# C:\Users\Program Manager\Downloads\RD_NoTagline_B.pngmcf_39%_stationery_pc_rgbNEW

# YOUTH-LED RESEARCH TOOL-KIT

# RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT UGANDA

# AND

# THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Restless Development wishes to extend sincere appreciation to the third iteration of Youth Think Tank 2015/16 whose insights and experiences informed the process that led to this publication but most specifically the framing team for their dedication and wonderful ideas. We also wish to thank the YTT team, particularly the Programme Coordinator, **Emmanuel Lubaale** for pulling together all the ideas from the framing team leading to the first draft and the Programme Manager, **Richard Wanzala** for providing oversight and support in the process.

Special thanks go to our management staff in Uganda including the Senior Programmes Manager, **Charles Churchhill Awich**, the Fundraising and Partnerships Manager, **Sabina Basi** and to our International Programme Quality team led by **Sushmita Mukherjee** for providing additional reference material and sparing time to do the final review of this publication. We hope it inspires young people and key stakeholders to better their engagement of young people

# AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

The entire process of developing the toolkit was led by YTT Researchers, in particular, Collins Kimaro and Augustine Malija from Tanzania, Hilda Namakula, Innocent Onika, Aliguma Ahabyona and Francis Arinaitwe from Uganda, with support from Restless Development and MasterCard Foundation. We wish to congratulate the team upon this achievement.

# BACKGROUND:

The youth-led research toolkit is one of the key outputs of the 2015-16 MasterCard Foundation’s East Africa Regional Youth Think Tank (YTT) project. The toolkit is a reflection of the research experiences of the Youth Think Tank Researchers over a period of 12 months.

The toolkit is a first-hand reference material on the core principles of youth participation and guidance for replicating the model of youth-led research. More importantly, it provides guidance and examples of how agencies can “walk with” young people through all stages of the research journey starting from conceptualization of research ideas to pretesting research tools, inception, field work, data analysis and validation, report writing and dissemination of findings.

## Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is written primarily for youth researchers and organisations or individuals interested or involved in youth-led research projects. It can be used as a blueprint for successfully carrying out youth-led research. Informed by first-hand experience, this tool kit will help to design their strategies to ensure they meaningfully involve youth at each of the different stages of research studies. The descriptions of challenges and proposed solutions will help mitigate the possible obstacles one may face and lead to more effective use of their resources.

## Why this toolkit?

The toolkit is premised on the realization that youth-led research can be a challenging endeavor because of the actual and sometimes perceived bottlenecks involved in the process.

Some of the key challenges of engaging young people in research include;

* **Requirement of committed financial, technical and human resources:**

Undertaking youth-led research might seem difficult especially for agencies that have not done it before and thus do not have the necessary financial, technical and human resources to undertake this process. Unlike conventional research where experienced researchers or consultants are hired to lead the process, youth-led research requires to recruit and train young people. Then there are staff in place to continuously support the young people some of whom, it would be their first time to lead on a research project.

* **‘Challenging the status quo’:**

Integrating youth led research means challenging our governance structures, processes and ways we ordinarily operate especially if this is the first time. It therefore means that to some, it is not the usual business of taking every decisions. It means a trade off with young people and trusting them, listening to their ideas and carefully brokering a process that helps you achieve the strategic organisational objectives and the real needs and ideas of young people. We appreciate that this could be a challenging path to take but again your commitment to listen by providing an environment that facilitates open discussion with young people is critical. Young people always feel valued when they are allowed to express their thoughts and ideas. While it’s impossible to consider all their wishes, agencies ought to openly explain why.

**Other possible challenges include;**

* Young people may not be taken seriously by some respondents. It’s therefore prudent to ensure that you have in-depth knowledge of the subject matter.
* Danger of skills gap, ‘maturity factor’ especially when it comes to analyzing high level concepts and understanding high level processes. Breaking down these technical terms and jargon is very helpful
* Balancing ‘support’ and ‘influence’; it can sometimes be challenging for adult facilitators of the youth-led research process, to draw a clear line between supporting the youth to lead the research process and influencing the direction of the process. To overcome this conflict, it is advisable for adult facilitators to shadow the youth and not the other way round.

