Study on Youth as Active Citizens for their rights
to education and SRHR

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Executive summary

Background

The multiple benefits of encouraging youth to engage actively in their social and political lives have been widely acknowledged and this has become a key focus for intervention programmes by a range of development agencies. Although the productive potential of Youth as Active Citizens (YAC) might appear self-evident, it demands a significant shift in approach within projects, in this case, from ‘doing for youth’ to ‘doing with youth’ and eventually ‘doing by youth’. The intention to mainstream the involvement of youth in claiming their rights to education and sexual and reproductive health and shaping how this might be achieved, presented an important opportunity to review the field. The resultant study, summarised here, included a map of the conceptual basis for YAC; a review of the ways in which promoting youth as active citizens has been approached by development organisations; the identification of good practices; reflections on the ways that contextual variables intersect with youth diversity (e.g. gender; rural/urban location etc.,) to highlight barriers and lessons learned; the production of guidelines and the identification of gaps.

The study included electronic searches of the academic literature and documents of 26 (I)NGOs, a review of these that explores 4 key concepts (Citizenship, Youth Participation, Education and SRHR) and the identification of ten successful YAC projects. Based on this, below we summarise the main barriers and the lesson learnt from (I)NGO projects. Then we use the successful projects to inform selected guidelines for future work and initiatives in the field. In the final section we point some gaps.

Main Barriers

- Adult perceptions of youth capacity (including within NGOs) limits the extent and nature of youth engagement.
- The wider political context in which the citizen voice and/or youth voice has not been included or encouraged militates against the active participation of youth.
- Poor education and training limit the expectation of a youth voice and any encouragement that sponsors youth engagement.
- Weak infrastructure and governance do not provide institutional spaces or support that might facilitate youth participation.
- Inequality and exclusion often marginalises the youth voice in general and that of specific groups in particular (e.g young women). Within social and institutional contexts structure and mechanisms to access or channel these different voices are often sadly lacking.
- Cost (and opportunity cost) of youth participation is high, especially for the poorer and more marginalised groups.
- Competing demands on youth time often offer little space to articulate, exchange and/or organise around rights or active engagement in citizenship.

Lessons Learnt

- Building trust takes time
Identifying and creating spaces for youth participation is vital.

Engaging youth peers works well to encourage engagement.

Ensuring equity in youth participation is crucial to all initiatives.

Aligning project priorities with youth priorities is critical to success.

Working with gate-keepers and important adult stakeholders helps to support and sustain youth participation.

New projects and strategies should build on existing networks/alliances and draw on previous knowledge & experiences in the field.

Capacity building is needed to enable youth and other stakeholders to claims rights & participate.

Guidelines

Listen to youth

Ensure equity in participation by diverse youth groups, in particular females and other socially excluded groups.

Engage youth to work with youth – peer support. Training is fundamental for peer support strategies.

Gain support through consultation, communication and advocacy with stakeholders.

Draw in formal institutions and bodies such as ministries and key stakeholder organisations.

Think creatively and look for ‘natural/ organic’ spaces where youth meet and interact.

Diversify approaches to education (e.g. speed schools) and use health issues as a route into addressing more sensitive issues related to gender, equality and SRHR.

Make resources (equipment, training, logistic) available for youth participation.

Adapt traditional approaches to youth participation for example by providing stipends, flexible hours and training that will increase employability.

Customise strategies that are suited to the target sub-group of youth in ways that complement their other activities or responsibilities (e.g paid work or domestic responsibilities).

Maintain youth motivation through participatory methods and entertainment (dance, drama, music).

Combine formal strategies (public hearings, lobbying) with informal strategies (social events) as well as a combination of social media with face-to-face approaches.

Focus on accessibility in the provision of education and SRH services especially for already marginalised Youth. For example, ensure that alternative educational opportunities for out-of-school youth are accessible in terms of time, location and finance and/or in addressing SRH make medication, condoms, HIV testing and counselling available.

Gaps

A common understanding of youth participation needs to be established.

Measures for the impact of participation need to be developed.

The criteria, process and outcomes of a Youth Audit need to be agreed as a first step towards mainstreaming.
1.0 Introduction

Development organisations have highlighted the potential of youth to strengthen democracy, address inequality and contribute to sustainable development. Oxfam Novib, alongside other organisations, has already started to focus on ways to engage with this potential to encourage positive social change and the realisation of human rights. Active citizenship is regarded as vital for effective and accountable government as well as a sense of personal empowerment. In countries of the Global South, where youth constitute a large proportion of the population, the sustained participation of Youth as Active Citizens is of heightened significance to the social and political conditions and opportunities. The places and spaces for the articulation of voice, however, are limited by the social hierarchies, norms and practices in each particular context and the diversity among the Youth (e.g. gender, wealth, residence). These difficulties can result in the reduced participation of youth even in development initiatives intended to address their needs.

The multiple benefits of encouraging youth to engage actively in their social and political lives have been widely acknowledged and this has become a key focus for intervention programmes by a range of development agencies. Although the productive potential of such initiatives might appear self-evident, there is a current need to reflect on the ways that contextual variables intersect with the diversity among youth and to review different approaches to promoting youth as active citizens as a means to identify good practices. More specifically, in this study we explore the opportunities for, and outcomes of, youth participation through analyses of, organisational and programmatic design, monitoring and evaluation procedures, current practices, development outcomes and stakeholder (including participating youth) views. Alongside this we will highlight diversity among youth e.g. by gender, rural/urban location, with respect to the extent and dynamics of participation; specific barriers to participation; the media through which their rights, needs and aspirations are pursued and the sustained impact on different programmes, organisations and levels of government. The (inter-) connections between local, national and global spaces for active citizenship are a further element that will be considered in the study.

The programming and practices of a range of organisations working in youth participation and citizenship are a central concern of this study, which seeks to develop a deeper understanding of ‘Youth as Active Citizens’ which Oxfam Novib can draw on for developing and strengthening their ongoing and future work with youth. Preliminary interview inquiries about Oxfam Novib activities
involving youth in three different countries: Pakistan, Palestine and Senegal, were conducted. Country level interviews explored how Oxfam Novib worked with its partners, how YAC might be developed in future programmes and the spaces and places in which youth between 15 and 24 were able to articulate and exercise their rights and responsibilities with specific reference to education and sexual & reproductive health (SRHR). Illustrations of good practices in promoting YAC and agents of change drawn from these three multi-dimensional country cases have then been used to inform preliminary guidelines for organisations and individuals engaged in promoting YAC.

This review is organised in five further sections. The next section states the aims and questions of this study and the approach taken to the collection of data. It is followed by a section that draws largely on academic literature to provide a conceptual mapping of the field. The fourth section considers a range of programmes focusing on YAC from different agencies. Examples of good practice, barriers to success and future possibilities are identified. Then, in the final chapter lessons are drawn out to identify gaps and to shape preliminary guidelines for future YAC programmes.

2.0 Study aims and approach

2.1 Aim

To understand the ways youth involvement in quality education and SRH policies can be strengthened, with a view to help inform the planning and implementation of Oxfam Novib future programmes involving youth as active citizens.

2.2 Study questions

1. How are YAC incorporated in Oxfam Novib policy on active citizenship, education and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR)?

2. In Oxfam Novib, what examples are there of good practices that have promoted youth as active citizens?

3. What lessons can be drawn from the country case studies (see questions below) that can assist projects that promote YAC in the future?
2.3 Approach

This study included a desk-based literature review and interviews with respondents in three Oxfam Novib country offices and UN Habitat, New York.

