One Stop Youth Resource Centres
Local Governments Response to Improving Youth Livelihood

youth in cities

World Urban Forum Dialogue Series
The well known demographic challenge of the 21st century – a rapidly expanding world population growing from 6.1 billion in 2001 to 7.2 billion in 2015 (NIC 2000) - will occur almost entirely in cities in low income countries. Rapid urbanization is coupled with the fact that nearly half of the world’s population are under the age of twenty-five (State of the World Cities report, 2007), and 85 per cent of those of working age live in the developing world (UN HABITAT, 2005). Of the one billion slum dwellers in the world today, it is estimated that more than 70% are under the age of 30. Migration to informal settlements is predominantly by the young.

As the lead agency for cities in the United Nations, UN HABITAT recognized the urgency of this issue and began to focus resources and energy on how to better the lives of youth and their communities, launching their youth programming initiatives at the second World Urban Forum in Barcelona in 2004. (UN HABITAT, 2005).

This collection of dialogue papers describes the situation of youth in poverty; outlines some of the hopeful programs that are successfully engaging youth in their communities, specifically the One Stop Youth Centres and provides a case study of one NGO’s experience in integrating youth into its programs and governance. The collection has been compiled for practitioners – youth service providers and youth themselves. While some of the papers draw from research, they are not academic treatises aimed at building theory but are rather reports from the field aimed at enhancing practice. Originally written for different audiences the styles of the papers vary. They all take an asset based approach to their topics, seeing youth as a positive part of the solution to urban challenges.
For purposes of a common language, this series of working papers uses the most commonly used definitions, in different demographic, policy and social contexts. These are: Adolescents: 10 to 19 years of age; Youth 15 to 24 years of age and Young People: 10 to 24 years of age.

One of the frameworks developed by Seymour was originally an appendix to the 2008 case study by the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (Seymour, N.K; 2008). That framework, reproduced on page iii, provides a useful set of categories to consider when undertaking youth programming. Unlike the ladder of participation or engagement (Hart, R; 1997), it suggests that all activities on the grid are valuable and necessary to a comprehensive approach to youth in cities. To urban practitioners it may provide a helpful diagnostic tool to guide the introduction of activities and engage a wider range of adults or youth in analyzing and addressing their civic experiences. It is also a useful lens through which to consider the ideas presented in each of the papers in this series.
### A Framework for Categorizing Youth Programming (Seymoar et al, 2008)

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<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Data, information and research about the status or perceptions of youth and/or that measure progress</td>
<td>Activities that improve the health, education, income or environment of youth</td>
<td>Activities that enable youth to understand the need for change and enhance their ability to positively effect their own future</td>
<td>Activities designed and implemented by youth to improve their lives or the sustainability of their communities</td>
<td>Activities where youth are equal partners with adults</td>
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<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Establish baseline data</td>
<td>Improve health</td>
<td>Overcome despair, apathy and give hope</td>
<td>Encourage leadership</td>
<td>Mutual benefits such as improved community infrastructure</td>
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<td>Identify assets and problems</td>
<td>Improve education and skill level</td>
<td>Raise consciousness</td>
<td>Provide community services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Monitor progress</td>
<td>Improve employability</td>
<td>Mobilize youth to act on their own behalf</td>
<td>Improve livelihoods and reduce poverty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enable adjustments</td>
<td>Occupy youth in positive activities (prevent crime, drug abuse etc)</td>
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<td><strong>Typical activities</strong></td>
<td>Research on demographics, trends, impact of health, poverty, location etc on youth</td>
<td>HIV AIDS programs</td>
<td>Youth to youth exchanges</td>
<td>Micro Enterprises</td>
<td>Local authorities hiring youth businesses to deliver services</td>
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<td>Establishment of benchmarks, goals, targets and monitoring of progress</td>
<td>Stay in school programs</td>
<td>Student Conferences</td>
<td>Youth credit and savings organizations</td>
<td>Joint projects – co designed and delivered</td>
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<td>Developmental evaluations</td>
<td>Life Skills programs</td>
<td>Youth Visioning Projects</td>
<td>Elected Youth Councils</td>
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<td>Participatory action research</td>
<td>Employment related skills training</td>
<td>Youth Congresses and Forums</td>
<td>Youth led Community Demonstration Projects</td>
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<td>Training in proposal writing, operating a small businesses</td>
<td>Appointed Youth Councils</td>
<td>Youth Climate Action Teams</td>
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<td>Employment placements, internships</td>
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<td>Sports and recreational programs</td>
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<td>Active Living (biking, soccer) programs</td>
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<td><strong>Case examples</strong></td>
<td>Youth Vital Signs project, Vancouver, Canada</td>
<td>Training for youth brigades to do construction in Nairobi slum redevelopment, Kenya</td>
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<td>Water detectives program in Matamoros Mexico</td>
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The Papers in this Dialogue Series include:

