AFRICAN YOUTH
Development and Empowerment:

Sharing Experiences that Work

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FOREWORD

The African Union considers African Youth as a special resource that requires special attention. African youth constitute up to 40% of the population. They are a formidable creative resource that can be harnessed for Africa's socio-economic development. Africa's youth have been faced with a myriad of problems. They have been used as canon fodder in times of war; they suffer poverty and deprivation; many are denied education, information and skill development opportunities. These clearly hinder the development of their potential to the fullest including their becoming responsible citizens and parents. HIV/AIDS, compounded by sexually-transmitted diseases, has not spared them either. Girls and young woman especially bear the brunt of HIV infections and suffer from rape, unwanted teen-age pregnancies, early marriages and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and obstetric fistula which further deepen the unfortunate condition in which thousands of female youth find themselves.

As UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid rightly said, "The bulging youth population in Africa constitutes both risks and opportunities. The huge youth population can result in increased capacity for growth and poverty reduction, if the opportunity is seized through adequate investment in health (including reproductive health and HIV prevention), education, and adequate market-based skills building as well as employment generation."

In line with its 2004-2007 Strategic Plan, the Commission of the African Union undertook to develop an African Youth Charter, by which

Member States will be assisted to develop nurturing programs for its young people. A popular document with the Youth who participated in its development, the Charter addresses both rights and responsibilities of the youth. Its implementation will enable the continent to maximize the potential of its youth, entrench a culture of responsible African citizenship, and ensure that young people are gainfully employed in the development, peace building and engendering prosperity, so that Africa can indeed claim the 21st century.

For this reason, the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa will address technical and vocational education and training, among its seven areas of focus. A culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, and a focus on science and technology will fit Africa's youth for leadership in the 21st century.

It is for these reasons that the AU Commission appreciates the positive support and collaboration of Partners such as the UNFPA in addressing the plight of African youth.

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List of Abbreviations

ASRH	Adolescent sexual and reproductive health
AUC	African Union Commission
AYA	African Youth Alliance
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CYCI	Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ICT	Information and communication technology
IYF	International Youth Foundation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NFE	Non-formal education
NGO	Non-government organization
PRSP	Poverty reduction strategy paper
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
SWAp	Sector-wide approach
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YDI	Youth Development Index

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth constitutes the largest segment of Africa's population. Therefore, youth is Africa's foremost social capital that requires priority investment. It is clear that Africa's development agenda should create an enabling environment in which youth and adolescents could strive in an environment that fully protects their rights, that is conducive to their development and empowerment and that adequately prepares them for responsible citizenship and parenthood.

Investing in the future of Africa calls for, among other factors, the effective and positive impact of youth development programmes and projects. This in turn requires building on successful practices that have contributed to youth participation, development and leadership. The African Union Commission and member states, including various stakeholders and partners in national and regional development, need to know about and adopt innovative, comprehensive and holistic approaches for youth development. Given the emerging consensus on the critical role of youth in the national development process, documentation of best practices and lessons learnt becomes an important contribution to improving the quality and scope of programming for youth development.

The rationale for this booklet is to document regional and global experiences on youth development to serve as a knowledge asset for both practitioners and policy makers working on youth development, empowerment and leadership issues. The experiences presented are intended to provide some guidance on what has worked and the underlying reasons, as well as to highlight factors that have inhibited more targeted and sustainable programming for youth development.

The booklet does not present an exhaustive review of youth projects and programmes, but rather aims to underscore the critical enabling factors that have contributed to the success of a selected set of programmes and approaches. The analysis presented should be seen as a work in progress.

One of the main objectives of the booklet is to set out an initial framework for the key elements that constitute a best practice in youth development, empowerment and leadership. The framework consists of a set of benchmarks that have been identified in varying degrees in best practices for youth programmes. The benchmarks encompass: participation, innovation, strategic capacity building, knowledge-based programming, rights-based programming, community involvement and potential for scaling up. These are critical factors of success that should be incorporated into the design of youth development programmes. While it may not be possible to integrate all these factors to the same degree, the framework nevertheless provides a minimum set of criteria for ensuring the positive and sustainable impact of a particular youth development initiative.

The examples of youth programmes selected for analysis present an integrated and multi-sector approach to several programmatic areas:

- youth and poverty reduction,
- youth and sexual and reproductive health and HIV/ AIDS,
- youth and participation and governance,
- youth in conflict situations,
- youth development, and
- private sector partnerships.

In the area of enterprise development among youth, the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative has proven successful at increasing access to credit, a serious constraint faced by youth seeking to start their own businesses. The African Youth Alliance, initiated through a multi-stakeholder partnership and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is another best practice example. While primarily aimed at addressing HIV/AIDS among youth, this programme used a multi-sector approach that also integrated livelihood issues.

Poverty reduction among youth is rapidly becoming a priority issue in national agendas, particularly within the framework of national poverty reduction strategies. Countries like Malawi and Mauritania are among the increasing numbers of countries that have integrated youth development as a key component of their poverty reduction strategies. The Youth Development Index developed for Brazilian youth is a solid example of youth-centred policy development. It is hoped that the best practice experiences presented in this booklet will serve as building blocks and contribute to up scaling the response to youth development and to effective policy making and programming.

The African Union is preparing for the approval and the adoption of a Pan African Charter and its coordinating regional mechanism – the Pan African Confederation.

The Charter is expected to provide for Continental Covenant that puts "Youth First" in Africa's development endeavours. It is hoped that the Charter will also help to enhance existing National Youth Policies and provide an additional impetus for their effective implementation from which ample examples of best practices could derive.

