



TOOLKIT "GET YOUTH ON BOARD!"

Youth Organisations

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Organisations of young people

Young people are organising themselves to use their combined capacities to pursue their own interests in a more efficient and effective way. Some youth organisations promote greater participation of their members than others and thus contribute to the development of a sense of responsibility and citizenship among young people. Youth organisations may be categorised by their orientation and by their dependence on, or independence of adults. They act at local, national, regional and international levels.

Types of youth organisations

1. Political youth organisations

a) Youth organisations of political parties and other politically motivated associations (e.g. trade unions)
These are anchored in a statutory framework. The organisational structure is defined by adults who provide young people with the opportunity to participate. The aim is to recruit junior staff for their parties or organisations.

b) Students' associations

Students' associations often identify themselves with the concepts of political parties. They have established and statutory rules of organisation and participation.

c) Independent political youth organisations

The aim of such organisations is to represent the interests of young people at a political level, independently of political attitudes. Generally they are initiated by adults or older youth. Like the students associations, they have established rules that correspond to adult organisations and parties.

2. Civil society youth organisations

In many cases these organisations are also politically active, representing their concerns in decision making processes at local, national or even international level. However, they are not mere political organisations and their structures are not similar to those of political parties or other adult organisations.

a) Youth organisations affiliated to NGOs and associations

Youth organisations integrated into or affiliated to adult organisations such as sub-chapters of national or international environmental or humanitarian organisations (e.g. youth Red Cross), sports associations or other international, national and local NGOs. They are initiated by adults and closely linked to the affiliated organisation within a clearly defined framework, and following their principles. The aim is, inter alia, to recruit the next generation of followers and to prepare young people for their future membership.

b) Independent youth organisations initiated or supported by adults

Simple youth organisations are often initiated and usually supported by influential adults (e.g. teachers, community leaders, sport activists). They comprise a wide range of organisational forms, e.g. youth clubs, youth councils in schools and youth meeting points. The intensity of youth participation is high and the role of adults is normally a supportive one. This allows young people to act according to their ideas and visions but with adult advice at their disposal should they require it.

c) Self-initiated organisations

Autonomous youth-initiated organisations such as self-organised youth groups, self-help groups or even musical bands enjoy many liberties, being independent of the adult world. Some of these organisations focus on social, cultural or ecological activities and work together with adult initiatives. Others focus on fun, recreation, music, sports or other hobbies. There are hardly any limitations to the creativeness and ideas of youth.

In many cases self-initiated youth organisations are a response to or reaction against the adult world (e.g. bands or sub-culture groups). These organisations form part of what is known as **youth sub-culture**. Members develop their own ideologies and proudly show their sub-cultural identity through different fashions, slang and styles.

Civil society youth organisations have various fields of activity:

Humanitarian, welfare or human rights activities aim to help people in need at local, regional, national or even international levels, improving their living conditions and promoting human and children's rights.

Health activities focus on health topics that can range from sensitisation and awareness creation, to involvement in the distribution of health services and medicines, e.g. in an HIV/AIDS group or in peer-to-peer programmes.

Environmental activities address the conservation of the natural resources and the protection of the environment. The Scouts Movement has an environmental background which is combined with the nurturing of a community spirit and practising survival techniques.

Cultural activities encompass a wide range of artistic expressions, from traditional to modern, from classical

to pop; they include music, graphic arts, pottery, theatre and literature. Internet computer game communities may be considered a new type of cultural youth organisation, with easy access, high fluctuation and low levels of commitment. Mainly in rural areas, cultural activities help to preserve traditional customs.

Sport activities are particularly popular among young people, exploiting their energy and channelling it positively at the same time. They promote healthy competition, physical fitness, team building and solidarity - values which are both attractive to the individual and necessary for social life.

3. Religious youth organisations

These organisations represent different religious affiliations and are affiliated to religious institutions and organisations (e.g. churches or Koran schools). Activities are oriented by belief. Besides a social and humanitarian commitment, they have a more or less distinct missionary orientation.