Hence, in pursuit of its strategic objective of placing young people at the forefront of change and development and to ensure that other organisations are meaningfully engaging youth in processes that affect them, the toolkit will support to:

* Improve the way youth are engaged in research processes based on our learning from past 30 years of experience as an agency at the forefront of youth-led development
* Appreciate the approaches from a local and regional contexts and how can young researchers be creatively engaged who are working independently in relatively distant locations to achieve research goals.
* Leverage and partake of our experiences and learning generated as a result of meaningfully engaging young researchers throughout the research cycle for a year. We therefore bring fresh ideas and a blueprint of what worked and challenges young researchers face including providing useful tips and guidelines about how to handle the challenges. 

We believe this toolkit can inspire agencies undertake youth-led research and continuously learn from and document their experiences so that they are better prepared to meaningfully engage young people in research processes. This tool kit also provides a clear understanding of the skills that will be needed and thus will guide the organizations in their recruitment of suitable youth researchers.

## Especially for young people

This toolkit is for youth researchers to prepare them for leading the research process. The tips and insights are to inform them of best practices to adopt in preparing for and carrying out their research. In addition it gives suggestions on how best to engage with different stakeholders such as government officials and to facilitate the smooth flow of the research process. The toolkit ultimately aims to inspire young people to venture into research by providing a simple understanding of all research stages. We hope this document can enhance the confidence of young people in leading research, build skills in doing comparative analysis across locations and countries and trigger users to generate more ideas that can facilitate better understanding of youth-led research process.

Young people might be challenged to claim their space in research processes. Many times, agencies find it difficult to embrace youth-led research methods for various reasons, some related to their capacity and lack of experience, limited resources and time among others. Amidst those challenges however, this toolkit will inspire you as a young researcher to continuously challenge your agency to consider this methodology by specifically referencing the value it brings based on the examples articulated here and even similar experiences you have had yourself. By speaking from an informed point of view, your agency might be convinced to undertake this process.



# DEFINITIONS

## Youth-led Research

First we define “Research” in simple terms: Oxford Dictionary defines Research as “The systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions”. Or Put simply; Research is searching for and gathering information, usually to answer a particular question or address a particular problem. The “Re” means ‘to repeat’, someone else has done what you are about to do. Therefore *Youth-led research* refers to the research process led by young people. Young people are the researchers, and take charge of the entire research process, with support from adult allies.

## Why Youth-led Research?

*“In our communities, research is often associated with Professors and Universities and the perception is that young people don’t have the skills to do so”* (Youth Think Tank Researcher). Whilst recognizing the valuable contribution of adults in guiding and providing young people with opportunities to build their skills, from our experience, young people are experts on youth issues; they can help explain youth issues to adults. Young informants will feel more comfortable and free talking about pertinent issues to people of their own age compared to adults. Therefore, young people can collect information about young people that is more close to the truth (more reliable) than when it is done by actors outside their age group. Adopting and investing in a youth-led research process could lead to an improvement in the quality and relevance of the research data. The data will inform project activities (interventions) that fit better with young people’s issues and interests. Building research skills in young people has an empowering effect on them, enhances their understanding of social issues that negatively and positively influence their lives, experiences as well as their motivation to contribute to changing things.

.

Youth-led research builds a society of youth with the zeal to identify and proactively interest themselves with issues that they care about and are of concern to them, their peers and the communities in which they live. Therefore, it facilitates youth to reach out and pick up voices of peers that barely have opportunities to do so and provides a platform for young people to dialogue and find lasting solutions with key influencers at various levels.

Research skills are useful social skills and good for future job opportunities. It can help build cooperation between young people and adults: It can improve mutual respect. Adults will take young people more seriously when they are involved in research and decision-making processes. Young people will take adults more serious if they understand the challenges of their work. This can lead to more youth participation in the organization.

