CONCEPT NOTE

Empowering Youth for Sustainable Human Development

Background

Today, 87% of young women and men living in developing countries face challenges brought about by limited access to resources, healthcare, education, training, employment and economic opportunities. They often have little to no opportunity for education, few possibilities to improve their living conditions, face poverty or multiple forms of discrimination. At the same time, as we consider innovations and global historic events inspired by youth, we recognize the energy, vision and potential for transformative change that youth bring to the table.

Being part of the largest generation of young people in the history of humanity that in some countries represents up to 80% of its inhabitants has not been accompanied by adequate involvement of, support to and investment in this very diverse population. Globally, in 2010, 74 million women, between the ages of 15 and 24, and 48 million men were illiterate. Also, 56.3% of young men compared to 40.8% of young women participated in the labour force this is compounded by the fact that women are more likely to be engaged in vulnerable employment which impact access to a steady income and services.

The UN Secretary-General has highlighted the urgency to address the needs of the ‘largest generation of young people the world has ever known’ as part of his five-year agenda.

Overview

Globally, there is a realization that the involvement of youth is key to achieving growth and development, and therefore there is a need to discuss how development actors can engage with youth and translate priority areas into development programming and policies. What are some of the persistent challenges and positive experiences and lessons that can be learned from countries that have empowered and engaged youth in finding sustainable development solutions? Should we be pursuing a sectoral approach to

1 http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/Brochure%20for%20IYY.pdf
addressing youth exclusion or invest more in a cross-cutting and capacity development approach so that youth are equipped with the technical skills and leadership qualities to respond effectively to the development challenges in their communities?

As a key development agency present in over 170 countries and part of the UN system, how best can UNDP support national partners, including youth and youth-led organizations to fully contribute to and benefit from sustainable human development?

The aim of this consultation is to engage in lively discussion on broad priority areas around which the UN and the UNDP specifically, may support youth empowerment for sustainable human development. These suggested priority areas have emerged with consultations with youth, youth based/led organizations and other development partners working with and for youth:

- **Support to and capacity development of young people and youth organizations**, including leadership and entrepreneurial skills development, and seed funding support for initiatives implemented by youth led and youth based organizations.

- **Youth policy development**, including the facilitation and formalization of dialogue between youth representatives and the state. Support for the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of policies on youth, as well as the building of youth capacities and creation of an enabling environment for them to participate in political and social conversations at all levels, including through better access to information. Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation tools at various levels should support the improvement of programming in this area.

- **Youth mainstreaming and advocacy**, including a transversal approach to incorporating youth perspectives and needs into all strategic planning and programming. This should be accomplished by establishing and strengthening youth consultation mechanisms and involving more youth in the strategic and day-to-day work of the organization.

The above three suggested priorities have as a cross-cutting theme the development of partnerships with governments, youth-led organisations, academia, civil society organizations, the private sector, the media and UN partner agencies in order to enhance commitment and holistic youth development policy and programming.

Development of these priority areas should also be guided by the principles of empowerment, accessibility, inclusivity, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and accountability.