

AGENDA FOR ACTION

emerging from the
IIEP Policy Forum
16-18 October 2012, Paris

ENGAGING YOUTH IN PLANNING EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION



This document has been written through a consultative process with participants from the IIEP 2012 Policy Forum on 'Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation'. The views and opinions in the document do not necessarily represent the views of UNESCO or IIEP. The designations employed and the presentation of the material do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO or IIEP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

Cover page: © UN Photo/Albert Gonzalez Farran. Young girl, member of the Parliament of Students in South Sudan.

The IIEP 2012 Policy Forum¹ brought together 250 participants – policy-makers, youth, practitioners, and researchers – to debate the issue of ‘Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation’ in three areas:

- conflict transformation and peacebuilding;
- civic engagement;
- connecting education, learning, and the world of work.

This Agenda for Action has emerged from those discussions.

Preamble

1. The Policy Forum built on recommendations formulated by the Youth delegates of the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum in 2011 (‘How Youth Drive Change’). They urged Member States ‘to ensure access to quality formal and non-formal education, including informal education, intercultural education, values-based education and civic education, as equal parts of general education’. They called for ‘a fair educational system, taking into consideration refugee children or children with migration backgrounds and creating opportunities that these children also succeed in school.’

¹ ‘Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation’, 16-18 October 2012, UNESCO, Paris, held in partnership with the UNESCO Chair in Education for Pluralism, Human Rights and Democracy, University of Ulster; the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement, National University of Ireland, Galway; the World Assembly of Youth and UNESCO’s Education and Social and Human Sciences sectors.

2. In recent years, there has been an increase in initiatives responding to the needs of youth. The International Year of Youth (2010–2011), the numerous youth-oriented and youth-led initiatives developed therein, as well as the growth of youth movements around the world, underline the potential of youth as positive agents of change. These initiatives have contributed to the growing recognition of youth as key partners in development and the shift from a *'for youth'* to a *'with and by youth'* approach to policy development, programming, and research.

3. Despite this progress, and a growing body of research showing youth as key actors in social transformation, misconceptions persist, as do obstacles to meaningful youth engagement. Too often, youth continue to be seen as a challenge and a source of social unrest. Engaging youth in planning their education is a precondition to challenging such misconceptions and overcoming the obstacles.

4. Education (both formal and non-formal) has a key role to play in developing the knowledge, skills, and values for youth to become global citizens and positive agents of change. Education can help foster the ability to build and maintain peace, to engage in political and civic processes that work for the public good, and to create social and economic progress that provides sustainable livelihoods. Civic engagement can strengthen these skills and values, as well as empower youth to contribute fully to their societies.

5. Youth are innovative. They engage easily with new technologies. Education policy-making, programming and research should use these innovative technologies which are revolutionizing learning to effectively engage youth in learning and planning processes.

6. Youth is a heterogeneous group. Stakeholders² should therefore consider the great diversity in the needs and motives of youth, and how diverse youth groups³ will perceive issues differently, according to their own context and culture. Educational issues affecting youth also vary greatly – ranging from the frustration or alienation of those who, though educated, are unable to find decent work, to those who have little or no access to basic education, literacy, or skills development.

² Stakeholders will vary depending on the context but could include for example government officials, employers, community leaders, civil society, research institutions. Youth should always be included as a stakeholder.

³ By 'diverse youth groups' is meant youth from different social, economic, geographic and ethnic backgrounds, from both rural and urban areas, who have different interests, needs and require a range of mechanisms for engagement.

Agenda for Action

This Agenda for Action is formulated in two parts.

Part I presents the main recommendations emerging from the Policy Forum and proposes actions to address them, through policy development to address the roles youth will play, concrete programmes that can be used to put youth-led policies into effect, and a research agenda to provide the evidence and evaluation process for policy and programme formulation and implementation.

Part II offers a list of actions that participants are willing to undertake to advance the agenda of engaging youth in planning their education for social transformation.

