains contested. Others acknowledge the risk that, without meaningful involvement, sufficient funding and long-term commitment, the participation of young people can become merely symbolic (UN-Habitat 2013) or tokenistic (DFID CSO 2010; French et al 2014). Adebayo (2017) argues, for example, that despite the range of youth advocacy initiatives taking place across Africa, ‘most of the approaches are still donor-driven, adult-initiated and patronising.’ Overall, however, youth participation is understood as essential to achieving successful development outcomes (Huxley et al 2015). Research by Avis (2015) highlights the emerging consensus that increasing youth participation has both instrumental and intrinsic value for both young people and wider society. Farrow (2015) suggests that the debate focuses on ‘the quality of participation initiatives, what participation should be attempting to achieve, and whether it actually results in change.’

### **Focus of this research report**

Youth participation can take a variety of forms: at various points in a programme cycle (e.g. planning, monitoring, evaluation), with diverse forms of engagement (e.g., legal frameworks; policy processes; setting up organisations); and at different levels (local, national, global). Within such initiatives, a range of roles are also undertaken by youth (e.g., as beneficiaries, partners, leaders). Indeed, Farrow (2015) questions how useful the term ‘participation’ is since it refers to so many different forms. Throughout these different forms, however, youth participation generally refers to the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes. Given the time limitations for undertaking this research report, the case studies included are not intended to serve as a comprehensive and exhaustive list, but rather as examples of the range of available interventions to help trigger further thinking on youth participation. An attempt has been made to survey the youth participation landscape and include case studies from a wide range of interventions, from the more traditional, top-down state (or donor or NGO) driven efforts (e.g., Youth Parliaments, Youth Advisory Panels, participatory consultations, etc.) to more innovative and, where possible, youth-led efforts (e.g., Participatory Action Research, media and ICT-based interventions).

Case studies were sought from countries with similar contexts to Papua New Guinea, including those with a ‘youth bulge’, natural resource wealth but low accountability for resource revenues, as well as from indigenous youth communities facing issues like unemployment, crime, drug and alcohol addiction and health risks including TB, malaria and HIV/ AIDS. Because it was not always possible to find case studies from contexts characterised by all of these, case studies where some of these issues were salient have also been included.

### **Strength of the evidence**

Some challenges were encountered in attempting to identify examples of good practice for this research report. Firstly, the evidence base around youth participation is, despite the range of interventions, still limited. For example, Carter (2015) notes that there is a lack of research around both the outcomes of young people’s inclusion in social structures and processes, as well as the link between greater civic engagement and young people’s future political engagement from low and middle income countries. The availability and quality of information available on case studies of youth participation interventions and their outcomes was also mixed. Certainly, there was more information available about some case studies than others. The empirical evidence on outcomes of interventions is based primarily on qualitative case

study material and secondary analyses (Carter 2015). Existing evidence is often limited, of variable quality, context specific and subject to interpretation (Avis 2015; Carter 2015). Outcomes are rarely critiqued in-depth and, even when they are, evaluations and reviews tend to focus more on quantitative outcomes (e.g., numbers of participants, policies approved) rather than on more intangible, longer-term impacts (Carter 2015). DFID CSO (2010) note that intangible outcomes are more difficult to measure and therefore often overlooked. Asker and Gero (2012) suggest that it may be too soon to measure broad-based change, as many initiatives are still in the early stages.

Farrow (2015) observes that there is a stark difference in how youth participation interventions are viewed by academics and practitioners. Practitioners tend to portray youth participation initiatives in an overwhelmingly positive way, while academic reviews are often more sceptical or critical. One example that illustrates this is U-Report, an online tool to support political participation (case study included in this research report). UNICEF (2012) claims that U-Report has “revolutioniz[ed] social mobilization, monitoring and response efforts”, whilst a review by Berdou et al (2017) raises some concerns about the process, whilst acknowledging the innovative potential of the tool.

Given the evidence gaps, an attempt has been made to identify ‘credible’ examples of good or innovative practice, such as those cited in reviews and publications by reputable organisations (such as donors and NGOs). However, Erika Lopez Franco (IDS) suggests that ‘some of the best Participatory Action Research - in the sense that it is owned by the young people from beginning to end, rather than merely including or consulting them at certain times - come from small initiatives’. This may also be true for other types of youth participation initiatives. Unfortunately, this means that information about them can be difficult to find or access online.

### **Key findings**

- Much recent youth participation literature concerns itself with how to enable genuine and meaningful youth engagement. A common theme includes acknowledging the agency of young people, and the multiple roles that they can hold including as beneficiaries, partners and/ or leaders.
- The youth participation in governance literature is expansive. Case studies were identified on participatory planning and budgeting (e.g., youth consultations and panels, participatory budgeting and budget advocacy); participatory monitoring mechanisms (youth social audits, ‘reality check’ field visits); participatory research; youth parliaments; mobilisation and awareness raising. Many of these interventions are state/donor or NGO-led and often take a top-down approach. The risk with top-down interventions are that they can result in a lack of genuine interaction and youth involvement, but appropriate measures taken by implementing organisations (for example, capacity building training and follow-up support) can mitigate these risks and ensure more meaningful and continued involvement of young people in governance processes.
- Although the literature around youth participation in wider civic life is less voluminous, case studies were nonetheless identified related to community-based resource management; community justice; information dissemination; theatre/ music/ arts-based initiatives; and participatory research. The level of available detail and analysis of these interventions was often more limited (with regards to process, outcomes, lessons learned and good practice) than those examples drawn from youth participation in governance.

- There is a growing interest in media and ICT-based interventions to enable youth engagement and participation in both governance and civic life. These interventions aim to capitalise on both the increasing use of ICT by young people and using innovative and creative approaches to capture their interest. Additionally, tools such as radio and social media can be used to engage with youth in more remote areas.
- Although many youth interventions claim to be participatory, the extent to which these really are so can vary. There is therefore a growing interest in, and emerging body of literature around, youth-led approaches to participation. Youth-led interventions aim to enable young people to participate on their own terms and aim to put them on more equal footing with government officials and adult community leaders and decision makers (Huxley 2015). Participatory action research, for example, intends to empower youth to identify the key issues related to them and take ownership in creating and implementing solutions.

## 2. Approaches to youth participation

Overall, there is a growing body of work reflecting on how to ensure that youth participation is both genuine and meaningful (UNDP 2013). There is a perceived need to shift the participation of children and young people from discrete projects and one-off interventions to wider approaches which redistribute power imbalances between young people and other actors (Asker and Gero 2012).

A number of donors and NGOs have adopted the ‘**three lens approach**’ (DFID CSO 2010) which view young people in multiple roles (**beneficiaries, partners, leaders**). DFID CSO (2010: 3) makes the case for considering all three lenses: “they are not mutually exclusive. Youth participation in development is often a combination of all three.”

Others find **Hart’s ladder framework** useful for understanding different forms of youth participation (French et al 2014). This conceives of the different forms of participation as levels on a ladder:

1. Young people are manipulated
2. Young people are decoration
3. Young people are tokenised
4. Young people are assigned and informed
5. Young people are consulted and informed
6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people
7. Young people lead and initiate action
8. Young people and adults share decision making

The first three levels are essentially **non-participation**, and the majority of youth participation interventions tend to be categorised as levels 5 to 8.

There is, as mentioned above, growing interest in **youth-led approaches** (UNDP 2013). Huxley et al (2015) suggest that youth-led development is still an evolving concept, but can be characterised by three core principles:

1. Diverse youth (including young women) define their own development goals and objectives.

2. Youth have intellectual, physical and socio-political space to participate in development and social transformation.
3. Peer-to-peer mentorship and collaboration (including mutually- agreed adult support) is encouraged to enable and harness youth innovation and creativity.

Key lessons and recommendations identified from reviews of interventions and good practice include:

While **political empowerment** of young people is critical for their meaningful engagement in governance processes, their participation will nonetheless be curtailed if parallel attention is not given to the **economic, social and legal empowerment** of young people. (Walker et al 2014).

**Capacity development** is key to any strategy for meaningful participation (UNDP 2013; Walker et al 2014). While building individual capacities is important, the **capacities of organizations** and the **enabling environment** that allows individuals and institutions to meaningfully participate in political processes should also be addressed (UNDP 2013; Walker et al 2014).

**Sustainable long term approach and commitment** is essential for success and effectiveness of interventions (Adebayo 2017). For example, continuous capacity development efforts are more effective than one-off activities (UNDP 2013).

