



YOUTH DRIVING CHANGE

– best practices from
international youth-driven partnership

*Based on lessons learned from the 'Youth Culture and Diversity' project
funded by the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme*

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Best practices and lessons learned were collected in collaboration with the five youth-led partner organisations and not least with young volunteers from across Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Denmark.

The team of consultants from the Nordic Consulting Group who authored this report would like to convey our greatest appreciation to all the engaged and inspiring young people who took the time to share their story and experiences with us in our collection of lessons learned and best practices of the Youth Culture and Diversity project.

Copenhagen, November 2020



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8 ANSTÆNDIGE JOBS OG ØKONOMISK VÆKST



9 INDUSTRIEL INNOVATION OG INFRASTRUKTUR



10 MINDRE ULIGHED



11 BÆREDYGTIG OG LOKAL

k-Arabisk nerskabsprogram



af unges
ltagelse i
et

STIVALFOTO

ET

XX-årgenerne. Vi prøver en kopi
allik, så du kan dele det. Du skal bare
bringe.

SAY
CHEESE!



Vi kan ikke ændre
værdierne, men
79 LANDE

HJÆLP OS MED AT LÆRE DIG AT KEN
Lager af de bedste brøde og boller i verdensklasse vil du forberede dig ved
beskrive dig heldt.

JEG ER FRA
JEG ER
JEG ER



1. INTRODUCTION

The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented recognition of youth as active citizens and agents of change among development actors. However, this acknowledgement does not always translate into action. Far too often, actors claim to *work with and for* youth, when in reality they treat youth as a target group or act on *behalf* of youth. The side-lining of youth prevents the unlocking of their potential to take part in the development of their societies and shape the future that belongs to them.

This publication explores how meaningful youth participation and influence can be achieved through international youth-driven partnerships, which allow youth to take the lead on project design and implementation. It presents a collection of best practices and methodologies that can serve as guidance and inspiration for organisations that are part of or wish to establish youth-driven international partnerships. Further, it offers universal and general inspiration to organisations that wish to strengthen youth participation, influence, and inclusion in their work. We strive to make the best practices presented accessible to a broad range of actors including local and international civil society organisations. More specifically, this publication examines the following three questions:

1. How to establish and maintain international youth-driven partnerships?

This section is relevant if you represent an organisation interested in establishing an international partnership – or currently engaged in one – and want youth to take the lead on decisions, planning and implementation of a joint project.

2. How to ensure youth participation and influence?

This section is relevant if you represent an organisation or entity wanting to give youth more opportunities to actively participate in and have an influence on your activities.

3. How to ensure youth outreach and inclusion?

This section is relevant if you represent an organisation or entity wanting to reach out to more young people and to create an environment that is welcoming and provides more young people with an equal opportunity to participate.

The best practices build on evidence on young people's engagement from the Youth Culture and Diversity project funded through the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme. The project is implemented by the Danish Youth Council in partnership with the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Initiative in Egypt, the East and West Center for Sustainable Development in Jordan, Les Scouts Tunisiens in Tunisia, and the KFUM-Scouts in Denmark. The publication is commissioned by the Danish Youth Council and authored by consultants from the Nordic Consulting Group (NCG).



All partners in the project share a mutual understanding of how youth-led initiatives provide young people with a unique opportunity to claim their rights and address issues affecting them. The drivers of the project are young volunteers who are involved in all aspects of the project, from developing the project strategy to implementing activities on the ground through a youth-to-youth approach. **The Ambassadors for Dialogue** project in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Denmark has developed a unique method to engage young people in dialogue with each other and to assist organisations working with youth in bridging differences and welcoming diversity through dialogue. The **Future Leaders** project has empowered young people to take the lead on processes of social change in their communities.

The approach and methodologies of the two projects have been developed over a decade. An important part of the Youth Culture and Diversity project strategy is to document lessons learned and best practices in order to inspire and influence authorities, civil society organisations and institutions to improve youth inclusion and empowerment and to enhance diversity in their organisation. This publication is intended to contribute towards this aim.

COMPONENTS OF THE YOUTH CULTURE AND DIVERSITY PROJEKT

The Youth Culture and Diversity project builds on two distinct, long-standing partnerships between five organisations working with youth in the Arab region and in Denmark.

» **The Ambassadors for Dialogue project.** Since 2009, the Danish Youth Council and its partners have trained young volunteer ‘Ambassadors for Dialogue’ in Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Denmark. Their aim is to break down prejudices, promote diversity and create a dialogical culture among young people.

The Ambassadors for Dialogue are known for their creative dialogue tools, which have spread through manuals and training sessions to civil society organisations in the Arab region and Denmark.