Part I:

New opportunities: strengthening youth engagement in planning education policy, programming, and research

Youth need to be included in all stages of policy development

7. Inter-ministerial collaboration in policy development (inter-ministerial initiatives of youth, education, labour, and gender, etc.), and broad stakeholder participation are essential. Education and training policies, both formal and non-formal, need to be aligned with youth, development, labour, and other relevant policies to ensure and strengthen coherence.

8. Inclusive partnerships, inter-geographical, inter- and intra-regional dialogue and coordination can facilitate knowledge sharing. Therefore, using consultative mechanisms and frameworks (e.g. national youth forums, youth cabinets or parliaments) that engage diverse youth groups (especially the most marginalized and hard to reach) may promote development of government education and training policies that are relevant to the needs and aspirations of youth. Capacity development, of both youth and policy-makers, to effectively engage with these mechanisms, may be required. To ensure these mechanisms are effective and continue to be relevant in contexts that are constantly evolving, there needs to be regular and consistent monitoring and evaluation.

9. Conflict transformation and peacebuilding should be integrated in education policy at all levels, in both formal and non-formal education. Its integration should be contextualized and supported through policies that address the possible causes of social conflict and violence. Stakeholders should work together to identify how education policies can contribute to resolving social and political conflicts, including through collaborative peacebuilding initiatives.

10. Civic engagement (i.e. active participation in school and community life) can promote and enhance global citizenship for youth at all levels. Stakeholders should develop context-appropriate strategies for civic engagement and civic education at all levels of formal and non-formal education.

11. The global economic and employment crises have increased the urgency to develop and implement policies that adequately connect education, learning, and the world of work. It is essential to ensure that education and skills policies are coherent with national employment and development policies and with the real skills demands of the labour market. Stakeholders need to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the impact of such policies on effective transitions from education to the world of work.

Proposed actions

a) Develop national agendas and frameworks on youth engagement in educational planning with diverse youth groups, through inter-agency, inter-ministerial, and inter-generational dialogue and collaboration, to strengthen meaningful youth participation at each step of the policy process.

b) Develop or support technical capacity for national and regional collaboration enabling stakeholders to jointly engage in education policy and programme development, research, and analysis.

c) Initiate tracer studies of youths' insertion into their respective fields of work, as a baseline for monitoring and evaluating policy impact. This could include the identification of good practices that have facilitated transition to employment in a given context.

d) Establish or strengthen formal cross-sector multi-stakeholder discussion and decision-making platforms such as national youth forums, youth cabinets or youth parliaments, to improve dialogue and facilitate multi-sectoral policy development, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Care should be taken to ensure that youth can express themselves freely and comfortably through these platforms.

Engaging youth requires diverse forms of educational programming

12. Approaches to educational programmes need to be relevant to the needs and life experiences of the youth they aim to engage. The importance of offering alternative educational paths is crucial. Transitions between formal and non-formal education need to be facilitated. Non-formal education should be given increased recognition, validation, and certification. Learning should provide traditional educational skills, as well as values that promote tolerance, citizenship, respect, and individual empowerment.

13. To implement conflict-sensitive educational policies and plans, it is necessary to consider conflict transformation and peacebuilding in programme development and implementation. In addition, education curricula (formal and non-formal) should include context-specific conflict-prevention activities. Programmes could be strengthened by youth-led civic engagement, including advocacy campaigns or peace clubs in schools and communities.

14. Civic engagement activities (political engagement, creative activities, sports, community work) should be included and accredited as a part of formal and non-formal programmes. This should include training for stakeholders on how to improve context-sensitive youth civic engagement.

15. To facilitate the connection between education, learning, and the world of work, lifelong learning approaches are needed. These may include skills training, mobile schools, community learning spaces, and other alternative educational paths. Teachers should be offered the option of training in alternative delivery methods, where feasible and appropriate, e.g. the teaching of transferable skills (entrepreneurship, business, IT) and career guidance (using employment forecasts to understand current skills demand). Non-exploitative internships and apprenticeships should be provided at appropriate levels of the education and training system. Technical and vocational education and training programmes must be given a more positive image, greater status, and increased recognition within education systems and society.