A youth-led research process inspires youth to take up opportunities to understand their issues and be part of the solution. Through youth-led research, agencies appreciate young researchers as a resource that helps them get insights to understand youth issues.

# The Youth-led Research Process

## Recruitment and selection of youth researchers

It is prudent before the youth researcher recruitment process to set a clear criteria and clarify the expectations from both the agency and the potential candidates. This will help you attract young people with the right motivation for the task ahead.

**Please see below a sample of the criteria used during the East African Youth Think Tank researcher selection process.**

Who are we looking for?

* Young men and women between the ages of 18-24 living in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda
* Participants from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and a mix of young people from urban and rural areas;
* Fluency in English (both written and verbal);
* Diverse Employment and Education background;
* Ability to use social media tools
* Experience and or interest working with young people;
* Strong written and verbal communication skills;
* Community engagement, policy knowledge, and basic research skills;
* Demonstrated experience working in a team and;
* Eagerness to collaborate and support Restless Development and it’s partners

Who is expected of you?

* Willingness to  dedicate a minimum of 25-35 hours a month to Think Tank activities between September 2015 and July 2016;
* Ability to conduct research, interview young people and other members of your community as requested;
* Participate in on-line and in-person discussions; Write blogs or participate in other media events on behalf of the agency; Participate in face-to-face meetings in East Africa;
* Availability to participate in the agency’s events such as conference or convening’s.

What will you be entitled to?

* A 12 days Training facilitated by Restless Development as part of the first convention;
* An opportunity to participate in online and in-person discussions, and have the chance to work directly with Restless Development and The MasterCard Foundation staff;
* An honorarium of $ XXX paid upon successful completion of agreed tasks.
* The opportunity to form networks and connections with other exceptional young people in Sub Saharan Africa and
* The opportunity to conduct research, work with peers, support youth-serving organizations and be part of a growing alumni network.

Still interested?

Please send an updated CV with references, and a *one-page* cover letter explaining why you’d like to join the Think Tank and what particular skills and experiences you would contribute to XX(email address of contact person in the agency) by XXX (date). Only shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview.

## Research Methodology and process

The research process is multifaceted and involves designing objectives, questions, plans, fieldwork, analysis, validation and write ups. Through the Youth Think Tank experience, these processes were broken down and the research conducted at different stages with different deadlines. This made it easy for the youth researchers to focus on specific research stages at different times and independently organize the activities and resources for each stage.



**Figure 1: Youth-led research cycle- Youth are central and leading on every stage of the process**

We believe that youth led research methodology and conventional methods can reinforce one another. We believe conventional research can benefit a lot from the process as this would make it more practical and connected and responsive to pertinent needs of young people. Conventional methodology can be adopted to suit the needs, experiences of young researchers by breaking down jargon and communicating the principles in a simple ways through examples and scenarios.

Youth led research can validate conventional research especially in as far as how the findings relate to the daily struggles and lived experiences of youth. In this case it makes the often superficial presentation of conventional research findings resonate with the real experiences of young people

The research process should be viewed as a chisel, where each of the steps is not mutually exclusive but rather joined up and linked. Young people are the energy and catalyst that drive every part of the chisel and as such, their role should be seen to contribute to the overarching aims and objectives of the research process. It’s common for agencies to see young people as mere “data collectors” or “data entrants”, in which case they are not supported to visualize their contribution to achieving the strategic research objectives. Engaging young people across the research process would the most ideal. That said even if this were not possible, young people should be encouraged and supported to visualize their strategic contribution to the ultimate research goals no matter the step they are called upon to contribute.

## Running effective youth-led research training

The agency needs to develop a concrete training design that truly mirrors methodologies and resources that should empower young researchers. It needs to be contextualized to the group of young researchers who are being engaged e.g. community youth, university graduates etc. Please note that the delivery which is informed by the design is the first step and critical step for your commitment and might require looking for and working with specialized trainers or investing in building the skills of your team. All these require careful planning and time.

