

## Chapter 10

# Structural Enablers

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This chapter provides:

- a discussion of structural considerations outlined in the Enablers Framework
- reflections on the need to engage with the big picture in youth mainstreaming.

### 10.1 The big picture

This chapter looks at the higher levels in the Enablers Framework: structural enablers – the broader policy contexts that shape youth mainstreaming. Strategies and innovations will depend on how macro-policy enablers are appropriated in planning or where macro-policy limitations are mitigated. How do broader economic and social policy prescriptions determine the way a local government, nation or region is able to invest in, and deliver for, youth through every sector? How does this awareness matter for our planning?

Some enabling macro- and meso-policy factors decision-makers will need to examine are discussed below.

### 10.2 Assessing structures 1: Pre-planning environment

These factors are influenced by larger structural policy contexts, but are immediately relevant to youth mainstreaming in terms of national-to-subnational and organisational commitments to youth mainstreaming processes.

#### 10.2.1 Political will determines policy direction and commitments

‘Political will’ refers distinctly to the political commitment of a leader to a specific process, in this case, to youth mainstreaming. Obtaining political will requires the adequate framing of youth mainstreaming in relation to political incentives and disincentives, including an analysis of what might support

and detract from political will towards youth mainstreaming. Interest groups may lobby either for or against youth mainstreaming, given contexts, and the way to generate and sustain political will rests on the ability to assess and negotiate these conditions.

### 10.2.2 Public spending and donor commitments help translate political will into practice

Public spending and donor commitments will not result automatically from the mere existence of political will, and will be determined by a multitude of factors – including government commitments to youth development (percentage of budget allocated for youth development and the allocation of budget across sectors in order to integrate a youth lens) or the directions and priorities of the policies of financial institutions and donors.

Both may require different forms of systematic evidence-based advocacy to enhance state investment and investments of donors, including an analysis of funding trends and providing reliable evidence for the need for investment in youth (Box 10.1). It is also important to keep in mind

#### Box 10.1 Investing in young people

The ODI project briefing *Youth and International Development Policy: The Case for Investing in Young People* (2013) identifies six key areas of youth development in which enhancing investment for the most marginalised young people would 'expand the reach of development assistance and support poverty reduction through equitable growth'.

These are:

1. **Post-primary education**, which builds resilience and enables the enhancement of life skills and employment skills;
2. **Work**, which fosters social inclusion not just through wages, but by forging identity and social networks;
3. **Health**, where good health influences access to education and work;
4. **Sustainability**, where young people are among the most seriously affected by climate change;
5. **Conflict and crime**, where young people are deeply affected, including their education and development, even as they contribute to peaceful societies; and
6. **Civic engagement**, where adult civic engagement is influenced by habits of participation development during youth.

that youth-centric elements of planning, if not adequately mainstreamed and made an integral part of planning across sectors, may be the first casualties of defunding public services, as is evident across the world.

### 10.3 Assessing structures 2: The macro-policy environment

This section looks at policy environments, which could be at the global, national, subnational or sectoral level and which can determine positive outcomes for youth.

#### 10.3.1 Non-discrimination/equality conventions and legislation strengthen young people's equality aspirations

Legislative enactment of aspirational goals set by human rights conventions makes the case stronger for youth mainstreaming. Legal initiatives such as a right to information and affirmative action programmes (quotas for young people's meaningful participation as party candidates etc.) can dramatically enhance youth-mainstreamed approaches. Similarly, there can be legal initiatives – such as anti-gay laws or laws that impinge on women's reproductive health rights – that can be detrimental to young people's freedom and dignity.

While the youth mainstreaming endeavour does not yet have a specific set of human rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which is a powerful tool for the gender mainstreaming movement, a convention on youth rights<sup>1</sup> becomes an important subject for deliberation in this context. Sectors planning for youth mainstreaming will need to assess their own legislative environment to buttress the rationale for youth mainstreaming. An example of young people seizing opportunities created through legislation is the use of the Right to Information Act (RTI) by young people in India (Box 10.2).

#### 10.3.2 Policy commitments to social equality and peace sets the foundations

Youth mainstreaming has a greater chance of succeeding in contexts where macro-policy environments commit

### Box 10.2 Young people exercise information rights in India

India's Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, is an Act that came into being to realise government commitments of transparency and accountability and to encourage public participation in governance. According to The YP Foundation (TYPF), a youth-led organisation in India, 'the Act recognises that for a democracy, having both informed citizens and transparency of information in government functioning is key.' The Act grants citizens the right to request and receive information on processes, spending and outcomes of any government programme or process. The Supreme Court of India has recognised the right to information as an integral part of the right to freedom of speech and expression, as well as the right to life. The Act was campaigned for by the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI), and campaigning continues to disseminate information about the Act itself and to ensure that it is implemented in its intended spirit.

