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“What Works” in Youth and DRG programming?

What the Literature Tells Us About Evidence-based Results
in Youth Leadership, Youth Civic Education, Youth and Organizations and
Youth Civic Engagement/Voice Programming

Webinar and discussion with research team and peer reviewers

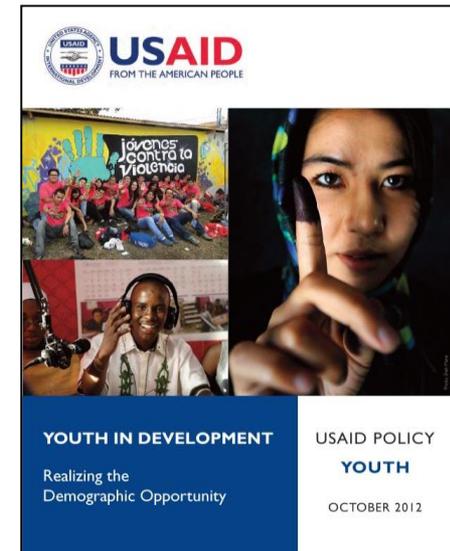


USAID Policy on Youth in Development (YDEV)

Policy Goal: USAID will improve the capacities and enable the aspirations of youth so that they can contribute to and benefit from more stable, democratic, and prosperous communities and nations.

Objectives:

- 1) Strengthen youth programming, participation and partnership in support of Agency development objectives
- 2) Mainstream and integrate youth issues and engage young people across Agency initiatives and operations.



****Website Link:** <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/youth>



Youth and DRG Research & Learning Project

- Implemented by **Counterpart International** through the DRG Center's **Global Civil Society Strengthening (GCSS) LWA**
- **Project Objectives:**
 - Identification of evidence of what works/doesn't work & prioritization of critical knowledge gaps
 - Creation of technical guidance & analytical tools

Youth and DRG Research & Learning Project

- **Key Project Components/Phases:**
 - Objective 1:
 - Review of Youth and DRG Programming & Program Evaluations
 - Academic Research Review
 - **Peer Review**
 - Finalization of Products & Identification of Critical Gaps
 - Objective 2:
 - Development of Technical Guidance
 - Development of Training Module for field officers

Youth and DRG Research & Learning Project

- **Peer Review**
 - **Online Peer Review ****
 - Week of **online discussions** related to the review (including posting of written peer reviews from other experts)
 - **WHERE:** Learning Lab Youth and DRG Work Space
www.usaidlearninglab.org/DRGYouth
 - *Note: This is open to everyone, but you will need to create a Learning Lab Profile. Feel free to encourage others to join the discussion.*
 - **Webinar** on/about July 30th on **Systematic Review** (details TBC)

*****We value your participation, so please use the chat box during the present webinar and engage on Learning Lab over the week through the discussion boards!!!*



The Research Problem:

To answer the question “What Works?” in four areas (with attention to conflict and violence-affected areas, including CVE):

- 1. Civic Education** - Promotes knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and behaviors desired of citizens to increase political participation and civic engagement.
- 2. Civic Engagement/Voice** - Examples include community service, volunteerism, participation in/leadership of CSOs, joining political parties. VOICE is expression of ideas/suggestions/interests to effect change.



The Research Problem (Cont.):

To answer the question “What Works?” in four areas (with attention to conflict and violence-affected areas, including CVE):

3. Youth Organizations – They benefit youth/raise their voice. Includes youth-led organizations and other organizations purportedly providing youth a voice (e.g. youth councils, youth wings of political parties, etc.).

4. Youth Leadership – Both a skill and an outcome— critical for success in political and community spheres for more effective youth participation.



Scope of the Research – Key Points

Combined Two Methods

1. Literature Review

- Peer-reviewed Journals
- Advantages

2. Systematic Review

- Peer-reviewed Journals *and* Grey Literature
- Advantages



Scope of the Research – Key Points (cont.)