At the time of training clearly define the expectations and roles of the participants including the research coordinator, the partners and the young people, most importantly their central role and definite deliverables.

The use of experiential learning aids is the most effective way of getting young researchers to grasp research principles. Challenge them to share stories, examples, role plays and simulations from where they live and what they have witnessed or heard, visualize.

Training is not just about the content but about the valuable connection that your team will develop. Implicitly provide time for relaxation and team building. These could be in terms of games, outings etc as appropriate. ***Please see sample training schedule on pages 10-12 below***

Beyond the boredom it could generate, a long training could also impact on people’s welfare and healthy and thus there is need to ensure that there are arrangements to respond to those issues.

Provide dedicated guidance and mentorship. Remember this mentorship is not just about you but also the young researchers. Each one of them has different experiences and competencies. Giving them space to share and learn from one another with your watch is very empowering.

**SAMPLE YOUTH THINK TANK FIRST CONVENING TRAINING SCHEDULE**

**Date:** 14th – 25th September 2015 (12 Days)

**Venue:** Grand Global Hotel, Kampala Uganda

**Participants:** 16 (10 Uganda, 2 Rwanda, 2 Kenya and 2 Tanzania)

**Objectives;**

1. **To better understand the issues around youth economic opportunities based on experiences of Youth Think Tank (YTT) researchers and partners,**
   1. Results from desk research by YTT team shared
   2. Youth researchers share perspectives on youth economic opportunities from their respective countries based on their lived experiences
   3. The MasterCard Foundation partners share vivid experiences as they relate to their understanding of the situation around youth economic opportunities in their respective countries or regions
2. **To build capacity of selected YTT members in youth-led research** 
   1. Youth researchers trained on steps to facilitate meaningful engagement of young people in the research (field work/data collection) process
   2. Research questions developed and agreed upon with youth researchers
   3. Research Questions and tools reviewed and approved
   4. Country/regional research teams develop research plans in line with set time lines before data analysis workshop
   5. Research tools pretested
   6. Logistical arrangements to facilitate field research agreed upon with researchers and approved
   7. YTT leadership team structure, roles streamlined
   8. YTT advisory panel constituted