Literature

An extensive electronic search formed the basis of the review reported in this study. The literature was approached in two different but overlapping routes. An initial search focused on international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to identify relevant ‘grey’ literature – much of which is not documented on the standard electronic search engines (see Appendix A for the list of INGOs and NGOs searched). In addition the electronic data base of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex was searched. Then a search was made of the more academic databases to identify relevant research published in journals. The search terms included (active) citizen(s), (active) citizenship, youth, youth participation and youth engagement although these varied slightly depending on the sophistication of each data base. Some search terms were used individually and others were used in combination with each other.

Interviews

In addition to the literature search and review, a short series of individual interviews were conducted with staff in three Oxfam Novib offices, one each in Pakistan, Senegal and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Further, to identify current activities and gaps in the literature, discussions were held with two staff at the UN Habitat New York, who are developing a resource guide on ‘Youth Participation’.

The interview question for each case study country were,

1. What examples are there of projects involving YAC implemented by Oxfam Novib partners and other organisations?
2. In what ways are youth acting as active citizens?
3. How inclusive has youth participation been? What are the gender dynamics of YAC? How have more marginalised youth been included?
4. Who are key stakeholders involved in projects concerning youth?
5. What are the barriers to the participation of youth in articulating and claiming their essential rights?
6. In what ways has YAC impacted on organisational structures and procedures?
3.0 Conceptual Mapping

Four key terms demarcate the arena of the review: Citizenship, Youth, Education and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). A discussion of each based on the available literature is presented here.

3.1 Citizenship (active Citizenship / change agents)

Citizenship concerns membership of a group or community which confers rights and responsibilities; it is a relationship with the state and/or among members of a group, society or community (Sweetman et al., 2011). Where rights are not protected, respected and promoted there is both a diminution of citizenship for those whose rights are denied and the loss of democratic legitimacy for the institution/ society/state (SIDA, 2005). Learning or gaining citizenship is both a status or identity and a process involving the development of citizens capable of exercising rights/protections and fulfilling their obligations (Gaventa and Barrett, 2010; Green, 2008). A sense of having a ‘right’ implies a sense of duty on somebody else’s part. Rights are a set of claims or entitlements that enable people, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised, to make demands on —‘duty bearers’, that is, those who have a responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of ‘right-holders’ (Green, 2008: 23-24). The violation of rights results from a failure both on the part of duty bearers to fulfil their obligations and on the part of the right-holders whose rights are denied to claim their rights (Ling et al, 2010). However, rights have to be
accompanied by an ability to exercise them which is often undermined when people are poor, illiterate, lack important information, physically unwell or otherwise marginalised.

At an individual level active citizenship involves learning to be self-confident, overcoming a sense of powerlessness and developing the ability to negotiate with others in order to influence decision making (Green, 2008). However, active citizenship is also a collective process, which involves citizens acting as part of a political community and taking collective action to build an effective state (Clarke and Missingham, 2009; Green, 2008). The claim for active citizenship moves beyond a passive technical notion, to one in which participating and involved citizens, especially poor and marginalised groups, exercise their rights, engaging with the state, civil society organisations and development agencies (Vijfeijken, 2009). Active citizenship involves utilising opportunities to transform the social, cultural and political conditions that led to the violation of rights (Ling et al., 2010).

The ‘right to participate’ is a fundamental right and is integral to the realisation of other rights such as political, economic, cultural and civil rights (Ling et al., 2010) as enshrined in the International Covenant on Civic and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Participation is the foundation of democratic practice and it guarantees the protection of other rights by enabling people to acts as agents in their own development (Holland et al, 2004).

In spite of its inherent strengths, active citizenship may not be possible (or optimal) in all circumstances, such as working with undocumented migrants (Clarke, 2009). In cases where public participation could endanger the lives of community members, one course of action for NGOs might be to assume the role of active citizen on behalf of the marginalised community or group and at the same time as providing development interventions engage in advocacy around the rights of the disenfranchised.

Learning to be active citizen requires knowledge and awareness of rights, the key contextual factors influencing practice of these rights and the skill, ability and disposition to use that knowledge and take action (Gaventa and Barrett, 2010). In many societies, citizens may be unaware of their rights, lack access to information vital for participation, or lack the ability to engage with others or feel disempowered to take action. In such circumstances, a first step and prerequisite to citizen
participation is the development of a greater sense of awareness of rights and the power of personal agency to claim these (The Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability [DRCCPA], 2011). Furthermore, effective citizen action and engagement require ‘spaces’, that is, “opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships that affect their lives and interests” (Gaventa, 2006). While both knowledge of rights and spaces are essential, the realisation of rights require examining, challenging and transforming established power relations (Ling et al, 2010).

Change through citizen action is often a slow and complex process that is rather unpredictable, uneven, highly iterative and rarely linear (Green, 2008). Moreover, citizen engagement does not necessarily result in positive outcomes. In some cases, it may result into a sense of disempowerment, a reduced sense of agency, an over-dependence on ‘experts’ or reinforce exclusions and old hierarchies (DRCCPA, 2011). Successful citizen participation is indicated by enhanced capacities of duty bearers to meet their obligations and of right holders to claim their rights; it is evident when the policies and practices of legal and administrative structures are changed in a way as to make it possible to hold public officials accountable and private sector answerable in protecting individual freedoms in the workplace, and transforming social institutions at the community and household levels (Holland et al, 2004). Although there is no recipe for successful citizen engagement that will work in all contexts (Green, 2008), successful citizen engagement depends on several contextual factors (DRCCPA, 2011) including:

- the institutional environment,
- prior citizen capabilities,
- the strength of champions inside government,
- the depth and breadth of the engagement,
- the history and style of engagement in a given context or locality,
- the nature of the issue central to engagement
• the availability of and access to information relevant for active and meaningfully participation (including information on the issues, opportunities and spaces for participation).

The success of citizen participation in a given context will depend on the extent to which the chosen strategy for citizen engagement is appropriate to these contextual factors.

Organised and empowered citizens both have the right and the potential, to assist in the achievement of development goals, to make states more democratic and responsive, and to make human rights a reality. Gaventa and Barrett (2010) reviewed the results of 100 original, qualitative case studies conducted in 20 countries, largely in the developing world, linking citizen engagement to a series of observable outcomes. They noted that overall, 75 per cent of these outcomes may be seen as ‘positive’. While the ‘rights’ discourse is increasingly being adopted by most development agencies (Holland et al. 2004), the benefits of citizen engagement will remain invisible to some donors who if they are primarily looking for progress on broader targets such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (DRCCPA, 2011).

The development targets and goals have played an important part in focussing action and signposting for social and economic development outcomes especially at the macro-level. Programmes and initiatives will be difficult to sustain, however, if the processes of social change and the engagement of citizens are side-lined. As such there is an evident need to better understand how active citizenship might be encouraged and supported. The development of citizen awareness, efficacy and engagement are the building blocks of aid effectiveness. While the benefits of citizen engagement can accumulate over time, there is usually a long-time lag and it cannot reduce poverty over night. Nevertheless, it is time to share knowledge about the processes of citizen engagement, for donors to incorporate this into development programmes and practices and to find ways in which this seemingly slow process might be gauged and further stimulated.

3.2 Youth and Youth Participation

There is no universally agreed definition of youth. It is a social and cultural construction that is bounded by a range of working indicators, such as age, financial dependency, responsibility and
emotional reliance on primary caregivers which vary considerably across cultures and contexts (Kelly et al., 2001). The relationship between characteristics of youth and their ages can vary across national and regional contexts and between individuals and their experiences (UNICEF, 2011a). The United Nations definition of ‘youth’ as persons between the ages 15 and 24 is widely used (for example by Oxfam Novib and DFID) and is useful for capturing, for example, how many young people have finished schooling, are sexually active, or are confronting livelihoods/unemployment issues. Other organisations use a different age range. Stop Aids Now! partners, for example, refer to youth as between 8 and 24 years (Stop Aids Now, undated) and in Pakistan, they are persons aged 15-29 (Government of Pakistan, 2008). The contextual variations in a simple age definition draw attention to the need to incorporate other indicators and to acknowledge localised understandings of youth (DFID, 2010).