» **The Danish-Tunisian scout co-operation: the Future Leaders project.** The KFUM-Scouts in Denmark have partnered with Les Scouts Tunisiens, Tunisia’s largest civil society organisation, since 2008. The partners focus on further developing the Tunisian scout organisation as a platform for young people’s civic engagement and for educating young people as democratic citizens. Their efforts have achieved broad recognition and were even highlighted by the former Tunisian prime minister Habib Essid for their role in protecting young people from extremism and radicalism.

(For more information about the two projects, see the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme website: www.dapp.dk/en/the-danish-youth-council-duf)

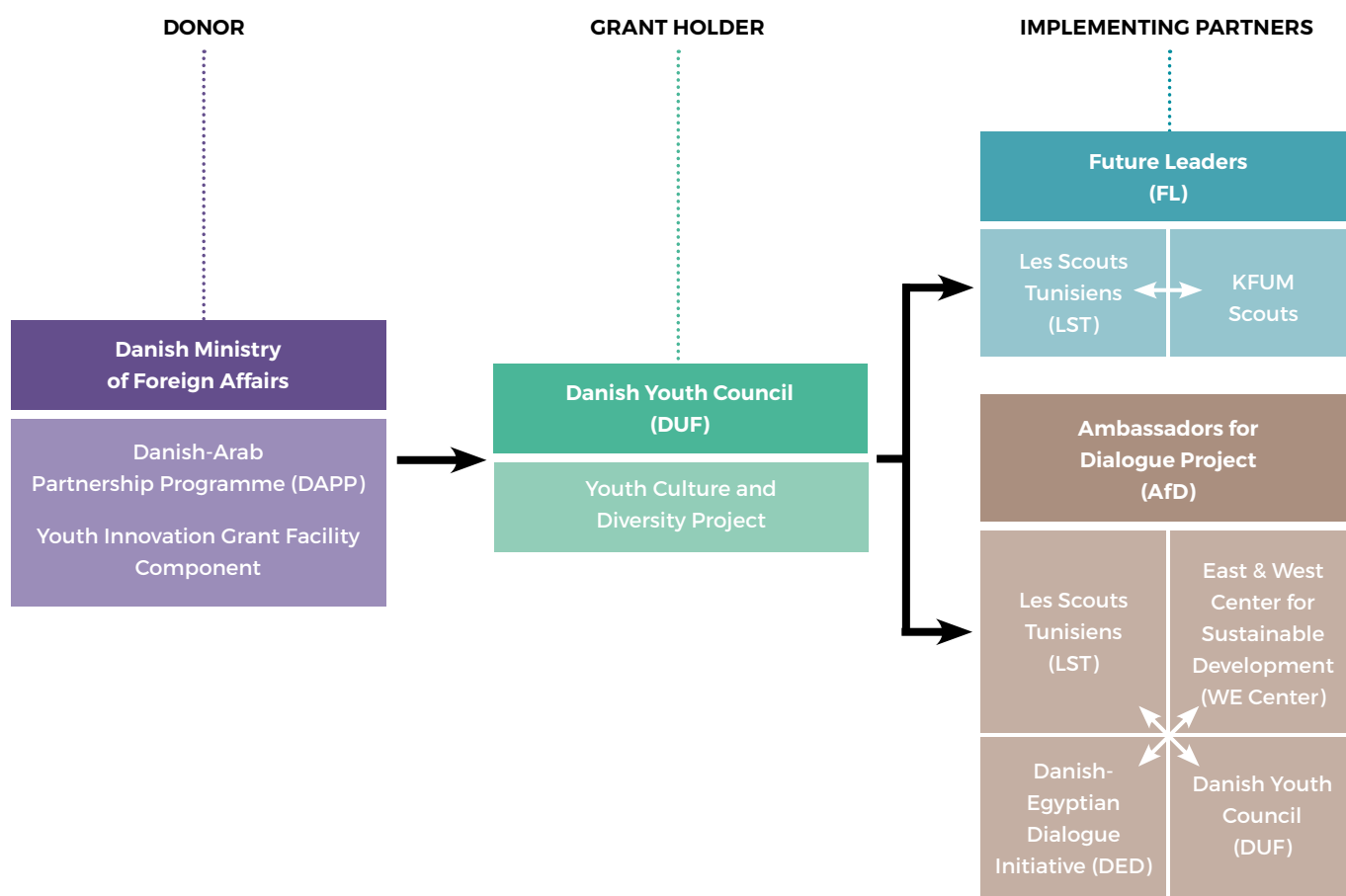


Figure 1 Organisational overview of the Youth Culture and Diversity Project

THE YOUTH CULTURE AND DIVERSITY PROJECT PARTNERS

The Danish Youth Council (DUF) is an umbrella organisation with more than 80 Danish child and youth organisations. The member organisations range from scouts to political youth organisations, voluntary social organisations, cultural organisations, environmental organisations, organisations for youth with disabilities and many more. DUF has been part of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme since 2006.

