



# YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP:

an effective tool in combating HIV /  
AIDS in Southern Africa

**Youth Participation and Leadership:**

an effective tool to Combat HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa

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# ACRONYMS:

<b>ASRH</b>	Adolescent sexual and reproductive health
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>CNCS</b>	National AIDS Council, Mozambique
<b>DFID</b>	UK Department for International Development
<b>DSW</b>	German Foundation for World Population
<b>FHI</b>	Family Health International
<b>IEC</b>	Information, education and communication
<b>KNASP</b>	Kenya National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan
<b>MGLSD</b>	Ministry of Gender, Labour, Sport and Development (Uganda)
<b>NAA</b>	National AIDS Authority(ies)
<b>NAC</b>	National AIDS Council (Malawi, Zambia) / Commission (Zimbabwe)
<b>NACA</b>	National AIDS Coordinating Agency (Botswana)
<b>NACC</b>	National AIDS Control Council (Kenya)
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government organization
<b>NPA</b>	National Planning Authority (Uganda)
<b>NYTWG</b>	National Youth Technical Working Group
<b>OVCY</b>	Orphans, vulnerable children and youth
<b>SADC</b>	South African Development Community
<b>SANAC</b>	South African National AIDS Council
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and reproductive health
<b>Sida</b>	Swedish International Development Agency
<b>SHEP</b>	School HIV/AIDS education programme
<b>SPW</b>	Students Partnership Worldwide
<b>TACAIDS</b>	Tanzania National AIDS Commission
<b>UNAIDS</b>	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>VPEs</b>	Volunteer peer educators
<b>YRC</b>	Youth resource centre
<b>YSCG</b>	Youth self-coordinating group
<b>YSOs</b>	Youth serving organizations

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# INTRO:

## About SPW

SPW is one of the global leaders in youth-led development. For more than 25 years, SPW has demonstrated its strength in recruiting and training young people to lead full-time development programmes to impact measurably on some of the most urgent development challenges. SPW works in eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, training more than 1,000 young people each year to take up these full-time professional roles both from the countries where SPW works, and other parts of the world. The positive impact of an SPW assignment on the life chances and careers of young people is significant and SPW's programmes have been cited as best practice by the World Bank and UNAIDS<sup>1</sup>.

SPW uses unique and groundbreaking methods in its approach to development, combining youth-led implementation of programmes with capacity building, advocacy and training for young people. SPW works with governments, donor agencies and partners to facilitate young people's access to decision-making processes, as well as increasing awareness globally of the vital role that young people have to play in development.

SPW is becoming a recognized leader for technical assistance in the field of youth participation and development with just a few examples being:

- SPW has trained more than 75 youth-led organizations in more than 30 countries in organizational development and strategic planning.
- SPW led the national youth consultation on the 5th National Development Strategy in Uganda.
- SPW coordinates the DFID/CSO youth working group and led the writing of 'Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers' in partnership with the UK Department for International Development (DFID).
- SPW will over the next five years provide technical assistance to the SADC Secretariat to develop and roll out a practical guide to youth participation and leadership for the SADC region.

<sup>1</sup> SPW has been recognized as a World Bank Best Practice Model of targeting young people in HIV/AIDS prevention (World Bank Sourcebook of HIV Prevention in 2003 and 2005); SPW was recognized by UNAIDS as meeting all 16 UNAIDS criteria for a holistic HIV/AIDS intervention (UNAIDS).

# CHAPTER 01:

## Why is there a need for this paper?

### CASE STUDY 01:

#### **National AIDS Control Council (NACC) Kenya:** National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (KNASP III) Development Process

**“It is high time we take control of our lives and issues affecting us in this country. We are infected more, we are affected more and we are dying more. NACC has given us the opportunity and let us take the lead”** - 25 year old Peter, Committee Chairman and Workshop Coordinator

The initiative was designed to capture youth needs and input into the Strategic Plan. The workshop specifically addressed meeting the diverse and different needs of young people attending the workshop (i.e., blind youth, deaf youth, disabled youth and street youth).

#### **Methodology:**

- The recruitment of a Programme Officer to oversee youth issues at NACC catalyzed the engagement process with young people.
- A two-day workshop involving 120 youth was organized by Kenya NACC and supported by DSW
- After the workshop, NACC engaged young people in a series of consultative meetings that led to the finalization of the youth result matrix which fed into the final KNASP III.

#### **The workshop was attended by:**

- 120 young people - a national representation of Kenya. The workshop also ensured the participation of marginalized groups of young people (65 boys and 55 girls of whom two were blind, one deaf and three were street youth).
- Officially opened by the German Deputy Ambassador to Kenya, accompanied by the Director NACC.

NACC and DSW senior staff, which included the NACC Deputy Director of Coordination and Support, Head of Stakeholders and others; DSW Country Director and other DSW senior staff. The high-level delegation was a reflection of commitment by NACC to listen, understand and work with young people in addressing their needs.

#### **How were young people involved?**

The idea to take part in the development of KNASP III came from the youth themselves. A committee of young people (10-24 years old) was formed to spearhead the planning process in consultation with the National Youth Technical Working Group (NYT-

WG) which was already in existence.

The committee met at NACC offices three times and came up with the budget, draft programme, list of participants, venue and other logistical arrangements. These were forwarded to the NYTWG for review. Feedback was given to the Committee which subsequently finalized the workshop logistics and programme.

Young people coordinated the entire workshop as all the invited leaders took a back seat. The presentations on the situation of HIV and AIDS in Kenya among youth were made by young people. The masters' of ceremony, the technical working groups' chairpersons, the workshop coordinators, the rapporteurs and logistics managers were all young people. The committee also came up with a subsequent plan of action that was to ensure that the workshop report was finalized, disseminated and incorporated into the national plan.

