



# From rhetoric to action

Towards an enabling environment  
for child and youth development in the  
Sustainable Development Goals

A report commissioned by the Case for Space initiative



**Cover photo**

A young woman calling a crowd for a community drama performance in Sierra Leone.

Photo: Restless Development

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## Foreword

# We must make the Case for Space together

We may be approaching a tipping point for young people and their role in development. In 2015, young people were at the forefront of some of the biggest development stories of the year — whether fighting Ebola in Sierra Leone, responding to earthquakes in Nepal, or protesting on the front lines for democracy. Hundreds of thousands fled conflict in the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere, highlighting the need to find long-term solutions for displaced young people. Away from the headlines — but perhaps even more importantly — youth continue to navigate and resolve conflict, create livelihoods, and drive every imaginable kind of change. There is arguably no richer part of the fabric of everyday community and civic life than the agency of young people.

The ink is barely dry on the new Sustainable Development Goals, signed and launched in September 2015, and effective January 2016. Together, these Goals represent an unprecedented promise to the next generation of children and young people about what their world will look like in 2030. Young people, in response, have fought their corner to prove they can and will influence, implement and monitor these Goals.

At the same time, though, we are witnessing a worrying global trend as civil society space appears increasingly restricted. Across our networks and movements, we hear and see time and again the systemic barriers and obstacles that inhibit child and youth development.

This is why we launched the *Case for Space*. The *Case for Space* is a research and advocacy initiative to better understand and strengthen the environment within which child and youth development operates. As a sector, we

are rightly concerned with the capacity and agency of young people and their organisations. But the sheer ambition and potential of the new Sustainable Development Goals means that the time is right to ask hard questions not only about ourselves, but also about the space within which we operate. There is incredible potential for the thousands of child and youth activists, entrepreneurs, movements and development organisations that are making change happen around the world to lead the global development agenda for the next fifteen years. But this will only happen if the right conditions are in place — for example, access to sustainable funding, connections and networks, civil and political freedoms, strong legal frameworks, and freedom from abuse and harassment.

We are proud to have launched the *Case for Space* initiative as the UK Department for International Development's youth consortium (Restless Development, War Child UK, and Youth Business International) and are delighted to have commissioned Youth Policy Labs to author this piece of youth-led research, investigating the conditions, structures and enabling environment for child and youth development. The results of this research are presented within this report, entitled "From Rhetoric to Action" and authored by Youth Policy Labs. With contributions from 18 young researchers from around the world, "From Rhetoric to Action" is an important and timely contribution.

We are determined to see an environment that enables child and youth development, and we urge you to join us in the coming months in make this case for space together. Only then will children, young people, and the organisations and movements they work with be able to help deliver the promise of the new Sustainable Development Goals.

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**“We need more young people to be the protagonists of their own movements, to generate, analyse and use their own data, and to be their own strongest advocates for human rights and equality.”**

## About youth, by youth

### Foreword by the Global Young Researchers

Coming from very different backgrounds, with diverse research interests and advocacy experience, we all met for the first time in April 2015 at the Global Young Researchers Lab in Berlin, and immediately began to work together to develop the research project's methodologies and create our research questions. In the process, we learned about each other's research, thought about space for children and youth in different contexts and from different perspectives, and formed new relationships that went beyond a love of research and concern about global child and youth development. We became a team: interacting, exchanging opinions, discussing and coming to a consensus. In the process, we not only gained important professional experience, we also grew our network of others who are similarly passionate about the rights and development of children and young people.

Once back home, we were faced with the challenge of implementing this project with an ambitious timeline. As well as needing to create specific methodologies and strategies for our individual research projects, we also had to understand how our research fitted into the bigger picture of the global project. This required constant communication with the editorial team, and our global young researcher peer group as a whole. The consistent guidance and company of everyone involved, through emails, individ-

ual and group Skype calls, Dropbox links and Facebook chats, helped keep all of us on track as we worked hard to produce our different research deliverables.

This global research and advocacy project provided exploratory tools for emerging young researchers, from five regions around the world, to allow our voices to be propelled from the national to the global stage. While each sub-region and country must address its unique situation, we believe that the collective findings and insights yield significant implications for policies and practices that shape the development of children and young people internationally.

Being able to address child and youth development in each of our contexts has been a fulfilling and rewarding learning process. With the publication of this important report, we conclude the research phase of the project and find that we have a greater understanding of the breadth and depth of the global struggles of children and youth, and are more dedicated than ever to creating enabling spaces for them. We hope that opportunities such as this, for young researchers to address youth-related issues, will become more common. We need more young people to be the protagonists of their own movements, to generate, analyse and use their own data, and to be their own strongest advocates for human rights and equality.

— *The Case for Space Global Young Researchers*





# Executive summary





The Green Club in Nepal, a project aimed to inspire school children to take responsibility and act to improve the conditions in their community.

Photo: Restless Development

## Making the Case for Space

An initiative to strengthen the environment for child and youth development

**C**ase for Space is a global research and advocacy initiative that seeks to understand and strengthen the conditions and environment for child and youth development in three focus areas: youth participation, child protection and youth livelihoods. The research was commissioned by the three organisations of the *Case for Space* initiative — Restless Development, War Child UK and Youth Business International. The project set out to investigate, understand and present considerations for future action on how to improve the conditions and structures affecting child and youth development. The central research question was:

**“What is the enabling environment (necessary conditions and structures) that ensures children and young people have access to their rights, can influence decisions, and have improved livelihoods?”**

The research intends to provide food for thought and action for the child and youth sector, and stimulate discussion and action by decision-makers on the space and structures for child and youth development. The research also serves to inform the strategic thinking, programming and practice of Restless Development, War Child UK, and Youth Business International. Youth Policy Labs designed and implemented the research, and authored this report.

The project combined quantitative, globally-focused research with qualitative locally-focused research, in order to ground the findings firmly in the political, social and economic contexts of young people’s lives. This was achieved through three methods: a global-level survey, completed by 827 people from 123 countries; three national-level case studies focusing on the experiences of the Case for Space partner organisations; and local research projects led by 18 young people from across the globe.

## What the research suggests: key findings and considerations for action

Factors that enable and hinder child and youth development in the areas of participation, protection, and livelihoods

### Participation

- » When participation becomes an end in itself, rather than a means of advancing change, young people may distance themselves from it.
- » Building trust between established youth organisations and emerging youth movements and activists would create opportunities for collaboration and support.
- » When the rule of law is ineffective and civic freedoms are repressed, child and youth participation often continues through informal networks.
- » For youth participation to be meaningful, it needs to address the issue of power.

### Considerations for action

- » Definitions and understandings of youth participation should go beyond formal youth organisations and traditional civic activities, such as voting, volunteering and being consulted, to embrace genuine spaces for political action, power-sharing and the realisation of meaningful changes in the lives of young people.
- » Opportunities to create stronger relationships between child and youth organisations and youth movements should be established to build trust between groups that have different structures and ways of working. Work should focus on areas of mutual collaboration and support.
- » Donors, international agencies and youth organisations should increase their understanding of the role, structure and position



Children participating in War Child activities in Jordan.

Photo: War Child



of informal movements and youth networks and provide support that enables their strengths, rather than seek to change them. Support should include flexible finance mechanisms, legal support and protection, and the provision of basic resources.

- » Current representation structures remain a useful bridge between governments and young people, but are at risk of interference and the perception of co-option. Governments should be encouraged to promote independent youth participation structures that are not aligned to political parties and free from manipulation and coercion.
- » More radical opportunities that focus on the development of power, such as co-ownership of development agendas, crowdsourcing of legislation and data accountability, should be explored to go beyond traditional participation structures.

## Protection

- » Children and young people are vulnerable to abuse and violence, where the perpetrators are trusted adults, armed groups, the state and other young people.
- » Challenging cultural and gender stereotypes and changing attitudes and behaviours are powerful tools for minimising violence and increasing the resilience of children and young people.

- » Youth-led networks can play a key role in community-led child protection systems. They can also hold states to account when they fail to uphold the rights of children and youth to protection.

## Considerations for action

- » The state and law enforcement agencies should enforce just and equitable legislation and policies that provide legal protection, redress for violations and space for violators to be held to account, particularly for survivors of abuse, harassment and corruption.
- » Education is a powerful tool for challenging negative cultural and gender stereotypes and changing attitudes and behaviours that pose risks to the wellbeing of children and young people. Teachers, parents and families should be engaged in educational initiatives, to promote supportive environments for child rights in school, the community and at home.
- » Community-based child protection systems should be scaled-up to help fill gaps in state-supported initiatives.
- » Community-based child protection approaches should ensure the participation and empowerment of children and young people, to enable them to inform child protection initiatives, and hold governments to account.

## Livelihoods

- » Young entrepreneurs are starting businesses, not only to generate employment, but also as a way to express cultural and civic values.
- » Informal and personal learning can complement formal education in providing the competencies and confidence young people need to improve their livelihoods.
- » Livelihoods support for young people is improved when a wider range of stakeholders, including the larger community, are involved.



### Considerations for action

- » Long-term employability, entrepreneurship and practical skills learning should be promoted, in addition to core teaching, and more opportunities created for non-formal education.
- » Ways should be increased in which the private sector and civil society organisations (CSOs) can collaborate to develop activities that enhance skills, knowledge and learning, such as mentoring for young people, paid internships and training in the workplace.
- » Support initiatives for youth-led social enterprises should extend beyond cities into rural areas, where poverty levels can be considerably higher and social problems more acute.
- » The participation of a wider range of stakeholders in the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of livelihoods programming should be strengthened, and particularly the participation of youth-led and youth-focused CSOs. There is a need to ensure that operational frameworks are in place to guide engagement, and that youth have the capacity and skills to participate adequately.
- » There is a need to promote tolerant, open and safe working environments for young people, with a focus on vulnerable populations, such as former child soldiers.

## Other aspects of the environment that enable and hinder child and youth development

### Poverty

- » Poverty is the most pressing issue facing children and young people today. It impacts on all other areas of their development.

### Consideration for future action

- » Children and youth data should be disaggregated in all SDGs data, to ensure that the unique impacts of poverty on children and

young people are not lost within the overall statistics. As part of this, there is a need to advocate for age-specific data, with the ability to disaggregate for both children and youth with sufficient refinement.

### Governance

- » Poor governance and a lack of effective rule of law constrains organisations and movements, and compromises development for children and youth.

### Considerations for action

- » To highlight the impact human rights violations have on children and youth, mechanisms for human rights monitoring should be strengthened, through bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. To this end, there is a need to advocate for a special child and youth section of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.<sup>1</sup>
- » The participation of child and youth CSOs in UPR processes should be encouraged by developing shadow reports with a special focus on children, young people and human rights. Children and youth organisations should be empowered to produce such reports.

### Civil society pushback

- » Increasing restrictions on civil society, and lack of trust in and recognition of children and youth organisations, threatens many associations, networks and movements.

### Consideration for action

- » CSOs and youth movements must resist, and actively campaign against, national and international restrictions, including restrictions against the receipt of funding.

### Resources

- » Resourcing challenges are most acute for smaller and less formal organisations and movements.
- » It is time for a new vision on resourcing.





Entrepreneur in Lango, Uganda

Photo: Enterprise Uganda / Youth Business International

### Considerations for action

- » CSOs and youth movements should campaign for development work to be adequately resourced, and for the fairer distribution of resources to reach a wider range of organisations and movements.
- » Capacity building programmes should be initiated to support young people's organisational abilities, particularly in fundraising skills and financing strategies.
- » A knowledge base should be developed about informal youth movements, to understand their nature and operations, and how best to support them.
- » A global youth donor and philanthropy summit should be established to reconsider the ways in which youth civil society is funded, the uneven allocation of funding, and the ability of small CSOs and informal groups to access resources.



Students participating in a child right's club in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Photo: War Child



The current state  
of child and youth  
development



## Progress but persistent problems in child and youth development

The 15 years of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have seen significant achievements for the world's children and young people: by 2015, the world's population living on less than US\$1.25 a day dropped from 47% to 14%; the primary school net enrolment rate in developing regions increased from 83% to 91%; and the number of deaths of children under five had declined by nearly half since 1990, to six million globally.<sup>2</sup>

However, at the end of this period, problems still persist for children and young people:

- » Young people are still under-represented in decision-making: just 1.65% of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20s and only 11.87% in their 30s;
- » 42,000 people daily are displaced due to conflict, with children accounting for half of the global refugee population;
- » 57 million children of primary school age are still not in school;
- » Only 40% of young people aged 15 to 24 are employed, dropping 10% from 1991, with a youth unemployment rate that is three times higher than that of adults globally;
- » Every year, there are 380 000 new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women (aged 10 to 24 years) globally.<sup>3</sup>

Expanded to 17 goals and 169 targets, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide renewed optimism and opportunities to tackle the persisting problems and new challenges of the post-2015 world through to 2030. As an ambitious “plan of action for people, planet and prosperity,”<sup>4</sup> the question remains of how the wide-ranging goals will be implemented, and what the role of children and youth is within this.

The SDGs assert that “no one must be left behind,” recognising that society cannot reach its potential if young people are excluded from participating in, contributing to, and benefit-

ing from development.<sup>6</sup> This important juncture calls for us to examine the conditions and environments that affect child and youth development, to ensure that young people can take on the duty of being torchbearers and leaders towards 2030, and beyond.

## Our core themes of participation, protection and livelihoods

Every day, around the world, children and young people are seeking ways to influence decisions, claim their rights, and improve their livelihoods, with differing degrees of success. Our research tries to understand the conditions that either enable or hinder these attempts by children and young people, and make recommendations on how to enhance enabling conditions.

For the purposes of our research, we define an enabling environment as **a set of conditions that impact on the capacity of citizens (whether individually or in an organised fashion) to participate and engage.**

The definition and components of the enabling environment will be returned to in the section on methodology below. But before discussing the specifics of this research project, including its approach, methods and findings, there is a need to set out some of the acknowledged challenges that children and youth face, and existing opportunities to influence the environment for child and youth participation, protection and livelihoods. This includes the new opportunities provided by the SDGs.

Participation, protection and livelihoods feature prominently as core areas of youth development in other recent global-level research projects on youth. The 2013 Youth Development Index, for example, defines youth development as “*enhancing the status of young people, empowering them to build on their competencies and capabilities for life,*” and includes indicators for education, health and wellbeing, employment, political participation and civic

Children with parliamentarians in Afghanistan

Photo: War Child UK



participation.<sup>7</sup> The 2014 Youth Wellbeing Index uses a slightly different definition of wellbeing as “*the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous,*” but measures similar indicators for citizen participation, economic opportunity, education, health, information and communication technologies, and safety and security.<sup>8</sup>

## Children, young people and participation: current trends

Child and youth participation is enshrined in Article 12 of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which articulates the responsibility of governments to realise the right of children to be involved in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.<sup>9</sup> At regional levels, the African Youth Charter acknowledges that young people have “*the*

*right to participate in all spheres of society,*” and the Iberoamerica Convention on Youth Rights contains an article on participation, as well as embedding it throughout in other articles.<sup>10</sup> In Europe, participation is formally recognised in the Council of Europe’s Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and the European Commission’s Youth Strategy (2010-2018), while the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment places emphasis on the promotion of youth participation as a specific goal.<sup>11</sup>

Since 2012, a plethora of new initiatives has emerged to support youth participation. The UN Secretary-General appointed an Envoy on Youth in 2013, and the Commonwealth established the largest youth council in the world, the Commonwealth Youth Council. The number of countries with national youth policies has risen.<sup>12</sup> Youth summits — the Global Youth

Forum, the Commonwealth Youth Forum, the World Youth Conference and the First Global Forum on Youth Policy, to name a few - have dominated the international youth scene. Donor organisations have started to tailor specific policies towards youth. New measuring tools, including the Youth Wellbeing Index and Youth Development Index, have been launched. In 2014, the UNCRC — a founding pillar of youth participation and “the most rapidly and widely ratified international human rights instrument in history” — celebrated its 25th anniversary.<sup>13</sup>

Away from the corridors of power, young people have also taken to the streets to make their own spaces for participation. In contexts as diverse as Bahrain, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Greece, Iceland, Iran, Israel, Libya, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States, young people have participated in or led protests, uprisings and revolutions.

In recent years, the post-2015 development agenda has framed the prospects for local, national and international youth participation in development. Goal 16 of the SDGs calls for the creation of peaceful and inclusive societies, with the targets focusing on addressing violence, human trafficking and corruption, and on ensuring accountable governance, representative decision-making and the protection of fundamental freedoms. In terms of child and youth participation, goal 16 offers an ambition and a benchmark to which children and youth will rightly hold their decision-makers to account over the next 15 years.

Given the changing shape of participation, the diversity of its forms - from formal institutions to protests on the streets - and the renewed focus on the participation of young people in the post-2015 agenda, this research asks: **what is the enabling environment (necessary conditions and structures) that ensures children and young people can influence decisions?**

## Children, young people and protection: current trends

Global statistics offer an alarming picture of what happens when children are not protected. Every year, around the world, between 0.5 and 1.5 billion children experience violence.<sup>14</sup> An estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys have been raped or subjected to sexual violence, while 115 million children are engaged in extremely harmful forms of work.<sup>15</sup> Children account for 51% of the global 19.5 million refugee population.<sup>16</sup> Children are also vulnerable to being forced into early marriages, with pregnancy-related complications and illnesses the leading cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 in developing countries.<sup>17</sup> Children are recruited into armed forces and militia groups, and children are at risk of imprisonment: in 35% of the world's countries, children and youth can be tried and jailed for crimes when they are younger than 12 years old, violating international standards.<sup>18</sup>

As with child and youth participation, the UNCRC lays the foundations for children's protection, provisions and fundamental rights. As a global convention with frequent reporting, the UNCRC has influenced and guided national legislation and policy on child and youth protection around the world.

But while the UNCRC has undoubtedly contributed to a massive improvement in children's lives — including access to water, sanitation, reduced infant mortality, increased school enrolment, and participation - the celebration of its 25th anniversary was overshadowed by the poor, and in some cases worsening, situation of children and youth.<sup>19</sup>

Many hope that where the UNCRC has failed, the SDGs will be more successful in protecting and improving the lives of children and young people. As the UN's Resolution puts it, *“We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.”*<sup>20</sup>



The SDGs address threats and risks to child and youth development from a variety of perspectives. Goal 16.a has a focus on ending abuse, trafficking and torture of children. Target 3.2 aims to end all preventable deaths of newborns and children under five years of age. Targets 5.1 and 5.2 aim to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, while target 5.3 is to eliminate child marriage entirely.

While threats and risks to child and youth development are still prevalent around the world, the SDGs renew a commitment to peaceful, just and inclusive societies. In the light of this, this research asks: **what is the enabling environment (necessary conditions and structures) that ensures children and young people have access to their rights?**

## Children, young people and livelihoods: current trends

Unemployment, under-employment, and the lack of decent quality jobs remain rampant challenges for young people across high, medium and low-income countries.<sup>21</sup> Global youth unemployment rates are three times those of the general population, with 73 million young people unemployed in 2013 and 537 million young people underemployed.<sup>22</sup> Youth unemployment is a chronic and structural problem: in 2007, at a time of strong economic growth, youth unemployment was only 1.1% lower than today. However, the problem has been exacerbated by the financial crisis. In 2012, four million more young people were unemployed than in 2007, and six million had given up looking for work all together.<sup>23</sup>

Youth unemployment is therefore a global emergency, as is repeatedly recognised in national and international political forums and initiatives, including the World Bank's Youth Summit, the Global Partnership for Youth Employment and the UN High-Level Event on the Demographic Dividend and Youth Employment.<sup>24</sup>



Soha (GYR, Egypt) researches a youth-led social enterprise, C.O.R.D., which aims to popularise science education for young Egyptians by organising robotics labs for engineering students as well as people with non-technical backgrounds

Photo: CORD

Youth unemployment is included in the SDGs:

- » Goal 4 focuses on “*inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.*” Target 4.4 is to “*substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.*”
- » Goal 8 focuses on the “*full and productive employment and decent work for all,*” with specific references to young people, such

as the reduction of youth not in employment, education or training (target 8.6) and the implementation of a global strategy for youth employment (goal 8.b).

According to the Global Partnership for Youth Employment's report, *Supporting Young Entrepreneurs*, 290 million young people are neither in employment nor education.<sup>25</sup> Over the next decade, only one job will be created for every four young people entering the labour market. The report suggests that young people are increasingly turning towards entrepreneurship to address this gap. It has correspondingly been suggested that a young person is 1.6 times more likely to set up their own enterprise than an adult.<sup>26</sup>

To understand the depth of the problem, and how SDG targets can be met, this research examines: **what is the enabling environment (necessary conditions and structures) that ensures children and young people have improved livelihoods?**

## Connections between participation, protection and livelihoods

While the distinction between the three areas of child and youth participation, protection and livelihoods was an analytically useful one for this research, it is important to acknowledge that in reality these three dimensions of child and youth development are linked. Many of the examples given in this report, drawn from the youth-led participatory research projects that are set out in more detail in a later section, illustrate how the three dimensions connect and reinforce each other:

- » When young people are **constrained in their ability to participate**, they can find it significantly harder to claim their rights or hold their duty bearers to account. For example, Ani's research in Brazil illustrates how restrictions in the political and cultural environment can restrict the ability of youth to

advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

- » When **protection systems are weak**, a child or young person can be exposed to exploitation, abuse or violence. For example, as Tavarrie's research in The Bahamas indicates, weak systems mean that young people are exposed to danger in the penal system.
- » When **livelihoods are insecure**, fundamental rights to health and safety can be easily compromised. For example, Fayyaz's research in Pakistan demonstrates how this happens when children engage in illegal labour.

The analysis attempts to identify connections, positive and negative, between the three areas. Bringing the three themes together, this research asks the question: **what is the enabling environment (necessary conditions and structures) that ensures children and young people have access to their rights, can influence decisions, and have improved livelihoods?**

## Why the three themes

While participation, protection and livelihoods are clearly not the only components of child and youth development, by narrowing the focus to these critical areas of child and youth development, the research offers an entry point for understanding key issues central to the lives of young people more broadly. Ideally there would be further research in other key areas of youth development, such as health and the environment.

The themes of participation, protection and livelihoods reflect the core work of the consortium of organisations - Restless Development, War Child UK and Youth Business International - that convened this project, and their aim of informing and improving their own strategies, programmes and practice.

Ani (Brazil) at the Global Young  
Researchers Lab in Berlin, Germany  
Photo: Youth Policy Labs



Young people  
in the lead: our  
methodology



## Defining children and youth: blurred and overlapping distinctions

Much has been written on the distinctions between children, youth, and adulthood, yet the definitions remain blurred and contested.<sup>27</sup>

Legally speaking, children exist as a distinct category: at the international level, the UNCRC defines children as being below 18 years of age, while at the domestic level, a child is defined as being under the age of legal majority, which in most countries is also 18.<sup>28</sup> However, fluidity exists, as the UNCRC uses the concept of ‘evolving capacities’, which establishes that *“as children acquire enhanced competencies [as they age], there is a reduced need for direction and a greater capacity to take responsibility for decisions affecting their lives.”*<sup>29</sup>

Youth is a much less clear category. No legal definition exists at the international level, nor in many domestic contexts. Some policies and programmes define youth, but they are far from uniform. For example, Finland defines youth in its 2006 Youth Act as anyone under the age of 29, while Malaysia’s National Youth Development Policy targets those aged 15 to 40.<sup>30</sup> In these and many other instances, classifications and understandings of youth overlap with those of children and adults, muddling definitions further.