Matrix of youth organisations					
Initiation/ Orientation	Statutory	Affiliated	Supported	Self-initiated	Sub-cultural
Fields of Activity					
Religious		●	●		
Political	●	●	●		
Human Rights	●			●	
Health			●	●	
Rural	●		●		
Environmental		●	●	●	
Cultural				●	●
Sport		●	●	●	

Youth centres

Youth centres can serve as contact points and meeting places for different groups of young people at community level. They give youth a place to live their “youth culture”, to organise themselves and carry out their activities. In this regard they are centres for voluntary work and activism. By providing young people with their own space, the community values them as equal members of society. The youth feel that their concerns are taken seriously.

In many cases young people use their centres to provide cultural, social or sporting activities for other youth, adults or children (e.g. theatre performances, discos, movie screenings, non-formal education). Some young people even run their youth centres as small businesses by providing services for money. Thus they are able to pay their running costs and also save money to fund new activities.

Motivation

There are many reasons why young people choose to get organised, and why they become members of an organisation. Their motivation may be inspired by:

- a role model - the involvement is exemplified or encouraged by family members (parents or elder siblings), peers (a friend, classmate, neighbour of the same age) or an idol (a famous artist, sportsman or sportswoman)
- the desire to develop their personality - young people decide to join an organisation in order to make friends, to have a good time or to pursue a hobby. They may want to fight injustice and make the world a better place, to be different to one's family and to share experiences with others, to promote talents, to express political opinions, to gain experiences in a special field, or they might want to enhance their chances for future employment.

Usually the decision to become involved in a certain youth organisation is influenced by quite practical reasons as well as a special interest.

Constraints

Youth organisations often face challenges such as a decline in numbers due decreased interest or additional extra obligations of young people in changing life phases (career entry, forming a family, etc.). Because youth is a finite stage of life and many young people are reluctant to organise themselves in a permanent way, youth organisations must constantly canvass new members. The extent of young people's participation in the decision-making processes of the various youth organisations that are affiliated to adult organisations or institutions differs considerably. Explicit principles of democratisation in the statements of aims and principles that involve young people in the management of many youth organisations still seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

Girls are less well represented in youth organisations than boys. In many societies, the cultural and social context does not allow women to lobby for their interests. Furthermore girls and women often carry more responsibility for their families and don't have the time to get involved with (youth) organisations. Even in “modern” and liberal societies many girls face more constraints than boys when advocating for their concerns.

Another challenge is the integration of disadvantaged young people (marginalised social classes, street children, migrants, ethnic minority groups) in politically or socially committed youth organisations. These youth often have less developed education and communication skills. In many cases they are passive and not interested in participating in a society that excludes them. As a reaction to their exclusion from society they organise themselves in gangs or other sub-cultural structures. To involve girls and marginalised young people effectively in youth organisations, special approaches are necessary (see chapter “Strategies”).

Relevance for development cooperation

As a prerequisite for democracy and development, participation has to be deeply rooted in society. This cannot happen overnight, it must be learned and practised. The engagement of young people in a youth organisation provides their first opportunity to experience democratic processes outside the family, and to gain an insight into decision-making processes. This prepares them to climb to the next rung of participation (see Fact Sheet "Youth Participation", Ladder of Participation). Depending on the approach taken by the respective organisation, young people are sensitised to different degrees about the challenges facing society, and they acquire skills to handle and solve them. The organisation allows them to take on responsibilities, not only for themselves, but also for the lives of others, and to make their contributions to development.

The involvement in youth organisations where young people are amongst their peers offers more space for active participation, personal development and creativity than does involvement in adult organisations. Cooperating with their peers, the young people learn to take their concerns seriously and equate them to the interests of other social groups.

Development projects and programmes which integrate youth organisations and cooperate with organised youth can take advantage of their ideas and creativity while addressing their needs more directly. Youth organisations can be used to reach special groups of young people (e.g. vulnerable youth and sub-cultural groups) that are usually difficult for development cooperation to reach. Development projects and programmes can only overcome the cycle of poverty and increase long-term sustainability, if they succeed in integrating young people, including those from vulnerable groups, in development processes.

