

NOTES YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Youth in Community-Driven Development

Community-Driven Development (CDD) approaches present an effective means to involve young people in local development decision-making, giving them voice and influencing power, with benefits for themselves and their communities. This note highlights the potential of CDD for young people and provides guidance on developing CDD operations with a youth focus.

Today's youth (15–24) constitute the largest cohort ever to enter the transition to adulthood. Nearly 90% live in developing countries and the challenges they face—low quality education, lack of marketable skills, high rates of unemployment, crime, early pregnancy, social exclusion, and the highest rates of new HIV/AIDS infections—are costly to themselves and to society at large. Client demand for policy advice on how to tap the enormous potential of youth is large and growing. This series aims to share research findings and lessons from the field to address these important cross-sectoral topics.



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Community-Driven Development and Young People

Typically, young people are seen as recipients of development programming, and have few opportunities to influence decisions affecting their lives or have a voice in their communities. It is now increasingly recognized that youth participation is a critical aspect of positive youth development. When young people have a genuine voice in development, there are real gains for themselves and their communities.

Community-Driven Development (CDD) operations encompass flexible program instruments founded upon principles of inclusion and participation. Broadly defined, it is an approach that empowers community groups and local governments with greater control over local development planning and decision-making. CDD programs often include provision of direct financing to local community groups. Groups then decide on and implement small micro-projects typically aimed at building local services and infrastructure such as roads, clinics and schools. However, CDDs can also promote livelihoods training and access to microcredit, among other activities. These programs operate on the principles of local empowerment, participatory governance, demand-responsiveness, downward accountability and enhanced local capacity. The approach thus has great potential to empower youth by involving them in decision-making, addressing their needs and priorities and promoting their active engagement in building a better future for their communities.

The Potential of CDD in Building Skills and Capacities of Young People

CDD fosters cohesion and supports inclusive local planning and resource allocation. This type of program can serve as a foothold to engage youth and build their life skills:

Giving voice. Young people have important opinions to voice around development aspirations but their concerns are often ignored when adults make development decisions on their behalf. CDD promotes collective action and creates space for dialogue on priorities. When young people are included and listened to, CDD programs give voice to youth to articulate the challenges and risks they face and ways to address them.

Improving services and livelihood opportunities. Since youth services may not be sufficiently prioritized by

national governments, CDD youth-focused initiatives have a potentially important gap-filling and demonstration effect function. These programs put resources in the hands of communities, and can be targeted to build assets and capacity of young people. Unemployment, for example, is a critical challenge. CDD programs offer a platform for promoting youth enterprise, which often include skills development for income generating activities and access to seed capital by leveraging microcredit.¹ CDD programs are also an ideal channel for low skilled youth to gain short term labor opportunities, building their work experience and employability.

Encouraging citizenship. CDD programs build linkages between communities and the State by bringing different constituencies together, often at the level of local state administration, for the purpose of local development planning. CDD programs also focus attention on issues of local governance of service delivery and often include measures to promote social accountability, making institutions accountable to local service users. When young people are engaged with this responsibility they can become role models for their peers, their community and beyond. Success in local community issues early in life encourages young people to take ownership and tackle larger issues at a later stage. Learning how to succeed in community planning gives youth aspirations for broader institutional change.

Gaining leadership and life skills. CDD is a fitting training ground for leadership, negotiation, decision-making and cooperation. Through CDD, young people develop these life skills and put them into practice, giving them the confidence to apply them in other areas of life. The practical skills of building or supervising community assets can increase their employability. All these skills are human capital assets for young people as they transition to adult life.

Box 1: Youth Banks

Youth Bank is a new type of grant making initiative run by young people providing small grants to other young people for projects of community benefit. Local youth councils decide policy, communication, invite and assess proposals and decide what to support and how to organize follow up and monitoring. Each grant maker group is supported by a host organization who provides capacity building and support. In Washington, DC, the Youth Advisory Council has given grants for projects as diverse as a community coffee house and online youth newspaper.

Source: www.youthgrantmakers.org



Building community cohesion and enhancing social capital. Bringing communities together in CDD can foster a common vision and sense of identity and belonging. In many distressed communities, young people often feel alienated—a marginalization which can lead to violence and other risky behavior. Where tension exists between young and old, CDD can promote cohesion and collective planning that increases solidarity and trust.

