

Child and youth participation: a practical example from German development policy

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Child and Youth Participation

A Practical Example from
German Development Policy

UN - Jugendreso
- alle 2 Jahre
- 1 Thema unter
vielen



• hoch/pokern
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• strategisch-realistisch
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Kritischer
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„Photo Opportunity“



Gemeinsam ansprechen!

Maximal Forderung

→ bekannt machen
→ runter handeln

Ungewöhnliche Formate
gewinnen Aufmerksamkeit

SDG's
• Ausrichtung

The German Institute for Human Rights

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Human Rights in Practice

Child and Youth Participation

A Practical Example from German Development Policy

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Summary

Children and youth want to help shape political processes – and they have a right to do so. Involving people in decision-making from an early age promotes both their individual development and their understanding of human rights and democracy, while helping them articulate their interests and become effective advocates for them. Overall, children's and youth participation contributes to greater transparency and accountability in the policies made by adults.

This applies to many policy fields, including development cooperation: involving children and youth in the formulation of German development policy and in projects carried out with partner countries empowers young people here and in the partner countries in their roles as agents of sustainable development.

Despite this, the right to participate is too seldom realised or not realised systematically in or by Germany or by its partner countries. Structured feedback on proposals developed by children and youth at the invitation of institutions is lacking. Proposals of this kind, though they may receive considerable media attention, often have no impact on the outcome of the political process they are ostensibly a part of. A more systematic application of existing standards, such as those developed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and by specialised organisations and researchers, is needed, to raise the quality of child and youth participation.

Although there are a variety of formats for participation processes, there are no precise blueprints. This means that for each participation process – whether it takes place in Germany or within the context of development cooperation in a partner country of the Global South – it is necessary to consider which format is best suited to the purposes of the process, whether the children and youth involved can legitimately speak for a larger group, how the participation process can best strengthen them as

actors, how the process can be set up to ensure the participation of disadvantaged groups and, finally, how to anchor the participation process within the wider context to ensure the best possible results.

The opportunities for child and youth participation are myriad. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development opens up many, for instance. German development policy should recognise that young people and youth-led organisations are a part of the civil society in their partner countries and, as such, are deserving of support. This is also essential from a demographic perspective: youth and young adults constitute a substantial population group in each of Germany's partner countries, one with very few opportunities to participate in political life.

The present publication documents a participation process in the area of development policy and draws lessons for good participation from it. The process in question is a youth consultation held in 2015 and 2016 at the behest of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The ministry used the results of the consultation while developing a policy action plan for realising child and youth rights. The documentation of the Youth Consultation Forum, which depicts both its strengths and its weaknesses, illustrates how quality standards can be taken into account even in advisory participative processes of limited duration, while pointing up some of the challenges this can involve.

This publication is aimed at development cooperation specialists, interested members of the research community and local practitioners as well as at young people involved in development policy and/or child and youth participation. It is intended to encourage all of its readers to promote participation by children and young people and to make their own creative contributions to the implementation of this fundamental children's right in and by Germany.

1 Introduction

Promotion of the right of children and youth to participation through development policy activities is a building block important for good and effective German development cooperation and is also required by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Excepting the USA, all United Nations member states have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and thus have an obligation to implement it both inside and outside of their state territories, including by means of their development cooperation.¹

Children and youth want to help shape political processes – and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines their right to do so. According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention, participation is “the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children’s lives.”² Participation by children and youth promote their skills and ability to act, and it also benefits the societies in which and for which they do so. Participation strengthens young people in their role as agents of change. It generates creative ideas and encourages young people to identify with democratic processes. In situations where children and youth are at risk, participation contributes to their protection. Involving young people in decisions

that affect them enhances mutual understanding and fosters interactions based on mutual respect between young people and adults. Participation is also conducive to intergenerational justice when the political decisions at issue are going to significantly affect the future. This was one reason that the consultative processes for the Post-2015 Development Agenda deliberately involved young people.³

Political participation enhances children’s and young people’s understanding of democracy and adds to their knowledge about democratic processes. Their participation also promotes transparency and accountability in policies made by adults. Participation opportunities help children and young people become effective advocates for their interests and helps them demand their rights, for example, to education. Thus, strengthening young people’s participation is not only a requirement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: it is a “real win-win situation”.⁴ This applies in particular in the case of fragile and conflict-ridden situations.⁵

Nevertheless, effective implementation of the right to participation in or by Germany remains quite rare. One reason for this is that many adults lack of knowledge about and experience with child and youth participation. Where participatory processes are supported, there are often too few

1 While article 4 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child contains only a general reference to international cooperation, several of the General Comments by the UN CRC include more detailed guidelines with respect to development cooperation, see Simon (2012), p. 12. The Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding Germany’s last State Report also contain recommendations as to how Germany can realise children’s rights in development cooperation, see UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014a), para. 21.

2 UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), para. 13.

3 Goal 16.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasises the importance of having all social groups participate in political processes, calling on states to ensure “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”, UN, General Assembly (2015).