#### **How were the participants selected?**

NACC had initially conducted a national mapping exercise of all youth serving organizations (YSOs)/registered youth groups in Kenya. This data was used by the NYTWG and the workshop committee to select young people from different thematic areas to attend the workshop. The committee drafted invitation letters signed by the Director NACC and followed participants through calls.

#### **Key challenges:**

- The number of days (two) allocated for the entire workshop was inadequate.
- The modes of communication during the workshop were not entirely disability friendly.
- Due to the workshop participants' diverse backgrounds it was quite difficult to meet the needs and hold the attention of all during the workshop.

#### **Benefit to NACC and key successes:**

- The finalization of a strategic plan that reflects and captures the true, rather than the perceived, needs of young people in HIV and AIDS programming in Kenya.
- The programme priority areas targeting young people were not only well captured but also budgeted under KNASP III and can therefore be implemented.
- Youth whole heartedly owned the strategic planning process and are expected to own the Strategic Plan once it is launched because they have been involved from the very beginning. This will again mean it is easier to implement with young people.
- For the first time since 1999, youth priority issues have been clearly spelt out in a national document with clear responsibilities.

Young people have a vital role to play in the fight against HIV and AIDS. They are disproportionately vulnerable to, and affected by, HIV and AIDS yet they are a vastly under-utilized resource in addressing the pandemic. As shown throughout this paper, there are many good examples of where National AIDS Authorities (NAAs) are already working with young people to enhance the response to the pandemic but there is still a need to do more in this area. This paper will:

- **Highlight the benefits of working with young people** - National AIDS Authorities increasingly recognize the need to work with young people, but few understand the tangible benefits to their own organizations and broader society in doing so. In addition, the inclusion of young people remains sporadic, and if the benefits were more obvious NAAs could be encouraged more to engage young people at every level of their work and on an ongoing basis.

- **Increase understanding on how to work with youth in HIV efforts** - Whilst there are several commendable resources and examples of where youth participation has worked well, there is still a lack of common understanding of where and how young people can best support NAAs in the response to HIV and AIDS. This paper aims to share some concrete examples of different successful ways that young people have worked with NAAs across the region as a first step to address this.

- **Analyse why NAAs sometimes struggle to work with young people** - Many documents look at the reasons why young people lack access to participation. However, few have taken the time to examine why NAAs are sometimes failing to work more closely with young people. This paper will explore the barriers that NAAs face and whether there are some simple and effective solutions for overcoming these challenges.

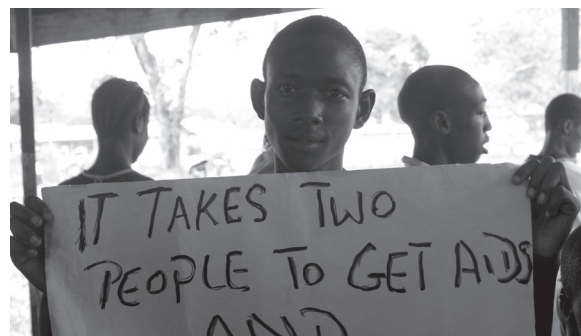
This paper does not attempt to address the barriers to youth participation faced by young people themselves as this has been frequently looked at and documented<sup>2</sup>. Nor is it intended to elaborate upon the divergent opinions amongst practitioners and academics alike as to the 'true' definition of 'youth' or optimum nature of 'participation' itself. Some key definitions for the context of this specific paper are set out in Boxes 1 and 2.

#### BOX 1: DEFINING YOUTH

##### Defining Youth

This position paper uses the terms youth and young people interchangeably, referring to those aged 15-24 years unless otherwise specified.

It is recognized that across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region there are many age definitions of youth. When working with and programming for youth, their specific ages and other contextual factors such as gender, culture and objectives should all be taken into account.



## THE CASE STUDIES

The case studies throughout this paper are designed to serve three purposes:

- To share promising practice of where National AIDS Authorities across the region are working with young people and to showcase activities and methods of youth participation that could be replicated.
- To demonstrate the benefits to NAAs of working with young people.
- To start sharing solutions to some of the common barriers to working with young people faced by NAAs.

While the case studies do not explicitly set out ways and next steps for replication it is hoped that they will encourage NAAs to look at similar possibilities of working with young people in their own organizations. They are not meant to be taken as standard – there will be a need for flexibility and adaptation to different social, economic, political and cultural contexts if they are replicated.

The case studies have been sourced from National AIDS Authorities within the SADC region, with the addition of Kenya NACC and SPW Uganda sharing learning from East African Community.

As well as the case studies, there are a series of recommendations to take youth participation forward as well as some general principles for youth participation that should be common across all activities.

Chapter 6 sets out the suggested next steps for NAAs within the SADC region, along with where SPW and other organizations can provide support. The steps aim to build on this paper and be a process of putting tangible solutions forward for youth participation for NAAs.

<sup>2</sup> For example see Lansdown, G (2004) 'Programming Strategy with and for Adolescents in East Asia and Pacific'; World Bank (2007) 'World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation'

## CHAPTER 02:

# What is youth participation?

### CASE STUDY 2:

## Youth-led implementation of a school-based HIV prevention programme.

SPW Zambia has piloted the School HIV/AIDS Education Programme (SHEP), a curriculum-based, school-based model for non-formal education that SPW promotes and uses to teach 5th through 12th graders about HIV prevention and reproductive health. The programme uses two main strategies:

### 1. Training and deployment of Volunteer Peer Educators (VPEs)

VPEs, who are usually around 18 to 20 years, are trained and then assigned in pairs to a school for two full terms of an academic year. They live full time in the community in which they are working. Training these young people has two benefits. First, in this cultural context it is more acceptable for students to learn about sensitive topics from trained peer educators than from teachers, who tend to be uncomfortable talking about sex, pregnancy and HIV with their students. Second, the training creates a cadre of young people who do important work in a country where it is difficult for many to get into a university or find employment.