Youth is a heterogeneous category and spaces for their participation differ depending on their educational, social and economic position; their cultural background, gender and sexuality; life circumstances, experiences and context (DFID, 2010). The ability of youth to act, to exercise their rights and access services are determined by their circumstances (VSO Pakistan, 2009). While youth as a category is often ‘excluded’ from the public sphere and major political, socio-economic, and cultural processes (Honwana and de Boeck 2005), some youth groups in particular are socially excluded through formal (laws, policies) and informal (social and cultural traditions, practices, attitudes and norms) institutions and relations. Through this they are denied access to resources, services and the spaces and opportunities open to other social groups. These marginalised youth groups include, among others, women, migrants, ethnic or religious minorities, refugees, rural youth, those belonging to lower castes or classes, disabled youth and with illnesses or HIV/AIDS. These categories often intersect and interrelate resulting in extreme forms of discrimination and exclusion. Given the wide diversity and the complex social dimensions it is critically important to consider and understand what is meant by ‘youth’ especially when working with or planning for them (DFID 2010). Meaningful youth participation must be inclusive which requires both a representative youth group and equity in the in participation by young people from all social backgrounds (Attawell 2004).

Meaningful participation by young people and their right to express their opinion on all things that concern them and their right to freedom of expression is recognised and supported by the

School is the most widely used space to target young people and school-based projects often provide a sustainable and supportive environment for youth to participate. While it is important avail of school as a place and space for youth initiatives there are two key reservations. First, research suggests that in many contexts of the global South, schools are characterised by subdued, passive students (Dembélé and Miaro-II, 2003) often subject to severe institutional disciplinary regimes (Humphreys, 2008) that discourage active student participation. Second, access to schools is not universal leaving many of the marginalised groups of youth excluded. This means that it is vital to extend beyond the school and look for other spaces where the socially excluded groups can be reached (UNICEF 2004).

The concept of participation itself is contested, ill defined and ‘participation projects’ often exclude already socially excluded and marginalised groups (Barber 2009). In addition, forms and levels of participation vary along a continuum with mere representation of youth at one end and ownership and decision making at the other (Mathur et. al 2004). For development policies to be representative and effective, a shift in working with youth is essential. Youth participation entails the active, informed and voluntary involvement of youth in making decisions affecting them and their communities; “Participation means work with and by young people, not merely work for them (DFID 2010: 11, original emphasis).

At an operational level, participation involves:

(i) people producing, accessing and sharing information to inform collective and individual action,

(ii) people consulting and interacting with an organisation which take into account their feedback,

(iii) people making (joint) informed decisions on specific policy/project issues and,

(iv) people proactively taking initiative and action.
Youth participation is a process:

whereby young people progress to greater rights and responsibilities (citizenship); from being the targets of outreach, to being actively engaged in the planning and implementation of development interventions (DFID 2010: 1).

Development projects may engage youth, in ascending order of responsibility, as beneficiaries, partners and leaders. The latter involves youth working with adults and becoming development professionals and leading political actors themselves. This is a key goal of youth empowerment processes. These different forms of participation produce different results and may be practised simultaneously within the same programme or organisation (CHOICE, 2011). The form of youth participation should be aligned to the programme objectives and the needs of the participating youth (CHOICE, 2011). It must always take into account local contexts, and cultural values and practices. In the global South, where age-based hierarchies are often strong, adult approval is essential for achieving and sustaining youth participation. It is equally important to realise that participation is a political process that requires on-going negotiation with ‘gate-keepers’, community and religious leaders and those in position of authority (Mathur et. al, 2004). In Youth SRHR programmes, in particular, the support from religious leaders is vital (UNESCO and UNAIDS 2001). Similarly, participation requires multiple spaces, includes a range of practices and demands skills that should not be assumed to exist in every context (Murray et al. 2010), as well as the allocation of funds by adult organisations (CHOICE, 2011).

3.3 Education

Education is a fundamental human right that all individual are entitled to and that is essential to poverty reduction and achieving sustainable human development (UNESCO 2012). An educated citizenry is the key to economic, political and social stability within and between countries (UNESCO 2012). Both education and democracy are linked to ‘rights’. Education remains a key instrument and a necessary condition in fostering a sense of citizenship and democratic values, however, it needs to be complemented by other supportive conditions such as the belief in participation and democritisation in all aspects of life (SIDA, 2005). In this sense, equity and justice are integral to any definitions of quality education (Oxfam Novib 2010). Quality education seeks to empower
learners to exercise their rights, is adapted to local settings, takes into account the needs of diverse learners including the marginalised, and promotes gender equality (ibid). Learner participation in education implies that they have a say in decisions on how the school is run and on the content of their education and the methods used in the classroom. As desirable or progressive as this may seem, it may also be regarded as an encroachment on established social relations and the traditional authority of teachers and parents (SIDA 2005).

Despite the general expansion of educational opportunities throughout the world, particular groups of children are still excluded from their right to basic education (United Nations, 2011; UNESCO, 2012). Poor, females or those living in a conflict zone are more likely to be out of school (United Nations, 2011). Gender equality in access to education has remained a concern, with the rights of girls to education continues to be inhibited in many developing countries (UNESCO, 2011). Of the total out-of-school population (67 million), 53 percent are girls (United Nations, 2011). Children and youth from countries affected by violence and displacement are three times more likely to be out of school than those in countries not recently affected by violence (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2011). Similarly, in spite of overall progress made in youth literacy, 127 million young people lack basic reading and writing skills, with 90 per cent of all illiterate youth concentrated in just two regions—Southern Asia (65 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (47 million) (UNESCO, 2011b). Investment in secondary education can accelerate progress towards achieving several MGDs (UNICEF, 2011b). For example, greater provision of secondary education motivates students to complete basic education which helps boost primary completion rates and thus MGD2 (UNICEF, 2011b). Likewise secondary schooling has a strong impact on promoting gender equality (MDG 3) and improving maternal health (MDG 5) (UNICEF, 2011b).

Enrolment in school is a positive indicator but does not mean educational inclusion. There are many who attend school but are ‘silently excluded’ as they learn little, may be often absent and are continually at risk of dropping out (CREATE, 2011). There are also those young people who may have attended school but have been out of formal schooling for a long time. They may need specialised programmes, such as non-formal education, second-chance programmes, bridging programmes or accelerated learning programs, which meet their educational needs (OxfamNovib, 2010; UNICEF, 2011b; Women’s Refugee Commission, 2011). Additionally, many young people may need education and training pathways that provide them with the flexibility to pursue education...
and employment or self-employment at the same time (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2011). However, out-of-school youth are a heterogeneous group (Burns et al., 2004). Some out-of-school youth belong to intact families that either cannot or choose not to send their children to school. Some may connect with alternative educational or vocational programs or with church, sports, or community groups. Other out-of-school youth, however, live in the most challenging circumstances, such as street children, adolescent sex workers, orphans and child soldiers, suffering marginalized from mainstream and non-formal services and society (Burns et al. 2004).

3.4 Social and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)

A comprehensive and holistic conceptualisation of youth sexual and reproductive health includes a wide range of issues that affects young people’s health and well being not only during adolescence but also in laying the foundation for events throughout adulthood (Mathur et al. 2004). Good reproductive health outcomes require access to knowledge and services, as well as the ability to make informed decisions in relation to intimate relations, marriage, sexuality, contraception and childbearing. Both the social, cultural, educational and economic ‘antecedents’ and risk factors, like multiple partners, early marriage and transactional sex, impact on the SRH outcomes of young people. In every social milieu, a changing dynamic between antecedents, risk factors and outcomes shapes and is shaped by young people’s norms and attitudes to SRH (Pulerwitz et al., 2006) and their gender identities. This has the potential to result in changing sexual health trends exemplified in the observation that “the HIV epidemic is increasingly young, poor, and female” (Bruce and Hallman, 2008: 227).