1. Background

> "Governments, donors and civil society organizations must be guided by a comprehensive national perspective in their efforts to address poverty among young people. A network of major stakeholders must be established to ensure coordination of efforts across government departments and the donor community. Extensive consultations with young people and their representative associations is required at all stages of the policy development and implementation process." *(World Youth Report 2005).*

The issue of youth development, empowerment and leadership is gaining increasing importance in the development agenda of national governments, regional entities and international development organizations. Most notably, there is a new momentum to promote the participation of youth groups and non-government organizations (NGOs) in a wide range of policy dialogues and policy development initiatives to ensure that youth perspectives are addressed in these processes.

The emphasis is none too soon in coming about, as people under the age of 25 represent around half the population of sub-Saharan Africa and other developing regions of the world. Those in the bracket commonly referred to as "young people" – aged 10–24 – account for about 30 percent of the total in sub-Saharan Africa.

Much of this impetus is the result of the recognition of the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on youth in most regions of the world and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (the highest rate of STI including HIV infection is found among young people 20–24

years old and the next highest among adolescents, aged 15–19). The consequences for growth and development are devastating, both socially and economically. This realization has led to a much more concerted effort to begin to address youth development issues in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

In fact, the economic role of the youth is so important that it is enumerated as Target 16 of Millennium Goal 8 (Develop a Global Partnership for Development): "In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth", with the indicator being the unemployment rate of 15–24-year-olds. Moreover, the African Union Commission is organizing a youth forum and conference of ministers, which will be held in Addis Ababa on 22–29 May 2006, and the World Bank will devote the 2007 World Development Report to youth issues – "Development and the Next Generation".

In addition to this attention, October 2005 marked the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, an observance that has served to refocus member states' commitment to achieving goals established in ten priority areas as set out in resolution 50/81. Specific commitments were made in the areas of youth concerns and needs in education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, gender equality, and participation in decision making. This youth development agenda was expanded in 2003 to take account of emerging development challenges facing youth; in response, the General Assembly adopted resolution 58/133, which endorsed the five additional priority areas of globalization, information and communication technology (ICT), HIV/AIDS, youth and armed conflict, and intergenerational relations.

Despite this comprehensive international awareness and commitment, programming for youth development, empowerment and leadership has to a large extent been conceptualized and implemented in a mostly ad hoc and fragmented manner. Much of the support for youth activities has been narrowly defined in terms of single sector issues mainly focusing on education cum vocational training and employment generation. There has been a discernable lack of efforts to address the problems of youth development using an integrated and multi-sector approach. The outcome of this shortcoming is that youth development and empowerment issues are in practice still peripheral to mainstream development policy making and programming. They remain in the realm of "projectized" activities that depend on external sources of funding and support and have little evident ownership by national governments, which nevertheless extol the high value of youth as a critical human resource to the development of their communities.

While programming for youth in a relevant and effective manner is still a new practice area, there are a number of important initiatives under way, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, that reflect a tangible change in the way youth issues are perceived by policy makers and development partners in the region. The African Union Commission (AUC) has initiated a process of complementing regional efforts towards effectively addressing youth development, empowerment and leadership in Africa. This effort is being pursued on three specific fronts:

- Elaboration of a Pan-African Youth Charter for adoption by African Youth Ministers.
- Support for extensive consultations between youth experts and youth constituencies to debate and reach a consensus on priority issues and actions to address youth concerns in the region.

- Commissioning of a concept paper on a Pan-African Youth Federation as a means to strategize on an appropriate structure to represent youth vis-à-vis the African Union.

These three initiatives are interlinked. They aim to promote a more comprehensive and systematic approach to youth development in the region, and equally important to establish specific policy and institutional frameworks to enable the African Union Commission and its development partners to address the many challenges facing youth in Africa. The Charter is envisaged as a common framework of principles and parameters for youth involvement and is intended to provide guidance to member states on the benchmarks that are required to achieve the highest level of youth development and empowerment in their respective countries.

2. Rationale

The emerging global and regional consensus on youth development clearly underscores the need to ensure the inclusion of youth perspectives in the development process along with the effective participation of youth in development practice.

The AUC and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) view this as a timely and strategic opportunity to undertake a preliminary exercise on documenting lessons and best practices in youth development, empowerment and leadership. This effort aims to contribute to ongoing efforts in three concrete ways:

- Build a knowledge base on programming experiences on youth development, empowerment and leadership.
- Promote sharing of lessons learnt and best practices with a view to influencing policy makers in the region.
- Contribute to and complement the African Union's initiative to elaborate and adopt a region-wide youth charter by summarizing policies and practices that have worked and have potential for scaling up.

This booklet begins that process. The booklet identifies programming experiences that demonstrate a measure of development effectiveness and impact in terms of the extent to which they have transformed the lives and livelihoods of their key beneficiaries – the youth of Africa. These examples stand out because of their innovative and strategic approaches to youth development and the insightful lessons they convey for future policy making and programming efforts.

The selection of youth development and empowerment experiences presented here as best practices is far from exhaustive

given the limited scope of the review. Rather, the booklet aims to present a synthesis of the lessons learnt and key features of the best practices selected instead of itemizing a compendium of "successful" youth development and empowerment activities or programmes in the different thematic areas. Furthermore, where compelling, examples have also been selected from other regions to provide further insight into and understanding of youth development issues. The intent here is to begin a process of sharing those particular experiences that have contributed to building a knowledge base on how best to design and deliver development programmes that address critical needs of today's youth in different and difficult circumstances.

The analysis is based on a thematic approach rather than a sectoral one. In the past most youth-related development has been addressed in a limited single-sector fashion, such as education, health or employment. It is hoped that framing youth issues within an integrated and multi-sector approach will yield dividends for future programming efforts for youth and provide value added to overall development performance in the region.