### 2. A comprehensive approach to the programme

The curriculum addresses abstinence, being faithful and condoms. The centrepiece is a weekly lesson taught to students by the VPEs, but in addition there is a youth resource centre (YRC) offering a library and counselling; extracurricular activities coordinated by the VPE; community educational events on specific topics (e.g. preventing early marriage); and capacity building for teachers through periodic workshops on specific topics.

During 2008/09 SPW Zambia recruited, trained and supported 96 VPEs based in 48 placement schools and 22 extension schools with activities also reaching out to the surrounding communities. Direct programme outreach was 24,859 school pupils (12,390 males; 12,469 females).

### In one year, the VPEs:

- Delivered 7,031 sexual reproductive health lessons to in-school students. Topics covered included: HIV transmission, treatment, testing and care; sexually transmitted infections; gender; teenage pregnancy and education around available sexual reproductive health (SRH) services.
- Delivered 3,071 life skill sessions to in-school pupils aimed at developing the five key life skills that SPW has defined as central to achieving positive

behaviour change: critical thinking / decision-making; inter-personal communication; coping and self-management; maintaining healthy lifestyles; and motivation to be in higher education / employment.

- Delivered 350 community-level events aimed at facilitating attitude change towards youth and youth inclusion among parents, teachers and community.
- Opened and manned youth resource centres for 3,515 hours to enable young people to access information and advice
- Peer leader training for 20 peer leaders per school to equip and motivate youth leaders to lead awareness raising activities with their fellow students.

### A Family Health International (FHI) external assessment of the programme found that:

- Sexually active students in SHEP schools were more likely to have had only one lifetime sexual partner and to have abstained from sex in the past year than sexually active students from comparison schools.
- SHEP students, compared with comparison school students, have significantly higher levels of HIV and reproductive health knowledge, and positive attitudes towards people living with HIV.
- The two pillars that VPEs spent the most time on - the SRH classes and the extracurricular activities - were also statistically associated with a higher level of knowledge and better attitude scores among SHEP students who reported exposure to those program elements.

### Sharing lessons with Zambia NAC

SPW uses this youth-led experience on the ground to share information and learning with other youth-led organizations and Zambia NAC through being a member of the NAC Youth Self-Coordinating Group (YSCG). This group meets quarterly, alongside the Civil Society Coordinator from NAC. The YSCG plays a major role in the direction of NAC through for example:

- Being consulted on policy and programming including the review and development of National AIDS Strategies.
- Leading data collection through the decentralized YSCG Structures.
- Leading the development of youth-friendly information, education and communication materials.
- Sharing experiences and promising practice on youth-led programme implementation.

There are many definitions of youth participation. The recently published 'Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Donor Agencies and Policy Makers'<sup>3</sup> explores and sets out several of these in detail. A key definition from the guide captures the essence of what this paper believes youth participation to be and is summarized in Box 2.

“For NAC, young people have been part of the NAC Board as one of the key constituency. It's a must that young people are represented on the board whereby issues affecting them are presented and discussed and feedback is provided to the entire youth constituency.” - Holman Malata Phiri, Head of Partnerships and Liaison Unit, Malawi NAC

### What does this mean for National AIDS Authorities?

Many organizations hold youth consultations or surveys which are very valuable in their own right (see Case Study 1 – Kenya NACC KNASP III) but tend to limit the influence that young people have long term. Others engage young people in just one area of their organization – such as having youth representatives on working groups – but do not engage them more broadly.

National AIDS Authorities across the SADC region are already engaging with young people in various ways. By committing to youth participation NAAs do not necessarily have to take on numerous new or expensive activities. However ensuring that young people are fully involved across a wide spectrum of organizational activities will require a shift in attitude towards young people and their participation. It will mean being willing to work with young people in more creative and sustainable ways and opening up more of the organization's systems and processes to youth involvement.

There are many ways that young people can be involved in and have a greater influence on the overall direction of NAAs by:

- Being involved in organizational systems and processes.

- Being actively engaged in ongoing policy dialogue.
- Leading the implementation of NAA policy and programmes.

Below are several examples of methods of youth participation / activities that are currently being implemented either by SPW or a NAA and are replicable. Where there is a longer-case study of a specific activity or method to be found in section 4 of this paper, this has been noted.

### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN...

#### ...NAA organizational systems and structures

- Internships and structured full-time volunteering (see case study 3 – TACAIDS).
- Work experience with a NAA.
- Youth representation on technical working groups.
- Young people as Trustees and on National Boards (see case study 6 – Malawi NAC).
- Budget for youth-focused / led activities.
- Dedicated Youth Officer within the NAA (see case study 4 – NACA Botswana).

#### ...ongoing policy dialogue

- Youth civil society group that is regularly consulted by the NAA.
- Facilitating the participation of a diverse cross-section of young people (age, gender, location etc) into the process of development of papers and policies.
- Organizing youth consultations to feed into policy development (see case study 5 – SPW Uganda; and 1 NACC Kenya).

#### ...implementation of programmes / policy

- Young people design and create IEC materials that are more user-friendly and relevant for young people.
- Young people work with NAAs to design reference and resources materials / website text and layout.
- Youth-led research / data collection with their peers to establish up-to-date situational analysis of the challenges facing young people.
- Young people lead peer education and other HIV/AIDS interventions, adequately supported e.g. financially and with skills development (see case study 2 – SPW Zambia).

### BOX 2: DEFINING PARTICIPATION

#### Defining Participation

Youth Participation: the active, informed and voluntary involvement of young people in decision making and the life of their communities (both locally and globally)

Participation is working with and for young people, not just targeting them. A shift in working with young people, and valuing them as assets – as advisors, colleagues and stakeholders – is crucial if development policies are to be truly representative and effective. Youth Participation is vital if this is to be achieved. Young people can participate in development as beneficiaries, partners and leaders (the DFID/CSO three-lens approach).