This research tries to understand the effect of an enabling environment on young people broadly, attempting to capture if this effect is the same or different for children and young people of different ages and capacities. Where the term ‘children’ is used, it is used specifically in reference to those under 18 years.

### Participation, protection and livelihoods

Participation is defined in Article 12 of the UNCRC:<sup>31</sup>

*“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”*

Our definition of **participation** starts from an understanding of *“young people being represented in political processes and decision-making,”*<sup>32</sup> including involvement in single issue campaigns, the youth wings of political parties, international student union organisations and the trade union movement. Youth participation is most commonly associated with the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes such as those within governments, organisations, public services and judicial proceedings, and at multiple levels of governance from the local to the global arenas.<sup>33</sup>

**Protection** in relation to children and young people relates to actions, measures or structures for their protection from violence, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation and maltreatment.<sup>34</sup> Although the term is most often applied to children (‘child protection’), the age cut off does not mean that protection rights do not extend to young people aged 18 years and over, as aspects of maltreatment are also covered by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments. Protection is now widely used as an umbrella term to denote protection against a range of different threats, such as those facing street-connected children, orphaned children, children living in residential care, children in conflict with the law, children affected by HIV/AIDS and children in conflict or disaster affected areas.

**Livelihood**, in its broadest sense, is the means to support one’s existence and secure the necessities of life.<sup>35</sup> In practice, the most commonly used definition originates from the UK’s Department for International Development (DfID), which ties livelihoods to sustainability in its 1997 definition:<sup>36</sup>

*“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.”*

FIGURE 1  
CIVICUS' Enabling Environment Index

- » 3 dimensions
  - » 17 sub-dimensions
- See Appendix I: Enabling Environment Index, page 104

Socio-Economic Environment	Socio-Cultural Environment	Governance Environment
Education	Prosperity to participate	Civil Society Infrastructure
Communications	Tolerance	Policy Dialogue
Equality	Giving and volunteering	Corruption
Gender equality	Trust	Political rights and freedoms
		Associational rights
		Rule of law
		Personal rights
		NGO legal context
		Media freedoms

## Defining the enabling environment: applying CIVICUS' Enabling Environment Index

In defining the different components that make up an enabling environment, the research applied the framework presented in the Enabling Environment Index (EEI) developed by CIVICUS in 2012 and 2013.<sup>37</sup>

The EEI aimed to assess the key conditions that shape how civil society operates. It defines civil society as “*the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests.*”<sup>39</sup> As such, all action undertaken by civil society — whether by individuals, movements or organisations — is affected by the enabling environment. It defines an enabling environment as: “*A set of conditions that impact on the capacity of citizens (whether individually or in an organised fashion) to participate and engage*

*in the civil society arena in a sustained and voluntary manner.*”<sup>40</sup>

The EEI is made up of 17 sub-domains, representing both the supply side and the demand side of the environment. The supply side refers to governance and policy measures directly having an impact on action, and is covered in the **Governance Environment**, which includes sub-dimensions such as corruption, the rule of law and media freedoms. The demand side relates to the readiness of individuals and organisations to take action, and is covered in the **Socio-Economic Environment**, which includes education, communications and equality, and the **Socio-Cultural Environment**, which includes propensity to participate, tolerance and trust.

The EEI framework was used both in the design of the research and the analysis. It guided the development and definition of research questions by the Global Young Researchers, and informed the design of the questions for the Global Survey (see below).

In the analysis of the three research components, explained in more detail below, the 17 sub-domains of the EEI framework were used as the basis for the coding design, to identify common patterns and trends emerging from the research, using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software. Additional codes were also added based on an evaluation of common issues that were not covered by domains, such as poverty.

## Local contexts and global perspectives

The research aimed to achieve a balance between understanding global trends in child and youth development, and capturing the experiences and voices of children, young people and those who work with them at the local level. It did this by mixing quantitative, globally-focused research with qualitative, locally-focused research.

### **A global outlook: understanding the conditions affecting children and youth organisations and movements around the world**

The Global Survey (GS) targeted individuals who work with or for children or young people, in order to understand the conditions under which they work. The GS asked practitioners to give their insights on the governance, socio-economic and socio-cultural environments that shape their work, and to share their ideas on the most pressing issues facing youth development today.

➔ See **Appendix II: Global Survey Questions**

The GS was accessible from 19 June to 24 July 2015, and could be taken online through Survey Monkey in seven languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish). It was distributed through an open call online and on social media, as well as through the networks of the project partners.

### **Taking a closer look: national level case studies of child and youth organisations**

To complement the quantitative and anonymous approach of the survey, the research employed case studies to focus specifically on different national level experiences of the three partner organisations. These case studies explore the on-the-ground experience of those working with children and youth, and how national governance, socio-economic and socio-cultural environments affect their programming. The case studies were prepared from questionnaires completed by three to five in-country teams or members of each of the three project partners, covering a broad range of issues in participation, protection and livelihoods over 11 different countries, including conflict and post-conflict settings.<sup>41</sup>

### **A unique methodology: youth leading the research of their own local contexts**

The centrepiece of this research was its use of a youth-led participatory approach, which allowed Global Young Researchers (GYRs) to take the lead in the design, delivery and analysis of research in their home locations. This approach had two purposes: to conduct research and analysis that is firmly embedded in the vastly different political and economic realities of diverse young people, and to build the research capacity of emerging young researchers and leaders in five different regions around the world.

The process included a combination of training, independent research, peer support, directed support and a close relationship with the editorial team at Youth Policy Labs, which involved rounds of consultation, approval, co-operative authoring and verification. The final deliverables were a written section for this report, summarised below and included in full in **Appendix III (online at [www.fromrhetorictioaction.org](http://www.fromrhetorictioaction.org))**, and a new media product on a topic relating to an aspect of their research for the online version of the report.



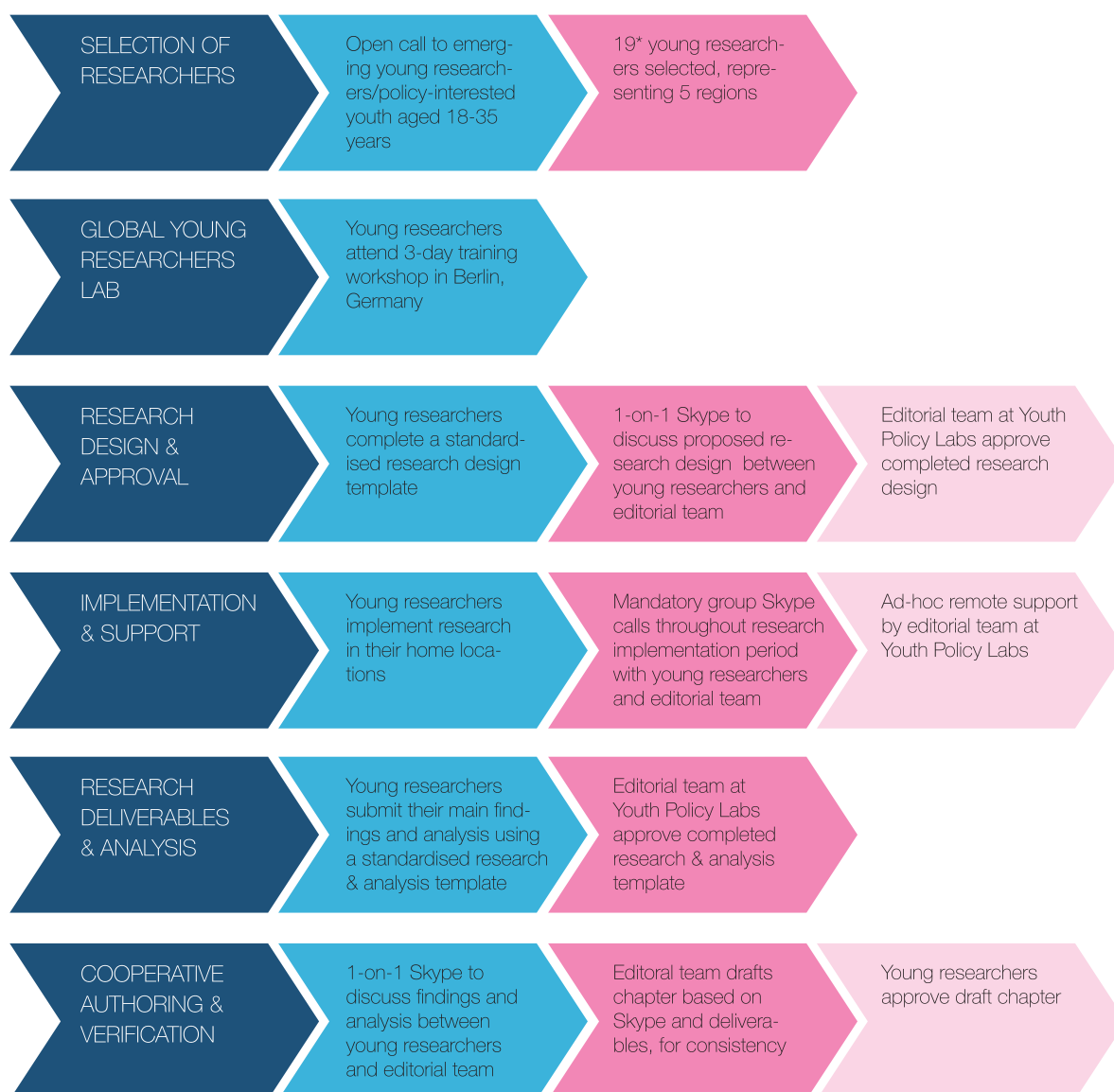
## REFLECTIONS FROM GLOBAL YOUNG RESEARCHERS ON THE PROCESS

*“[It] is a great process, in the sense that it not only engages young researchers from around the world to identify and take up the social issues of their concern for research and probing, it also builds their skills for sound research work, and effective policy advocacy based on their research work. Also, it makes sense to engage youth themselves, to highlight and find resolutions for the problems and issues that affect them the most.”* – Fayyaz, Pakistan

*“I learned that being part of a larger project can seem more complicated and overwhelming at first, but that it ultimately creates an invaluable support network if properly implemented. I always felt supported, and I believe that is because of the excellent communication and transparency about the infrastructure of the project. I also felt like I could reach out to my peer researchers at any point.”* – Ani, Brazil

FIGURE 2

Global Young Researchers — research process



A young Ugandan entrepreneur in the pottery business  
supported by Enterprise Uganda.  
Photo: Enterprise Uganda / Youth Business International



A global perspective:  
what the survey and  
case studies tell us





Participants in a Talent Show for Self Esteem in  
Dombodema High School, Zimbabwe.

Photo: [Restless Development](#)





Together, the GS and the national-level case studies illuminate the views and experiences of practitioners in the children and youth sector, the environments and conditions under which they operate, and the impact of these environments and conditions on child and youth development around the world.

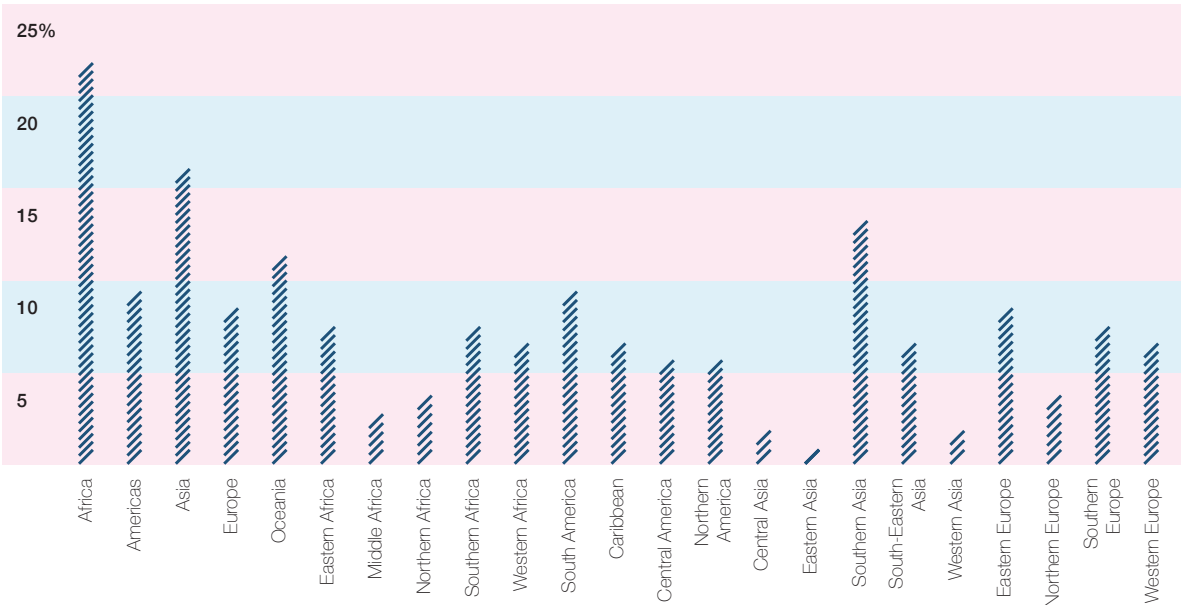
Target audience  
for the survey //

- » Individuals (staff, volunteers, governors or members) who are part of an organisation that works with or for children or young people, including civil society, governmental, intergovernmental, national and international organisations and academia;
- » People aged under 35 who are involved in youth-led or student-led movements.

# Global Survey of child and youth organisations and movements

FIGURE 3  
Profile of respondents

REGIONS OR SUB-REGIONS THAT ORGANISATIONS OR MOVEMENTS FOCUS ON



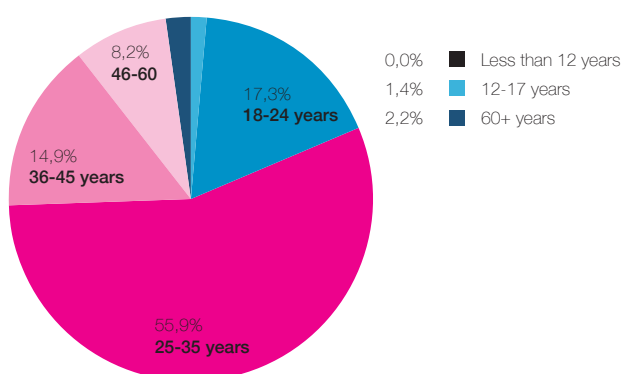


### How did we define organisations and movements?

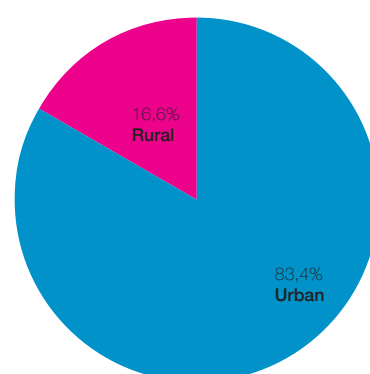
Organisations are considered to be formal bodies that provide a non-profit or public service, such as in civil society, governmental, intergovernmental, national and international organisations and academia.

Movements are purposely not defined, to acknowledge that movements tend to be informal, fluid and transitory. Instead, respondents were given an open-ended question to describe the aim of their movement.

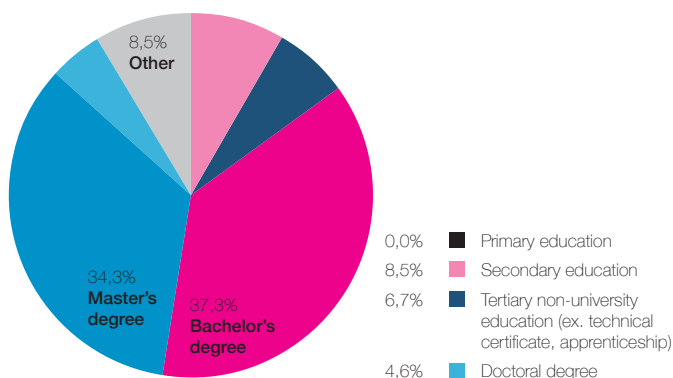
#### YOUR AGE



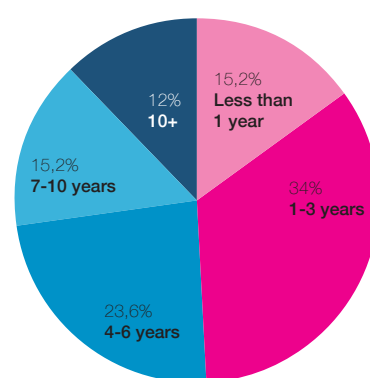
#### LOCATION



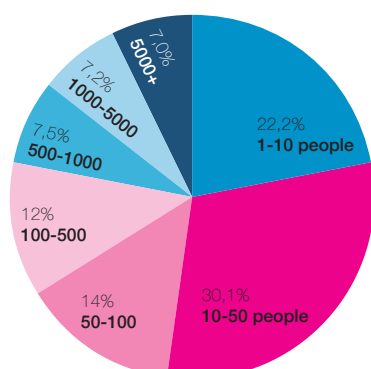
#### HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION YOU HAVE COMPLETED



#### HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN YOUR ORGANISATION OR MOVEMENT?



#### HOW LARGE IS YOUR ORGANISATION OR MOVEMENT?



#### WHAT IS THE GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS OF YOUR ORGANISATION OR MOVEMENT?

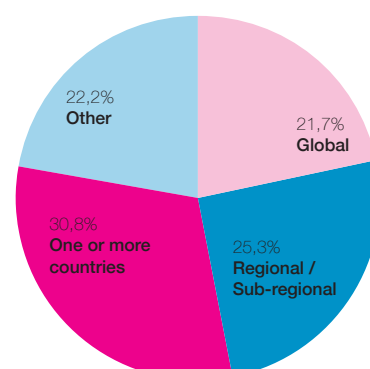
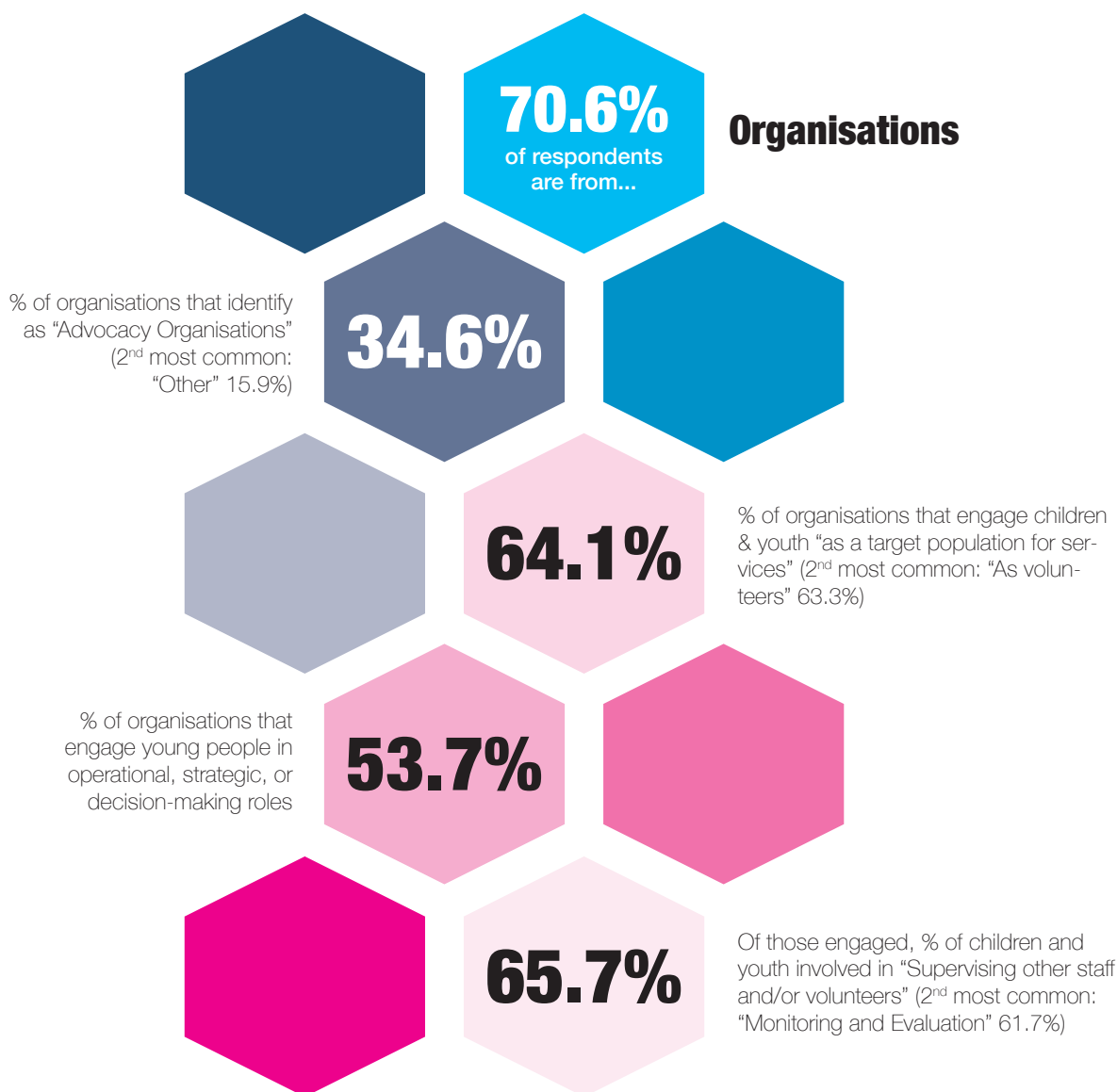
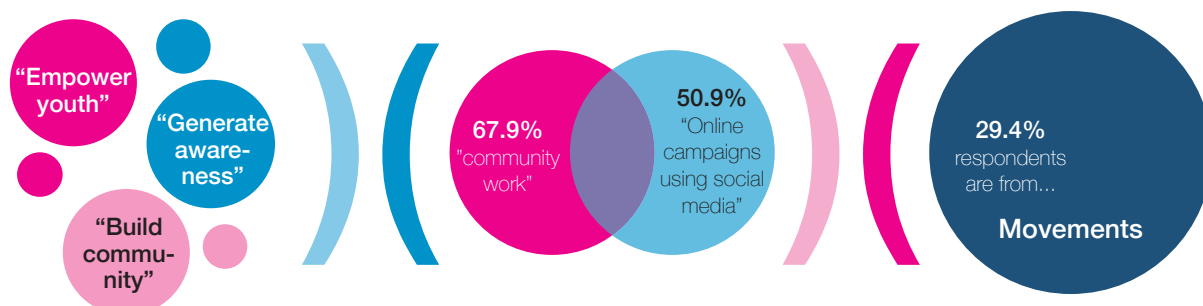


FIGURE 4  
Organisations vs. movements



In a few words, how would  
you describe the aim of  
your movement?

Most common types  
of action to promote  
their cause



# How political, legal and policy environments affect operations

Freedom of expression, association and assembly

Political and civil freedoms include the freedom to collectively join others in pursuit of common interests; to organise and attend peaceful protests and demonstrations; and to freely express yourself and access public information of any kind. These make up the three fundamental civil society rights, embedded in international law: the right to association, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to free expression.

The GS suggests that people working with or for children and youth often operate in difficult political contexts that have an adverse effect on their operations. On average, respondents report experiencing only moderate levels of political and civil freedoms, with a mean score of 3.33 out of 5 (where 1 = weak freedoms and 5 = strong freedoms). This is despite these free-

doms being very important to the work they do, with respondents scoring the importance of the key civic space freedoms at an average of 4.07 out of 5 (where 1 – not important and 5 – very important).

