Partners for change:

Young people and governance in a post-2015 world

David Walker and Paola Pereznieto with Gina Bergh and Kerry Smith

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Key messages

- Young people's active citizenship and participation in governance can provide significant value-added for the fulfilment of government commitments, particularly at national and local levels.

- Young people have been active participants in the post-2015 agenda-setting process, but work still needs to be done to ensure that their role in governance within the framework becomes a reality.

- Young people can play a key role in ensuring that the goals, targets and indicators agreed through the post-2015 process are effectively implemented at national and local levels.

- For maximum impact, it is also necessary to work with adults such as power-holders/duty-bearers and government officials to enable young people to engage successfully in participatory governance.

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1 Introduction

There are three core reasons why it is critical that young people engage with governance processes and, therefore, discussions on the post-2015 framework. First, there is significant intrinsic value in upholding young people's right to participate in decisions that affect them. Young people's right to participation is articulated across several international human rights conventions, including: the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights; article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affords children up to the age of 18 the right of participation; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to name but a few. Second, as this report illustrates, there is an instrumental value in young people's engagement in governance processes due to the value they provide in improving policy and programme outcomes. Third, and as this report will also show, there is further instrumental value in young people's engagement due to the ongoing reward of developing active citizens who can play a key role today in improving overall development gains nationally and globally, and who can become more active and participative adults to secure future improvements.

This report therefore explores how evidence from young people's involvement in governance processes can provide lessons and guidance for the post-2015 framework for sustainable development. This includes understanding its mechanisms to ensure accountability, which can enable active citizen participation by young people, focusing on the role that they can, and should, play. It looks at young people's participatory governance across different areas, including education, anti-corruption, local decision-making on young people's issues, and environmental awareness. It demonstrates that young people are interested and engaged in the various thematic issues that affect their lives and their communities, and can participate as active citizens in national and local governance processes to help achieve better outcomes for all.

To this end, the report draws on evidence from a comprehensive literature review, insights from a Task Team comprised of experienced young practitioners, and six primary case studies. It explores the different ways young people have been involved in governance processes, how they have participated and, in some cases, have actively promoted accountability by decision-makers. By looking across a variety of cases, the report discusses how, by building on these experiences, young people can contribute to critical debates at the global and national levels over the course of the post-2015 process and the development of the framework. More importantly, it discusses how young people can be involved in the implementation of the framework, particularly with respect to the roll-out of goals and policy commitments at the national and local levels, where they affect their lives more directly. The timing of this report is therefore not accidental. The decisions made and commitments agreed through the post-2015 process over the coming years will have a significant impact on the young people of today, and will continue to affect them as they become adults. Consequently, their engagement in and contribution to the achievement of these goals and targets is vital.

In this report, we use the term 'young people' to refer to older children, adolescents and youth under the age of 25 who were involved in the documented good practices that inform this report. The term refers to girls, boys, young women and young men, although specific issues might have variable effects on the active participation of each of these groups in governance processes at all levels. Therefore, while younger children's role in governance processes is not explicitly discussed, the report nevertheless acknowledges its importance. Another important note is that the literature often conflates the term 'youth' with 'young men'. This poses a challenge to including adolescent girls and young women in any debate on the issues that affect young people. This problem is explored in subsequent sections and is a key area where change is required, particularly given increasing recognition of the role of youth constituencies in government processes and the issues that affect them, including gender-specific issues.

Engaging young people in national and global governance is critical: the world now has the largest generation aged 15-24 in history, making up a quarter of the world's population (Pereznieto and Hamilton Harding, 2013), and almost 90% of these young women and men live in developing countries (UNICEF, 2012). The sustainability of any development effort, global or national, will therefore require their ownership, involvement and participation. Yet young people are generally excluded from decision-making and governance processes. This needs to change.

This report seeks to unpack and contextualise the advantages and disadvantages of different youth-sensitive governance approaches, recognising that each may have merits depending on the context and circumstances where they are applied. Using the evidence and analysis presented, the report seeks to make a strong case for young people's visibility in the broad post-2015 framework, not just in the sectors that are traditionally linked to their wellbeing and development. Importantly, young people should be visible with respect to their role in governance and accountability, through their active participation. This will help ensure that commitments made across all these areas are translated into relevant actions on the ground; it will support young people's ability to hold national and local authorities accountable, and strengthen young people's active involvement in promoting good governance practices at the global, national and local levels, laying the foundations for their long-term engagement as active citizens.

1.1 Young people, governance and participation

To set the stage for the analysis presented here, it is useful first to define some of the concepts that will be used throughout this report. 'Governance' refers to the processes through which a state exercises power and the relationships between the state and citizens. The state has the responsibility to perform a core set of duties that allow society to function and exist. In doing so, it forges a relationship with its citizens (Plan UK, 2012). 'Participatory governance' is one of many strategies of governance, and refers to the processes and deliberations that citizens are engaged in when discussing the distribution of public resources and broader decision-making.

'Accountability' is the assumption of responsibility for actions by decision-makers, the engagement by civil society in holding these decision-makers to account for their actions, and decision-makers' responsibility to respond constructively to those holding them to account.

Young people, as citizens, have a relationship with the state and as such are entitled to hold the state – and its decision-makers – accountable for their duties and performance. They should be included in decision-making processes, particularly on issues that affect their lives directly (e.g. the need to invest in quality education), as well as on broader issues that affect their communities (e.g. fighting corruption or ill-use of state resources, which has a bearing on all aspects of public life and service delivery). While other power-holders and decision-makers are also critical for promoting accountability, this report will focus on the relationship between young people and the state. Young people's participation refers to the way in which they voice their views and concerns, exercise their rights, and engage in dialogue with and influence decision-makers – that is, the way they engage as active citizens. As articulated above, this involvement has intrinsic value in terms of respecting young people's right to participate in decisions that affect them. But it also has instrumental value in the sense of the knowledge and credibility that young people bring to governance dialogues and their development as active citizens, today, and as participative adults later in life.

In terms of an instrumental role, Plan UK (2012) highlights that governance work with young people aims to enable them to hold duty-bearers to account for their actions (such as the services they provide) and to strengthen young people's relationship with decision-makers. Such work focuses on young people's participation in decision-making processes, including, for example, how their school is run or how local government funds are allocated for community development. Governance work with young people might also include influencing policy on health, education or child protection, to ensure that young people's own priorities are made visible and acted on, and looking at how these policies are implemented locally. By contrast, an intrinsic approach recognises that governance work needs to build the capacity of young people to engage, collectively and individually, with government and decision-makers to demand their rights. For instance, in the context of the post-2015 framework, governance can be understood as an end in itself, with the 'good governance and peaceful societies' dimension in any post-2015 goal seen as quite a normative objective. For example, the High-level Panel's report on the post-2015 framework (United Nations, 2013) took a strong stance on the importance of including good governance in the post-2015 framework, recognising that:

> *… people the world over expect their governments to be honest, accountable, and responsive to their needs. We are calling for a fundamental shift – to recognise peace and good governance as core elements of wellbeing, not optional extras.*

Critically, governance work with young people also entails building the capacity of decision-makers to engage with and respond to their concerns and needs. Civil society organisations (CSOs) play an important role, supporting young people to navigate these complex structures and processes and bringing their voices to the fore. It may also involve supporting governments and decision-makers to be more transparent by making their information available and accessible to young people, bearing in mind their diversity and different capacities. The ultimate aim of governance work is nevertheless to improve the wellbeing of young people and their communities.

1.2 Methodology and structure of the report

Various inputs inform the analysis in this report:

1. An extensive review of the global literature on good practice examples, with reference to young people participating actively to promote governance and/or accountability, in relation to a specific policy or programme (such as quality of education or sexual and reproductive health and rights) as well as more cross-cutting governance issues such as local-level budgeting and corruption. Insights on achievements, enabling factors, challenges and areas for improvement were distilled from this evidence.

2. Six case studies were commissioned – two each in Peru, Uganda and Viet Nam. Their purpose was to explore, in greater depth, the challenges and achievements of young people's engagement in participatory

governance (particularly as much of the published literature provides only descriptive case studies of participatory governance without exploring these important issues). In order to make a stronger evidence-based case for young people's positive contribution to governance processes, it was therefore necessary to unpack these issues.

