**UN-Habitat’s Youth Marker**

A User’s Guide to Youth Mainstreaming the Project Cycle

# UN-Habitat Youth Marker

Quick Facts

* *By 2050, 7 in 10 people will be urban dwellers*
* *60% of all urban dwellers are expected to be under the age of 18 by 2030*
* *Currently, there are 1.8 billion people between 15-24 years of age globally*

Rapid urbanization coupled with a demographic youth bulge - the urban youth bulge - can provide opportunities for socio-economic development in cities if planned and accounted for in local and national development plans. However, in lieu of appropriate responses and opportunities for youth, the merging of these two trends may on the contrary contribute to expanding informal settlements and poverty, rising inequalities, new forms of marginalization and social exclusion.

Youth is a cross-cutting issue for UN-Habitat, reflecting the commitment UN-Habitat has to ensure that people who would otherwise be marginalized because of their age have a voice in the process of urbanization. This is reinforced as per the following Governing Council (GC) resolutions on youth: 19/13 - Enhancing the Engagement of Youth in the Work of UN-Habitat, 20/1 - Youth and Human Settlements, 21/6 - Urban Youth Development, 22/1 - Strengthening the Development of Urban Young People, 23/7 - Urban Youth Development: The Next Step.

Constituting the majority of the population in many rapidly urbanizing countries, youth need to be taken into account for urban development to be inclusive. As a means to this end, UN-Habitat’s projects should reflect how youth are likely to be affected by the issues at hand, and further, how youth can be involved in the project cycle to address them. The Youth Marker developed by UN-Habitat is intended to help in this process.

# The Youth Marker Explained

Responding to evaluation findings which point out the need to strengthen youth mainstreaming in UN-Habitat’s work, the Youth Marker has been developed as a tool to support UN-Habitat staff in mainstreaming youth into the project cycle. The Youth Marker is developed to support project formulation and review, providing a self-assessment tool for developing project proposals.

The Youth Marker will also be a key instrument for project approval, allowing for systematic review and standardization of requirements for youth mainstreaming, helping define the essence of youth mainstreaming, a concept which may be unclear in the context of urban development.

Meanwhile, on a larger scale the youth marker can also provide UN-Habitat with data on how far youth is being mainstreamed in projects across the agency. This will help establish clear baselines and measurable progress on youth mainstreaming in UN-Habitat.

# 1 Youth Aware

**YOUTH MAINSTREAMING**

* Initiatives that have gone through a youth sensitive analysis in its conceptualization phase, taking into account youth’s interests and needs aiming at decreasing societal inequalities throughout implementation and evaluation, are youth mainstreamed.
* The primary focus of the initiative does not have to be youth, but their interests and stakes in the project have been accounted for to ensure there are no negative impacts for youth as a consequence of implemented activities.
* *Analysis of the situation for youth in the context of the project*

A youth analysis can help uncover linkages between the project and youth within the targeted community. Conducting a youth analysis entails collecting data relevant to youth, either qualitative or quantitative.

Analyzing an issue or a problem from the standpoint of youth is the first step towards addressing the youth dimensions of urban development. This analysis interprets data and information about a situation from a youth perspective, i.e. the issues specific to youth in their given roles, activities, needs and available opportunities.

* *Youth recognized as stakeholders, experts and/or target group*

Youth often fall into the categories of both adults and children in terms of national legislative frameworks. Furthermore, youth are often not recognized as having the experience and knowledge required to meaningfully contribute due to their age.

Youth do however have a well of knowledge and experience that can have an enormous impact on project implementation. Recognizing youth as stakeholders, experts or a target group is the first step towards addressing barriers to youth’s development such as lack of access to decision-making and unequal access to resources and opportunities.

The youth analysis can facilitate mapping the skills, capacities and roles of both young women and men in communities, enabling the project to draw upon these for successful implementation.

* *Plans to collect age disaggregated data in project document or logical framework*

Youth are most often defined by their age, and constitute the majority of the population in developing countries. In order to uncover disparities and tailor project interventions to address existing needs in the population it is critical to ensure the data collected is age disaggregated.

The age definition may however vary from country to country, and may not match that of cultural norms in a given context. The United Nations uses 15-24 years old as a standard statistical definition for youth.

# 2a Youth Sensitive

* *Youth Strategy is linked to the logical framework with specific activities, indicators, outputs and expected accomplishments, addressing youth’s rights*

There is no convention or charter on youth rights per se, however as youth fall into the categories of both adults and children in terms of human rights, youth mainstreaming should aim for the realization of their universal human rights on equal basis to that of others.

A youth analysis as part of the project formulation will help identify issues that the project can address with regards to youth. It is important that these are integrated into the project in a way that will go beyond the project document itself and translated to real life as tangible and measurable actions.