3. Key Benchmarks for Programming

KEY BENCHMARKS for Successful Intervention

- Participation,
- innovation,
- capacity enhancement,
- knowledge and rights based approaches,
- community engagement and commitment,
- strategic partnerships,
- the potential for scaling up

The best practice experiences presented in this booklet not only underscore a number of critical factors that have contributed to achievement of their objectives. They also offer evidence of their replicability and viability beyond their initial incidence of success. It should be emphasized that an important outcome of this exercise is to contribute in a concrete way to building a knowledge base on how and why programmes for youth development and empowerment can be effectively designed and implemented and make a difference in the lives and livelihoods of so many youth facing so many challenges.

For the purpose of establishing an initial framework of key elements that constitute a best practice in youth development empowerment and leadership, a number of benchmarks were elaborated from the outset: participation, innovation, strategic capacity enhancement, knowledge and rights based approaches, community engagement and commitment, strategic partnerships, and the potential for scaling up. These have proven to be critical factors of success in programming efforts aimed at responding effectively to the challenges of addressing youth development, empowerment and leadership. These factors are described in turn.

- **Participation** is critical for achieving youth development, empowerment and leadership but is not always easily achieved at a practical level. Meaningful participation is multi-faceted and entails the active involvement of youth themselves in all phases of policy and programme development including design, management and decision making, as well as monitoring and assessment of activities.

  Too often consultation with youth is equated with participation, and too often this is because programme managers do not regard youth as capable of more than token participation. In truth, youth themselves are not always well prepared to participate effectively as development partners. In many instances they lack the requisite leadership and organizational skills to clearly and convincingly advocate for their interests and needs as key stakeholders. It is essential to clearly formulate and implement the participation component of a given youth development programme.

  Many of the youth development experiences reviewed for this exercise integrate a well defined participation component with built in modalities to strengthen the capacity of youth for participation. The Commonwealth Youth Programme presents a best practice example of youth in Commonwealth countries participating as full partners in this multi-dimensional initiative.

- **Innovation** is a key feature of development, empowerment and leadership programmes that have responded effectively to youth concerns and needs. Yet, in many respects the youth development agenda has lacked innovation in ways that would have added value to the quality of the programmes

formulated and the effectiveness of the delivery of services and inputs. A major exception here is youth programmes in the HIV/AIDS sector, which have achieved a remarkable degree of innovation and creativity.

Programmes able to introduce innovative ways of reaching out to youth have reaped the dividends not only of responding to the youth but also of contributing a sustainable intervention that has wider significance beyond the specific activity or programme.

• **Strategic capacity building** is a component that should be integral to all youth development programmes. To date, youth development, empowerment and leadership programmes have fallen far short of their goals because of weak design and implementation of their capacity building activities.

While substantial support has been provided for training or skill development programmes for youth, most of these have been designed as isolated activities. Little effort has been made to improve or reform those policies that haven't worked based on an in-depth evaluation of the outcomes of such projects.

These activities have another serious flaw in that they are de-linked from livelihood opportunities that exist in their communities. It is ironic that such programmes may end up producing "unemployable" graduates who lack the skills required for the local labour market, rather than a skilled human resource

that is in demand and an asset for development at the community level.

- **Knowledge-based** youth development programmes have a singular advantage in fully and meaningfully addressing the needs of all stakeholders who are critical to the successful implementation of their activities. The experiences selected for review underscore the need to invest time and resources to find out relevant and accurate information about the primary beneficiaries, the youth and their families and communities.

  Indeed, the effort has to go beyond conducting a baseline survey to ensuring that knowledge is generated at each stage of programme implementation and used to ensure that activities are in line with intended objectives, with sufficient flexibility built in to accommodate modifications in the design of such programmes if and when it becomes necessary. Information gathering on youth has to change radically if the knowledge base is to be of practical use in policy formulation of programming.

- **Community engagement** is a core feature of almost all the youth development and empowerment programmes presented here. Participation and engagement of the community – including parents, teachers and local entrepreneurs – is a critical factor in the success of youth-focused development activities.

  Where the involvement of key constituencies is lacking or inadequate, projects for youth will inevitably not do well or fail entirely. A "buy-in" is

needed by all stakeholders at all stages from design to implementation to evaluation so to ensure community ownership and programme sustainability.

• **A rights-based approach** has become an accepted programming strategy much like the complementary results-based approach. While there is as yet no specific "rights" framework for youth, work is under way even at the regional level to formulate one.

In the meantime, other frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provide a basis for pursing specific commitments made to youth. This approach emphasizes a holistic perspective on youth development issues rather than a narrow or sectoral response to the needs of youth.

• **Multiple partnerships** are essential if youth development programmes are to truly take off and affect the lives of youth in positive and productive ways. Multiple sponsors are needed not only for mobilizing substantial levels of resources, but to ensure a broad base of community involvement and a multi-sector perspective that more comprehensively responds to the needs of youth.

• **Potential for scaling up** is an important indicator of best practice. Given the huge social, economic and political challenges facing youth, and their equally huge potential for contributing to economic and social development, there is considerable urgency "to go to scale" with experiences that have been demonstrated to work. Indeed there are priority areas

for up-scaling, such as data gathering on the circumstances of youth, that are critical for policy development and programme support.

The relative value and relevance of each of these benchmarks is largely determined by the specificities of the development context and challenges that youth are confronted with. For example, the emphasis given to benchmarks used in youth in conflict programmes will vary from those of the core benchmarks used to appraise best practices in youth in governance initiatives. It is useful, moreover, to keep in mind that this is still a work in progress. Much more concerted effort is needed to refine and retool the benchmarks, and more and more programmes need to be scrutinized for the insights they provide in terms of success and failure, both of which have important lessons to convey to development practitioners, particularly those working in youth development.