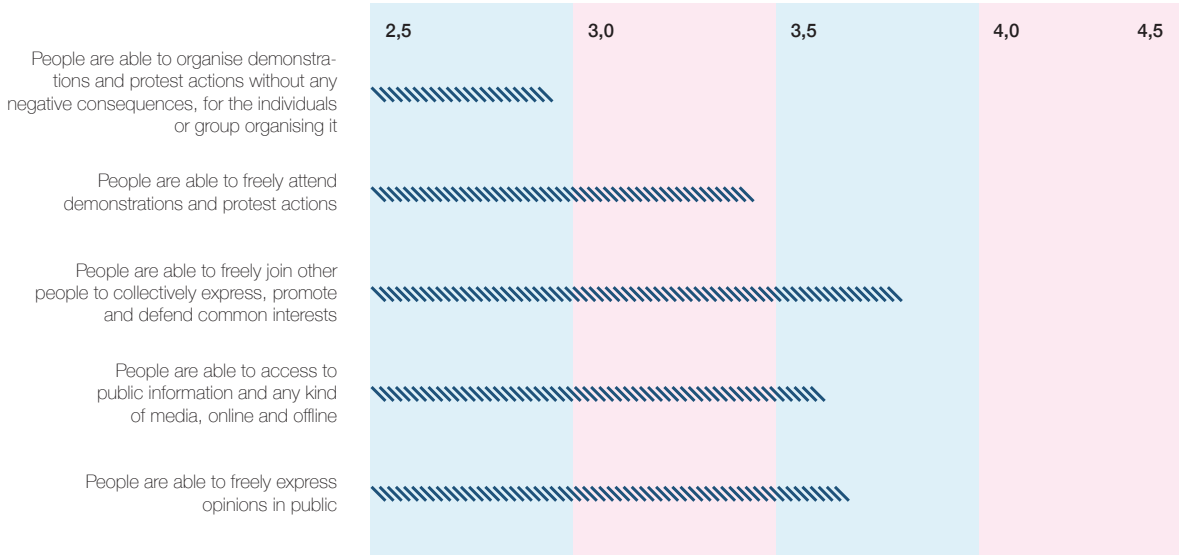
Both organisations and movements consider freedom of expression to be the most important freedom, including the ability to freely express opinions in public, and to access public information and online and offline media. These freedoms are of greater importance to those working in participation and protection than those working in livelihoods.



In the political environment, the ability to organise and attend demonstrations and protest actions is assessed as the weakest area. This might be expected to affect movements

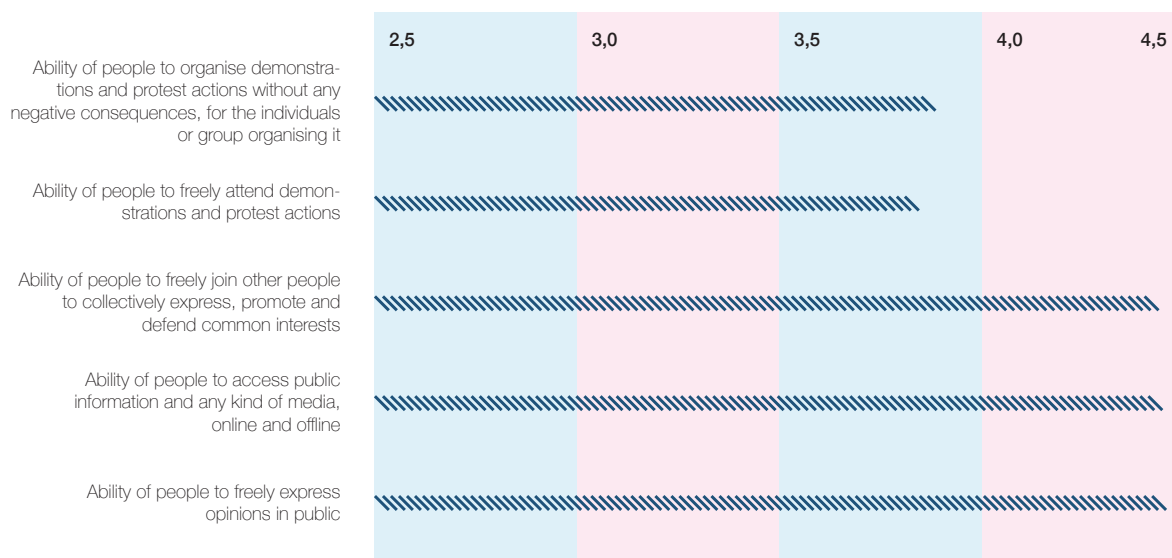
FIGURE 5  
Civil and political rights

REFLECTING ON THE CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS IN THE COUNTRY THAT YOU WORK IN, DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

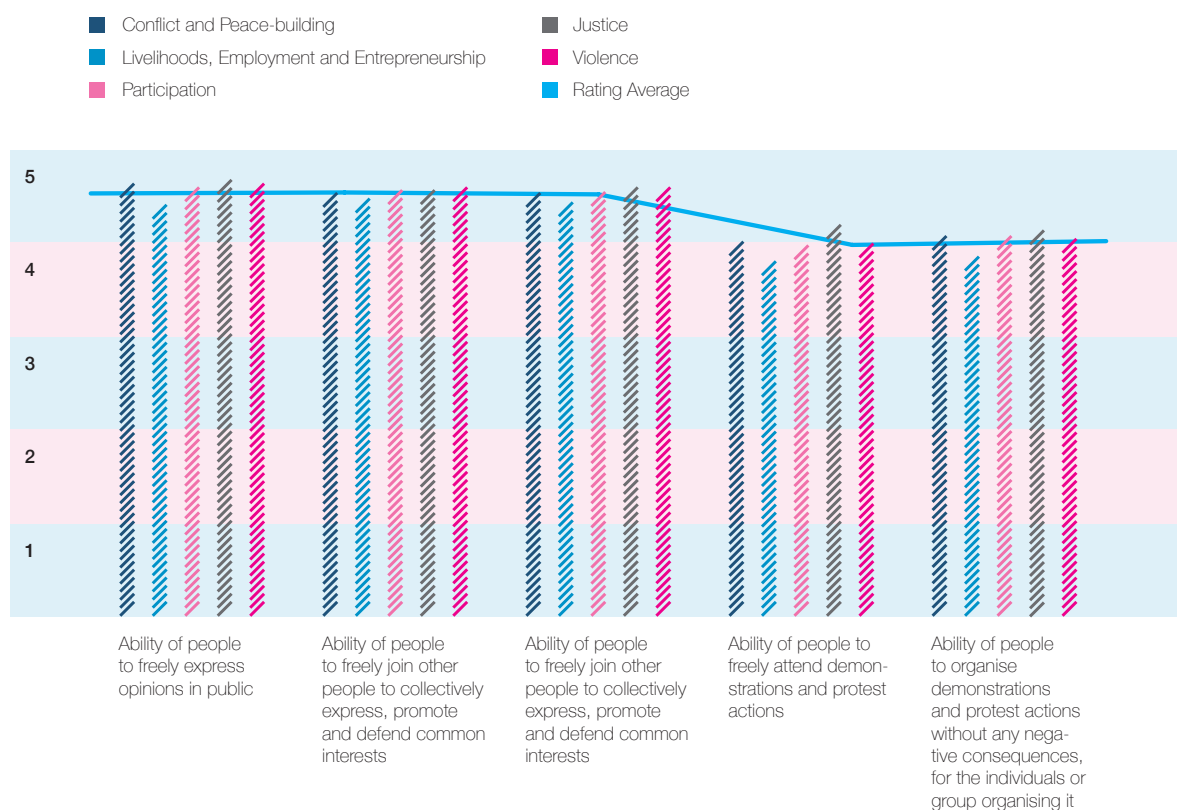




ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE WORK THAT YOU DO WITH OR FOR CHILDREN AND/OR YOUNG PEOPLE:



ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE WORK THAT YOU DO WITH OR FOR CHILDREN AND/OR YOUNG PEOPLE:



more than organisations, but the disaggregated results suggest that both organisations and movements rate the importance of civil and political rights roughly the same. Movements indicate that they engage mostly in community

work, rather than lawful or unlawful protests. It may also suggest that movements are employing new ways to engage in civic space, particularly in restrictive political environments where the right to assembly is constrained.

## Governance and the rule of law

Aspects of the governance environment include the holding of free and fair elections, a competent, ethical and independent judiciary, fair and evenly enforced laws, protection of fundamental rights, and accountability.<sup>43</sup>

The governance environment was scored at just 2.71 out of 5 (where 1 = poor governance and 5 = good governance) by respondents working with children or young people, suggesting that key elements of good governance are lacking. There is a clear gap between expectations of governance and reality: a strong governance environment was identified as an important priority, scoring 4.16 out of 5 (where 1 = not important and 5 = very important), placing it as an even higher priority than political and civil freedoms.

There is of course an interaction between poor governance environments and restricted civic space: the rule of law relies heavily on state institutions that are accountable, and the existence of an independent judiciary and elected parliament to balance the power of the executive.

Predictably, respondents focused on protection rely on the governance environment more than those focused on participation and livelihoods, and rate accountability under the law as

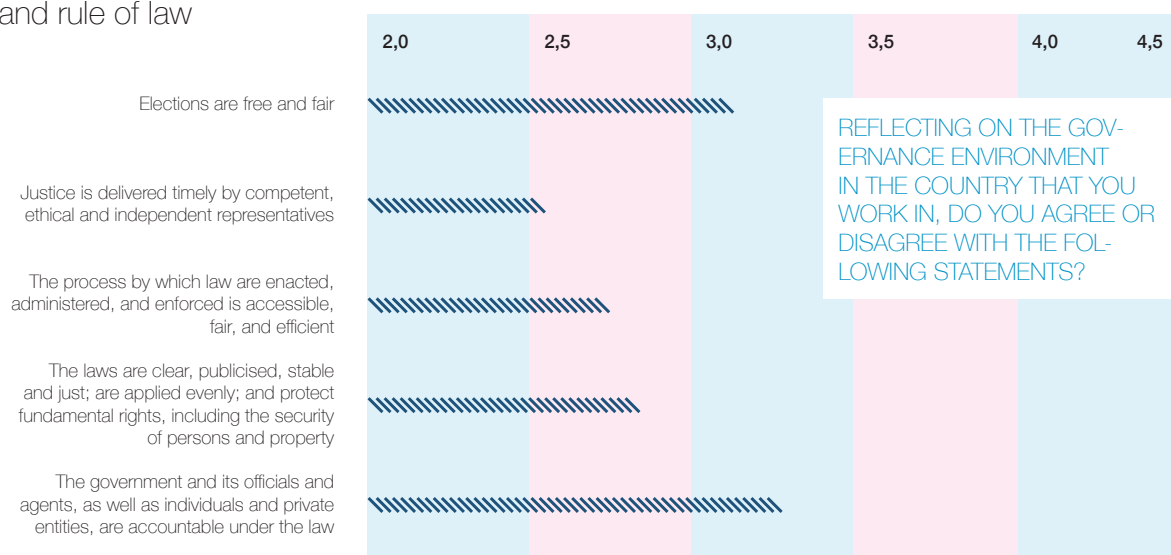


the most important aspect of the environment. Child and youth protection requires the states to uphold their responsibility as duty holders, protecting fundamental rights through the enforcement of just laws. Children and young people are most vulnerable in an environment of poor governance. Respondents working with very young children (aged up to five years) consistently find governance and the rule of law more important to the work they do than the average of respondents, in all aspects except elections.

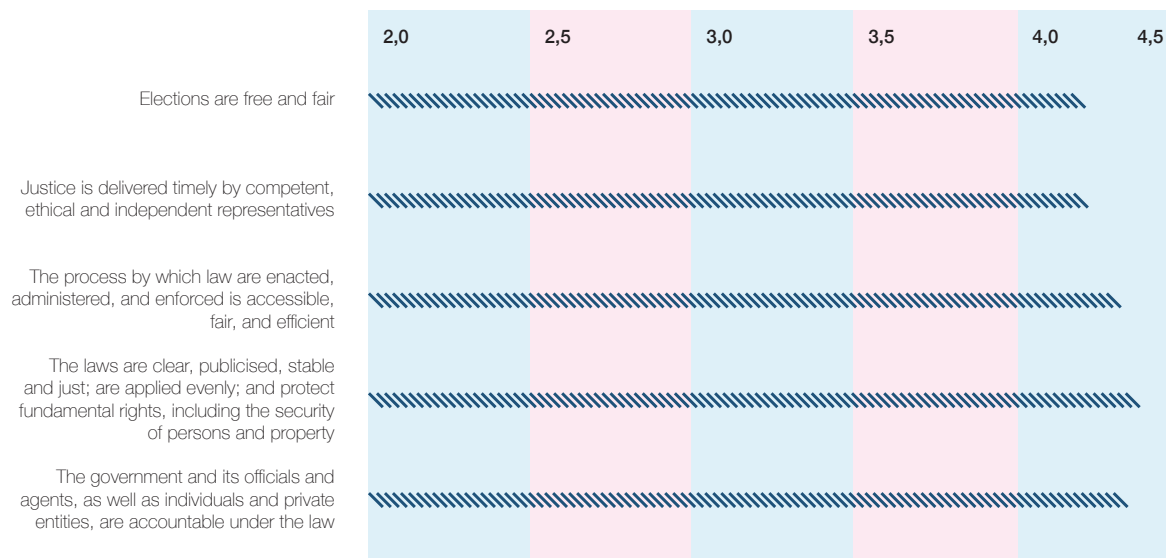
When disaggregating by organisations versus movements, youth-led and student-led

FIGURE 6

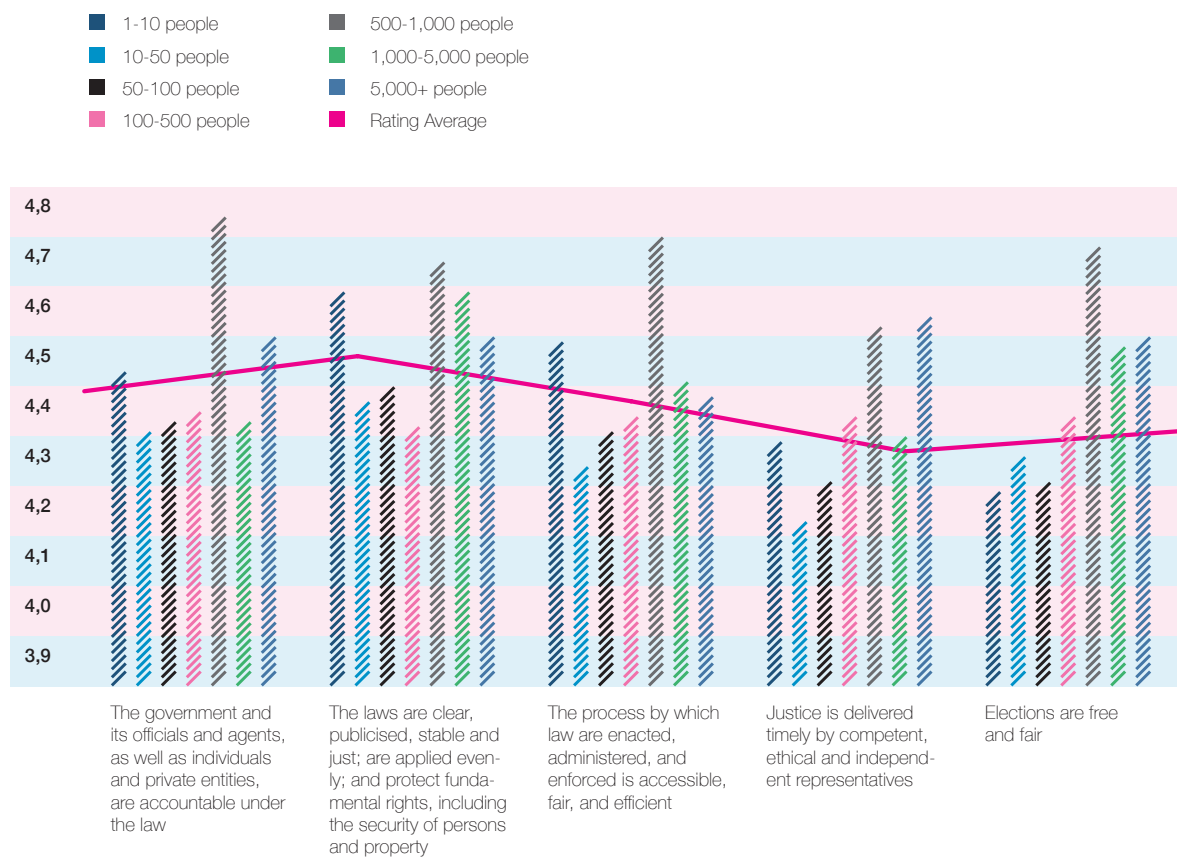
Governance environment and rule of law



ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE WORK THAT YOU DO WITH OR FOR CHILDREN AND/OR YOUNG PEOPLE:

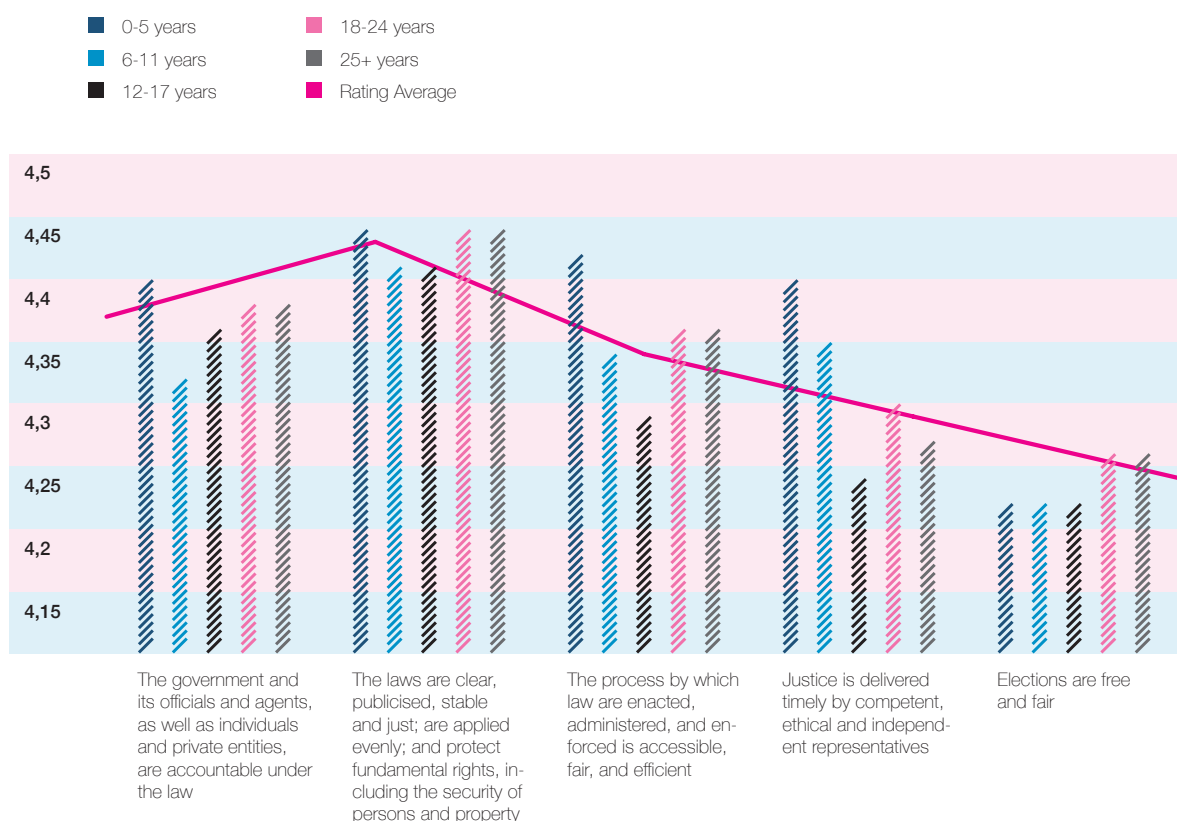


SIZE OF ORGANISATION: ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE WORK THAT YOU DO WITH OR FOR CHILDREN AND/OR YOUNG PEOPLE:





TARGET AGE GROUP: ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE WORK THAT YOU DO WITH OR FOR CHILDREN AND/OR YOUNG PEOPLE:



movements consistently find governance and rule of law less important for their work. This may be because their informal nature means they rely less on stable, predictable institutions and frameworks than formal organisations.

## Civil society infrastructure, support and capacity

Respondents were asked to assess the challenges their organisations and movements face. The challenge most identified was the lack of funding. Among reasons given for funding challenges is a belief that funders prefer larger CSOs over grassroots or smaller organisations, that the respondent's focus area is not attractive to funders, or that the respondent's organisation or movement lack the staff or skills to raise

funds. Funding issues lead to fewer qualified staff, and hamper levels and quality of services.

The largest sources of funding for organisations and movements identified in the survey were foreign funding, from sources such as development agencies and international organisations, followed closely by national government funding.

When asked how much longer they believe their organisation or movement could sustain itself, based on current funds and operating levels and without receiving additional funds, almost 50% of respondents indicate that they believe they would last one year or less. Only around one-fifth (20.3%) believe their organisations and movements would last longer than five years.

Disaggregation by size of organisation reveals that very large organisations (with 5,000 or more staff) believe they are more likely to

last longer than five years than any other size of organisation. This may be because larger, more institutionalised organisations tend to have dedicated fundraising departments and reserves to fall back on, which smaller organisations often lack. It may also add weight to the

view expressed by some respondents that larger organisations are given preference for funding.

Despite challenges to civil society infrastructure, many respondents cite key assets that

help them to overcome challenges such as their “ability to operate and deliver key programming with low funds” with “dedicated and driven staff and volunteers”, as well as having “clear and simple goals”, and a “strategic vision.” However, many respondents also believe that they could do more and be more sustainable if funding was not such a challenge.

**Top challenges facing child and youth organisations and movements, as identified by survey respondents //**

- » 60.3% lack funding
- » 57.2% have insufficient staff for their workload

ents say that they do, with the prospect of increasing funding opportunities being the most commonly cited reason for doing so. Organisations and movements are also seeking non-financial resources from businesses, such as skills and guidance: these may be easier to obtain than financial commitments.

However, not all respondents welcome the prospect of closer relationships with the private sector. The most commonly stated concerns here are about the autonomy of organisations and movements, and the potential for conflicts of interest. For such respondents, governments and foundations are preferred as funders. Little concern is expressed about autonomy or conflicts of interest relating to receiving funding from governments and foundations.

50% of child and youth organisations and movements believe they can last **only one year** or less at current funding and operating levels

## Working with the private sector: opportunities and concerns

Organisations and movements responding to the survey rely on the private sector primarily for grants and in-kind gifts (37.8%), followed by skill exchange and mentorship (30.0%). However, private sector grants make up the smallest proportion of funding that child and youth movements and organisations receive.

This is not necessarily because organisations and movements are opposed to private sector funding. When asked if their organisation or movement seeks to build new or closer relationships with the private sector, an overwhelming majority of respond-

**66.2% of child and youth organisations and movements have relationships with the private sector //**

Most common sectors:

- » Consulting (24.6%)
- » Financial (24.3%)

## Participation: children and youth in civic life

Overall, children and young people’s inclination or willingness to participate in civic activities, encompassing volunteering, engaging in community decision-making, joining boycotts and attending peaceful demonstrations, is assessed as moderate, scored by respondents on average at 3.22 out of 5 (where 1 = no inclination and 5 = high inclination). This score is unchanged, at 3.20 out of 5, for the 75% of respondents aged 35 years or under.