Focus for Both Types of Reviews –

Evidence-based results

That is, *Causal Studies*

- Per USAID Evaluation Policy, this means Impact Evaluation (Experimental/*RCT*, Quasi Experimental, Natural Experiments)

If no Causal Studies found, then researchers turn to Descriptive Studies



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A Systematic Review of Evaluations of Youth Development Programs Across DRG Sectors

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The Two Sides of Evidence-Based Programs



I figure there is better than a 50/50 chance these programs will work—and a 10 percent chance we know what we're talking about.



The Systematic Review (SR)

- An essential tool of program evaluation and evidence-based policy.
- Summarizes available evidence of “what works.”
- Uses transparent methods to locate, code, evaluate, and synthesize evaluations.
- Tries to provide an accurate, comprehensive, and unbiased representation of the stock of evidence.
- Works in concert with literature reviews (LRs), which give depth and meaning to systematic reviews (SRs).
- Qualitative understanding needed to interpret quantitative results. Mixed-methods preferred.



Main Question

What are the findings, policy implications, and scope of published and unpublished evaluations of youth programs in the four DRG sectors?

- Scope of All Studies: Since 1966 more than 50,000 studies of all kinds have been published.
- Scope of Evaluative Studies: Since 1990 some 14,000 are evaluations of program interventions.
- Growth: Half of studies published in last 5 years.
- Location: Studies conducted in more than 50 countries and published in a dozen languages.
- Peer-Review. About 70 percent are peer-reviewed and the rest is “grey” literature.



Review Procedures

- Search Engines Used: Google Scholar supplemented by ERIC, IES, C2, DEC, and subject experts
- Focus on Evaluative studies: Search terms “evaluation,” “assessment,” “outcome,” “impact,” “intervention” used.
- Application of Exclusion Criteria: Exclusion of studies before 2010, written in languages other than English, and out-of-sector yields 323 studies.
- Data Entry: The 323 studies entered into an IBM-SPSS spreadsheet for analysis.
- Further Exclusions. High-grade experimental studies included and cross-sectional and case studies excluded



Some Findings

- Weak or negligible evidence that civic education promotes behavior in form of political participation
- Weak to moderate evidence that civic education promotes knowledge such as democratic values and attitudes such as political efficacy
- Evidence that differences among programs so large as to make inferences about outcomes problematic.
- Moderate to strong evidence that concentrated (high-dose) programs work much better than diffuse ones.
- Most studies use “reactive” measures that are prone to errors and biases that reduce the magnitude of effects.
- Very few studies use reliability and validity testing or common scales and indexes.



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“What Works” in Civic Education and Youth Civic Engagement and Voice?

M.A. Thomas

Visiting Researcher, Georgetown University



Focus of Literature Review

- Academic empirical literature in English from 2000 onwards
- On the impact of interventions for
 - youth civic education
 - youth civic engagement and voice
- With attention to violence-afflicted areas and countering violent extremism
- Priority given to experimental evidence where available



Civic Education: *any educational initiative that purposefully seeks to promote the knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and behaviors desired of citizens.*

- Overlaps youth civic engagement interventions in service learning and action civics
- Body of experimental and cross-sectional studies, focused primarily on U.S. and European secondary school students; some case studies from developing countries



Youth Civic Education

- *Knowledge*: Can contribute to civic knowledge with active teaching methods, teacher training, and resources – but may depend on context
- *Attitudes*: Can improve self-confidence (internal efficacy); effects on other attitudes more mixed
- *Behaviors*: Little evidence of impact on political participation/engagement – methodological issues
- “Civics gap”; more of an impact on low SES students because of lack of outside resources



Youth Civic Engagement and Voice

- **Youth civic engagement:** *lawful activities by youth intended to be beneficial to the broader community*
- **Voice:** *youth's expression of their ideas, suggestions, or interests that can result in organizational, social, or political change*
- Wide variety of programs
- In school and out-of-school programs