These three countries were chosen because the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has strong local research partners with prior experience of conducting participatory research with young people, so ODI was able to commission the primary research locally. Importantly, the regional diversity brought in very different perspectives around young people's involvement in participatory governance in different contexts. Each of these countries also had interesting experiences to document, supported by international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on young people and governance (Plan, Restless Development and ActionAid). The specific case studies chosen were identified through a brief review of the literature and in consultation with these youth-focused NGOs.

Local researchers used multiple methods to obtain various types of information from different respondents. Research instruments were developed by the ODI team. Key informant interviews were conducted at the national and sub-national levels with government officials involved in the initiatives being explored, as well as with NGO staff facilitating these initiatives. Participatory and gender-sensitive research was undertaken with young men and women, including single-sex and mixed-sex focus group discussions (designed to address gender-specific issues as well as to foster discussions between young men and women and observe their group interactions); focus group discussions were facilitated using participatory methods (such as problem tree analysis), as well as one-to-one discussions with a sub-sample of young men and women who had a particularly active role in the initiative under study, using storytelling as the entry point.

ODI has an internal research ethics code that includes specific provisions for working with young people, which the local research teams were required to abide by while conducting their research, in addition to Plan UK's child protection guidelines.

The focus of this primary research was thus to explore achievements and challenges in young people's participation and to provide evidence of the value-added of their involvement in local-level governance.

3. The analysis is informed by discussions during a workshop organised by the multi-agency Children, Youth and Governance Task Team, which took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, as a corollary to the 2014 World Youth Conference.

4. There was also an analysis of the current state of play of the post-2015 framework and the Sustainable Development Goals in terms of discussions around governance, with a particular focus on the visibility of young people in the agenda-setting process.

5. Interviews were held with a number of key informants during the preparation of the interim report, as well as discussions with Plan UK and Restless Development experts. These are reflected in the analysis.

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 explores the valuable role of young people in governance processes, drawing on evidence from the literature review and case studies. Section 3 discusses how young people have been participating in the post-2015 process, and presents an argument in favour of young people's visibility in the goals and targets agreed and as key actors in their implementation at national and local levels. Section 4 provides the report's conclusions.

2 Young people as active citizens: now and in the future

A review of the available best practice literature regarding youth engagement in governance shows there can be broad-based and long-term advantages to facilitating and fostering participation in governance and accountability for young people. In fact, young people can become powerful agents of change and active citizens – at local, national and global levels (Zeldion, 2004).

In Argentina, for example, budgeting schemes that involve young people at the municipal level have flourished and, over time, have enabled the young people involved to become increasingly more integrated into decision-making processes – for instance, having a say in the design of youth services in their city and in the allocation of resources over the course of a six-month annual cycle (CSO Youth Working Group, 2010).

In Sierra Leone, where 73% of the population is under 35 years, and where more than half (around 1.5 million) of the 2.7 million citizens registered to vote in 2012 were aged 18-35, it was particularly important for young people's views and concerns to be heard and taken into account by those working to ensure a peaceful and fair voting process. As such, Restless Development worked with young people to develop a 'youth manifesto', which would demonstrate their commitment to working towards democratic rule and good governance. The manifesto was a platform that gave young people and youth representatives the opportunity to publicly share their opinions about the elections and the future development of the country, highlighting the positive and valuable contribution that young people can make to the elections process and the deepening of democracy in the country (Restless Development, 2012).

In Embakasi district, Kenya, a Plan Kenya programme working with young people improved development and democratic outcomes through the active engagement of young citizens in policy, planning, resource mobilisation and programme implementation. This occurred in sectors including youth and governance, reproductive health and life skills, economic empowerment, environmental management, and information and communication technologies. The programme promoted active engagement with local authorities as well as transparency and accountability, making information about the use of public funds available to the public for the first time (Ashley et al., 2011). These are examples of youth-focused initiatives that not only address young people's concerns directly but also move beyond these to enable young people to engage in wide-ranging public issues of governance.

As these examples suggest, young people can be actively engaged in promoting governance through a range of actions and at different levels. In doing so, young people can play different roles (see Figure 1): they can be a target group (beneficiaries), collaborators in the initiative (partners), or initiators who 'create' governance space (leaders) – or a combination of these (Huxley, 2012). For each of these roles, there are different ways of working with young people and providing them with support in order to strengthen their role in and contributions to participatory governance. In this process of actively engaging young people, it is necessary to continually remind policy-makers and practitioners of the need for sensitivity towards marginalised and excluded young voices – including those of girls and young women, ethnic minorities, young people with disabilities, or other excluded groups – to guarantee more equitable representation and a richer representation of young people that reflects the reality of their diversity.

Figure 1: The 'lens' of participation for young people
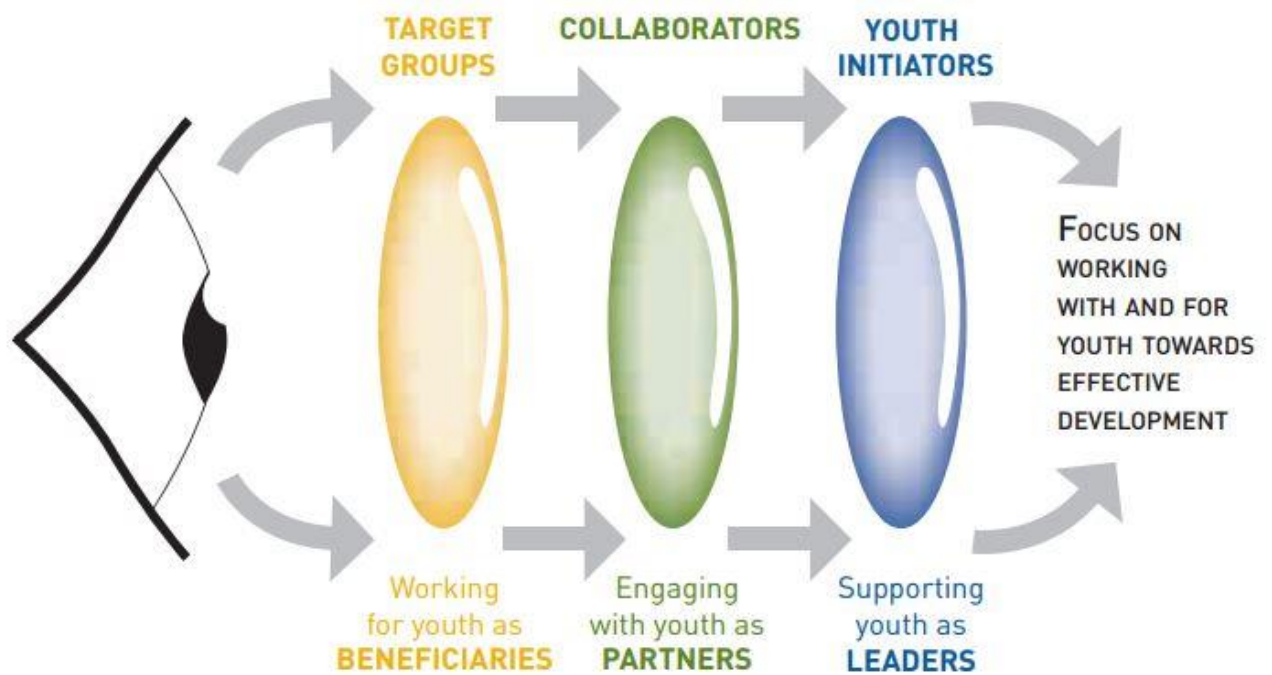
Source: World Bank (2006), in Huxley (2012).

In addition to understanding young people's roles, there are other factors that contribute to successfully involving young people in governance initiatives. These include the different institutional structures, policy frameworks in place, commitments to enable young people's participation, and thematic issues that initiatives can focus goals and inputs on (British Youth Council, 2014). Any initiative developed by young people, or for young people supported by other actors, should consider these dimensions and their potential to promote or inhibit the achievement of outcomes by young people in different contexts.

The section below discusses several of these factors under six core cross-cutting themes:

- discriminatory social norms (such as negative attitudes and practices)
- the types of space in which young people engage
- the technical capacity and systemic constraints specific to young people's participation
- gender dynamics
- opportunities and challenges around decentralisation
- individual capacities that lead to collective change.

These themes emerged repeatedly, in the literature review, discussions with the Task Team, interviews with key informants, feedback from the World Conference on Youth side event, and technical inputs from peer reviewers, and so were identified as key dimensions for the analysis of young people's participatory governance and active citizenship.

Box 1: Overview of primary case studies

Six case studies (two each in Peru, Uganda and Viet Nam) were undertaken to inform this report. These looked at young people's role in participatory governance in different areas, including education, anti-corruption, local decision-making on young people's issues, and environmental awareness, among others.