Responses suggest however that it is not apathy or lack of interest that explains a level of disinclination to participate, but rather a lack of awareness of how to participate, and a belief by young people and children that their contri-

bution does not matter. Only 3.9% of respondents feel that young people do not face any obstacles to participation.

A lack of awareness of how to participate suggests that one response for child and youth organisations and movements, particularly those focused on youth engagement, could be to promote greater awareness of participation opportunities.

**Main challenges to child and youth participation as identified by survey respondents //**

- » 69.3% think that young people lack the knowledge or awareness on how to participate
- » 63.2% think that young people believe that their contribution does not matter.

However, pessimism about participation, as indicated by the 63.2% of survey respondents who think that young people believe their contribution will not count, is harder to tackle. At its bleakest, this pessimism could be seen as having systemic roots, reflecting

disillusionment with politics, economics and society, and a persistent feeling among children and young people that their contribution has no impact.

Lack of political and civil freedoms is cited as the least common obstacle to participation, suggesting that despite a restrictive civic environment, children and young people who wish to participate will find a way to do so, perhaps by less formal means.

## Children and youth as victims and perpetrators of hostility, discrimination or violence

The unfortunate reality is that almost all those who work with or for children and youth have witnessed violence or discrimination against young people: 90% of all respondents indicate that they have witnessed some type of hostility, discrimination or violence against a child or

young person, at an average frequency between 'sometimes' and 'often' (score of 2.37 out of 5, where 1 — never and 5 — highly frequent). The highest cause of hostility, discrimination or violence cited is social class and wealth status, followed by gender identity, then ethnicity and sexual orientation. Children and young people of lower socio-economic classes are already more vulnerable to the risks associated with poverty, such as worse than average health and educational outcomes, and discrimination and violence further exacerbate this vulnerability. Respondents working with young children (aged up to five years) have witnessed all types of discrimination or violence at higher levels than other respondents, indicating that the youngest are the most vulnerable in society.

Children and young people are perpetrators, as well as victims, of discrimination and violence. The most commonly cited perpetrator for discrimination or violence is other young people (72.6%), followed by people in positions of authority, such as teachers, religious leaders or sports coaches (66.1%), and police or other personnel of the justice system (56.6%).

90% of all respondents have witnessed some type of **hostility, discrimination or violence** against a child or young person.

## Prospects for youth development: most pressing issues facing children and young people

Respondents were asked to select the three most significant issues that children and youth face. The most common responses were: lack of economic opportunities, including unemployment (56.8%), poverty (45.1%) and inequality and lack of social mobility (27.2%).



These three most significant challenges are all socio-economic issues. It can also be

**Three most significant issues that face children and youth today as identified by survey respondents //**

- » Lack of economic opportunities (56.8%)
- » Poverty (45.1%)
- » Inequality and lack of social mobility (27.2%)

understood that other issues identified by fewer respondents, such as epidemics and diseases, armed conflict and child abuse, are all influenced by socio-economic conditions.

However, when asked to describe

the single biggest obstacle to child and youth development, respondents most often cite education, mostly relating to lack of access to education or low quality of education. Low levels or quality of education are often also linked to a lack of economic opportunities. For example, several respondents criticise education provision for inadequately preparing young people for the job market. Respondents view education as a potential way to address the current lack of economic opportunities and poverty; this suggests a need to promote education that is designed to increase the employability of young people, which could include non-formal educational opportunities.



A career workshop for students facilitated by a young volunteer in South Africa.  
Photo: Restless Development

# Case studies

The three case studies, compiled from questionnaires completed by staff and members of the three consortium organisations, do not necessarily represent the position of the organisations concerned.

## Case study Restless Development

**About the organisation:** Restless Development is a youth led-development agency that operates directly in 10 countries (India, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, UK, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and works with partners in many other countries around the world. Restless Development works with 2,000 volunteers, who are active in communities across its focus countries, taking five approaches: direct delivery; generation of leaders; shaping policy and practice; building a stronger youth sector; and sharing and learning.

**This case study examines** three countries in which Restless Development works: Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In these countries, Restless Development focuses on three key programme areas: sexual and reproductive health (SRH), civic participation and livelihoods.

### **A snapshot of some of Restless Development's programming:**

» In **Uganda**, Restless Development delivers youth-led programming in Central, Eastern and Northern regions of Uganda through young volunteer peer educators, working with local youth groups and schools, and helping to link young people to local government and health service providers.

Restless Development Uganda also carries out considerable work on youth policy and strengthening the youth sector, including convening Uganda's National Youth Working group and supporting young Ugandans to analyse and use data on development through the Big Idea initiative on youth-led accountability.

- » In **Zambia**, Restless Development encourages community and youth participation in development through a community self-assessment process that allows young people to generate evidence on gaps in policy implementation, particularly in SRH service provision. From this, youth develop policy papers and organise meetings with their local leaders to lobby for improved service delivery. Restless Development Zambia also works with the media to generate conversations between young people and decision-makers.
- » In **Zimbabwe**, Restless Development provides comprehensive sexual education and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment to young people, along with livelihoods and employment creation initiatives for young people living with HIV/AIDS, and orphaned and vulnerable children. Across its programmes, Restless Development Zimbabwe works with the government and policy-makers to increase recognition and support for the active role of young people in all aspects of society.

**The government structures they interact with:**

Across all three countries, Restless Development works closely with governments and maintains strong relations with a number of ministries. Relations are often formalised in Memoranda of Understanding or partnership agreements. Restless Development staff cited various challenges in coordinating with different government structures, particularly where mandates overlap. This is the case, for example, in Zambia, where the Ministry of Community Development and Ministry of Education share a mandate around access to SRH services. Similarly, in Uganda, despite a relatively well-funded youth sector, Restless Development can face challenges in coordinating with different donors.

**Political, civil and legal aspects of the enabling environment:**

There are a number of challenges in the political, civil and legal aspects of the environment for wider civil society in Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Uganda, there continues to be debate over a proposed NGO law that would increase government powers to monitor and control civil society activities, while the Public Order Management Act gives police significant discretionary powers to control public gatherings.<sup>44</sup> Anti-homosexuality legislation contributes to a particularly challenging environment for SRH youth activists.<sup>45</sup>

Restless Development's civic participation work with young people encounters particular challenges. Both Uganda and Zambia will experience elections in 2016, while in the politically polarised context of Zimbabwe, there is a risk that Restless Development's work to engage young people as active citizens and voters could be seen as favouring either incumbent political leaders or the opposition. Ensuring and emphasising neutrality in every aspect of this politically sensitive work is therefore particularly important. Restless Development's success in remaining clearly politically neutral throughout mass voter education and mobilisation activities that reached over 300,000 young people ahead of the October 2015 Tanzanian elections may provide an important lesson for

international agencies seeking to undertake such work.<sup>46</sup>

**Adaptation and engagement:** Given these contexts and risks, Restless Development country teams need to remain flexible and responsive to their environments. Where restrictions or risks emerge, it is particularly important that the agency's youth participation work remains closely integrated with its programming in education, health and livelihoods, which are considered non-political activities. Restless Development's work to shape policy and practice is also tied closely to research and evidence, making it harder to reject as biased. For example, in Zambia, Restless Development support youth to directly lobby their local MPs based on findings from a community self-assessment tool, and support them to generate robust evidence around the gaps that exist in SRH services. Working through networks and partners, such as Uganda's National Youth Working Group and various district-level youth working groups, is another useful tactic, which has contributed to Restless Development's profile and credibility in Uganda. Equally important to Restless Development's approach is the agency's commitment to engaging deeply and closely with government at all levels, and ensuring that, even when working on more sensitive areas such as accountability, young people are recognised and appreciated for playing a constructive role in driving development as partners with government.



## Case study

# War Child UK

**About the organisation:** War Child UK provides support to the most vulnerable children whose families, communities and schools have been affected by war. Their work includes: child protection through direct services, capacity-building of local actors, and local and global advocacy, in the areas of child protection, education and livelihoods.

**This case study draws from responses from** four of War Child's in-country teams, in Afghanistan, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Jordan.

### **A snapshot of some of War Child UK's programming:**

- » In **Afghanistan**, War Child raises awareness of health, nutrition and hygiene for children, strengthens existing traditional social protection mechanisms, and engages and builds the capacities of communities in the design, analysis, implementation and evaluation of programmes to protect unaccompanied asylum-seekers and children and young people in conflict with the law.
- » In **CAR**, War Child aims to ensure that children attend safe, protective schools by supporting local partners to set up and run child-friendly spaces in areas where Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) concentrate. It encourages children and young people to resume school or enrol in vocational or technical training, and promotes child rights with children, teachers, parent-teacher associations and communities.
- » In **DRC**, War Child has set up child protection mechanisms, including national help-lines, community-based child protection networks and referral systems for disclosed cases of abuse and violence. It has built the capacity of partners, including government ministries, law enforcement person-

nel and community leaders and members, to strengthen and coordinate interventions and referral pathways.

- » In Jordan, War Child is promoting child development in the Zaatari refugee camp, which is home to around 80,000 Syrian refugees, by offering vulnerable Syrian children access to quality education, protection and psychosocial support.

**The security environments under which they operate:** All War Child in-country teams operate in fragile security contexts, either in countries in transition from war, with sporadic hotspots of conflict (Afghanistan, CAR, DRC), or countries with continuing conflicts on their borders, and which host high numbers of refugees, many of whom are children (CAR, Jordan). In all instances, security is a constant consideration. Afghanistan, for example, remains vulnerable: Islamic State has a growing presence and is seizing territory from the Taliban, in addition to existing tribal conflicts, making areas previously accessible to humanitarian and development work once again unreachable.<sup>47</sup> In CAR, despite a fragile peace reached through the Brazzaville Ceasefire Agreement in July 2014, insecurity and instability persist, due to the weak capacity of governmental institutions and the lax enforcement of laws.<sup>48</sup>

**Political, civil and legal aspects of the enabling environment:** The political, civil and legal environments have a direct impact on the rights of children and families they support. For example, in DRC there are few repercussions for violating children's rights, and therefore building the capacity for juvenile justice is a priority. In CAR, the lack of enforcement of laws creates an unpredictable legal environment for operations. Syrians, as refugees in Jordan, are extremely constrained in their civil, economic and political rights.

**Differing humanitarian and development contexts shape approaches to programming:** While all in-country teams focus on protection, psychosocial support, education of children and

the livelihoods of their families, approaches to programming differ depending on the humanitarian context.

In the Zaatari refugee camp, work entails direct service provision, including the provision of quality education and psychosocial support for children. Similarly, in IDP sites in CAR, War Child supports the creation of a protective environment for unaccompanied or separated children, children who have been victims of sexual violence, and children associated with armed forces and groups.

Alongside direct service provision, there is also a focus on the institutional development and capacity-building of national partners. For example, War Child in Afghanistan supports the strengthening of existing traditional social protection mechanisms by building on knowledge and capacity within institutions such as Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres. In CAR, as one of the few international CSOs working in the country, War Child supports the strengthening of the capacity of local civil society actors for child-related activities through the Common Humanitarian Fund.

DRC is a context where no easy distinction between humanitarian and development work can be made. The protracted conflict has affected social and health structures for so long that support networks struggle to function without external support. Therefore War Child has partnered with local and national public bodies to support the creation of a child protection system through a child helpline, community-based protection networks and a referral system to support cases of child abuse. However, key stakeholders in the child protection system, such as the judiciary, child detention centres and social workers, are hampered in their effectiveness. They may lack basic necessities such as office supplies and vehicles to transport juvenile detainees, and in some cases, staff do not receive regular salaries.

**The key challenges they share:** When asked to select the top three challenges that the in-country teams face, some consensus emerged, particularly regarding the lack of funding oppor-

tunities as a primary challenge. From a donor perspective, supporting children in psychosocial wellbeing may seem a less tangible activity than meeting other humanitarian needs; even though the impact is sustainable, it may not be considered a life-saving activity. Funding for child protection is highly competitive, and the selection process often tends to favour larger CSOs.

Poor governance and high corruption were identified as significant challenges by some country teams. Ministries require CSOs to submit project budget documents for their approval, and often ask CSOs to hire family members of ministers and officials, or favour contractors or supervisors of their choice, from which they can be expected to benefit. Dealing with corruption among suppliers absorbs substantial time and energy that could otherwise be spent on child protection programming.

**Partnerships with national actors are key to programming and sustainability:** War Child seeks to work closely with domestic local and national partners where possible. In DRC, the country office aims to build the capacity of child protection actors such as police, judges, social workers and teachers. In Afghanistan, War Child works closely with the National Solidarity Programme's Community Development Councils and other key community actors in all stages of the programme cycle, from analysis and assessment to implementation and evaluation. In CAR, students, parents and teachers are trained on child's rights in schools, through child rights clubs.

In the Zaatari refugee camp, structures are focused on short-term emergency needs rather than longer-term development, despite the protracted nature of the conflict, which entered its fifth year in 2015. In this environment of protracted crisis, carers, families and local civil society partners are key stakeholders for securing protection for children. Therefore several advocacy campaigns aim to raise awareness among parents and families of the hazards of child labour and early marriage, and promote the value of educating their children.

## Case study

# Youth Business International

**About the organisation:** Youth Business International (YBI) is a global network of independent non-profit initiatives operating in over 40 countries. YBI members assist under-served young entrepreneurs with a combination of training, access to capital, mentoring and other business development services.

**This case study examines five YBI members, in Brazil, Canada, France, India and Uganda:**

- » In **Brazil**, Aliança Empreendedora (Entrepreneurial Alliance) supports low-income micro-entrepreneurs through partnerships with companies, CSOs and governments. It also works on promotion and awareness raising, training and self-development, and access to finance and mentoring. 70% of Aliança's work is with people aged 18 to 35.
- » In **Canada**, Futurpreneur Canada provides start-up financing (a low interest loan up to \$45,000 in partnership with the Business Development Bank of Canada), mentorship and support for entrepreneurs aged 18 to 39, as well as complementary business coaching and access to business planning resources. The ThriveNorth initiative aims to provide additional programming and financing to youth in Northern British Columbia, which is home to a large indigenous population.
- » In **France**, Planet ADAM works in Sensitive Urban Zones (ZUS), which are under-privileged and isolated urban areas with high levels of unemployment. It raises awareness of entrepreneurship, helps individuals to formalise and develop their business ideas, supports them in their search for funding and connects individuals to networks that may help them in their projects. Half of Planet ADAM's clients are under 32 years old.

- » In **India**, Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust (BYST) offers support to young people at all stages of the business start-up process, with a strong emphasis on formalised and comprehensive mentoring, and additional support to entrepreneurs after their business is set up, including training and referrals for high performers to access further financial assistance.
- » In **Uganda**, Enterprise Uganda focuses on training, mentoring and other post-training support, including counselling, specialised training and networking with other young entrepreneurs, with the aim of encouraging mind set changes.

**Political, civil and legal aspects of the enabling environment:**

Three of the five organisations feel that they exist under political and legal environments that either have little effect on their programming, or are fairly favourable to entrepreneurship in general. In Brazil, for example, civil and political rights are characterised as very open, with large degrees of freedom of speech and media. In recent years, it has also become easier for entrepreneurs to get a business licence. In India, when asked about the impact of the civil and political environment on its operations, BYST responded that because they deal with entrepreneurship, this dimension is less relevant to them. However, BYST noted a lack of policy focus on its target group of the 'missing middle': potential entrepreneurs who risk being left out between traditional microfinance/start-up support and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME)/venture capital support.

YBI members in France and Uganda commented more on the overall political environment than specific conditions or structures. Planet ADAM remarked that in the ZUS, youth are under-served by the government, and community trust in public services has broken down. Indeed, Planet Finance France, its parent organisation, was founded in response to riots in French suburbs in 2005.<sup>49</sup> Enterprise Uganda described government intervention as sporadic and not based on evidence; rather,



initiatives are populist in nature and seek to placate youth and voters. This is a challenge for Enterprise Uganda, which tries to convince young people to take job creation into their own hands, as opposed to waiting for government action, which is unable to solve youth unemployment in the ways politicians promise.

**Cultural and social norms play a significant role**

**in operations:** Aliança Empreendedora in Brazil explained that, while society is changing, and there is increasing acceptance of women ‘taking the lead’ economically, in some of the communities where they work there is still a tendency for men to be unsupportive of their female partner’s entrepreneurial ambitions. The young women they work with often have to convince their husbands that pursuing their entrepreneurial dreams will have a positive impact on the family. This can create tension in the household and even lead the males to try and jeopardise their partner’s business. In the low-income contexts where Aliança work, 70% of households are headed by a female (either because the male has left the household, or because he is unemployed).

In Canada and France, YBI members target youth populations, which can present additional challenges. The neighbourhoods that Planet ADAM works in have large populations of immigrants, who are culturally more inclined to rely on their community, for example, to find work, than to access services from CSOs. Northern British Columbia, where Futurpreneur Canada’s ThriveNorth initiative is based, is home to a large indigenous community, which faces much higher poverty, unemployment and social exclusion than the rest of the population.<sup>50</sup> Developing relationships with this community has taken Futurpreneur Canada much longer than expected, and has required a great deal of sensitivity. BYST also places particular emphasis on marginalised groups in its programming in India, with women and Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes — officially designated disadvantaged groups — needing more assistance in setting up businesses. BYST makes a concerted effort to reach these groups through

special outreach to women’s groups and community groups that work with specific tribes or castes.

Aliança Empreendedora and Enterprise Uganda express concern about paternalism on the part of the government in Brazil and international CSOs in Uganda, which means that youth are becoming excessively reliant on public services and charity respectively. In these instances, the organisations feel they have a particular challenge in persuading young people to take employment into their own hands through entrepreneurship.

**The diversity of challenges:** When asked to select the top three challenges that their organisations face, there is no single common challenge shared by the five YBI members. Three of the five highlight resource challenges, including in terms of staff, finances, infrastructure and key partnerships. While BYST has had some success in finding partners in the private sector in India, it needs to have the national government as a partner to scale up across the country, given the government’s reach. Planet ADAM faces challenges with staff capacity and funding, which also prevents it from expanding and opening more branches across France. Aliança Empreendedora in Brazil faces constraints on its productivity due to the low quality of its equipment, supplies and infrastructure.

**Factors that drive success:** Planet ADAM and Futurpreneur Canada see their close ties to the communities that they serve as a key factor in their success. Planet ADAM bases its branches in the communities with which it works, and hires its staff from those communities. Futurpreneur Canada relies greatly on the local organisations and individuals it has built strategic partnerships with under its new initiative in Northern British Columbia.

Nearly all organisations also mentioned an increasingly favourable environment for entrepreneurship in general, and for low-income entrepreneurs in particular, as a key success factor. In Brazil, the ‘inclusive business’ movement (the locally preferred terminology



Cristián Leger, founder of Dermaloe in Chile, is a young entrepreneur who received support from Accion Emprendedora, a member of Youth Business International.

Photo: Accion Emprendedora, YBI


for social enterprise) is getting stronger, with business development among low-income communities becoming more popular. In Uganda, the government welcomes and encourages any initiatives with youth as job creators, and

has been very supportive of Enterprise Uganda. The success of BYST's entrepreneurs contributes to the organisation's reputation in India, showcasing wealth creation and contributing to national economic growth.









Nathalia (GYR, Colombia) examines the rehabilitation of former child soldiers in Colombia through livelihoods programmes. This picture is of Luna, a former child soldier, from a photo exhibition Nathalia helped organise called "Girls of Water and Rice". It is part of the Voices of Post-Conflict Project in Edinburgh, Scotland, where Nathalia is studying.

The local context:  
the issues that matter  
most to children  
and youth

# Participation



**Ani Hao**

SRHR in Brazil



**Lawrence Ndambuki Muli**

Participation in African regional structures



**Martti Martinson**

Participation in local governance in Australia



**Naim Keruwala**

Digital Participation in India



**Rocío González Ramírez**

Harassment in Mexico



**Salim Salamah**

Challenges of youth participation in Syria

# Protection



**Amy Cheung**

Asian American mental health in USA



**Mwebaze Kanaahe  
Brian Bilal**

Road safety in Uganda



**Fayyaz Yaseen Bhidal**

Child labour in Pakistan



**Felipe Blanco**

The value of hip-hop in Mexico



**Jake Soriano**

Emergencies and child safety in the Philippines



**Tavarrie Smith**

Juvenile justice in The Bahamas

## Livelihoods

### **Gioel Gioacchino**

Entrepreneurship support in Italy and Poland



### **Hilary Ewang Ngide**

Monitoring and evaluating livelihood programmes in Cameroon



### **Roli Mahajan**

Young urban women's economic participation in India



### **Soha Mohamed Osman**

Social entrepreneurship in Egypt



## Additional contributions

### **Nathalia Sarmiento Salamanca**

Child soldiers in Colombia



### **Brabim Kumar**

Youth CSOs during the Nepal Earthquake



# Global Young Researchers



Between April and July 2015, the 18 GYRs reflected on the most pressing needs and issues in their local contexts on the project's three core themes. Two young researchers faced difficult circumstances, which prevented them from concluding their research, but they submitted special reflections, which are included in this report.

GYRs covered all of the world's five regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific. The ages of the researchers ranged from 24 to 34 years. Three young researchers examined issues in the global north, and 15 in the global south, of which two focused on conflict or

post-conflict contexts. The young researchers covered a range of topics: seven focused on participation, six on protection and five on livelihoods. Although all research projects were multifaceted and touch on other themes, five of them made explicit connections between two of the main themes. Each contribution is presented in summary on the following pages, and more detail is given online at

**[www.fromrhetorictoaction.org](http://www.fromrhetorictoaction.org)**.

The views expressed are of course those of the researchers alone, and not those of the organisations involved in this report.

**“We need to invest in dialogue to confront this conservative political environment. We also need to accompany the political processes and put pressure for political change.”** – SRHR activist

**Ani Hao**  
SRHR in Brazil



*Ani Hao is from New York but based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Her academic background is in anthropology and the politics of development and gender, and she is a youth advocate with the International Youth Council. Her ethnographical research focuses on social movements tied to reproductive rights in Latin America, and she works with reproductive rights organisations in Brazil, including Ações Afirmativas em Direitos e Saúde.*

**Question //** What are the strategies that young activists seeking to achieve sexual and reproductive rights use to achieve policy dialogue in Brazil?

**Methodology //** Focus groups:

One group with 15 participants, Age: 15-19 years, Sex: 13 female, two male

**Individual interviews //** Four

Age: 18-22 years, Sex: Four female

**Other details //** Focus groups were held with members of a feminist high school organisation that exists in five campuses across two cities, and interviews with activists from various feminist or leftist human rights organisations.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of participation as it focuses on how youth in CSOs position themselves to achieve their goals in reproductive rights, particularly in the area of achieving dialogue with policy-makers.