Young people's participation is about far more than gathering their views in surveys or listening to limited numbers of representatives. Formal consultation and dialogue is useful in that it can guide decision and genuinely represent a body of opinion and experience. However it should be part of a process whereby young people progress to greater rights and responsibilities; from being targets of outreach to being actively engaged in the planning and implementation of development interventions.

<sup>3</sup> SPW/ DFID-CSO Youth Working Group 2010 – [www.ygproject.org](http://www.ygproject.org)

## CHAPTER 03:

# The benefits of youth participation: Why National AIDS Authorities should engage with young people

### CASE STUDY 3:

## Youth internships at the Tanzanian AIDS Commission (TACAIDS).

### Objectives

- To increase understanding of youth issues at TACAIDS.
- To build the capacity of young people through professional opportunities.

### Summary of initiative

TACAIDS has been hosting internships since the inception of the organization in 2001. Since then, more than 200 students with different professional skills have undertaken internships lasting from two to six months. The students were between the ages of 23 and 30 years and internships involved working on data collection, analysis and report writing.

### Challenges

- The students sometimes need a high level of support within the organization, so hosting them can require more support from full time staff.
- The internships are unpaid, and so sometimes TACAIDS had difficulty finding and keeping interns.

### Benefits to TACAIDS

- The internships provide a youth perspective inside TACAIDS enabling TACAIDS to respond better to the needs of young people.
- Although they sometimes need extra supervision, the internships provide a valuable extra human resource for the organization as they can take on work such as data collection, analysis and report writing.

### Benefits to the young people:

They acquired skills of management within the institution and general work experience to help them move into paid work.

effective strategies for addressing HIV and AIDS, it is crucial that young people are given the opportunity to influence decisions, solve problems, inform policy and implement programmes.

Many organizations, especially those that are not specifically youth focused, face internal ambivalence about why and how work should be undertaken with young people. There are often clear benefits to the young people themselves, but what is less obvious are the benefits to the organization itself, and wider society in general.

There are several direct, tangible benefits to NAAs of working more closely with young people, such as an increased access to valuable human resource. There are also many benefits to young people that result from their participation, such as an increased sense of value and ownership, which in turn provides further tangible benefits to NAAs such as being able to better fulfil their objectives through more effective programmes and policies.

The benefits of youth participation to NAAs and to young people are inextricably linked, creating a series of mutual benefits: this is shown in Figure 1 – ‘The Benefit Chain’.

## Benefits of youth participation to National AIDS Authorities

**Increased access to dynamic human resource** (see case study 3 – Youth internships at TACAIDS) – by working with young people at all levels, NAAs have increased access to volunteers, interns, new staff members, and programme implementers who can often reach target areas that NAAs cannot reach by themselves. It can also be **an inexpensive way of implementing change**, bringing in new structures and processes that make the organization more responsive to primary-beneficiary (youth) needs.

**Gives young people a say** – young people bring useful perspectives, skills, qualities and experience that are unique to their situation, which mean they can play an active role in development and in particular in addressing HIV and AIDS. They are the age group most affected by HIV and AIDS and as such they have a right to contribute and be part of responses and solutions that are put in place. By giving young people a say, they feel valued while NAAs receive valuable insights and input from priority-target beneficiaries leading to more effective programming and policy making.

**Increased understanding by NAAs of young people's real, rather than perceived, situation and needs** – young people help organizations to understand the reality of the socioeconomic, cultural and political situations that young people face, as well as

Good policy needs to be informed by the viewpoint of those the policy intends to benefit<sup>4</sup> as demonstrated in case study 6 (Youth on the Governing Board of Malawi NAC). The same is true of programmes and other interventions. Young people are the population most affected by HIV and AIDS. If NAAs are to deliver

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Youth Development, NZ (Unknown) ‘Youth Participation: Benefits for your organization’

their expressed needs and wants. HIV and AIDS for example is not always a priority for young people, but through consulting and working with young people it is possible to develop integrated HIV interventions that will both interest them and respond to their needs.

**New ideas and energy created by youth-adult partnerships** - by working together and combining experience with creativity and an understanding of youth culture, the best possible response to HIV and AIDS is more likely to be found. Youth-adult partnerships not only produce better solutions to problems facing young people, they also create trust and recognition of capabilities between the generations, therefore ensuring that NAAs responses are more effective.

**Increased ownership by young people of HIV and AIDS strategies; increased sense of belonging, worth and value** - the process of input allows young people to 'own' strategies. Being part of decision making processes and programme and policy design shows young people that they are valued, taken seriously and that their opinions are important. This increased ownership in turn leads to more young people willing to participate in and lead efforts to address HIV, thus increasing outreach and effectiveness.

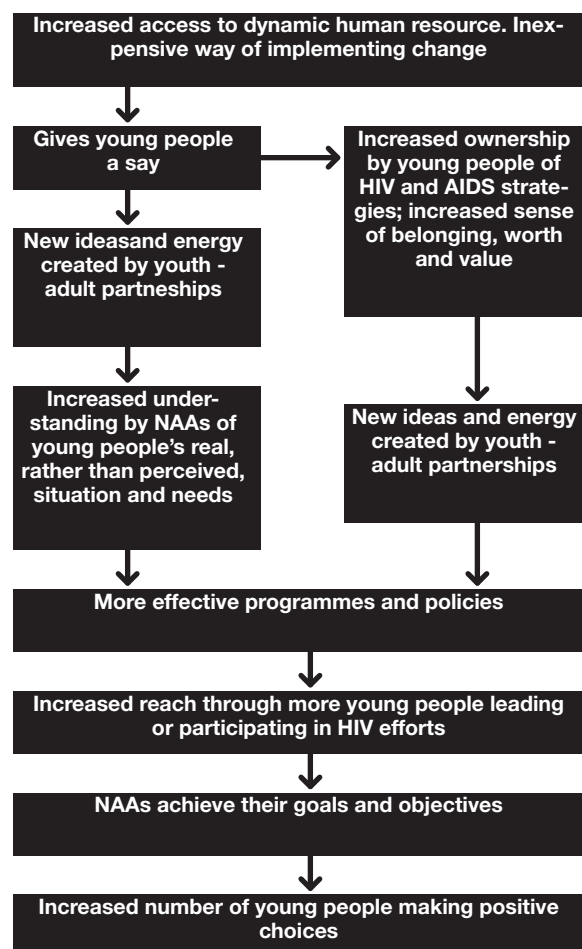
**Increased acceptance from young people of programmes and policies designed to support them** - youth promotion of a programme or policy is more likely to be believed and accepted by other youth. If young people have had significant input into policy and programme design it is more likely to appeal to their peers and engage them more effectively.