The complex intersection of social norms with personal attitudes to sexual health risks has been explored in sub-Saharan Africa, where many young South African females associated condom use with ‘unsafe sex’ due to its potential to jeopardise love from their partner. They also regarded the attainment of sexual experience before marriage desirable for men and accepted inequality in sexual decision making as ‘normal’ (Reddy and Dunne, 2007). In addition, both females and males identified having multiple sexual partners, fathering many children, material possessions and sexually transmitted infections as the markers of manhood (Brown et al., 2005). By drawing on the dominant discourse of heterosexuality (hetero-normativity), both young women and men conspire
together to reproduce the existing gendered power relations that not only disempower women but put both groups at a greater risk of HIV (Reddy and Dunne, 2007). Gender identities, and dominant femininities and masculinities, in particular, are deeply implicated in youth SRH (Dunne, 2008; Jewkes and Morrell, 2010).

The spread of HIV/AIDS has drawn attention to gender relations, styles of intimate relations and gender based violence all of which pose threats to SRH, especially for women. There is growing recognition of the vital importance of understanding masculinities and the role that male socialization plays in promoting and supporting violence (Eckman, 2007) with interventions targeting young men early when styles of interaction in intimate relationships are formed and established (Barker, 2001). In this context, there are important opportunities for the involvement of youth in challenging social norms and individual attitudes to gender relations and SRHR (Achyut et al., 2011).

While there is no guarantee that SRH education can totally eliminate the risk of HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancy or sexual violence, properly designed and implemented programmes can reduce some of these risks (UNESCO, 2010). Despite evidence that institutional context of schools tends to be marked by gender inequality, gender violence and at times sexual abuse (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Leach and Mitchell, 2006; Dunne, 2008) many initiatives addressing Youth SRH and HIV prevention are often school-based. This limits the potential for raising youth SRHR which is compounded by a shortage of effective SRH programmes for out of school youth, particularly girls, who are at a greater risk (Bruce and Hallman, 2008).

The context within which a youth SRHR programme is implemented is clearly important especially given its social and cultural sensitivities. In addition, alongside the question of rights, there is a need to address gender relations as well as sexuality, sexual health, prevention of health risks such as HIV/AIDS and other STIs, unintended pregnancies and sexual abuse (World Population Foundation and Stop Aids Now, undated). The claim for SRHR, then, implies fundamental social changes to effect a reduction of gender inequalities. For Mathur et. al (2004), as a basic minimum, a youth SRH intervention should include an intervention that:

- improves the provision of information and services to young people.
• develops youth skills, for example through education, expansion of livelihood opportunities, improvement of life skills, and youth clubs.

• mobilizes youth and community members to change norms, attitudes, and social systems.

4.0 Current activities

In this section we move to focus the results of the extensive search of INGOs and NGOs that explored current programmes attempting to address various aspects of youth participation and citizenship. This electronic search was supplemented by interviews with three Oxfam Novib country level as well as two staff from UN Habitat. We first present examples of good practice in education and SRHR, then move to consider the main barriers to the successful programme implementation and finally distil some key lessons learned.

In the wake of the conceptual mapping it is important, once again, to bear in mind that the promotion of youth as active citizens tends to be a long term process and to recognise that major contextual challenges often constrain the spaces for youth engagement. Together these conditions usually demand incremental approaches to programme development and implementation.

4.1 Examples of good practice

The literature reviewed and discussions with UN Habitat revealed that examples of good practice in ‘youth’ participation, particularly in education. The following section showcases successful case-studies identified.

Oxfam Novib: Pakistan

In Pakistan, Oxfam Novib has two educational projects and one on SRH. Both education projects are implemented through local partners and are focused on improving the quality of basic education in disadvantaged areas. The first is research oriented where the local partner Idara-e-Taleem-o-
Aagahi (ITA) is trying to assess the current quality and status of curriculum and the ways it affects the learning capabilities of primary school children in Sindh and Southern Punjab.

The second project is implemented in Southern Punjab through a Civil Society Organization (CSO), Society for Advancement of Education (SAHE). SAHE has introduced an innovative accelerated learning programme that targets out of school children, children who have never been to school and those who have dropped out. This Fast Track Education Model is delivered through an innovative curriculum which enables students to complete primary school in three years. Upon graduation, they can enrol in secondary schools. In this project SAHE works in several different levels that includes, the mobilization of the community to raise parents’ awareness of the importance of education; building schools in the community, delivering the Fast Track curriculum and following up those young people who complete their curriculum to ensure they enrol in secondary schools.

Turning to SRHR, the main aim of this programme is the development of a curriculum on SRH for schools based on a five year forward plan. A wide scale communication and consultation process has been integral to this development with various partners and stake-holders, government ministries, religious leaders, communities and parents drawn in as part of a strategic approach to ensure that the SRH curriculum is based on youth needs, is approved by both health and education ministries and is implemented in schools within two years. A learning need assessment of youth will be carried out to accommodate youth expectations and needs. Beyond the production of documents and inevitable meetings, this communication strategy uses edutainment in which soap operas, talk shows and radio shows will be produced, articles in newspapers will be published, and social media like twitter and facebook will be used to build an understanding in the community that these SRH issues need to be discussed and that youth have a right to have knowledge of SRH. In this context, religious leaders were tasked to provide evidence from the Quran and Sunnah in support of SRH education and to show that the right to SRH information is not against the teachings of Islam.

Oxfam GB: Pakistan

Oxfam GB is using an integrated programme to ensure greater access and better quality of education for girls in Pakistan (Oxfam GB undated). This programme comprises, among others, Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) activities which have been implemented in 208
schools in six districts in Punjab. Oxfam and partners have installed or repaired toilets and hand-washing facilities in schools. They have used a range of participatory method to train 10,000 girls and 450 teachers to get across key messages about good hygiene practices. This has been followed up with advocacy and lobbying work with parents, teachers, communities and CSOs to demand better access to water and sanitation. The project team uses different tools such as health checklist, a Snakes and Ladders board game, other information, education and communication materials, and theatre to engage and ensure the active participation of girls, teachers, parents and members of the communities. After 12 to 18 months of the intervention, an increase was observed in both girls’ enrolment and in their learning levels, suggesting that WASH activities enabled girls to stay in school, reduced absenteeism and increased their achievement levels.

**Oxfam Novib: Palestine**

Oxfam Novib partners in Palestine are the Early Childhood Development Centre and the Teacher Creativity Center (TCC). The TCC has a number of projects in Civic Education. One of these is ‘Project Citizen’, which is for school children aged 14-15 and teaches them how to be active citizens and create their own projects in communities, such as building school gardens, cleaning streets in villages, and opening a community centre.

Other projects include the ‘Social Audit’ in which youth are engaged to find out if projects are successful and to investigate the transparency and accountability of INGOs and local NGOs. They present at local events and all stakeholders are invited to come. With respect to SRH an organisation called ‘Juzoor for Health and Social Development’ that works with youth and women working to integrate SRHR into existing projects, such as the Youth Parliament, Training of Trainers and Health Clubs. In practical terms they help women’s organisations to prepare healthy meals and use a peer to peer approach to hold discussions on SRH.

**USAID: Senegal**

The Population Council, Senegal and Frontiers together have worked across different policy areas, utilising a strong research base and government partnerships to catalyse change in adolescent SRHR policy and practice (DFID, 2010). A network of co-ordinated strategies was used in this multi-dimensional programme. These included, research and pilot studies, exploration of sensitive SRH issues for Youth, peer education, training of youth peer educators as well as education and health professionals, advocacy in communities and through religious organisations and CBOs,
communications in different public meetings and through drama, and collaboration in the development and implementation of the programme.

