

# EQ Review

Educational Quality in the Developing World



*EQ Review is a newsletter published by USAID's EQUIP1 to share knowledge about issues fundamental to improving educational quality and to communicate successes, challenges, and lessons learned by USAID Missions.*

June 2006

Vol. 4, No. 3



## Youth Assessments

*In recent years there has been a growing awareness among USAID Missions and Bureaus of the need to more effectively address the role of young people in the strategic direction of USAID's work. Youth are increasingly seen as key actors in strengthening fragile states, ensuring the stability of strategic states, and promoting transformational development in other countries.*

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### Youth as Assets or Threats

Youth can positively affect community development when appropriately engaged and adequately prepared for roles in the worlds of work, family life, and civil society. Conversely, youth may be a profound destabilizing force when governments and communities make no allowances for meeting young people's development needs through mainstream institutions and programs in areas of health, education, recreation, livelihood support and/or civil society participation. The presence of positive youth development opportunities is a strategic necessity, versus a development nicety, for youth so they do not become a major destabilizing force when co-opted by groups with violent agendas, such as insurgent groups or organized gangs.

### Three Key Contributions of Youth Assessments to Strategic Planning Efforts

Youth, as a cohort, are occasionally the stand-alone entry point for programming; however, more often they are viewed as cross-cutting actors in traditional areas of development, such as health, education, democracy and governance, and economic development. The success of cross-sectoral programming involving young people is dependent on three inter-related factors, all of which are often best addressed initially through a joint youth assessment activity. These three factors are:

(i) A clear and overarching strategic direction identified at the USAID Country Mission level for work involving youth – one that links youth to existing or emerging country strategies and strategic objective (SO) priorities; one that identifies key areas where USAID can play the role of catalyst in the development of youth-driven programming that host-country government and other donors can sustain; and, one that draws on youth, both as beneficiaries and protagonists, in program implementation. Recent work by USAID/Jamaica to develop cross SO programming for unattached youth in Jamaica is an excellent example of such efforts.

(ii) The essential knowledge base and key recommendations to inform the USAID Mission's strategic planning and program design functions. This should come from the availability of clear and concise qualitative and quantitative data about youth that has been analyzed and synthesized. The data should capture the core developmental challenges facing young people in SO-specific or cross-cutting terms – while at the same time identifying the practical resources, underlying assets, and overarching aspirations youth bring to the table in a given programming area. There is a need to analyze and catalog examples of effective youth programming already on the ground and ready to go to scale; to identify key gaps in capacity or program design that block innovative solutions; and, to understand ways that youth could better contribute both to their own development and that of their community. Youth appraisal activities supported by USAID in both the West Bank & Gaza, and Iraq underscore the importance of this factor – as does recent appraisal work by the ANE Bureau to understand the school-to-work transitions of youth in a diverse range of countries such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Armenia and Bahrain.

(iii) The capacity of Mission teams and program developers to segment the youth population into specific cohorts of potential actors and beneficiaries (by gender, place of living, economic status, social grouping etc); to appreciate both the particular strengths and needs for support of these sub-groups; and to articulate strategies and design programs that will effectively engage target populations of youth with interventions that foster significant results in terms of immediate outcomes and longer term developmental impacts. This work is linked, in turn, to the Mission's ability to identify the ways that particular cohorts of young men and young women can be engaged as a positive force for community development – not simply a beneficiary of development spending. The programming areas of service learning and youth contributions to household level economic strengthening, are examples of this approach, all of which reflects what the Ford and Kellogg foundation call a Community Youth Development approach.

These three factors must be taken into consideration in the design, planning, staffing and field research activities of youth assessments, which can in turn lead to the design and development of effective youth-inclusive, or youth focused, strategic objectives and programs.