Proposed actions

- a) Review and, if necessary, revise school and teacher education curricula to ensure they are context- and conflict-sensitive, supportive of civic engagement, and relevant for the transition to the world of work.
- b) Accredite and certify non-formal education, including civic education, through specific education programmes, including at master's level.
- c) Establish or strengthen career guidance and information systems for all youth which are coherent with current labour market information and demand-based skills.

Research should be developed and conducted with and by youth

16. A holistic research strategy that identifies the relations between conflict transformation, civic engagement, and the connection between education, learning, and the world of work is essential. Greater insight into the impact of policies on the lives of youth could be obtained through the use of life history and social research methods. Monitoring how youth engagement contributes to political, social, and economic stability is also crucial.

17. To strengthen evidence-based education policy-making and programmes, youth must be engaged as partners in the research process. Research findings should be clearly communicated to the different stakeholders using appropriate tools and formats.

18. To ensure that conflict transformation and peacebuilding policies and programmes are context specific, the capacity of all stakeholders to conduct conflict analysis should be enhanced. A mapping of the state of research on peace education and conflict resolution, including youth participation in conflict transformation and peacebuilding, should be undertaken to determine what is known and what works, and to identify knowledge gaps.

19. There is a need to further define ‘civic engagement’, including its role in relation to specific social and cultural contexts. Research should be conducted on appropriate, context-relevant youth civic engagement programmes. These could include capacity development projects to help youth develop their engagement and research skills.

20. Given the ever-changing nature of the labour market, more research is needed to facilitate connections between education, learning, and the world of work. Research findings should feed into policy and planning for national, regional, and local education and training programmes.

Proposed actions

a) Undertake baseline research on current youth engagement in education planning, policy, and programmes at different levels – from school and local, up to national and international levels.

b) Review current education programmes to identify any gaps, and to determine the strategies needed to transmit the values and competencies necessary for inclusive citizenship, peacebuilding, and support of youth transitions to the world of work.

- c) Use a variety of new media, including social networks, to strengthen discussions and communication on youth-related issues and engagement in education.
- d) Increase involvement of media and research institutions to advocate for increased youth engagement in education decision-making.
- e) Train youth as researchers to develop, design, and co-lead research programmes on youth education, peacebuilding, civic engagement, and connecting education and learning to the world of work.

Part II:

Participant follow-up on proposed actions

Initiatives related to the engagement of youth in educational policy development, programming, and research, in the three thematic areas outlined in this Agenda for Action, will be monitored and reported at annual and bi-annual events, such as the UNESCO Youth Forum or the World Assembly of Youth's annual Youth Dialogue programme.

The following actions have been committed to by the respective parties, who have agreed with the core principles outlined in the Agenda for Action:

Burundi, Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports is working towards:

- Establishing youth centres in all 'communes' (129) of the country; these are training (undertaken by UNESCO-trained peer educators) and awareness-raising centres on themes such as citizenship, peaceful conflict resolution, sexual health, AIDS;
- Establishing a 'first job placement' aimed at young people with no work experience (in 2012, 200 young people benefitted from the programme);
- Seeking funding to establish a fund for youth entrepreneurship promotion, to circumvent the need for guarantees required by banks and micro-finance institutions;
- Introducing a national volunteer service in 2013.

Espolea

Espolea commits to contributing to the definition of ‘young people’s civic engagement’ throughout 2013, including the promotion of best practices and the identification of relevant theoretical and practical ideas that aim to create a more comprehensive and meaningful political participation of young people.

Greater Upper Nile, Bahr El Ghazal and Equatoria Youth Association, South Sudan

We are committed to formulating a national agenda for youth, which is coherent with, and will allow us to work in partnership with, other international youth organizations.

