

Module 4: Opportunities and Barriers



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Learning objectives:

By the end of this module, participants should be able to:

- Define and describe an 'enabling environment' for youth engagement.
- Identify the global and organization-specific barriers young people might face, which limits their participation in development.
- Understand invisible barriers to youth engagement and how to address them.
- Understand how to create youth-friendly spaces both in 'invited' context and a 'created' context.
- Understand barriers that may exist in their organization's work.

How we will achieve this:

- By providing an understanding of what an 'enabling environment' for young people means.
- By exploring current barriers to youth engagement in development globally, in the development sector and in participants' organizations.
- By discussing the role that civil society/USAID can play in overcoming these barriers and embracing the opportunities.
- By conducting a youth engagement barrier and opportunity mapping exercise.
- By being able to conduct a youth engagement context analysis.



Read and Reflect:

Today, young people globally face multiple challenges. Despite these challenges we know, as explored in Module 1, that young people are assets and, when meaningfully engaged, they can provide the solutions to many of these problems. This module will further explore specific barriers young people and we ourselves as development practitioners face that prevent our ability to meaningfully engage with them, and how we can provide an enabling environment for engaging young people in development program design, implementation and monitoring. We will also consider the issue of power, both visible and invisible, and it's role in meaningful youth engagement.



Read and Reflect

What is an 'enabling environment'?

A set of conditions that impact on the capacity of citizens to participate and engage.

The external environment offers numerous barriers to and opportunities for youth engagement, so it is crucial for us to understand how enabling the environment is to youth engagement when structuring meaningful youth engagement.

Q. What are the different elements of an enabling environment for youth engagement?

Q. What are the more visible elements and which are more hidden?

Q. What factors do we need to think about for young women and adolescent girls in particular?

Q. As donors, how do you need to consider in program design, the environmental barriers implementing partners may face?



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Enabling Environment Index for implementing partners

Socio-Economic Environment	Socio-Cultural Environment	Governance Environment
Education	Prosperity to participate	Civil society infrastructure
Communications	Tolerance	Policy dialogue
Equality	Giving and volunteering	Corruption
Gender Equality	Trust	Political rights and freedoms
<p>The EEI (developed by CIVICUS) aims to assess the key conditions that shape how civil society operates and outlines barriers that civil society might face. Many of these are relevant for young people also. The factors that hinder their engagement all need to be identified first before we can propose solutions to engagement</p> <p><u><i>If you are a donor, which of these factors are appropriate for you to be considering?</i></u></p>		Associational rights
		Rule of law
		Personal rights
		NGO legal context
		Media freedoms



What is the enabling environment for youth development?

From Rhetoric to Action - youth-led research conducted by 18 global researchers seeking to strengthen the conditions and environment for youth participation in development, child protection and youth livelihoods. The barriers to youth participation in development uncovered were:

- When participation becomes an end in itself, rather than a means of advancing change, young people distance themselves from it (module 3)
- When rule of law is ineffective and when civic freedoms are repressed, child and youth participation often continues through informal networks
- For youth participation to be meaningful, it needs to address the issue of power

We will look at addressing all these barriers in the rest of this module.



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ICEBERG



Invisible Barriers to Youth Engagement: Power

The Youth Engagement Iceberg demonstrates that there are 'visible' barriers to youth engagement, but beneath the surface there are also 'invisible' barriers to youth engagement. Central to this, is the idea of **POWER**.

Q. Can you think of any invisible barriers to meaningful youth engagement?



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Created vs. invited spaces

Invited spaces = When we invite young people to engage in spaces set up **not specifically for them**, usually within our own organization's governance structures, therefore **power** for the young people in this space will need to be **built**. (example: inviting a young person to sit on your board/panel)

Created spaces = **Specially created** for young people (example: safe spaces for young people in sexual health clinics) and, if **created in collaboration** with young people, will be **empowering**.



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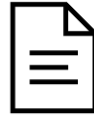


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Activity: The Power Walk



M4-H2

AND



M4-H3

It's not as simple as inviting a young person to take part. We have to be aware of the **space** we are engaging young people in, but we have to be aware of **power dynamics** between adults and young people to avoid young people feeling manipulated, intimidated or disempowered. They need to be able to voice their concerns and needs.

Using M4-H2 and M4-H3 conduct a 'Power Walk' exercise to truly understand the different invisible power dynamics between a young person and an adult (in addition to other hidden barriers).

Read and Reflect:

Solutions for youth engagement

More radical opportunities: That focus on addressing power imbalances, such as co-ownership should be explored to go beyond traditional engagement structures.

Capacity-building of soft skills: Training and supporting young people to build up soft skills (especially those who didn't have access to education)

Follow-up: Where young people have inputted to something, make sure you have a follow up strategy afterwards. They will see the impact they had, feel valued and will result in longer-term engagement with your program.

Community embeddedness:

For donors: Young people are best placed to identify the problems they face and design appropriate solutions based on their knowledge of navigating local contexts and structures.

For implementers: Volunteers with local knowledge and access to community structures, will help engage the hard to reach (such as out-of-school youth) who sit outside of traditional structures of engagement. Having a strong network of volunteers will improve attrition rates and enhance the sustainability of your programming.

Data specific to young people: Afrobarometer data provides useful insights into the realities of young people's engagement and combats the perception of them as aggressive and volatile.





Case study: SRHR Needs Assessment Sierra Leone

Q. What was the barrier?

Q. What tools were used to overcome the barriers?



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Activity: Conducting a SWOT analysis

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

Return to your SWOT analysis from Module 3.

Reflecting on what we've learned about the environments are programs are being designed and delivered in what **OPPORTUNITIES** and **THREATS** do you need to add to your SWOT analysis?