The YP Foundation has been at the forefront of disseminating information about the RTI Act among young people and training young people on its use. TYPF is encouraging dialogue both on the relevance of the RTI Act and on its application to young people's daily lives, in areas of civic governance as well as human rights. Because of many such initiatives, young people across India have been active in exercising their rights as established by the RTI Act, in seeking and obtaining information around services and processes within government, and also in using the Act for the larger public interest. RTI, in one estimation, has been 'taken over by young people'. As an NCPRI member himself has stated, 'It is heartening to see the youth using the RTI Act in larger public interest. And the phenomenon is not restricted to the cities. It is happening at the village level too...'<sup>2</sup>

meaningfully to social equality, public goods<sup>3</sup> such as health and education, and peaceful, rather than militarised, resolution of social and political conflict.

In Scandinavia, successes in mainstreaming gender and attaining relative equality for women were linked to the welfare state,<sup>4</sup> where the participation of women in the economy, in political movements and in political parties was tied to ideologies of care and social security. From a youth development perspective, recognising services such as education, healthcare, housing for the economically disadvantaged, social safety nets for young people who 'fall through the cracks' and so on is an invaluable consideration. Adequately financed public services will be a great facilitator in integrating a youth lens to social policy planning, and has indeed proved possible – even in contexts of global pressure for structural reform.<sup>5</sup> Box 10.3 provides a further example of the relationship between tax cultures and equality.

### Box 10.3 Tax evasion and inequality

Reducing inequalities means redistributive economic policies and adequate public investment in social services and infrastructure. This, in turn, is reliant on progressive taxation and fiscal responsibility.

Tax evasion, for example, removes investment from multiple sectors. Save the Children found that US\$15 billion is lost in tax revenue from trade mis-invoicing in sub-Saharan Africa alone. In some countries, the scale of tax losses is greater than the average health spend.<sup>6</sup> Going beyond tax evasion to other illicit financial flows that negatively affect Africa's governance and development agenda, some estimates indicate that 'illicit flows from Africa could be as much as US\$50 billion per annum. This is approximately double the official development assistance (ODA) that Africa receives'.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, promoting peace-building and prioritising dialogue and understanding initiatives over militarised conflict resolution ensure a cohesive and content society and also ensure the investment of valuable public funds for the benefit of society and youth.

By contrast, modern paradigms of development based on austerity, small government, increasing cuts to the social sector and a trend of militarised conflict resolution attempts require extra effort to prioritise social safety nets, to enhance youth welfare and youth participation, and to ensure access to healthcare, education, peaceful societies and so on.

Working to mainstream youth, therefore, also requires working to strengthen public services and public service financing, enhancing dialogue and social cohesion, as well as institutionalising care economies, which facilitate the participation of marginalised groups and can cede power to them. Box 10.4 describes the link between military conflict and poverty.

### 10.3.3 Democratic politics, accountability and transparency ensure youth-centric party politics

The level of democratisation of political institutions plays a critical role in the success of youth mainstreaming, in that politics define in whose interests policy directions are set. Democratic political spaces allow the opening up of policy debates to broader, diverse audiences including youth, and to truly representative and inclusive government and governance

#### Box 10.4 Military conflict, public expenditure and poverty

The World Bank's 2011 *World Development Report* found that no low-income country classified as 'fragile' or 'conflict-affected' had yet achieved a single one of the Millennium Development Goals. People in fragile and conflict-affected states were found to be more than twice as likely to be undernourished as those in other developing countries, more than three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school, twice as likely to see their children die before age five, and more than twice as likely to lack clean water.<sup>8</sup>

On average, a country that experienced major violence during the period from 1981 to 2005 has a poverty rate 21 percentage points higher than a country that saw no violence. The average cost of civil war was found to be equivalent to more than 30 years of gross domestic product (GDP) growth for a medium-sized developing country.