**ICT presents a growing opportunity** for engaging with young people (Walker et al 2014). Digital power must be harnessed through a more strategic engagement that empowers youth as digital activists and advocates of their agendas (Adebayo 2017). Such interventions must, however, address the digital divide as not all young people have equal access to technology.

**Tailored gender-sensitive measures** are needed to facilitate the engagement of girls and young women in participatory governance, as this can lead to transformation in gendered social norms by legitimising young women's engagement in decision-making arenas. It can also inform better programming and actions to address issues that affect girls and young women (Walker et al 2014).

**Youth-led approaches** can be applied across the programming cycle, including policy; campaigning and advocacy; programming, monitoring and accountability; communication and research (Huxley et al 2015). Nevertheless, in many contexts these may not go far enough in truly challenging existing power dynamics (Restless Development ND).

More objective and robust **monitoring and evaluation of initiatives** supporting young people's participation in governance and civic life is needed to develop a more standardised and comprehensive body of evidence (Walker et al 2014; Farrow 2015).

### 3. Youth participation in governance

This section highlights case studies of youth involvement in a range of governance mechanisms and processes. This includes interventions in participatory planning and budgeting, participatory monitoring and youth oversight mechanisms, participatory research, youth parliaments and awareness raising and citizen mobilisation. It outlines the intervention and where possible provides more detail about process, lessons learned and challenges encountered.

#### Participatory planning and budgeting

### ***National youth consultation (DFID, Uganda)***

In 2009, DFID Uganda commissioned SPW (a civil society organisation) to lead and organise a two-day national youth consultation for the National Planning Authority. The consultation was designed to address the lack of youth input and involvement in the development of Uganda's 2009-2014 National Development Plan (NDP). Objectives included: enabling young Ugandans to both learn about and feed into the NDP process; providing face-to-face engagement between young people and decision-makers; and ensuring effective dissemination of consultation findings.

52 young people from different districts were recruited from youth NGOs, student associations and youth disability groups. Key members of the staff team responsible for the consultation were also young people. The consultation group discussed the key thematic areas of the NDP, with emphasis on key issues affecting young people (e.g., unemployment, education, health and poverty). The group then formulated recommendations for the government. National newspaper advertisement also invited contributions from the wider youth population via SMS. Young people's contributions and recommendations were thus documented to feed into the NDP.

Key lessons identified from this intervention include:

- Capacity building at the early stages can enable young people to discuss and prioritise key issues in a more effective manner.
- Media involvement was a useful mechanism for ensuring a wider coverage, soliciting input and recruiting participants. Rural youth can be contacted via SMS, radio or newspaper announcements.
- Face-to-face interaction between adults and rural youth, practitioners and donor agencies increased understanding each other's realities.
- Government officials and policy advisors should oversee and participate in the consultation, and ensure follow up and internal dissemination of findings.
- The implementing partner organisation should identify: a core management team; senior staff members responsible for developing relationships with stakeholders and overall management of logistics; and staff member(s) to liaise with young people.
- Participants' travel costs and costs of accommodation and food for young participants should be considered. Additionally, where appropriate (i.e., where young people are under 18 years of age) a chaperone should be provided.

Additionally, challenges can include securing the participation of key authority figures as well as ensuring a fair and thorough representation of diverse young people. (DFID CSO 2010: 49-50)

### ***Participatory youth budget advocacy (Plan Ghana and Integrated Social Development Centre, Ghana)***

In 2010 Plan Ghana, in collaboration with the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), began a youth budget advocacy project, as a pilot for replication in other West African countries. Through training young people in budget advocacy, this aimed to enhance youth participation in budget preparation and tracking. The project selected ten youth between the ages of 12 and 30 to attend a week-long training, building youth capacity to advocate for key development changes in their communities. Training topics included a rights-based approach to budget advocacy; national, international and regional legal

instruments; family budgeting; the budget cycle; budget documents; implications of budgets for vulnerable groups (such as women and children) and how to engage with media and decision makers. They were also taught how to calculate growth rates and conduct trend analysis and gained experience interviewing local authorities, designing questionnaires and interviewing children. Upon completion of the course, the most confident trainees were chosen to train 15 other young people. After returning to their own districts, the 25 young people travelled to different communities to gather data on issues affecting the welfare of children (including education, health, water, social protection). Their task was to ascertain the adequacy of budget allocations for these specific services. The youth then analysed District Assembly budget allocations in relation to these findings and reported back to community members and local authorities. According to Plan Ghana, scaling up youth involvement in budget advocacy could create “a specialist youth budget network” which would contribute to increasing budget accountability to children and youth at all levels.

The participatory learning process was deemed very effective in empowering young people to engage in local budgetary processes. Following the interventions, youth groups now have carried out their own initiatives (e.g., visiting schools, organising debating competitions and participated in community meetings to call on local government to address the needs of children and youth). These young people are occasionally consulted by the District Assembly on issues relating to young people.

Facilitators’ reflections on the intervention included:

- During the initial training, it was observed that the participants were able to absorb more than initially anticipated. Subsequently, it was decided to include more exercises to enhance knowledge and practicality of the training manual.
- Participants responded very well to the creative and innovative approaches of their peer-trainers.
- The participatory approach adopted for the training boosted young people’s confidence to share ideas and contribute to discussions. The participatory approach also facilitated effective understanding of the concepts.
- Providing young people with better access to media would encourage them more to take up initiatives. follow up visits with youth groups to radio stations to discuss the budget analysis findings. Some youth groups have also been encouraged to write articles for publication in news journals.

In terms of lessons learned, facilitators felt that they left young people to operate independently a bit too early. Providing refresher training would help them stay focused on their objectives, and address challenges such as difficulty in accessing information at district level and in generating media interest in their advocacy work. Additional training is also planned on budgeting for all participants of the initial training, to identify weaknesses, enhance knowledge and the quality of future training activities (IDS 2011: 143-152)

### ***Participatory budgeting (GTZ, Argentina)***

The Municipality of Rosario undertakes an annual participatory youth budget. This involves young people in the democratic selection of representatives and determination of budget allocations for youth services. Through this process, young people are enabled to have a say in the design of local youth services and in the allocation of resources to fund these.

The participatory budget process is guided by two key objectives: (1) to engage youth in the design and implementation of local youth services (approximately 1,000 young people, aged 13 to 18, annually engage in the control and distribution of resources and co-managing decision-making processes); and (2) to educate young people in citizenship through active learning. Youth are thus engaged both as partners and beneficiaries (e.g., wider youth who use the funded services).

Several positive outcomes have resulted from this process, including: the involvement of 3,500 young people between 2004- 2008; identification of gaps in provision (addressed through the allocation of funding); the creation of new youth projects; and development of new democratic skills, knowledge and attitudes amongst young people. The elected youth representatives within the process are also expected to involve others.

Several lessons were identified from this intervention:

- Strong political will is required to maintain participation initiatives.
- Decentralising the intervention enables the engagement of youth from more diverse areas.
- Human resources required included overall direction from within the municipal budget team, youth workers across all six municipal districts and administrative support for the youth budget council.

Potential challenges include successfully engaging the most socially excluded young people (e.g., those involved in gang activity). Additionally, maintaining communication with all young people involved following the intervention can be difficult (DFID CSO 2010: 67-68).

### ***International Youth Panel (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Restless Development, Denmark)***

In 2017, Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) launched a new strategy for its development/humanitarian work with youth as a key focus area. As a part of this, the MFA commissioned a review of its youth-related engagements which generated 19 recommendations for how young people can be nurtured to lead this action. The review (facilitated by youth-led organisation Restless Development) involved young people throughout various stages. For instance, a range of qualitative methods were employed to gather and analyse data (including two youth focus groups in Kampala and Nairobi, involving young researchers, advocates and staff from youth organisations). The data informed the final set of recommendations.

An International Youth Panel was also set up, including young people from Denmark as well as international youth representatives. The Youth Panel was convened twice during the course of the review, and youth panellists were invited to review and comment on reports, documents and recommendations. In addition, Restless Development, supported by the Youth Panel, ran an online 'Youth Conversation' on Facebook over 10 days to engage young people in Denmark and around the world. 124 young people from 16 countries participated in the conversation, which reached 2,000 young people who registered to follow the event online. The highest levels of participation came from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Denmark, Ghana, Nepal and South Africa.