4 For the original German, see Olk / Roth (2007), p. 56.

5 In December of 2015, for instance, the UN Security Council passed an unprecedented resolution on youth and their role in conflict situations and in peacekeeping and reconstruction in post-conflict states. This resolution defines “youth” as young people between the ages of 18 and 29; see UN Security Council (2015).

resources and opportunities for effective participation. Moreover, there is a need for more exchange of experiences, and for the various approaches to be integrated into coherent concepts. Speaking of Germany, Waldemar Stange, a scholar well-known for his research on participation, has noted: “We must not be misled by the many individual approaches for use in specific contexts into assuming that the dimension of sustainability of participation has been adequately secured or that sophisticated, coherent overall concepts have been developed.”⁶ International development cooperation presents a similar picture: “the field of children’s participation is fragmented. Agencies tend to focus on specific forms of children’s participation, in relative isolation from other approaches.”⁷

This publication shows ways that children and youth can participate effectively in political processes. It focuses on processes in the area of development policy and on the participation of youth and young adults in the 14–24 age range. It should be noted that the participation rights formulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child apply only to young people under the age of 18. However, it is objectively necessary to include young adults in participatory processes in the development-policy context: for one, because the understanding of “youth” varies from region to region and for another, because in reality young adults in many countries of the Global South have very little chance to make their voices heard in society or to influence political decision-making despite having the right to vote *de jure*.⁸

The publication picks up on the findings of a 2013–2014 research project of the German Institute for Human Rights funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

which explored questions of child and youth participation in development cooperation.⁹ In the context of a qualitative, interdisciplinary study, the project determined what forms of participation children and youth in partner countries of German development cooperation were interested in and what kinds of decision-making they wanted to influence, as well as their views about what distinguishes good and effective participation. The recommendations to the BMZ developed in the project included the following: that the BMZ should increase its activities aimed at child and youth participation in the partner countries, that it should establish a system for the classification of its existing experiences in this area and that it should also promote participation in Germany.

“The participation of children and youth in development policy-making in Germany is both possible and important. The BMZ and the implementing organisations should be guided by the same standards that they apply for the participation of children in partner countries [...]”¹⁰

Acting on this recommendation, the BMZ funded the realisation of a youth consultation on development policy in the context of its preparations to draft an action plan for the realisation of child and youth rights in development cooperation. The consultation was realised by the project “Children’s Rights in Development Policy” at the German Institute for Human Rights, in contract-based cooperation with the sectoral programme “Realising Children and Youth Rights in German Development Cooperation”¹¹ of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

This document is an abbreviated translation of the German-language publication “Beteiligung von Kindern und Jugendlichen an

6 For the original German, see Stange (2010), p. 16.

7 Theis (2010), p. 343.

8 The UN CRC applies to children below the age of 18. The BMZ, following the definitions of the Statistics Division of the UN, defines persons under the age of 15 as children, persons in the 15–24 age range as youth, and the entire age group under 25 as young people. The African Youth Charter, on the other hand, applies to young people between the ages of 15 and 35, reflecting the different social conditions and educational pathways there, see African Union Commission (2006), Definitions.

9 See Stamm/Betzliche (2014 and 2015).

10 For the original German, see Stamm / Betzliche (2014), p. 10.

11 The GIZ is commissioned to carry out sectoral projects by the BMZ. The term “GIZ sectoral project” is used in the following for ease of reading.

politischen Entscheidungen. Ein Beispiel aus der „entwicklungspolitischen Praxis“ published in 2016 as part of the Institute’s *Analysen* series. That original publication contains an additional section which sets out the normative underpinnings of participation and describes various participation formats. It also contains the list of calls for action addressed to German development policy-makers drawn up by the consultation participants in an

appendix. This English-language version is divided into two parts. The next section, Section 2 is devoted to appraising a youth consultation on the subject of development policy carried out at the German Institute for Human Rights, as one example of practice in this area. Recommendations for German development policy based on this appraisal are formulated in Section 3.

2 The Youth Consultation Forum: A Practical Example from German Development Policy

The youth consultation presented here began with a public call for applications in May 2015 and ended in 2016 with the presentation of the outcomes of the consultation. The Youth Consultation Forum was a participation process limited in both duration and subject-matter: specifically, participation in the preparation of a development-policy strategy, and even more specifically, in the development of a development-policy action plan on child and youth rights by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Its purpose was to provide the means for youth to participate in an advisory role.¹² The process was initiated and guided by adults, and the participating young people had no possibility to monitor/audit use of the results.

2.1 Context and objectives

German development cooperation pursues a dual approach in its promotion of children's and youth rights: It seeks to integrate the rights of young people more firmly in the general and sector-based procedures and decision-making as part of its mainstreaming of the human-rights based approach. At the same time, it supports projects aimed specifically at young people in the priority areas of development policy: health, education, employment promotion, good governance, peace and security, food security and rural development. The BMZ laid down the principles for this in its position paper "Young people in German development policy".¹³ The paper describes the human rights concept of the BMZ, which applies for all German state development cooperation, and

details what this concept entails with regard to the rights of children and youth.

In 2014, the BMZ decided to highlight this aspect politically by drawing up a development-policy action plan for the realisation of children's and youth rights. The BMZ commissioned the GIZ sectoral project "Implementation of Children and Youth Rights in German Development Cooperation" to act in an advisory capacity for this process in cooperation with the German Institute for Human Rights. The BMZ also commissioned the German Institute for Human Rights to organise and run a youth consultation, for which it provided materials. The Youth Consultation Forum had the following objectives:

- Realise the right of the child to be heard and to participate
- Investigate possibilities for the permanent incorporation of youth participation in German development policy through the realisation of a youth participation process during the development of the action plan that can serve as an example.

In early 2015, the following principles for the youth consultation were formulated and then discussed among the core team¹⁴:

- Processes must be transparent and "pseudo-participation" be avoided.
- Participation must be targeted (no involvement in matters of no relevance to the process,

¹² Stamm / Bettzieche (2014), p. 11.

¹³ See BMZ (2011), p. 11.