The first case study in Uganda focused on the experiences of a campaign undertaken between 2010 and 2014 to promote a bill to generate a youth enterprise fund with the aim of creating jobs, expanding entrepreneurial business opportunities and business skills development. The campaign was spearheaded by Green Light Movement (GLM), a youth-led advocacy initiative based in Kampala, and mobilised young people to generate and communicate action-oriented ideas in relation to business opportunities.

The second Uganda case study examined an Anti-Corruption Caravan (road trip) campaign implemented by CSO partners of ActionAid in selected districts. The campaign mobilised communities – young people in particular – along its route to give testimony of their experiences of corruption in their locality. The goal was to build citizenship and civic consciousness to demand accountable leadership for improved service delivery and to bring citizens forward into the mainstream development of their locality.

The Peru case studies focused on more institutionalised and longer-term initiatives, in which governance processes for young people took place in more structured environments. The first looked at the Programa de Escuelas Municipales (or Programme of School Municipalities (PSM)), created in 1996 by the NGO Acción por los Niños (APN). Initially supported by Save the Children Sweden, PSM was designed as a participatory structure closely linked to schools to help build children and adolescents' citizenship, with the specific aim of reinforcing children's participatory budgeting for schools.

The second Peru case study focused on the Consultative Committee of Boys, Girls and Adolescents (CCONNA) for the regional government of Piura, which was tasked with the role of submitting child and adolescent-focused policy proposals before the Regional Council for the Rights of Boys, Girls and Adolescents and the Regional Management Unit on Social Development, as well as giving their opinions on any consultations related to childhood policy.

The Viet Nam case studies looked at ethnic minorities in marginalised locations, as well as specific challenges concerning 'created' spaces for participation within highly formalised 'top-down' governance systems. The first case study documented successes and challenges of the Green Ocean movement in raising awareness among the community, especially young people, of the need to implement environment-friendly actions, to enhance leadership capacity, and to use and develop innovative environmental initiatives in a joint effort with Da Nang's Youth Union and government agencies.

The second Viet Nam case study took place in the geographically and ethnically marginalised North-West border region. Youth Leadership in Enhancing Public Service Providers' Accountability (YLEPA), supported by ActionAid Vietnam, is a relatively large operation being undertaken across five provinces with the aim of strengthening youth leadership and providing young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to enhance the accountability of public service providers.

Important lessons on the processes and outcomes found in researching these case studies inform the analysis of young people's participatory governance presented below.

2.1 Social norms

The presence of discriminatory social norms – including adults' negative attitudes towards young people – were a common feature of the examples of young people's participation in governance processes found in the literature, as well as in several of the case studies. This highlights a key barrier to young people's effective

participation. This issue appears in three circumstances: first, with respect to cultural stereotypes regarding the potential value-added of young people in participatory processes; second, with respect to gender discrimination specifically (as addressed above); and third, with respect to concerns over the potential for violence by young people, discussed specifically below.

Perceptions of aggressiveness
Adults commonly perceive young people – and youth (those aged 18-25) in particular – as volatile or aggressive. As observed in the Uganda Green Light Movement case study, youth respondents noted that they are often perceived as risky and aggressive, demanding, and unaware of the implementation challenges government actors face (McLean Hilker and Fraser, 2009). In effect, this perception among adults often limits the spaces allowed for young people to participate effectively in governance processes. Studies on this particular topic are very few, but Afrobarometer data provide useful insights into the realities as opposed to the prevailing perceptions of youth as a politically violent demographic – highlighting that youth are not, in fact, violent as perceived. Youth have also been shown to be equally associated with protest activities as those aged 30 and above (Resnick and Casale, 2011). Young people can evidently be engaged in active but non-violent forms of participation to promote good governance, such as peaceful protest. These provide avenues for those who are typically marginalised to find informal spaces to articulate their interests.

Therefore, an important point to consider in supporting young people to have their voice heard relates to the informal attitudes and fears of those who traditionally wield power and influence; there is a need to develop sensitisation programmes to reorient the mindsets of these audiences regarding what young people 'can' actually do, as well as challenging perceptions about what they 'should' do. In addition, well-designed and well-implemented initiatives can help change adults' perceptions of young people from passive to active and engaged citizens, and, more importantly, from 'violent trouble-makers' to peaceful activists. Note that these approaches must recognise the need to give significant attention to the individual capacities of young people to ensure that any new positive expectations are fulfilled in practice.

Perceptions of what young people 'can' and 'should' do
The Task Team raised concerns several times regarding the expectations for young people to perform traditional roles, as well as negative perceptions about the potential for young people to add value in discussions – summarised under the headline 'can/can't – should/shouldn't'. This issue is particularly challenging to understand as well as to address, given that it is determined within informal organisational rules and social norms, which in turn are determined by wider socio-cultural settings. Evidence in the case studies and feedback from the Task Team showed that, even if formal governance procedures for young people's participation existed, along with regulations for their enforcement, these would not necessarily directly lead to the acceptance of young people's views.

The main obstacle is in adults' minds, be they members of the community or local authority officials. Many adults regard young people as 'incomplete', immature, with no proposals or analytical capacity to contribute based on their life experiences in topics that affect them (key informant interview, Plan manager, Peru).

Such attitudes lead to decisions that effectively undermine efforts to provide further resources to enable the dissemination of youth-led information about the performance and impacts of government policies and programmes. Meanwhile, the case studies routinely demonstrated that young people are more likely to be consulted in the early stages of governance initiatives in order to 'tick boxes' on inclusiveness, but young people's involvement in ongoing reviews is limited, with few chances to provide critical inputs.

However, as several of the case studies illustrate, the view (shaped by social norms) that young people are unable to contribute can change relatively quickly once young people are provided with spaces or platforms to get involved and adults see how successfully they can contribute. For example, the Peru PSM case study includes testimonies from teachers suggesting that children now 'do not stay silent' (key informant interview, teacher, Piura) and are no longer afraid to demand accountability. This, in turn, has changed the attitudes of many teachers about the value young people bring in identifying challenges in the school administration system, as well as suggesting workable solutions.

2.2 The types of space available for young people's participation

The analysis of the different sources of evidence feeding into this report showed that young people have a number of entry points into governance processes. Simply put, these spaces may be either 'invited' or 'created', as well as formal or informal. These distinctions refer to the level of ownership in participatory governance on the one hand, and a more structured versus unstructured approach on the other. Despite the different ways in which young people's participation in governance processes occurs, such initiatives can achieve positive results if their actions and external support recognise the relative advantages and disadvantages of 'invited' versus 'created' spaces, as well as pathways between the two.

Crossing the formal–informal divide

A review of the best practice literature shows several examples of young people developing their political consciousness alongside programme activities, with some NGOs facilitating ongoing engagement with local administrations. For example, Plan USA's (2009-2011) Youth in Governance programme in Sierra Leone organised 900 participants from marginalised communities into youth groups. It provided training on projects such as maintaining water points and working to change laws to enable pregnant girls to attend school and gain access to livelihoods options. This project enabled youth to not only interact but actively participate in traditional governance activities, including helping in the collection of taxes. Previously, young people had been barred from taking part in community decisions and thus reacted by refusing to pay taxes. But when they were empowered to become active decision-makers within their communities, they began to contribute. As a result, the communities collected three times the normal amount of taxes and were able to allocate tax money towards the construction of a new youth complex. As participants, young people made communities accountable for how they were spending their revenue and were able to advocate for some of the resources to be dedicated towards youth-focused activities (Plan USA, 2013).

Similarly, the Ashe Caribbean Performing Arts Ensemble,[1] based in Jamaica, has demonstrated long-running sustainability and the positive impacts of young people's informal participation, which transitioned into formal governance processes. Ashe embedded youth–adult partnerships into the operational and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) aspects of targeted local schools, in a model that was scaled up to government education institutions. Jamaica's Ministry of Education (MoE) integrated the Ashe curriculum on HIV and AIDS awareness into the existing Family Life Education curriculum and implemented it in state secondary schools (Family Health International, 2007).