### ***Youth advisory panels (Plan International, various countries)***

Plan International has established youth advisory panels in 24 of their 51 (national and country) offices to include young people in their internal governance structures. Additionally, Plan has a Global Youth



Advisory Panel contributing to the organisation's international governance and strategy. These youth advisory panels participate in decision-making and key advocacy and campaigns work. 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 also contributed positively to Plan's work - for example the youth advisory panel in Sierra Leone played a key 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 (ACFID 2016: 10).

## Participatory monitoring and youth oversight mechanisms

### *Youth social audit (Plan International, Kenya)*

Plan International facilitated a youth social audit in Kenya in response to concerns about accountability in the management of the country's public resources. During the process, youth in three counties mobilised their peers both informally (through peer-to-peer interactions) and formally (through registered youth organisations). The youth formed gender-balanced social audit teams that also incorporated marginalised social groups. They developed a scorecard with criteria for assessing public service projects; conducted field visits with relevant government officers and public servants; gathered data; prepared a report on the good practices they had observed and the aspects that needed improvement; and fed these back to the stakeholders, beneficiary communities and other youth. Reflecting on the initiative, IDS (2011: 185) concludes that the social audit prepared young people "to question and influence dominant value systems: within themselves, their communities and government." In this way, it also helped to institutionalise practices of accountability in the organisations within which they work.

Several lessons were learned from the social audit process:

- Understanding the local context is crucial (including factors that unite or trigger community divisions). This can help manage tensions that arise between communities and service providers during the process.
- Mutual trust, confidence and buy-in among citizens and government are essential. For example, the young social auditors in Kwale obtained letters of introduction to junior officers written by their superiors, with instructions to cooperate as partners rather than engage as adversaries. This was intended to overcome apprehension and suspicion that might impede progress.
- It is important to understand intra-youth power relations (e.g., team members' contrasting ages, education levels and family socioeconomic circumstances) which can affect group dynamics and the quality of participation.
- A social audit is a process rather than an event or an end in itself. For it to contribute to positive change it must be carried out with transparency and in conjunction with other existing social accountability mechanisms (e.g., anti-corruption initiatives and human rights campaigns) (IDS 2011: 181-186).

A community scorecard process has also been implemented in Malawi (IDS 2011: 187-194). Although this was not a specific youth initiative, youth were one of the key target groups included in the process. Community scorecards provide a useful alternative to budget tracking methodologies in areas with low literacy levels as they have more popular appeal and enable input from service users with limited

education. These can enhance the collection of information and key community knowledge to support service planning in rural areas.

### ***'Reality check' field visits (DFID, Tanzania)***

Field visits by organisations working on youth participation initiatives can enable community members (including young people) to express their viewpoints to decision-makers. In 2007, key advisors from DFID Tanzania conducted two-day 'reality check' consultations (also known as 'immersion trips') with target beneficiaries to assess whether policy and practice reflected accurate and up-to-date understandings of the lived circumstances of the community members. These were a key component of assessing local government accountability mechanisms. Not only do young people live in the communities where these initiatives take place, but they can be actively engaged as partners if they are enabled to co-facilitate such visits.

Several lessons were identified:

- Visits should take place where organisations are already working. There should ideally be existing relationships with partners in order to maximise impact.
- Visits should acknowledge cultural sensitivities and avoid becoming token consultations. This can be achieved by involving local community members in the design of visits.
- Delegations should meet with local citizens both together and separately from their local leaders.
- Target groups should be briefed and debriefed in order to clarify expectations.
- The costs of the visit (including refreshments for local community participants) should be taken into account.

Potential challenges can include the distance between urban location (where many government/ donor agencies are based) and the isolated rural areas where host communities reside. Additionally, setting, cultural formality and politeness may impede the ability of citizens to communicate openly, especially young people (DIFD CSO 2010: 25)

## **Participatory research**

### ***Participatory research and social dialogue (Government of Brazil and research institutions, Brazil)***

In 2005, the Brazilian government partnered with research institutions to facilitate a series of policy dialogues with young people. The Brazilian Youth Dialogue was an 18-month study that surveyed young Brazilians about their views on democracy and their role in society. The objectives were two-fold: (1) to enable a cross section of young people (inside and outside of the formal educational system) to support the creation of a national framework and strategy; and (2) to identify issues and policies to be addressed within a national youth policy.

8,000 young people (aged 15 to 24) responded to surveys as target beneficiaries. Their survey responses have impacted policy, which indirectly has positively impacted youth in Brazil. Additionally, more than 900 young people took part in dialogue groups, as well as helping to shape the areas for discussion.

Lessons learned included:

- The lead agency should oversee partnerships with research institutions to ensure good working relationships.
- Research institutions require a dedicated core research team with long-term commitment, and infrastructure and staff to co-ordinate multiple dialogue groups.
- Most of the participants expressed a desire to participate in politics, but did not know how. Education on political processes was identified as a key area for government and civil society to engage on.
- Specific costs include: travel and accommodation for young participants and funding for research personnel leading the process.

Potential challenges were identified related to logistics and communication. First, coordinating large-scale research and participatory activities requires significant planning and clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities. Second, it is vital to clarify expectations, communicate regularly, disseminate information and provide feedback to keep young people engaged for the duration of the process (DFID CSO 2010: 43-45).

## Youth parliaments

### *Yes Youth Can! (USAID, Kenya)*

Started in 2011 in Kenya, The Yes Youth Can! project aims to create ‘peaceful leaders’. Young people (aged 18-35) organise themselves in youth-run and youth-led village and county level ‘bunges’ (parliaments) at the local, regional, and national levels. Each bunge has its own democratically elected leadership and constitution. This arrangement provides a structure for Kenyan youth to improve their own lives and communities, develop new leadership skills, promote transparent decision-making, and become empowered as positive forces for change. To achieve this goal, the project developed a series of integrated activities with four objectives: 1) mobilize and form youth representative structures at the village and county levels; 2) support young people to exercise a greater voice in local and national affairs; 3) increase youth productivity, employment opportunities, and income; and 4) increase young women’s access to social, political, and economic opportunities.

USAID’s implementing partner, Mercy Corps, offers training, mentorship and skill building activities to the bunges to nurture youth leadership and entrepreneurship. At village level, young people are starting to design and implement their own activities, including small businesses (e.g., fish ponds) and various community services (e.g., building peace groups and collecting garbage). Young people are also active in promoting a youth-focused agenda through advocacy and building relationships with government officials. For instance, the ‘My ID, My Life campaign’ mobilises young people in an effort to register Kenyans for ID cards, which required to vote, get a job, and open a bank account. As of mid-2012, almost one million youth had participated in the Yes Youth Can! project. USAID has established Yes Youth Can! in 30 of Kenya’s 47 counties, focusing on those that have experienced high levels of violence or where threats of terrorism and extremism are prevalent (USAID 2013; French et al 2014).

Based on the experience of this intervention, several best practices were highlighted:

- Roll out youth engagement efforts incrementally (e.g., start with smaller pilot projects at first) to enable more careful monitoring of investments and returns.
- Create roles for youth that allow them to contribute in meaningful ways.

- Make sure young people know what is expected of them. Individualized contracts with youth help define roles and expectations.
- To build capacity and enhance the roles of youth, provide project-specific training, such as key informant interview training for young evaluators or content-specific training (e.g., global sexual and reproductive health trends) for young policy advocates.
- Adult facilitation is key; youth must have some level of ownership and autonomy, but also be given the preparation and support to succeed. The level of facilitation depends on the skills and experience of the youth.
- Ensure that adults are informed and prepared to work in a meaningful way with youth during each phase of the process.
- Establish an evaluation and feedback loop for youth engagement efforts. This helps create a youth engagement evidence base and potentially leads to more informed, relevant, and effective approaches to engaging youth.
  - Market and make the case for including youth (USAID 2013).

### ***Young Female Parliament (ActionAid and NORSAAC, Ghana)***

Despite constituting over half of the population in Ghana, and playing a significant role in the country's economy, women's visibility in key decision-making positions continues to be low and policies and programmes often do not address the specific needs of women and girls. The young female parliament (YFP), designed by ActionAid Ghana (AAG) and the Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre (NORSAAC), sought to provide space for young women to build skills and confidence for engaging in participatory governance. It also links AAG's work in promoting girls' education with its work on women's participation in decision-making.

The YFP has 40 members, representing high schools and tertiary institutions. Female students vote for parliamentary representatives, with a varying number of seats allocated per institution/school. Since the aim of the YFP is to provide the opportunity for as many young females as possible to develop their leadership skills and abilities, each member serves only one term, lasting two years. The YFP has a well-defined leadership structure and debates topical national issues (e.g., local and national government development projects, interventions, policies and programmes). There are also debates on issues related specifically to women and girls (e.g., violence, harassment and discrimination, the gender gap in leadership positions in the region and institutional/cultural issues).