**The Place of Children: Poverty and Promise** by Willem van Vliet and a team of researchers, explores the experience of four adolescents (three 13 year olds and one 11 year old) in four cities: Ankara, Turkey; Nairobi, Kenya, Rio de Janero, Brazil; and New York, USA. A qualitative picture of their daily lives, it reveals their common concerns for safety and worry about violence that is mitigated by their family and social networks that help them navigate their way. Environmental degradation and impoverishment are dominant in their homes and communities, yet they manage to go to school, play, help their families and volunteer in their communities. Their dreams and hopes for the future are not unlike those of their more affluent peers. The paper shows youth who are not passive victims of their circumstances but active participants in improving their lives.

**Youth in Urban Development: Bringing Ideas into Action**, by Kevina Power, Darcy Varney, Doug Ragan and Karun Korenig, was a key discussion paper for more than 500 youth who attended the World Urban Youth Forum held leading up to the World Urban Forum in Vancouver in 2006. The paper introduces two key concepts: youth led development and youth mainstreaming. Both approaches are derived from an asset based philosophy that recognizes youth as leaders in their communities and emphasizes their capacity and interest in contributing to the decisions that affect their lives. Following an overview of the evolution of youth programming in the UN system, the authors advocate youth mainstreaming as an effective strategy for addressing youth and cities. The approach adapts gender mainstreaming from the women’s movement which has been used in the field of development since the mid 80’s. Youth-led development is introduced as a meaningful approach to engagement and social inclusion. Practices that emphasize mentorship (both peer-to-peer and adult-to-youth) and asset based community development are described. Four broad support conditions that create an enabling environment are introduced – understanding of youth involvement, the need for financial and human support, a positive policy environment and access to decision-makers so as to effect long-term change. The paper concludes with illustrative case examples.
**Space for Change** by Claire Wilkinson provides an in-depth analysis of the One Stop Youth Resource Centre in Nairobi, introduced in the above *Youth in Urban Development* paper. Originally a master thesis, her paper provides a useful theoretical and geo-political context for the One Stop initiative and goes on to give examples of partnerships and of the use of space to affect change and address the issues in their community. It suggests factors for success, gives observations about the objectives and goals and identifies the main difficulties that continue to exist. The paper concludes with the authors' reflections on her experience as an international intern.

**One Stop Resource Centres: Local Governments Response to Improving Youth Livelihoods**, by Doug Ragan and Mutinta Munyati, further elaborates on the One Stop cases. Building on the experience of the Nairobi One Stop, similar Youth Centres have been introduced in three cities in East Africa - Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Kampala, Uganda; and Kigali, Rwanda. Five key principles for Youth-led Development were identified in a conference in Kampala. The paper is based on an evaluation report on the state of the One Stops and provides an overview of their development, elaborating on their use as a model for effective training and capacity building for marginalized youth. The paper provides a useful focus on strengthening the capacity of local authorities to effectively engage youth, referring to the role of youth councils in Dar es Salaam and Kampala. Finally, it points out the value of using the One Stops as a platform for amplifying the voices of youth locally, nationally, and internationally.