SRHR, which includes sexual education and access to contraceptives, family planning programmes and abortion procedures, are significantly

limited in Brazil. Although Brazil has many progressive health policies on paper, there are no widely implemented sexual education or family planning programmes, and Brazilian youth often face barriers to accessing accurate reproductive health information and care, with limited recourse when their rights are violated.<sup>51</sup>

The lack of SRHR in Brazil disproportionately affects the lives of Brazilian children and youth. Youth in Brazil tend to initiate sexual activity two years earlier than the global average.<sup>52</sup> They are more vulnerable to coercion and unplanned and unprotected sex than Brazilian adults.<sup>53</sup> An estimated 17-40% of first pregnancies among urban young adults in Rio de Janeiro end in abortions, typically done illegally, as abortions are outlawed except in special circumstances.<sup>54</sup> Adolescent girls experience exclusion and stigma associated with early unwanted pregnancies, and this is the main reason for early dropouts from school.<sup>55</sup>

Brazilian youth are historically highly civically engaged, through CSOs, community councils and school clubs.<sup>56</sup> The mobilisation of young people was examined at the convergence of cultural beliefs, social norms and social movement strategies, giving insight into young activists' perception of democracy, social equity and health in Brazil.

#### **Main findings //**

- » Young Brazilian activists are not achieving policy dialogue on this issue, as a broader public dialogue about SRHR is lacking.
- » SRHR youth groups lack institutional capacity, and are poor at networking and partnerships.
- » Most activist groups do not adopt a comprehensive definition of SRHR.



## Lawrence Ndambuki Muli

Participation in African regional structures

*Lawrence Muli is a public policy analyst and environmental sustainability expert. He has managed and coordinated the policy and programmes work of the African Observatory for Policy Practice and Youth Studies, and is currently working as an Assistant Programme Officer (Africa Region) in the Youth Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, based in London, UK. Lawrence has a Master's in Public Policy and Management from the University of London, and an undergraduate degree in Environmental Science and Climate Change from Kenyatta University in his home country of Kenya.*

**Question //** What hinders participatory structures in Africa from creating meaningful space for youth leadership and citizenship agency?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: Eight participants, Age: 24-38 years, Sex: Four female, four male

**Other details //** Four interviewees were from the African Union (AU) Commission (two senior officials, a youth member and a volunteer), plus a senior official of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), a research consultant for the UN Commission for Africa, a UN Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) liaison officer with the African Union and a representative from the Ethiopian Youth Federation.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of participation as it investigates what meaningful youth participation means to some of the regional institutions engaging youth in Africa.

Africa's youth development journey shows great challenges, while promising key opportunities in the areas of civil liberties and economic growth. Inter-governmental structures engaging youth in Africa, including the AU, are facing emerging democratic trends in African states, including the rising impact of youth mobilisation, increased use of social media, and the spread of processes for stakeholder involvement and inclusive development planning. These participatory structures are founded on guiding principles of shared values, leadership and good governance. However, the challenge remains for national-level youth stakeholder involvement to be made more meaningful, and impact to be made sustainable.

Much has been done to enshrine the rights and responsibilities of African youth. There is formalised and institutionalised representation of youth at the AU Assembly of Heads of States through the Pan-African Youth Union (PYU). There are also policy and legal instruments such as the African Youth Charter, and the AU Youth Decade Plan of Action, and institutionalised participatory mechanisms such as the AU Youth Volunteers Corps. However, all such institutional frameworks have been criticised for lacking enforcement provisions and responsive



## **“Annual Youth Forums and Intergenerational Dialogues are not sustainable and exemplify tokenism in youth engagement processes.”**

– an AU Commission staff member

and effective accountability mechanisms. In addition, youth engagement is often characterised as a tokenistic activity. The opening of discussions on the future of Africa's development, through the AU's ambitious, long term Agenda 2063 process, further makes it timely to assess and suggest improvements on continental level youth participation practices.<sup>57</sup>

The research question sought to reveal what hinders current structures from creating an enabling environment for youth leadership and citizenship agency. The research aimed to uncover gaps within the design, planning and implementation of institutional frameworks to engage with young people.

### **Main findings //**

- » There is a lack of financial resources, a mismatch in budgeting and planning for youth, and inefficient financial regulatory frameworks targeting youth.
- » The organisational cultures of youth participation structures are embedded with ageism.
- » There is a lack of political and structural space for youth to engage.



## Martti Martinson

Participation in local governance in Australia

**“Youth participation should be about young people setting an agenda themselves rather than adults setting an agenda for young people.”** – A youth worker from Victoria

*Martti Martinson is an Australianised Estonian, and has worked in the youth sector in both Australia and Europe as a youth leader and advocate, contributing to legislating youth participation and developing youth policies. He is currently working and undertaking post-graduate research in Melbourne, Australia, teaching undergraduate youth work students, and advising local councils on youth participation and international cooperation matters.*

**Question //** In what ways do youth participation structures in local government impact on political outcomes?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: Seven participants, Age: 30-50 years, Sex: Five female, two male

**Other details //** All participants are experienced youth workers from the state of Victoria in Australia with more than five years' of experience in different local government and state structures. Five came from the Melbourne metropolitan area, and two from rural areas.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of participation as it seeks to provide an insight into the role of youth participatory structures in local government settings, and the ways in which these can impact on the work of local government.

The past 20 years has seen a rise in the number of structures, organisations, policies and events focusing on young people's participation, and the

promotion of youth as a specific social category.<sup>58</sup> This trend has also resulted in the promotion of young people's participation in the delivery of public services, within government structures and the community sector, particularly at local levels.<sup>59</sup>

With the election of a conservative government in Australia in 2013, youth work, including the representation of young people, has started to disappear from the political agenda of the national government. Many youth organisations and youth services have been defunded. There is pressure on local councils to cut costs, and youth work, including work to promote youth participation, is one of the prime targets, due to the lack of political will, strategy and evidence, related to the benefits, for the community and individuals, of youth work and youth participation. There is therefore a need to showcase the experience and policy outcomes of local governments and practitioners in facilitating the process of youth participation in Australia.

### Main findings //

- » While all levels of government are seen as important for youth participation, local government has multiple advantages over state and federal levels.
- » The most advantageous way of achieving meaningful youth participation is through a formal youth participatory structure established in the local government setting.
- » The disadvantages of having a formal youth participatory structure in place in the local government setting are, however, the very limited contingent of young people they tend to attract, and a danger of making youth participation a less enjoyable activity.

## Naim Keruwala

Digital Participation in India



*Naim Keruwala has anchored the Urban Governance department at Janwani, a charitable public trust in Pune, India, since April 2012. He works to promote and facilitate citizen engagement in the budgeting and governance of Indian cities. Naim has a Master's degree in Economics and has worked with international agencies such as UNESCO, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Yuva Unstoppable, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, Planning and Resources on Urban Development Affairs and AIESEC.*

**Question //** How are new digital media tools changing the way young people participate in politics in India?

**Methodology //** Focus groups: Two groups, with a total of 18 participants

Age: 18-27 years, Sex: 10 female, eight male

**Other details //** One focus group consisted of students from an economics university, representing 10 different cities in India, and the other of young men working in private companies.

**Individual interviews //** Nine

Age: 22-41 years old, Sex: —

**Other details //** Five interviews were held with young professionals, two with academics researching digital technologies, development and politics, and one each with a political party member and a staff member of Restless Development – India.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of participation as it examines the way that young people in India have changed their engagement with politics, at a time when internet usage in India is not yet ubiquitous.

Historically, youth in India have played an important role in politics, from the independence struggle in the early 1900s, to the massive anti-corruption movement in 2011-2012 that resulted in the formation of the Common Man's Party (Aam Aadmi Party) which won the 2015 Delhi Legislative Assembly election with an overwhelming majority.<sup>60</sup> Youth are a pivotal political force in India that politicians seek to capture.

Digital technologies have changed the landscape for political engagement in India. For example, politicians such as current Prime Minister Naren-

**“There is  
thrill and pride  
in participating  
in politics.”**

— A young male student



dra Modi and former Minister for Human Resource Development Dr Shashi Tharoor regularly conducted Google Hangouts in a virtual town hall format leading up to the 2014 general elections.<sup>61</sup> India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) drove its membership numbers up in 2015 through a 'missed call campaign', using technology that allows citizens to register as a BJP member simply by making a missed call to a designated number. This technology provides the BJP with a huge data bank of numbers for future outreach. Members can receive text message updates from the party on upcoming events and on how to engage in issues.<sup>62</sup> Changing technologies are likely to have an impact on how young people engage in politics, given that 60% of all internet users in India are under 25.<sup>63</sup>

While around 40% of the world's population is online,<sup>64</sup> India's online population is still emergent at 19%, but it is estimated that this will increase by over a third in only two years.<sup>65</sup> This research examines the advantages and challenges of youth digital participation from the viewpoints of various people in Indian society, including students, media professionals and academics in the field of internet research.

### Main findings //

- » Scalability, interpreted as the ability to connect with many different people at one time, instantaneously, was identified as one of the main reasons why young people use digital tools to participate in politics in India.
- » Young participants are ambivalent about anonymity on the internet, which they feel can empower free speech, but can also lead to people spreading misinformation and malicious and hateful speech.
- » Young participants are sceptical about whether political participation online can be authentic, because of how easy it is to participate.

**“Since we’re trying to become a ‘truth commission’, some of us believe that our place is not as a formal NGO, because we, by nature, don’t want to stay close with public policy. We know that becoming formals can give us serious financial strengths and make us more successful, but this is a risk because we can be trapped in some sort of agenda with government institutions, and that’s not what we need as an organisation that needs to be more independent.”** – A young activist who documents arbitrary detentions and disappearances

## Rocío González Ramírez

Harassment in Mexico



*Rocío González Ramírez has been a consultant at the Youth’s Research Seminar of the National University of Mexico (UNAM) since 2014. She focuses on public policy related projects. Rocío has a BA in Sociology and a MA in Urban Studies. Academically, she is interested in public space, housing and transitions into adulthood.*

**Question //** What challenges, particularly in terms of harassment and persecution, do informal youth organisations working in Mexico City face, in comparison to formal youth organisations, and how does it impact on their work?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: 12  
Age: All under 35 years, Sex: Six female, Six male

**Other details //** All participants come from nine organisations from Mexico city.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of participation as it investigates how harassment affects the participation of young activists, who are prominent within protest groups in Mexico.<sup>66</sup> There are intersections with the theme of protection, as the research addresses the challenges that formal and informal organisations face in violent environments.

Mexico has a long history of political and youth activism. However, in recent years the freedom and safety of young activists has become more contested. A recent increase in harassment and violence against civil society activists has been documented. Between 2006 and 2012, over 60 human rights defenders and activists, many of them young, were killed because of their work. More than 200 human

rights defenders have been accorded protective status by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in recognition of the high risk that they face.<sup>67</sup> Under the current administration, since 2012, aggression and persecution seems further to be on the rise: during 2014 alone, over 300 attacks against human rights defenders and journalists were reported.<sup>68</sup> This high level of attacks suggests that safe conditions for participation do not exist. Police forces and the government are believed to collude with drug cartels.<sup>69</sup> Commentators have advanced the idea that there is a ‘Narco Estate’, in which activists are targeted.<sup>70</sup>

### Main findings //

- » Informal organisations, compared to formal ones, are at a much higher risk of police harassment, persecution and political intimidation.
- » Stigmatisation of youth makes them, and their organisations, more vulnerable.
- » Youth organisations share a view that the government does not intend to establish any dialogue mechanisms. This encourages some of them to remain informally organised, so that they can voice their opinions in public protests. However, lack of formal recognition can affect the safety of young activists.



## Salim Salamah

Challenges of youth participation in Syria

*Salim Salamah is a Syrian Palestinian blogger and activist who has lived in Sweden as a political refugee since 2013 following the Syrian revolution. He studied Law at Damascus University and is currently studying International Migration and Ethnic Relations at Malmö University. Since March 2015, Salim has headed the Palestinian League for Human Rights – Syria, a grassroots group. His research interests lie in issues of youth, displacement, migration and human rights.*

**Question //** How is youth participation conceived in present-day Syria, in conflict and with an absence or lack of government structures?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: Four  
Age: 25-30 years

Sex: Two male, two female

**Other details //** Two interviews were held with activists based outside the region (one based in the UK and one based in Turkey who travels to the EU and USA), and two based in and around Syrian (one based at the Turkish-Syrian border but living in Turkey, and one living in north-west Syria who travels between Syria and Turkey).

**Rationale and relevance to theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of participation as it investigates how civil society and youth activism work in time of war, in Syria, neighbouring countries and the diaspora. As threats to personal rights,

health and safety are a daily concern of many young Syrians, this research also relates to protection.

Since 2010, the Middle East and North Africa has experienced radical socio-political change, commonly referred to as the Arab Spring, with varying developments across the region.<sup>71</sup> Syria, in particular, has been in turmoil since March 2011, when what started as peaceful resistance spiralled into an armed conflict. Syria is now experiencing war, which has claimed 220,000 lives and displaced four million people to neighbouring countries, with a further 7.6 million internally displaced.<sup>72</sup>

Throughout the reign of the ruling Assad family, Syria's civic space has been constrained. Some Syrians commonly describe the 40-year dictatorship of the Assads as the 'Kingdom of Silence' based on the marginalisation of segments of the population, notably youth, in civic and political life.<sup>73</sup> The only exceptions to this were state-sponsored structures of participation, which, while notionally separate from the state, did not have the level of autonomy that would characterise a free and open civil society.<sup>74</sup>

Since the beginning of the conflict and subsequent state collapse, the shape of civic space has changed. Prior to that collapse, and in the absence of state structures, youth were creating channels of participation and self-organisation, notably Local Coordination Committees (LCCs). Since their inception, LCCs organised protests, developed strategies and fundraised, but as the conflict escalated and the number of casualties and displaced persons increased, they also set up humanitarian as-



sistance structures that worked in parallel to those of the government. In areas no longer controlled by the regime, citizens also established Local Councils (LCs). LCs provide all types of basic public services no longer provided by the state, relating to health, education, and justice.<sup>75</sup> Despite war and state failure, participation in civic space lives on, often with young people in the lead.

#### Main findings //

- » Most of today's youth participation in Syria can be seen as coming in response to the absence of government.
- » Syrian youth engaging in civil society demonstrate a lack of interest in the work of political structures on all sides of the Syrian conflict.
- » While young activists distance themselves from traditional politics, they admit that there is a thin line between civic work and political work.

**“We started with one school project. There was lack of schooling and we felt that there is an ideological battle over schools. So, we started with one school and then it became five schools. This year, we had eight schools. We are trying to create a new model of schools that are unbiased, and not trying to indoctrinate the kids with ideologies. Instead, we want to create a school that functions in accordance with human rights.”**

– A Syrian blogger, activist and head of a CSO based at the Turkish-Syrian border

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## Projects on **protection**



### **Amy Cheung**

Asian American mental health in USA

*Amy Cheung is a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She was raised in Quincy, USA. Drawing from her experiences as the daughter of Chinese immigrants, Amy's research interests focus on the intersection of immigrant experiences and civic engagement, particularly with respect to Asian American adolescents.*

#### **Questions //**

- » What do Asian American youth identify as common threats to their mental health and wellbeing?
- » What do Asian American youth identify as existing sources of support present in their local contexts to which they can turn to help address their mental health and wellbeing concerns?
- » What do Asian American youth identify as factors that affect the degree of trust they have with these sources of support?

**Methodology //** Focus groups: Two groups with a total of 10 participants, Individual follow-up interviews with focus group participants: Four  
Individual interviews: Three  
Pair interviews: Two interviews with a total of four participants  
Total of 17 participants, Age: 16-20 years  
Sex: 13 female, four male

**Other details //** Nine participants were born outside the USA, and eight in the USA; 12 out of 17 participants are of self-reported low-income status.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of protection as it addresses perceived challenges and difficulties in Asian American adolescents' lives, as well as their perceptions of conditions, resources and supports that enable them to feel successful, connected, confident and safe.

Although Asian Americans' mental health needs are comparable to those of other racial groups, Asian Americans have lower rates of seeking mental health support than other groups.<sup>76</sup> Researchers have determined that Asian American youth, in particular, have high unmet mental health needs.<sup>77</sup> Scholars have proposed that a number of factors may be related to barriers against seeking mental health support among Asian Americans, including cultural stigma, lack of culturally responsive services and social beliefs that conflate educational achievement with psychological adjustment.<sup>78</sup> The Asian American population is the fastest growing racial group in the USA, which suggests a need to pay attention to the mental health of Asian American youth, so that services and programmes that can appropriately respond to this demographic.

It has further been suggested that to understand mental health, there is a need to adopt a holistic

view of wellbeing that takes into account levels of exposure to negative factors, but also has benchmarks about positive factors and levels of life satisfaction.<sup>79</sup> Thus, exploring wellbeing means understanding youths' feelings of anxiety and worry, but also their feelings of success and the factors that make up their perceptions of a positive quality of life.

#### Main findings //

- » Among the sampled Asian American youth, academic stress emanating from the desire to do well in school is the most often and consistently cited threat to mental health.
- » Although the sample was small, it included students who acknowledged a range of mental health threats.
- » The overwhelming majority of participants reported that the schools they attend do not have any programmes or structures in place that specifically address the mental health or wellbeing of students.

**“I feel like success means thanking your parents for all that they’ve done. It’s a lot to carry actually. Because they’re relying on you. They’ve spent most of their lives supporting you, raising you, because my parents were immigrants here. And I think that applies to a lot of Asian society here in America... Not like a burden, just a responsibility, like an innate responsibility we have.”**

– A young male student





## Mwebaze Kanaahe Brian Bilal

Road safety in Uganda

**“Look, you and I are professionals in this road safety game. But, I can tell you, I don’t even know our own emergency numbers that we give to the public to call. They are too long and many that I have to check them in my notebook first. And they are not free at all. How do you expect a primary school child to even remember it?”** – An official from a district traffic authority

*Brian Kanaahe Mwebaze Bilal currently works with the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he helps to mainstream youth work in the AU Mission on Ebola Outbreak. In Uganda, he is affiliated to the International Red Cross Movement and Red Crescent Youth Programmes. He is also a lecturer, researcher and youth ambassador for road safety.*

**Question //** What are the opportunities and obstacles in promoting road safety in Uganda’s primary schools?

**Methodology //** Focus groups (students): 12 groups with a total of 60 participants

Age: Five to nine years, Sex: 30 female, 30 male

**Other details //** Participants came from a primary school in a high risk area close to a major highway. They had not yet participated in civil society road safety activities.

**Focus groups (key actors) //** Three groups with a total of 19 participants, Age: 25-49 years, Sex: Three female, 16 male

**Other details //** Participants included primary school teachers, officials from the district government (road safety, traffic and health authorities) and volunteers from the Uganda Red Cross.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of protection, in seeking to understand community interventions in the reduction of risks to child safety on roads and in traffic. The focus is on primary school children and early education.

Road traffic injury is globally the leading cause of death for people aged under 19.<sup>80</sup> Globally, more

than 500 children and adolescents under 19 lose their lives in traffic accidents each day, with more thousands injured.<sup>81</sup> While road engineering and the enforcement of traffic laws affect the prevalence of road traffic injury, road safety education plays a major role in influencing behaviour and building a culture of safety. Road safety education includes risk reduction practices, such as the teaching of knowledge of traffic signs and laws, and provision of information about what to do in case of an accident. Road safety education can help to reduce the extent of injury and fatalities.

Child road safety education should ideally involve an array of actors that extends beyond schools, including CSOs, road safety authorities and others in the community.

While the government of Uganda mandates road safety education in the primary school curriculum, this ambition often remains on paper, with a lack of consistent and comprehensive implementation.

### Main findings //

- » There are misperceptions about the causes of road traffic accidents, as well as a lack of knowledge about correct emergency procedures in the event of an accident, including the national emergency telephone number.
- » Road safety training for primary school teachers is brief, not comprehensive and seen as too theoretical.
- » An over-loaded primary school curriculum that does not accommodate co-curricular activities was cited as the number one hindrance to the provision of more road safety-related activities, such as road safety clubs.

**“Yes, I wonder, when I see so many children going to school, or playing in the ground, they run after each other, eat and play together, they are very happy... I wonder why I don't do this? I so wish to skip work, and join them.”** – A 13 year old girl who works as domestic worker in F-6 sector of Islamabad

## Fayyaz Yaseen Bhidal

Child labour in Pakistan



*Fayyaz Bhidal is a development practitioner with six years' experience in civil society. He is an Atlas Corps and Think Tank LINKS (Leaders, Innovators, and Knowledge Sharing) Fellow and Accountability Lab's Accountability Ambassador to Pakistan. Fayyaz holds a MA in Economics and an MPhil in International Development Studies. Fayyaz has worked in remote areas of Pakistan in fields such as education, health, voice and accountability, women's participation in political processes, violence against women, child labour and conflict resolution.*

**Question //** What are the factors that drive children into labour as domestic workers instead of allowing them to attend school?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: 16

Age: —, Sex: —

**Other details //** Five interviewees were from civil society (two from Save the Children and three child rights activists), five were parents (three mothers and two fathers), five were children, and one was an employer of child labour employer. All families included in the research are covered by some form of social protection programme.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of protection as it looks at the basic right of children to education, and how this becomes compromised when they are sent into work early. As it deals with the economic circumstances of families and their struggle to provide for themselves, the research was also relevant to the theme of livelihoods.

Pakistan presently has several different social protection programmes, which include sub-programmes and schemes that target the most vulnerable segments of the society.<sup>82</sup> The total federal allocations for these programmes amount to well over a hundred billion Pakistani Rupees (equivalent to over US\$9.5m), with additional support from provincial allocations and programmes funded and run by national and international donors.

Despite these programmes, child labour in Pakistan is alarmingly high, involving over 11% of children between 10 and 14 years of age, amounting to more than three million children.<sup>83</sup> This may be an underestimation: the total number of out-of-school children is estimated to be close to 5.5 million, which would include children working as domestic workers or helpers in agriculture-related work.<sup>84</sup> This research attempted to explore the reasons why families encourage their children to work rather than attending schools.

### Main findings //

- » Many families would rather send their children to work to contribute to the household budget than send them to school.
- » Pakistan has no child-specific or youth-specific social protection programmes, and no programme that targets child labour. Existing social assistance is neither child nor youth-oriented.
- » Some children who are engaged in child labour report physical abuse and sexual exploitation at the hands of their employers.



## Felipe Blanco

The value of hip-hop in Mexico

*Felipe Blanco is an economist with a Master's in Public Policy. He has worked in academia as a researcher and graduate professor, and in the public sector as Policy Advisor for the Mexican Institute for Youth. His research interests include youth policy, performance evaluation systems and violence prevention. He is also a nationally recognised artist and social activist who uses rap in his activism — a 'raptivist' — under the name of Elemsiburrón.*

**Question //** What are the core values of hip-hop culture in Mexico City's metropolitan area, as perceived by its members, and how do those values affect attitudes of young people towards violence or help them to cope with violence?

**Methodology //** Focus groups: Three groups with a total of 10 participants

Age: 23-28 years, Sex: One mixed group (two female, one male), one all male and one all female group.

**Other details //** Nine out of 10 participants come from violent parts of the city, and all are involved in one of the hip-hop disciplines.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of protection as it explores the way hip-hop could affect young people's

attitudes to violence, and the potential value of hip-hop culture as a promoter of peace and a youth-led movement. This in turn could serve as a coping mechanism for the violence that affects Mexican young people.