¹⁴ Established to draw up the action plan, this core team included representatives of the BMZ, the GIZ, KfW Development Bank, the German Development Institute, the German Institute for Human Rights and a young person with specialist knowledge.

avoidance of products that have no place in the political process)

- Young people are to be understood as actors to the fullest sense, and the participatory process must be designed as a process of their empowerment
- Development of a youth-friendly format within the scope of a general consultation on the drafting of the action plan and possibly of a youth-friendly format for the monitoring and implementation of the action plan

The format chosen was that of an open participation format consisting of three workshops supplemented by virtual working groups between the workshops. The first workshop was to focus on choosing issues to work on, defining further process steps and defining research and work assignments (October 2015, two and a half days). At the second workshop, participants would combine the results of those activities and prepare their presentation. The plan was to present the outcomes and suggestions of the young people within the context of a civil society consultation on the action plan, which was to coincide with the second workshop (November 2015, two days). The third workshop was to be devoted to the evaluation of the process by participants. In addition, the young people would be able to attend the public presentation of the action plan, which was scheduled for spring 2016 (one and a half days).

It was necessary to modify these plans, however. Specifically, this was due to internal organisational processes underway in 2015 and to the thematic focus of German development policy on flight and migration. Thus, in late 2015, the BMZ rejected the original proposal to develop an action plan made up of measures to be taken in six areas of particular relevance, instead limiting the scope of the plan to the area of “flight and support for refugees”. Moreover, the civil society consultation scheduled for November of 2015 did not take place. The key calls for action formulated by the young people were therefore recorded in a short video so that they could be presented at a later date. The filming of the video and the evaluation

of the process took place at the third workshop of the youth consultation, in March 2016. In October of 2016, two Youth Consultation Forum delegates presented the video and the outcomes of the youth consultation at a meeting on the draft action plan with civil society representatives.

Experiences with child and youth participation reported by other organisations (National Coalition Germany, terre des hommes Germany, Plan International Germany, UNICEF Germany) as well as experiences from the UN Youth Delegates Programme were drawn on in the development of the process steps described below.

2.2 Target group and participant selection

The target group for the call for applications for the consultation was limited to young people active in groups or organisations in the area of development policy, i.e. members of that part of youth civil society active in development policy. Members of the target group also had some experience in political participation processes and were working or had worked on development policy issues in that context. This was intended to ensure that issues addressed at the consultation were of relevance to the young people participating. The intent was that all of the participants would be able to bring their own experiences with the issue into the discussion and be able to represent a larger group of young people; they should also be able to have a multiplier effect.

To keep the process manageable, participant age was limited to the 14–24 age group. A process that adequately addressed the needs of children under the age of 14 did not seem feasible given the resources available.

Another aim was to have the greatest possible diversity in life experience represented within the group. The Institute therefore reached out to a wide range of organisations and individuals in civil society active in the area of development policy, in an attempt to connect with relevant youth groups to inform them about the possibility of applying to

participate in the youth consultation.¹⁵ The Institute also developed additional selection criteria aimed at obtaining a selection of participants that was as balanced/diverse as possible along dimensions of immigrant descent/origin, sex, educational background, disability, and regional origin (different federal states).

For six weeks in May/June of 2015, applications to participate in the youth consultation were accepted via the Institute's website. The generally accessible and low-threshold online application was intended to expand the circle of potential applicants. To ensure that young people would know exactly what they were applying for, the website also described the objectives and steps of the participation process as precisely as possible. To encourage younger potential applicants, there was an option of submitting a joint application for two persons and applications by telephone were also accepted. Questions about applicants' reasons for wanting to participate and previous experiences in

working on development-policy topics were kept simple. Answering questions about gender, form of schooling, immigrant descent/origin or life with disabilities was voluntary. Taken as a whole, this approach was intended to reach as many young people of diverse backgrounds as possible and keep the hurdles low across the board.¹⁶

Ultimately, 24 young people were selected from among 39 applicants on the basis of the previously defined criteria. The applicant pool did not allow all of the criteria to be fulfilled to a satisfactory extent. For instance, very few applications were received from young people from federal states in East Germany, and no young people living with a disability applied. However, the young people who were selected do represent a wide range of different youth groups and organisations that work on development issues. The participants, as well as their varied experiences and expertise, were fundamental to the success of the youth consultation.



Group photo from the first workshop, October 2015 | © DIMR

15 These included internationally active child rights organisations, UNICEF, all political foundations, religious and non-religious aid organisations and development services as well as immigrant organisations. Independent youth initiatives and child or youth-related Engagement Global programmes were also contacted. Also contacted were youth association structures, such as the umbrella organisation of communal youth councils (Dachverband Jugendgemeinderäte) of Baden-Württemberg and the German Federal Youth Council (DBJR). In total, about 55 organisations were contacted.

16 The statistical analysis in June 2015 showed 468 visitors to the application website (not counting visitors returning for multiple visits).

Table 1: Diversity among participants

Selection criterion	Participants
Age	14–17: 6 18–24: 17 >24: 1 ¹⁷
Sex	Female: 14 Male: 10
Regional distribution	Schleswig-Holstein, Berlin, Brandenburg, Hessen, Bavaria, Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden Württemberg
Educational background	Not all applicants provided precise information, but Gymnasium/university attendance clearly predominated
Living with disability	none
Immigrant descent/origin	Of immigrant descent/origin: 13 Not of immigrant descent/origin: 8 No response: 3

2.3 Procedure, methods and outcomes

Team

Participation processes are also negotiation processes. Therefore, familiarity with different participation models, forms and methods as well as with the roles, processes and challenges of participation processes is essential. This recognition guided the selection of the team: the trainer chosen had previously moderated child and youth participation events and was skilled in the use of graphic recording methods to document discussions. A young adult familiar with international processes and the institutional landscape of German development cooperation as well as youth participation and youth association work was chosen as the second trainer. He also acted as a mediator between the adult organisers and the young people involved at times. In addition, two freelance practitioners with experience working with young people were on hand around the

clock to look after the underage participants. One member of the German Institute for Human Rights staff was responsible for the youth consultation, two additional staff members provided support as needed.