The creation of "ownership" and the promotion of self-help capacities in the partner countries are central principles of development cooperation. To achieve these goals it is important "to strengthen partner countries' institutional capacities to develop and implement result-driven national development strategies", as it is described in the **Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness**.¹ Youth organisations are important civil society actors. However, the youth often find it difficult to participate in the structures and processes of adults. Organisational development and empowerment supported by development cooperation are therefore important instruments to strengthen youth organisations and networks, as well as to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Through their social and political commitment, especially at community level, youth organisations contribute considerably to achieving the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**.

German Development Cooperation

Although young people have always played a key role in the success of community-based German Development Cooperation, such as integrated rural or urban development schemes, they were not seen as a specific target group until the 1990s. German Development Cooperation was among the pioneers in addressing youth not just as an important target group, but also as important actors. Today it promotes youth participation and youth organisations through political dialogue with the partner countries and at international conferences. Youth organisations embody the concept of young people as a target group and as actors. Therefore they are directly promoted by German Development Cooperation through empowerment and capacity development as well as by their direct integration into German Development Cooperation projects in different sectors.

Youth organisations in Germany are encouraged to raise awareness about development issues and to engage in activities related to development cooperation.

Strategies to empower youth organisations

Young people's involvement in youth organisations is the first step of active citizenship and participation in civil society. It is of utmost importance for their personal development as well as for the development of society. The successful integration of youth in organisations is also a basic prerequisite for the continued existence of adult organisations which experience a life cycle and need to recruit new members from the next generation. Depending on the type of organisation and the rate of fluctuation, the organisational structures are often quite weak. They can be strengthened with the following strategies:

Training of youth promoters and leaders of youth groups

Training young people as local youth promoters prepares them to train other young people and to initiate new youth groups. In order to improve the existing youth work and to increase the professionalism of voluntary youth work, advanced training is offered for group leaders who are involved with youth associations and organisations. They are trained to improve the organisational structures within their organisations, to initiate new activities, to attract new members, to initiate new youth groups and to implement lobbying and advocacy work. The training includes project management, communication and presentation techniques, peaceful conflict resolution, teamwork and public relations. According to the needs of the youth organisations, the training may also cover various thematic areas, such as youth policy, HIV/AIDS, prevention of drug abuse, human rights or career advice.

The training generally spans a prolonged period of time and is divided into different training modules. For the training of youth promoters and the leaders of youth groups, it is necessary to adapt training methods to the special target group, applying a range of games, exercises, tools and techniques, which are described in a separate handbook (see GTZ publication "Methods Handbook for Youth Social Work - Uganda"). The training imparts methods and techniques for organisers, advisors, mediators and animators.

Organisational development

Organisational development is intended to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of youth organisations and networks. It constitutes a core element of capacity building and implies a systematic change of philosophy, structures, behaviour, communication and image, with the active involvement of the target group. First of all a diagnosis of the existing situation is made. This is followed by the definition of goals, problem solutions and action planning as well as implementation and evaluation. Issues such as funding and financial management are also addressed. Due to these far-reaching changes, the systematic learning stages of organisational development should be facilitated by an outside advisor in close cooperation with the respective organisation. The objective is to reform values, norms, roles, procedures and manners within youth organisations and networks. Organisational development encourages youth organisations to focus on precise objectives and prioritise their activities. It helps them improve their financial accounting, budget monitoring and reporting, and it enhances their networking with other actors, their lobbying activities and public relations. It also addresses their overall effectiveness and efficiency. At the same time, the way the organisation is perceived by others in society also improves.

Tools for organisational analysis and development include the evaluation of reports, workshops and interviews as well as open space and mediation techniques.