'Invited' spaces as a key entry point

It is important to recognise that the uptake of informal activities into formal governance processes outlined above was dependent on a balance between a successful intervention that captured the attention of government actors and initiating young people into the mechanics of active citizenship. When targeting formal spaces from the outset, however, there is often a need for young people to develop different technical experience and capacities. In Argentina, for instance, the agency for German Development Cooperation (GIZ) funded a youth-participatory budgeting programme in the municipality of Rosario. Young people were invited to identify neighbourhood priorities and elect delegates to each district's youth-participatory council. These councils met regularly for several months to develop project proposals based on local neighbourhood priorities. Participants were also encouraged to get involved in other participatory budgeting processes beyond those pertaining to young people. This set-up is a strong example of meaningful and far-reaching active citizenship by young people, as they engage with existing structures and adult counterparts (CSO Youth Working Group, 2010). For this initiative to be successful, a significant investment was required in terms of administrative support and communication with youth groups, as opposed to the sequential focus on 'what works' leading to scale-up, as in the previous examples from Sierra Leone and Jamaica.

The primary case study research from Peru, Uganda and Viet Nam echoes and expands on these observations. For instance, embedded structures for young people's participation in governance processes can bring advantages in terms of the duration of involvement and facilitating access to decision-makers; but they depend

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1 Ashe is a long-running institution that attracted external donor funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Family Health International (FHI) after 10 years of operation.

on institutions' internal organisational capacity to incorporate young people's interests, and on the presence of facilitators who are able to ensure quality and collaborative participation between institutions and young people, whether these are independent or located within institutions themselves.

The Peru Programme of School Municipalities case study illustrates how weak and isolated M&E systems within local authorities that do not actively involve young people and are not used to engage with national-level (MoE) authorities can undercut the longer-term sustainability of governance spaces for young people. The programme promoted collaboration and coordination with other local organisations and institutions (including education authorities) to address problems affecting children and adolescents. However, one of its major constraints was the inability of local and central authorities to develop, maintain, systematise and review the monitoring outputs from participating schools. This indicates a weakness in the capacity-building of duty-bearers (representatives of the state) and service providers to engage meaningfully with young people to enable their effective participation in governance processes – an issue that is explored in more depth later in this report.

'Created' space as the only space
Where 'invited' spaces are not an option for young people to engage in participatory governance due to limited openness by authorities, the extent to which young people can be successfully engaged depends largely on the nature of the issue at stake – that is, whether it challenges the status quo or is contradictory to the interests of power-holders, and how the situation is approached by young people and their supporters. For instance, the case study of Uganda's Green Light Movement demonstrates how a national advocacy initiative for a youth enterprise fund law outside of formal governance processes could be successful when the enabling environment, such as government support and interest in it, was positive. The initiative was able to draw on and amplify the voices of young people on a topic that was already of significant national interest – how to enhance and expand youth employment opportunities.

By contrast, where the nature of the issue goes against government interests, it is important to engage a broad cross-section of interest groups to rally support. The second Uganda case study examined a series of youth groups supported by ActionAid working collectively at sub-national level to raise awareness about local government corruption and hold local officials accountable for the use of public resources. This experience showed that the cross-cutting nature of the issue of corruption, the interests of different actors in combating it, alongside the right facilitation (in this case from ActionAid and a supporting youth network, Activista) was able to raise the profile of the debate among wider civil society actors. This created a platform to 'name and shame' corrupt officials, which eventually led to several local government leaders stepping down. Engaging citizens of all ages interested in reducing corruption provided greater civil society momentum than would otherwise have been the case if more narrow entry points had been pursued within specific essential services such as health or education, for instance.

As illustrated by the example above, while organisational and various capacity issues (for young people themselves as well as officials and NGO/CSO actors working with them) are instrumental to successfully engaging young people in participatory governance processes, there may be no 'invited' spaces available. In these situations, building alliances – framing interests around an issue that resonates either with government, civil society or other constituencies – is potentially vital to generate the momentum for change.

Another approach to promote change would require a longer-term investment by facilitators (NGOs or CSOs working with young people) engaging with them over a longer period of time, supporting the development of their political consciousness, and encouraging them to take action; while at the same time working with government officials so that they become more open and responsive to young people's participation. While this approach might take longer, it has more potential for sustainability as young people are likely to remain engaged and create new governance spaces. It is important to recognise that 'crossing the divide' between 'invited' and 'created' spaces, as well as specifically targeting formal and 'invited' spaces, requires different levels of strategic and technical support.

2.3 Technical capacity and systemic constraints

Young people's engagement in participatory governance through organised groups must overcome several structural capacity issues to have lasting impact, including managing membership, maintaining learning and accountability mechanisms within the group, and engaging with financial issues. Such administrative and technical matters are by no means unique to young people's initiatives; many of these constraints are also relevant for adult groups promoting good governance. However, young people are unique in two respects: first, they face multiple exclusionary factors based on their specific capabilities relative to adults. These can include limited technical knowledge, limited experience of engaging with authorities, weak public communication skills and low self-confidence, restrained mobility, and constraints to their ability to seek and sustain institutional funding without intermediation by adult facilitators. Most of these constraints are particularly challenging for young women. Second, in terms of interactions with the community and authorities, young people are often excluded because of perceptions of their intrinsic lack of experience. This means that they may not be given credibility, with authorities not seeing their potential to add value in governance dialogues.

There might also be a concern about their volatility or aggressiveness (an issue explored previously in section 2.1 on social norms). However, these constraints can be transformed into opportunities, through developing the capacities and skills of young people and officials alike. Through young people's motivation and engagement, they have the potential to become a more energetic and organised voice than other adult groups working to promote good governance.

Reliance on reactiveness

Young people thus experience organisational constraints more acutely than adults. Evidence from the case studies and from the Task Team, for instance, shows that not only are the more technical aspects of M&E procedures not developed in a way that is usable for young people, but there is also a dearth of accessible platforms for communities of practice that cater specifically for young people working on governance processes. For instance, feedback from the 11 Task Team members working on governance issues in several countries and contexts showed they relied heavily on reactive and ad hoc advocacy and lobbying measures, with little recourse to any databases with examples of best practice. Successful as reactive approaches may be on occasions, limited access to more structured resources limits the way in which young people are able to engage in governance.

Given this general dependency on reactive initiatives, young people working outside of governance structures are also heavily reliant on 'issue champions' (individual supporters within target institutions) as enablers and entry points. Discussions with the Task Team highlighted that significant time and resources are often spent in establishing strong contacts, often at the expense of consolidating other network contacts, fundraising or developing an evidence base. While champions often facilitate significant advances for initiatives led by young people, lending them increased credibility to decision-makers, they also tend to change job relatively quickly, leading to a loss of institutional memory. An evaluation of Restless Development's Youth Programme in Uganda, showed that a critical success factor for the programme was the continued support and interest of the community development officer, who was a sustained influence rather than a one-off champion (Walker, 2012).

This issue, combined with the shifting and transitory nature of the membership base that is common in young people's initiatives – with young people only involved for a limited amount of time – can lead to a continual recycling of activities, whereby new members either reinvent structures and procedures or are forced to establish new networks. There are not many good examples of knowledge management around youth-led initiatives that could provide examples of how to maintain institutional memory to help young people entering the process benefit from the experience of others who are exiting it. This also presents an opportunity for stakeholders looking to work with young people because political consciousness and technical skills may not necessarily be lost – only transitioned to another initiative or actor in a wider advocacy or campaign network. Indeed, building active citizenship as adults is one of the key instrumental reasons why it is so important to engage young people in participatory governance.

Tailoring NGO support

Some of these systemic constraints are ameliorated where there is international or national NGO support for young people's engagement in participatory governance. Of the six case studies, three focused on examples of NGOs providing ongoing financial and technical support. These examples show that the relatively external

intervention role of NGOs can be critical in catalysing young people into action by providing a space for them, as well as strengthening their capacity and their confidence to engage with decision-makers . In Viet Nam, for example, ActionAid set up clubs as part of the Youth Leadership in Enhancing Public Service Providers' Accountability project, which provided financial and technical assistance to young people from ethnic minority groups in a remote province in the north of the country. The aim was to strengthen youth leadership and provide young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to enhance the accountability of public service providers, which, despite the existence of the Vietnamese Youth Union,[2] had not been done before.

The vital role of NGOs does not necessarily lie in providing financial resources, but rather in the technical support, facilitation and capacity-building they can provide, which increases young people's confidence. NGOs can also be instrumental in providing decision-makers with skills and knowledge about how to work with young people and take advantage of the value they can add to promote good governance. NGOs can therefore elevate young people's activities further in terms of their involvement in governance, with the potential legitimacy and safety that such connections bring in the eyes of government actors. This is particularly important at the outset of such initiatives, and in adverse contexts, where young people may not have been actively involved previously.