Diversity training

The first workshop started with diversity training. The aim was to raise participants' awareness to diverse life experiences and experiences of discrimination and familiarise them with a non-confrontational way of dealing with these experiences. For instance, part of the diversity training involved the participants drawing up a set of rules to govern their interactions with one another.¹⁸ The training was also intended to get the participants talking about the asymmetric north-south relationships and stereotypes that often shape perceptions of non-European countries.¹⁹ Another aim was to identify and discuss problematic aspects of the presumed "need for help" of people in the Global South and to get the participants to reflect on their own roles in this context. In addition, the

¹⁷ One participant was included despite being older than 24 as he represented an organisation of unaccompanied minor refugees. His background of refugee flight justified the suspension of the age criterion.

¹⁸ The exercise "Musikstühle" (Musical chairs) was used for this, see GIZ (2014), p. 85.

¹⁹ Exercise: "Ein Schritt nach vorn" (One step forward), GIZ (2014), p. 24. Discussion of the text "Meine eigene Herkunft" by Noah Sow, see http://www.deutschlandschwarzweiss.de/meine_eigene_herkunft.html (accessed 16 Jun. 2016).

identified as priorities, such as economy and climate change, could not be dealt with in detail.



Young people use cartoons to visually represent the content of discussions at the second workshop, November 2015 | © DIMR

A phase of intensive activity in the working groups began after the second workshop. The members of each working group were responsible for completing their group's sections of the document, using the material they had previously written. Google Docs was one of the tools they used to do so. The Institute provided research sources and offered advising sessions to the group via Skype. In most cases, the majority of working group members joined in on the advising sessions and individuals took over the actual drafting. In a final phase, the Institute assembled the text segments into a single document and edited it for grammar/spelling/clarity of language.

The outcomes of the consultation include a document containing several calls for action aimed at realising the rights of refugee children and youth. There are also calls that relate more directly to the participants' own experiences. The proposals place a lot of emphasis on supporting and institutionalising youth participation in Germany and in partner countries (youth advisory councils/youth forum, coordinating body for youth participation, fund for youth for the financial support

of participation projects). This reflects, above all, the experiences of those of the young people who were familiar with various forms of youth participation from their involvement in organisations or committees. The other chief concerns of the young people were educational issues, youth exchange, international networking and designing development cooperation activities based on equality.

The closed and secret" Facebook group set up early on turned into an important means of communication.²² Even prior to the first workshop, the young people and adults participating in the process used it to introduce themselves. Later, this Facebook group served as a simple and fast means to exchange information, which was used to deal with important questions outside of the workshops (scheduling queries, organisational matters, approval of results). This communication channel was supplemented by the provision of information via e-mail at key junctures in the process.

Visual representation of the outcomes

In consultation with the BMZ and the consultation participants, the organisers decided to create a visual documentation of the calls for action in a short video at the third workshop. The young people prepared the script with specialist support. Additionally, drawings done by participants during the second workshop were formatted as a postcard and e-postcard. All products were posted by the young people on the public Facebook page they set up²³ and by the German Institute for Human Rights on its website.²⁴

The visual documentation fulfilled several functions at the end of the process: It forced the young people to group their proposals into core requirements and thus to map out their central concerns. This process was methodologically supported at the workshop²⁵ and resulted in a message that is clear

22 The Facebook group was set up despite data protection concerns because, with two exceptions (who received information by e-mail), all participants were already Facebook users. In addition, the young people themselves suggested setting up a public Facebook page of their own for public relations activities at the first workshop. Participation processes must always take both the real communication behaviour of young people and data protection concerns into account. For example, a data protection concept for the use of Facebook was developed, with the participation of the state data protection officer, for the "jugendforum rlp" in Rhineland-Palatinate: Bertelsmann Stiftung (2015b), pp. 34 f.

23 1,650 hits (accessed 06 Sep. 2016).

24 See <http://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/themen/kinderrechte/kinderrechte-in-der-entwicklungspolitik/> (accessed 06 Sep. 2016).

25 Without injecting her own assessments, one adult summed up her view of the calls for action being made by the young people, who checked whether her understanding matched their intended meaning.

and recognisable for young people and adults. At the same time, the visual representation of the message once again established a connection to the personal experiences of the participants, lending the message greater credibility. In addition, some of the young people who were less enthusiastic about drafting texts were able to make a greater contribution to the visual design. Finally, shooting the video turned out to be an interesting learning experience, for example with regard to appearing confident in front of the camera.



Participants develop key messages and calls for action at the third workshop, March 2016 | © DIMR

Description of political-administrative decision-making processes

The change in the planned focus and timetable for the action plan made it necessary to explain the general decision-making paths within the BMZ as transparently as possible to the young people, so they could understand why the situation had changed. The processes of coordination between German development policy-makers and the governments of the partner countries were described. The point was to make it clear that state development cooperation does not “do projects” on its own, but instead always does so in consultation with governments in other countries. Sufficient time for these explanations was set aside in the second workshop.

In addition, the responsible desk officer from the BMZ attended the second and third workshop of the youth consultation, where she and the participants discussed, quasi off the record, the status of planning for the action plan and the ideas the young people had developed thus far. These visits were the subject of careful preparations beforehand, involving advance clarification of the objectives of the exchange of information and

mutual expectations. At this stage of the process, the focus was on getting to know each other and creating transparency. The BMZ representative made it clear that she was not able to make any political commitments but would speak openly. The young people agreed to keep the information they received confidential. Thus, the desk officer’s visits were primarily about trust-building and expressing appreciation for the process.