Youth networks and international exchange of experiences

A youth network promotes the exchange of youth organisation experiences from different regions or countries, sharing information about their situations, problems and ambitions and their visions for the future, as well as about concepts and activities of youth work. Using information technology, it facilitates the sharing of knowledge and experience and thereby empowers the member organisations. Furthermore, international networks provide opportunities to exchange volunteers and experts, to compare experiences with national youth policies and to stimulate cooperation between youth associations. The concerted lobbying for the rights and concerns of young people strengthens the negotiating

position of the youth organisation in the communication with political and social decision makers.

Training of multipliers

The training of multipliers promotes the networking and professionalism of youth organisations, especially in regions where the organisations are located a long way away from each other and have little access to support. It is also necessary in countries and regions where networking and cooperation between youth organisations does not exist or is in an incipient stage of development. Multipliers are needed to empower youth organisations and networks, to organise exchanges with other youth organisations and thus to motivate the members of their organisations and to give them the feeling that they are not alone. Furthermore the multipliers initiate new activities within their organisations and in cooperation with other youth organisations.

The training of youth multipliers is similar to the training of youth promoters or youth leaders. However more resources are needed to bring together youth from different regions.

Promotion of economic activities within youth organisations

By creating a financial basis through the establishment of economic activities within youth organisations, the fluctuation of members can be reduced and financial resources for future activities can be secured. Typical examples are the organisation of music or sports events, computer courses and community clean-up. The promotion of economic activities helps to sustain the work of the youth organisation and trains the youth in personal and economic competencies. Thus they gain important skills for entering the labour market.

To undertake their economic activities the youth organisations need training in the development of business ideas and plans; they must learn how to carry out market analyses, use communication skills, network and deal with legal requirements and formalities. Continuous backstopping is also important.

Promotion of youth organisations via municipal institutions

Existing municipal institutions, especially schools, constitute an ideal framework for the promotion of youth organisations, particularly for organisations that have only recently been initiated. They can promote youth organisations by sharing their resources (e.g. premises or technical infrastructure), reference and communication platforms (newspaper, homepage), and by sharing their knowledge by giving advice to the youth.

Integration of marginalised groups of young people

To integrate girls and young women in the work of youth organisations, the meetings and activities should take place at a time when they are able to participate. It may also make sense to establish special youth organisations for girls or to define special tasks for them. Make sure that these tasks do not perpetuate social role models! If the girls are amongst themselves they often feel fewer constraints to express their interests. By-and-by they gain enough self-confidence to compete with the boys or young men. Apart from this, gender mainstreaming should be implemented in all relevant youth activities and participatory youth structures. This means ensuring that youth bodies and participation in activities involve girls on equal terms to the boys. If this is not possible, a context-relevant analysis of what hinders the participation of girls and young women should be conducted, and an attempt made to minimise the limiting factors for their participation.

To involve youth from marginalised social groups it is necessary to gain their confidence and to strengthen their self-assurance (e.g. through community social work, street work or mobile youth work). Sporting or cultural activities are appropriate to raise their interest and to introduce them to more serious matters. It is important not to put too much pressure on them in the beginning and to give them time to take over responsibility. Furthermore, young people from marginalised groups often need incentives to take part in youth promotion activities. It makes sense to offer activities which have a direct impact on the improvement of their living conditions.

Examples

Self-initiated youth organisations

Promoting youth in the field of environmental protection: Corporación Ambiental CHILCOS - Colombia

The Corporación Ambiental CHILCOS was formed by young people living in San Cristóbal, Bogotá. It combined spare-time activities with information on the principal ecological structure of the area, the biodiversity, etc. At the same time, it involved adventurous extreme sports and imparted a sense of responsibility for the participants living environment. Young people developed a sense of ownership of the protected areas and contributed to environmental awareness raising among the inhabitants. The organisation succeeded in generating some income to make itself more sustainable. Furthermore it was selected for financial support for one year to help implement its plans of youth integration in environmental protection within the Integrated Upgrading Project "SUR con Bogotá".