In terms of YAC a key outcome was the involvement of Youth to inform the programme, as peer educators within the programme, in peer engagement in the delivery of a SRHR curriculum and in providing evaluation feedback. Over eight years, 28,000 young people in three urban regions were reached by peer education. In addition, seventy adolescents were recruited to act as peer educators, including at-risk youth, house servants, shoeshine boys, car washers, and teenage mothers. They delivered the SRHR programme of work incorporating formal and informal educational approaches and a core curriculum in the three pilot districts. This successful programme was supported by local civic and religious leaders and received an over-whelming positive community response.

**Youth Advocacy Group (YAG): Nigeria**

A group of 10 young people, aged 18-24, some undergraduates and others out-of-school, used advocacy to influence Nigeria’s national legislation on HIV and AIDS anti-stigma and discrimination bill, in order to make it more responsive to the needs of young people in the education sector (Akinfaderin-Agarau and Fashola, 2011). This youth advocacy group (YAG) was formed by EVA (Education as a Vaccine) to implement advocacy activities in Nigeria. The YAG meets formally twice a month and receives daily technical support from EVA. Because of the personal relationship of EVA with the chairperson of the House Committee on HIV and AIDS, YAG was the first youth group that was invited to attend a formal public hearing of various stake holders to discuss the draft HIV/AIDS antidiscrimination bill. With support from EVA, YAG identified gaps in the bill and prepared their position paper which they presented at the public hearing. In a proactive approach, YAG did not rely on submission of the petition alone; it also worked to muster support from other young people. It developed a video, showcasing the story of one of the group’s members, worked in partnership with Student Unions to organise campus education events and continued to have formal and informal follow-up meetings with the chairperson and members of the House Committee on HIV and AIDS. After a year-long process, the HIV and AIDS anti-discrimination bill was passed by the House of Representatives in October 2010 – with YAG’s recommendations incorporated.
The YAG launched the Red Card campaign to facilitate the passage of the bill by the Senate. The campaign ran for three weeks and targeted individuals and groups representing the States and constituencies of the members of the Senate Committee on Health. Youth were asked to exercise their electoral power by completing a template red post card with messages and stories about the effect of HIV stigma and discrimination. The cards were sent to the Senate, calling on senators to pass the bill. Young people above the age of 18 years, eligible to vote in the 2011 elections, were deliberately targeted as a means of getting the attention of their representatives.

To popularise the Red Card campaign, young people were encouraged to share the campaign message with their friends verbally and through social media channels. This included changing their Facebook profile picture to the red card and updating their profile status with campaign messages. As a result, young people outside YAG’s immediate networks were able to contact the YAG to request cards to participate in the campaign. The cards were presented to the House Committee and its members on the 1st December 2010, World AIDS Day. This focused the attention of the Senate on the anti-stigma bill laying the foundation for the bill’s passage in the Senate.

**Entre Nós (“Between Us”): Brazil**

Entre Nós (“Between Us”) is an innovative multi-media campaign developed and implemented by Promundo, a Brazilian NGO based in Rio de Janeiro, and a group of young women and men peer educators known as JPEG (the acronym in Portuguese for Youth for Gender-Equity) (Ricardo and Fonseca 2008). The campaign targets Brazilian youth to engage in critical reflections on rigid ideas about gender in order to promote gender equality in Brazil. It addresses the gender-based expectations and power dynamics in intimate relationships that often underlie young women and men’s vulnerability to HIV. In a radio-based soap opera the storyline about a young couple and their friends tackles first sexual experiences, condom use, unplanned pregnancy and adolescent parenthood through the lenses of women’s empowerment and gender equity.

Soap opera was chosen as a medium of communication because soap operas are a big part of popular culture in Brazil and appeal to different social groups, while the radio provided a low-cost alternative medium. To maximise its reach, the soap opera is played on local radio stations and in diverse settings where young people hang out including schools, community centres, beauty salons, cyber cafes and snack bars. The airing of episodes is followed by peer educators led discussion groups in which youth talk about the storyline linking it to their lives and relationships. The soap
opera is also complemented by a set of comic books and a soundtrack with songs set to popular music styles and lyrics inspired by the campaign themes. In addition to promoting gender equality, peer educators act as local resources for the community on sexual and reproductive health, violence against women and other campaign issues. The campaign brings together young women and men. The choice of a “mixed” group ensured the campaign was accepted among youth in general and that its content was relevant and engaging to both women and men.

Promundo also runs Programmes H and M which are complementary interventions using education workshops and other community outreach strategies to engage the youth in critical reflections on gender and help them build the skills necessary to act in more empowered and equitable ways. An impact evaluation of Programme H in Rio de Janeiro reported an increase in self-reported condom use among young men who attended workshops, as well as a decrease in reported STI symptoms.

**Yaari-Dosti (friendship or bonding among men): India**

The Yaar-Dosti programme was adapted from the Brazilian programme discussed above. It aimed to promote gender equity among young men from low-income communities in Mumbai, India (Verma et. al, 2006). The project involved formative work on gender, sexuality and masculinity, and educational activities with 126 young (married and unmarried) men, aged 18–29, over a six-month period.

The intervention strategies and key issues to be addressed were determined by discussions with parents, community members, young men and older men who had significant influence over the younger men. Peer educators were selected from the community and were given two-week training on gender and HIV related issues, facilitation skills and qualitative data collection methods. Intervention activities were developed involving young men (but also two women) from the community, religious leaders, community members and NGO leaders. An evaluation of the study suggests that young men became less supportive of inequitable gender norms after participating in the interventions (Verma et. al, 2008). Similarly, there were significant improvements among intervention participants in key outcome indicators, including condom use, partner communication, partner violence, and attitudes toward people living with HIV. This study also showed that change in attitudes and behaviours is a complex and gradual process. Qualitative observation of those who attended the sessions suggests that changes among the young men happened in stages. In the initial stages of the intervention, young men who came into the sessions often denied the idea of
gender-based inequality in their society and in their individual actions. As they progressed through the sessions, they moved their position toward accepting that gender-based inequality does exist. Further into the intervention, they acknowledged that some of their attitudes and behaviours were gender inequitable, and that it would be beneficial to change these views.

**SRHR peer education (NAC): Uganda**

Young Empowered and Healthy (YEAH) is a nationally recognised sexual health campaign for and by young people in Uganda which was launched in 2004 (DFID, 2010). At an early stage YEAH identified that HIV and other SRH programmes in Uganda needed to include both males and females as it is often males who contribute to female vulnerabilities. In terms of process, YEAH uses multimedia including radio and drama to reach youth and it is implemented by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) with technical assistance from Health Communication Partnership (HCP). The impact of outreach and communication strategies has been enhanced by this strong partnership in which responsibility is divided on a regional basis. Regional young people’s advisory groups (YAGs) have been formed through which young people are involved and consulted in all stages of campaign development—planning, implementation and evaluation. Alongside this Civil Society Organisations (CVOs) work closely with district teams which reduces unnecessary duplication of work. An initial assessment of the SRHR needs of local communities informs planning, strategy design and the development of materials for pre-testing. This is followed by dissemination of SRHR education resources through peer educators, and the implementation of SRHR campaigns over a two-year cycle. Monitoring and evaluation provides the basis for re-planning. A 2008 YEAH impact survey showed that many of the campaigns reach to a substantial proportion of young men (46% - 66%) and women (32% -70%).