**More effective programmes and policies** - young people are pioneers of new approaches and are able to adapt quickly to changes and updates in technology. They understand what will appeal to their peers, meaning that interventions that young people have been involved in designing are more likely to a) engage higher numbers of young people and b) influence young people to adopt positive behaviours and make other positive changes in their lives. In addition, young people are highly dynamic and mobile and so are able to provide quick responses where necessary.

**Increased reach to young people through more young people leading / participating in HIV efforts** - When young people are given opportunities to lead, plan, voice their opinions, and serve their communities, they build new competencies and skills and develop into successful adults. Young people can support the delivery of NAAs strategies as they can often deliver services and programmes in hard-to-reach areas that otherwise would not benefit from development interventions. They can therefore directly contribute to achieving goals set out in national strategies by increasing the outreach of programmes and services.

**Increase in the number of young people making responsible choices** - if the programmes and policies are more relevant it should lead to a reduction in the number of new HIV infections, more young people accessing care and treatment and other positive impacts for young people thereby fulfilling NAA strategies.

**Figure 1: The benefit chain**



### Longer-term societal benefits

The benefits of youth participation can also have a broader effect on the community and nation:

- The building of young people's skills and capacity as well as instilling a positive sense of responsibility, leads to the development of social competency and a strong future workforce.
- Openness, involvement and participation encourages and embeds respect for democratic procedures and principles<sup>5</sup>. Young people are more likely to (peacefully) exercise their vote and positively participate and contribute to society in other ways.
- Communities benefit from the services and programmes that young people are leading and involved in.
- Societies begin to view young people as assets rather than problems.

All of this points towards a more stable social and economic future for young people, and therefore nations, as the number of people who are skilled and able to work increases, democratic processes are strong and in turn those who have participated when they are young are more likely to encourage future generations to also participate.

<sup>5</sup> www.Article13.com, Briefing paper 'Child and Youth Participation'

## CHAPTER 04:

# Barriers - and possible solutions - to youth participation.

### CASE STUDY 4:

#### Youth Officers in the National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA), Botswana

“In whatever NACA is doing young people should be in the forefront”

- Mokgadi Mantswe, Youth Officer, NACA Botswana.

#### Objectives:

To put youth issues at the forefront of NACA (and every government organization); to increase resources dedicated to addressing youth issues; and to integrate youth issues in the core business of NACA so that the needs of youth are met adequately.

#### Summary of initiative:

In Botswana, young people have been declared the Window of Hope. In order to prioritize young people, 'Youth Officers' have been recruited in each government ministry, including NACA where there has been a Youth Officer since June 2008.

#### The remit of the Youth Officer is to:

- Integrate and mainstream young people's issues across NACA through working with each division.
- Work closely with the youth sector, through national and district-level structures and the National Youth Council who receive funding from NACA to implement youth-led HIV activities.
- Coordinate with the Youth Officers in other Ministries through quarterly meetings to examine where each Ministry is meeting and implementing the National Youth Policy.

#### Challenges:

- It has taken a while for people within NACA to understand the role of the Youth Officer.
- The scope of work is sometimes unclear, in particular where NACA's remit can overlap with other Ministries.
- Some individuals within NACA are still sceptical about why young people should be such a priority, although the majority of people recognize this should be the case.
- Outside NACA there is more widespread scepticism around why young people should be engaged. The role of the Youth Officer is therefore to encourage others to work with young people and to keep young people high up on the political agenda.

#### Learnings:

- At policy-making level it is important to have someone (the Youth Officer) that can push youth issues and represent them. NACA can influence other organizations to also put youth issues at the top of the agenda.
- The Youth Officer can play a connecting role between the organization and young people and be a link as they interact both with policy makers and the youth sector.

#### Benefits to NACA:

- If the Youth Officer was not in post, NACA would not have the capacity or foresight to look at young people's issues in the same way. Through the Youth Officer's work, each and every day young people's issues are being integrated into the work of NACA.
- Young people have someone within NACA that they can approach – they now feel more comfortable to go to the national as well as district and village levels.



**“Giving young people a place in decision-making processes builds a broader base of citizen involvement and creates stronger, more inclusive communities. Both young people and communities benefit when young people are active partners in projects that aim to build community wellbeing.”** - Youth Participation: Benefits for our organization, Ministry of Youth Development, New Zealand Government

There are efforts in most National AIDS Authorities across SADC to engage young people at least at a minimum level, which is encouraging. However there are common factors across the region that NAAs and others have observed which prevent youth participation from moving forward in terms of the quality of participation, the number and variety of opportunities for young people to be engaged in all levels and structures of the organization, and the ongoing, rather than one off involvement of young people in policy and programming.

There has been a tendency to put the onus and responsibility for making participation ‘happen’ onto adult structures without stopping to ask if they have the capacity necessary to do that. This section will therefore explore some of the common barriers being faced by NAAs as well as offer possible solutions to these based, where possible, on examples of how individual NAAs are already working with young people to address these challenges.