**Training Schedule**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Time/Date | 9.00-10.00am | 10.00-11.00am | 11.00-11.20 | 11.20-12.00 | 12.00-1.00 | 13.00-14.00 | 14.00-15.00 | 15.00-16.00 | 16.00-17.00 |
| Monday 14th Sept. | Participant introductions, brief on training objectives and pre-training assessment | Introduction to International development and Sustainable Development Goals | BREAK | Mapping our countries (social, economic, political) characteristics | Mapping our countries (social, economic, political) characteristics | LUNCH | Cross cultural working | Life skills and youth-led research | Life skills and youth-led research |
| Tuesday 15th Sept. | Meaningful Youth Engagement /participation | Meaningful Youth Engagement /participation | Meaningful Youth Engagement /participation | Meaningful Youth Engagement /participation | Meaningful Youth Engagement /participation | Meaningful Youth Engagement /participation | Meaningful Youth Engagement /participation |
| Wednesday 16th Sept. | Intro to youth-led research (what is/not, characteristics, and why do research | Intro to youth-led research (what is/not, characteristics, and why do (youth-led) research | Other methods of gaining knowledge (types of research) | Other methods of gaining knowledge (types of research) | The research process: Defining the research problem, selecting research topics | The research process: Defining the research problem, selecting research topics | The research process: Defining the research problem, selecting research topics |
| Thursday 17th Sept. | Review of previous research pieces | Review of previous research pieces | Review of previous research pieces | Review of previous research pieces | Review of previous research pieces | Review of previous research pieces | Review of previous research pieces |
| Friday 18th Sept. | Intro to youth-led research methods -Conducting FGDs | Intro to youth-led research methods -Conducting FGDs | Alumni session | MCF Partner experience sharing | Conducting peer to peer interviews (practice) | Conducting peer to peer interviews (practice) | Conducting peer to peer interviews (practice) |
| Saturday 19th Sept. | Research design | Research design | Youth-led Research Ethics | Youth-led Research Ethics | Sampling techniques, data collection methods and tools (including mobile technology) | Sampling techniques, data collection methods and tools | Sampling techniques, data collection methods and tools |
| Sunday 20th Sept. | Qualitative data analysis techniques | Qualitative data analysis techniques | Social Outing | Social Outing | Social Outing | Social Outing | Social Outing |
| Monday 21st Sept. | Formulating research objectives, question and hypotheses | Formulating research objectives, question and hypotheses | Formulating research objectives, question and hypotheses | Formulating research objectives, question and hypotheses | Formulating research objectives, question and hypotheses | Mapping our research areas | Mapping our research areas |
| Tuesday 22nd Sept. | Mobile phone technology and research | Mobile phone technology and research | Mobile phone technology and research | Mobile phone technology and research | Mobile phone technology and research | Mobile phone technology and research | Mobile phone technology and research |
| Wednesday 23rd Sept. | Pre-testing (preps) | Pre-testing(fieldwork) | Pre-testing (field work) | Pre-testing (field work) | Pre-testing (field) | Pre-testing (field work) | Pre-testing (debrief) |
| Thursday 24th Sept. | Refining research tools | Refining research tools | Field work team work planning | Field work team budgeting | Field logistics preps (packs) | Field logistics preps (packs) | Field logistics preps (packs) |
| Friday 25th Sept. | Post test | End of training evaluation | Departures | Departures | Departures | Departures | Departures |