During the last decade, violence in Mexico has increased dramatically, with the homicide rate more than doubling in just six years (2005-2011).<sup>85</sup> This violent environment especially affects young people, either as victims (38.2% of total homicides in Mexico from 2000 to 2010 were of young people) or perpetrators (50% of crimes committed in 2010 were by young people).<sup>86</sup> Although Mexico City is not as violent as other Mexican states, a recent survey showed that 34% of its young people have suffered some type of violence and 21% considered themselves to be violent.<sup>87</sup> In some municipalities surrounding Mexico City the situation is worse, with young women particularly targeted.<sup>88</sup>

In violent and deprived contexts, including parts of Mexico City's metropolitan area, arts can play a positive role in diminishing risky behaviours and offering effective vehicles of expression to address past and present traumatic events. In Mexico City's metropolitan area, young people have found diverse ways to express themselves, and one of the most outstanding in recent years is hip-hop culture. Research has identified hip-hop culture, among other art forms, to be suited for helping youth to cope with violence.<sup>89</sup>

Hip-hop is a youth-led global movement that comprises four basic artistic branches: emceeing or rapping, breaking, deejaying and graffiti writing.<sup>90</sup> Hip-hop culture is usually nurtured in the streets of disadvantaged areas around big cities. It is a powerful art form with „a cultural and political resonance like no other (...), [which has become] the voice of choice for young people who find themselves on the margins.“<sup>91</sup>

#### Main findings //

- » Hip-hop culture in Mexico City's metropolitan area has many positive values, such as unity, respect, tolerance and solidarity, while negative values include intolerance, discrimination, envy, vengeance and gender violence and misogyny.
- » Hip-hop is not a peace culture in itself. It offers a tool that could be used to influence youth in both negative and positive ways.
- » Hip-hop is a potentially powerful instrument to avoid or cope with violence.

**“With hip-hop you empower yourself — with your decisions, with who you are and where you go. Even in the moment when you choose the name you want everyone to call you, when you choose the way you’re going to dress. I mean, it’s something that’s all your own. And in that way, [hip-hop] helps. Because when there’s possible violence or violence directed at you, you can like, assess it, because it doesn’t really affect you. You feel so empowered, so sure of yourself, that it’s like, it doesn’t matter. You can think what you want about me, offend me but really, it doesn’t change anything.”**

– A young person involved in hip-hop





## Jake Soriano

Emergencies and child safety in the Philippines

**“When you look at childhood as ‘being,’ that means you see children capable making contributions.”**

– Yany Lopez, PhD  
researcher on disasters  
and children from  
Macquarie University,  
Sydney

*Jake Soriano is a journalist from the Philippines. He reports on peace and conflict, the environment and social protection for persons with disabilities, including youth and children. He has covered a human trafficking rescue operation, a typhoid outbreak and bogus civil society groups defrauding the government of public funds. He contributes to the media outfit VERA Files, and has freelanced for Global Post, BBC and the Thomson Reuters Foundation.*

**Question //** In disaster-prone Philippines, what can government and civil society learn from each other to ensure the safety of children in times of emergencies?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: Two

Age: —, Sex: Two female

**Other details //** Interviewees were Yany Lopez, PhD researcher on disasters and children from Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, and Adel Chavez, governmental representative from the Council for Welfare for Children.

**Rationale and relevance to theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of protection as it examines the roles and approaches of government and civil society actors in safeguarding children in times of disaster, and building resilience for future recovery.

Recent studies show that the Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. In the Long-Term Climate Risk Index, which measures the quantified impacts of extreme weather

events from 1994 to 2013, it ranks fifth, and has the most number of natural disasters among the top 10 countries.<sup>92</sup> In 2015, eight Philippine cities were included in the 10 most at-risk globally, based on the Natural Hazards Risk Atlas.<sup>93</sup>

Children are particularly affected by disasters. Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda), which gained widespread international attention in 2013 as one of the worst disasters in modern history, claimed over 6,300 lives, with up to four million children affected.<sup>94</sup> Children are particularly vulnerable during disasters, due to their size, still-evolving development and dependence on others for survival. They are more likely than adults to be killed during a disaster, or suffer from malnutrition, injury or disease in the aftermath. Becoming orphaned or separated from their families increases their vulnerability, and makes them more prone to abuse or trafficking.<sup>95</sup> Given the scale of such catastrophes, disaster response requires that a range of humanitarian actors are mobilised, in government and civil society, and internationally and domestically.

### Main findings //

- » Differing views of childhood between governments and CSOs shape divergent disaster programming.
- » Civil society leads the way in terms of children and participation, but suffers from financial and time constraints.
- » Increased partnerships between government and civil society may help bridge the different approaches towards children in disaster programming

**“If there was a body/agency to protect these rights and really look out for the rights of juveniles, I think we would be able to save a lot of juveniles. The current system as it relates to detention is not conducive to rehabilitation. If there was somebody who is really able to advocate on behalf of the juvenile, a lot of their matters could be settled without having to go so far. [It would be good to have] options other than prosecution and detention.” – A prosecutor**

## Tavarrie Smith

Juvenile justice in The Bahamas



*Tavarrie Smith is the current Director of Research and Policy for the Caribbean Youth Policy Institute and the co-chair of the Global Network of Youth Rights Experts. He holds an Associate's degree in Law and Criminal Justice, a Law degree and a postgraduate Certificate of Legal Education. He is a youth policy and juvenile justice specialist, with over 15 years of experience in the field.*

**Question //** What are the obstacles to safeguarding the personal rights of juveniles in conflict with the law in The Bahamas?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: Nine participants, Age: —, Sex: Five female, four male

**Other details //** Three judges, three prosecutors and three defence lawyers were interviewed.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme the theme of protection, as it seeks to understand what legal, institutional and cultural obstacles might exist in the safeguarding of personal rights for children who are in conflict with the law.

From 2008 to 2009, the number of juveniles accused of crimes increased 79.6% in The Bahamas, with the youngest accused being 12 years old in 2008, and nine years old in 2009.<sup>96</sup> Between 2009 and 2012, 908 juveniles were charged with crimes against the person in The Bahamas.<sup>97</sup> However, the actual number of juveniles in conflict with the law is likely to be much higher, taking into account drug possession, damage to property, theft, truan-

cy, curfew violations, disorder in public and other violations that juveniles are commonly charged with. While the Child Protection Act (2007) provides some guidance relating to proceedings and the detainment of children in conflict with the law, some violations of the personal rights of children have been reported.<sup>98</sup> For example, juveniles have made claims of police brutality and maltreatment during detention.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, juvenile justice in The Bahamas is unevenly distributed, with juvenile courts existing only in some areas and missing in others, and a limited amount of legal staff with expertise in juvenile justice.

This research explored juvenile justice from the perspective of legal practitioners who work with juveniles, seeking to understand the opportunities and shortcomings of this evolving legal system.

### **Main findings //**

- » There is an overall lack of consistency in the way juveniles in conflict with the law are handled by the courts.
- » There are institutional gaps in the juvenile justice system, which can cause juveniles to fall through the cracks.
- » There is a unanimous view that the minimum age of criminal responsibility in The Bahamas is too low.



### **Gioel Gioacchino**

Entrepreneurship support in Italy and Poland

*Gioel Gioacchino is a researcher and youth engagement consultant. She works to integrate young people's experiences and voices as part of international development logics. As the director of Recrear, she prioritises action research projects, believing that research should be fun, engaging, and transformative. Gioel holds an MPhil in Development Studies from the University of Cambridge, UK and is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, UK.*

**Questions //** What motivations do young people have in accessing entrepreneurship support programmes? How can mentorship and informal education programmes support young people's entrepreneurial initiatives?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: Seven  
Age: 25-55 (older interviewees were mentors)  
Sex: Four female, three male

**Other details //** Three interviews were conducted with mentors from Italy, and four with young entrepreneurs (two from Italy and two from Poland). All participants were reached through the YBI network.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of livelihoods as it seeks to discover some of the best practices related to mentorship programmes through the experience of YBI's partner organisations in Italy and Poland.

Youth development debates are paying increasingly close attention to the role of entrepreneurship. Access to credit is considered an important tool, although not the only tool, to provide young people

**“The possibility of sharing my idea with someone else, to open my world to someone else, was very important to me. Working with a mentor is important because my mentor did not have the same type of interest and attachment to the business that I had. My perception that my mentor was there for me, to help and to provide support to me, and backed up by a respected organisation that is specialised in mentorship, gave me the sense that someone was there to look after me. She was my business angel! Sharing an idea with someone and making sure it really makes sense is so important.”**

– A young entrepreneur

with the necessary capital to start a business and create employment. In developing countries, young people have traditionally been a key target group of microfinance loans. Studying the context of Europe, this research project sought to unpack the deeper reasons that encourage young people to access entrepreneurship support programmes. Discussion on the significance of entrepreneurship could transcend the position of simply valuing entrepreneurship for its economic significance, to explore the social and transformational power locked into business initiatives. This research sought to further explore why young people would be inclined to start their own businesses, beyond financial motivations.

#### **Main findings //**

- » Young entrepreneurs deciding to start a business were motivated not only by the need to earn a living, but also by their willingness to take more ownership of their professional and personal growth.
- » In order to reach their goals, young entrepreneurs often need skills beyond those offered in formal education, as well as financial resources.
- » Young entrepreneurs benefit from mentorship programmes, which expose them to practical knowledge that they can use in their businesses.

## Hilary Ewang Ngide

Monitoring and evaluating livelihood programmes in Cameroon



*Hilary Ewang Ngide leads a youth-led development CSO, the Centre for Community Regeneration and Development (CCREAD-Cameroon), which has special consultative status with the UN. Hilary holds a MSc in Environment and Development studies, a PGC in project management and a BSc in Geography and Regional Planning.*

**“Poor governance and corruption reduces the productivity and sustainability of NGOs [involved in] public contracts and youth livelihood programmes.”**

– An CSO activist working with youth-led groups in rural communities

**Question //** How do livelihood programmes in Cameroon engage youth in their monitoring and evaluation processes, and what are the opportunities and challenges of this?

**Methodology //** Focus groups: Three groups with five participants in each, making a total of 15 participants, Age: 21-38 years, Sex: 10 female and five male

**Other details //** One focus group was rurally-based, and two were urban-based (with experience in rural areas). Individuals are involved in youth-led CSOs that work with livelihood programmes. Three participants were paid staff working with government and CSOs, while the remaining participants were full-time volunteers with various youth-led CSOs.

**Rationale and relevance to theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of livelihoods as it seeks to understand the extent to which youth livelihood programmes engage youth-led CSOs in monitoring and evaluation processes. This research is also relevant to participation, in exploring the role that young people play in these CSOs.

Youth (defined in Cameroon as people aged between 15 and 34) constitute more than 35% of Cameroon's 23 million plus population, and have an unemployment rate of over 64%.<sup>100</sup> Given this, the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education, in collaboration with other government departments, has worked in partnership with various organisations to implement long-term livelihood empowerment programmes for youth. These form part of the government of Cameroon's Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) (2009), which lays out the framework for medium-term development goals over the period 2010 to 2020.<sup>101</sup>



**“There should  
be such a city  
where I can  
travel at any  
hour, using  
any mode of  
transporta-  
tion and just  
‘be’, without  
feeling  
unsafe.”**

– Young working  
woman

The GESP expressly endorses a participatory evaluation approach for its implementation, with the main objective being to “ensure ownership of the participatory development process, improve transparency and accountability of the different actors, improve the quality and relevance of services (especially as concerns public utilities) and control of the GESP monitoring process.”<sup>102</sup> Different actors who are to play a role in participatory evaluation include target groups and beneficiaries, who define their needs and priorities, and civil society, which the GESP defines as “the key instrument in safe-guarding governance-related concerns, as a power-check and partner in GESP implementation. It ensures that the government honours its commitments and is accountable for its actions. It particularly safeguards the interests of vulnerable groups.”<sup>103</sup> The GESP identifies youth as a vulnerable group, along with women, people with disabilities and indigenous minority groups.<sup>104</sup> As such, youth-led CSOs have a role to play in providing civil society oversight. This research examines the extent to which youth-led CSOs are engaged with this process.

#### **Main findings //**

- » Livelihood programmes lack an operational framework for the involvement of CSOs, including youth-led CSOs, in monitoring and evaluation.
- » Youth-led civil CSOs have limited capacities to engage in and conduct monitoring and evaluation processes.
- » There is limited involvement of youth generally in the entire project cycles of livelihood programmes.

## Roli Mahajan

Young urban women's economic participation in India



*Roli Mahajan freelances as a photojournalist and blogger. She has documented stories about leaders from the poorest states of India for a DfID-funded project, and attended the Rio+20 summit as a journalist with Adopt a Negotiator. She co-authored and designed a report on youth activities at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP 17), in Durban, South Africa, 2011, and has worked as an editor. She has volunteered for TakingITGlobal and the UN Major Group for Children and Youth.*

**Question //** How do considerations of safety and personal rights affect the participation of young urban women in economic life?

**Methodology //** Individual Interviews: 14 participants, Age: 21-30 years, Sex: All female

**Other details //** All interviewees were with young, working women in three locations: Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. Interviewees were mostly urban and middle class, apart from two women from lower economic strata.

**Rationale and relevance to theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of livelihoods, focusing on the considerations that influence young urban Indian women's economic participation. This research also touches on protection, as it focuses specifically on the safety and personal rights of women, and how this impacts on the experiences of young working women in urban environments.

As the economic participation of women in India is increasing, more women are moving out their

homes for work, and interacting with public spaces and people in ways not experienced before.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, the mass migration of young people to cities means a convergence of cultures, norms and mind sets of people from diverse areas, economic classes and groups, in some cases causing tensions and unsafe conditions, while society is still adjusting to women moving out of their traditional, domestic roles.<sup>106</sup> Hand in hand with this economic and geographic transition are rising rates of violence against women.<sup>107</sup> Violence against women exists at all income and education levels, and is experienced in both the private and public realm.<sup>108</sup> Risk of violence can occur in the workplace, at home and while travelling to and from a place of an employment.

### Main Findings //

- » Young women's economic choices are mostly guided by considerations of remuneration and city of work. Safety was not stated as an overt concern that impacts on economic choices, but is a concern of young women's everyday lives.
- » Harassment is common in public spaces, and also occurs in the workplace.
- » Trust in the rule of law is low when it comes to women's safety. Law and order agencies are perceived to be bureaucratic, slack and corrupt.



## Soha Mohamed Osman

Social entrepreneurship in Egypt

*Soha Mohamed Osman is a researcher in the international development field through her work with the UNDP, as well as a number of local and international CSOs. Her research addresses the dynamics of collective action and urban governance in the Arab region. She holds two Master's degrees, in International Relations and International Development.*

**Question //** How can a pro-entrepreneurship environment for social entrepreneurs be created in Egypt as a developing and unstable country?

**Methodology //** Individual interviews: 10 participants, Age: Seven participants were between 20-30 years of age, and three were middle-aged  
Sex: Four female, six male

**Other details //** Five participants were social entrepreneurs, and the other five were from entrepreneurship incubators.

**Rationale and relevance to the theme //** This research is relevant to the theme of livelihoods, in seeking to understand Egyptian social entrepreneurs' dynamics and identify the necessary factors that enable them to reach their potential.

Egypt has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 61% of its population below the age of 30.<sup>109</sup> Youth unemployment is a problem: the unemployment rate for Egyptians aged under 24 reached 38.9% in 2013.<sup>110</sup> Unemployment is highly concentrated among college graduates, amongst whom unemployment is 10 times higher than for those who did not go to college.<sup>111</sup> More than a third of young undergraduates specialise in commerce,

business administration and engineering, fields that are already overcrowded, and as such offer limited work opportunities.<sup>112</sup> Employment troubles worsened in recent times of economic hardship and political unrest. Despite the huge youth-led public protests that led to the resignation of the authoritarian regime in 2011, young Egyptians are still far removed from decision-making circles, and subject to increasing abuses of their political and socio-economic rights.<sup>113</sup> An anti-protest law adopted in 2013 severely restricted meaningful engagement in public space and led to the detention of a number of activists who attempted to defy it through spontaneous "unauthorized protests."<sup>114</sup>

Many young people, inspired by revolutionary energy and aiming to change their society, embarked on new and creative projects to address social problems. They were dissatisfied with the developmental efforts of established CSOs and the failure of the government and private sector to provide public goods. Going beyond conventional notions of civil society, social entrepreneurship gained momentum among young Egyptians as an alternative path to social change.

### Main findings //

- » Social entrepreneurship is still embryonic in Egypt, with a limited number of active social enterprises, which are concentrated predominantly in urban areas.
- » The main obstacle for youth to engage in entrepreneurship in general, and social entrepreneurship in particular, is the lack of business knowledge.
- » The legal and regulatory framework for social entrepreneurship is not supportive.



Soha (GYR, Egypt) looks at youth-led social entrepreneurship in Egypt, such as Alwan & Awtar, which has been working in a low-income neighborhood, increasing the critical thinking skills of children through artistic and sportive activities.

Photo: Alwan & Awtar

**“Good intentions and smart ideas are not enough for a young social entrepreneur to survive the hurdles of labour market. It’s mainly about management skills in the first place.”**

– A young entrepreneur



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## Additional contributions

**Two additional contributions** are offered by GYRs who were unable to complete their research projects due to unforeseen circumstances. They do not follow the typical analysis structure as the other GYR contributions.

**Nathalia**, from Colombia, faced personal family difficulties during the research period. However, she still wanted to contribute a short account, drawn from the literature on livelihoods reintegration programmes, key expert interviews that she was able to conduct, and an excerpt from a personal reflection of former child soldier in Columbia.

**Brabim**, from Nepal, was caught in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that hit Nepal in April 2015. Due to this, he was unable to complete a full research project. However, he wrote a first-hand account of the youth mobilisation for disaster relief in Nepal, which he headed through his youth organisation, the Association of Youth Organisations Nepal (AYON).

*Nathalia Sarmiento Salamanca is a Colombian human rights researcher. She holds an MSc in Social Research, and is currently a PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh, UK. Her current research explores former child soldiers' narratives in Colombia as a way of considering how these narratives can contribute to the understanding of childhood during war.*

Colombia is the only country in South America that has an active armed conflict within its borders. While efforts are made to prevent the recruitment and use of young people by illegal armed groups, there is also a special focus on the reintegration of demobilised and disassociated young combatants to civilian life.<sup>115</sup> In the reintegration process, there is a core rite of passage from army life to civilian life, which includes one's ability or capacity to make a living.<sup>116</sup> However, former child soldiers, even when they have been victims of forced recruitment, are seen by society solely as criminals, and therefore widely regarded as unemployable.

**Reintegration through employment //** The Colombian government claims to have set in place one of the world's most comprehensive reintegration programmes for demobilised combatants. Official figures from the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR in Spanish) report that more than 40% of the demobilised population of over 30,000 people that have gone through the process of reintegration since 2003

## Nathalia Sarmiento Salamanca

Child soldiers in Colombia



were recruited when they were under 18 years old, amounting to approximately 12,000 people.<sup>117</sup>

Marcelo Pisani Codoceo, chief of mission in Colombia (2010-2014) of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), explains:<sup>118</sup>

"...one of the most important results [...] is the understanding that the vulnerability of the population in the reintegration process lies not in the lack of a job or a lucrative project, but rather on the need to restore each person productive capacity and to overcome the barrier of discrimination by employers and host communities. [...] The employment relationship is just the beginning of the process and not a goal in itself. For a former combatant, a job is more than a pay check – it is his/her first chance to be a citizen entitled to have and to belong to a family, with the ability to hold an honest and decent job."

**Trust as a key element in successful livelihoods reintegration programmes //** The ACR based its main findings on its vast experience in implementing programmes since 2003, and the similarity to other demobilised populations. It suggests that the process of adaptation for a former child soldier when entering the job market should involve a process of building trust simultaneously between: (i) society and the former child soldier; (ii) the employer and the new worker, and vice versa; (iii) and the former child soldier with him/herself. On the issue of the sustainability of reintegration processes, researcher Irina Mago explains that there are major risks that former child soldiers are unable to find steady jobs, or become uncertain about the demobilisation process, which can sometimes take up to eight years.<sup>119</sup> In these instances, former

child soldiers may end up returning to illegal armed groups, joining other illegal groups, or undertaking short-term jobs in informal or illegal sectors, such as drug trafficking. Mago says, *"Confusion, distrust of the state and ignorance remain in the interviewees even when they have spent more than eight years attending the programmes."*<sup>120</sup> According to her, former child soldiers do not seem certain about the aims and processes of governmental programmes, and also question the length of these. Mago argues that this can be detrimental to the sustainability of their reintegration processes: *"It has led them to consider returning to weapons, and the information gap can be filled falsely by saboteurs, such as illegal actors, in order to influence the demobilised children and youth."*<sup>121</sup>

### **(In)experienced youth? Former child soldiers and their unrecognised atypical skills //**

Hilda Molano, coordinator of the Coalition against the involvement of boys, girls and youth in the armed conflict in Colombia (COALICO in Spanish), points out the need to take into account any previous work experience or skills of former child soldiers, such as agricultural skills or adaptability to difficult conditions.<sup>122</sup> They tend to lack the type of work experience of other young people their age, and are unable to be open about their past experiences, for reasons of safety, fear or stigma. In this context, where their past and acquired skills are neglected, former child soldiers will find it harder to fully reintegrate into society. Having discussed with former child soldiers their entrance to the labour market, Molano reports that their main fear is that their past as child soldiers will become known. She adds, *"There's rejection and a bad work environ-*

ment when they manage to find a job.”<sup>123</sup> As a solution, she suggests that some sensitisation of host communities will be required to help former child soldiers find a way into the workforce. Instead of

hiding or neglecting a former child soldiers’ past, a dialogue would then be started where all workers could feel sure and confident about the participation of the young person in their workplace.

## María: working to get a job<sup>124</sup>

*The following is an English translation and extract of a text written by María Alejandra Martínez for the project, ‘Tell your story. Re-signifying the right to work of Colombian women’. This story is the first time she had narrated her experience as a former child soldier, in her own words, without being guided by journalists or researchers.*

Although she has known how to work since she was very young, in this city this does not count for anything; it only recognises what can be certified with diplomas, and María does not have any.

María is strong. She has had to learn almost everything in life, but her specialties are heavy chores and all housework. She knows how to clean, do laundry, cook, babysit and decorate, and she knows how to work the land and take care of animals and plants.

She knows about protection rituals and everything one needs to know to survive in the jungle. She knows fishing, hunting, planting, harvesting, weaving, kneading and how to do all the exercises of military training. She is good at obeying, and loading heavy bundles, like her tactical bag, which for years she carried on her back.

María is filled with construction experience. She knows trenching, and how to make highways and mobile homes that are packed in seconds. The house was a plastic sheet that lined the tent, where her greatest treasure was the mosquito net, which every morning, she folded in the suitcase with her equipment.

María knows how to run, hide and sing. She also knows about nursing, economics, politics and revolution, not to mention having a good aim and a good eye for shooting, skills she so often had to use to survive.

Besides learning how to do chores, María was also trained to defend herself. From the weapons, she kept the injuries, and a few techniques on how to handle them, both short and long, explosives and grenades. Those were the toys she was given to play with and to save her life.

María does not get to share her experiences, as it would be absurd to mention some of her past in her new life. Now she is a mother and a fairly free woman, trying to build a life, and get a job, to continue the fight — now, for the realisation of her dreams.

## Brabim Kumar

Youth CSOs during the Nepal Earthquake



*Brabim Kumar K.C. is currently serving as President of AYON, a national umbrella network of youth organisations in Nepal. He has worked as programme producer of youth radio for Equal Access Nepal and UNICEF, and as Public Information and Outreach Officer in the UN Peacekeeping mission in South Sudan. He is a co-founder of Nepal Policy Centre, a youth-led think-tank.*

A devastating earthquake of 7.8 magnitude hit Nepal on 25 April 2015, followed by hundreds of aftershocks, which affected an estimated eight million people, one-third of the population of Nepal, including 1.1 million children. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, 8,857 people lost their lives, and 2.8 million people were left in need of humanitarian assistance in 14 severely affected districts.<sup>125</sup>

During the disaster and in its aftermath, Nepal witnessed an exceptional level of response from its highly motivated youth. Nepali youth sprung into action, determined to leave their mark on the much-needed rescue and relief operations. Over 50,000 youth volunteers were involved in Kathmandu, the capital, alone, with additional volunteers from district level local clubs and youth groups engaged in a wide range of activities - from cleaning up roads and setting up toilets at temporary shelters, to distributing medical supplies.<sup>126</sup>

**From political activism to humanitarianism: youth on the front lines //** Historically, Nepali youth have been on the frontlines of a variety of political movements that have led political change.