**Gender Equity Movement in Schools: India**

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in partnership with the Committee of Resource Organizations for Literacy (CORO) and the Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS), developed a school-based programme entitled “Gender Equity Movement in Schools,” (GEMS), for students in Grades VI and VII (Achyut et. al, 2011). GEMS promotes gender equality by encouraging equal relationships between girls and boys, examining the social norms that define men’s and women’s roles, and questioning the use of violence. The first phase of the programme was implemented in Mumbai public schools across two academic years (2008-09 and 2009-10),
reaching more than 8000 girls and boys ages 12-14. In the second phase, currently underway, GEMS is being scaled up to over 250 schools in Mumbai.

The Group Education Activities (GEA) used participatory methodologies such as role plays, games, debates and discussions to engage students in meaningful and relevant interactions and reflection about key issues. In the case of GEMS, the GEA were conducted by trained facilitators and held during the regular school day. The first year covered three themes: gender, the body and violence. The sessions in year 2 focused on deepening students’ understanding of gender and building skills to respond positively to discrimination and violence. The GEMS school campaign was a week-long series of events designed in consultation with the students and involved games, competitions, debates and short plays. Evaluation of the study indicates that students in both intervention group report more positive outcomes compared to those in the control group. The outcome variables that demonstrate the greatest changes are clustered around appropriate roles for women and men and girls and boys. The data on self-reported changes in behaviour are particularly encouraging, suggesting that girls and especially boys are taking steps in their lives that reflect the aims of the GEMS program. The findings on how students are responding to violence in the intervention schools indicate a positive shift.

**The Development Initiative Supporting Healthy Adolescents (DISHA): India**

DISHA was one of the first large-scale integrated programs in India which addressed the broader context of young people’s sexual and reproductive health needs (Kanesathasan, 2008). In addition to providing youth with sexual and reproductive health information and services, the program sought to tackle the social and economic constraints that often limit their choices and actions. DISHA was designed, implemented and evaluated by The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and local partners in the Indian states of Bihar and Jharkhand. These two states are among the country’s least developed and are characterized by poorly functioning public health systems, persistently high fertility rates, poor reproductive health outcomes and conservative gender norms. DISHA’s integrated program was conducted in 176 villages over a two-year period, from 2005 to 2007.

The youth skills and capacity component focused on building skills in areas such as communication, negotiation and leadership. It also worked to build young people’s self-confidence and decision-making abilities through youth groups and youth resource centres. Married and unmarried peer
educators were recruited and trained to provide information, counselling, support and referrals to youth through youth groups and individual sessions; and providing training opportunities for income generation. The programme mobilised community support for Youth SRH needs through engaging community leaders and undertaking mass communication activities and creating partnerships between adults and youth groups. The intervention also provided youth friendly health services based on the basis of input from the youth.

An evaluation of DISHA indicated that the programme was successful in shifting youth and adult knowledge and attitudes around early marriage and reproductive health (Kanesathasan, 2008). While the impact of the programme was stronger in changing norms around certain dimensions of empowerment (spousal communication, self-efficacy within the context of marriage and mobility), changes in other empowerment measures (communication with elders and self-efficacy prior to marriage) were not as robust. The project also increased youth awareness of and access to reproductive health services.

### 4.2 Main barriers

In this section we have collected together some of the key barriers found to militate against active youth citizenship.

**Adults’ perceptions of youth capacity**

The key argument used against youth participation is their limited capacity to participate (Faulkner and Nott, 2002; CIDA, 2007). Because of this adult perception of youth, young people are often in situations, where decisions are being made for them by older adults and institutions (DFID, 2010).

> The major problem is the mindset that kids don’t know anything or they are too young, they don’t know, they are just being emotional. So the biggest barrier is to challenge this mindset when it comes to engaging or involving youth. So what happens is that the government and NGOs often engage youth in events to show people that youth is being engaged but it is very difficult to change that mentality (Staff interview, Pakistan).
The process and outcomes of youth participation in projects should be documented and used as evidence to demonstrate to adults that youth have the capacity to play leadership roles and to make significant contributions to a broader range of youth programs (Attawell, 2004). While some partner organisations may question the capacity of youth in monitoring, evaluation and research, evidence suggests that youth elicit deeper data from respondents compared to professional researchers (UNICEF, 2011).

**The Wider Political Context:**

The historical and current political context also places constraints on youth participation and awareness. Pakistan, for example, continues to struggle to develop a stable democratic culture, largely due to those with power who hinder development by resisting education and awareness-raising (Aurang Zeb 2008). In fragile states, those affected by emergency or conflict or experiencing highly authoritarian regimes, the opportunities to engage YAC are reduced.

> However, there has been some reluctance from the Palestinian Authority (PA) and local organisations. ... Youth are the most active part of society in relation to trying to make changes, but everything is related to the Occupation and fighting against the Occupation. (Staff interview, Palestine)

**Poor education and training**

Education systems often do not focus on preparing young people adequately to participate in decision-making or develop the necessary analytical skills for critical thinking or problem-solving through participatory, active learning (DFID, 2010). As suggested in section 3.2 and 3.3 above, the institutional context of schools is often characterised by age and gender relations that are in opposition to the aspirations for YAC. Students are most often passive and subject to strong age/authority hierarchies and gender inequality. The severely limited space for youth voice is normalised and reproduced over time to further militate against youth participation.

**Weak infrastructure and poor governance**

It is often the case that young people lack direct access to institutional systems and structures within governments, the media and private and civil society sectors which severely hinders their ability to advocate for their rights (DFID, 2010). Even in the rare cases where young people have
been successful in influencing policy decisions, barriers within complicated bureaucratic structures and poor governance have tended to limit implementation which destroys young people’s belief in such mechanisms.

So, Pakistani youth are actually very active when it comes to making small or big policy changes. But the problem in Pakistan is very different. We have a very weak governance structure and no matter what policy we have, it is difficult to implement it. Whenever we or the youth go to the government demanding the implementation of policies, the only answer we get is ‘we don’t have any money’ (Staff interview, Pakistan).

**Inequality and exclusion**

Tackling inequality and addressing the inclusion of socially excluded groups of young people is a big challenge within the youth sector (DFID, 2010). It is easier to target elite educated youth than disadvantaged rural and urban youth. (Attawell, 2004).

... youth is not an homogenous group, so ensuring that you have a representative youth group becomes a challenge at times. You do urban, rural, you do gender wise but then you miss those young people with a different sexual identity. You do want to get them but it is very difficult, you do not know how to do it because this is a very taboo thing. Not many young people will be interested in coming up and talking about it. Though all young people have a right to information in SRH, young people in rural areas have different expectations than those working in rural areas so coming up with one thing that responds to the expectations of both at times become a challenge (Staff interview, Pakistan).

In addition to excluding certain groups, the dynamics of participation within youth sub-groups is often undemocratic with certain groups dominating others, for example, boys, the educated, the more confident and the rich often tend to dominate spaces of youth participation (UNICEF 2001).

**Cost**

It is often wrongly argued that youth participation at all level costs more compared to adult involvement (DFID, 2010). Regular attendance of youth in projects often require, for example, transportation to travel to and from meetings or workshops, provision of food and the costs involved in capacity building (Stop Aids Now, undated). While the meaningful participation of youth
does involve greater resources, the benefits of youth participation far outweigh the high costs involved (Save the Children, 2001).

**Competing demands on youth time**

Both in-and-out-of school youth have competing pressures on their time and have a number of problems that make attendance in projects difficult (Pravah et. al, undated; Stop Aids Now, undated); These include, exams, physical distance and transportation difficulties, the need to earn a living, objection from gate-keepers (parents, brothel owners etc.).

*Similarly, young people are also involved in studies, ... so what happens is they are interested but then they have other things to do as well, for example, education etc. So we [development organisations] go with our own frame of mind and expect them to attend meetings at particular set times and we do not realise that they have different life style and we do not have provision usually to adjust to a routine that facilitates them to participate and give their views* (Staff interview, Pakistan).