The Danish KFUM-Scouts is a Danish scout movement with almost 30,000 members with the majority being children and youth. The Danish KFUM-Scouts works to empower children and youth to become independent, honest and democratic citizens who respect their society and nature. Since 2008, the Danish KFUM-Scouts have partnered with Les Scouts Tunisiens in project activities with the purpose of engaging youth to transform their societies. On the Youth Culture and Diversity project, The Danish KFUM-Scouts are involved in the Future Leaders project, continuing their long-term partnership with Les Scouts Tunisiens.

Les Scouts Tunisiens (LST) was established in 1933 and is the largest civil society organisation in Tunisia with more than 33,000 members, mainly children and youth, in 24 districts and with 340 scout groups. Their mission is “to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.” Les Scouts Tunisiens is a partner on the Ambassadors for Dialogue project and partners with the Danish KFUM-Scouts on the Future Leaders project.

The Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Initiative (DEDI) is an intergovernmental body established in 2004 by the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme in order to promote political, social, and cultural understanding between Denmark and Egypt, Europe and the Arab region, with dialogue as the main tool. DEDI has been an implementing partner on the Ambassadors for Dialogue project in Egypt since 2017.

The East and West Center for Sustainable Development (WE Center) was founded in 2008 in Jordan and has since then worked to strengthen the institutional capacity for dialogue, diversity and youth inclusion in the country. WE Center has managed the Ambassadors for Dialogue project in Jordan since 2009 and has additional experience managing projects with other international and national partners and funds.



2. WHY WORK WITH YOUTH?

WHO ARE THE 'YOUTH'?

There is no universally agreed definition of 'youth' or a 'young person,' but definitions are usually made by specifying an age bracket. It is important to remember that youth is a highly diverse social and demographic group. Age is only one of many intersecting aspects of identity, which can shape a person's life. Other conditions such as gender, race, citizenship status, social class, educational attainment, and religious and cultural background also have a significant role to play. Therefore, working with youth requires an appreciation of the fact that they do not constitute a homogenous group with fully aligned interests or identical needs.

Figure 1 - Who are we talking about, when we talk about 'youth'?

This chapter sets the scene for working with youth globally and in the Arab region and explores reasons and reflections on *why* it is so important to work *with* and for youth through international partnership projects.

2.1. RECENT TRENDS – TOWARD GREATER YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE

The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented focus on youth as active citizens and agents of change in the international community. For instance, the first ever UN youth strategy entitled 'Youth 2030: Working With and For Young People' was published in 2018.¹ The vision of the strategy is "A world in which the human rights of every young person are realized; that ensures every young person is empowered to achieve their full potential; and that recognizes young people's agency, resilience and their positive contributions as agents of change." The UN World Youth Report emphasises that young people are not merely beneficiaries but 'active architects' of the 2030 Agenda, and that youth interventions directly contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.²

Youth participation and influence is also at the heart of the Danish strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action. Born out of a recognition that "*young people represent a huge resource and valuable democratic agents of change as entrepreneurs and as active citizens*", the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, like the UN youth strategy, emphasises that development should be "*of and with young people, not merely for young people*".³

While the international development community has recognised youth as 'positive contributors' and 'agents of change,' there is still some way to go in terms of acting on those words.⁴

1 UN (2018): "United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030: Working With and For Young People"

2 UN (2018): "World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

3 Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2017): "The World 2030: Denmark's strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action".

4 Pozzoboni, K.M, and B. Kirshner. (2016): "The Changing Landscape of Youth Work: Theory and Practice for an Evolving Field - Chapter 1: Voluntary Association, Youth Voice, and Collective Action", P. 12.