A key factor in sustaining the case study initiatives was the degree to which NGOs built on pre-established organisational foundations of young people's initiatives, as well as their ongoing momentum and connections with formal government structures. For instance, Activista and the Anti-Corruption Caravan in Uganda, supported by ActionAid, disseminated their aims and objectives via an existing anti-corruption newsletter, built on an already established anti-corruption task force, and developed a relationship with the local police force in order to have security for a march they were organising. The key role of ActionAid in this case lay in recognising that, despite observed successes, young people in the movement had limited confidence and understanding of their rights and did not yet have the technical ability to scrutinise government programmes to identify policy gaps and entry points. As such, technical training to address this deficit was seen as more important than network facilitation or public outreach resources.

Similarly, in the case of the Consultative Committee of Boys, Girls and Adolescents (CCONNA) in Peru, capacity-building provided by Plan International to young participants has been instrumental to their informed and active participation. Plan invites regional CCONNA members (typically older adolescents and young men and women) to take part in workshops and other training activities to strengthen leadership skills, social skills and assertive communication – priorities identified by young people themselves. Plan provides training to all young elected participants, which it regards as an important part of the programme.

**Information and communication technologies**
Globally, young people are twice as likely to be IT literate as adults. Opportunities for them have been made possible through advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as obtaining real-time information from young people (crowdsourcing), their greater access to information and their easier communication of data on evidence through new means. There is an even starker distinction in low-income countries, where young people are up to three times more likely to be ICT-literate (International Telecommunication Union, 2013). Helping young people to engage with evolving ICTs is important both in terms of their ability to support the collection of data and to use the information analysed in 'real time' to hold duty-bearers to account.

Consultations with the Task Team revealed several examples of young people engaging in, or being aware of, national-level 'crowdsourcing' platforms such as Huduma in Kenya and UReport in Uganda. These initiatives draw on real-time data on issues as diverse as teacher absenteeism, safety in the locality, access to credit, and breastfeeding practices to inform the work of local government or to promote greater accountability. A major challenge with respect to such initiatives is the asymmetry in levels of investment between national and local initiatives, particularly given that local governments typically have fewer resources and lower ICT literacy (UN-

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2 The Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union (HCYU) is a socio-political organisation of Vietnamese youth. It was founded, led and trained by President Ho Chi Minh. It defines its members as progressive youths, striving for the Party's ideal and goal of national independence and socialism, for the cause of rich people, strong country, just, democratic and civilised society. It is the main youth organisation in Viet Nam.

Habitat, 2012). Therefore, despite the promising advantages of user-generated content for social accountability processes, local-level responsiveness in the use of ICTs remains a challenge to be tackled.

This difference between national and local investment in ICTs has broader ramifications for the 'data revolution'. The post-2015 discussions, for instance, have included debates about evidence-driven accountability processes, based on increasing interest around social accountability mechanisms such as citizen report cards. Such mechanisms would do well to draw on the same principles that the 'data revolution' is being founded on, such as addressing the timeliness and quality of existing data, filling data gaps, and harnessing different forms of evidence. Additionally, and most importantly with respect to governance, the use of ICTs can enhance the transparency, accessibility and public availability of data (Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2013). However, if these principles are not exercised across national contexts, it is likely that rural and other marginalised groups of young people (including ethnic minorities, girls, and young people with disabilities) will be further marginalised from opportunities to participate in governance initiatives, as discussed in greater detail below.
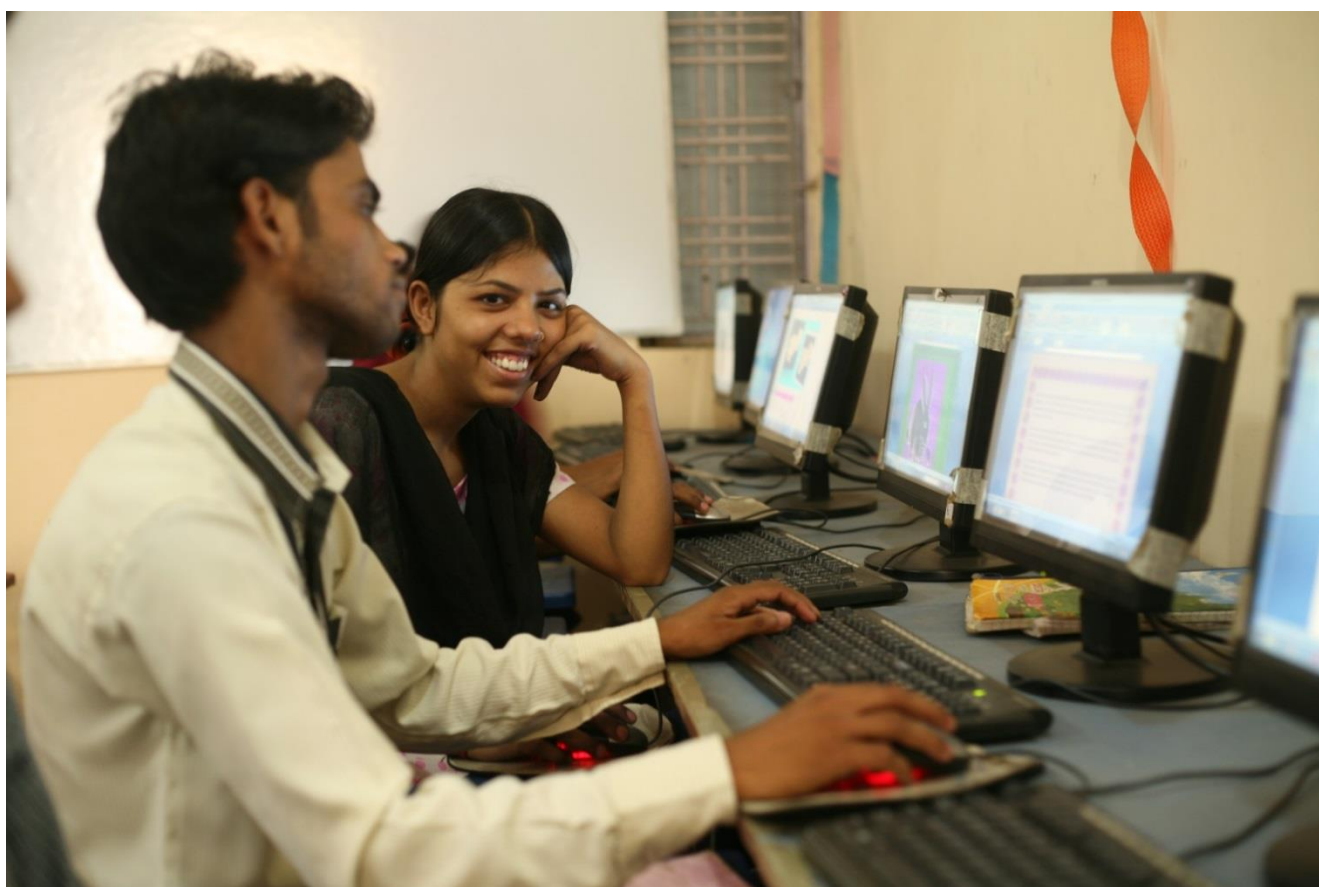
Factoring in government capacity

As seen in the previous subsections, there is a key gap in the way the capacity of local, national and global duty-bearers is being developed: the failure to address their ability to meaningfully engage with young people in participatory governance approaches. According to the review of examples of participatory governance from the Task Team, this 'power literacy' capacity-building – where it occurs – often takes the form of rights sensitisation, facilitation of access to information, and other types of citizenship role, but focuses less on the capacities of government structures to deliver outputs and transform these into outcomes.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID)'s Capacity, Accountability, Responsiveness (CAR) framework, for instance, suggests that a comprehensive governance structure should ensure that staff and government structures have the capacity to deliver outputs and facilitate outcomes for young people's engagement in participatory governance (Moore and Teskey, 2006) rather than actively including work with government institutions and personnel. In the Green Light Movement case study in Uganda, participants noted

that there was limited ongoing youth participation in initiatives to provide independent scrutiny during the implementation of government programmes. Consequently, young people's governance initiatives struggled to retain longer-term relevance, which led to tensions in ongoing dialogues in which young people felt increasingly marginalised. Thus a key conclusion is that where initiatives for building the capacity of young people to engage with governance processes are created, it is equally important to work with government institutions to build their capacity and responsiveness to work with young people in different aspects of governance mechanisms in order to promote more sustained outcomes.