**Source: Restless Development 2015**

**Below is a detailed account of how to support young researchers across the research cycle**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Research cycle** | **Our experience of challenges** | **Tips and tricks of how to manage** |
| Preparing for youth-led research   * Foundation training * Developing research questions | It can be challenging to conceptualise the research topic and develop the research questions when you intend to do research in different contexts or locations whose socio-economic characteristics are divergent.  Therefore, it becomes very difficult to narrow down on a research topic  Working with young people can seem to be a challenge given that they could be idealistic  . | Select young people who understand the context of the area.  Undertake a test run in the target area before coming up with the final tools to get feedback. While selecting them, look for a demonstrated show of passion toward youth issues in their past.  It’s important to first generate a diversity of ideas based on experiences of the researchers and having gathered them, agree on broad themes and categories  Whereas running straight to a agreeing on research topic using already developed themes might be a quick way to develop a topic, it denies young researchers an opportunity to connect your strategic needs to their lived experiences. It’s therefore critical to provide space for youth researchers to first explore themes more randomly and then align those to your bigger themes other than the other way around. When young researchers understand how their role connects to your strategic objectives, ownership of the process is more likely  Help young people to choose a topic they care about or that is of great interest to them and consult young people and other agencies  Also incorporating technology such as mobile phone platforms, online tools and social media communication can keep them excited about the work. |
| Preparing for field work | It can be challenging to set appointments for respondents and navigate bureaucracy of government.  Getting target respondents to honour appointments in a timely manner can be frustrating especially in rural locations | Leverage partnerships with organisations. Go through organisations as opposed to approaching individuals one by one. After explaining the objectives of the research and its potential merits, many organisations are happy to help mobilise their members to be part of the exercise  Recruit Youth in pairs. Having two young people from the same region will be great for support and also making the research process efficient. For example, during a Focus Group Discussion, one researcher can lead the discussion whilst the other takes notes.  It is much better to do on spot mobilizations while having an identity card or official letter of introduction to avoid confusion.  Make use of young people to mobilise as they are passionate, energetic and are good at mobilizing other people particularly fellow young people. |
| Conducting field work | Field work is the time to “do” but it doesn’t always necessarily go according to the script though it’s the stage that every young researcher looks forward to.  Using mobile technology for research like internet enabled mobile phones and related online software questionnaires in rural areas can certainly be challenging especially when the study requires capturing the GPS  Older respondents are sometimes judgemental and make it difficult for a young researcher to be taken seriously | Encourage young researchers to refer to their notes and ask colleagues and support team for guidance in case something is unclear  Remind researchers that field work is not just about getting information from young people and how they get it matters. Therefore a flexible sampling methodology that helps researchers meaningfully engage their peers and thus treat field work as an opportunity to get voices of young people heard  Depending on the type of device, think through alternatives in case technology falters e.g. allow the tool to work offline and if the device creates anxiety from the respondents explaining the rationale for using it can be of help  It helps if the young researcher is from the area and they appear reputable with official identification and introduction letter from your agency as well as from higher ranking government officials |
| Data analysis and making conclusions | It can be challenging for any young person to critically analyse large sets of data as they may not have experience or even know what to look for in the mountains of data collected.  A challenge can be critical analysis.  Analysing large volumes of data to make sense out of it can be scary and demotivating to a young researcher especially if it has to be summarised from multiple locations | It is important to be patient and offer on spot guidance. Breaking down the data into chunks that can be analysed in a series of exciting team activities can avoid monotony and boredom. Also rewarding and recognising key insights can really motivate a young person. This can motivate in-depth analysis and encourage the art of storytelling.  Remember to bring in external parties like interested partners who can offer their feedback on preliminary findings from an objective viewpoint.  Remember to draw out an analysis plan based on the research question and tools prior which can be further refined based on the early trends in the data/information collected through the data collection process. |
| Data gap filling and validation | Gap filling and validation is a critical step in the youth-led research process and if planned well, it can be an inspiring experience for a younger researcher as it builds directly from the analysis phase and helps them reconnect with the respondents and pick valuable insights on pending issues that need further information. That said, young researchers can easily get confused if the purpose, focus and outputs of the exercise are not well defined | In this case, ensure briefing is properly done before the start coupled with detailed step by step guidelines they can reference.  Also, one can share case studies of previously conducted validations to enable the young person get a picture of the process  Given that they set out to validate their findings, empower them to own their findings so they can identify extra pieces of information they should probe further.  Offer support (can be physical visits, online, calls) to the researcher. In addition, engage them on social media to get updates on each key finding |
| Preparing for and presenting/disseminating findings | A youth-led research process should be mirrored in the way young researchers are able to confidently articulate their findings to the external audience. This is the only way their engagement makes sense. This process however can be quite tedious and time consuming | You ought to have the commitment about the process not just the findings and it’s worth the investment to spend time preparing young researchers to ably articulate the findings by   * Making it clear right from the start that it’s about them and not just the agency or the funder. * Depending on the scale of presentation (communities, dignitaries, media etc), design and execute a preparation workshop and training * Allocate roles for different individuals especially based on where they are likely to be most effective or interested * Conduct several rounds of simulation recreating the presentation environment * Give open and constructive feedback for them to perfect * Given the sensitivity of certain audiences like the media, make sure that young people receive a through orientation on the protocols. Its often advisable to identify a few in the team to engage the media. |

## Some more tips from the Youth Think Tank researchers

* Agencies ought to empower young researchers to think creatively, be flexible in decisions and take a good approach towards designing of research questions.
* The data collection stage has challenges that need to be addressed with creativity and flexibility by both researcher and the agency. For example, there are those respondents who will not show up at an interview despite prior scheduling with them. What do you think you will do with them? Substituting them is easy if a researcher is flexible and can creatively think.
* The mode of running the whole research should be “youth friendly”, not too formal. We happen to be very collaborative when there is a friendly communication with our agency. Imagine connecting researchers over WhatsApp groups and other online platforms mostly used with us. This is going to ensure a quick delivery of tasks and help among researchers just in case one is stuck on the process.
* Encourage exploratory and independent thinking of the researchers to find solutions just like it will be in the field. Enough time should be created for researchers to envision challenges in the field and offer solutions - these should be discussed with the mentors
* Trial testing the questions amongst researchers and/or going to the field coupled with role plays should be conducted to create a good atmosphere and to reduce anxiety of the researcher
* Organizations should invest heavily in explaining data analysis techniques so that important data collected by young researchers should not be lost in the name of summarizing the raw data. During this stage, researchers should be given an opportunity to explain and interpret their findings.