Cultural encounters and peer learning

The participants at the Youth Consultation Forum engaged in discussion with a number of other participation initiatives in the context of development cooperation. The 2015 UN Youth Delegate provided information about forms of participation at the UN level and spoke about the preparation of UN youth delegates for their participation in the UN General Assembly Third Committee in New York. Her experiences with negotiations on political resolutions were interesting, for example. Two representatives of the political volunteer representation of the Youth Exchange Service Weltwärts who were invited spoke in their input primarily about their experiences with decision-making processes at the BMZ, reporting on the complexity and duration of change processes in an informative manner.



Members of the Nepali youth organisation We for Change at the second workshop, November 2015 | © DIMR

At the initiative of a consultation participant, representatives of a youth organisation from Nepal (We for Change) came to the second workshop and reported on their activities in the reconstruction after the 2015 earthquake. They made a cogent and convincing case for the importance of involving young people in crisis situations. As part of the evening program of the second workshop, the participants took part in a dance workshop offered by the Berlin theatre group Refugee Club

Impulse. The group, which cooperates with numerous theatres in Berlin, is made up largely of young refugees. At the third workshop, the participants met with Hilaire Djoko, a rapper and youth activist from Cameroon, who described how he grew up and what he now does to support Cameroonian youth. Youth movements in Burkina Faso and Senegal, which have been influential in recent years, formed the development policy context here.

2.4 Evaluation and lessons learned

Two methodological approaches were selected for use in the participants' evaluation of the youth consultation. One approach involved printed questionnaires that the young people completed at the end of each workshop²⁶ and at the end of the whole process. The questionnaires drew on the evaluation criteria of the EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit.²⁷ The other approach took the form of a discussion of the process on the last day of the final workshop.²⁸ The key results from the evaluation and lessons learned are set out below and shown in Table 2, which summarises them in the form of strengths and weaknesses of the process.²⁹

As mentioned earlier, participation processes serve multiple purposes. Two objectives were particularly important for the participants in the youth consultation: empowering young people in their

role as actors and influencing political processes and decision-making. The participants' evaluation of the youth consultation process differed in relation to these two objectives.

Overall, the majority of the young people felt that participation in the consultation had been worthwhile.³⁰ They found the content interesting, felt that they were taken seriously in the discussion and were able to expand their knowledge base and network with one another – i.e., all in all, they had enriching experiences. “It makes one stronger”, said one participant, summing up his feelings at the end. A majority of the participants also felt that the standards for participation had by and large been met.³¹

Shaping the participation process as a realistic dialogue about policy

With regard to opportunities to have a real influence on decision-making, the participants' assessment was far more sceptical. The participants recognised a willingness on the part of the BMZ to consult with young people. At the same time, though, they criticised the stagnation of the process of preparing the action plan (the action plan had not yet been released when the workshop was evaluated) and identified the resulting uncertainty and lack of clarity about how the process was going to proceed as an obvious weakness of the youth consultation. They did not feel that they had been “treated like other important multipliers”.

26 The post-workshop assessments served primarily to adjust the ongoing process. This took the form of, e.g. provision of vegan meals, additional offerings in the evening programme, a clearer structure for discussions and more visual representation of background information in the form of organisational charts.

27 See UNICEF (2014), Module 3, p. 41.

28 The concluding questionnaire, sent out by post and electronically, was completed by 17 of the young people. Some participants were unable to attend the third workshop due to the change in schedule or other commitments, so 15 young people took part in the participative evaluation. The evaluation was recorded. Visual representation methods were used to capture the results of the discussion. Methods used: (i) rating the process along a four-point scale in terms of fulfilment of child and youth participation standards (fully met, partly met, met in part only, not met at all); (ii) visual representation of all major steps of the process and evaluation using the following criteria: a wagon bearing a harvest = this was good, I'll take that with me; an ambulance = could be better; bin lorry = a waste of time, dump it; (iii) Discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the consultation based on four questions: What did you expect? What was the youth consultation's greatest success? What did you not like about it? What could be improved?

29 These aspects were not included in the evaluation, as it took place prior to production of the video and publication of the outcomes of the consultation.

30 With one exception, all respondents reported that participating had been very or moderately worthwhile. There was also a high level of approval for the trainers, organisational aspects and arrangements for the inputs.

31 The only reservations voiced by the young people in this respect related to the criteria of transparency (due to the lack of clarity in the action-plan planning process), of relevance (understood here as the relevance of the youth participation from the viewpoint of the BMZ) and of inclusion (no young people from the Global South involved).

“We are investing our time and energy, but if none of our concerns are addressed, it will all have been for nothing. We would like to at least have a result showing us that we accomplished something. With volunteer activity, it is important to know that you are valued, otherwise you might not want to do it again.”

Helene Brinken

“I would have preferred it if a more senior official had come, to demonstrate that youth participation has value. In that case, the responses we got would have been of a more binding nature as well.”

Justus Schömann

The young people had originally expected to be able to present and discuss their suggestions personally and to have some “small influence” on the action plan. At the time the evaluation, more than half of them felt that the youth consultation had been unsuccessful with respect to having an influence on the action plan. While acknowledging the appreciation of their involvement expressed by the BMZ desk officer, they found fault with the fact that their efforts had not met with any response from middle level or higher level BMZ officials by the end of the third workshop.

This was another point on which participants felt the quality standards for participation processes had not been adequately met: some of the young people felt that they had not been adequately informed/familiarised with the course of the process and the procedures involved. In the view of some of the young people, particularly at the beginning of the process, the roles of all those involved as well as the purposes and limits of the consultation were not adequately spelled out. The organisers had underestimated the need for clarification. At the second workshop, roles and decision-making processes in development cooperation were therefore explained and discussed in more detail. This clarification was especially important in view of the changes in the scope and timetable of the action plan. Interestingly, in their evaluations, the young people mentioned these very insights into the policy-making process in particular as being highly informative. Some of the participants considered the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of development policy structures and processes to be one of the chief successes of the youth consultation.