**Youth Led Development in Sustainable Cities: From Idea, to Policy to Practice**, is a case study by Nola Kate Seymoar and a team of people engaged in introducing youth initiatives in an established NGO active in Canada and cities around the world. The candid story of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities’ path to embrace Youth Led Development within its own governance and as one of its program areas was not straightforward. The lessons gained from the experiences include; the need for unwavering commitment; the importance of co-designing the program with youth; the value of undertaking two paths simultaneously - mainstreaming and specialized projects; maintaining an active approach to learning;
managing risks and conflicts; providing seed funding for small community based initiatives; using flexible evaluation and monitoring tools; and nurturing innovation. The Framework for Categorizing Youth Programming (see above) was originally incorporated as an appendix to the case study. It was developed in conjunction with the team of authors and provides a practical framework – both for analytical purposes and for guiding program choices and managing expectations.

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Co-editors

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Local Governments Response to Improving Youth Livelihoods

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Over the past decade there has been a growing awareness internationally of the need to urgently address youth issues. It is predicted that the world population will grow by 2015 to 7.2 billion, up from 6.1 billion in the year 2000 (NIC, 2000), with 95% of the increase in developing countries and nearly all in rapidly expanding urban areas. Nearly half of the world’s population - more than 3 billion people - are under the age of twenty-five (State of the World Cities report, 2007), with 85 per cent of those who are of working age live in the developing world (UN HABITAT, 2005). Of the one billion slum dwellers in the world today, it is estimated that more than 70% are under the age of 30. These youth will be living for the foreseeable future with limited access to employment, education and adequate health care. UN HABITAT, as the lead agency within the UN system for cities, recognized the urgency of this issue and began to focus resources and energy on how to better the lives of youth and their communities.

In 2004, UN HABITAT launched the Global Partnership for Urban Youth Development that sought to engage cities globally in addressing youth issues as part of the implementation strategy for enhanced youth engagement (UN HABITAT, 2005). Under this partnership a series of youth programs designed by UN HABITAT in partnership with local governments and civil society were created to address the most pressing needs of urban youth. UN HABITAT is the focal point for local authorities in the UN system.

One of the most successful of these programs has been the establishment of pilot youth centres in 3 cities in East African. These centres, called One Stop Youth Resource Centres, addressed a range of needs of young people, from training in areas such as entrepreneurship, to life skills to health. One of the reported contributing factors to the success of these centres is the “youth led development” methodology utilized - a methodology that places youth in a decision-making role and at the centre of their own and their community’s development. Another contributing factor to the success of these Centres was their addressing of the significant lack of public spaces and amenities for youth. Cities, such as Nairobi, Kenya where the first One Stop was developed, had begun to recognize that they being the closest government entity to youth, needed to address these issues to assure both the positive development of its youthful populations and the cities themselves.

Using data collected from a desk study and the State of the One Stops evaluation report (UN HABITAT, 2009), this paper will argue that the demographic “youth bulge” which is primarily happening in the developing world and increasingly in cities, can be dealt with in a positive way through the implementation of youth led development programs and the establishment of youth resource centres along the model of the One Stop Youth Resource Centres.
Section 1: One Centres’ Background and History

The first One Stop Youth Resource Centre was launched on International Youth Day, 2003 as a partnership between the City of Nairobi, international and local NGOs, the government of the Netherlands and UN HABITAT. The focus of the Centre was to first and foremost be a place that “empowers the youthful generation to have ownership of the development process and be agents of transformation in the city.” Operationally, the One Stop focused on improving the livelihoods of youth in Nairobi through the provision of “youth empowering services” such as employment training, counseling, recreation and cultural activities and as a place for youth and other stakeholders to network (Wilkinson, 2009). The Nairobi One Stop quickly became a model urban youth centre (UN HABITAT, 2009).