## Meaningful Youth engagement in research

For youth to benefit from research and development outcomes, their participation is very central. As a team we have found reference to **Roger Hart’s 8 rings ladder of participation** and **the DFID 3 lens models** very informative especially when training young researchers. These are explored subsequently below

**The Roger Hart model**

His view is that achieving meaningful youth participation is a step-wise or incremental process is very interesting and the discussion about the different steps/levels of participation enables young researchers and trainers open up and discuss more deeply how they can realistically be engaged through the research process.

**1) Manipulation**. Happens where adults use young people to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by young people. This rung of the ladder reflects adultism.

**2) Decoration**. Happens when young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people. This rung of the ladder reflects adultism.

**3) Tokenism**. When young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate. This rung of the ladder reflects adultism.

**4) Assigned but informed**. This is where young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by community youth boards.

**5) Consulted and informed**. This happens when young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by youth advisory councils

**6) Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people**. Occurs when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the young people. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by participatory action research.

**7) Young people-initiated and directed**. This step is when young people initiate and direct a project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by youth-led activism.

**8) Young people-initiated, shared decisions with adults**. This happens when projects or programs are initiated by young people and decision-making is shared between young people and adults. These projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by youth/adult partnerships.



**How to deal with youth researchers**

Let them share experiences and role play scenarios about each of the rings pointing out situations of manipulation, decoration, tokenism, where young people are assigned and informed, are consulted and informed, where adults initiate decisions and share with young people, where young people lead and initiate action and where both adults and youth share decision making

Give them opportunity to critique the model and challenge them to share what they learned

Call to action- challenge each one to write something they will do differently to ensure meaningful engagement of youth in research.

**DFID lens approach**

Youth participation can be viewed through three lenses: with youth as beneficiaries; with youth as partners and/or with youth as leaders.

It is important for institutions and practitioners to consider all three lenses; they are not mutually exclusive. Youth participation in development is often a combination of all three.

This approach is dynamic: depending on the local context and the development intervention one particular lens may be more appropriate or have more prominence/focus.



The different lenses may be used with different groups of young people during an intervention/initiative, i.e., young leaders may be reaching out to new groups of young people as targets.

It might appear that youth participation is just about young partners or leaders, and not young beneficiaries. However, participation must also develop from a foundational base.

The ultimate aim is to develop youth as partners and leaders in development. This is based on youth having agency: their capacity to act, their skills and capabilities and their ability to change their own lives.

Youth operating as partners and leaders are inherently beneficiaries too.

The principles underpinning this model are adaptable to use by agencies engaging young people in research and using it in a training environment helps young researchers better understand a cogent way of engaging young people through the research cycle

**Mobile technology and research**

It’s widely recognized that the Information and Communication Technology sector has driven and continues to drive economic growth in East Africa and that young people are increasingly adopting and aspiring to use mobile technology. We have had an opportunity to use it ourselves and found it handy and a cost effective medium of managing youth-led research processes especially when direct supervision is limited. Each researcher and the staff support team were provided with an internet enabled tablet phone to support with data collection.

In general, mobile technology made the research process more efficient. It made it simple to synchronize the most recent versions of the research tools as well as to submit forms once filled in. It also helped organize the material; for example attaching a respondents’ photo

Being familiar with the technology will help agencies be more efficient. Agencies will then learn the shortcuts and tricks to do different things, which will allow to complete tasks faster. In addition, agencies will be better placed to solve problems with the technology when they arise.