4. Youth and Poverty Reduction Strategies

Societies that fail to acknowledge the particular challenges facing youth and involve them in devising solutions will find it difficult to achieve the MDGs including sharp reductions in poverty levels by 2015. *(World Youth Report 2005)*

THE FOCUS on poverty reduction as Africa's most critical development challenge has presented new opportunities for a more targeted and comprehensive approach to addressing youth development and empowerment issues. One significant contribution of the poverty focused approach is the shift away from narrow income and macro GDP measure-ments for determining the relationship between economic growth and poverty. Instead, there is an emerging understanding that growth must be "pro-poor", in other words growth policies must target the poor specifically to ensure they are lifted out of poverty.

Programming for youth: LESSONS LEARNT

- Youth are largely a "missing" target group in most national development frameworks and strategies.

- A key obstacle to addressing youth development in a comprehensive manner has been lack of a policy framework with specific benchmarks that reflect the poverty status and development challenges of youth in the region.

- To date employment generation and other development activities for youth have been ad hoc, lacking policy support and measurable impact.

Alternative measures including reduction of income inequality and the criteria set out in the Human Development Index (HDI), such as literacy rates, access to clean water, political participation and gender equality, are among the policy assessments needed to address wellbeing and development.

National Policy Making on Youth: Innovative Approaches

One persistently weak area of national policies on youth is the lack of specific benchmarks against which progress can be measured and assessed in a systematic manner. The World Youth Report 2005 underscores the usefulness of applying the Human Development Index to the social and economic challenges faced by youth in developing countries.

While national youth policies have been formulated in some countries, these lack sufficiently formulated benchmarks for monitoring and ensuring their implementation within specific time frames and with adequate resource allocations. The experience of Brazil is highlighted as a best practice for its innovative formulation of a *Youth Development Index,* based on educational, health and other socio-economic indicators, much like the HDI.

The YDI, initially spearheaded by UNESCO in Brazil, was scaled up in collaboration with the government and has had a positive impact on the development of a national youth policy making process that has been inclusive and responsive to youth needs and concerns in all of Brazil's 27 states.

Development Data for Youth: A Critical Factor in Policy Making

There are broad estimates of the numbers of poor youth. For example, regional distributions of youth in poverty show that the largest number is found in South Asia, with 84.1 million, followed by sub-Saharan Africa with 60.7 million.

The eight countries with the largest concentration of youth living in extreme poverty that is surviving on less than US$1 a day is: India (67.7 million), China (33.3 million), Nigeria (18.60 million), Bangladesh (9.9 million), Democratic Republic of Congo (6.9 million), Ethiopia (3.4 million), Indonesia (3.1 million) and Vietnam (2.9 million) *(World Youth Report 2005)*.

Despite these estimates, one important challenge associated with youth devel-

The Youth Development Index (YDI): The Brazilian Model

- The YDI was developed as a partnership between the Government of Brazil and UNESCO to ensure its ownership as an effective instrument for national policy making on youth.

- The Government used the YDI as a monitoring framework for assessing the implementation of the national youth policy, on the basis of which the first Youth Development Report covering all 27 Brazilian states was issued in 2003.

- The YDI provided specific benchmarks that were incorporated into the drafting of the first national youth policy.

- The World Youth Report 2005, recognizing the effectiveness of the Brazilian YDI as a policy development instrument, has recommended its adaptation into a global youth development index as well as adoption at the country level.

opment and empowerment is obtaining an accurate reading of the scale of the problem and the underlying defining characteristics. To date, the development data on youth have been fragmented, and there has been very little systematic data collection carried out to assess the social and economic conditions of youth.

One explanation for this omission has to do with the actual methodology used for data collection on the poor. Most poverty assessments, used in the formulation of poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), rely on household surveys to identify the poor. Household surveys may provide a snapshot of the household as a whole, without illuminating the discrepancies within the household in access to and use of resources. And these discrepancies are often biased against women, children and youth. Thus measuring vulnerabilities requires more than a static definition of poverty or single-observation survey data on households.

One result has been that young people are less likely to be identified as a separate poverty target group. PRSPs that rely on such surveys and their inherent assumptions do not adequately consider the realities of impoverished youth, who may have been forced to leave their homes to live in temporary housing or even on the streets. The continued reliance on narrow measures and household surveys to determine who is living in poverty will perpetuate the bias against youth (Curtin, 2004).

Life Cycle Approach: Using Longitudinal Data to Capture Youth in Poverty

A more dynamic definition of poverty provides a different starting point for understanding and responding to specific issues of youth in poverty. Such an approach demands an alternative concept of poverty as situational rather than necessarily inherited and likely to be associated with a short-term rather than a life-

long experience. This more dynamic view of poverty emphasizes a life cycle approach where youth may face difficulties finding livelihood opportunities soon after leaving school, or upon the birth of an unplanned child. This perspective also under-scores the active role of the poor in working their way out of poverty rather than being trapped for the duration of their lives.

LONGITUDINAL DATA: A tool for accurately capturing poverty among youth

- Institutionalize the use of longitudinal data collection to establish the poverty and risk profiles of youth.

- Use this database to develop risk assessment tools that can enable financial institutions to increase the limited opportunities for youth to access credit for productive or entrepreneurial activities.

Longitudinal data, even if only from small but representative sample surveys, are likely to yield better information about the economic needs and prospects of individuals and groups at risk of poverty than large-scale and expensive household surveys. Micro-level data will provide insights into the kinds of assistance that are likely to be effective. One of the key recommendations emanating from The World Youth Report 2005, for example, is the use of panel data sets to measure more effectively the youth's experience of poverty, which is dynamic and closely linked to specific stages in their transition to adulthood.

Currently two large-scale longitudinal surveys are under way:

- *Young Lives,* started in 2002, is investigating changes in child poverty over a 15-year period in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

- *Birth to Twenty*, started in 1990, explores social, economic, political, demographic and nutrition-related transitions in urban South Africa and their impact on a cohort of children, adolescents and their families (World Youth Report 2005).

National Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: An Entry Point for Mainstreaming Youth Development

The "old way" of planning development programmes and allocating resources through projects has now been superseded by the sector-wide approach (SWAp). This has radically changed processes and practices for planning and programming development activities. Youth development programmes have yet to find their footing in this changing development context. One

The Malawi PRSP:
Case study in an integrated
approach to youth development

- "Mobile village polytechnics" to promote self-employment through skills development for the poor in the informal sector in rural areas.
- Expansion of multi-purpose youth centres offering relevant resource and educational information, and the services of trained youth leaders.
- Vocational training and new competency-based curricula for vocational education and training in primary, secondary and technical education.
- A total of 11 performance indictors for measuring the progress achieved in the areas where changes have been implemented.

Source: Malawi PRSP, available at ***www.imf.org***

strategic response is to use national poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), which have become blue prints for national development agendas for most countries in the region. The process of developing a PRSP provides a valuable source of evidence on the extent to which national governments and other development stakeholders specifically target youth in poverty.

The *Malawi PRSP* stands out for its comprehensive approach to addressing youth development and empowerment. The poverty assessment analysis revealed a huge gap between the number of graduates from the formal education system, about 300,000, and the number who actually secure formal employment, 30,000. The balance of 270,000 is unemployable because of "lack of skills development due to inappropriate education curricula at all levels and low access and intake into technical entrepreneurial and vocational education training systems". The PRSP proposed a range of innovative initiatives to address this serious mismatch in youth employment.

LESSON LEARNT: Youth development is an effective anti-poverty measure

> The significance of these national poverty reduction strategies is that youth development and empowerment is being addressed within a multi-sector framework and gaining ownership by national governments as effective ways to fight poverty in their communities.

Another example of youth development mainstreamed into a national poverty reduction strategy is incorporated into *Mauritania's PRSP*. Two initiatives directly targeting youth were proposed. A special vocational training programme for more than 5,000 people, mainly women and youth, and a second programme designed to meet the specific needs of unemployed graduates to place them in the workforce in partnership with the private sector, local communities and NGOs. The *Mozambique PRSP* used the

health sector as an entry point, but focused on addressing the health care needs of youth through school-based services that would also meet their reproductive health needs.

The poverty reduction strategy papers are also an important means of mobilizing the necessary resources once commitment has been made to a plan of action that includes youth as key stakeholders. Too many programmes for youth are still implemented outside of integrated development frameworks, resulting in little impact on the lives of youth. Mainstreaming youth issues into national poverty reduction frameworks provides strategic opportunities for scaling up support for youth development and ensuring its institutionalization and sustainability over time.

LESSONS LEARNT:
Enterprise development for youth

■ Entrepreneurship programmes for youth need to provide seamless, integrated services that take into account the totality of youth needs, in particular access to credit.

■ Credit programmes specifically targeting youth present an important alternative for youth seeking small affordable loans for starting up small businesses.

■ Successful programmes such as the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative provide pilot experiences that can be replicated in many countries in the region.

■ Recognizing the success of the CYCI, member governments in the Commonwealth have prioritized youth enterprise as a means of promoting entrepreneurship in general and fighting poverty.

Entrepreneurship Programmes for Youth: An Anti-Poverty Measure

Youth enterprise development has been endorsed by Youth Ministers in Africa as a strategy for poverty reduction. While there are many programmes that address the skills development aspect of enterprise development targeting youth, too often they are not conceived as a one-stop shop that also integrates other critical components such as provision of credit. Financial institutions in the formal sector generally regard youth as high-risk creditors and are reluctant to extend credit on favourable or concessional terms.

The *Youth Enterprise Development Programme* supported by the Commonwealth is an exception to the rule. This programme is part of the much larger Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which is operational in most member countries of the Commonwealth. Most notably, the Youth Enterprise Programme incorporates the *Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative (CYCI)*, a specific component on credit that has established specific objectives for credit access for youth:

- Implement an effective credit delivery and monitoring system to support young people.
- Achieve sustainability by generating a resource base for continuing the programme and extending credit to greater numbers of youth.
- Increase the credit worthiness and business success of youth and enable them to graduate from micro credit to borrowing from formal sector financial institutions like banks.

The programme is operational in six countries in Africa, Cameroon, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia.

5. Youth and Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2000, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation granted $57 million to launch an innovative partnership aimed at addressing adolescent sexual and reproductive health in four countries in the region over a five-year period. The result was the ***African Youth Alliance (AYA)***, established as a joint programme of UNFPA and Pathfinder International. AYA's activities in the programme countries (Botswana, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda) were grounded in a number of key principles:

- Building partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations and youth serving groups.
- Building the capacity of existing organizations working with youth by introducing new skills, methodologies and systems.
- Playing an advocacy role with regard to adolescent sexual and reproductive health including HIV/AIDS

The innovative dimension of the AYA programme was that it adopted an integrated and multi-sector approach to addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of youth, particularly those related to HIV/AIDS prevention. From the outset there was a consensus among the partners that AYA was not just another "health programme" that would take a limited sectoral view when attempting to deal with the complex set of factors that in reality determine adolescent sexual and reproductive health behaviour. The programme aimed to incorporate livelihood as well as cultural and social components to more effectively address the needs of

youth and to make a positive impact on youth behaviour as it relates to sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

AYA had five core components that were interlinked and synergetic in their outcome:

- *Behaviour change communication* focusing on increasing knowledge and use of modern contraceptives as well as encouraging adoption of safe sexual practices.

- *Policy and advocacy support* to promote an enabling environment for implementation of adolescent reproductive health programmes.

- *Youth-friendly services* to increase access to and use of quality adolescent sexual and reproductive health ASRH services.