Youth Civic Engagement and Voice

- Few experimental studies
- Some pre- and post- studies focused on changes in youth attitudes
- Case studies of programs often financed or conducted by program implementers
- Little literature on effect of program components, but recurring statements about prerequisites for success
- Unable to identify academic studies of impact of these interventions in violence-affected regions or in CVE



General Observations on State of Evidence

- Some experimental evidence in civic education; very little in youth civic engagement and voice
- Study results should be pooled with care
 - Lack of common definitions
 - Lack of common measurements (e.g., self-reports v. answers to knowledge questions)
 - Wide variety in types and features of interventions
- General lack of validation of measures and surveys, lack of control for social desirability bias



Moving Forward

More Research

- Young field! Lots of research gaps
- Not a lot of evidence of impact on behavior, governance
- Need work on role of contextual and enabling factors
- Need to ask more specific questions
- Design programs for learning



Moving Forward

Bigger Issues

- Should evidence of impact determine whether to engage in programming?
 - RCT not always a feasible methodology
 - Intervention necessary but not sufficient?
 - Purpose is empowerment or behavioral change?



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“What Works” in Youth Organizations and Leadership

Loubna Hanna Skalli, PhD

Webinar
July 23, 2015



Outline

1. Scope of Work and Methodology
2. Conceptual Foundations and Models
3. Youth Organizations:
 - Youth Councils and Youth Parliaments
 - Youth in National Parliaments and Party Wings
 - Youth-Led Community Organizations and Youth Organizing
4. Youth Leadership – YD & PYD
5. Conclusion & Implications



Scope of Work and Methodology

Questions:

- Core competencies, knowledge and skills youth need
- Factors that enable or constrain youth participation and leadership roles
- The impact of youth participation and leadership

Data/Reviewed Literature:

- Key search terms: core themes
- Selection criteria: academic, 2000-, English, evaluation-related

Methodology:

- Qualitative methods: case study, interviews, focus groups, observation, etc.
- Strengths (context, how and why questions) and weaknesses (no causality)



Conceptual Foundations & Models

Youth Participation & Benefits

- A good and a right
- Gains for the individual, community and organizations/nation

Types and Spaces of Participation

- Types include: youth leadership, organizing, youth governance and youth in decision-making, youth and civics, youth service etc.
- Spaces include: youth clubs, councils and parliaments (local, national & international), youth wings of political parties and youth in political parties, youth in professional groups and labor unions

Pre-requisites and Conditions for Participation

- The key four: capacity, opportunity, motivation, foundation



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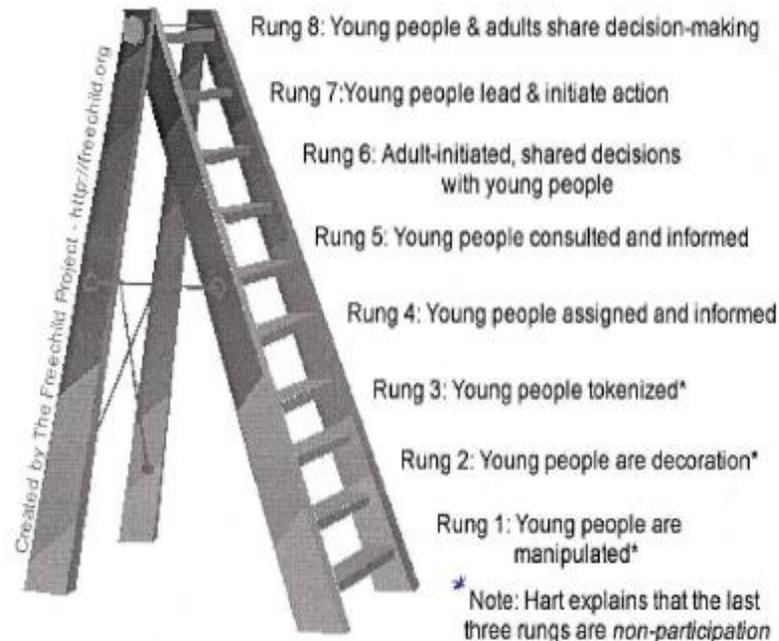
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Conceptual Model I: Hart's Ladder