At least once every three months, trainings are organised for parliamentarians on issues such as leadership, conflict management, debating skills, advocacy and lobbying with duty bearers.

YFP has faced some challenges, including the slow pace of full ownership of the system by the regional coordinating councils and district assemblies, due to financial constraints. The time and resource demands of research needed to feed into the debates is another challenge faced by the parliamentarians (IDS 2011: 113-121).

### ***Youth parliament (UNDP Solomon Islands)***

In 2010, the Solomon Islands Parliament, with support from the UNDP Solomon Islands Parliamentary Support Project, conducted a Youth Parliament for the first time. Since then, several additional Youth

Parliaments have been convened. Youth parliamentarians (from Forms 5-7) are selected by invited Secondary Schools. Criteria for selection include:

Strong academic background; good writing, research and analytical skills; evidence of good citizenship and ‘strong leadership character’; evidence of being outspoken, involvement in some form of organised school programme (e.g., speech or debate forums). It is also suggested that schools use essay and speech competition in their selection process (Solomon Islands National Parliament website).

Once selected, youth parliamentarians take part in preliminary preparation events. For example, in 2013, a half day workshop was organised for participating students. The aims were to familiarize participants with parliamentary functions and processes, as well as raise awareness on the Government of Solomon Islands’s commitment to addressing climate change and youth issues (Solomon Islands National Parliament website).

Baker (2015: 37) suggests that a natural progression from the Youth in Parliament programme, would be the creation of a “parliamentary internship programme” to encourage young people to become more directly involved in their government.

In addition to the Youth Parliament, other youth-targeted events are organised, including regular annual open days in parliament; a schools outreach programme (designed to teach young people about parliament, government, active citizenship, and political participation); and a Youth Leadership Forum, held as part of the outreach programme (Noble et al 2011: 104).

## **Awareness raising and citizen mobilisation**

### ***Anti-corruption caravan (ActionAid, Uganda)***

ActionAid deploys regular anti-corruption caravan campaigns, implemented by CSO partners in selected districts. These campaigns mobilise communities – particularly young people – along its route to give testimony of their experiences of corruption in their locality. The goal is to build citizenship and civic consciousness to demand accountable leadership for improved service delivery and to bring citizens forward into the mainstream development of their locality (Walker et al 2015).

The Anti- Corruption Caravan initiative has been successful in decentralising the debate around corruption in Uganda, in particular opening the debate up at a local level and in rural areas. Prior to this initiative, the relative density of CSO networks in the capital city and other urban areas had resulted in ‘elite capture’ of the debate on corruption (Walker et al 2015: 17).

### ***Youth in governance (Plan, Sierra Leone)***

Between 2009-2011, Plan in Sierra Leone organised 900 young people from marginalised communities into youth groups. Training was provided on issues such as maintaining water points and working to change laws to enable pregnant girls to attend school and gain access to livelihoods options. This project enabled youth to not only interact but actively participate in traditional governance activities. Previously, young people had been barred from taking part in community decisions and thus reacted by refusing to pay taxes. But when they were empowered to become active decision-makers within their communities, they began to contribute. As a result, the communities collected three times the normal amount of taxes and were able to allocate tax money towards the construction of a new youth complex. As participants, young people made communities accountable for how they were spending their revenue and were able

to advocate for some of the resources to be dedicated towards youth-focused activities (Walker et al 2015).

### ***Mobilising voters through hip-hop ('Fed Up' model, Senegal, Burkina Faso)***

In Senegal, a youth movement spearheaded by hip-hop musicians was extremely influential in mobilizing voters during the 2012 elections. The civil society group 'Y'en a marre' ('Fed Up') was formed in 2011 in the wake of growing youth frustration with the government of Abdoulaye Wade.

First elected in 2000 on a free-market platform, Wade amended the constitution to weaken the opposition and lengthen his term as president. Despite large protests, the courts allowed him to run against a badly split opposition in 2007 and, to the shock and dismay of young activists, his candidature was validated.

In 2011, as new elections approached, a number of well-known hip-hop artists founded the 'Y'en a marre' movement. They recorded a hit song, 'Faux! Pas Forcé,' that depicted young people gathering to participate in the election and respectfully demonstrating for change. The movement raised public awareness and mobilized against potential fraud using slogans, such as 'ma carte mon arme' ('my voter card, my weapon') and 'Juni juni votes' ('Thousands and thousands of votes').

When the government began mass arrests of protesters and stories emerged that the founding hip-hop artists faced surveillance, threats and harassment, the movement grew even stronger. The comparatively youthful opposition candidate Macky Sall (Wade was 85) campaigned on a promise to restore the old term limit, and he won. However, in May 2016, constitutional reforms were passed through a referendum.

The 'Fed Up' model has been influential across West Africa. In 2014 Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore (in power since 1987) also tried to change the country's constitution to enable him to run for another term. There, a group called Balai Citoyen ('The Citizen's Broom'), in which hip-hop artists also featured prominently, organized peaceful protests that forced Compaore to resign in 2015 (Oxfam 2016: 27).

### ***Outreach and youth voter mobilisation (UNDP, Tunisia)***

In Tunisia, UNDP applied a variety of innovative tools to reach out to youth prior to 2011 elections. These included an election song, 'Enti Essout' ('You Are the Voice'). The song became the 'election anthem', with more than 100,000 free downloads. Additionally, a voter education game, 'DemocraTweet', aimed to mobilise youth in partnership with Tunisia's leading radio station, Radio Mosaïque FM. It was played by 10,000 people over three weeks. Three voter education campaigns focused on registration, late-voter registration and voter mobilization, including through media messages and billboards.

The campaign reached out to illiterate and rural youth. The awareness of young people about the electoral process increased and voter turnout was 76% (UNDP 2013: 53).

## **4. Youth participation in civic life**

This section highlights case studies from youth participation interventions in civic life. It includes interventions in community based resource management, community justice, information dissemination, theatre/ music and the arts and participatory research.

## Community-based resource management

### ***Empowering youth to protect fisheries in Solomon Islands (World Fish and Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Solomon Islands)***

In Solomon Islands, youth participate in fisheries. Despite this, discussions and decisions on managing local fisheries mostly involve male elders and community leaders. The strong cultural hierarchy in many rural and coastal communities limits the extent that youth can participate in discussions on fisheries governance. Respect for community chiefs, elders, religious leaders and resource owners as the decision makers can constrain the ability of youth to participate. This can result in youth becoming disenfranchised, uninvolved and even unaware of deliberations. A key challenge is to create a model of community management of natural resources that integrates the voices of all community members (including youth) while respecting traditional social hierarchy (Siota 2017).

Since 2005, WorldFish, in partnership with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, has tested, refined and promoted community-based resource management (CBRM) in Solomon Islands since 2005. The CBRM approach involves local communities managing natural resources in partnership with government bodies and civil society groups through such mechanisms as discussing customary access rights, sharing contemporary scientific and local knowledge about marine environments and fish ecology, promoting sustainable harvesting and practicing enforcement. This approach resonates well in Solomon Islands, where, because of customary marine tenure, communities have always managed their local fisheries with little intervention from government authorities (Siota 2017).

To ensure CBRM initiatives reach and involve youth, WorldFish has partnered with the regional organization Pacific Community (SPC) to run CBRM workshops targeted toward youth. Since November 2016, three youth-targeted trainings have been held involving 47 young people. The three-day training empowers youth to increase their knowledge and confidence, and enables them to become active in (and even lead) marine resource management in their communities. It encourages young people to interact and share ideas on tackling fisheries issues and creating community-based solutions. By giving them nurturing their capabilities, youth learn that they can contribute to resource management programs, and affect a range of decisions that impact upon their communities. Trainings have resulted in youth gaining basic marine biology knowledge and a deeper understanding of the interconnections between the marine environment and humans. Youth used their new knowledge to discuss and plan better ways to manage community resources (Siota 2017).