In the evaluation conducted in March 2016, some young people questioned whether the Institute’s



Group work during the first workshop, October 2015 | ©DIMR

role in organising the participation process had contributed to blurring the lines of responsibility for the process and for dealing with its outcomes. In the final questionnaire, seven respondents agreed with the statement that the BMZ itself should organise and moderate a subsequent youth consultation process, as this might make the process more binding for the ministry.

Youth participation processes always involve a confrontation between the world and participation desires of young people on the one side and the logics of action of adults, who take their cues from the environment and day-to-day exigencies of political life and administration. It is possible to compensate for this to a degree by clearly describing the decision-making processes, roles, interests and lines of conflict to the young people involved. It is essential that this not result in “sheltered participation” conveying a distorted picture of real political life: “In the long term, there is a high price to be paid for presenting political processes as harmonic and conflict-free to young people in forms of participation when in truth these processes are often very sluggish and contentious.”³²

Shaping a flexible and youth-friendly process

The program for the first workshop was changed at the request of the young people on the first day to accommodate their desire to get down to preparing proposals much earlier than anticipated. Also at their request, times were set aside for them to discuss matters without adults present. In the final evaluation, the young people gave high ratings for this flexibility and for the fact that they could influence the topics discussed.

Overall, however, the program was criticised as being too compact. Some participants felt that they had not had enough time to develop suggestions and to contribute their own opinion. Their conclusion in this respect was not that elements should be cut from the programme, though, but that discussions should be better structured and that more time should be devoted to working on the issues and formulating calls for action, and

also that rooms be available for autonomous discussions.³³ As the young people saw it, work in the working groups via Skype could compensate for this deficit only to a limited extent, because it was difficult to find times that worked and only a core group was involved in completing the work assignments. One participant suggested that workshops be scheduled during school holidays because too many meetings/events were scheduled while school was in session.

Thus, aside from adequate financial resources, youth-friendly participation processes require time and flexibility above all else. This includes permitting conflicts to arise between the various parties involved in such a process and finding solutions for them, as well as enabling participants to influence planning, issues, approaches, programming and the order of events. This is challenging for a number of reasons: the short windows of time in which young people are available due to the constraints of school/university timetables, the full professional schedules of adults and the exigencies of political action. However, organisers of participatory processes and political decision-makers can learn to see the sometimes-rebellious character of youth participation as factor conducive to quality. Finally, participating adults need to be prepared for participation projects just as the young participants do: awareness of what such processes require and their role in them is crucial.

Recognising youth as part of civil society

One of the best aspects of the youth consultation in the view of the young people was the opportunity it gave them to network with other young activists and projects.³⁴

Participation processes create a space for young people to share their experiences with one another, thus creating a potential that is beneficial both for the participation process itself and for future engagement by the young people.

It makes sense to involve young people who represent a wide range of youth groups and

³² Stange (2008), p. 49.

³³ Only two respondents said that the consultation should have been shorter.

³⁴ All respondents rated exchange and networking as having been good or very good.

organisations, particularly in the case of supra-regional participatory processes of limited duration dealing with development policy issues, because representatives of this kind can also have a multiplier effect. Moreover, involving representatives from youth civil society groups increases the legitimacy of such processes. At the same time, application and selection procedures for participative processes should be low-threshold, should not be contingent on applicants' previous achievements and should take into account criteria intended to ensure diversity among participants.

Empowering youth through participation

All of the respondent participants believed that the youth consultation had contributed to strengthening their knowledge base and skills. The youth consultation created a space for them to learn, have new experiences and develop their own ideas. However, some participants would have preferred to be involved in the preliminary planning and to have had the opportunity to take on more organisational and moderation activities during the workshops.



Snapshot of the participation group taken during the second workshop, November 2015 | © DIMR

Child and youth participation is based on the principle that children and youth are “experts in their own affairs”. This premise also applies to the design of a concept for a participation process itself. If at all possible, young people should be involved in planning right from the start. This ensures that methods, materials and processes are age-appropriate.³⁵ It also allows new ideas to

flow into the participation process. Particularly helpful is the participation of young people who are in a position to channel valuable experience with previous participation into the process. This is worthwhile even for one-off participation formats, despite the additional effort it entails in the preparation phase.

“It is always helpful to have a body whose members are drawn from the pool of young participants that is charged with preparing for the process and shares responsibility for the programming. This allows participants' questions and needs to be taken up early, in the planning stage.”

Joshua Hofert

In effective participatory processes, children and young people have voices, and they raise them. Targeted knowledge transfer, the use of methods designed to structure processes and training can further improve young people's ability to formulate positions and influence political processes. Visual representation methods are often useful in helping young people identify their key concerns and relate them to their personal experiences. This can be of particular benefit to young people who – for various reasons – may have had fewer opportunities to be heard.

Young people fill the creative space that participatory processes create. For instance, the young people at the youth consultation quickly developed their own ideas for disseminating their suggestions and calls for action in public outreach work.³⁶ The organisers of a participation process should take up these impulses if at all possible. Overall, participation processes and forums should open up opportunities for young people to take responsibility for the content and organisation of their work.

Facilitating an understanding of complex issues and drawing on the lived realities of young people

With one exception, all of the respondent young people considered the issues addressed in the youth consultation to be of relevance. The majority

35 See, e.g. the establishment of a youth advisory council to advise on the “Jungbewegt” participation project carried out by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in cooperation with federal-state and local governments in Berlin, Saxony-Anhalt and Rhineland-Palatinate (2015a).