2.4 Gender

In many of the cases reviewed, the ability of girls and young women to participate in initiatives was often constrained by barriers at the household level arising from domestic and care burdens, discriminatory social norms regarding girls' mobility, and negative views about the appropriateness of their involvement in political issues or legal frameworks. Another limiting factor is that despite there being generally favourable gender policies at the national level in most countries, their implementation does not adequately consider the rights, needs and interests of women and girls. However, in some of the examples explored in the literature and in feedback from the Task Team, it is evident that young women and girls can play a transformative role in terms of promoting more responsive government structures, particularly at the local level, carving the way for more actively engaged young men and women.

Time and mobility restrictions
The case study on YLEPA in Viet Nam, which works with ethnic minority young people in marginalised areas, frequently highlighted gender constraints to participation:

> *Men's proportion [in the YLEPA club] overwhelms that of women. Gender equality in Viet Nam is pretty rare. Women are mainly responsible for housework; men and women both work in the fields and then men can have a rest when coming home; meanwhile, women have to cook. The men's proportion is high [in the YLEPA club] also because of their family situation, hindering women from participating.* (Focus group discussion, men aged 22-27, YLEPA club, Can Yen commune, Viet Nam)

Constraints also include gendered restrictions on mobility. In the case study carried out with Green Ocean club members in Viet Nam, one participant described how:

> *Normally, [girls] take care of housework; [when they] get married, [they] have to take care of their husband and children. Now, when they have yet to get married, they have to take care of housework for their parents. When they get into life, it is less likely that they are accepted as much as boys. If girls are determined, they can do as well as boys do. But girls are still underprivileged compared with boys in terms of several issues and social relationships. It is very tough to change their minds.*
> (Female in mixed-sex focus group discussion, women and men aged 20-25, Da Nang province, Viet Nam)

Combating traditional roles
If girls and young women are able to overcome these household-level constraints to participation, they can face additional stigmatisation and power differences at the community and organisational level. In the Uganda Anti-Corruption Caravan case study, some girls and young women in the community were not considered 'youth', as they had become mothers and were hence seen by community members as having graduated into adulthood – even if they were still adolescents. Some community members perceived young women participants negatively, in the sense that they were acting in contradiction to their traditional docile role (sometimes even labelling them 'prostitutes'). This obviously poses a huge challenge to the equitable participation of young women in the promotion of good governance from the local level up.

Exceptions were noted in the case studies from Peru. In the Programme of School Municipalities, for example, feedback from youth groups attested to the fact that participation in the municipality system led to direct, albeit tacit forms of empowerment. Interesting changes in gender dynamics were highlighted as providing important opportunities for adolescent girls and young women who would not otherwise have been recognised as

legitimate actors in decision-making spaces. While adults, including decision-makers, still perceive differences in the role of girls compared with boys, adolescent girls and boys themselves are starting to see that girls have opportunities for leadership and participation:

> *In this region, there is a huge gap between the value and opportunities of a boy and a girl. This is evident in the way they play, socialisation with family, autonomy, and even nutrition. Girls are not fully appreciated but at the same time, parents are more afraid of them becoming pregnant, being raped, etc. In education, it is also usual that boys get more responsibilities and opportunities than girls to develop themselves as we [Plan International] found this in Plan's research, 'Because I Am a Girl'.* (Key informant interview, Plan International staff)

> *This is changing now; as we can see, women can be in important positions. Women have always excelled above men. Nowadays, we could even say that women are better than men, but this is not like that everywhere. Sometimes, women are being taken into account but for what? To make them feel less [than men]. It is a problem that men cannot treat women equally, we are far from having a 100% gender equality.* (In-depth interview, young man aged 16, CCONNA)

One important finding was that there were differences by gender in the issues prioritised during CCONNA participatory sessions within the regional government of Piura. While girls' top priority was adolescent pregnancy, boys' top priority was quality of education. This underscores that there is a need for safe spaces for young women and young men to voice their gender-specific needs and priorities, as they can enrich debates and improve outcomes by providing more varied perspectives, and thus identifying a broader range of issues that need to be addressed. In the case of Piura, both these issues have been taken up locally.

Quality, quantity and representation

Participatory governance initiatives from across the case studies, the Task Team consultations and the literature rarely focused on disaggregating their goals and objectives through a gendered lens. In fact, the majority of the primary case studies and best practice examples in the literature showed that gendered approaches were based largely on including girls and/or young women, with a focus on the numbers of young women participating. This emphasis on 'quantity' is often the dominant criteria to the detriment of 'quality' or depth of understanding concerning gender dynamics and gender-specific concerns. Gender responsiveness in young people's participatory initiatives could, for example, tailor access to account for young women's mobility constraints (for example, changing the timing and venue of meetings to maximise their attendance).

This highlights the importance of young women's participation as a form of representation. The gender balance within some case studies – for instance, in the Peruvian CCONNA and PSM examples – was in fact increasingly skewed towards girls as the project developed. According to respondents, this change did not occur as a result of any specific targeting measures, but rather because of the gradual empowerment of girls participating in the project, their perception about changing gender roles, and their consistent presence in leadership roles within CCONNA. More research will be necessary to see whether this outcome is gender-transformative (as boys may not *have* to relinquish engagement, but rather withdraw out of a lack of interest). However, girls now see the municipality system as a safe space to voice their concerns.

As observed in Peru, young people's participatory activities can eventually lead to the empowerment of girls, and girls can take advantage of governance initiatives despite any lack of gender-specific support structures. In contexts in which girls and young women have pre-existing entry points into participatory governance processes, it is therefore even more important to take advantage of such spaces to consolidate the representation of girls and young women.

While the best practice literature and case studies highlight the importance of enabling good-quality participation, the methods and tools used to promote young people's active participation are focused on the participatory space itself rather than what happens outside it – for example, engaging in community-level decision-making more broadly. Gender dynamics in the context of participatory governance for young people still need to be strengthened, particularly where gender equity is still far from being achieved but has enormous potential to increase the quality and depth of debates.

2.5 Decentralisation

The form and extent of decentralisation varies across contexts, depending on the processes of contestation and bargaining that take place between local and national government bodies. This fundamentally political process produces a diverse set of administrative and fiscal institutional arrangements that have important implications for the form and extent of young people's inclusion and participation in governance processes. These implications often include new opportunities for young people to engage, based on local entry points. On the other hand, without a broader enabling environment or the substantial re-arrangement of centralised power, young people can face significant structural challenges, including urban bias or the dilution of their voices if no effective decision-making takes place at the local level where they might have more influence.

Local entry points

Several of the examples of effective participatory governance activities in the literature demonstrate the advantages of having young people engage through sub-national government bodies in order to achieve wider impacts. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s Youth Municipal Council Programme in the Dominican Republic is one such example. Youth councils were set up at the municipal level to reflect existing decentralised governance structures and to serve a more participatory model of governance. The mechanism was designed to fit in with decentralised governance structures and therefore encourage interaction between parallel adult- and youth-led councils. An evaluation of the initiative highlighted the creation of new governability structures that take into account young people and their rights, as well as the role of the municipal council itself and the citizens in the protection of these rights. The evaluation also noted that spaces were created to facilitate

young people's participation in municipal-level decision-making, including participative budgeting processes (UNICEF Dominican Republic, no date).

A youth empowerment programme in Serbia funded by German Development Cooperation (GIZ) was implemented on a decentralised basis, with trained youth coordinators in each municipality (GIZ, 2012). The overall aim was to implement multi-level youth empowerment structures at national, regional and local levels to promote participation along social, political and economic lines. Youth forums were used as a mechanism for establishing youth offices at municipal level with a view to identifying youth policy priorities and presenting these to local government. Other aims were to provide platforms for conflict resolution and to build a network with all local-level youth organisations so as to integrate their agendas. Similarly, in Cambodia, UNICEF supported the Commune Youth Groups Project, implemented by Cooperation for Development of Cambodia (CoDeC). This project was designed to provide young people with a decentralised system of governance whereby they had their own platform to conduct their own youth planning (Ruiz, 2010).

Timing and wider social change
Feedback from the Task Team suggested that participatory governance for young people can also take advantage of the timing of decentralisation processes. In Burkina Faso, for example, the emergence of new debates and the implementation of decentralisation enabled the National Youth Council to gain entry into moments of strategic reflection in local administrative bodies, which amounted to newly created governance spaces at local level – particularly as local government officials were keen to emphasise their performance in delivering new decentralisation outputs.