Many of the issues are inter-related and cannot be addressed on their own. The possible solutions should be taken as a starting point for discussion rather than definitive answers to these issues. It is worth remembering that there is no ‘one size fits all’ answer, and that youth participation must always take into account the broader context in which it is taking place.

It is recognized that many of the possible solutions set out in the table below will require collaboration across the region at different levels as well as further research and funding and will only be achieved over time. However it is hoped that by setting them out in this paper it will show that effective youth participation can be achieved and that barriers can be overcome especially if organizations are prepared to prioritize young people.

Chapter 6 sets out some of the next steps proposed to start addressing some of these challenges.

#### COMMON BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION BASED FACED BY NAAS

Barrier	Description	Possible Solutions
<b>NAAs uncertain of the tangible benefits of youth participation</b>	There is an inability to articulate exactly what these benefits to organizations and society are and many are still sceptical as to the long-term benefits of youth participation. As a result NAAs are sometimes still unsure of why they should work with young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of promising practice on youth participation among NAAs.</li> <li>• Further study into the tangible benefits of youth participation.</li> <li>• More effective monitoring and evaluation of youth participation.</li> <li>• Set of indicators for measuring youth participation (e.g. Commonwealth Youth Index).</li> </ul>
<b>Attitude of adults</b>	Adults can feel that they know best due to their experience. Young people can struggle to articulate their views and so compound the idea that they have little to offer among adults. This can lead to a situation where both the adults and young people can feel there is little value in young people's presence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating trust between young people and adults.</li> <li>• Feeding back to young people on how their input has been used.</li> <li>• Training of young people to be able to articulate their views.</li> </ul>
<b>Different understandings of what ‘participation’ is</b>	There are varied and extreme understandings of the term ‘participation’. For some it should be as the dictionary definition states - “full involvement” (of young people) - while for others young people's views represented by an adult is enough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a common definition of participation among NAAs in the SADC region so there is a platform to work from.</li> </ul>
<b>Different understanding of the ‘objectives’ of youth participation</b>	Is youth participation a means to an end, a process or an end in itself? For those from a rights-based perspective, it is an end in itself, whereas for others, youth participation is critical because it leads to better programming or other ‘end product’.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth participation can achieve different things – it is crucial to understand why we want young people's participation in a particular activity and the outcomes we want as that will determine the best methods.</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of confidence on effective ‘methodologies’ of youth participation</b>	Achieving effective participation can be seen as too complicated and difficult, so is avoided <sup>6</sup> . Increasing scrutiny is being applied to youth participation, without understanding what is or is not ‘effective’ participation. This can make organizations hold back as they do not want to be seen to be doing youth participation ‘wrong’.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance that not all youth participation efforts will be perfect, but that it is a process of learning what does and does not work.</li> <li>• Agree common criteria for the evaluation of youth participation efforts.</li> </ul>

Barriers to defining and understanding participation

<sup>6</sup> Bray, R (2009) Child and youth participation in East and Southern Africa: Taking stock and moving forward

## COMMON BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION BASED FACED BY NAAS CONTINUED...

Barrier	Description	Possible Solutions
<b>Limited knowledge / cooperation of structures for participation</b>	<p>NAAs are often unaware of existing models, structures and forums relating to youth participation / organizations, or where those organizations and structures do exist there is weak coordination or competitiveness.</p> <p>Youth participation is sometimes seen to be a remit for the Ministry of Youth rather than important across all areas.</p> <p>There is a lack of connection between national and local levels limiting many young people's access to participation opportunities. This in turn affects the quality of participation as diverse opinions and needs of young people may not be adequately represented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated Youth Officer in the NAA coordinating youth activities and being a focal point for NGOs and others to work with (see case study 4).</li> <li>• Coordination / harmonization of structures and youth platforms to reduce competition and enhance coordination.</li> <li>• Youth participation as a cross-cutting issue for all Ministries.</li> <li>• Devolved structures for participation to district NAA structures rather than being limited to the national level.</li> </ul>
<b>Limited planning</b>	<p>Youth participation is not yet engrained into 'normal' working practices or organizational structures. Youth participation activities are often not adequately planned, limiting young people's access to participation opportunities: the haphazard, last minute nature of many youth participation efforts means it is often the same known young people who are called on to attend; there is not time to train young people; there is no mechanism in place to feed back to young people following their participation; and therefore efforts are usually one off rather than an ongoing dialogue between young people and adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth participation activities planned and budgeted for at minimum on an annual cycle, preferably further in advance so resources can be sourced.</li> <li>• Young people are included in organizational structures (e.g. on working groups and boards) and can identify in advance opportunities for collaboration with other young people.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial barriers</b>	<p>Many National AIDS Authorities feel that they do not have enough funding to fully meet the needs of young people and there are inadequate resources in all member countries to support implementation of youth development strategies.</p> <p>It can be more costly to invest in youth participation and until there are clear benefits to doing so, many organizations will be reluctant to move beyond one-off activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth participation activities as an integral part of financial planning processes and funds from organizational budgets allocated to it.</li> <li>• Pool resources: donors and governments working to identify where they can jointly support youth participation efforts; organizations work together on youth participation activities rather than competing to reduce duplication.</li> </ul>
<b>Staffing and skills</b>	<p>Youth participation takes more time and resources than traditional programming / policy making. Many NAAs cite sheer volume of work and a lack of (dedicated) human resource as common constraints preventing them from more interaction with young people.</p> <p>There is often a lack of staff and/or internal procedures with explicit remits for participation and youth partnerships. Where an NAA has dedicated human resource, e.g. a Youth Officer, it seems more able to proactively work with young people and maintain ongoing dialogue<sup>7</sup>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideally, each NAA and Ministry to have dedicated Youth Officers and / or trained staff in working with young people, and more especially children.</li> <li>• Explore how donors can fund government personnel to have dedicated human resource for youth participation.</li> <li>• Increase the number of youth internships / youth employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>No / limited internal policies and frameworks around youth participation</b>	<p>Many organizations recognize international policies and frameworks around youth participation and youth rights, but these do not always in turn get enshrined into organizational policies and practices. Often organizations whether practitioners or policy makers, need to internally reflect on participation principles and how they themselves integrate youth participation into their own structures. This is likely in turn to highlight other barriers such as financial constraints or lack of common understanding on youth participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and frameworks in place for youth participation.</li> <li>• Identify knowledge gaps and skills of how to work with young people which impede progress and sap confidence of staff.</li> <li>• Hold a staff workshop / training on the organizations policies on youth participation to support a common understanding of the issues across the organization.</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> See case study 4: Botswana and case study 1: Kenya

