

Chapter 12

Youth Mainstreaming Spaces and Accountability

This chapter examines:

- the spaces/places of national planning and implications for youth mainstreaming
- the importance of horizontal linkages (across finance, planning, the youth sector and all other sectors) and vertical linkages (from aspirational frameworks, legislation, policy, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation) in ensuring accountability to young people
- the role of independent accountability mechanisms.

12.1 Harmonising planning: Finding the linkages

How does a process/strategy approach translate into real-life planning? Figure 12.1 provides the different domains in the scenario of all-of-government youth mainstreaming. This diagram helps us 'connect the dots' in planning in the state sector (working collaboratively with all other players, private, non-governmental and voluntary associations etc. [=stakeholders]). This is a useful tool to understand the integration of YM mechanisms into national development plans for each component part and level:

- horizontal linkages of all sectors to harmonise YM across sectors, with the finance and planning sectors, and the youth sector;
- vertical linkages in aligning planning at all levels (global, national, subnational) to endorsed global/national/local human rights and development frameworks to enhance accountability to young people;
- mechanisms/processes in place to facilitate youth mainstreaming.

12.1.1 Aligning implementation to human rights and development aspirations

Other than the global conventions and frameworks already discussed in Part 1, each sector may have its own thematic guidance that needs to be assessed for its focus on young people as a specific social category, and the nature of the articulation of their rights and needs.¹ If such recognition exists, it should be used to the optimum in designing political briefs and in policy planning.

While the SDGs have already been recognised as being at the heart of YM planning for the purposes of this publication, efforts to align national planning to the SDGs may differ in each country and perhaps across sectors. However, using the SDGs and other benchmarks set in the Equality Matrix for Youth (Table 3.1) will only strengthen YM efforts.

This will be complemented by mechanisms at all levels that ensure youth mainstreaming, as discussed below.

12.1.2 National mechanisms and accountability

National mechanisms and accountability would include:

- the executive and the legislature's commitments to youth mainstreaming in terms of legislation and policy;
- youth priorities in administrative bodies – in programmes and planning, and in youth budgeting;
- the youth sector, including all its stakeholders, in functioning as the nodal point in advocating for, and providing technical support to, youth mainstreaming; and
- an independent accountability mechanism that ensures the faithfulness of YM implementation to YM policy.

Box 12.1 contains an example of a national accountability mechanism.

12.1.3 Subnational mechanisms and accountability

The autonomy of whole-of-government approaches at the subnational level will be determined by the extent of devolution

Box 12.1 An accountability mechanism: The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland is a post that promotes and safeguards the rights of children and young people. The position, equivalent to the children's ombudsman agencies of many other countries, was established by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act of 2003.

Children and young people from all over the country helped choose the current commissioner in Scotland. Children were part of the interview process that helped select the commissioner, ensuring child and youth participation from the onset.

The commissioner has the responsibility to:

- promote awareness and understanding of the rights of children and young people;
- review law, policy and practice to examine their effectiveness in respecting the rights of children and young people;
- promote best practice by service providers;
- promote and commission research on matters relating to the rights of children and young people; and
- encourage the involvement of children and young people in his/her work and – in particular – consult with them on the work that he/she should be doing to improve the rights of children and young people.²

The commissioner represents the interests of collectives of children and youth, and not individual children.

The remit of the Children and Young People's Commissioner is to act on behalf of those under the age of 18. However, such legislated positions/structures for the youth category, if effectively functioning, can play a vital role in recognised youth mainstreaming and ensuring that all stakeholders deliver effectively for youth.

Children's authorities and youth councils etc. often perform the same independent regulatory function in many Commonwealth countries.

of powers, the extent to which local governments recognise youth mainstreaming as leading to more equitable and sustainable development, and their ability to plan and procure funds for YM. Box 12.2 describes two notable examples of accountability mechanisms for children, youth and women set up in two states in India.

Box 12.2 A local government mechanism: Children's and young people's councils

Children are not only discussing and trying to solve their problems through the Makkala Panchayats, but they are also showing the adults how to run the government in harmony.

– CM Udaasi, Minister, Department of Rural Government of Karnataka, India

The two stories below are from Karnataka, a state in southern India, where children and young people have been able to co-create mechanisms that feed into local government planning. Concerned for Working Children (CWC), a child rights organisation in India which also works with young people, played a key role in both processes.

Children's local government: *Makkala Panchayats* (children's local governments) are designed as a children's and young people's equivalent to *Grama Panchayats*, the elected adult councils at the most local level, which manage day-to-day life in rural India under the 'Panchayati Raj' scheme of decentralised government. Elected by all the children of a Panchayat, the Makkala Panchayat monitors the work of the adult Panchayat, identifies problems facing children and young people, works to create solutions and, where necessary, demands action from adult representatives.

Within a few years of being set up, Makkala Panchayats proved highly effective at enabling children and young people to organise and demand solutions to their problems. In one village named Alur, the Makkala Panchayat helped children and young people convince adult elected representatives of the need for a high school in the village, enabling many youth, especially girls, who would otherwise have dropped out, to go to school. In Keradi Panchayat, members of the Makkala Panchayat persuaded the Grama Panchayat to close illegal alcohol shops in their community.

Children and youth in areas where Makkala Panchayats exist informed CWC that they had altered the whole attitude of adults to youth. Often dismissive before, elected adult representatives are now attentive to children's and young people's concerns. Makkala Panchayats have identified and helped resolve many issues which affect not just children and youth, but entire communities, and helped invigorate local democracy at the adult level. In 2004, for example, Makkala Panchayats were central to CWC's work facilitating 20,000 children of the Taluk of Kundapur to participate in their village's contributions to the national five-year planning process. State officials were so impressed with their work that they recruited Makkala Panchayat members to provide training to 82,000 adult Panchayat members state-wide. This is documented in detail in *A Unique Revolution*, published by CWC.³

In 2006, CWC published a *Protocol of Makkala Panchayats*, a publication designed to help local councils set up these children's and young people's councils.⁴

Mandating children's village councils: In a recent, even more far-reaching development in Karnataka, Children's Grama Sabhas (village councils) have been mandated as part of the Grama Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, in the drafting of which CWC's campaign for political decentralisation was a key

(Continued)

Box 12.2 A local government mechanism: Children's and young people's councils (cont.)

factor. This Act is radical in the way it empowers citizens and encourages their participation, including that of children, youth and women. Going forward, children's councils are to be held each year in all 6,020 Panchayats (India's lowest level of local government administration) of Karnataka, where local governments **must** listen to issues raised by children and report back to them on action taken.⁵

– Adapted from material on the Concerned for Working Children website

Notes

- 1 For example, the health sector in many Commonwealth member countries has guidance on reproductive health delivery, which focuses on young men and women.
- 2 Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland N.D.
- 3 Concerned for Working Children N.D.
- 4 Mentioned in Concerned for Working Children N.D.
- 5 Direct information from Concerned for Working Children, March 2017.

References

- Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (N.D.), 'The Commissioner's Role', available at: <https://www.cypcs.org.uk/about/commissioner/role>
- Concerned for Working Children (N.D.), *A Unique Revolution*, available at: <http://www.concernedforworkingchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/6.A-UNIQUE-REVOLUTION.pdf>