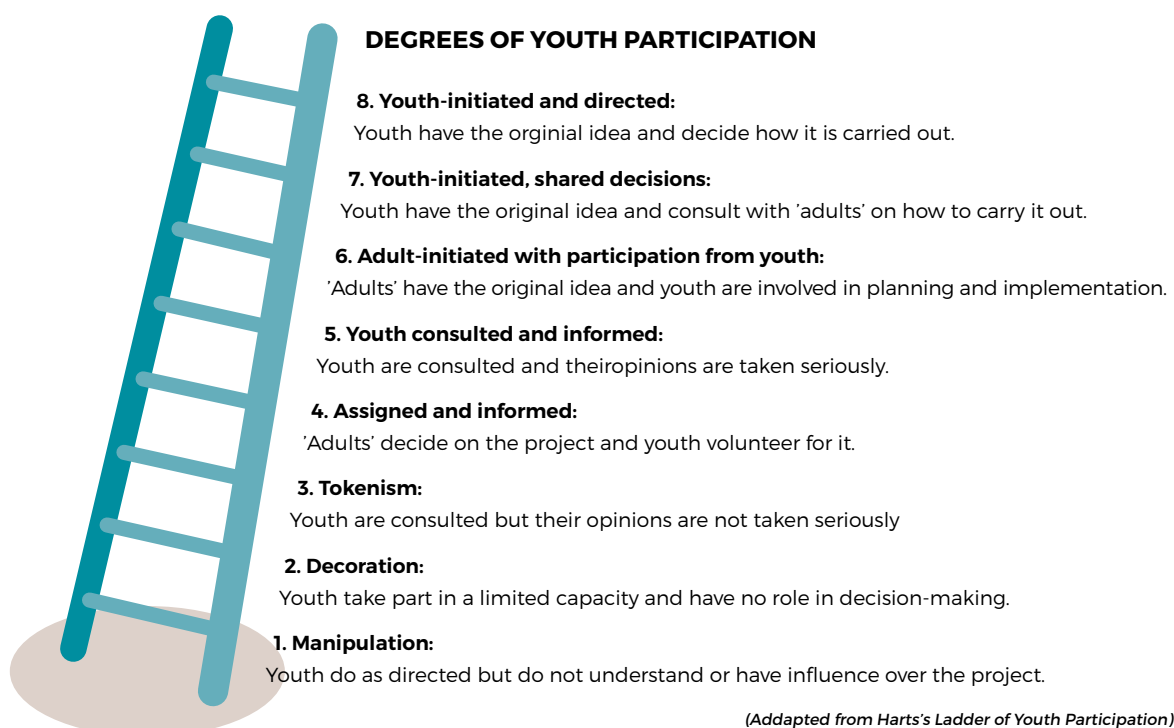
WHY WORK WITH YOUTH?

Youth currently make up approx. 16% of the world population and a much larger proportion of the population in many developing countries. The large generation of youth in the Global South represents a demographic opportunity for development if the right policies are in place to harness their potential. The extent to which this large group of young people will become healthy and productive members of their societies depends on how well governments and societies meet their social and economic needs. Far too often countries fail to put in place policies which support youth inclusion, resulting in sky-high levels of youth unemployment, marginalisation, and civil unrest. Rather than 'leaving youth behind', an approach which challenges prevailing social norms and recognises the value of investing in and working with youth can mitigate these issues and contribute significantly to the development of a country.

Figure 2 - What is the value of working with young people?

The 2019 DUF report 'Meaningful youth participation towards 2030 and beyond' points to common pitfalls in current youth participation initiatives in global governance, noting that involvement of young people often takes on a consultative form, rather than opening up for youth to set the agenda or to hold decision-making power.⁵ Further, while the commitment to more meaningful youth participation has been stated in the past, the UN World Youth Report notes that historically political statements have not been backed by financial support.

Youth interventions can use different approaches and have different purposes. The extent to which youth are in charge of decision-making depends on the organisational culture and the context, among other things. When aiming to ensure youth participation, it makes sense to distinguish between different degrees of youth participation as illustrated in the figure below. *The ladder of youth participation* does not represent a sequential process, but rather



⁵ DUF (2019): "Meaningful youth participation towards 2030 and beyond: Legitimate national youth councils as platforms for youth participation and facilitators of sustainable change." P. 21.

different levels at which organisations can engage with youth. While the lower tiers (1-3) should be avoided, it is useful for project coordinators and organisations to reflect on where they are in terms of youth involvement and, consequently, how they can improve.

2.2. YOUTH IN THE ARAB REGION

The proportion of youth in the Arab region continues to rank among the world's highest, with 65% of the total population under the age of 30.⁶ Young people in the region generally find themselves outside the sphere of political and social influence. They tend to be sidelined, due to the lack of interest shown by decision-makers and society at large. Unleashing young people's potential requires a holistic approach, including investment in opportunities of meaningful learning and education, access to decent jobs, and platforms for social and civic engagement. Unfortunately, for most young people, access to these is currently limited, particularly for certain groups such as young women, refugees and youth with disabilities. UNICEF finds that *“Adolescents’ and youth’s sense of citizenship is compromised by violence, social norms and other factors. There are limited opportunities for them to collaborate and develop a sense of shared responsibility and few spaces where they can create and enjoy their own world.”*⁷