In the same year's *Global Monitoring Report* data (2011),<sup>9</sup> UNESCO found that:

- Education accounted for just 2 per cent of humanitarian aid and no sector had a smaller share of humanitarian appeals funded than education (38 per cent).
- Armed conflict was diverting public funds from education into military spending,<sup>10</sup> while 21 developing countries were spending more on arms than on primary schools.
- Military spending was also diverting aid resources. It would have taken just six days of military spending by rich countries to close the US\$16 billion Education for All (EFA) external financing gap.

represented by youth-friendly political mandates. Political structures can be assessed at the local government, national or global level. We discuss government democratisation here through five prisms:<sup>11</sup>

#### 1. Devolution and decentralisation

This refers to the extent of power sharing a) geographically and b) among stakeholders, including the privatisation of formerly public services, as analysed in gender mainstreaming. Member countries taking up youth mainstreaming will benefit from an analysis of how social sectors function, to what extent local governments have autonomy over decision-making, and to what extent control of decisions is influenced by civil society or private sector players for respective sectors. In the gender mainstreaming experience, local government decentralisation facilitated building diversity into programmes, while the feminist movement could lobby for equitable services through private sector

services provision where privatisation was replacing public services.

## 2. **Party political cultures and genuine multiparty politics**

The political stances of dominant political parties, and their openness to youth participation in party politics, can either promote or hinder youth mainstreaming. Are party discourses aligned to youth rights? Are governments, both the executive and the administration, genuinely listening to young people? Is it truly democratic, shared leadership, or centralised leadership? Is there genuine multiparty politics that facilitates diversity of opinion and the consideration of different policy options? This would facilitate youth mainstreaming.

## 3. **Youth participation in party politics**

While young people may reject the present political status quo in some contexts, they are yet ready to create more enabling and transparent party political structures. Are there mechanisms to encourage young people's participation in party politics, such as affirmative action programmes? What are the push factors that encourage, and pull factors that discourage, young people contending as political party candidates? Are there affirmative action programmes to redress imbalances in youth participation in party politics?

Also, and more importantly, is youth participation in party politics seen as a distinctive means of representing legitimate youth interests and interests of other marginalised groups in political decision-making, and of bringing new forms of youth-centric, democratic, co-shared political leadership cultures into party political spaces? Or is such participation nominal?

## 4. **Monitoring and auditing mechanisms**

State mechanisms that are accountable, transparent and fair will lend themselves well to prioritising youth issues in policy and practice. Democratic elections that are transparent, capacitated and participatory, including youth-participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, open, learning relationships between state and civil society, and openness to legitimate, evidence-based scrutiny and critique by

all parties in the policy process, all facilitate youth mainstreaming. The freedom of the media, and exposure of local youth groups and concerns in global contexts, would further add to the transparency of the process.

#### 5. Global governance

In an increasingly globalised world, where the obligations of Commonwealth member countries are tied to international agreements and conventions, it is critical that legitimate, representative youth voices of the most marginalised groups in society, who are most affected by policy decisions, be heard in framing global policy and conventions. How open is global governance to the participation of diverse global communities in deliberations? How are international forums set up to facilitate the articulation of diversity, which comes with issues of language, translation, consultation cultures and so on? Are we, in many ways, reinforcing elitism in global participatory structures, or can international conventions and agreements and global policy directions truly represent the most local voices, which are affected the most by policy decisions?

Box 10.5 illustrates a young person's perspectives on youth participation in party politics.

#### Box 10.5 Do young people want to participate in party politics?

*Youth participation [in party politics] has been a dwindling [sic] issue both in the West and the global South. That is partly because young people find the democratic structures quite frustrating, and we have seen activism as a trend with young people, when you look at the Arab Spring, or riots in Europe, it is about young people who care about issues ... but maybe aren't that interested in political structures. In my country, 70 per cent are under 35, but we have limited numbers in governance ... we need to think about how we engage with [the] young in [party] politics generally.<sup>12</sup>*

– Young woman from a Commonwealth member country, Africa

### 10.4 Connected government serves young people more effectively

'Connected', or 'joined-up', government refers to the increasingly co-ordinated ways in which government and governance

(government involving multiple stakeholders) operate to provide services, including for young people. This helps different sectors work together beyond their sectoral silos, for more efficient and responsive outcomes for service seekers, and is a critical part of youth mainstreaming which recognises the cross-sectoral implications of policy and practice. Table 10.1 helps look at some ways in which joined-up government can support youth mainstreaming.<sup>13</sup>

In beginning a youth mainstreaming process, it would be useful to map the extent of joined up government in your country/sector etc., in order to understand the implications of youth mainstreaming for your sector. Box 10.6 provides an example from the United Kingdom of joined-up government for delivering services to youth.