**For additional information on community-based resource management, please see Schwarz et al 2014.**

## Community justice

### ***Children and youth in conflict with the law (Save the Children Australia, Solomon Islands)***

Save the Children Australia has a project focused on 'Children and Youth in Conflict with the Law', which is one of the few programmes specifically focused on young people in the justice sector. The project uses

child rights programming and a community justice approach to address youth offending in the Solomon Islands. The project is multi-faceted focusing on prevention and modules of support post and pre-release for young people. It has potential for sustainable outcomes, but requires the infrastructure of government to be robust enough to support change, not only in terms of policy and procedure, but also attitudinal change in the overall treatment of young offenders. The project targets the main stakeholders in the justice system (e.g., police, the courts, and corrective services). The project also works with the community, in particular Crime Prevention Committees at urban and provincial levels, as well as supporting young people through their integration back into the community. Challenges have included the capacity of some government stakeholders and lack of consistency in their commitment and involvement with the project. For example, one of the dilemmas faced by this programme mentioned during consultations was the limited number of service providers in Honiara for the referral of young offenders (Noble 2011).

## **Information dissemination**

### ***Daily Talk chalkboard (Accountability Lab, Liberia)***

Daily Talk provides a valuable source of information for Liberians who lack the means or education to navigate print media or the internet. This was initiated by one young Liberian citizen and supported by Accountability Lab (a youth-run not-for-profit organisation), during the Ebola outbreak in Liberia. The Daily Talk chalkboard, placed on one of Monrovia's main roads, became a powerful way to monitor the government's crisis management. This initiative shows how young women and men can be more than just service providers. They can help ensure that development interventions are communicated back to local communities (Huxley et al 2015).

## **Theatre, music and arts-based initiatives**

### ***Awareness raising (The Wan SmolBag Theatre, Vanuatu)***

Founded in 1989, the Wan SmolBag (WSB) Theatre, a non-profit organisation, uses sustained participatory approaches to raise awareness of health and social issues. It started as a small development theatre group with 15 voluntary actors, initially touring villages and schools, and developing relationships with rural and urban communities. WSB used drama productions to raise awareness of sensitive health and social issues. The organisation has grown over the past 25 years and expanded the range of activities it undertakes. Its current activities include environmental conservation, sports, reproductive and sexual health services and youth centres. WSB's participatory practices (theatre, peer education and participatory workshops) create community awareness, dialogue and empowerment in order to tackle current and emerging social issues (e.g., health and its social determinants).

Key features of Wan SmolBag's work include their participatory approach to developing the scripts and or content for plays, radio, or television; workshops and publications; and using creative media as a focus for youth centres. These also provide spaces for nutrition and reproductive health services, literacy and computer classes and for a range of sporting activities; approaches to building individual and community capacity for change beyond awareness raising, such as for improving food security and providing education on nutrition; having a long term commitment to poor communities near WSB through the youth centres and the outreach services in agriculture and nutrition; and promoting an indigenous presence in contemporary theatre and film (Simpson 2017).



### ***Youth music programme (UNFPA, Vanuatu)***

In 2013, UNFPA started an integrated development project on Aneityum, the farthest island from Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila. This project includes family planning and reproductive health care services, as well as renovating a health dispensary, provide microloans for handicraft businesses and supporting a youth music programme. The music programme reaches out to vulnerable young people in Vanuatu, at risk of sexually transmitted disease or teenage parenthood. Young people create and listen to music addressing issues like sexual and reproductive health. The club members are also peer educators, who reach out to other young people about these issues.

According to Bobby Shing, a musician who runs the youth programme, these efforts are beginning to change public discourse: "We cannot really see it on a big scale right now, but for the young people, I have seen very big change in their lives, especially their personal lives. They are beginning to become interested again in community life and recognizing that they are capable of making things better for all of us." As a result of the programme, Shing claims, young people spend their weekends doing volunteer work, such as helping to build homes and weeding plantations. During these events, music club members share information about reproductive health, education and other matters important to young people (Uniting for Youth 2014).

### ***'Voices for change' and 'Engaging youth in cultural rights and conservation' (Further Arts, Vanuatu)***

Voices for Change was a joint project between Further Arts and Youth Against Corruption Vanuatu. It aimed to build the capacity of these local indigenous youth driven charitable associations through training, salary support and the set-up of an office space; improve youth and community participation and engagement with social, economic, political and environmental issues through art, culture, music and multimedia; and, develop production skills in young people to organise and produce events and multimedia content for broadcast on national television and community media.

Further Arts also facilitated a project called 'Engaging youth in cultural rights and conservation' which was identified by UNESCO Youth Forum 2013 as a 'successful action project'. This addressed the theme of social inclusion through a framework of equity for rural and remote indigenous young people in terms of their cultural rights. This program is designed to support a range of activities that Further Arts works on in collaboration with Canal Studio. For example, the Traditional Entertainment and Kastom Support (TEKS) Unit in Santo, Vanuatu, aims to build a strong foundation to undertake its key activities in the field of traditional knowledge and wisdom transfer, and cultural development. TEKS Unit is a grassroots indigenous-led movement of Further Arts working alongside the Lukaotem Gud Santo Festival (LGSF) in Luganville, Santo, the second largest music and cultural festival in Vanuatu, as a creative hub for cultural promotion and development. TEKS was set up after the 2011 edition of LGSF due to the clear need to provide more support to kastom performance groups. It has received seed funding and administrative support from Further Arts since early 2012. TEKS Unit uses alternative locally-based approaches to cultural resource management through the promotion and preservation of important traditional wisdom practices including dances, music, songs, and stories, and connecting these with contemporary music and dance; and traditional artistic creations such as carving, weaving, painting, drawing and fabric art (See Further Arts website).

## **Participatory research**

### ***Participatory sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) needs assessment (UNICEF, Sierra Leone)***

UNICEF Sierra Leone commissioned a partner civil society organisation (SPW Sierra Leone) to undertake a needs assessment with young researchers. This entailed children interviewing other children who had dropped out of school, those who never attended school, and those who had participated in non-formal school programs. The information collected was used to produce a set of guidelines for life skills programs delivering non-formal HIV education. Most life skills education for the prevention of HIV/AIDS undertaken by organisations is targeted only at young people in school. Youth were engaged as partners, with 20 people aged 18- 22 receiving the skills to directly implement research in their communities using focus group discussions, interviews and consultative meetings with beneficiaries. Reported results found that this practice was a cost-effective way to collect information. Additional outcomes included youth partners developing skills and experiences, realising their own potential to undertake professional research. Out-of-school children commented that they found it easier to talk to young people than to adults.

Lessons learned included:

- Adequate training and support for the youth is essential.
- Ensure roles, responsibilities and expectations are clearly outlined during the recruitment process.
- Facilitators need time to think through and deliver how data and analysis will be disseminated after project completion to ensure influence.
- Specific costs include: training costs, travel to the field, and food/accommodation for the young people.

Several potential challenges were also identified, including supporting young people with limited experience to undertake professional research (this requires intensive practical training). Additionally, discussing children's sexual and reproductive health and rights issues are highly sensitive for many individuals, families and communities (DFID CSO 2010; Asker and Gero 2012).

## **5. Media and ICT-based initiatives**

This section highlights examples of media and ICT-based initiatives. The case studies show that these technologies have been deployed to increase youth participation in a range of governance processes (e.g., political participation, voter education) and aspects of civic life (e.g., radio production, sexual health and reproductive rights education and awareness, mapping communities redesign of low-cost housing, claiming rights to healthcare and education services, and promoting stability).

### ***Ekialo Kiona Youth Radio (Ekialo Kiona Center, Kenya)***

Ekialo Kiona Youth Radio ("EK-FM") is a for-youth, by-youth community radio station that broadcasts 12 hours a day to over 200,000 residents across remote areas of Lake Victoria. Produced in the indigenous Suba and Luo language, this 100% solar and wind-powered community radio serves as a platform to engage youth, build the skills and confidence of youth to be active players in the future development of their communities.

Ekialo Kiona Center has also proposed a vocational training program to train young women (aged 16-24) in journalism and radio production. Located 10 miles off the mainland, few opportunities exist for youth on Mfangano, especially young women. Joining this program provides young women without formal education the opportunity to learn by doing. At EK-FM, Suba youth produce and present the entire line-up of programs and attain employment at the station. Through this experience young women build the writing, production, and presentation skills needed to join media movements around the county and secure future employment. Creative interventions like these have been shown to activate youth to be more engaged with other aspects of their life and learning, especially when they are connected to social activities. Beyond radio production, these young female leaders can take on roles as community activists and facilitators of discourse, changing representation and participation of women in the community (See <http://healthmarketinnovations.org/program/ekialo-kiona-suba-youth-radio-ek-fm>).