36 The follow-up on these activities was sometimes slow, but this may also be due to the changes in timetable and planning.

had applied because they were interested in developing policy issues.³⁷ Young people consider it important to get involved in global issues. Representative surveys have also shown this: a 2009 survey commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung found that six out of ten young people in Germany had thought about the issue of sustainability. Seven out of ten young people consider poverty, shortage of food and drinking water, climate change and environmental degradation to be the great challenges the world is facing.³⁸ Development issues are also important for young people across Europe. A 2014 Eurobarometer survey found that 88 percent of young Europeans aged 15 to 24 thought it was important “to help” people in developing countries.³⁹

However, in order for young people to form their own opinions about global issues, these need to be comprehensible and manageable. For instance, many young people found the discussions of which issues to work on at the first workshop too lengthy and unstructured. For this reason, some participants felt relieved by the requirement to focus on the issue of refugee flight, as it simplified the discussions.

“I thought it was good that we decided to focus on the one priority issue. We would never have managed to get through all of the issues. Besides, the topic of refugee flight is of great relevance right now. Still, it is imperative that an action plan on child and youth rights in development cooperation address other issues as well.”

Lola Katzenberger

Some of the participants felt somewhat overwhelmed by the challenging issues, others would have liked an even higher level of abstraction. However, these assessments were less about the participant age than about the individual interest in engaging in longer and more complex discussions. Overall, a majority of the respondents were not in favour of including children from younger

age groups though. There was a suggestion that more young people whose parents do not have university degrees should be involved, however.

For many participants, drafting the list of their calls for action was an important achievement of the youth consultation. The young people’s assessment of the development of key messages was also positive, almost without qualification.

Ideally, in a participation process addressing a complex policy field, young people have enough time to address the issues involved, develop and cogently draft their suggestions, and relate them to their own lives. This enables them to familiarise themselves with the issues and develop authentic calls for action. This also reduces the risk that the process will culminate in a set of cliché-ridden statements.

On the whole, when they were developing their proposals, the young people added their own accents to them by relating them to their lived realities (e.g. with a focus on education, youth exchange and networking), highlighting aspects which might have been given lesser priority by adults. However, taken together, their suggestions complement the perspectives of adults and thus can raise the quality of political and administrative decision-making and improve young peoples’ understanding of political processes and their results and promote their identification with them.

Considering the issue of diversity

Diversity was issue considered relevant to all aspects of the youth consultation and one that shaped the process in various phases. For instance, criteria intended to ensure the group’s diversity were designed for use in the selection of participants. On the whole, the quality and legitimacy of participation processes increases when participants bring diverse experiences with them with respect to age, immigrant descent/origin,

37 Other motivations were interest in children’s rights and progress towards genuine youth participation.

38 See Bertelsmann Foundation (2009), p. 6 ff. One thousand young people in Germany and Austria were surveyed for the representative survey.

39 See Eurobarometer Survey “Junge Menschen und Entwicklung – Wichtigste Ergebnisse” http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_421_fact_yf_de.pdf (accessed 09 Sep. 2016).

living with a disability, their place of residence and level of education.

Another advantage of heterogeneous groups is that it gives participants practice dealing with their own values and differences and strengthens their social competence in areas like adopting another's perspective, respect/equality, communication skills and empathy.⁴⁰ Incidentally, these are all skills necessary for effective development cooperation. It is evident that participants were able to work well together at the youth consultation: the working relationship was perceived as cooperative and based on equality and respect.

In North-South relations, diversity training is essential, to raise awareness of disadvantage and privilege and to foster critical reflection about various roles. Participants' assessments of the diversity training at the workshop varied, however. Some had already been familiar with the training content and felt it was addressed at excessive length and that its relevance to the action plan was not sufficiently great. For others, the diversity training constituted an effective introduction to the process, one that helped to clarify their own perspective on development policy.

"I found the questioning of one's own alleged expert role in relation to development cooperation to be a particularly important aspect of the diversity training. So, I thought it was regrettable that we couldn't include young experts from the Global South."

Simon Sonntag

Some of the young people also questioned whether there could be any legitimate basis for the development of policy suggestions when no young people from the partner countries were involved in the youth consultation on an equal footing with those from Germany. One could counter this argument by pointing out that youth in the Global South actually should be involved in the policy development of their own governments and have the ability to exercise an influence that way. This basic objection notwithstanding, the primary

reason that young people from countries of the Global South were not systematically included in the youth consultation was that the available resources, in terms of time and funding, were not sufficient to allow this under circumstances ensuring a high quality of participation. Nonetheless, it is still important to note that all of the participants responding spoke out in favour of involving youth representatives from development cooperation partner countries in future development policy participation processes.

It is apparent here, and in other respects, that overcoming this kind of asymmetry will require the systematic support of youth civil society, analogous to the support already being provided to adult civil society through development policy. Development-policy consultations with German civil society, for instance, derive their legitimacy in part from the fact that German organisations are in direct contact with the civil societies in the partner countries, contacts which are specifically promoted, for example, by the BMZ. This allows some German civil society organisations to shape their programming and political work in countries of the Global South to reflect the causes and concerns of civil society there. It must be possible for youth organisations to do the same and be recognised as legitimate.

Thoughts about diversity also guided the design of the cultural program. The resulting encounters with active civil society members from the Global South were an important aspect of the youth consultation for many of the participants. Another aim of these meetings was to provide a platform for people from countries in the Global South to be heard as agents in development processes, and thus to counter the stereotype concerning their supposed helplessness. In addition, culture can open the way for encounters that feel genuine and can have a lasting impact. Forms of cultural expression can encourage the creation of contacts and empathy at the relationship level, as well as foster discussion of communication difficulties, prejudices or hierarchies in a playful way and help surmount them.