Due to the success of the Nairobi One Stop, UN HABITAT with the support of the Norwegian government, began a plan to scale-up the operations of the One Stop Centre in Nairobi and use it as a model for four other cities in East Africa – Kampala, Uganda; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Kigali, Rwanda. To further this agenda, UN HABITAT brought together 60 youth representatives from the One Stops for a workshop held in Kampala, Uganda in the Spring of 2007 to plan how to support the further development and operationalization of each of the sites. As well, the workshop developed a series of principles on youth led development—known as the Kampala Principles for Youth Led Development - under which Centres would be developed. (UN HABITAT, 2007)

These principles are:

1. Youth should define their own development goals and objectives.
2. Youth should be given a social and physical space to participate in so as to enhance their development
3. Adult mentorship and peer-to-peer mentorship should be encouraged.
4. Youth should be role models in order to help other youth to engage in development.
5. Youth should be integrated into all local and national development programmes and frameworks.

What is key about these Principles is the strong focus on youth taking the lead in their own development – or what has become known as Youth Led Development. Youth Led Development was first conceptualized by Peacechild International in 2005 (Peacechild, 2005; Woolcombe, 2007). One of UN HABITAT’s international partners – the Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) – adopted and refined this methodology with their own youth led methods, and further developed the youth led program model (Ragan, 1997; Ragan, 2004). This program method was first operationalized by UN HABITAT and EYA for the One Stop Environmental Entrepreneurship program (UN HABITAT, 2008), and has since gone on to be used extensively by each of the One Stops.

Since the Kampala conference two One Stop centres have come online in Dar es Salaam and Kampala, while the Nairobi One Stop has consolidated itself in a new
permanent location. A draft evaluation report entitled State of the One Stops (UN HABITAT, 2009) was completed in May of 2009 and highlights the perceptions of youth regarding the Centres, as well as documents the status of the One Stop programs and infrastructure. The development of the One Stops as models of urban youth development happened within the larger context of the growing understanding of the need to engage urban youth and the provision of safe urban spaces, and with that the exploration of how to effectively do this. The next section outlines the context within which the One Stop Centres developed.
Section 2: One Stop Centre: Responding to the need for Urban Space for Youth

Globally young people make up the majority of many cities in the world, yet cities are not welcoming places for youth. Youth are most often not effectively engaged by cities at any level - from the actual planning of the cities where professional planners have both a lack of time and resources to engage youth (Frank, 2006) through to building spaces for youth for activities such as recreation (GUCIC Canada, 2005). This lack of engagement is exacerbated in the developing world where there is little basic infrastructure for youth to access, ranging from parks and community centres, to basic services such as health, training and education.

Yet, dedicated youth spaces in urban centres have been shown to be key to both the physical and emotional wellbeing of youth. Studies in developed countries have suggested that the provision of urban space can raise youth’s self esteem, help them form close and healthy bonds with their peers and become aware of social issues which directly affect them (Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003; Luken, 2005). Youth spaces have as well be shown to positively affect key issues such as health, for example lowering HIV AIDS infections (Easton, 2007). A study done with youth in Canada outlined five key ingredients for a successful youth space, as represented by a five-point star. (Luken, 2005, Figure 1)

A key finding of this study that is relevant to this paper was the focus on youth ownership of the Centre. This ownership entailed youth having a sense of responsibility and an ability to have meaningful input.

Youth ownership is not simply about painting walls. Youth need power and control in decision-making to have a sense of ownership and responsibility. They may be involved in formal roles as board members or they may make or influence decisions through an informal meeting process with coordinators or community representatives. (Luken, 2005)

The need for youth to have this ownership relates to Principle 1 of the Kampala Principles for Youth Led Development - Youth should define their own development
goals and objectives.