The key thing for agencies to consider is how to keep the entire research process youth-friendly and simple. This includes standardizing the questions to be used and well-designed forms that are easy for the researchers to input the data into using the medium like Smartphones. They should consider the different environments that the medium will be used in and consequently take provisions to protect the technology.

Another important thing to bear in mind is the unpredictability of technology and they should therefore be flexible. For example, locating GPS coordinates proved to be a challenge for many researchers in the different countries and Restless Development was able to be flexible and remove that requirement from the questionnaire.

**Adding value to youth-led research- engaging technical and academic partners**

There are lots of perceptions that technical research assignments are a ‘no go’ area for young inexperienced people and a reserve of technically competent academics and Development Research experts. From our experience the two can complement one another to make it even better.

It’s important that Development agencies undertaking youth-led research remain conscious of that reality but are not swayed away from the core cause. While experienced academics and grounded Development Research experts can provide very rich technical insights, they should be made aware of the value of trusting young people to be the corner stone of the research process, breaking down complicated technical research jargon for aspiring researchers to understand and to leverage their understanding of the issues affecting young people to enrich the findings. In short, you ought to realize that a youth-led research process is not just an end in itself but a means. Beyond working with young people to achieve the set research goals and objectives, it’s an opportunity for building and enhancing their research skills

**Partnering with Development Research Agencies during the Research Design and Analysis Phase**

As part of the design workshop, we brought together partners working on areas of youth-livelihoods in Uganda and across the region to share their experiences. As part of the sessions, Directors of respective agencies made situational presentations to the youth research team and engaged directly with the youth researchers in a Question Answer session to get a broad understanding of the youth livelihoods situation. The research team convened to reflect upon the session and considered some of the insights during the research questions drafting phase. At the analysis stage, the youth researchers presented preliminary findings to the agencies management teams and received feedback.

**Partnering with the Academic Institutions-our experiences Data analysis phase**

The youth researchers were joined by our colleagues from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands led by one professor who led a half day workshop on the principles of qualitative research from a much deeper technical point of view. However having been briefed and thus conscious about the youth-led nature of the research, they built the discussions around the research teams central role in the process by first trying to understand how they found the process; what worked well in getting the respondents to share their stories, what could have gone wrong, what they were surprised about, what they could have missed out. From the discussion they jointly helped the team agree on an analysis key

**Getting young researchers motivated to achieve set goals**

Young people need to be trusted. At every stage of the way, they should realize that their efforts contribute to the bigger picture. While youth-led research is about them leading, agencies should take responsibility to build their skills and again them accordingly. Remember their involvement is not just about achieving your project research goals but an opportunity for them to acquire requisite skills for their careers. As such you ought to be sensitive to their career aspirations and be seen as a “career mentor”, always happy to connect them to opportunities and recommend them formally and informally

Leadership is critical in getting things done; let the team decide on who should lead their respective locations. These should be people that should be held accountable for the tasks and proactive when it comes to communication and getting things done

Motivating young researchers is not necessarily randomly responding to what they ask for but rather being clear about the expectations of either party right from the start including keeping your commitment to what you promise to enable them do their job

Be open and friendly and less bossy but remain professional. This balance builds trust in the team to look up to you and earn natural respect

Show that you care about them beyond your short term research assignment. To achieve this for example, Restless Development provided career development training at the end of the assignment

# Conclusion

# Are you a young person, agency or donor interested in youth-led development? If YES, We hope that this toolkit will inspire you to venture into youth-led research. Whereas it is not meant to answer all questions you may have about youth-led research, this toolkit will provide you with the basis for making an informed decision on how to approach this exciting and enriching process.

# For more information and guidance, please connect with us through the following open channels:

[www.restlessdevelopment.org](http://www.restlessdevelopment.org)

[info@restlessdevelopment.org](mailto:info@restlessdevelopment.org)

http://www.mastercardfdn.org/

info@mastercardfdn.org

+256200906450 (Restless Development Uganda)