Similarly, from the case studies, the Programme of School Municipalities in Peru was highly dependent on national-level changes associated with decentralisation as well as specific policies regarding young people's participation. Following the corruption crisis involving President Fujimori, a suite of changes was introduced in 2002, eventually leading to swifter implementation of the decentralisation policy and the transfer of political and financial power to local governments (Terreros and Tibblin, no date). The public schools administration has been a part of these changes, including governance reforms, driven by the National Strategic Plan for Youth, which outlines an aim to 'increase participation and leading role of young female and male children in processes of decision making in national and sub-national governments by using institutional mechanisms of participation'.

Urban bias
Decentralisation can create spaces for young people's participation, but it can also underscore rural–urban biases, with generally better-educated and better-networked young people in urban localities receiving more support to participate than rural young people, who might face several layers of marginalisation. NGO and CSO actors may need to jump-start the process by providing more active mediation to promote participatory governance in rural areas, particularly for young people. In Uganda, for instance, the success of the Anti-Corruption Caravan occurred only after extensive interventions by Activista, with support from ActionAid. The reason for this slow momentum was the relative density of CSO networks in the capital city and other urban areas, which resulted in 'elite capture' of the issue:

> *I think the opening up of the debate on corruption at very local level was a major breakthrough because previously the anti-corruption fight was looked at as what the IGG [Inspector General of Government] should do, not what NGOs are doing on the streets in Kampala.* (Key informant interview, ActionAid Uganda)

In addition, administrative (rather than fiscal) decentralisation can force resource constraints that are more distinctive at the local level, which can have implications for efforts to enable young people's voices to be heard. Non-provision of even basic allowances or remuneration to assist with the participation of young people (for example, resources to support local-level youth participatory budgeting) can often make it prohibitive for many group members to participate, given for example, the cost of transport or the opportunity costs involved (if participation takes them away from other income-generating activities). This was an issue in Restless Development's youth governance work in north-eastern Uganda (Walker, 2012), as well as in the Activista/ActionAid work on the Anti-Corruption Caravan:

But the challenge is that they are reluctant in the villages because they don't want to come to most of the meetings unless they are sure that they will be able to take some drink or refreshment, hence a poor turnout. (Key informant interview, district youth councillor, Amuru)

Ultimately, decentralisation offers several opportunities for greater participation of young people in governance processes – particularly if opportunities are seized early on, and the decentralisation policy itself recognises an enhanced role for young people. Significant challenges remain where capacities and resources at local level are constrained by a lack of fiscal decentralisation. This is evident not only with respect to limited ability to distribute basic allowances and compensation for young people to attend meetings but also in terms of technical issues, such as the low level of local government resources to address young people's demands. In such circumstances, young people can be caught in a cyclical accountability gap in which duty-bearers pass responsibility for inaction to local administrative bodies, who in turn refer responsibility upwards based on withheld resources and capacity support from central government bodies. This dynamic is one of the more overwhelming challenges that young people and associated stakeholders face when looking to access, input to, and continuously monitor government activities.

However, it also offers an opportunity in the sense that government officials who have been frustrated by limited resource transfers may be encouraged to liaise more closely with civil society to add ballast to their demands for increased financial support from central government. There are also opportunities to break the cycle of limited vertical accountability and advocate for a clear chain of accountability in order increase representation at the local level.

2.6 Individual capacities that lead to collective change

Facilitating channels for young people to be involved in governance dialogues requires working on their individual capacities, as well as those of duty-bearers. This broadens the issue of civic empowerment beyond the governance agenda and provides opportunities to engage other policy and practitioner audiences. For instance, where linkages between improved governance and enhanced individual or group capacities can be made – such as in the area of basic services or economic empowerment programmes – these can be used to forge new ways of working with young people. The role of formal and informal education in strengthening young people's interest in active citizenship is critical, from generating spaces for their participation (which often takes place in school and could include stronger promotion of citizenship practices in the curriculum) to highlighting the relevance of participation as a process to develop critical thinking in informal education settings.

Evidence from the literature review shows that participatory mechanisms can empower young people by strengthening individual capabilities such as self-confidence, civic awareness and engagement, leadership and organisational skills, as well as more specific skills such as literacy and use of media. In Tanzania, participants in a children's council programme run by Save the Children observed that participation equipped young people with the skills to engage in community activities and interact with adults, increased their awareness of their rights, and their ability to assert them. These enhanced capabilities in turn led to a positive change in community perceptions of young people (Couzens and Mtengeti, 2011).

In Sierra Leone, the Youth Justice Action campaign (Sierra Leone YMCA, no date) led to skills development among young members in research, advocacy and campaigning, which empowered them to independently conduct and lead advocacy movements on youth justice issues. For instance, members participated in the Child Rights Coalition to draft the Sierra Leone NGO Universal Periodic Report, which was submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in 2010. Members have also participated in several demonstrations and media spaces, and established a core group of active young people engaged in campaigning on youth justice issues nationwide.

A similar impact has been observed in Kenya. Plan involved young people in governance through district youth networks, where government funds were accessed for income generation and job placement activities. A boost in confidence among the young participants was observed: they were able to influence community issues in village meetings and local government committees, leading to a positive image of youth among communities and adults (Plan UK, 2012).

In all of the case studies for which primary research with young people was conducted, young people said that the process of engaging and participating was one of the most important outcomes of the initiative, particularly

when accompanied by skills development and training on leadership skills, communication, and understanding policy issues. In particular, it was seen as an outcome that would allow them to become more active citizens. This has enormous potential for the development of more engaged and proactive adult citizens from a young age. However, while these dimensions are critical to young people's engagement in promoting governance and accountability beyond the organised participatory initiatives explored, an important corollary to efforts focused on young people is the need for investment in the individual capacities of duty-bearers. While such responses might include technical skills development, they should also focus on sensitisation of decision-makers around many of the issues discussed above, such as the critical role that gender dynamics, urban bias and social norms play in framing young people's participation in governance processes. Capacity-building support should also cover how to better communicate with young people and how to enable spaces for their engagement, including mobilising resources to support youth-led initiatives at the local level.

3 Young people as active citizens in the post-2015 framework

This section explores how young people can contribute to informing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) post-2015 process, both in terms of the global framework for the goals and targets, as well as how they are implemented at the national and local levels, which is where their impacts will ultimately be felt.

Young people's participation in governance has the potential to inform and improve policy development and service delivery. They can also hold policy-makers – particularly at the local level – accountable to their commitments. These avenues are also necessary to prepare and motivate engaged and active citizens over the long term, as young people become adults. As such, ensuring young people's visibility and active participation in the post-2015 process and framework at global and national levels is critically important.

3.1 Governance in the Sustainable Development Goals post-2015 framework

Young men and women still face major obstacles in relation to active and meaningful participation. This underlines the need for commitments from local and national authorities and governments to actively engage (and enable engagement from) youth, to foster an environment of active citizenship. This is certainly still not the case in some country contexts, where the engagement and participation of civil society more generally – let alone of young people – continues to be stifled by the state.

The quality of governance structures has been identified as a defining factor in influencing the success of outcomes across key sectors during the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (OHCHR, 2013). In fact, gaps in accountability for the MDGs were identified as being among the main barriers to reaching the goals. This is therefore an area in which the role of young people in governance and accountability at local and national levels could be instrumental in securing the realisation of the future framework.

Along with issues of peace, security and rule of law, governance is seen by some United Nations Member States participating in the post-2015 process as the domain of the sovereign state rather than open to regulation and oversight by international agreements. This viewpoint poses a significant risk to the inclusion of governance in the final agreed set of SDGs. Nevertheless, many recognise that in terms of achieving development, strengthening citizenship and fulfilling rights, governance and accountability are critical features in a global post-2015 framework. Within this, the active engagement of young people as the largest population group – particularly in the developing world – is essential.

In spite of the political challenge, retaining a standalone governance goal could enshrine key targets and indicators regarding the participation of young people. It could also ensure that sufficient support is given to local and national government capacity-building to enable greater engagement with young people. While the effort to include a governance goal among the SDGs has met with controversy, the Open Working Group's (OWG) proposed Goals 16 and 17 are particularly relevant in outlining target areas that would strengthen the inclusion of young people in future governance structures. They include core civil and political rights, transparency and accountability, and 'participatory and representative decision-making' at all levels.