However, for the first time, Nepali youth proved their ability, capacity and dedication to be able to take the lead and mobilise themselves in an apolitical action. Hundreds of informal youth groups immediately responded by helping communities in rescue and relief. Youth were even able to reach communities that the state failed to serve in a timely manner.<sup>127</sup>

A key factor that aided this large-scale mobilisation of youth was the use of social media. As a response to this disaster, one of the largest youth-led campaigns, #act4quake, was initiated in partnership between AYON and Come on Youth Stand Up. In 45 days, #act4quake was able to reach more than 15,000 families from 340 communities and villages in the affected areas, with the help of more than 1,000 volunteers. A campaign that started with the documentation of dispatch details on sticky notes and the deployment of self-motivated volunteers became a fully fledged response that emerged as one of the largest youth-led relief campaigns in Nepal.

It must be noted that while the devastation in Kathmandu was extensive, even greater destruction was experienced in the central hills and mountain districts. The high concentration of youth in Kathmandu, combined with a high degree of motivation and availability of both time and resources to contribute to these efforts, were the key success factors in the youth mobilisation in Kathmandu.

**Youth groups grapple with a complex and opaque bureaucracy //** Despite the overall success, some circumstances hindered the participation of youth organisations in disaster relief. The initial days of the earthquake were very chaotic; a lack of information persisted, and when information



from the government was shared on guidelines for rescue and relief efforts, they were unclear. Initially the government announced a 'one door policy' for relief distribution, meaning that youth were required to go to the Chief District Officer's (CDO) office and report prior to entering any village under his jurisdiction with relief support. This brought a high level of backlash from many formal and informal youth groups, as it added bureaucratic layers between service providers and service seekers. Some youth groups were not allowed to go to some villages, and were asked to drop their supplies at the CDO's office. There were continuous reports about the lack of transparency in how supplies were distributed by the district level offices, and many citizens expressed frustration that they had not been reached.

The lack of coordination between government and civil society actors added further layers of complication, and there was confusion about how to prioritise districts, communities and needs. Data collected from communities took a long time to be processed, analysed and shared, and often, at the district level, data were not in digital format, leading to the creation of further barriers to efficient relief efforts.

In the mobilisation of youth volunteers, two government institutions conducted parallel activities: the National Planning Commission created a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with youth organisations, while at the same time the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) announced a youth volunteers' mobilisation programme. This dual approach caused confusion among youth groups and volunteers.

However, despite some of the factors hindering the mobilisation of youth organisations, youth efforts achieved impact that was felt across the country. Through youth-led relief efforts, the young people of Nepal have demonstrated that they are ready, willing and able to get to work to rebuild Nepal.



Youth championing the Sustainable Development Goals at The Youth Summit in London  
Picture: Restless Development

# Key findings and considerations for action

Several of our **findings** shed new light on the enabling environment for child and youth development, and identify new challenges and opportunities, while others add more nuance and context to current discourse in the sector. Not all of the findings summarised below are surprising or new, but this in itself can be significant: the repeated and intensifying appearance of some of the issues summarised below suggests that current actions are either inadequate or absent.

**Considerations for future action** to improve the enabling environment for child and youth development are highlighted at the end of each set of findings, for consideration by the range of public, private and civil society actors who can affect the enabling environment for child and youth development: young people themselves acting as change-makers, locally and globally; youth organisations, networks and movements; CSOs working on issues relevant to children and young people; professionals and volunteers working with children and youth; and governments, agencies and donors supporting child and youth development.

## Factors that enable or hinder child and youth development

### Participation

**When participation becomes an end in itself, rather than a means of advancing change, young people distance themselves from it.**

Despite an explosion of structures, spaces and places for young people's voices to be heard, this research finds that young people's inclination or willingness to participate in civic activities — such as volunteering, community decision-making and taking peaceful action — is moderate. Respondents to the GS reaffirm the well-known barriers against young people's participation:

- » 69.3% think that young people lack the knowledge and awareness of how to participate;
- » 63.2% think that young people believe that their contribution will make no difference;
- » 54.7% think that young people are disillusioned with politics.

These figures contrast with the active and leading role young people and children have played in the mass protests seen in many countries in recent years. Children and young people may feel a low propensity to participate, believing that their actions will make no difference, but it seems there comes a tipping point when they are willing to take to the streets — and even risk their lives — to seek to realise a better future: participation is embraced when there seems to be a possibility of advancing real change.

Formalised, project-based participation structures can provide meaningful activity for young people and ensure that development programmes are more efficient, effective and legitimate.<sup>128</sup> This can particularly be the case in environments where the space for civil and political engagement is restricted, or even prohibited. As seen in the case study of Restless

Development, when programming on education, health and livelihoods is integrated into a single model, it can provide neutral, depoliticised entry routes into participation. This can provide opportunities for young people to be involved in decision-making, learn new skills and experience a positive space of empowerment.

But there are clear limitations to formal participation structures. For example, young people are expected to give up their time and may find themselves having to pay for transport or needing to take time off from work. This means that the participation pool may be limited to those who can afford to participate. In his research, Lawrence (GYR, Ethiopia) concludes that participation opportunities *“are often unequally and disproportionately distributed, slanting towards urban and elitist youth, while neglecting rural and underprivileged youth.”* Martti (GYR, Australia) notes that despite a multitude of formal political structures, they fail to attract many young people: they are seen as too hierarchical, too political, or too dull. The CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report 2015 also suggests that there is a risk of participation becoming *“institutionalised and professionalised, and thereby co-opted into systems and networks.”*<sup>129</sup>

Given these challenges, social media can be a powerful tool to support autonomous and informal participation that enables greater inclusion. As explored by Naim (GYR, India), as internet access and social media usage has spread, it has provided a more anonymous space where young people feel confident to share their opinions, particularly at a time of civil society restrictions.<sup>130</sup> But as Naim concludes, *“the digital divide can then also result in a democratic divide”* in places where internet access is limited.

There is a disconnect between the rhetoric of empowering youth that is commonly offered by decision-makers and the reality experienced by young people daily. There may be a growing gap between young people’s aspirations and the limits to which power holders are prepared to share decision-making power. Definitions,

understandings and expectation of participation may also need to be challenged.

### **Building trust between established youth organisations and emerging youth movements and activists would create opportunities for collaboration and support.**

The relationship between formal organisations and informal youth movements is often characterised in somewhat simplistic terms, in which youth organisations are bureaucratic, co-opted by funders and subject to legal restraints, while youth movements are dynamic, organic and free from intrusion and manipulation. Exploring the challenges that informal youth movements face in comparison to formal organisations, Rocío (GYR, Mexico) notes:

*“Many informal organisations in Mexico decided not to register formally. In their opinion, this gives them more freedom and independence in their work... The main reason for this decision is the fact that being formalised means that they would be seen as collaborating with the government, compromising their objectives, which would in turn deter their potential supporters.”*

And yet the GS demonstrates that youth organisations and youth movements are more similar than might be expected: both are often small scale (52.3% of organisations and movements have fewer than 50 people involved), community-based and focused on youth empowerment, as a means to an end, and as an end in itself. 67.9% of youth and student movements report that they focus primarily on community work, and only 34.6% of child and youth organisations describe their main work as advocacy. For both organisations and movements, youth participation is often localised as project work in physical communities, and not in international events or dictatorship-ending protests.

However, Ani (GYR, Brazil) identifies a distrusting relationship between formal youth organisations and informal youth movements in Brazil, with young activists viewing *“official participation channels for youth, such as the National Youth Council, with scepticism, as they*



*perceive formal political processes in Congress as corrupt.*” Similarly, youth organisations have their own priorities and agendas and may be reticent to put their position and status at risk on behalf of informal movements.

A similarity of approach but current lack of connections suggests that there is significant scope for increased collaboration between student and youth movements and formal youth organisations. For informal groups, youth organisations can provide legal protection, support and advice that informal movements lack; act as interlocutors with funders to fulfil the structural and systemic obligations that donors require; provide access to networks and individuals that informal movements might find difficult; and offer basic infrastructure, such as office space, meeting venues and equipment. The benefits for youth organisations in such collaboration would seem to lie in broadening their participation base and building their legitimacy. The GYR projects described above suggest some areas where the formal and informal can collaborate.

A powerful alliance between youth CSOs and youth activist movements could be forged, not only out of common purpose, but also for mutual protection, benefit and effectiveness. To do so will, however, require trusting relationships and realistic expectations of support to be established.

**When the rule of law is ineffective and when civic freedoms are repressed, child and youth participation often continues through informal networks.**

The child and youth organisations surveyed report that they operate within a governance environment that is, on average, of moderate-to-low quality, as well as in conditions of moderate access to political and civic rights. These limitations have a detrimental effect on organisations and movements. When more time and resources are spent on compliance with bureaucracy, bribing corrupt officials, or fighting opaque legal battles, less time is spent on delivering services and working to effect positive change with and for children and

young people. For those working on child and youth protection, the consequences of poorly enforced laws are even starker: children’s rights are not safeguarded, and violations go unpunished. Fayyaz (GYR, Pakistan) and Tavarrie (GYR, The Bahamas), show how lax, uneven or unenforced laws place children and young people in danger.

The GS shows that almost a quarter (22%) of youth movements engage in non-violent lawful protests, and a tenth (10.7%) in non-violent unlawful protests. Young people who take part in protests may be arbitrarily detained, and denied their rights, with little legal support available. There may also be a particular vulnerability to violence experienced by young women who take part in protests. This was seen, for example, in Tahrir Square in Egypt in 2011.<sup>131</sup>

Activism is not prevented by suppression — it is merely relocated.

When the state fails, is considered illegitimate, or is seen as representing fundamentally different interests to those of youth, young people can form powerful networks that bypass formal participation structures.

Such forging of alternate pathways can also be the case when youth movements address socially taboo subjects. In her research on SRHR work, Ani (GYR, Brazil) shows that a hostile political and social climate prevents activists from being able to organise and mobilise as other civil society groups and organisations do. This includes limited funding, low public engagement, and even facing “*resistance from academic institutions when trying to book rooms for meetings or events.*” Though this means sensitive topics can become “*relegated to the streets in the form of illegal protests, or online,*” activism is not prevented; it is merely relocated.

As the contribution from Brabim (GYR, Nepal) highlights, when a devastating earthquake struck in 2015, youth volunteers mobilised in great numbers, with volunteers often able to respond more quickly and reach more remote areas than the government.<sup>132</sup> This was a strong

example of collaboration between formal youth organisations, informal youth networks and individual young people around a common purpose, with social media playing a key enabling role.

Salim (GYR, Syria) describes how at the start of the Syrian conflict, youth established self-organised Local Coordination Committees to organise protests. As the conflict escalated, these committees evolved to become support structures, providing the health, education and justice services no longer delivered by the state. As Salim concludes, *“Despite war and state failure, participation in civic space lives on, often with young people in the lead.”*

Legitimacy and autonomy are important considerations in deciding whether to formalise or remain informal. The young people in Rocío’s study (GYR, Mexico), who chose not to formalise their organisation, were *“aware that this leads to having no access to external grants and benefits from having an established legal entity”* due to feeling that a *“foreign or domestic grants would make them look corrupt in eyes of their supporters.”* Salim (GYR, Syria) notes that while *“the informal nature of their work can act as a hindrance to getting international support”*, youth activists perceive that international donors *“don’t understand the grassroots nature of Syrian civil society.”* Greater awareness amongst international donors could help strengthen the capacity and ability of informal youth movements, but may require an accommodation of their less structured set-ups, and an understanding of the nuances of legitimacy and autonomy.

In the SDGs, targets 16.3 and 16.10 commit countries to the protection of fundamental freedoms and rule of law. Although already enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and international law, this research suggests that for young people the space for participation and activism is increasingly becoming constrained, prohibited and, in the worst cases, dangerous. The realisation of targets 16.3 and 16.10 will require transformative actions on the part of national governments, youth organisations and activists, donors, agencies and

the rest of society to reverse the current trend of restriction.

### **For youth participation to be meaningful, it needs to address the issue of power.**

The GS was predominantly completed by those working in youth organisations (70.6% of respondents). Over a third, 37.9%, report that the head of their organisations — their CEO, director or equivalent — is a young person. Young people are involved in the day-to-day running of youth organisations through the supervision of staff and volunteers (65.7%) and in the evaluation of the services provided (61.7%).

The examples offered above from GYRs show that young people are leaders of organisations and movements that are seeking to improve their lives, and those of their communities and countries. Through actions such as social businesses, street-based activism, participation in and leadership of protests, community programmes, online discussions and networks of individuals, young people are trailblazers of action and change.

At the same time, the GS suggests that young people’s propensity to participate in traditional civic activities, such as volunteering and being involved in community decision-making and peaceful campaigns, is moderate. For a generation that has grown up in a period of rapid globalisation and increasing access to information technology and open self-expression through social media, it could be that participation on the terms of adults, organisations and power holders is no longer sufficient. It may be the case that the way young people see the world and seek to engage, and the goals they want to achieve, have changed.

Academic research suggests that in recent years, youth participation has focused on the realisation and exercise of individual character benefits, such as leadership skills, confidence and public speaking, at the expense of social and institutional change.<sup>133</sup> Regardless of the structure or space of youth participation, it is the emphasis on developing power that is vital. As Jeremy Heimans, CEO of Purpose and co-creator of Avaaz notes:<sup>134</sup>

*“New power models are enabled by peer coordination and the agency of the crowd - without participation, they are just empty vessels. Old power is enabled by what people or organisations own, know, or control that nobody else does - once old power models lose that, they lose their advantage.”*

Whether experienced in a livelihoods monitoring and evaluation project in Cameroon, or a Twitter-based dialogue on elections in India, the transition from old power to new power will frame youth participation for the next generation. Youth participation has the potential to change relationships between young people, the state and the institutions they encounter, but only if current power imbalances are addressed.

Target 16.7 of the SDGs calls for the establishment of participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Given that 131 countries out of 198 already have a national representative youth structure, the full realisation of target 16.7 should focus on extending both formal and informal mechanisms for young people’s participation, and ensuring that all countries value and provide opportunities for youth.<sup>135</sup> This should include stronger relationships between formal youth organisations and informal movements, the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, and a changed understanding of participation.

Moving participation beyond representation and into changing power relationships would be a new milestone for the youth sector. Regardless of whether international agencies, CSOs and donors join this process, it is already happening. They can either shape it and co-produce it with young people, or be left behind.

### Considerations for action

- » Definitions and understandings of youth participation should go beyond formal youth organisations and traditional civic activities, such as voting, volunteering and being consulted, to embrace genuine spaces for political action, power-sharing and the

realisation of meaningful changes in the lives of young people.

- » Opportunities to create stronger relationships between child and youth organisations and youth movements should be established to build trust between groups that have different structures and ways of working. Work should focus on areas of mutual collaboration and support.
- » Donors, international agencies and youth organisations should increase their understanding of the role, structure and position of informal movements and youth networks and provide support that enables their strengths, rather than seek to change them. Support should include flexible finance mechanisms, legal support and protection, and the provision of basic resources.
- » Current representation structures remain a useful bridge between governments and young people, but are at risk of interference and the perception of co-option. Governments should be encouraged to promote independent youth participation structures that are not aligned to political parties and free from manipulation and coercion.
- » More radical opportunities that focus on the development of power, such as co-ownership of development agendas, crowdsourcing of legislation and data accountability, should be explored to go beyond traditional participation structures.

## Protection

**Children and young people are vulnerable to abuse and violence, where the perpetrators are trusted adults, armed groups, the state and other young people.**

Violence and abuse is a persistent issue that affects many children and young people. In the GS, 90% of respondents indicated that they had witnessed some form of discrimination or violence against a child or young person. Given the statistics that children and young people represent nearly half of all victims of crime

(43% of all murders are of children or young people, and 223 million boys and girls suffer sexual violence each year) this finding is as disheartening as it is unsurprising.<sup>136</sup>

There are numerous perpetrators of violence against children and young people, and in many cases, abuse of children involves persons of trust. To give just one example, in 2009, 82% of substantiated cases of child abuse in the USA were perpetrated by parents or other trusted adults, including teachers, coaches, clergy, or relatives.<sup>137</sup> Fayyaz (GYR, Pakistan) tells the story of children engaging in child labour in Pakistan, who have been physically abused by their employers: some children showed visible scars on their arms during research interviews. CSOs working to eradicate child labour in Pakistan confirm that children not only work under hazardous conditions, but are also susceptible to sexual exploitation by those who employ them.

In 2014, UNICEF estimated that 230 million children were living in countries or areas affected by armed conflict.<sup>138</sup> In the context of conflict, children and young people are most often victims, including as civilian casualties, victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking, and as forced combatants or intelligence sources for armed groups or criminal gangs.<sup>139</sup> Nathalia (GYR, Colombia) notes how, as victims of forced recruitment by armed groups, former child soldiers face stigma and discrimination by their communities when attempting to reintegrate into civilian life. They are therefore victimised twice. Because of this, former child soldiers can have difficulty in finding steady jobs, and risk returning to illegal armed groups, or working in illegal areas, such as drug trafficking.

The state can also be a perpetrator of violence and abuse against children and young people. Tavarie (GYR, Bahamas) describes cases of reported police brutality and maltreatment during detention in The Bahamas. As well as suffering violence at the hands of police and justice officials, children are further victimised by institutional gaps and lack of enforcement, meaning that abuse goes unpunished. Rocío

(GYR, Mexico) describes the risks that informal youth activist groups face, including aggression, harassment and abuse by police and government forces, in an increasingly dangerous civic space: in 2014, over 300 attacks against human rights defenders and journalists were reported in Mexico.<sup>140</sup>

Young people are also perpetrators of violence against their peers. In the GS, 72.6% of respondents identified young people as the lead perpetrators of violence. The World Health Organization identified that, *“the main victims and perpetrators of such violence, almost everywhere, are themselves adolescents and young adults.”*<sup>141</sup> Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that young people are *“involved in armed violence simultaneously as perpetrators, victims and witnesses”*.<sup>142</sup>

Felipe (GYR, Mexico) describes how young people are victims as well as perpetrators in Mexico City, where a recent survey showed that, while 34% of young persons have suffered some type of violence, 21% also consider themselves to be violent.<sup>143</sup> Half of crimes committed in 2010 were by young people.<sup>144</sup> In the context of rising violence in Mexico, the role of young people in contributing to that violence must be addressed.

### **Challenging cultural and gender stereotypes and changing attitudes and behaviours are powerful tools for minimising violence and increasing the resilience of children and young people.**

Part of the response to minimise violence lies in challenging stereotypes and changing attitudes and behaviour. Felipe’s research shows how young people can be agents of change to eradicate violence. The young participants described how positive hip-hop values, such as tolerance and respect, help them react peacefully in potentially violent situations, and how its disciplines have helped them to reflect upon and express feelings about violence and other difficult situations.

Negative cultural stereotypes need to be challenged to help children and young people



Education plays an important role in raising awareness, promoting values and changing attitudes and behaviours towards children.

feel safe. Amy (GYR, USA) describes how academic stress is the primary mental health threat for Asian-American youth, as there is a cultural expectation and sense of family obligation to use education as a means of upward social mobility. Jake (GYR, the Philippines) explores how, in the context of disaster relief programming, the government does not see children as having agency, and so does not adequately include their views when designing programmes.

In both of these cases, negative stereotypes are being challenged through voluntary action. Participants in Amy's focus groups identified youth programmes and volunteering as sources of support for their wellbeing, offering spaces where they can feel a sense of belonging with peers, and develop a sense of achievement in helping their communities. In the Philippines, civil society groups are taking a more progressive view of children, and valuing and respecting children as stakeholders in disaster relief interventions.

Education plays an important role in raising awareness, promoting values and changing attitudes and behaviours towards children. Examples include the child's rights clubs supported by War Child in CAR schools, where students, parents and teachers learn about the value of supporting the rights of children, and civil society work in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, where the value of education is promoted, and messages on the hazards of child labour and early marriage are shared, in order to secure the sustainability of educational gains.

In Uganda, as Brian (GYR) explores, road safety education, run by both teachers and CSOs, can play a pivotal role in reducing risk and promoting safety. Young children perceive road accidents as unavoidable, and do not know what to do in case of an accident. Education, both by teachers and other young people in road safety clubs, has helped to increase their resilience.

**Youth-led networks can play a key role in community-led child protection systems. They can also hold states to account when they fail to uphold the rights of children and youth to protection.**

Youth-led networks can play important and innovative roles in promoting protection, both at individual and societal levels. Amy's example above shows the potential for youth networks to reduce mental health risks, and increase the resilience of young people. Focus group participants described how formal support structures, such as school guidance counsellors, can exacerbate their mental health concerns, by encouraging public shaming, or being dismissive of their problems. In the face of weak support mechanisms, Asian American youth instead found support in youth leadership and volunteer programmes, where networks of young people reduced their feelings of exclusion.

Youth-led networks can also play an essential role at the societal level, where the state is absent, as in the case of Syria, or has failed in its role of upholding rights, and is instead a perpetrator of violence, as in Mexico. Rocío (GYR, Mexico) describes the role of youth-led networks when the state commits violence against young people. Formal youth groups work together in networks with informal groups, to provide support in the event of police harassment and abuse. Human rights networks, such as the National Network of Civil Organisations/All Human Rights for Everybody, document abuses against activists and works to hold the state to account.<sup>145</sup>

The Amman Declaration, an outcome of the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, held in August 2015, recognises the importance

of youth-led organisations and networks and the role they play in preventing violence and promoting peace.<sup>146</sup>

International CSOs can also play a valuable role in supporting community-led protection systems, which involve children and youth. In DRC, protracted conflict has resulted in the weakening of state-led services, such as social protection and health care, while weak governance has led to a culture of impunity towards sexual and gender-based violence, enabled by an under-resourced judicial system. CSOs such as War Child UK have set up child protection mechanisms, and are working to build the capacity of partners such as local and district public bodies, law enforcement officers and community leaders.

#### Considerations for action

- » Governments and law enforcement agencies should enforce just and equitable legislation and policies that provide legal protection, redress for violations and space for violators to be held to account, particularly for survivors of abuse, harassment and corruption.
- » Education is a powerful tool for challenging negative cultural and gender stereotypes, and changing attitudes and behaviours that pose risks to the wellbeing of children and young people. Teachers, parents and families should be engaged in educational initiatives, to promote supportive environments for child rights in school, the community and at home.
- » Community-based child protection systems should be scaled up to help fill gaps in state-supported initiatives.
- » Community-based child protection approaches should ensure the participation and empowerment of children and young people, to enable them to inform child protection initiatives, and hold governments to account.

“[T]he space of a business transforms itself into a space of participation.”

## Livelihoods

**Young entrepreneurs are starting businesses, not only to generate employment, but also to express cultural and civic values.**

The lack of economic opportunities, closely linked to poverty, has serious and damaging impacts on individuals, communities, countries and world regions. The three most significant issues that children and youth face, as identified in the GS, all had clear links to the issue of employment:

- » lack of economic opportunities (including employment) (56.8%);
- » poverty (45.1%);
- » inequality and lack of social mobility (27.2%).