Promotion strategies

Capacity development of youth organisations –Zambia

Organisational development for national youth organisations and their networks was at the centre of the technical cooperation youth project in Zambia, the elements of which were then integrated in a programme for the strengthening of civil society. Strategic planning, capacity building in the field of corporate identity, training in efficient management and the organisation of voluntary work are all central to the organisational development included in the German cooperation with the Zambian youth NGOs. Because of their organisational development, the youth organisations were able to identify and express their interests systematically and to enter into negotiations with decision makers. One success of the youth project was the involvement of Zambian youth organisations in preparing a modern, national youth policy in 2004; another was the founding of independent networks of youth NGOs to help share lobbying work and exchange knowledge. The publication of "Youth Voice", the country's only political magazine for young people, by the Youth Constitutional Coordinating Committee is another result of the organisational development.

The TWIGA Box of the Programme to Promote Children and Youth (PCY)-Uganda

PCY was a German Development Cooperation project with the Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, involving GTZ and the German Development Service (DED). Between 2002 and 2007, in selected districts of Uganda, PCY used the "TWIGA" approach for the training of young people, members of local administrations and employees of NGOs. Using a handout box containing various modules, young people were trained as youth promoters, and youth social workers were qualified as youth trainers. The training included organisational and entrepreneurial skills, as well as mediation and motivation techniques. The training material was then made available to the youth promoters to use for peer-to-peer education. The training was preceded by a "participatory children and youth appraisal" (PCYA). As a result well organised youth groups were founded and youth action plans were developed. Youth centres were also created and some of the youth promoters started to train other young people.

Multiplier Training-Russian Federation

This project was implemented by GTZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior. In 1992 an Education and Information Centre (EIC) was set up in Moscow because the regional NGOs had only limited knowledge of children and youth promotion. However, beyond the EIC there was no network for youth work in the regions. Therefore, in 2003 the EIC developed a concept using annual training seminars to enhance the cooperation and professionalism of the youth organisations. The youth coordinators of each region select multipliers on the basis of particular criteria (educational background, commitment, mobility, skills for the further dissemination of the contents they learn, knowledge of the internet etc.). Before each seminar, the multipliers are asked to suggest relevant topics. Based on these suggestions, the EIC develops a training programme. This contains a balanced mix of technical input (e.g. legal basis for youth work or current youth policy), teaching for a competent use of training methods (to help them pass on what they have learned) and techniques for presenting the work of their youth club to the public (PR campaigns etc.).

Youth networks and international exchange of experiences

EspacioLibreJoven (YouthFreeSpace) – Latin America and Germany

The youth network was established in 2002 to promote the intercultural exchange of methods, strategies and presentation techniques between the youth in Latin American countries and in Germany. Using an internet platform with a chat forum and emails, the young people could exchange their ideas and experiences. A selection of methods, games, reports, photos and a “tool box”, as well as varied information on global learning, intercultural education work and the politics of development cooperation was provided. Local youth organisations and initiatives have grown stronger as a result.

Relevant literature and websites

Literature

- Ad hoc working group for youth and the MDGs (2005): Youth and the Millennium Development Goals. Challenges and Opportunities for the Implementation
- BMZ (2003): Recht - Demokratie - Frieden. Politik für die Entwicklung.- Bonn
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- GTZ (2006): Analyse von Ansätzen zur Beteiligung junger Menschen an der Entwicklung und Umsetzung von PRSPs.- Eschborn
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- Mokwena, S. (2002): Taking the Initiative: international perspectives on young people's involvement in public decision making.- London
- UNICEF (2001): Participation Rights of Adolescents: A strategic approach.- New York
- UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (2006): Child and Youth Participation Resource Guide.- Bangkok
- Worldbank (2006): World Development Report 2007. Development and the next generation.- Washington

Websites

- DIJA - the Database on International Youth Work: www.dija.de
- EspacioLibreJoven: www.espaciolibrejuven.netfirms.com
- European Youth Forum: www.youthforum.org
- Global Youth Connect: www.globalyouthconnect.org
- Global Youth Action Network: www.youthlink.org
- Pro Youth International: www.alli.fi/euro
- TakingITGlobal: www.takingitglobal.org
- UNICEF: www.unicef.org

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