40 See Bertelsmann Foundation (2012), p. 74.

Table 2: Strengths and weaknesses of youth consultation in relation to compliance with quality standards: results of the March 2016 evaluation

Standard	Strengths	Weaknesses
Transparency with respect to purposes / strategy	Clear goals and scheduled organisational steps Expertise of young people integrated in process planning	No involvement of participants in preliminary planning Process could not unfold as planned
Transparency within process	Transparent selection criteria Rapid communication via closed Facebook group, regular provision of information via e-mail	Lack of clarity about the roles of the participants for some of the young people, particularly at the start of the process Lack of clarity regarding how the process would continue
Voluntary nature	Young people able to withdraw from the process if they wished	No entry
Respect	Diversity training Cooperative, respectful interactions among all participants	No entry
Relevance	The target group for the call for applications consisted of young people already active in civil society and young people with experience in participation processes	No entry
Child-/Youth-friendly process	Trainer with appropriate qualification, second trainer young adult with expertise in participatory practice Flexibility in the process Cultural programme relevant to the subject-matter	In some cases, inadequate time set aside to develop content and for autonomous discussions Daily programme too crowded, not enough breaks
Inclusion	Low-threshold online application process Balanced ratio of participants with regard to gender and immigrant descent/origin Inclusion of representatives of relevant youth groups Accessible, youth-friendly venue Meetings with actors from partner countries on a basis of equality Video documentation of the results	Majority of young people had a Gymnasium- background, many were over 18; no persons living with a disability applied Participation of young people from partner countries precluded for organisational reasons

Standard	Strengths	Weaknesses
Safety	<p>Round the clock professional support for underage participants</p> <p>Protected communication via Facebook</p> <p>Safe and secure handling of all data acquired</p>	No entry
Support / Training	<p>Networking among the young people participating and between them and guests at the youth consultation (peer learning, exchange of experiences)</p> <p>Knowledge gain (such as structures and procedures of development policy) and new experiences (such as producing a short video)</p> <p>Well-developed list of calls for action, clearly articulated key messages and calls for action, and effective communication thereof in the short video</p>	Too little delegation of process organisation and moderation to the young people
Accountability	<p>The young people were involved in the evaluation of the process</p> <p>Dissemination of the outcomes by the young people via Facebook</p> <p>Documentation of the outcomes of the youth consultation by the German Institute for Human Rights publicly accessible (website and publication)</p>	<p>Young people were not able to present the outcomes of their work to actors in politics and administration until October of 2016</p> <p>No feedback on suggestions from senior level of the BMZ as of the end of the youth consultation</p> <p>Lack of clarity regarding how process would continue after the end of the consultation in March 2016</p>
Basic conditions	<p>Sufficient provision of resources, with funds to pay for staff and equipment necessary to carry out the consultation</p> <p>Networking with relevant external actors</p> <p>Use of variety of communication channels for internal communication and for publication of the outcomes of the consultation (press release, various relevant newsletters, websites, Vimeo, Facebook)</p>	<p>Changes in action plan planning</p> <p>No “strong” advocates for youth consultation in German development cooperation</p>

3 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on its experiences over the course of the youth consultation and on the suggestions from the young people as well as their feedback in the evaluation process, the German Institute for Human Rights makes the following recommendations to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and to the implementing organisations:

1 Take advantage of opportunities for youth participation in connection with implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The concerns of children and youth are not a niche topic in international cooperation. Many of the goals of the 2030 Agenda are aimed at helping states around the world better realise the rights of children and youth. German development policy should take advantage of the momentum and opportunity offered by the 2030 Agenda to promote the effective participation of children and young people in Germany and in its partner countries. Targeted networking among individual projects and approaches, e.g. in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by partner countries and through the national sustainable development strategy in Germany, could stimulate youth participation within the context of domestic and development policy.

2 Recognise and support young people as part of civil society

German development policy should recognise that youth and youth-led organisations are a part of civil society and should support youth civil society in its partner countries just as it does other parts of civil society there. This is essential from the perspective of demographics, as young people constitute a substantial population group in each of the partner countries, but also because this population group usually lacks sufficient opportunities for political participation. Moreover, systematic support is best suited to achieving the positive effects that people expect from child participation, i.e. promotion of democracy and social change,

peacekeeping and the expansion of resources for education, training and employment.

3 Develop a coherent concept for child and youth participation

The BMZ should develop a coherent concept for child and youth participation that allows for the use of different participation formats for different sectors and instruments. Any such concept should include the following aspects:

- establishing and supporting civil society youth groups and youth participation as a central aim of international youth exchange programs
- strengthening child and youth participation as part of human rights education in development cooperation education programmes
- promoting the rights of children and youth and also child and youth participation within the scope of local development partnerships between Germany and its development-cooperation partner countries
- specifying standards for participation in various fields of action or sectors and supporting the development of good practices.
- promoting the exchange of experience on child and youth participation among the actors in German development cooperation, the specialist public in Germany and relevant civil society and multilateral organisations, with an emphasis on the participation of disadvantaged or difficult-to-reach target groups.

4 Seek continuous dialogue with young people on development policy

Young people want to participate in development-policy discussions and processes, and they have specific ideas regarding them. They need time, resources, support and a clear framework affording them the opportunity to be heard,

feedback and a continuing dialogue. The BMZ should therefore systematically investigate ways to maintain regular and effective dialogue with youth civil society active in the area of development

policy. The dialogue should integrate the recognised quality standards for child and youth participation.

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5 Abbreviations

BMZ Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)

GIZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH

UN United Nations

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

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