Given the current employment outlook for young people, these are unsurprising findings.

While young people want to create jobs that support them financially, they also seek to transform their communities by taking control and actively participating in their development, including through social enterprises. Gioel (GYR, Italy and Poland) explores the

world of young entrepreneurs who express a desire to spend time on work that is personally meaningful, but also want to “take more agency in their community, fully express their talents, create opportunities to build closer community and engage with people from different walks of life.” In doing so,

*“the space of a business transforms itself into a space of participation.”*

The notion of business as a vehicle to articulate a vision for social change is particularly pronounced in countries experiencing democratic transition. As Soha (GYR) notes from her research on young social entrepreneurs in Egypt:

*“Many young people, inspired by the revolutionary energy and aiming to change their society, sought refuge by embarking on new*

*and creative projects that address the social problems.”*

In Egypt, this response arises from a complex set of factors: a labour market that disproportionately excludes young people; the failure of government and private entities to provide high quality — or sometimes any — public services; and a dissatisfaction with development programmes offered by established CSOs. Moreover, in a restricted civic space, where protests are outlawed, young people are using social enterprises to effect social change while also creating employment for themselves.

While social enterprises provide opportunities for young people to address social problems, Soha notes that support for enterprises is concentrated in urban areas, such as Cairo, rather than rural areas, where poverty levels are higher and social problems more acute. Support for young social entrepreneurs needs to be extended, to ensure that youth are able to address problems in the areas where they are most severe.

**Informal and personal learning can complement formal education in providing the competencies and confidence young people need to improve their livelihoods.**

While SDG target 8.3 calls for the promotion of development-oriented policies, including entrepreneurship, formal education fails to provide young people with adequate skills, knowledge or support mechanisms to establish their own enterprises. Soha reports on the need for business management and English language skills for young social entrepreneurs. These skills are usually obtained in an informal setting and from personal learning experience, rather than through formal education. Similarly, Gioel notes that formal education rarely prepares young entrepreneurs to manage a business, but this gap can be filled by trusting relationships with mentors, who have direct personal experience of entrepreneurship.

Mentoring opportunities provide a space for young people to learn from experienced business owners, and to build strong social

networks that can provide support with the development of an enterprise. The GS, in which 30% of respondents indicated that their organisation or movement relies on the private sector for skills exchange and mentorship, also suggests that some in the sector have learned to tap into these possibilities and work with the private sector for more than simply financial resources, although it indicates potential to develop this resource more.

As the case study of five YBI members suggests, training works best when it is tailored towards the specific needs of a young person and community, such that the skills gained are those most suitable for the context and individual. This can be seen in the special programming that BYST in India and Futurpreneur Canada provide to specific communities that face particular challenges of marginalisation.

**Livelihoods support for young people is improved when a wider range of stakeholders, including the larger community, are involved.**

Various stakeholders, including civil society and the wider community, have a role to play in supporting livelihood interventions. In Cameroon, Hilary (GYR) describes how livelihood empowerment programmes have a mandate to use a participatory evaluation approach, which engages target groups, including youth. The main objectives are to ensure local ownership, and improve the transparency, quality and relevance of the services. This speaks to SDG target 16.6, to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions, and target 16.7, to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

But while this sounds good on paper, Hilary reveals how livelihood programmes often lack an operational framework for engaging target groups such as youth-led CSOs, and how these CSOs lack the finances, human resources and skills to participate effectively. Here, aspiration does not match implementation, and livelihood programmes, as well as the youth beneficiaries they aim to serve, are disadvantaged as a result.

Nathalia (GYR, Colombia) discusses the role played by communities and businesses that host former child soldiers in livelihoods programmes as part of their re-integration. Gaining employment is the beginning of a long road to recovery for former child combatants, with the ability to hold an “*honest and decent job*” representing the “*first chance to be a citizen.*” Success lies not simply in having a job, but in overcoming barriers of discrimination and stigma, among employers and communities. Without an emphasis on building trust in the host communities, there is a risk that employment will not be sustained.

Young women face particular vulnerabilities in their economic life, as Roli (GYR, India) explores. In India, young women face constant threats to their safety, both in public spaces and the workplace, with worse risks in the informal sector. Young women can be put in a position where they must either tolerate threats to their safety or continually seek alternative employment and risk unemployment. This is a difficult proposition for those already in a tenuous economic position. Young people must be afforded opportunities for work, but also their working conditions should be decent, consistent with SDG target 8.8, which seeks to promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, in particular women migrants and those in precarious employment.

#### Considerations for action

- » Long-term employability, entrepreneurship and practical skills learning should be promoted, in addition to core teaching, and more opportunities created for non-formal education.
- » Ways should be increased in which the private sector and CSOs can collaborate to develop activities that enhance skills, knowledge and learning, such as mentoring for young people, paid internships and training in the workplace.
- » Support initiatives for youth-led social enterprises should extend beyond cities into rural areas, where poverty levels can be

considerably higher and social problems more acute.

- » The participation of a wider range of stakeholders in the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of livelihoods programming should be strengthened, and particularly the participation of youth-led and youth-focused CSOs. There is a need to ensure that operational frameworks are in place to guide engagement, and that youth have the capacity and skills to participate adequately.
- » There is a need to promote tolerant, open and safe working environments for young people, with a focus on vulnerable populations, such as former child soldiers.

## Other aspects of the environment that enable or hinder child and youth development

### Poverty

**Poverty is the most pressing issue facing children and young people today. It impacts on all other areas of their development.**

In the GS, poverty was identified as the most important issue facing young people by respondents who work with very young children (aged up to five years), and one of the top three issues by all respondents.

Eradicating poverty is arguably the greatest global challenge and is intrinsic for the achievement of the SDGs: ending poverty in all its forms everywhere is SDG goal 1, and one of the fundamental goals of the UN system.<sup>147</sup> Since 1990, the percentage of people living on less than U\$1.25 a day has dropped to 14%. However, 800 million people still live in extreme poverty and suffer from hunger, and 160 million children under five experience stunted



growth as a result of poor nutrition and insufficient food.<sup>148</sup>

Our research indicates how poverty affects the lives of children and youth beyond health impacts, by magnifying and compounding the obstacles already faced by young people in the areas of participation, protection and livelihoods. Lawrence (GYR, Ethiopia) explains that young people want to be part of the development of their country and continent, but many young people are discriminated against by economic and political elites, and are denied access to decision-making structures due to their social class. Formal participatory structures often skew towards youth who are well-educated and have time and social capital, advantages typically enjoyed by those who are wealthier.

Poverty further deprives children of basic rights, and leads to discrimination in the legal

curity, and high turnover.<sup>149</sup> Although discrimination does not happen only to poor women, they are more exposed to it, as they more likely to find work in this sector. Of the families interviewed by Fayyaz (GYR, Pakistan), poverty is the main reason why children are sent to work, where they are exposed to abuse by their employers. Children in labour are further deprived of their right to education.

### Consideration for action

- » Children and youth data should be disaggregated in all SDGs data, to ensure that the unique impacts of poverty on children and young people are not lost within the overall statistics. As part of this, there is a need to advocate for age-specific data, with the ability to disaggregate for both children and youth with sufficient refinement.

Poverty magnifies and compounds the obstacles already faced by young people in the areas of participation, protection and livelihoods.

system. Tavarrie (GYR, The Bahamas) describes how children who cannot afford attorneys are forced to represent themselves, as free legal aid is not available to minors. Young people from poorer backgrounds also face greater difficulties in improving their livelihoods than others, as poverty drives them to work in jobs that involve greater risks than they would otherwise choose. Roli (GYR, India) describes how sexual harassment of women is worst in the informal sector, which in India is characterised by uncertain legal status, lower rates of pay and job se-

## Governance

**Poor governance and a lack of effective rule of law constrains organisations and movements, and compromises development for children and youth.**

A consistent and fair legal system is very important to the work that child and youth organisations do, as the GS attests. Child and youth organisations report, on average, that they operate in an environment of moderate-to-low quality governance. This has a detrimental effect on the ability of organisations and movements to operate, and therefore on child and youth development.

The centrality of good governance, the rule of law and justice in sustainable development is now being recognised.<sup>150</sup> SDG goal 16 aims to “*promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*” Target 16.3 is to “*promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.*” John W Ashe, President of the UN General Assembly in 2013, recounts exam-

ples that demonstrate the link between rule of law and development:<sup>151</sup>

*“We heard a number of important examples about how the rule of law was instrumental to access and foster integration into global trade; how strengthened institutions and clear legal frameworks that fostered predictability, transparency and accountability were beneficial to economic development at the national level and could help curtail corruption [...]; and how better access to justice through transparent and impartial institutions fit for purpose has empowered otherwise marginalised parts of society, such as women or minorities [...]*

*“[T]he rule of law underpins human rights which supports the process of sustainable development in all its dimensions.”*

Our research further demonstrates the link between the rule of law and development, specifically for children and young people. The case studies indicate how poor governance and corruption takes time and resources away from the delivery of vital services for children and young people. Poor governance also has a direct impact on the personal rights of children and young people. Respondents to the GS working in protection are most acutely affected by poor governance and weak legal enforcement, because this means that children’s rights are not safeguarded, particularly when violations go unpunished.

The GYR projects further illuminate the impact that a weak justice system and the lack of an effective rule of law can have on the lives of children and young people. When laws are not enforced — particularly those that protect freedom of expression — participation can be negatively affected: activists risk police intimidation and free speech is stifled, as shown by Rocío (GYR, Mexico), or free speech migrates to online platforms, where activists feel safer,

Poor governance also has a direct impact on the personal rights of children and young people.

but which excludes those who lack access, as explored by Naim (GYR, India). A young person’s ability to improve his or her livelihood can also be affected by a weak legal and governance environment. Soha (GYR, Egypt) mentions how a lack of intellectual property enforcement stifles young entrepreneurs, as they fear their ideas will be stolen. Roli (GYR, India) describes how failure to act on workplace harassment of young women can force women into precarious employment. The failure to enforce child labour laws in Pakistan means that the practice remains commonplace, and children are working instead of attending school, as explained by Fayyaz (GYR, Pakistan).

The rule of law is not only about the enforcement of laws, but also about the consistency and quality of laws, and the processes attached to them. Tavarrie (GYR, The Bahamas) elaborates how a lack of consistency and absence of clear procedures in the judicial system puts young people and children at risk.

### Considerations for action

- » To highlight the impact human rights violations have on children and youth, mechanisms for human rights monitoring should be strengthened, through bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. To this end, there is a need to advocate for a special child and youth section of the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.<sup>152</sup>
- » The participation of child and youth CSOs in UPR processes should be encouraged by developing shadow reports with a special focus on children, young people and human rights. Children and youth organisations should be empowered to produce such reports.

## Civil society pushback

**Increasing restrictions on civil society, and lack of trust in and recognition of children and youth organisations, threatens many associations, networks and movements.**

This investigation of the enabling environment for child and youth development has come during a time of global pushback against CSOs.

In 2015, CIVICUS reported that the three key civic freedoms — freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression — were threatened in 96 countries, with six out of seven of the world's population living in countries where these freedoms are constrained or denied.<sup>153</sup> In its 2015 State of Civil Society Report, CIVICUS stated that:<sup>154</sup>

*“...these developments suggest a renewed period of contestation about the acceptable bounds of civil society, the latest manifestation of the battle to protect citizens against state power.”*

CIVICUS reported that the three key civic freedoms — freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression — were threatened in 96 countries, with six out of seven of the world's population living in countries where these freedoms are constrained or denied

There is now, at least, growing awareness of the scale and scope of the pushback. It has been documented by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the International Human Rights Funders Group, among others, and reported widely in the media.<sup>155</sup>

While the pushback against civil society includes many instruments of constraint, control and harassment, the introduction of laws and regulations to restrict the receipt of funding has become a particularly troubling recent tactic. The International Center for Not-for-Profit-Law (ICNL) has mapped such restrictive funding measures. According to its report, legal barriers that impede access to international funding, including through grants, donations, contracts and investments, are one of the most commonly used constraints, and are increasingly far-reaching:<sup>156</sup>

*“...constraints on external funding have arisen in every region, including countries from Africa (e.g., Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan); Asia (e.g., Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan); Europe & Eurasia (e.g., Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine); Latin America (e.g., Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela); and the Middle East (e.g., Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt).”*

Increased awareness and debate about the issues surrounding the restriction of funding of civil society, including the youth sector, has led to Maina Kiai, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, placing the issue of civil society funding on the global agenda. This resulted in his milestone 2013 investigation, *Report on the ability of associations to access financial resources as a vital part of the right to freedom of association*.<sup>157</sup>

The current wave of restriction is affecting CSOs that work with and for children and young people, including those that work in the areas of participation, protection and livelihoods.

### Consideration for action

- » CSOs and youth movements must resist, and actively campaign against, national

and international restrictions, including restrictions against the receipt of funding.

## Resources

### **Resourcing challenges are most acute for smaller and less formal organisations and movements.**

Restrictions on the receipt of funding offer a further challenge to organisations and movements that already struggle to secure sufficient resourcing. From organisations in Cameroon, described by Hilary (GYR), that are unable to participate effectively in monitoring and evaluation schemes for livelihood programmes, to informal groups in Brazil, researched by Ani (GYR), who have no funds to pay for meeting spaces and are blocked from using free spaces because of the controversial nature of their work on SRHR, the lack of access to sustainable funding is obstructing the work of children and youth organisations and movements across the globe.

CIVICUS Secretary General Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah further points out that many donors do not know how to support CSOs adequately during these times of pushback, and instead rely on what he calls ‘projectisation’ and ‘logframitis’, bureaucratic support processes that limit the potential of civil society:

*“They want us to package the long-term and systemic change we are passionate about into neat little fundable projects that fit their programme and timelines. They work through complex chains of ‘fundermediaries’ who channel ever-smaller chunks of money with ever-larger relative reporting requirements. Many in civil society are good at playing this game but many of the most innovative, most ambitious initiatives rarely involve project proposals.”*

CIVICUS further identifies a persistent tendency of funders to favour larger, service-orientated organisations over smaller, change-seeking

ones as an additional problem for civil society, and one that would seem to apply to many child and youth organisations. The War Child UK case study, which suggested that funding tends to flow to more measurable, humanitarian responses, rather than work to promote the long-term wellbeing of children, adds weight to this. The case study also suggested that competitive funding processes tend to favour larger CSOs. Smaller CSOs, and less formal groups, receive less support.

Such challenges are spelled out by Salim (GYR, Syria), in his interviews with youth civil society leaders in informal organisations, which are doing vital work in the absence of the state but struggle to find funds for their activities because of their less formal nature:

*“Many of the organisations profiled began as flexible social movements centred around self-organisation, and due to the requirements of international donors, must consider becoming structures and institutions, getting bogged down in bureaucracy. The informal nature of their work can act as a hindrance to getting international support.”*

These tendencies imply a growing rift between smaller and larger organisations, and formal organisations and less formal movements. As noted earlier, the organisations in the GS that felt most confident of sustaining themselves, based on current levels of funding and operation, are generally the largest ones. The danger is that inequality within civil society is permanently reinforced by selection procedures that favour larger organisations, and consultation processes that give larger organisations the best access to spaces.

### **Time for a rethink on resourcing**

60.3% of GS respondents cited the lack of funding as the biggest difficulty faced by child and youth organisations and movements.

When invited to elaborate on funding challenges, it is notable that the majority of responses focused on internal issues, particularly lack of expertise to fundraise, lack of time to



The lack of funding is cited as the most prominent problem of child and youth organisations and movements.

fundraise, and perceptions that youth organisations are unprofessional.

Reinforcing this finding, when asked what they considered to be the factors most likely to contribute to their organisation's or movement's success, respondents cited access to funding most frequently, and again focused on internal factors, such as staff and volunteers needing to develop stronger fundraising skills. This suggests some lack of awareness of external issues affecting the sector as a whole, including the trend of increasing civic space restriction and the overall lack of public funding.

CIVICUS argues that *"it is time for a fundamental rethink about the resourcing of civil society,"* and this call holds true for child and youth organisations.<sup>158</sup> There are some key actors in the sector who could take such a rethink forward, most notably the UN Youth Envoy, who has long been working towards convening a meeting of donors on the funding of youth organisations. Other key actors may include those 20% of child and youth organisations which report confidence that they have sufficient resources to continue their work in the long-term.

The fear must be that many children and youth organisations and movements will be caught by surprise if civic space restrictions worsen or the funding situation for civil society deteriorates further. If these questions and issues are taken on now by child and youth development networks and stakeholders, preparedness and resilience will be built for the

changes in the environment that may be on their way.

Given this need for preparedness, a global youth donor and philanthropy summit should be convened. It should bring together those that provide funding, those that currently benefit from funding, and those that do not. A focus should be on how to distribute resources to those child and youth organisations and movements that are most at risk from experiencing restrictions on civil society, including small and change-seeking organisations and movements.

### Considerations for action

- » CSOs and youth movements should campaign for development work to be adequately resourced, and for the fairer distribution of resources to reach a wider range of organisations and movements.
- » Capacity building programmes should be initiated to support young people's abilities in organisational development, particularly in fundraising skills and financing strategies.
- » A knowledge base should be developed about informal youth movements, to understand better their nature and operations, and how best to support them.
- » A global youth donor and philanthropy summit should be established to reconsider the ways in which youth civil society is funded, the uneven allocation of funding, restrictions on the receipt of funding and the ability of small CSOs and informal groups to access resources.

Young women prepare their reflections on the relationship between HIV and gender, proposing solutions on how this issue can best be tackled in South Africa.

Picture: [Restless Development](#)



From rhetoric  
to action: what  
needs to change?





The *Case for Space* initiative, through this research project, has had a rare opportunity to measure the pulse of child and youth development practice, to pair the latest thinking with the lived experience of youth, and to understand better the issues, themes, obstacles and opportunities that matter most to children, young people and their organisations and movements today.

Through a global survey, case studies, and 18 participatory, youth-led research projects, the research has explored what strengthens and obstructs enabling environments that should ensure that children and young people can influence decisions, claim their rights and improve their livelihoods.

The accumulated findings of this report confirm and add detail about the major hindrances for child and youth development, many of which are well known: poor quality education; lack of employment opportunities, disproportionate poverty; low trust in institutions; low political rights and freedoms; uneven civil society infrastructure; poor governance and

lack of effective rule of law; repressed political rights and freedoms; under-resourcing of many child and youth organisations and movements; and an increasingly constrained legal context for CSOs and movements.

It may seem discouraging that many of the challenges identified in this report are all too familiar. This is particularly the case when looking at the broader global picture. It is far from new that poverty affects children and young people disproportionately, or that governance is closely intertwined with development outcomes. To make things worse, many movements of young people around the globe — the very citizens who are best-positioned to address these challenges — find themselves caught up in the current global pushback against civil society. The sheer scale of challenging conditions that are present, by design or default, can feel overwhelming, even to the most agile child, youth or organisation and movement. It is easy to feel that the global balance has tipped against children and young people.

And yet there are beacons of hope everywhere. Around the globe, there are small but





Primary school children lead a rally on waste management in rural village in Tamil Nadu, India  
Picture: Restless Development

important victories for the child and youth sector. And wherever there are hindrances, there are young people engaging in constant acts of resilience, adaptation and resistance. The enduring abilities of children and young people to adjust, survive and transform the structural barriers in their way can be truly inspirational. Our research has showcased ways in which, on the cusp of a new era in global development, child and youth organisations and movements have taken constructive action: young people have used online communication to form *ad hoc* networks to provide basic public services, respond to humanitarian crises and form community-based protection systems; they have established socially-oriented enterprises; they have advocated for policy dialogue on contested issues; they have taken leading roles within organisations and movements; they have taken to the streets, sometimes risking their lives, to push for justice and human rights.

It should be a source of constant hope that children and young people are, in an often difficult operating environment, reassuringly creative in improving their communities. Our

research suggests that a substantial number of organisations have managed to flourish over the past years, equipping themselves with the resources and authority that helps to weather the challenges other organisations and movements have a hard time responding to.

The recommendations of some of these young people — our Global Young Researchers — will, we hope, help to improve the effectiveness of child and youth organisations and movements, even if they cannot on their own transform the persistently challenging environment for youth and development.

To only lament the scale of the challenge would simply be to indulge our occasional propensity in the youth sector to favour conversation over action. The Case for Space initiative offers an opportunity to advance ideas that can challenge and change the environment. From ensuring that the SDGs consider and capture the realities of children and young people, to making the UPR process address child and youth rights, and from fostering youth-led child protection systems to strengthening non-formal educational opportunities to support employment, this report has set out a wide-ranging set of considerations for action, from the local to the global level.

This research project has reaffirmed our belief that children and young people are the people best placed to inform policies and programmes that are created for them. The youth-led nature of this research offers a practical demonstration of how young people can be agents of change. Youth-led participatory research techniques offer a powerful way to enhance understanding of the various facets of child and youth development, and provide nuance, context and richness of detail where they are most needed. Such techniques should be built into research initiatives wherever they explore issues that affect children and young people.



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# Appendix I

## Enabling Environment Index – Sub-dimensions

Adapted from CIVICUS (2013), Dimensions and Indicators Table for the CIVICUS Civil Society Enabling Environment Index  
<http://civicus.org/eei/>

### Socio-economic environment

#### Education

Includes basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as enrolment and completion of primary, secondary or tertiary formal education

#### Communications

Includes access to technologies used for communication, including Internet and mobile. "Access" can mean skill, availability, cost

#### Equality

Reflection of social or economic inequality, and the impact of this on participating in public life. Measures include Gini coefficient, Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index

#### Gender equality

Specific focus of equality between the sexes

### Socio-cultural environment

#### Propensity to participate

Cultural propensity or willingness of people to take part in civic activities

#### Tolerance

Acceptance or permissive attitudes towards difference (of opinions, race, religion, nationality, sexuality)

#### Trust

Levels of trust between people or institutions, which can lead to cooperation

#### Giving and volunteering

Propensity of people to get involved in more formal charitable activities (making donation, helping strangers, volunteering)

## GOVERNANCE ENVIRONMENT

### CIVIL SOCIETY INFRASTRUCTURE

Strength of organisational capacity, financial resources and support mechanisms for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

### POLICY DIALOGUE

Openness of governing institutions to outside inputs (levels of advocacy by CSOs, existence of networks of cooperative associations or interest groups; engagement of government with outside groups or individuals in policy process)

### CORRUPTION

"The abuse of trusted power for private gain". Distorts ability to influence policy process, Can be of high-level officials or lower civil servants (Transparency International, 2015, FAQs on Corruption, [https://www.transparency.org/whowere/organisation/faqs\\_on\\_corruption/2/](https://www.transparency.org/whowere/organisation/faqs_on_corruption/2/))

### POLITICAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Includes human rights, civil rights, political rights, access to information

### ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL RIGHTS

Specifically the ability to freely assemble and associate with others in political parties, trade unions, special interest groups

### RULE OF LAW

Governance by laws for all people and not arbitrary decisions of governmental officials; includes free and fair elections and independence of the judiciary from other branches of government and the military

### PERSONAL RIGHTS

Specifically focus on basic human rights, such as physical integrity (freedom from violence, torture, extrajudicial killing, political imprisonment, disappearance)

### NGO LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Legal conditions that allow NGOs to operate with relative ease and little impediment

### MEDIA FREEDOM

Open flow of information to the citizenry, independent from government or censorship, meaning any form of restriction placed on the press, or in general, on speech or expression









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