3.2 Young people's participation in the post-2015 process

There have been a number of high-profile spaces and meetings with young people from around the world to give voice to young people's viewpoints in the post-2015 process. These include the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Beyond 2014 Global Youth Forum, young people's participation in three post-2015 UN High-level Panel (HLP) meetings; the Youth Consultations for a Post-2015 Framework organised by the DFID/CSO Youth Working Group, as well as the My World Survey and the UN World We Want consultation platforms, among others.

A brief analysis of the data provided by the My World Survey shows that young people have been the most active cohort responding, with 75% of responses coming from those aged 16-30 – a total of 3.3 million participants out of 4.4 million. The priorities set by participating young people are largely the same as those of older cohorts, namely that 'an honest and responsive government' consistently remains in the top three agenda items (out of sixteen) along with 'a better education', 'better health care' and 'better job opportunities'. Despite subtle differences, these priorities remain consistent even when taking different genders, regions and levels of education into account. Similarly, in the post-2015 consultations with young people organised by Restless Development in 2013, 'Youth Voices on a Post-2015 World', governance was again highlighted as the most important issue for young people. These consultations have helped inform stakeholders in the post-2015 process about the specific challenges faced by groups of young people across the world.

While general priorities may be similar for young people of different sexes and in different circumstances, the underlying needs and responses may vary considerably. As such, the specific needs of young people – which may include improving secondary education, tailoring education to the job market, improving employment opportunities, and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services – must be understood and addressed (Bhatkal, 2014) and young people are instrumental in this process. Thus, as part of these consultations, young people highlighted the relevance for them to be explicitly recognised as part of the 'global partnership' for implementing SDGs as an important constituency; but also as they are disproportionately affected by negative development outcomes and therefore must also be considered as part of the solution to enable the realisation of the SDGs.

3.3 Visibility of young people in governance goals, targets and implementation

Young people are heavily referenced in the Open Working Group's SDG document across many different goals, linked to different thematic areas that are relevant to their wellbeing and development such as ending hunger, promoting healthy lives, achieving gender equality and promoting equitable growth, among others. This is important as it recognises that young people have distinct needs in these areas of development. However, while young people are recognised as beneficiaries, they are not currently being explicitly regarded as fundamental actors in achieving development objectives, despite evidence that they can be active promoters of change.

The Open Working Group text is strong on key aspects of the governance and accountability agenda, including core civil and political rights, transparency and accountability, and 'participatory and representative decision-making' at all levels, as reflected in Goals 16 and 17. Retaining a standalone governance goal and related indicators is a critical enabling factor for the participation of young people in future implementation and monitoring efforts. Such a goal could also ensure that sufficient support was given to local- and national-level capacity-building of institutions to enable greater engagement with young people.

The scope for raising the visibility of young people in discussions of governance and accountability is therefore very relevant. The available evidence indicates that linking local- and national-level advocacy and participation of young people with the emerging regional and global mechanisms and means of implementation for new goals will be key to more robust and effective governance of the SDGs overall. This calls for work to identify the specific ways in which the local and the global levels may effectively interact, building capacity to do so, with a focus on how young people have effectively contributed to governance and accountability during the MDGs. The strategy for taking this forward needs to be tactical, targeted and clear, and be applied both before the SDGs are signed off, as well as after, when they begin to be implemented and monitored.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

Using examples from different contexts and on different issues, this report has illustrated how young people's meaningful participation can contribute to improving governance processes, particularly at the local and national levels, thereby securing more effective outcomes in the short term, while also leading to the development of active citizens over the long term. It has also identified ways in which young people are currently involved in the post-2015 process and why they should continue to be engaged.

The SDGs post-2015 framework needs to be cognisant of the key role that young people – as a powerful global and national demographic – have to play. It must highlight not only young people's right to participation but also the relevance of their participation as a specific population group, which will have a lasting engagement and impact on the success of the new framework (which cuts across age cohorts, gender, ethnicity and disability). The visibility of young people as one of the specific targets in an explicit governance goal – as well as their visibility in targets related to thematic goals in key sectors such as education, health and employment, both to inform and to contribute to the implementation of these goals – is therefore critical.

Drawing on the available evidence, this report has sought to outline how to highlight good governance through the SDG's post-2015 framework, with a focus on making young people's participation more visible, particularly in inclusive governance processes.

Building on this evidence, we present the following recommendations:

- One of the key ways to support young people's participation in governance processes is by **increasing their capabilities and political empowerment**. This can be achieved by: increasing their technical knowledge of the thematic issues they are likely to engage with; developing their skills and confidence to engage with adults, particularly local authority officials; increasing their public communication skills and self-confidence; and developing skills and knowledge on how to access institutional funding without intermediation by adult facilitators. These capacities can be developed by youth groups themselves as they work with younger generations, by NGOs, local governments, and formal and informal education institutions. The most vital role for NGOs may not be in funding young people's initiatives, but rather identifying technical support tailored to their needs at specific points in time.

- While political empowerment and expansion of young people's power literacy is critical for their meaningful engagement in governance processes, their **participation will nonetheless be curtailed if parallel attention is not given to the economic, social and legal empowerment of young people.** This could be done through formal as well as informal education, integrating these principles into the standard curriculum, as well as reinforcing such skills through informal programmes (possibly implemented by NGOs where government services are constrained). This wider focus on the individual capacities of all young people to meaningfully engage would also assist in reducing the tendency for 'elite capture' of dialogue space by more privileged young people – including at the global level.

- Additionally, **it is critical to develop the capacity of government institutions to meaningfully engage young people** on governance and to facilitate their participation. The capacity of local government institutions should not be overlooked in this respect: several of the examples of effective participatory governance activities are based on young people's engagement with decentralised governance structures. NGOs and CSOs have an important role to play here in familiarising young people with these dynamics, while facilitating and convening young people's engagement in the areas of government policy where they are capable of responding.

- **A community of practice for young people and practitioners working on governance and accountability should be created** to give those young people working on governance across the world a forum in which to seek advice, share learning and understanding, and increase opportunities for collaboration. Organised youth groups, with support from youth-focused NGOs, could develop such a platform and promote it, nationally and globally.

- **The data revolution presents enormous opportunities for young people's participation and greater involvement in governance and accountability**, from the local to the global level, using different forms of ICTs. In particular, generating real-time data that can contribute to young people's ability to monitor implementation and communicate findings can be an effective and immediate method of promoting accountability. There is thus an opportunity to use such data to foster good governance, transparency and accountability.

- With the advancement of ICTs, **it is critical that local government institutions are given the necessary software (and related training) to make use of them to engage with young people** and overcome the detrimental effects of urban bias. This process should also recognise that technocratic approaches do not automatically facilitate the inclusion of marginalised groups – and may actually serve to further isolate them.

- **Tailored gender-sensitive measures are needed to facilitate the engagement of girls and young women in participatory governance,** as this can lead to transformation in gendered social norms by legitimising young women's engagement in decision-making arenas. It can also inform better programming and actions to address issues of particular concern to girls and young women, such as violence, early pregnancy, and mobility constraints. However, care should be taken that the quantity of young women's engagement does not become the focus at the expense of quality of their engagement; specific measures may need to be taken to cater for young women's pre-existing time burdens, mobility constraints, and other rights discriminations.

- **Ensure that young people are provided with spaces to participate in governance processes alongside adults.** This can help inform and change social norms about the capabilities and 'place' of young people, changing adults' perceptions about what young girls and boys 'can' and 'should' do. While changes in social norms are often considered to require intensive and long-term investment, the evidence shows that adults' views can change relatively quickly when they see what young people can contribute. Sensitising adults on the role of young people in governance processes would not only involve presenting their instrumental and intrinsic value, but also downplaying perceptions regarding their 'aggressiveness'.

- **More robust monitoring and evaluation of young people's participation in governance should be undertaken** in order to develop a more standardised, comprehensive and communicable body of evidence regarding the forms and functions of engagement that young people use with public actors, including an analysis of the challenges they face, how these have been overcome, and what they have achieved.

- **With respect to the SDG, a standalone goal on governance should be included**, with specific reference to the engagement of young people in order to provide support for investment in and facilitation of young people's participation in governance processes at the national and local levels.

- **Stakeholders involved in the post-2015 SDGs process must realise the huge potential for young people to become actively engaged in national- and local-level implementation of the goals,** to ensure that the goals are fulfilled. Young people's engagement is important now, while they are still 'young', but as the timeframe for the SDGs elapses, today's young people can develop into tomorrow's active and engaged adults who continue to work for the achievement of the goals, and pass on their valuable experience and knowledge to upcoming generations.

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