Though there has been research done on the need for urban youth spaces in the developed world, there as yet has been little research done with developing country youth. One study done in Accra, Ghana found that informal urban street spaces for young men were "significant to them, full of positive meaning and emotion" (Langevang, 2008). The young men were seen to be attempting to consolidate and formalize these spaces into youth clubs as a way to be recognized as "responsible actors in their communities". These spaces and the attempt to formalize them come up against the community belief that young men gather only to "deliberately provoke their environment” and cause problems. The stigmatization of youth in the developed and developing world as incapable, lazy, or threatening is one of the greatest barriers to youth gaining space in cities.

A recent study of the One Stop Centre in Nairobi was done in 2007 to determine how youth utilized the One Stop space. The study entitled Space for Change is of great interest because Claire Wilkinson, the author, researched the operations of the Centre at a time when the Centre itself was run more informally than the One Stops that were later established. This informality allowed there to be a greater degree of youth ownership. Building on the findings of the Ghanian research, which highlighted the importance of informal space for youth, and the attempts of the youth to formalize the space into youth clubs, the One Stop Nairobi seems to have followed a similar path, reflected in the key findings of the report.

The key findings from Space for Change report suggest that there are four conditions that were present that brought about the success of the One Stop:

1. Spatial flexibility,
2. Personal freedom,
3. Spatial function and
4. Spatial partnerships.

Each of these conditions relates in different ways to how youth can take leadership in the One Stop.

Spatial flexibility refers to the use of the One Stop by youth for their own activities and for mobilization on issues important to them. For example, the Nairobi youth council used the One Stop to host regular meeting on issue of local governance. Many of the youth councilors and other youth used the space as a place to organize youth led programs and organizations that covered a range of issues from the protection of the environment to the rights of street kids. The use of the One Stop form of youth led organizing is prevalent in all the One Stop sites.¹

Personal Freedom refers to the degree to which a space is supervised by an adult. A "formal" space is one which adults have a high degree of control over, and an

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¹ A program that has developed from the One Stop has been the Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth Led Development that has currently documented over 500 youth led agencies globally.
“informal” space one that has a high degree of youth oversight. Wilkinson posited that informal youth run space was key to the One Stop because it both allowed youth the freedom to organize and plan their own projects, while at the same time having the support of adults “literally next door”.

Spatial Function refers to spaces in the One Stop that are for youth and have a specific programmatic function such as employment, governance and advocacy, educational purpose or the provision of health care. Wilkinson believes that this space creates an outlet for youth to realize and apply their skills, and acts as an impetus for participation in the One Stop.

Lastly, Spatial Partnerships are key because they incubate alliances through networking and connections formed with other youth and adult mentors, from government, academia and private enterprise. These partnerships are the “building blocks for positive and healthy behaviours.” Taken together, these four conditions strengthen the youth led methodology, and demonstrate how youth can, if given the chance and proper support, develop strong leadership skills. The Nairobi One Stop was able to inspire UN HABITAT, NGOs and local government to expand the model beyond Nairobi.
Section 3: One Stop Centres: An Effective Training and Capacity Building Model

As mentioned in the last section, the One Stop plays many different roles in the area of training and capacity building for youth. The State of the One Stop report looks at what the perceptions of youth are in regards to the effectiveness of the One Stops. The State of the One Stop Survey was administered to youth and mentors over a two-month period to 24 youth from the One Stop Centres of Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam. This chapter is broken into three sections, which relate to the evaluation as based on the UN HABITAT goals for youth. These goals are:

1. Improved Livelihoods for Marginalized Youth
2. Strengthened capacity of Local Authorities to effectively engage youth
3. Increased understanding of the role of youth in urban development through strengthened communication and learning
4. Youth participation in forums at the local, national and global levels in order to enhance effectiveness in defining problems, identifying solutions and implementing programmes

1. Improved Livelihoods for Marginalized Youth

Being involved in the One Stop Youth Centre helped me get a chance to be trained as a youth information worker. This has lifted my spirit and I...