### **Eight Key Principles of Effective Youth Assessments**

Through both an external and internal review of effective practices in youth assessments, the EGAT/ED funded Educational Quality Improvement 3 (EQUIP3) has identified the following eight guiding principles for youth assessments:

1. **Responsive:** Youth assessments are only successful when they respond in an intentional way to the immediate and practical needs and aspirations of the mission and SO or IR teams involved.
2. **Rapid:** Youth assessments need to work within tight timelines, both in terms of the LOE of team members, and in terms of timely delivery of knowledge generated and recommendations made.
3. **Cross-Cutting:** Youth assessments almost always need to integrate the cross-cutting theme of youth with one or more SO- or IR-level priorities.
4. **Appreciative:** Youth are almost always already active agents in their own development and look for supportive programming that builds on their existing strengths.
5. **Analytical:** To be useful to missions, qualitative and quantitative data gathered during youth assessments must be quickly and concisely analyzed.
6. **Pragmatic:** Youth assessments need to generate knowledge that is directly applicable to the strategic planning and/or program design work mission staff are undertaking.
7. **Efficient:** Youth assessments should seek to coordinate/integrate their work with other ongoing/planned assessment activities.
8. **Youth Participation Driven:** Successful youth assessment activities maximize meaningful youth participation at every level of work.

For more information contact David James-Wilson, Associate Project Director for Applied Research, Education Development Center, [Djames-wilson@edc.org](mailto:Djames-wilson@edc.org).

*“...young men and young women can be engaged as a positive force for community development – not simply a beneficiary of development spending.”*

## Haiti Out of School Youth Livelihood Initiative

The Haiti Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN), an Associate Award under the EQUIP3-Youth Trust project, is developing an approach to address the educational needs of 15- to 24-year olds. Half of Haiti's population is below the age of 24; its weak school system and high level of primary school dropouts leave large numbers of illiterate youth unprepared for adult life. Those youth living in urban slum areas are especially vulnerable to violence and political manipulation.

At the outset, IDEJEN conducted a participatory youth assessment, adapting the Community YouthMapping (CYM) approach. In the first phase, CYM collects data that traditional research approaches cannot access. Youth Mappers (both in- and out-of-school youth) went into their communities and identified youth-oriented educational, training, health, and other services. The mappers then conducted focus groups with community leaders to collect data on their attitudes and perceptions of out-of-school youth. Finally, interviews that captured youth perceptions of their living situation and life opportunities were conducted.

The second phase of the CYM approach identified youth livelihood pathways. During this phase, the mappers collected information regarding economic realities of, and opportunities for, young people.

Results of the CYM assessment informed the design of an education and livelihood preparation program for illiterate youth. The approach considers the extreme poverty in which these youth live and addresses their health, nutritional and psycho-social needs. For example, the youth from high-crime urban slums expressed the need to be engaged in the program on weekends. In response to this need, the project implemented a cultural and sports program takes place on Saturdays to provide a safe environment for these youth.

Building on the youth involvement philosophy, the Youth Mappers wished to continue their participation in this innovative project. In response, USAID is providing small startup grants for youth-led projects. The Youth Mappers in Jeremie, a peri-urban community in the southwest of Haiti, recently inaugurated a community cybercenter, which is a venue for the youth to learn more about information technology and a place for the community to make international calls and use internet facilities. Proceeds from the center will fund youth activities in the area.

The CYM approach has enabled IDEJEN to be responsive to the needs of this marginalized youth population, and has provided valuable insights as USAID/Haiti prepares for its new strategy. In the words of the youth themselves "IDEJEN is leading an education revolution. It's giving us back our future."

For more information contact Grace Lang, Education Officer - USAID Haiti, [glang@usaid.gov](mailto:glang@usaid.gov) or visit [www.equip123.net](http://www.equip123.net).



Haitian students compare CYM results.

## Iraqi Youth and Community Stabilization

Multiple patterns of fragility threaten the development of a stable, prosperous democracy in Iraq. These patterns include organized ethnic and religious violence, a lack of government capacity, and high unemployment. Approximately half of unemployed Iraqis are youth aged 15-24, and more than 3.5 million of those youth are not in school. It is important to reach this target group of 5.8 million 15 to 24-year-olds because they will play a role in either mitigating or exacerbating the sources of Iraq's fragility. Meeting the needs of youth is a critical part of USAID/Iraq's Community Stabilization in Strategic Cities Initiative (CSSCI). The initiative, which is scheduled to begin in June 2006, is designed to reduce popular support for the insurgency and remove existing incentives that promote participation in violent conflict in approximately 10 cities.