Strategies to address these needs are essential for maintaining youth participation.

### 4.3 Lessons learnt

The conceptual mapping in section 3, the case studies presented in section 4.1, and the interviews with Oxfam and UN Habitat staff highlight a number of important lessons in relation to the successful planning and implementation of programmes involving youth.

**Building trust takes time**

Gaining the trust of youth, who may have a history of poor relationships with adults in general, is a time-consuming process. One of the key factors for ensuring successful youth participation is to allocate sufficient time, at all cycles of the projects, to build trusting relationships with youth and other stakeholders—parents, community members and other ‘gate-keepers’ (CIDA, 2007). Socially excluded youth, in particular, such as migrants, sex workers, need a great deal of time to establish trust and confidence before actively engaging (Busza and Scunter, 2001; Save the Children, UK, 2001), especially on sensitive topics such as SRHR (Attawell, 2004).
Creating spaces for youth participation

Critical to achieving effective and meaningful youth participation is the creation of spaces in which they can explore their own lives and made available with the respect and support adults (UNICEF, 2010). Creativity in targeting youth makes the continued participation of youth throughout the life of a project less challenging. To target youth effectively, it is often best to go where they are, rather than to assemble them at designated ‘spaces’ chosen by adults (UNICEF, 2010). This will vary with the context and the characteristics of the target youth (UNICEF, 2004). For example, Akapire et. al (2011) note that especially with marginalised young Ghanaian women, a female-only space was considered a ‘safe’ space for developing and exercising skills and building self-confidence. Similarly, Harris (2009) observed that in Nigeria the vocational school was a valuable venue for ensuring the inclusion of young Muslim women as it was a space that their husbands permitted them to attend. It was also a good space for including Muslim and Christian women together. In the same context, young men tended not to meet as they worked in separate places, Muslims in Kawo district in Kaduna North and Christians in Romi District, Kaduna South.

In circumstance like these, it is often useful to create a space which addresses the immediate concerns of young people, for example, a lack of recreational facilities. There are examples where attending to such needs provided opportunities for other youth-focused activities like music and performance in bands which indirectly highlighted the importance of sexual and reproductive health-related issues to these young people (Save the Children, 2001). Integrating SRH education activities, for example, into existing community activities, such as youth groups, after-school clubs, and informal – but regular – gatherings of young people, ensures better youth attendance and therefore increases their impact (Save the Children, 2001). Ensuring consistent involvement in such activities can also be achieved through increasing livelihood support to marginalised young people so that they have less need to travel for work, and through conducting activities at times which allow working youth to attend (Save the Children, 2001). Low cost safe spaces can be set up by using existing publicly provided sites like youth/community centres, and schools, or voluntary institutions like faith-based organisations, churches, mosques, and local NGOs (Bruce and Hallman, 2008).
**Engaging youth peer educators (YPE)**

Successful youth participation programmes have found that young people most often interact with those similar to themselves and identify peers as the most common source of information on sensitive issues such as SRH (Burns *et. al*, 2004; UNESCO and UNAIDS, 2004; Focus, 2011). Trained YPE serve as role models in promoting social norms and values supportive of positive attitudes and behaviour and they are more likely to be considered culturally appropriate and accepted by youth (Focus, 2011). Quality YPE has been found to promote HIV prevention behaviours; exposure to YPE programs in Zambia has been found to be high and associated with some SRH risk-reduction behaviours, appropriate referrals, and use of SRH services by highly vulnerable youth (Svenson, 2008). Using YPE has the potential to help, for example, vulnerable out of school youth, such as sex workers, locate and provide other youth education and health services (Burns *et al.*, 2004). The impact of YPE on youth behaviour is particularly strong in school settings, however, it has been less obvious in the case of out-of-school youth. There are difficulties in targeting this particular group which is diverse and does not necessarily congregate in specific locations like schools (Focus 2011; Rosen et. al, 2004).

**Ensuring equity in youth participation**

Donor-partners need to critically examine gender mainstreaming and the participation of other socially excluded groups within their projects and organisations (CIDA 2007). More marginalised and disparate groups are often very difficult to access. Creative mechanisms, such as radio, often help to target hard to reach groups such as rural illiterate youth (DFID, 2010). Other innovative methods include online marketing company, rap groups, for example Senegalese rappers called “Y’en ai marre” [*I’m fed up*] (Staff interview, Senegal). It needs to be understood that the same barriers that prevent girls from accessing quality education also act to hinder their participation in development projects (Mitchell 2003).

*In Pakistan, it’s mainly the male group who dominate the whole discussion so we often don’t hear what young girls want or how they want to get involved in the projects. Not many organisations make use of diverse efforts to reach out to girls* (Staff interview, Pakistan)

An examination of the ways girls and young women participate in projects is equally important. Ndebele and Billing (2011) note that young women in their project strategically used traditional
gender roles and behaviour to gain increased influence with traditional adult leaders for challenging discriminatory patriarchal structures. They caution, however, that this behaviour might reflect a continued internalised sense of inferiority among young women which might compromise their ability to hold their leaders to account (Ndebele and Billing, 2011). Gender mainstreaming in projects demands the collection and reporting of gender segregated data as well as capacity building of project staff on gender equality (CIDA, 2007).

**Aligning project priorities with youth priorities**

Youth priorities should be considered at the inception stage of the project. In cases where participants’ priorities and needs might differ from the project implementers, which is not unusual, it is important to accommodate the priorities of the participants. For example, in a project that focused entirely on adolescent girls’ vulnerability to becoming infected with HIV, the project implementers soon found that HIV prevention was not an immediate concern for the participants or the adults in their communities. Rather, their concern was on preventing unintended and early pregnancy, and protecting girls from sexual violence. To ensure that the intervention developed by the project responded to the expressed priorities and most pressing concerns of the participants the implementers shifted the emphasis of the research questions and activities from HIV only to also include pregnancy and other sexual vulnerabilities (McCleary-Sills et al, 2011).

*It is difficult to prioritise SRHR because it is not a priority for youth. ... People from the West are imposing too much around HIV/AIDS in Novib documents. Here [in Palestine] this is not as urgent as in other countries* (Staff interview, Palestine)

**Working with gate-keepers and important adult stakeholders**

Enabling young to realise and exercise their rights is the responsibility of a wide range of adults; the state, in particular, is a key player in creating an enabling environment for youth participation (Commonwealth Secretariat 2005). Gaining government approval and working closely with governmental agencies is fundamental to ensuring the longer-term sustainability of programmes, particularly when conducting work on sensitive issues such as sexuality and SRH in highly centralised countries (Save the Children, 2001). Similarly, the development of linkages between non-governmental and governmental agencies is essential for the long-term sustainability of programmes. Likewise, the involvement of local community is essential, in particular religious
leaders in the case of SRHR (Save the Children, 2001; Staff interview, Pakistan; Rosen et. al, 2004). Similarly, the role of media is critical to engaging youth, raising awareness and mobilising public support (Attawell, 2004). The viability and sustainability of projects is to a large extent dependent on the positive support of multiple stakeholders in addition to the engagement of youth.

Building on existing networks/alliances and drawing on previous information/experiences

Successful youth participation depends on building strong alliances. Identification of ‘youth’ and ‘participation’ champions within the government, civil society and NGOs and utilising their knowledge and expertise to build a strong coalition will help achieve positive outcomes (DFID, 2010). Maintaining databases of youth-serving organisations, leaders, champions, alumni, youth networks and current activities and programmes will help eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort and offer a resource for information sharing and exchanging good practices.