### ***Young Empowered and Healthy (CDFU and HCP, Uganda)***

Young Empowered and Healthy (YEAH) is a nationally recognised sexual health campaign for, and by, young Ugandans, launched in 2004 by the Uganda AIDS Commission. YEAH uses radio and other media to reach youth and produces an award winning national weekly serial drama, *Rock Point 256*. YEAH is implemented by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) with technical assistance from Health Communication Partnership (HCP).

Young people are engaged as partners through regional young people's advisory groups (YAGs). Through the YAGS, young people are involved and consulted in every stage of campaign development (planning, implementation, evaluation). Additionally, young people are beneficiaries from the project, since young people more widely are targeted and reached through media campaigns.

The process begins with an initial assessment of SRHR needs of local communities, which informs planning and strategy design and development of materials. Next, SRHR education resources are disseminated via peer educators, and SRHR campaigns implemented. These are monitored and evaluated, before another round of planning begins, which informs the designing and implementing of further evidence-based campaigns (e.g., 'Be a Man' campaign). Educational SRHR campaigns are conducted over a two-year cycle. YAGs are involved at all stages, as is a technical advisory team of youth organisation representatives. The initiative appears to have significant reach amongst young men and women in Uganda, although the evidence of success is based primarily on survey data related to reach of the various radio programmes and campaigns.

The intervention identified several key lessons, including:

- Strong partnerships and the division of responsibility on a regional basis enhance the impact of outreach and communication strategies.
- CSOs working closely with district teams can reduce duplication of work.
- Strong partnerships working at national and regional level improve quality of communication.

Potential challenges include insufficient availability of resources to meet demand for the service as well as existing skills gaps amongst partners and young people which can impact on the initiative's sustainability (DFID CSO 2010: 63-64).

### ***Youth Empowerment through Technology, Arts and Media (Plan International, Cameroon)***

Youth Empowerment through Technology Arts and Media (YETAM) used a participatory approach to support youth (aged 12–21) to identify resources, raise issues that affect them, suggest solutions and act on them. The tools they used to gather information included new technology, arts and media. Several ICT tools were used in YETAM, including Flip video cameras, mobile phones for video and photography, the Internet, social media and digital mapping. Creating arts and media (e.g., videos, paintings, songs, cartoons, photographs and maps) served as an opportunity for youth to learn, reflect, build confidence and strengthen their communication skills. The ‘products’ youth made in turn became a starting point for involving the broader community (including local councils and divisional authorities) in dialogue and generating support for resolving issues identified by the young people.

Assessment of the YETAM project indicates that it successfully strengthened the capacity and confidence of the young people involved, and their awareness of their rights and how to claim them. They were able to use arts, media and new technology for local development planning and to demand and secure their rights from the State. At later stages, youth participated in decision-making processes, budget allocations and development activities and created accountability mechanisms with local traditional councils and municipal councils. Community leaders, district and national level authorities and Plan became more aware of key issues of concern to the participating youth.

IDS (2011) highlights the digital mapping component of the YETAM project in Cameroon. Hand drawn community mapping has been used in participatory development to gather the community to discuss priorities, enhance ownership and plan actions. Digital mapping can complement hand drawn maps and are easily shared at wider levels. While rural communities in African countries are often portrayed by simple dots on a map in the middle of a blank screen (with no additional detail) digital maps from rural communities can contribute to the growing body of global geographical information. Digital mapping can offer youth a tool to collect and process information, and to advocate for their concerns with their local governments. It can enable youth to map their communities in ways that make the most sense to them; decide what deserves to be mapped and what doesn’t and what should remain unmapped; and engage communities and authorities in discussions around resources and risks. Digital mapping should not be seen as a stand-alone activity, however, but rather as part of a broader methodology of youth involvement and engagement with community adults and local leaders. For example, IDS (2011) attributes the success of YETAM’s digital mapping exercise in Cameroon to the relationships that were built during the first phase of the project and the work with the other participatory elements of the programme.

### ***Block by block (UN-Habitat, various countries including Solomon Islands)***

As a way of engaging young people in the design of urban public spaces, UN-Habitat in 2012 entered into partnership with gaming company Mojang AB, the makers of the computer game Minecraft. In Minecraft, players interact with the game world by placing various types of coloured blocks – similar to a ‘digital Lego’ – in a three-dimensional environment with the purpose of building creative structures, such as buildings and cities. UN-Habitat began developing a methodology for Minecraft community participation in 2012, initially with the support of Byggtjanst, a company focused on social change and innovation owned by the Swedish construction sector. In 2011, Byggtjanst piloted the use of Minecraft for youth participation in the redesign of low-cost housing areas with good results and advised UN-Habitat on how to start Block by Block, as the programme came to be known. After initial tests in Kenya and Nepal, the process has now been used in projects in Nigeria, Somalia, Kosovo, Peru, Haiti, Mexico, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Solomon Islands. Experiences from using Minecraft show that the game increases youth’s interest in urban design and planning, enables them to express themselves in a visual way, provides new

ways to influence the policy agenda and helps youth develop skills and network with other people from the community. Designing in Minecraft allows youth to explore the merits of various design alternatives and visualize their ideas, providing a way to explore and question new perspectives. The deliberative process also encourages youth to develop a broader understanding of the urban environment, speak in public with greater confidence and improve social relations. For many participants, this is the first time they have publicly expressed opinions about public issues and many say that the Block by Block process makes it easier to communicate their interests and ideas (Westerberg and von Heland 2015).

### ***U-Report (UNICEF, Uganda)***

First pioneered in Uganda in 2011, U-Report is a free tool for political participation (see U-Report website; UN-Habitat 2013: 46). It is a mobile platform that runs weekly large-scale polls with young people on a range of issues (e.g., safety, access to education, inflation, early marriage, etc.). Users can register for free by texting “join” to short-code 8500, thus becoming ‘U-reporters’. U-reporters are asked a series of questions during the registration process, enabling responses to be analysed and messages targeted. Thereafter, UNICEF sends a question via SMS text to U-reporters, who can respond either with a simple menu-based reply or with a personal message. The UNICEF team analyses and interprets the responses, sharing the results and often following up with additional questions or suggestions (UNICEF 2012). According to UNICEF (2012), U-Report has “revolutioniz[ed] social mobilization, monitoring and response efforts” and it has since then been rolled out in several other countries (including Papua New Guinea).

Berdou et al (2017) has undertaken more detailed review of the potential of U-Report Uganda as a tool for engaging young people politically. According to the authors, U-Report is a cost-effective way to quickly assess what segments of the population think about a given issue. They find, however, that U-Reporters tend to be more educated and tech-literate than other segments of the population. This raises concerns about the validity of the feedback and limits the types of analyses that can be performed. They suggest that additional research needs to be conducted on the limitations and opportunities offered by the SMS format and its implications for different aspects of validity.

Berdou et al (2017) also suggest that to improve the depth of analysis and validity of the information generated by U-Report, a core of trusted U-Reporters representing different segments of Ugandan youth could be created, to whom additional resources and training would be provided.

The authors find that the innovations offered by U-Report do indeed possess “potential for amplifying the voices of Ugandan youth”. The platform is able to engage a significant number of dedicated contributors, highlight emerging issues which support debate, and disseminate critical information. They suggest that there is scope to improve whose voices are being heard, the way they are being heard and how the data generated are used. The less tech literate and poorest members of society could be indirectly engaged by the trusted core of U-Reporters who would actively seek to obtain the views of the least-represented of their cohorts. Alternatively, UNICEF could attempt to engage these groups through other technologies (e.g., inexpensive video recorders and cameras).

### ***My Rights My Voice (Oxfam, multiple countries)***

This initiative was created to empower young people to claim their right to quality health and education services. Oxfam started My Rights My Voice (MRMV) in 2011 and has now implemented the program in eight countries, including Mali and Niger.

In Mali, MRMV used e-learning tools to improve educational quality and address socio-cultural constraints that prevent students (particularly girls) from accessing and completing school. The programme also helped young women learn about sexual and reproductive health, to prevent early pregnancy and marriage.

During the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections, MRMV campaigned on health and education as essential to youth development. The campaign used various creative approaches, such as commercials, radio panel discussions and floats at markets, crossroads and playgrounds. As a part of this initiative, more than 1,700 youth activists raised public awareness and encouraged their peers to register to vote (Oxfam 2016: 20).