The large generation of young people in the Arab region have the potential to become agents of change and contribute to a more prosperous and stable future for themselves and their communities. Against the backdrop of the Arab uprising and regular, wide-spread demonstrations, it has become clear that many young people in the region want to see fundamental change and social reform. According to the Arab Youth Survey, which is conducted annually, almost half of youth consider leaving their country, while their concerns revolve around corruption and economic hardship⁸. Their level of trust in key social institutions that influence their daily lives is low, and there is a need for better platforms to engage in social issues, as civic inactivity or exclusion contribute to marginalisation. This is backed by UNICEF⁹, who conclude that the level of civil engagement among youth in the Arab region is the lowest in the world, with only 9% of young people across the region volunteering with a civil society organisation – a small proportion when compared to their Danish counterparts, of which 39% report being engaged in volunteer work¹⁰. This is not to say that young people in Denmark face no barriers to meaningful participation and influence on their employment situation and society at large. There continues to be room for improvement, especially for young people who are marginalised. This is also the case in the Arab region, where as UNICEF puts it: *“most countries in the region continue to marginalise the most vulnerable adolescents and youth, particularly those who are young women, poor, refugees or who have disabilities, impacting their ability to realise their full potential. This inequity prevails across the region and is at the heart of many of the challenges encountered by adolescents and youth.”*¹¹

6 OECD (2019): “Seven Key Findings from the Youth Governance Survey, MENA-OECD Governance Programme”

7 UNICEF (2019): “MENA Generation 2030”

8 ASDA' A BCW (2020): “Arab Youth Survey 2020”

9 UNICEF (2019): “MENA Generation 2030”

10 Center for frivilligt socialt arbejde (2018): “Tal om unge og frivillighed”

11 UNICEF (2019): “MENA Generation 2030”

3. METHODOLOGY

The preparation of this best practice guide was initiated shortly prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a consequence, when the team embarked on their journey to meet with the young people in the Youth Culture and Diversity project countries, data collection was abruptly cut short. Therefore, the process took on a different form, with most of the data collection taking place online, rather than face-to-face.

Given that the Youth Culture and Diversity project is youth-led and strongly values equal participation, the team has carried these principles into the overall approach guiding this publication. Throughout the whole process, the team has taken strides to ensure strong ownership of the publication among the young volunteers, enabling the process to be somewhat youth-led. To this end, the team has worked in close collaboration with project coordinators and youth volunteers from start to finish. They have played an essential role in defining the overall objectives of the assignment and providing continuous dialogue and feedback throughout.

A series of interviews, both individual and group-based, were carried out. Findings and best practices were collected and triangulated through interviews with youth volunteers, coordination team members across all five organisations, youth who have been targeted by



Youth Culture and Diversity project activities, and partner organisations who have been involved with the project. Furthermore, an extensive document review has been carried out, covering existing project reporting and documentation, as well as external publications related to youth-driven interventions and the context for youth in the four partner countries. The team has applied an iterative approach, through which the team has been in regular contact with project coordinators. The process has culminated in a validation workshop with the project team across all four countries and five organisations, with the view to validate and enhance the ownership of findings and identified best practices.

3.1. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

As was noted in the Introduction, this publication highlights three parameters of youth-driven interventions, and therefore the chapters covering best practices have been structured as follows: Chapter 4 covers how to establish and maintain international youth-driven partnerships; Chapter 5 covers how to ensure youth influence and participation; and finally, Chapter 6 provides best practices on how to ensure youth inclusion and outreach. In each of these chapters, cases have been provided from the Youth Culture and Diversity project, which are intended to contextualise the best practices and give concrete examples of how they can be operationalised. While the best practices can stand on their own, the final section, Chapter 7, provides concluding remarks with a set of cross-cutting take-aways for organisations working with youth in the Arab region and beyond.

4. HOW TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH-DRIVEN PARTNERSHIPS?

YOUTH-DRIVEN PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships may vary in the extent to which they work *with* or *for* youth. For instance, some partnerships may work with youth-related activities and services that benefit young people. But for a partnership to be truly youth-driven, young people must take the lead on project decisions, planning and implementation and have an actual say in the direction of the project.

Box 1 - What is a youth-driven partnership?

Young people are living in a globalised world, and despite their immense diversity, both within countries and across borders, there are certain aspects related to being young that are shared. For example, across most countries, there is still a need for greater youth participation and influence in civic life, and many young people share the struggle to have their voices heard. Linking youth up across borders can build solidarity, support the establishment of a broader youth agenda, and foster a greater understanding of different cultures. Additionally, many young people experience significant personal development when partaking in international exchanges and find meaning in being part of global movements.

Forming and maintaining effective youth-driven international partnerships take time and effort from all involved parties. Organisations that wish to enter into this type of partnership should be aware of the differing cultural and contextual factors and the different understandings of the role of youth in a project, among other things. While working in an international partnership may be challenging at times, by working together, a good partnership supports mutual learning and can lift the project to a whole new level. Simply put, working together accomplishes more than working alone.