CDD Entry-Points for Engaging Youth

There are diverse ways in which young people can be involved in CDD programs as both participants and beneficiaries:

Participate in community meetings. It is proven that young people will attend open meetings and take advantage of opportunities to express their views on local development decisions, meet with friends and have vigorous discussion with elders. In the Kosovo CDD operation, young people form 54% of the participants at community meetings.²

Elected as community representatives. Community fora can include young people systematically in their membership. In Rwanda, CDD decisions are made by a Community Development Council. Each council has place for one young person. This young person is elected through a secret ballot.³

Targeted financing. Some CDD operations have a window that allocates grants for micro-projects specifically targeted to young people. In Uganda, NGOs are invited to prepare grants for vulnerable young people such as ex-combatants and work with them to develop proposals.⁴ In other cases, youth associations themselves hold and manage the resources. Youth Bank projects take this aspect further and give funds to youth councils to make grants to young people (see Box 1).

Gaining employment and skills. Young people can be hired to implement the micro-projects and gain employment and life skills in the process. In Indonesia, the Coral Reef Management and Rehabilitation Project targets young people at different stages of their educational career to work on coral reef management. The project's Sea Partnership Program includes secondary, university and graduate scholarships and placements for young people. After completion of their studies, secondary school graduates have the opportunity to work as 'Village Motivators,' university graduates in districts with a program management unit and postgraduates with program-related government agencies. University

students, under the practical field training component of the project, also have the opportunity to spend approximately four months in a village performing community work to promote sustainable coral reef management.⁵

Being facilitators. In the Kecamatan Development Program in Indonesia, most of the facilitators are young people, many of whom graduate into community leaders.⁶ The enthusiasm and dynamism of young people makes them valuable facilitators for CDD processes. They are active in organizing meetings and running participatory discussions. In fact, community members often perceive young people as neutral and free from political affiliation so trust them to oversee CDD. In Nigeria, a CDD program employs youth NGOs as project monitors (see Box 2).

Promoting communication and community outreach. Young people take an active interest in media and show creativity in communicating messages about CDD. In Colombia, a youth network has developed out of the Peace and Development program. This youth network took responsibility for developing and hosting a radio program that spread information and thus established a lively environment within which the program evolved.⁷

Principles for working with young people

Principles for good practice for engaging youth in CDD are:

Stay youthful. Think creatively about CDD mechanisms to engage young people. Decisions on community development can be linked to other activities, such as music or sports. Participatory methods using visualization—posters, photography, video or drama—often increase interest and accessibility. Times and places for decision meetings

Box 2 : Youth Monitors

In the Community Based Urban Development Project in Nigeria, youth NGOs are employed as project monitors to oversee the quality of work and level of community participation. They work together with the participating communities to ensure that the beneficiaries are receiving the infrastructure and services agreed to in the project designs. The youth NGO's also act as advocates on behalf of the community, making sure local people are well represented in all project meetings and decisions. In addition to benefiting the community, participating youth gain both technical construction-supervision skills as well as leadership and public solving skills that build their employability.

Source: World Bank. 2003. "Nigeria Community-Based Urban Development Project." Project Appraisal Document. Washington DC.



for CDD initiatives should be structured appropriately, taking into account youth calendars.

Work with all young people. Avoid elite capture amongst youth by making sure a broad range of young people are involved in CDD and that all their interests are represented. Outreach work will draw more young people into CDD. This is especially needed to draw in excluded young people—young women, refugee youth, youth with disabilities—and to accommodate a wide age span amongst the youth taking part.

Be responsible towards young people and offer support. Do not accept or promote unrealistic expectations about what young people will be able to achieve. Young people should be offered every support to manage their own expectations about outcomes and achieve concrete results. Ensure adequate capacity building, such as basic skills in grant management and financial accountability.

Work with adults to work with young people. Set up mechanisms so that adults take the ideas of young people seriously and give real decision making power to young people. It is not enough just to include young people in meetings, often adults need to be trained in how they listen and respond to young people.

Guarantee protection. The involvement of young people will need special safeguards, especially in unstable environments. In Palestine, facilitators have set an ethical code

that increases the level of protection for young people involved in community development projects. This includes the provision of adult staff members to accompany youth on their journey to and from activities.⁸

Facilitate an enabling environment. Youth involvement in CDD will benefit from clear government policy and legislation for an applied youth strategy that promotes the active citizenship of all youth. CDD should be supported by other comprehensive approaches for youth development.

Monitor and evaluate. It is essential to monitor whether the actions that young people suggest for their community get implemented and the funds that are made available for young people truly get into their hands. Evaluation is needed of the impact of programs on young people. Participatory monitoring and evaluation increases ownership of young people over the program.

Conclusion

When their participation is well supported, young people can gain much by an involvement in CDD. These operations provide an opportunity to increase youth voice, empowerment and employment. In return, youth involvement can enhance the quality and transparency of CDD, improving community representation and bringing youthful qualities of optimism, energy and creativity into finding solutions to local development challenges.

References and Recommended Reading

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