LESSONS LEARNT from AYA

- Build multi-level partnerships to promote an integrated and sustainable programme to fully address the complex issues that underlie adolescent sexual and reproductive health behaviour.

- Promote participation of youth as well as other key stakeholders in the design and implementation of such programmes.

- Establish a knowledge base by making monitoring and evaluation an integral and functional component of implementation.

- Promote critical policy linkages such as gender equality and reproductive health rights to ensure a comprehensive approach to issues of adolescent reproductive health.

**LESSONS LEARNT –
Youth outreach initiatives**

■ Youth participation in and management of
a media channel like a newspaper can
become an effective outreach strategy for
disseminating information on sexual and
reproductive health.

■ Partnership among government, the
community and international agencies
provides the needed synergy to implement
such an initiative successfully.

■ Open discussion and dialogue on
culturally sensitive issues such as sexual
and reproductive health are critical to
mobilizing support from key actors in the
community religious leaders, parents and
guardians.

- *Integration of livelihood development programmes* to
  provide further incentives for youth.
- *Monitoring and evaluation* as an ongoing process of
  active learning aimed at sharing successes and lessons
  and disseminating knowledge to strengthen the
  partnerships built around the programme.

- *Capacity building* of the country-level partners to
  better plan manages and sustains programmes and
  services.

   Outreach to youth with information and knowledge about
sexual and reproductive health issues remains a challenge for
those working in this field. Communication channels with
extensive national networks are limited and pose a major

constraint on efforts to reach youth with reproductive health information that would have an impact on the quality of their lives. The experience of a youth produced and managed newspaper in Zambia, *The Trendsetter,* presents a valuable experience in how communication obstacles can be overcome using creativity and available resources.

The Government of Zambia and the United States Agency established trendsetter in 1997 as a collaborative initiative for International Development (USAID). The newspaper is essentially fully operated by youth in both production and management. It has been successful in creating space for discussion of adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues by all stakeholders, including parents, guardians, policy makers and other community members.

At an earlier stage parents and religious leaders raised objections to the paper's content and messages, which clashed with traditional Zambian culture where open discussion of sex is taboo and permitted only within the context of initiation ceremonies involving the extended family. The paper was able to overcome this potential discord by incorporating articles on parent–child communication and the importance of sex education and by featuring one article a month on abstinence. By accommodating opposing views, the newspaper was able to maintain an open channel for dialogue on such sensitive issues.

Trendsetter is also unique in terms of its strategy for outreach. The paper is free and is distributed monthly to more than 10 major secondary schools and 20 retail outlets within the capital city of Lusaka. It reaches youth nationwide through Shoprite, a supermarket chain with stores in all major Zambian provinces. The Lusaka District Health Management Team distributes *Trendsetter* in health clinics around Lusaka.

6. Youth in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations

Crisis and conflict in many countries of the region have had an adverse and lasting impact on the development potential and prospects of their youth. The reality is that young people have been disproportionately involved in most of the conflicts that have broken out in the past decade. Despite the overwhelming evidence of their presence both as protagonists and as victims in these upheavals, the response from the development community has fallen far short at all levels. Legal frameworks designed to protect youth in crisis situations have largely proven ineffective, while development efforts have also been inadequate since youth development issues have fallen between the cracks as other priorities have taken precedence.

The omission of youth in conflict from the global youth agenda, the World Programme for Action for Youth adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, was raised in 2003 when the General Assembly adopted another resolution that specifically identified youth in conflict as a priority area of development action to be included in the World Programme of Action for Youth. This marked an important policy milestone, providing added impetus to national governments and their development partners to address the development and empowerment of youth in conflict and post-conflict situations as an issue requiring special attention and support.

Progress has also been made at the programming level where a wide range of innovative initiatives have been undertaken to address in a holistic manner the needs of youth in crisis and

conflict situations. Three very different programming experiences related to youth in conflict are presented below that underscore the best practice benchmark features identified at the outset of the analysis. These examples are drawn mainly from UNICEF programming experiences at the country level, and are recognized by UNICEF as worthy of an in-depth study because of the valuable lessons and insights they provide into programming for this vulnerable segment of youth (UNICEF, 2003).

SOMALIA – The Youth Education Development and Participation Programme

Implemented in the context of a fragmented and largely unstable social, economic and political environment, this programme nevertheless aimed to reach out-of-school youth between the ages of 14 and 18 to promote learning and participation. Lacking any organized youth groups and networks to collaborate with; initially the programme used sports and recreational activities as a key entry point.

This particular experience is notable for adopting an integrated and multi-sector approach for addressing the needs of youth in a perpetual state of civil war.

Community participation and mobilization was made possible through sports events that mobilized not only the youth, but also their families and the community at large. Sports thus became an effective channel for delivering messages on the development and peace building potential of youth. The sports forums also enhanced public awareness on health issues such as HIV/AIDS. The net effect was to validate the constructive role of youth in the community: Youth were enabled to engage with local leaders to communicate their ideas and plan for development activities that directly affected the quality of life, such as environmental cleaning projects.

Strategic capacity building focused on training-of-trainers to build the leadership and organizational skills of local youth groups. Peace building and conflict resolution skills were heavily emphasized in the training. These skills became an asset to the youth, who used them to resolve conflicts among themselves and in the larger community. The trainees became "youth mentors" to other youth groups, transforming them into active community-based organizations, and contributing to the improvement of their own lives and life in general in their communities.

> Sports became an effective channel for delivering messages on the development and peace building potential of youth.

The multi-sector approach provided the youth with a chance to acquire basic educational skills by developing a non-formal education (NFE) curriculum to impart literacy, numeracy and life skills. An essential part of this component was creating a link between the NFE training and the school-based curriculum. This feature gave youth a choice to either earn a certificate that allowed them to enter the formal system or to pursue a vocation.