Implementation of CSSCI will be informed by the results of USAID's Iraq Youth Assessment, which was conducted in five Iraqi cities during the six weeks preceding Iraq's October 15, 2005 constitutional referendum. It included 2,625 individual youth surveys, 30 youth focus groups and more than 20 structured interviews with stakeholder organizations. Field research was complemented by a review of relevant youth programs in countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia

and West Bank / Gaza. The assessment concludes with recommendations on how USAID/Iraq programming can actively create positive alternatives for youth, deter youth from joining extremist groups, and support youth in their development of values aligned with both Iraq's Muslim identity and its emerging free-market democracy.

Youth programming through CSSCI will complement both the previous and ongoing work with youth that has been implemented through USAID, other USG efforts, and other donors. USAID's accelerated learning program is currently targeting 14,000 out-of-school youth for the 2005-2006 school year. Other nonformal support to youth has come through democracy and governance projects and the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). These programs support youth by providing vocational skills training, building the capacity of youth organizations, and renovating and equipping youth centers throughout the country with furniture, computers, internet service, sports equipment, musical instruments, and other items. Depending on Congressional funding levels, CSSCI youth activities will most likely include accelerated learning and vocational training, among others.

CSSCI is being implemented through a USAID cooperative agreement and will provide a bridge between U.S. military stabilization programs under the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP), a program that provides both small infrastructure rehabilitation projects to reinstate government and social services to affected areas, and longer-term development initiatives under the USG's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), elected Iraqi Provincial Councils (PCs) and the National Government of Iraq.

For more information, contact Chris Shephard, Iraq Education and Health Advisor, [cshephard@usaid.gov](mailto:cshephard@usaid.gov).

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## Youth Assessment in Angola

USAID/Angola initiated a multi-sectoral assessment of the conditions youth face in Angola with the goal of informing future programming that would improve employment, education, civic participation, and health-related opportunities for youth. Demographically, young people make up a large percentage of the Angolan population (60% under age 20). Yet, due to 27 years of conflict, Angola's social services infrastructure is weak and unevenly distributed across the country. In spite of a substantial oil industry, the private sector is not currently strong enough to absorb the large number of youth entering the workforce. Successful socio-economic integration of youth ex-combatants is critical to Angola's future stability and prosperity.

The USAID-funded Angola youth assessment team included USAID staff, international consultants, and Angolan youth assessors. Working in close collaboration with the Angolan Ministry of Youth and Sports, the team conducted 12 focus groups with young people in Luanda, Huambo, Benguela, and Cunene. The team also visited youth programs and consulted with numerous stakeholders and partners, including vocational training providers, NGOs, potential employers, and youth activists. Overwhelmingly, Angolan youth reported that fair access to education and employment was their key concern; other concerns included healthcare and access to information about the wider world.

Programming recommendations suggested by the team were expansion of holistic services in youth centers; youth engagement in democratization for upcoming elections; and coordination of employment and entrepreneurship services to help youth create sustainable livelihoods and find jobs. The Mission in Angola, in partnership with the Government of Angola, is using the youth assessment to encourage the creation of public-private alliances to support youth development. While many recognize that the future of Angola lies in its youth, many stakeholders must come together to create strategies to improve prospects for youth employment, education, civic engagement, and well-being. The USAID youth assessment was designed to contribute to this effort.

For more information, contact Clare A. Ignatowski, Ph.D., Workforce Development and Youth Specialist, EGAT/ Office of Education, USAID, [cignatowski@usaid.gov](mailto:cignatowski@usaid.gov), The Mission Director that launched the assessment, Diana Swain ([dswain@usaid.gov](mailto:dswain@usaid.gov)), or Specialist Cathy Hamlin ([chamlin@usaid.gov](mailto:chamlin@usaid.gov)).