Pakistan, Ministry of Education

- The Ministry of Education will augment the proposal to focus on marginalized youth with the involvement of youth in non-formal education, as well as by strengthening their role in policy formulation, planning, and dialogue.
- It is further proposed that civic engagement and civic education should be given high focus in Education Development and Planning so that the engagement of youth in social transformation is fully accomplished.
- Youth activities will be promoted through civic engagement, such as sports and community work, and stakeholders be provided with the training necessary to be more effective.
- Community Model Schools will be employed as agents to motivate communities for enhancing literacy in the country,

to allow us attainment of the following objectives of UNESCO's forum: (i) New opportunities strengthening youth engagement in planning education policy, programming, and research; (ii) Bring youth into the initial stages of policy development; (iii) Engaging youth requires diverse forms of programming and implementation.

South Sudan, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports:

- Plans to bring different youth associations (religious, political, and regional) together for dialogue and debate in order that they may be fully engaged in planning and programming;
- Proposes to establish a national youth service to bring together youth from all around the country to take part in an annual programme to promote civic values attached to sports, culture, and community service;
- Hopes to establish and strengthen vocational training centres to encourage more opportunities for young people to have skills that are relevant to the employment needs of South Sudan;
- Will propose to the cabinet to introduce a levy of US\$1–2 per barrel of oil to finance youth activities in South Sudan.

UNESCO Chair at the National University of Ireland, Galway

The UNESCO Chair at the National University of Ireland, Galway, will seek to support the partnership through the future agenda of the Chair.

UNESCO Chair at the University of Ulster

The UNESCO Chair at the University of Ulster in collaboration with the partnership will, over the next two to three years, design and seek funding for a research project with the overall aim of informing practice in the area of youth participation. The project will examine literature and existing models in a number of countries to meet the following four objectives:

- Undertake a review of existing methodologies for accessing ‘inaccessible’ youth voices and ensuring a multiplicity of youth representation.
- Conduct a review of models of organizing youth participation.
- Identify the skills and approaches necessary to support youth as researchers.
- Examine models for youth to influence the policy process.

UNESCO

International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)

- IIEP will maintain the Plan with Youth website and social media tools in order to maintain the dialogue between different stakeholders involved in youth engagement in educational planning and policy development. The website ‘www.planwithyouth.org’ will serve as a means for collecting and disseminating information on monitoring the follow-up to the Agenda for Action and the different stakeholder commitments.
- IIEP will undertake an analysis of current education and youth policies and plans in order to identify gaps as well as

possible good practices that exist in terms of youth engagement in educational planning and policy development.

- IIEP, in collaboration with the partnership, will produce a series of policy briefs for education decision-makers on mechanisms to support youth engagement in educational planning in different contexts and for different categories of youth.
- IIEP, in collaboration with the partnership, will publish a synthesis of the outcomes from the 2012 Policy Forum, including the background research overviews related to the themes of youth engagement in education and peacebuilding and conflict transformation, civic engagement, and transition to the world of work. Additional research materials, online debates, and group work discussions will be included.

UNESCO Youth programme (Youth-led social innovation team)

- UNESCO will provide space during the 2013 UNESCO Youth Forum for young participants of the IIEP Policy Forum to report on the follow-up projects and actions that they have developed in their countries and communities to follow upon those Agenda for Action items of the IIEP Policy Forum that link to the recommendations of the 2011 UNESCO Youth Forum.
- UNESCO will develop context-appropriate programmes for democracy-building, civic engagement and civic education, both through the formal and the non-formal sector, in countries in transition in the Arab States.

- UNESCO will support the establishment of, and/or strengthen existing, structures (namely National Youth Councils, youth desks at the UNESCO National Commissions) enabling an inclusive and representative engagement of youth in policy and programme development at national or local level.

World Assembly of Youth (WAY)

WAY commits to continue assisting IIEP, youth, and partners around the world on advocating for youth engagement in education, particularly conflict transformation and peacebuilding, civic engagement, and the transition to the world of work, and will continue awareness-raising by conducting other events in 2013 related to these themes.

Yemen, Ministry of Youth and Sports

The Minister of Youth and Sports recognizes the major role that youth have played in changing Yemen and has started to take practical measures to involve youth in decision-making, including:

- Organizing a large national meeting for youth to elect a council of youth that will advise the Ministry on policy;
- Launching a webpage to provide information on the Ministry's activities.



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Human Rights and Democracy
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Civic Engagement



Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