So then, why is it important that the international partnerships are youth-driven? As discussed in the introduction, youth-related projects often take on a consultative form but fail to give young people full agency. When youth take the lead, it ensures that interventions are relevant to the needs and interests of young people themselves. In addition, they gain a deeper and more direct experience in cross-cultural communication and cooperation.

4.1 QUICK OVERVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES

BEST PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT YOUTH-DRIVEN INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS:

- ✓ Establish a 'third culture' guided by joint values and ground rules to ensure equal participation and project ownership
- ✓ Ensure that your partnership and organisation allow youth volunteers to set the agenda and drive the project forward
- ✓ Meet regularly, either face-to-face or virtually, to keep the partnership running smoothly.
- ✓ Prioritise cultural exchanges to increase motivation and inspire new approaches and activities
- ✓ Foster ownership and a strong sense of shared identity among youth volunteers for long-term commitment and impact.

4.2. UNFOLDING BEST PRACTICES

In this chapter, best practices on how to establish and maintain youth-driven international partnerships will be unfolded. Cases from the Youth Culture and Diversity project have been included in order to exemplify how a best practice can be implemented.

✓ ESTABLISH A 'THIRD CULTURE' GUIDED BY JOINT VALUES AND GROUND RULES TO ENSURE EQUAL PARTICIPATION AND PROJECT OWNERSHIP¹²

Partnering on youth-driven projects entails understanding each organisation's culture for including youth and volunteers in activities and decision-making processes. More broadly, it is useful to start the partnership by learning some fundamental things about each organisation involved.

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

Getting to know and understanding your partner is essential. Adapted from DUF's *Position Paper on Partnerships*, questions that are relevant to ask include:

- What is the mandate of each organisation, and which values is it based on?
- What activities do they perform, and who is funding them?
- How is the organisation structured and led, and at which levels will the partnership be anchored?
- Does the organisation have other partnerships?
- Is the organisation youth-targeted or youth-led?

¹² Adapted from Reid, S. (2016): 'The Partnership Culture Navigator: Organizational cultures and cross-sector partnerships.' Oxford: The Partnering Initiative, p. 9.

CASE

DEVELOPING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING AND APPROACH: THE DIALOGUE HANDBOOK

Dialogue is the guiding principle of the Ambassadors for Dialogue project, drawing on the observation that “dialogue can help overcome prejudice and create understanding of other people’s perspectives and horizon and enable reaching across an abyss of difference, as long as we see and recognise each other for what we are: different youth but all human beings in the same world.”¹³

To really embody an equal partnership requires continuous, open and honest dialogue between partners and a willingness to learn and adapt. In 2012, the Ambassadors for Dialogue partners and volunteers embarked on a journey to document their understanding of what dialogue is and the tools and methods that can support it. This is how the idea for the Dialogue Handbook was born, cataloguing the methods used in the project.

The Dialogue Handbook was updated in 2019 to capture recent developments, as the methodology used in the project continues to evolve with new volunteers entering the project. The updated version of the handbook was published in 2020 and shared with stakeholders. It can be downloaded for free from the website of the Danish Youth Council:

www.duf.dk/materialer/produkt/the-dialogue-handbook

There is no ‘one size fits all’ when establishing partnerships. Therefore, it is important for partners to find the approach that fits their particular partnership. Defining what you hope to get from the partnership and clarifying expectations are equally important. To make sure that the partnership starts off on an equal footing, it can be useful to create a shared working culture that is specific to the partnership, rather than assuming the normal working culture of any one partner. Establishing a shared or ‘third culture’ to guide the partnership requires that the partners together define which values and principles should guide the partnership, e.g. in relation to decision-making or the role of young people in the project. Particularly in a youth-driven partnership, placing youth behind the steering wheel from the onset of the partnership, ensures that young people’s needs, aspirations, values, and ways of working are ingrained in the process.

In the Youth Culture and Diversity project, for example, there are two distinct ways of working in a partnership, both striving to ensure youth participation and influence. While the two approaches are founded on the same principles of equality, trust and openness between partners, there are also differences. The Future Leaders partners have found it effective to mirror each other’s structures and hierarchies, so that the partnership can be anchored in the respective organisations at many different levels. On the other hand, the Ambassadors for Dialogue partnership has a flat structure, where planning is carried out in circles guided by dialogical approaches to working together. In both cases project protocols are used to guide how decisions are made, founded on the principle that all partners have an equal right to participate in and influence decision-making.