2 It must be stated that these findings are preliminary as the One Stops in Dar es Salaam and Kampala had only recently opened, so any longitudinal data is not present. Thus, this data reflects the perceptions of youth and youth/adult coordinators on the success of the Centres.

3 The One Stop Stakeholder Survey was structured within the framework of UN-HABITAT Strategy for Youth Engagement and the Medium Term Strategic Implementation Plan. The evaluation was structured to analyze both qualitatively and quantitatively how well the One Stop Centres achieve the following four overarching UN HABITAT youth program objectives:

a) Improve livelihoods for marginalized youth in urban slums
b) Strengthen the capacity of Local Authorities and other institutions to effectively engage youth in policy formulation and programme implementation
c) Increase understanding of the role of youth in sustainable urbanization and urban development through strengthened UN-HABITAT and Partner information, communication and learning
d) Enhance effectiveness in defining problems, identifying solutions and implementing programmes on youth in human settlements through youth participation in UN-HABITAT’s organs and forums at the local, national and global levels
e) Establish the means for scaling up and sustaining youth-focused approaches by ensuring broad-based multi-stakeholder engagement in the youth strategy.
committed myself to working and using all the information I got to see that the Centre moves on.

Youth Respondent
State of the One Stop Uganda

One of the key roles of the One Stops is to improve the livelihoods of marginalized youth. 83% of respondents believed that marginalized youth’s lives were improved through their involvement in the One Stops. The areas the respondents identified that were improved were better access to jobs (37.5%), their physical environment (25%) and better access to recreation (21%). The remaining youth believed that the One Stops improved their lives through training in different topics such as HIV AIDS, and the meeting of other youth through involvement in the One Stop.

Through involving young people in good governance [the One Stop] gives young people access to own the city and the city development at large. It also gives young people an environment to lobby for their issues to be taken as a serious contribution.

Youth Respondent, Age 23
Nairobi

2. Strengthen the capacity of Local Authorities to effectively engage youth

One goal of the One Stops is to facilitate youth in better engaging in local government. Respondents were asked whether they felt that youth were engaged in local government, how this manifests itself, and whether there was support within the One Stop in the area of leadership training to support this.

All respondents (100%) believed that it was important to have youth involved in local government. In regards to youth involvement in government there was a range amongst the One Stops. Respondents believed that youth were very involved in local government in Kampala (100%), very involved in Dar (75%), and not so much in Nairobi (25%). These numbers are borne out in that there are established Youth Councils in Kampala and Dar based out of the One Stops, and no council in Nairobi, though historically there has been one. The Youth Councils in Dar and Kampala were often referenced in the surveys as key to their success. The One Stops as well has facilitated the involvement of youth in local government through training over 50% of the respondents in leadership skills.

Though the respondents felt that youth involvement was key to the success of the One Stops and the cities they reside, the respondents as well felt a strong level of cynicism, with only 37.5% of respondents believing that youth involvement had a positive effect on government. One respondent states the challenge clearly:

“The government does not believe that youth are a progressive group, so [the One Stop] helps.” (Youth Respondent, Kampala)
3. Increase understanding of the role of youth in sustainable urbanization and urban development through strengthened communication and learning

A key role of the One Stops were to increase the knowledge and understanding of the youth involved, and from this their capacity to effect positive change in themselves and their communities, in areas such as HIV AIDS and employment. As well, the respondents were asked questions regarding scalability, and whether the One Stop as a centre had any impact or was an inspiration to other cities.

In regards to health and employment, 73% of respondents had received information from the One Stop both regarding HIV AIDS and training opportunities. This information had come in the form of direct dissemination as well as through training and workshops. Other information was disseminated was in training in participatory planning, and computer training to access information with new technologies.