**Table 10.1** Joined-up government and youth mainstreaming

Ways joined-up government works	Youth mainstreaming example
Joining organisations – Intra-departmental, interdepartmental, national to local	Youth mainstreaming within a national development framework requires all sectors to work in co-ordination horizontally (government and other stakeholders) and vertically (national to local government) to deliver optimally for young people.
For social groups – Joined up services for a specific social group	Joined-up services for young people in conflict with the law may include education, rehabilitation, restorative justice, youth services and social services coming together to provide integrated services.
Joining a policy/issue/sector	Joined-up government delivers more effectively if, for example, the education and employment sectors work more closely to look at education meeting employment needs, to ensure a smooth transition for young people from education to employment.
Joining up in a geographical area	Particularly disadvantaged youth groups in geographical locations, such as a conflict region or a remote rural region, may need urgent joined-up services to ensure that education, psychosocial care, employment services etc. work hand in hand.
Mode of service delivery	The mode of service delivery for young people can deliver all the above if different sector services are located in a 'one-stop-shop', such as a local government office with offices for all sectors.

### **Box 10.6 Youth Connexions One Stop Shops and Centres, UK**

A 'Youth Connexions One Stop Shop', through the Connexions Youth Services in the UK, is a venue where local partners come together to deliver a wide range of services for young people. These services include the provision of youth work, information, advice, guidance and support on education, work, training and volunteering, advice on drugs, finance, health, including sexual health, housing and much more. A Youth Connexions 'Centre' will offer or signpost to all the above, but less services may be available directly at the site.<sup>14</sup>

This is also a means of multiple sectors working together to provide co-ordinated services for youth, which not only co-ordinates the services, but also co-ordinates each young person's holistic needs in terms of health, employment, recreation and empowerment. This also helps sectors focus more on the youth dimension of their services.

## **10.5 Free and responsible media facilitate transparency and accountability**

Free and responsible media are the cornerstone of a democracy and ensure transparency and justice in social decisions. Other than being an indicator of good governance and social responsibility, free and responsible media are a critical structural enabler for youth mainstreaming. They can be a strong partner in sharing media material on the need for and the successes of youth mainstreaming, while also functioning, along with professional associations and sectors, as a watchdog on the process of working towards reducing inequality for young people.

## **10.6 Responsible business help investment for development**

Responsible business practices that go beyond corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects to broader environmental, fiscal and other forms of accountability to governments and citizens, including positive tax behaviours, help boost sustainable development and contribute to sustainable public revenue and socio-economic development.<sup>15</sup>

The role of civil society was discussed in Chapter 8, Stakeholder Engagement.

## **10.7 Conclusions and reflections**

These broader enabling attributes can be considered at the global, regional, national or local level in planning for youth

mainstreaming, and advocating for better contexts for YM. At the global level, macro-policy contexts have not been enabling of youth mainstreaming in instances where governments have been forced to reduce public spending, service debt and deregulate services at the cost of serving all citizens, particularly the most marginalised. Yet there are creative means of addressing the broader challenges to achieving equality for young people.



### Box 10.7 Reflections on Chapter 10: Structural Enablers

- In considering the Enablers Framework, what aspects of the macro- and meso-policy environment in your context support youth mainstreaming?
- What aspects of this environment are less conducive to youth mainstreaming?
- Are there initiatives that are challenging the less conducive aspects of macro-policy in your context?

## Notes

- 1 The Ibero American Convention on Youth Rights (2009) was the first regional framework. Yet, despite calls from UN bodies and the European Youth Forum, there is no International youth convention at present.
- 2 *Governance Now*, 2010.
- 3 A public good is an item or service that is provided free at the point of supply to all citizens. It can be provided by the state or another sector. In the case of the state, public goods are usually financed by taxation. Examples are free healthcare and education, public parks, government postal services etc. Citizens pay indirectly for these goods through taxation, but all citizens have equal access to public goods irrespective of taxes paid. This is considered a step towards creating equality and the redistribution of wealth. See also Koo 2013.
- 4 Rai 2003, 8.
- 5 Gaventa and Martorano 2016, 18.
- 6 Save the Children 2015.
- 7 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa N.D.
- 8 In 2013, a new World Bank analysis revealed that some 'fragile' countries – including Commonwealth members Kiribati and Tuvalu – had met the target on gender parity in school enrolment. Tuvalu had also met the target on improved access to water, while Sierra Leone was on track to do so. Eight countries had met the goal to halve extreme poverty (defined as the number of people living on less than US\$1.25 a day); however, this represented only about 20 per cent of countries so defined.
- 9 UNESCO 2011.

- 10 In the years leading up to 2008, the average duration of violent conflict episodes in low-income countries was 12 years. This clearly shows how catch-up education during and after armed conflict is a matter of the youth cohort, as well as of children.
- 11 Rai 2003, 26–37
- 12 Channels Television 2013.
- 13 These categories are adapted from Central Government Office 2009.
- 14 Youth Connexions N.D.
- 15 Includes observations from ActionAid 2015.

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