¹³ DUF (2020): ‘The Dialogue Handbook – the art of conducting a dialogue and facilitating dialogue workshops’

CASE

LAYING THE GROUND RULES FOR HOW TO WORK TOGETHER

- » The Ambassadors for Dialogue partners have created a 'Working together manifesto', which embodies the principles of equality, awareness and openness and emphasises the responsibilities of each member of the coordination team to be actively involved and raise issues, as well as their equal opportunity to be involved in decision-making. When all voices should be heard, communication and decision-making can be a time-consuming process. Therefore, another important element of the manifesto is the aim to specify a clear timeframe on issues that need collective input.
- » The Future Leaders partners have also agreed on a 'Rules and Procedures' document for the partnership, outlining the mandate that is connected with specific tasks. The clarity that the document provides allows for delegation of responsibility and greater involvement of youth volunteers.



ENSURE THAT YOUR PARTNERSHIP AND ORGANISATION ALLOW FOR YOUTH VOLUNTEERS TO SET THE AGENDA AND DRIVE THE PROJECT FORWARD

For a partnership to be youth driven, young people's ability to participate and influence the partnership and project is essential (please note that the following chapter discusses youth participation and influence in more detail). Therefore, it is important for partners to look inward and create spaces for youth volunteers to have a seat at the table and an active role in planning, decision-making, facilitation, reflection and evaluation. Too often, engagement with young people is more consultative – in which case, youth are not setting the agenda or making decisions. Youth volunteers bring a lot of energy, enthusiasm and other capacities to a project and are hungry for experience and ownership. It is important to understand their motivations for participating and to create spaces for them to do so meaningfully.

CASE

FROM BEING A YOUTH VOLUNTEER TO BECOMING A YOUTH LEADER

Volunteers in the Future Leaders project are given a high level of responsibility in managing the project and the partnership, including of financial and project management aspects. Their capacity to carry out project activities is strengthened, which is an empowering experience.

- » For the Danish **KFUM-Scouts**, some volunteers felt their participation in the project gave them the confidence to run for election of the KFUM board. Not only does this support project anchoring at a high level in the organisation, but it also supports youth influence in the organisation as a whole.
- » For their Tunisian counterpart, **Les Scouts Tunisiens**, the Future Leaders project has also provided young people with a platform to learn, e.g. concrete tools to take on leadership roles in the project, in the organisation and beyond. In fact, after participating in the Future Leaders project, young Tunisians have gone on to be elected as representatives in the World Scout Movement.

CASE

YOUTH PARTICIPATION & INFLUENCE IN THE YOUTH CULTURE AND DIVERSITY PROJECT

There are many good examples of youth participation and influence in the Youth Culture and Diversity project, where all of the partners have taken strides towards ensuring that youth volunteers have a seat at the table and a voice when it comes to planning, decision-making, facilitation, reflection and evaluation.

- » One example of a dynamic approach that enables young volunteers to try on different roles is the project 'circle' set-up used by the **Egyptian Ambassadors for Dialogue team**. The different roles in the project are not fixed but rotating on a voluntary basis, allowing young people the opportunity to engage in many different roles related to project coordination and implementation.
- » In Jordan, the Ambassadors for Dialogue team introduced the concept of volunteer project coordinators, which enables young volunteers to take on an active role in running the project. Inspired by their Jordanian partner, the **Tunisian Ambassadors for Dialogue** have established a similar approach, whereby young people have clear entry points for participating in decision-making and project implementation.
- » In a similar way, the **Future Leaders** project ensures the volunteers' ownership of the project by involving young people in all layers of coordination and project management, which enhances their confidence and ability to take on leadership roles.



MEET REGULARLY, EITHER FACE-TO-FACE OR VIRTUALLY, TO KEEP THE PARTNERSHIP RUNNING SMOOTHLY.

Coordination meetings or exchanges provide the time and space for identifying areas for improvement or where meaningful collaboration between the partners can be expanded. While – it is important to work on anchoring the partnership broadly across each organisation, partnerships tend to be driven by individuals, for whom regular meetings build familiarity, trust and understandings of how to work together. Even in more established partnerships, regular communication is important and can help build a sense of community between project coordinators who may be the sole persons responsible for the project in their own organisation.

On the ground, practices and understandings of the project evolve, and therefore meetings also serve as opportunities to recalibrate expectations and survey needs for adapting project implementation. Over the years, partners of the Youth Culture and Diversity project have prioritised meeting in-person regularly on a rotational basis, giving each partner the opportunity to host the others and to visit them in turn. The project also ensures regular meetings and exchanges for volunteers, who are invited to participate in some coordination meetings.

CASE

THE DANISH CONCEPT OF 'FAMILY SCOUTING' IN THE TUNISIAN CONTEXT - FUTURE LEADERS

In Denmark, the concept of family scouting is well-established and has been implemented by the KFUM-Scouts for many years. Family scouting are scouting activities which involve children and parents together. In 2019, strides were taken to introduce this concept into the Tunisian context, given that young parents – and in particular young mothers – often do not have the opportunity to participate actively in civil society. Family scouting activities were piloted by 11 local scout groups across six districts of Tunisia and was met with positive feedback from the participants.