“Urban public space is critical for youth to use for shelter, innovation, recreation and entrepreneurship.”

* *Financial inputs are assessed to ensure youth benefit as intended*

Building on the youth sensitive analysis, the main issue to address during the planning phase of the project is how it will affect youth. This is where you are likely to identify issues that may need to be addressed differently with respect to young people, a process which is useful to ensure the project will not aggravate existing age inequalities and that barriers and constraints preventing youth from benefitting the project have been addressed.

To this effect, project objectives should reflect the youth analysis and state the changes in terms of youth empowerment and equality. Activities (and budgetary provisions) can be used to reflect youth’s inclusion and participation, such as for example youth-led activities and initiatives to engage young people.

* *Monitoring and evaluation strategy includes a youth perspective*

To effectively monitor aspects related to youth during project implementation and evaluation, youth indicators developed in planning process should be used to measure progress while consulting with youth and adults separately to obtain their specific perceptions of impacts. Data should be disaggregated by sex as well as age, while consultations with actors working on and with youth should be held regularly.

For evaluations, an impact assessment on youth specific issues and dynamics as related to the project should be a component of the evaluation’s terms of reference.

It may be worthwhile to monitor youth’s and adult’s access to and control over resources and access to services as well as changes in youth’s and adult’s participation in decision-making processes. Discriminatory attitudes towards youth and specifically towards young women, girls, teenage mothers, etc. may be prevalent, affecting your ability to achieve successful results unless accounted for.

“Young women often face dual discrimination due to their gender and age.”

Youth-Led  
Development

* *Youth should define their own development, goals and objectives*
* *Youth should be given a social and physical space to participate in development and to be regularly consulted*
* *Adult mentorship and peer-to-peer mentorship should be encouraged*
* *Youth should be role models in order to help other youth to engage in development*
* *Youth should be integrated into all local and national development programs and frameworks*

# 2b Youth Transformative

* *Project is designed based on principles of youth-led development, with youth effectively empowered to design, plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate project activities*

Youth-led development is an effective tool with significant benefits for cities. Empowering youth to become change agents within the city has the power to transform attitudes, mentalities and actions among youth and others, particularly the regional and local governments who are closer to them, into a positive and productive influence for the city. It can help cities become more inclusive in addressing socio-economic barriers, reducing social isolation of neighborhoods and communities, and allowing youth to access opportunities.

A youth transformative project effectively empowers youth to define their own development goals and objectives through consultative methods or mechanisms that encourage youth to take the lead and implement their own projects. An example of this is UN-Habitat’s Urban Youth Fund which provides small grants to youth-led organizations working to better their cities. The lessons learned from these projects feed into normative work at the global level which in turn influences the development agenda.

The project should support the development of youth’s capacity for participation, leadership, self-esteem, confidence and self-organization, something which can be undertaken in collaboration with youth-led civil society organizations. This supports long-terms capacities being built at the local level, providing youth with the tools needed to affect long term change as agents for sustainable urban development.

**Further Reading on Youth Mainstreaming:**

Youth Empowerment for Urban Development: Mainstreaming Youth in UN-Habitat Programmes (UN-Habitat, 2012)

Cities of Youth, Cities of Prosperity (UN-Habitat, 2013)

The State of the Urban Youth Report 2012/2013 (UN-Habitat, 2013)



CASE 1:

*A project seeks to upgrade housing in a slum area of Nairobi, focusing solely on construction of shelter. The project concludes successfully, having reached its target of 100 upgraded houses. However, as one of the side-effects of the project, because of the improved standard of living the rents increase drastically, leaving significant impact on youth who no longer can afford to pay the rent.*

How can this problem be avoided? Conduct an analysis inclusive of youth when designing the project to avoid a negative side-effect. Youth on average have lower incomes than the remaining population, and linking the project on housing to other initiatives and contextualizing within a framework of economic development could help ensure youth also benefit.

CASE 2:

*An intervention by UN-Habitat has invested several million dollars in improving access to clean water in an informal settlement in Bangladesh. However, a few months after completion, the evaluators come back to the area only to find the water pipes having been removed. The local inhabitants share a story of young men who took the pipes with no law enforcement in place to react.*

Young people are an integral part to any community, and may play informal roles that go beyond being a student, a job seeker or a new vote to the local democracy. These roles are often overlooked by formal structures, including the UN, making it difficult to assess how a project will really impact youth. One way of going about this is to directly involve young people to have a voice throughout the project cycle, ensuring ownership is in place and helping the intervention target the root causes of problems it seeks to address.

**Do I still need to do youth mainstreaming?**

**My project does not target youth…**

Projects that are technical of nature may not seem to be of any relevance to youth, thus leaving out an analysis of how your intervention may or may not impact this group.

Although this assessment can save you from initial headaches, you may want to reconsider based on the two following scenarios:

# Case Studies