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## INEE ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH TASK TEAM (AYTT)

The scarcity of educational, employment, social and political opportunities in crisis-contexts leaves youth vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation, social exclusion and recruitment into armed groups or criminal gangs. Although youth in crisis situations are particularly vulnerable, they are also extremely capable and are powerful resources for the development and reconstruction of their countries. The international community has largely neglected this age group over the past decade, creating an even greater urgency for a holistic, systematic and coordinated response that will promote the rights, needs and capacity of youth in crisis contexts.

### The Trends

#### Youth in crisis-affected areas

- Of the estimated 1.2 billion youth living across the world, almost 90 per cent are living in developing economies
- Around 515 million youth live on less than 2\$/day
- Approximately 35% of the 14 million refugees are youth between the ages of 12 and 25

#### Inadequate education and employment for youth

- Almost 71 million youth, around 1 in 5, are not in school at all (1 in 3 in sub-Saharan Africa)
- No country in Africa sends more than half its girls to secondary school
- At the end of 2009, there were an estimated 81 million unemployed young adults, an increase of 7.8 million since 2007
- 62 million girls of primary school age are not in school, a number that increases significantly at the secondary school level – yet, an extra year of school boosts girls' wages by 10-20%

### The Challenges

#### Policy frameworks

Overarching policy documents on youth in crisis settings are largely unavailable, as are clear conceptual frameworks for collecting necessary information and addressing identified challenges and deficits. Small scale youth programmes often exist outside a wider policy context and as a result can have only limited impact in making the link between education systems and employment markets. Gender sensitive policies for youth in emergencies are also lacking.

#### Coordination and collaboration across sectors

Few agencies have distinct units focused on youth that could overcome thinking and working in issue silos (education, employment, health) and bring such efforts together into comprehensive responses to youth needs. While agencies are increasing their work with youth, existing partnerships do not document the linkages and outcomes of collaboration, and the development of much-needed coordination mechanisms is lagging behind.

#### Evidence, practical guidance and programming

The evidence base regarding youth in crisis settings and highlighting the added value of youth programming and engagement is weak. This shortfall includes very limited research on matters such as good practice and lessons learned or practical tools to guide programme design and implementation. Furthermore, education programmes are not adequately addressing gender issues or preparing youth for the labour market, resulting in low participation rates.

#### Funding and financing

There is a distinct lack of systematic funding for youth issues and youth-driven activities, particularly in emergency contexts. Financing mechanisms to address youth issues do not fall easily under a particular sector, resulting in significant funding gaps for programmes explicitly targeting adolescent girls and boys.

#### Protection

Threats of indiscriminate violence, the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war, mass displacement and forced recruitment into armed forces affect youth at a disproportionately high rate in countries affected by conflict. Many young girls are forced to drop out of school after rape because of unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases and social stigma. The physical and psychological trauma, threat of abduction, missed educational or vocational training opportunities and difficulties associated with reintegration severely impact learning opportunities and discourages both male and female youth from reaching their full potential.

## Youth participation

Inadequate youth participation in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programme and policy development has resulted in irrelevant and disjointed education opportunities. If youth do not have a meaningful way to express their needs, aspirations and grievances, or participate socially, economically and politically, they represent a ready pool of recruits for criminal gangs, extremist groups and other violent youth behaviour.

## The Ways Forward



IIEP-UNESCO 2009

### **Developing cross-cutting policy frameworks**

A holistic and cross-cutting policy framework that offers realistic and implementable recommendations for youth programming is urgently needed. Youth policy and programming need to be developed based on clearly articulated national socio-economic goals that effectively connect education to employment and put gender equity at the centre of a broader education and employment agenda.

### **Establishing a coordinated, sector-wide response**

A balanced sector-wide approach is required to ensure that youth have access to a variety of relevant, quality post-primary education opportunities. The sector wide focus should consider options for market-driven livelihoods initiatives in addition to formal secondary schools. Establishing a broad partnership at global and national levels (perhaps mainstreaming youth issues into the work of the IASC Cluster system) could foster knowledge sharing and collaboration.

### **Strengthening evidence, practical guidance and relevant programming**

There is a need for more evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, to strengthen policy and measure its impact on the lives of youth. Internationally accepted indicators that identify gaps and track progress of policies and programmes specific to youth need to be established. Practical guidance must link certified formal and non-formal education opportunities to employment markets as well as address the diverse needs of the youth population. Programming should mainstream job skills during post-basic education to prepare youth for employment opportunities and ensure greater livelihood security.

### **Systematic funding and financing mechanisms**

Funding for youth issues and youth-driven initiatives should be systematic and delivered via mechanisms that are flexible and responsive. There is a need to bridge humanitarian and development funding pools and sectoral silos to fund programmes that address youth needs holistically, such as through the IASC cluster coordination mechanism and/or the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

### **Prioritizing Youth Protection**

The increased examination of and action on child protection, specifically in relation to adolescent years, must be prioritized. Addressing violence, abuse and exploitation of adolescents is vital to ensuring that youth reach their full potential. Programmes that cut across sectors and target community and national-level stakeholders can generate education and much needed consensus around human rights principles to inspire social change and decrease harmful practices against both male and female youth.

### **Getting Youth Involved**

Youth involvement and participation in all stages of policy development can help improve the quality, effectiveness and relevance of programming. There is a need to institutionalize mechanisms for youth participation, including those that reach marginalized youth. Youth organisations should be recognized as valuable partners in addressing challenges and deficits in humanitarian and development contexts, while programmes and activities need to better include youth-driven initiatives or networks.

**To learn more about programmes targeting education for youth in crisis, please visit: [www.ineesite.org/aytt](http://www.ineesite.org/aytt)**

### **Adolescent and Youth Task Team**

The INEE Adolescent and Youth Task Team (AYTT) is made up of committed individuals from UN agencies, bilateral donors, international and national NGOs, practitioners, researchers and policymakers who work collaboratively on technical tasks to ensure a coordinated, accelerated, expanded and evidence-based response to the educational rights, needs and aspirations of adolescents and youth affected by crisis.

**For more information on AYTT, please visit: [www.ineesite.org/aytt](http://www.ineesite.org/aytt)**