# CHAPTER 05:

## General principles for youth participation

### CASE STUDY 5:

#### SPW Uganda: youth consultation during the national planning process for the 5th National Development Plan

The initiative sought to address the previous lack of youth input and involvement in national level planning. To address this, a 2-day intensive youth consultation was organized by SPW in partnership with the National Planning Authority (NPA) and funded by DFID to solicit youth input in the 5th National Development Plan (NDP).

##### Objectives:

- Ensure young people across Uganda have the opportunity to learn about and feed into the NDP process.
- Engage youth creativity and expertise to identify policies and programmes required to achieve NDP objectives.
- Provide an opportunity for face-to-face discussion between young people and decision makers.

##### Attended by:

- 52 young people with national representation of Uganda's districts and youth-led organizations, of which seven were SPW volunteers.
- The Minister of Youth and Children Affairs, the Assistant Commissioner (Youth & Children Department) from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development; the Deputy Chairperson of the NPA; Administrative Officer National Development Plan, NPA; Gender and Social Development Officer, NPA.
- Social Development Advisor for DFID.
- Eight media representatives – television, radio and newspaper.

##### How were young people involved?

The consultation was initiated and organized by SPW, itself a youth-serving NGO. The staff involved in organizing and leading the consultation were young people of 28 years old or younger (Uganda's national definition of young people is >30 yrs). Group work, presentations, and discussions were led by the youth participants.

##### How were the participants selected?

Given the short time frame, young people were identified through SPW's networks and partner organisa-

tions. Ideally it would have been an advertising and application process to encourage a diverse range of young people to take part.

##### What resources were needed?

Five staff members of SPW were involved in the planning and organisation and the consultation cost approx UGX 19,636,000 (£6,136 / \$9,500)

##### Timeline:

Following SPW's initial approach to the National Planning Authority it took just over a year to get the go ahead for the consultation to take place. Following the go-ahead, SPW was given 3 weeks to organise the conference for the consultation.

##### Benefits to the NPA:

- Young people presented their recommendations to the NPA who now have a better understanding of the real situation facing young people across the whole of Uganda.
- Significant opportunities now exist for continued collaboration of young people with the NPA, higher level dialogue with the Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs, as well as with DFID.
- Successful engagement of young people through the consultation, adverts and surveys.

##### Challenges:

Lack of time to prepare the event resulted in difficulty mobilizing key authority figures.

##### Learnings:

- An event of this nature and importance requires considerable time so key planning stakeholders need to be informed of this matter and commit to holding the event at least a month in advance. This gives participants preparation time and VIPs can be invited etc.
- Ensure that, while an official rapporteur is present, a young person present is also empowered to act as one.
- Despite the need for more time, such consultations can be executed to the highest quality of detail in an extremely short time frame, if this is led by talented young staff.
- The highest level consultations and strategic relationship building can, and should, be led by young staff / young people.

During the research for this paper, a number of common themes for enabling effective participation were highlighted, and have been collated here.

### **i) Multi-sectoral approach and partnerships**

An effective response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other issues affecting young people requires the adoption of strategic partnerships involving NAAs and other government ministries, local and international NGOs, the United Nations (UN) system, international bilateral and multilateral development partners and others. This would help to make the most of the limited human and financial resources, coordinate efforts and come to a common understanding of what youth participation is and how it could best be put into practice.

### **ii) Youth-adult partnerships**

Youth participation should not exclude adults. All sectors must work across different ages as effective youth participation cannot be achieved by working with youth alone. An equal and mutually beneficial partnership is needed. Adults need to make sure that the young people are informed, trained, and supported in their work and young people need to trust that the adults they are working with will take them seriously.

“Youth adult partnership was made a reality (adults guided young people while the latter brought their vision, priorities and cultural context to the planning process). Young people meaningfully contributed and got engaged in informing a national process. This will subsequently lead to the ownership of the Strategic Plan by young people.” - Edward Marienga, NACC, Kenya, on the consultation process for the KNASP III

### **iii) Youth participation is an ongoing, two-way process**

When young people are involved, there needs to be a continuum of communication between young people and adults, rather than young people's participation being a one off. Adult organizations need to feed back to young people on how their input is being used and taken forward, or if it is not, why not.

### **iv) Young people should be involved at every stage**

Youth participation should be taken beyond peer education and one-off consultations to include young people in all aspects of development efforts including identifying vulnerabilities and risks, designing programming, research, participation in governance structures and monitoring and evaluation of results. Involving youth from the beginning to the end of any process results in more effective policies and programmes that address the actual, rather than perceived, needs of young people.

### **v) Evidence based research**

There has been little systematic evaluation of youth participation efforts, which in turn contributes to the ongoing scepticism around the long term benefits. The research capacity and ability of government ministries, NAAs and others to conduct needs assessments and to monitor and evaluate the impact of existing youth participation efforts are essential for effective programming as well as understanding the contribution that youth participation can make to overall development efforts.