The respondents were split almost 50/50 regarding whether the One Stop was an inspiration to other cities, with 46% believing that the One Stop had inspired other cities, and 42% believing it hadn’t. In regards to the One Stop having a direct effect on policy, 60% of the respondents believed the policy impact happened at the local level, with participation of youth being one area affected as well as an increase in resources for youth. The impact of the One Stop on national policy was as well mentioned.

4. Youth participation in forums at the local, national and global levels in order to enhance effectiveness in defining problems, identifying solutions and implementing programmes

One role of the One Stop is to assure that youth voice is heard and heeded both internally in the running of the One Stop, as well as youth’s voice being amplified through the One Stop as a platform for engagement.

76% of respondents felt that there had been effective engagement of youth in the One Stop, with 61% feeling this had been done through the Youth Councils, 38% through consultations and 33% through project management. In regards to involvement in UN HABITAT, 81% of respondents knew of examples of youth involvement in events and forums, specifically the World Urban Forum. Less - 55% - knew of youth from the One Stop’s involvement in other international events such as the Commonwealth Youth Ministers meeting and related events held in Kampala, Uganda in 2007.

State of the One Stop Report Conclusion

The findings from the State of the One Stop report clearly show that the youth felt that the One Stops were a positive influence on their lives, providing them with key information, training, and access to opportunities. This positive view of the One Stops stopped at the doors of local government, where youth felt they had little impact. These divergent findings demonstrate the importance of the One Stops as important places for youth to improve their livelihood, but as well the challenges youth have to become active participants in their communities.
Conclusion

It is not an overstatement to say that the world has undergone fundamental changes in the past few years. These changes have forced the global community to reflect on all its current assumptions on how the world works economically and socially. One key event in this reflection was the release of the World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation by the World Bank (World Bank, 2007). This report represents one of the first times that youth have been comprehensively dealt with by a major international body – the other comparable document would be the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which focused on only youth from the ages of 15-18. This report clearly states that the world is at a turning point in which “the time has never been better to invest in young people living in developing countries” and goes on to state that they are “the healthiest and best educated—a strong base to build on in a world that demands more than basic skills” (World Bank, 2007). This report clearly speaks of the possibility of this large youth demographic becoming the global positive change agents IF the proper policies and programs are put in place to educate, train, and enhance the well being of this generation.

Yet there is another side to this global discussion, one that underlines the perceived risk of some of regarding the rise of youth globally. There are international agencies such as the prominent US based National Intelligence Council who view the demographic “youth bulge” as a threat to the stability of many developing countries, and the underlying cause of terrorism especially in the Middle East and North African region which is one of the most youthful regions in the world (NIC, 2008). What both proponents of these opposing views do agree on is that the world is at a cross road in regards to youth in the developing world.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight in a small way how youth can be engaged, not as leaders of tomorrow, but as leaders of today, through methods such as youth led development, and through international agencies working with local government to create safe and positive spaces in the cities in which youth are increasingly living in. The One Stop Youth Resource Centre model created by UN HABITAT recognizes that youth need to have safe urban based places in which they can call their own, where they can receive important information on issues such as HIV AIDS prevention, where they can receive job and entrepreneurship training, where they can practice and meaningfully engage in local governance, and where they can most importantly meet and co-exist peacefully with other youth. UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon said it best when he stated:

\[ "It is high time that we stopped viewing our young people as part of the problem and started cultivating their promise and potential ... let us all resolve to invest in and protect our most valuable resource, and give young men and women a fair and full stake in our society, and in its success." \]

- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
Bibliography


GUIC Canada (Producer & Director). (2005). Carving the road: Growing up in cities Canada multimedia DVD for engaging young people. [Video/DVD] Victoria, Canada. One vignette describes the challenges faced by youth in one of the most prominent recreation projects undertaken by youth in North America – the building of skateboard parks.


Cover photos: One Stop Youth Resource Centre (2001 – 2007) in Nairobi, Kenya (Claire Wilkinson)