Innovative dimensions of the programme included the establishment of a modality for creating youth-friendly community spaces that could be scaled up for greater impact. The youth activities generated through the programme were mainstreamed into the 2004 to 2008 UNICEF country programme. One concrete proposal was the setting up of multi-purpose development centres designed to function as hubs for delivering a wide range of youth focused services.

UGANDA - Participatory Research and Advocacy on the Impact of Conflict on Youth

This research and advocacy project targeted youth in Acholiland in Northern Uganda. It was sponsored by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, an international NGO. The project aimed to assist 54 male and female adolescents from two different districts, Kitgum and Gulu, in two ways. The first was to identify and investigate key issues facing them in their war-affected communities. The second, on the basis of that research, was to carry out targeted advocacy for change in policies and programmes to improve their lives

The benchmarks that make this experience a best practice include:

LESSONS LEARNT on youth in conflict and crisis situations

- Sports activities provide a strategic entry point for engaging youth emerging from situations of conflict and crisis.

- Investments in capacity building, particularly in negotiating and peace building skills, yield significant dividends that facilitate re-integration of youth into their communities.

- Innovation in programme design incorporating features that allow for full partnership and responsibility for programme management yield positive results in terms of rehabilitation and inclusiveness of marginalized youth.

- **Knowledge-based programming** resulting from the findings of a major study by the Commission that called for new strategy to build a knowledge base about the experiences and struggles faced by youth in war-torn countries.

- **Innovation** in the project allowed youth to be given full responsibility for managing the project including the budget. Each team had $10,000 to carry out the full range of research activities including training, analysis sessions, recruiting, allocation of expense for stipends and transportation. A key requirement was making financial decisions with full transparency. The youth gained a valuable experience – an opportunity for hands-on experience in responsible oversight.

- **Strategic capacity-building** enabled the youth to write project proposals with realistic budgets and action plans. The team from Gulu, which initially had no youth organization, eventually formed its own NGO and successfully wrote project proposals for which it received funding to address HIV/AIDS awareness especially among girls. The other team deepened its focus on human rights issues and developed project proposals based on the research findings. It even took on an advisory role to assist a anish-funded initiative to increase secondary school opportunities for adolescents in northern Uganda;

- **Scaling up** of project activities was achieved in a number of ways. The youth have provided leadership in helping other youth to manage their own projects and in setting up proactive and knowledge-based youth networks that work at the community level. Because of the success of the project, the Ugandan government expressed its interest

in replicating the adolescent participation methodology in a large-scale psychosocial support project.

SIERRA LEONE – Youth Development in the Context of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

Youth emerging from conflict situations and entering the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration transition phase face huge challenges in adjusting to a non-violent mode and settling into normal life in their communities. A strategic entry point for rebuilding the self-esteem of youth coming out of conflict situations was found by engaging them in team sports. Involvement in such activities has been effective in encouraging youthful ex-combatants to form new friendships and interact in positive ways with their peers. In particular, sports have allowed them to channel aggression and learning of non-violent methods for conflict resolution, fair play and team work.

Other best practice benchmarks are:
- **Innovation:** In this programme, the use of sports in the rehabilitation of youth was recognized and replicated by other development partners. Right to Play, an NGO, has been working collaboratively with other development partners to train coaches in Freetown and the surrounding regions with the objective of setting up a network of trained coaches to work with former youth combatants.

- **Community participation:** By promoting sports for youth in difficult circumstances, the programme provides an opportunity for youth to be accepted into the communities they had earlier been forced to abandon.

6. Youth, Participation and Governance

One integral component of youth participation in key areas of social and economic life is political participation as it related to decision making processes and the distribution of power.

In the decade since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth there has been a recognition of the need to involve youth as partners in all spheres of development and in particular as contributors to public policy making. This recognition has led to the adoption of national youth policies and the establishment of national bodies representing youth.

In practice, however, creating meaningful opportunities for young people to participate as active agents in decisions affecting them is relatively new in most countries and in most areas of young people's lives. While consultations are of some value, they don't constitute full engagement of youth as active citizens playing a role in decisions and processes that affect their lives. There are tangible gains to be had from youth participation in governance, including:

KEY MILESTONES in the youth participation and empowerment agenda

- *The Lisbon Declaration on Youth* – Adopted in 1998 by the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth to accelerate implementation of the provisions of the World Programme of Action.
- *The Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy* – Adopted in 2001 at the fourth World Youth Forum to focus the policy and institutional commitments required by governments and international organizations to effectively address youth participation and empowerment.

- **Accountability, transparency and gaining understanding** of the system and assume responsibility for the demands that their constituency places on them.
- **Ownership and legitimacy** that comes from participation and ensures an active engagement in society to ensure political and social progress in their communities.
- **Sustainability and relevance of policies** that affect the lives of such large proportions of the population.

One important area of action that has moved the agenda forward on youth participation and governance is the *World Youth Forum* organized by the United Nations system and the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. These gatherings have not only served as effective platforms for advocating for meaningful participation of youth in governance processes. They

LESSONS LEARNT in youth participation

- Despite recognition of the importance of youth participation, practical implementation is slow, piecemeal and insufficiently integrated into all areas of young people's lives.
- Many organizations are still unconvinced that youth can play a leading or even a supportive role in helping them to achieve their programme goals.
- Little work has been undertaken in collaboration with youth to develop indicators against which participatory methods and programmes can be evaluated.
- This is a rapidly evolving field, with minimal track record and much experimental and innovative work, for which a critical analysis has to be undertaken to determine both the successes and the shortfalls.

have also facilitated the adoption of policy frameworks committing governments to implementing a set of common goals to promote youth participation in governance processes at the local, national and regional levels.

For Africa the youth dividend is a critical one since the demographic profile of most countries on the continent presents a significant youth bulge. This pushes the stakes that much higher for making sure that youth citizenship rights are fully respected and youth take their place as a critical constituency in all levels of governance.