A mapping of current status of youth active citizenship projects in Pakistan and learning from them rather than replicating what other people have been doing [would be useful]. (Staff interview, Pakistan)

Capacity development for rights and participation for youth and other stakeholders

Learning to participate and exercise rights needs knowledge, information, skills (Akinfaderin-Agarau and Fashola, 2011; Save the Children UK, 2001) and resources (Stop Aids Now undated). Successful youth participation requires strengthening the capacity of young people to campaign for their own protection and creating a youth network(s) which give more power when youth face duty bearers (Traore, 2011). In this respect, there are training needs for Youth in communication skills and public speaking so that they present their views confidently to the media, officials and other stakeholders. In addition, vulnerable youth also need help developing their life and livelihood skills so that they also can be empowered (Burns et. al, 2004). If youth are to be involved in all stages of the project, they also need training in respondent confidentiality, data collection methods, reporting, monitoring and evaluation (DFID, 2010).
5.0 Implications

In this final section of the report we focus first on some key points drawn from the study in the form of guidelines and then we consider some gaps in our knowledge that need greater thought and attention.

5.1 Towards guidelines

This section draws together key principles that have emerged from the review of the literature and current practices in particular from the successful case studies presented earlier. This yielded several lessons in ensuring meaningful youth participation which include:

- Listening to youth – involving youth from the initial planning stage through to evaluation and respecting and responding to their views.
- Ensuring equity in participation by diverse youth groups, in particular females and other socially excluded groups.
- Youth working with youth – peer support
- Gaining support through consultation, communication and advocacy
- Drawing in formal institutions and bodies, ministries, key stakeholders
- Think creatively and look for ‘natural’ spaces where youth meet anyway
- Diversifying approaches to education (e.g. speed schools) and using health to address gender and SRHR
- Making available resources (equipment, training, logistic) for youth participation
- Adapting traditional approaches to youth population (providing stipends, flexible hours, training that will increase employability)
- Customising strategies that are best suited to the target sub-group of youth
- Maintaining youth motivation through participatory methods and entertainment (dance, drama, music)
- Using formal strategies (public hearings, lobbying) with informal strategies and combining new and mobile media in combination with face-to-face approaches
- Combining participation with offering education and SRH services denied to vulnerable groups

5.2 Gaps

In addition to the identification of key principles, three areas were identified where considerable gaps exist currently. This suggests that without addressing these gaps, it will be difficult to achieve and document greater impact of youth as change agents.

*Establishing a common understanding of ‘youth participation*

All partners need to have a clear understanding of the definition, purpose and goal of youth participation (CIDA 2007). It is important that donor agencies (either directly or through implementing partners) develop indicators or criteria against which to assess effective participation even though the nature and level of participation will change as projects evolve and will continue to ebb and flow as community members strive to balance competing demands on their time (Mathur et al. 2004). In the absence of these indicators or criteria, it would be difficult to monitor progress (UNICEF 2004). These will vary with sector, scale, country context and the views of participating young people and their communities (DFID 2010). Quality standards need to be outlined in four key operational areas—organisational development, policy planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

*How can we as Novib directly involve youth more? I put a focus on youth in any discussion, for example in relation to health and livelihoods. We need to do it but we have no methodology or strategy* (Staff interview, Palestine)

*At the moment we do not have clear policy guidelines or a check list to ensure we do engage young people meaningfully, not just to show that we’ve engaged them at the beginning or at the end of the project. I think youth would also like to get involved in the monitoring and*
evaluation of projects, and that is OK but as an organisation we need to make a conscious effort to know why we are doing A and why we are not doing B. (Staff interview, Pakistan)

Up to now youth have not properly been listened to or involved in projects, though OxfamNovib is better than others partly because programmes & projects have been designed by older people and through the traditional routes – civil society organizations – whereas that’s not how young people work or want to be involved (Staff Interview, Senegal)

While the type, nature and purpose of youth participation will change as each project evolves, a shared understanding of youth participation will help enhance the relevance and outcomes of the project.

**Measuring the impact of participation**

The impact of participation needs to be assessed from three differing perspectives (UNICEF 2004):

(i) on the individual youth who participate,

(ii) on the realisation of goals set by the youth and

(iii) on families and the communities in which youth live.

The ways youth participation has impacted on the donor/implementing organisations’ structure and procedures is important to consider as well (Faulkner and Nott, 2002). This will enable learning from past activities to inform current and future activities. Broader impact nationally and regionally also needs to be considered with an appreciation that a long time is required for impact at this level to be evident (Forss et al. 2009). Evaluating SIDA’s work in the area of young people’s SRH for over 10 years in India, Forss et al. (2009) observe that while progress on indicators such as, age at marriage, teenage pregnancy, illegal abortion, sex ratio, prevalence and spread of HIV/AIDS, knowledge among adolescents around sexuality, prevention of STDs, and the extent of rights in this field, are far from satisfactory, young people targeted by SIDA’s project do experience a better understanding of their SRHR. Adolescents are now a group that matters in policy-making and with concerned ministries (health, education and women affairs). This is evidenced in policy initiatives, appointment of committees, allocation of funds and legal changes and the introduction of sexuality education in the nation-wide curriculum for forms 10-14 (Forss et al. 2009). While different
projects have different aims and objectives, it is nevertheless important that the impacts of youth participation are measured and evaluated.

**Conducting a youth audit**

Undertaking a youth audit should be the first step towards youth mainstreaming in development (DFID, 2010). This will help enable the donor/implementing organisation to assess the current status of work with youth. Issues to consider include:

(i) the organisation policy towards youth and the arrangements for implementing and monitoring this policy, as well as the incorporation of youth issues in other key policies;

(ii) descriptions of who within the organisation leads on youth issues, who the external partners are and how committed they are to youth issues, and the role of youth in decision-making;

(iii) the capacity of the organisation in terms of staff with adequate expertise and training in and responsibilities for youth mainstreaming.

(iv) youth working with youth and the levels of peer support

In the burgeoning literature on participation, the engagement of ‘youth’ is less visible compared to that of ‘children’ and ‘adolescent’. Education, in particular, offers few examples of good practice in engaging youth as change agents compared to SRHR. The processes and indicators of youth participation are often not outlined making it difficult to evaluate the impact of projects. To utilise the full potential of youth in development practice there is a need to adopt creative approaches, focusing on excluded sub-groups of young people and building partnerships between adults and youth in a culturally sensitive manner. There is also a need to evaluate the impact of youth participation at the individual, organisational, and (local / national / global) community level. While youth participation is not a straightforward process and change is often slow and incremental, their participation is essential for rights to become a reality.
6. References


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Pravah, iVolunteer and Patang (undated) Talking Volunteerism: A Qualitative Study. Available at: http://www.pravah.org/content/files/Talking%20Volunteerism.pdf


World Population Foundation (WPF) and Stop Aids Now (undated) Quality of SRHR Education Programmes for Young People: Checklist for Programme Officers. Utrecht and Amsterdam: World Population Foundation (WPF) and Stop Aids No. Available at: http://www.stopaidsnow.org/documents/OVC_E-PAT_checklist_UK.pdf


Appendix A

Search List of INGOs and NGOs

1. Advocates for Youth: http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/
3. AVERT: http://www.avert.org/
5. dance4life: http://www.dance4lifesza.org.za/
8. Girl Effect: http://www.girleffect.org/learn/more-resources
11. Interagency Youth Working Group:
    http://www.iywg.org/youth/topics/sex_family_life_education
14. OxfamNovib: http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/?id=946
15. Pathfinder International: http://www.pathfind.org/
17. Pravah: http://www.pravah.org/
19.  RCPLA (Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action) network: http://www.rcpla.org/

20.  Save the Children UK: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/

21.  SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) : http://www.sida.se/English/


23.  UNICEF: http://www.unicef.org/

24.  VSO, UK: http://www.vso.org.uk/about/