### ***Digital communication to support participation of indigenous youth (Oxfam, Bolivia and Peru)***

In 2010–2013, Oxfam partnered with Bolivian (2010–2013) and Peruvian (2012–2013) indigenous communities, Wapikoni Mobile and two local partners (CEFREC in Bolivia and CHIRAPAQ in Peru) to strengthen youth participation and leadership through digital communication. According to Oxfam, the project was successful in improving young people’s knowledge of their rights. It also enhanced their leadership abilities and increased their social and technical skills. The films they produced were shown at international festivals (25 shorts were nominated and six won awards). Broadcasts reached an audience of 500,000 people, helping to spread awareness of development issues (Oxfam 2016: 23).

### ***Modernizing Civic and Voter Education in Liberia (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, Liberia)***

Effective information dissemination is one of the pillars of democratic elections. In post-conflict countries like Liberia, where there are high levels of illiteracy and poverty, mass media can be vital to facilitating dialogue, debate and discussion between the masses and policy-makers and elected officials. By modernizing civic and voter education methods in Liberia, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Liberia’s National Electoral Commission (NEC) attempted to overcome barriers to voter participation (illiteracy and inadequate access to information) prior to the 2017 elections (IFES 2017a). According to IFES, these jointly designed and implemented civic voter education campaigns successfully reached prospective voters through various modes of mass media (e.g., print media, radio, internet, and face-to-face engagement).

The introduction of 4G internet and the sharp rise in the use of social media platforms (notably, Facebook) provided new avenues to disseminate information via audio-visual content and reach out to Liberian youth, the largest demographic of the country. IFES’ two-pronged approach toward content creation and dissemination therefore relied on radio to target the older generation and social media to interact with young people.

Since radio has traditionally formed the core of traditional information dissemination in Liberia, IFES launched an extensive civic and voter education campaign on the country’s national radio station. Seeking to address the lack of well-produced, quality local broadcast content, IFES engaged a reputable local production agency with extensive experience in radio production, to produce and broadcast 50 episodes of a talk show (‘Elections and You’) as well as an elections-themed radio serial and several public service announcements.

Since Liberian youth area more receptive to visual media, new media was also used as a platform for campaigning, a forum for public debates and a means to increase civic participation. The introduction of Facebook's Free Basics (which provides people with access to basic websites on their mobile phones in markets where internet access may be less affordable) created the opportunity to utilise this medium to campaign digitally.

### ***Youth engagement to promote stability (Search for Common Ground, Timor-Leste)***

In 2012, Search for Common Ground in Timor-Leste (SFCG-TL) implemented a three-year program titled Youth Engagement to Promote Stability (YEPS). The YEPS program aimed to transform youth engagement with government and community leaders to promote peace and reconciliation and prevent election-related violence. The program had two key components: (1) youth leadership and civic engagement activities (trainings, forums, debate clubs); and (2) media activities (radio programmes targeting youth; training and mentoring to build the capacity of community radio stations; and art classes and reading clubs of social-change comic books).

The project was unsuccessful in several of its aims – for example, improving engagement between youth and government leaders outside of the context of YEPS forum activities; improving sector-wide coordination on youth issues between peacebuilding actors; instilling youth with a keen understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens and social stakeholders (Stine 2015: 5). Reasons for this included:

1. Program design emphasized a wide variety of activities (civic leadership trainings, youth forums, debate clubs, reading clubs, art classes, and a listening club), all with different young people, all on a one-off basis without follow-up. While this meant that over 1,000 young people had the opportunity to participate in a YEPS activity, they were left without support to further develop or apply their skills. The individual level changes that resulted are not likely to be sustained or utilized in Timor-Leste's "civic space" without further assistance. Because the activities all had different objectives and expectations and occurred in isolation of one another, they did not conclude in more than isolated changes among specific youth.
2. The community radio stations have extremely low capacity, and cannot afford to pay their volunteer journalists or purchase much-needed radio equipment and transportation.

Nevertheless, the intervention did achieve some notable successes:

- Youth developed new skills in leadership, problem-solving, public speaking, and conflict resolution, as well as greater sense of self, motivation, and positive attitudes. Consequently, youth applied new knowledge, skills, and self-confidence to address personal disputes or other issues in their own lives.
- The youth forums gave youth the opportunity to engage with government officials at the local and national level. YEPS youth participants and government officials have not yet formed independent relationships or collaboration, and similarly, not many participant youth are engaged in the "civic spaces" of their community, but positive engagement at the forums is a good first step.
- In several instances, youth applied the skills they learned to help their communities. These small, independent initiatives included starting an art class for youth, creating a seedling growing project, and training other youth in their own communities.

- Despite the high attrition rate of trained radio volunteers, those that stayed directly applied what they learned in creating new radio talk shows, which they use to highlight youth role models; bring attention to important issues in peacebuilding, governance, and development; and solve disputes among local parties on air.
- SFCG produced two, high-quality radio programs which address issues to youth and peacebuilding, and were broadcast in 13 districts of Timor- Leste (Stine 2015).

Search for Common Ground has carried out several other media-based initiatives as a part of their youth engagement portfolio in a range of contexts. For example, In Nigeria SFCG’s civic education and information campaign is being supported by the Nigerian Radio and TV Communication network (ORTN) to plan, produce, and air monthly radio programs on topics that reinforce the project’s goals (e.g., civic rights and responsibilities, transparent governance, youth leadership, and peaceful management of conflicts). (see <https://www.sfcg.org/civic-education-and-free-information-in-zinder/> ). In Tunisia, SFCG is using digital platforms to support citizen journalism initiatives targeted at young people (<https://www.sfcg.org/youth-platform-citizen-journalism/> )

### ***Youth vote activation and digital media campaign (IFES, Kenya)***

In Kenya, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) supported the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to deploy a dynamic youth outreach strategy targeting youth voters ahead of the 2017 general elections. A central part of this campaign was the ‘Youth Vote’(YVote) digital media and face-to-face outreach initiative. The objective of YVote was to educate, engage and motivate young people prior to the election, so that this cohort could actively and peacefully participate in the electoral process. The campaign focused on educating young voters and spreading ‘get-out-the-vote’ messaging; bring young people to take active roles in governance; increase the youth voter turnout; and improve accessibility of voter information to help youth make informed choices. Peace messages were also disseminated throughout the campaign’s digital ads and on the ground activation activities.

The face-to-face campaign reached over 100,000 people and the digital campaign reached over 1.1 million people. Key messages of the campaign included calls to “make your voice heard through the ballot”, “make a plan for election day”, “vote together in numbers”, “share a rallying call to vote”, and “peacefully participate” (IFES 2017b).

## **6. Youth- and community-led initiatives**

This section highlights examples of good practice related to youth- and community-led approaches to increasing youth participation. The case studies included are from a range of interventions including participatory education and grassroots media, community-driven development, monitoring and evaluation and participatory research.

### ***Participatory education and grassroots media (Viramundo, Brazil)<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on this project, please see <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/in-action/ypar-in-brazil/>



The Brazilian NGO Viramundo aims to support youth involvement in public health through the use of participatory social technology (Photovoice and participatory video) to document life in communities in Rio de Janeiro that face chronic social, health, and environmental problems. One of their current projects is based in Rocinha, one of the largest slums in Latin America. By employing their technology/methodology here, Viramundo seeks to call attention to residents' daily health and environmental issues.

Viramundo's goal is to empower young people to engage with media so that they in turn can encourage the wider community in Rocinha to take action to improve the quality of health and social wellness in the slum. Viramundo encourages adolescents to engage with social, health, and environmental issues through the use of community communication technologies (CCT). They advocate for the creation of participatory videos and photos that address huge problems in Rocinha where more than 100,000 residents live under abject conditions, including rat infestation, tuberculosis, teenage pregnancy, alcoholism and drug abuse, violent drug traffickers, and police violence.

At Viramundo, projects are generated from the grassroots. Youth participate in both the selection of social, health, and environmental issues to be addressed and the application of the CCT aiming to document them in the Rocinha community. Deep community involvement is encouraged and the current project aims to benefit the communities by both creating positive change and by promoting conscious attitudes about key issues.