There are a number of Africa-wide initiatives that are worthy of note and underscore the rapidly expanding "space" that is enabling increased levels of participation of youth in both regional governance structures and policy making. The **Second Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit** held in 2005 in Morocco brought together youth leaders to promote their more direct involvement in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Summit adopted the "Ifrane Declaration", which specifically endorsed sport as a strategic entry point for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. "Sports for All" was acclaimed as an effective means of reaching out to and engaging a wide spectrum of youth in the service of development.

Recognizing the importance of effec-

The Commonwealth Youth Caucus: A model of youth governance

■ The Caucus operates on national, regional and pan-Commonwealth levels and serves as an advisor to the Commonwealth Youth Network and Governance Programme on its programmes and strategies.

■ The Chair of the Youth Caucus is given a seat at the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' meetings and participates as an equal to ensure youth are heard and their ideas incorporated into the decisions taken.

tive youth participation in its policy making process and structures, the African Union has launched specific initiatives to establish a framework for enhancing the active participation of youth in its deliberations and programmes. Consultations have already been undertaken with youth groups and their representatives to ensure their perspectives are reflected in the *African Youth Charter* that is envisaged to be adopted by the Heads of State. Given the changing context for youth development, empowerment and leadership issues, there is also a re-thinking of ways to improve existing youth mechanisms working with the AU, including the establishment of a *Pan-African Youth Federation*.

8. Private Sector Partnership and Youth Development

Increasingly, development paradigms call for a more significant role for the private sector in all facets of development, including efforts to promote youth development, empowerment and leadership. In particular, private sector investment in the public sector is seen as a mutually beneficial undertaking in the long term. The highest potential dividend for the private sector is to make strategic investments in youth development activities that will have a multiplier effect. Examples of such synergies are already playing out in the region.

The information and communication technology (ICT) sector in South Africa presents a case study of how partnerships between civil society organizations and the private sector can become effective launching pads for youth development. One such initiative is *Make a Connection*, a joint programme of the International Youth Foundation (IYF), Nokia, a global ICT corporation, and the Youth Development Trust, a civil society organization working with youth. Nokia has invested $14 million dollars in 17 countries worldwide to promote youth development and ICTs. Make a Connection has become a model for programming on youth and ICTs because it incorporates a number of unique features that are enabling factors for youth in this particular sector:

- **Strategic capacity building** is one key component of the programme that has set the standard for comprehensive employability training that incorporates life skills, entrepreneurship and ICT training. Make a Connection has secured jobs and internships for more than 65 per cent of its trainees over three years.

- **Knowledge-based** programming is an important feature of this type of partnership as the experiences of Make a Connection informed the design of a much larger-scale programme aimed at bringing the benefits of ICT to youth in other countries in the region.

- **Multiple partnerships,** such as the one that launched the Alliance for African Youth Employment involving the IYF, USAID, Nokia and Lions Club International in a venture that mobilized much larger resources to meet the needs of an ever-growing number of youth in need of access to integrated income-generation opportunities. The Alliance selected reputable national secretariats in each of the programme countries. These secretariats work with a network of youth-serving organizations and training institutions as well as business and government agencies. In South Africa, partnership was established with the Absa Bank, the South African Management Development Institute and the Department of Environmental Affairs to provide internships and job placement for Alliance graduates.

- **Scaling up** is a measure of the successful outcome of a particular development programme. The *Alliance for African Youth Employment* that Nokia and the IYF

announced in February 2004 is a new and expanded partnership that builds on the success of the Make a Connection programme in South Africa. Over a period of five years the scaled up initiative aims to promote employability and employment for more than 35,000 disadvantaged young people aged 14 to 29 living in rapidly urbanizing areas of Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda and South Africa. Youth participating in the programme will receive not only job training, but also career counselling, direct placement in internships and jobs, and the skills to create their own business.

9. The Way Forward

The analysis presented in this booklet on programming for youth development, empowerment and leadership has aimed to underscore the features, factors and fundamentals that have made these experiences best practices. Not all the examples highlight all the benchmarks elaborated at the outset of the analysis, but they do reflect in very tangible ways a good number of those criteria. Other examples have been presented for the lessons that can be drawn rather than for any specific programmatic characteristic. One key defining criterion is that for the most part they have involved a multi-sector, multi-stakeholder approach to programming.

At national and international levels the successful elements of relevant policies and programmes must be identified and scaled up if they are to have any real impact on poverty reduction. This is particularly so for the youth, who are increasingly vulnerable owing to the heightened risk they face from HIV/AIDS and its impact on both their lives and their livelihoods. Some countries have youth policies in place, and many have youth programmes. Few of these youth programmes have been evaluated for their effectiveness, however, which means that knowledge and information about successful investments in youth are still fragmented while the scale of youth development is far too limited.

It is acknowledged that this is only a preliminary effort to begin to systematically scan youth development experiences in order to inform and shape future policy making and programming. Governments, donors and civil society organizations must be guided by comprehensive national policy frameworks that incorporate specific benchmarks in their efforts to address youth

development and empowerment. One important area for further action is identifying strategic entry points for mainstreaming youth policies programmes into national policy frameworks such as poverty reduction strategy papers, which present an integrated and multi-sector framework. Multi-stakeholder partnerships need to be leveraged to attain the highest level of development impact.

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*"Like their parents,
Africa's young people believes
that their continent is potentially
one of the richest regions on earth,
but needs more accountable and
inclusive policies to make a place
where they can live safely, in
freedom and dignity.*

*"I share their faith in Africa's
enormous potential, and along with
the entire UN system will continue
to work with Africa and its partners
to turn our hopes for a better
Africa and to reality."*

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's
Message to Africa-France Summit,
12 May 2005