# CHAPTER 06:

## Next steps

### CASE STUDY 6:

## Youth on the governing board of NAC, Malawi

### Objectives:

- To address inadequate opportunities for young people to participate and lead interventions for HIV and AIDS.
- To listen to the voices of young people.
- To put young people in decision making positions.

### Summary of initiative:

Young people have been represented on the NAC Malawi Board since 1988 when the country started a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS. Each young person serves a term of three years, as per the Terms of Reference for the Board. They are elected via the National Youth Council of Malawi. A total of six young people, between the ages of 15-30 years have had the opportunity, so far, to sit on the Board.

### Why include young people on the Board?

Young people represent a very mobile, risk-taking population, and so are very vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. NAC has therefore ensured that the National HIV and AIDS policy as well as the National Action Framework has clear objectives and interventions for young people. Besides that, the country has developed guidelines for young people in addressing issues of HIV and AIDS and has a national prevention strategy which also has specific interventions for young people.

This was therefore a nationally agreed and planned strategy to ensure involvement and participation of young people. NAC and partners have always advocated strongly for the inclusion of young people on the Board (young people are also represented on Technical Working Groups and Boards of Commissioners).

### Successes:

- The position of young people has been recognized and their roles appreciated. Young people are leading in prevention efforts and are very powerful resources in message dissemination.
- NAC has strategically repositioned the national response according to the needs of young people as their voice is heard loudly.
- NAC has attained international as well as regional recognition for young people's contribution.
- NAC has achieved increased coverage, quality of programmes and interventions; increased preven-

tion efforts etc through having young people represented at a high level within NAC.

### Learnings:

Given the opportunity young people can lead an effective response to HIV and AIDS. They are willing and dedicated to fight HIV and AIDS and have the energy which can keep them fighting for longer periods of time.

### Benefits to NAC Malawi:

- Improved and more effective national policies.
- Lead to greater success in securing donor funding.
- Malawi has benefited from young people in so many ways, including their participation on the Board: young people have played a significant role in prevention activities, communication and community interventions. A response without young people is incomplete.

**Would NAC Malawi recommend that other NAAs have young people represented on their governing board?** Yes, this will ensure total coverage of the response and will help to address the root cause of the problem as young people are at the centre of the epidemic.



**“Improving the lives of youth is a forward-looking process that itself requires cooperation, institutional support and vital partnerships across society and across the different spheres of governance”** - José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs

This position paper is designed to highlight some of the benefits and barriers to youth participation, rather than be a toolkit or guide to youth participation. The next steps presented here are therefore high-level recommendations for National AIDS Authorities as an initial starting point. This section also sets out how SPW will be taking this work further.

Where NAAs are interested in pursuing youth participation at a more practical level than can be offered in this paper, there are several useful resources already available including the SPW/DFID CSO ‘Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers’<sup>8</sup> which has a number of useful tools and practical advice for working with young people. While aimed predominantly at donor agencies, much of the Guide is applicable to government and partner organizations.

It is recognized that many of the possible solutions mapped out in section 4 cannot be achieved by NAAs alone. This paper should therefore be used to advocate for more support to NAAs to enable them to work effectively with young people.

### Suggested next steps for NAAs

- Share good practice and link with other NAAs doing work in this area. By sharing ideas and effective strategies for working with young people there will be a better understanding across the region of what is working and what is not and therefore what may be able to be replicated across multiple NAAs.
- Examine ways that you are currently working with young people – are there ways you can improve or make your engagement with young people more sustainable?
- Are there any obvious gaps where you are not currently working with young people, but could do so? Using the case studies for reference, look at how young people might easily be able to be involved in the following areas:
  - at an organizational level
  - being actively engaged in ongoing policy dialogue
  - implementation of NAA policy and programmes
- Create links with national youth organizations to build your knowledge and capacity and hear their suggestions of how they could engage with the work of the NAA.
- Conduct internal advocacy (formal or informal) with colleagues on promoting and integrating youth within the organization, policy and programming.
- Set up / maintain a database of youth organizations and communicate with them on a regular basis.
- Use a participatory approach internally with staff, as well as with external stakeholders and beneficiaries.

### Next steps to support NAAs

The development of this position paper has been the first step of an ongoing process to engage and support National AIDS Authorities in the area of youth participation. Through a five year memorandum of understanding, SPW will be providing technical assistance to the SADC Secretariat, developing and implementing a practical Guide to Youth Participation and Leadership as part of the implementation of the ‘Business Plan on OVCY 2009-15’.

The main objective is to support Member States, including NAAs, in this area. However, it will provide opportunities for dialogue on youth participation and leadership and for other implementers to collaborate on the development of the Guide. It will provide opportunities for training NAAs, implementers and young people in youth participation and for the SADC region to gain a common understanding of participation and effective methodologies.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ygproject.org>

## CONCLUSION:

### What have we found?

Young people have a vital role to play in the fight against HIV and AIDS. They are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by HIV and AIDS, yet they are a vastly under-utilized resource in addressing the pandemic.

National AIDS Authorities across the SADC region are already engaging with young people in many different ways. The benefits to NAAs of working with young people are becoming clearer all the time: youth input into organizations, and their strategies and policies, increases youth ownership and enables programmes to be tailored more effectively to addressing the real, rather than the perceived, needs of young people. This means that the goals and objectives of NAAs are more likely to be met through more effective programming.

And yet NAAs still face a series of challenges that are preventing them from fully implementing youth participation. Understanding what youth participation is and how to do it, identifying the physical resources to carry out participation activities and being able to effectively work with existing youth structures are among the most common challenges identified.

For the most part the willingness to work with young people is there. What is now needed is a shift in attitude towards the extent of young people's involvement and the role they can play across the whole organization - from being part of the governance structures, to policy-making and implementation.

Finding creative and sustainable ways of involving young people in all facets of NAAs' work is crucial if young people are to be able to play their full role in contributing to the fight against HIV and AIDS.

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