### ***Strengths-based approaches (Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement, Solomon Islands)***

Willetts et al (2011) assesses the Strength Based Approaches (SBA) implemented by six non-government organisations (NGOs) under the AusAID-funded Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement (SINPA), in more than 100 communities in Solomon Islands between 2009-2014. This new partnership model featured innovative approaches to aid design and delivery, based on locally relevant community development models to support livelihoods and health, particularly for women and young people (Willetts et al 2011). SINPA aimed to explore approaches which enable Solomon-Islander led development. Within this model, the role of SINPA partners was to support and empower a range of actors (e.g., individuals, community-based organisations and communities) to facilitate culturally appropriate solutions for their own health and livelihood needs. Additionally, partners would ensure projects were guided by a 'community vision' led by Solomon Islander groups. As such, SINPA treated primary stakeholders as key actors in their own development process. SINPA partners reported feeling that the SBA approach resonated with traditional Solomon's community 'kastom'<sup>2</sup> in terms of roles, responsibilities and structures: "SBA is not new – it's part of culture and the old way of how people did things" (Willetts 2011: 5). Willetts et al (2011) notes that, despite not being a 'new' initiative, its use as a development approach is new. SBA is being 'contextually indigenised' and can support local traditions whilst addressing contemporary challenges (Willetts et al 2011: 5). This is useful in a context where there is "strong resilience towards [...] customary ways" and "resistance to adopting externally driven models of economic and political practice" (ibid).

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopaedia 1893-1978 (<http://www.solomonencyclopaedia.net/biogs/E000153b.htm>) 'kastom' means either 'shared traditions' or 'contemporary ideas and institutions perceived to be grounded in indigenous concepts and principles.'

Asker and Gero (2012) report that several positive changes were observed as a result of the SBA process in Solomon Islands. These included a reduction in youth's reliance on home brew; increased respect between people; and a greater assertiveness of young people within the community.

### ***Youth-led monitoring and evaluation (Youth Empowerment Programme, Uganda)***

Youth-led monitoring and evaluation (M&E) facilitates the design of practical tools, builds transferable skills and ensures that young people's input to decision-making is informed and consistent. Within the Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP), young people led field-based M&E as part of their activities on SRHR, livelihoods and conflict resolution with their peers in schools and communities. Their experiences were discussed and recorded during a youth guidance project workshop.

Objectives included providing young people with quantitative and qualitative research skills and to facilitate their use of M&E data to improve programme delivery. Problems addressed included how to support and train young people to take ownership of and successfully implement M&E activities in programmes that involve them; and how to use youth engagement in all aspects of programming and encouraging youth-led analysis.

Young people were conceived both as partners and as leaders. They were trained to conduct a range of monitoring and evaluation activities, and they helped develop indicators and write final reports and recommendations.

A number of lessons emerged from the initiative:

- Volunteers must be thoroughly trained in cultural norms, sensitivity and confidentiality. Length of training must be adequate (in the case of this intervention, it was increased to two weeks).
- Regular follow up training is vital, and should be skills-oriented, practical and conducted in local languages.
- Tailor training times to suit particular groups (e.g., after 5pm is often best for students).
- Standardised training across the country is not always suitable; customise training based on target groups.

Potential challenges were also identified, such as achieving gender balance for focus group discussions. There is also the risk that volunteers deviate from agreed methods, such as males asking sensitive SRHR questions of females (DFID CSO 2010: 77-78).

## **Participatory action research**

### ***Youth empowerment and health promotion (Voces y Manos, Guatemala)***

Voces y Manos, a Guatemalan youth development organization, works to empower youth to advance the health and wellbeing of their communities. To achieve this, Voces y Manos coordinates a youth leadership program and provides high school and college scholarships. Through Voces y Manos' leadership program, students learn how to implement community projects that improve child nutrition, combat deforestation, and promote sustainable agriculture. Their vision is that by fostering youth leadership and facilitating access to higher education, Voces y Manos' graduates will become leaders who transform social conditions in their communities and broader society.

Given the unjust social and political conditions that impact on indigenous youth in Guatemala, the youth and facilitators in Voces y Manos felt that it was necessary to attempt to create change in the broader social arena. Because 2015 was an election year in Guatemala, the youth believed it was an opportune moment to put youth issues onto the political agenda. Using strategies of YPAR (youth participatory action research), the young people in Voces y Manos conducted research to identify key issues facing youth, drafted a proposal to address these issues, and held a forum in which they introduced their proposal to local decision makers.

The entire YPAR project followed a two-stage format of investigation and action. In the investigation stage of the project, students designed and administered a survey to 250 youth at local high schools. The survey asked students to report on the quality of their relationships with teachers and peers, the amount of money they spend each month on school-related costs, and their overall satisfaction with their education.

The action stage of the project involved students presenting research findings and policy recommendations to mayoral candidates. Working with an extraordinary coalition of local organizations and youth organizers, the Voces y Manos students drafted a policy proposal and invited local mayoral candidates to a public forum to discuss the proposal and other local issues.

Key outcomes that emerged from the process, included: the attendance of all seven mayoral candidates of the youth-led forum; attendance by over 250 members of the general public attended (another 600 tuned-in online); youth gained valuable skills in research and advocacy; youth had the opportunity to have their voices heard by local politicians; youth were able to network with other local agencies in the local area; and all seven local candidates signed an agreement that they would provide funding to strengthen Rabinal's Office of Childhood and Adolescence.

Lessons include:

- Using a core group of slightly older students act as facilitators allowed the research and action to move forward in an organized way.
- Having staff of Voces y Manos coach the core group on how to best involve youth in research and action given their time constraints allowed the entire group to play a meaningful role in the project.
- Building a broad coalition was essential to achieving the recognition and impact the forum received.
- Supporting the proposal with data lent legitimacy to the proposal, even though the proposal was only partially driven by survey results.
- Hosting the forum in a warm, non-confrontational environment was essential to creating productive relationships with political candidates and ensuring safety for youth participants (YPAR Hub website)

### ***Participatory action research (Save the Children, Perth)***

In 2012, Save the Children conducted participatory action research to improve understanding of the lived experiences of 'street present' young Aboriginal people in Perth. The project involved 120 Aboriginal young people through semi-structured interviews and a further 20 through the research technique Photovoice. 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 following meaningful and empowering engagement. This technique can facilitate more productive and targeted programming approaches. 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 (ACFID 2016: 12).

### ***Participatory action research (Forum Aktivis Perempuan Muda – Young Women Activists Forum, Indonesia)***

FAMM is a network of women activists that strengthens the capacity of young women organisers across Indonesia. The research aimed to shed light on the barriers faced by young women in local decision-making in rural Indonesia. The process involved young women across the country in analysing the systematic nature of their exclusion from local governance spaces.

The research fed directly into FAMM's strategic planning for strengthening young women's capacity to advocate for themselves, and offers important insights on accountability from the margins. It emphasises the personal and political changes that necessarily precede the expanded citizen engagement that is often assumed to underpin accountability initiatives.

The following insights emerged from this intervention:

- Participation is not only about presence and consultation, but also about the rights of citizens in expressing the aspirations, ideas, needs and interests of their community in order to be adopted into policy.
- Village planning and development meetings need to be a space for marginalised people to enter the arena of development planning.
- Marginalised groups need to experience capacity-building in order to influence and get involved in determining policy through active community forums.
- Young citizens need to gain awareness and understanding that they are a part of a community with the power to engage in the political process and decision-making together with government. (Feruglio 2017: 7).

### ***Participatory action research (Recrear International, Cuba)***

This example of participatory action research was highlighted as an example of innovative practice by Erika Lopez Franco (IDS). Recrear International (RI) spent 7 months in Cuba working with 10 young researchers, and 75 young people from 3 cities. With a research project on youth's relationship to climate change RI sought to open a space for young leaders to connect with each other, and create synergies. RI recruited 10 youth leaders and trained them on participatory action research methodologies. With them, RI designed a series of workshops that they carried out using creative techniques ranging from theatre, to creative writing, to treasure hunts.

RI selected a group of youth leaders from different regions to train in action research. They then ran a series of PAR workshops with 75 young people (aged 18-35) in three cities. They conducted a mid-term review to understand what had been learned so far. The Cuban researchers undertook internships

carrying out interviews with experts, institutions and a range of community organisations. During a final review workshop, the Cuban researchers were reconvened and an assessment was carried out of the collective learning process. The team agreed on lessons learned, and shared their experiences via blogs, a photo book of recommendations and by attending international conferences (Recrear International website).

More detailed information about the process of the PAR initiative in Cuba can be found at <http://cuba.recrearinternational.org/en.html>. More information about Recrear International's research techniques can be found at <http://recrearinternational.org/research-lab/>

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## Expert contributors

Erika Lopez Franco (IDS)

Sarah Huxley (Independent consultant)

## Key websites

- Further Arts <http://www.furtherarts.org>
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (Youth Engagement) <http://www.ifes.org/issues/youth-engagement>
- Search for Common Ground (Civic Engagement) <https://www.sfcg.org/civic-engagement/>
- U-Report <https://ureport.in>
- YPAR Hub <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu>

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