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

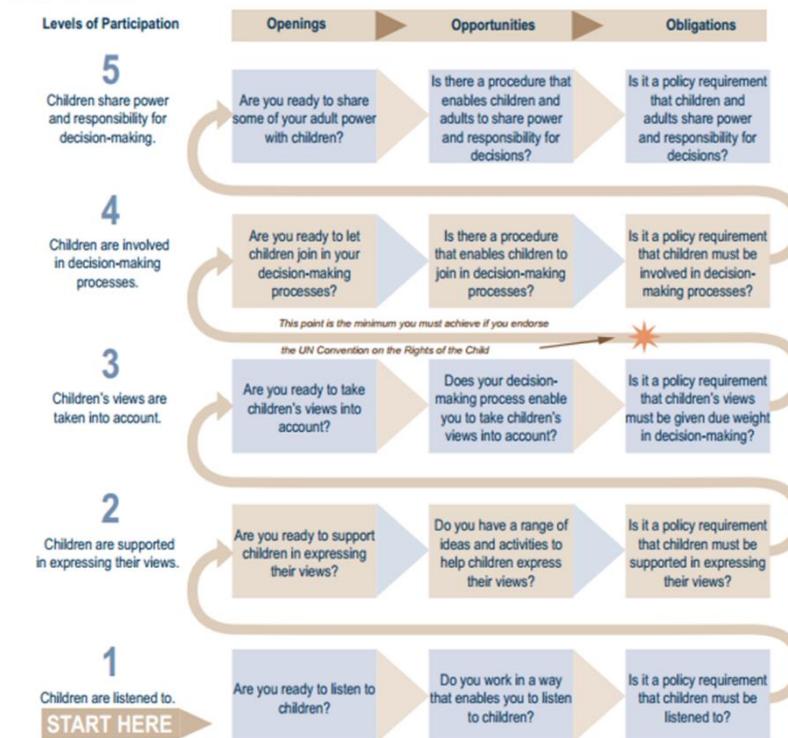


Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*.
Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.



Conceptual Model II –Sheer’s Pathways

Pathways to Participation Harry Shier 2001





Conceptual Model III- *Power Sharing*

Less power

More power



Model 1

Adult-Led with
Youth
Participation

Model 2

Adult-Led with
Youth as
Limited
Partners

Model 3

Youth-Adult
Collaborative
Partnership

Model 4

Youth-Led
with Adult
Allies



Youth Organizations

Youth Councils and Youth Parliaments

- Formal/informal spaces
- Promises: individual rewards, self-representation, tangibles
- Pitfalls: elite capture, exclusionary spaces & reinforcement of inequality

Youth in National Parliaments and Party Wings

- More questions than answers
- The gender dimension: quasi absence of research
- **Youth-Led Community Organizations & Youth Organizing**
 - The appeal of PYD principles and social justice agenda
 - Pre-conditions again: Youth-Adult Partnerships & power sharing



Youth Leadership

Youth Leadership Development

- A skill and outcome:
- Yet, overemphasized but under-researched:
- PYD and YD approaches to leadership



Conclusions & Implications

- Youth organizations and leadership:
 - A continuum of participation; Gaps in knowledge
- Short-term individual gains Vs long- term levels & processes of changes
- Dominance of the deficit approach to youth development
 - The challenge of translating PYD principles
- The absence of the gender lens on youth political development
 - Disconnect between program goals and research/evaluations
- Four dilemmas donors and practitioners should consider!



NEXT STEPS

- Participate in week of **online discussions** related to the review

WHERE: Learning Lab Youth and DRG Work Space

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Note: This is open to everyone, but you will need to create a Learning Lab Profile. Feel free to encourage others to join the discussion.

- Webinar on/about July 30th on Systematic Review (details TBC)

For more information, contact

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