PRIORITISE CULTURAL EXCHANGES TO INCREASE MOTIVATION AND INSPIRE NEW APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES

When taking part in an international partnership there are often a lot of opportunities to learn from one another, particularly through cultural exchanges. During cultural exchanges, dialogue and learning is key. For many young people, taking part in international activities can give a sense of pride related to being part of something bigger. Within the Youth Culture and Diversity project, it is evident that cross-cultural exchanges have added value, both in terms of motivating young people to take part and in shaping the project through cross-border inspiration. While cultural exchanges are built into this project – it is after all called the Youth Culture and Diversity project – other projects can certainly benefit from in a similar manner supporting learning and inspiration through exchanges.

There are good examples from the Youth Culture and Diversity project of inspiration between countries – such as the introduction of the Danish 'family scouting' concept in the Tunisian context under the Future Leaders project (see case above). Likewise, the Ambassadors for Dialogue project, which encompasses both national, regional and international activities, has succeeded in replicating and scaling ideas and projects as a result of knowledge-sharing between volunteers and coordinators. The project ensures regular exchanges through international and regional dialogue seminars, where young volunteers come together to learn and share experiences. Given that the project operates across several levels – from local to international – it's important to systematise learning, so that lessons from all levels are captured and shared.



Exchanges let you see your blind spots. It also boosts creativity and involvement in the project. You also need to touch base with partners on what the concrete methods of the project are, as these are always evolving on the ground.

Project Coordinator, Egypt



 **FOSTER OWNERSHIP AND A STRONG SENSE OF SHARED IDENTITY AMONG YOUTH VOLUNTEERS FOR LONG-TERM COMMITMENT AND IMPACT.**

Volunteer retention and continuity are universal challenges in youth-driven partnerships that rely heavily on the engagement of volunteers. To ensure that young people feel engaged and committed to the cause, ongoing communication and follow-up with each volunteer is required (see also Chapter 5). While it may involve a significant amount of time and resources, it is important to foster a sense of belonging and shared identity, as this contributes to the quality and impact of the project. Both projects are powerful examples of how young people's identities are shaped by and through their engagement. Many of the volunteers characterise their relationships with other volunteers and their roles within the partnerships and organisations as formative, providing them with learning that will follow them throughout their life and career. Involving young people in defining shared values and a working culture from the very beginning of a project fosters a sense ownership and belonging, which is conducive to their continued participation in a project. For others that are looking to foster such a strong identity and attachment from volunteers involved in their project, the Youth Culture and Diversity project provides an important lesson: you should ensure that young people have ownership and create an environment where they gain a sense of belonging, and then the other things will follow.

CASE

KEEPING THE AMBASSADORS FOR DIALOGUE PROJECT ALIVE

In 2017, the Ambassadors for Dialogue faced a period without funding for the project. However, this did not shut the project down – the team of volunteers continued their work and kept it alive and running until the project once more started to receive funding in 2018. This goes to show the powerful impact that the approach of the the Ambassadors for Dialogue project has on the volunteers and the lengths that they will go to pass the methodology on to others – whether there is funding or not.

5. HOW TO ENSURE YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE?

MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

“The reach of young people involved must be broad and representative. Young people should not only be ‘included’ but allowed space to participate and have an influence on par with other stakeholders. This means that young people should not only have a voice but also agency.”

Source: DUF (2019) “Meaningful youth participation towards 2030 and beyond.”

Box 2 - Defining meaningful youth participation






Young people’s participation in activities, projects and organisations can take a broad variety of forms. However, as has been noted, all too often actors claim to work with and for youth when in reality they speak on behalf of youth, resulting in a form of tokenism. Any truly youth-led process must take as its starting point an understanding of young volunteers and practitioners as active and able agents who, with the right tools, can run and oversee projects themselves. Naturally, this can happen with support and help from project staff but should be done in a manner that allows youth volunteers to discover what it means to lead and



shape projects. Such responsibilities tend to foster confidence and knowledge that youth will bring with them into other jobs and positions they will occupy in society. In this way, youth participation is both a means and an end that all projects should strive towards. The Youth Culture and Diversity project is a good example of how to balance individual support to young volunteers, on the one hand, with delegating virtually full responsibility of projects without direct interference on the other.

5.1 QUICK OVERVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES

BEST PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT YOUTH INFLUENCE AND PARTICIPATION:

-  Embed youth in formal and informal decision-making structures in a transparent manner
-  Entrust youth with responsibility for project design and implementation based on their individual aspirations and ideas
-  Nurture the aspirations of youth and tailor capacity development activities to each volunteer.
-  Create space for reflection and learning with youth
-  Design activities that actively involve external stakeholders and decision-makers to increase influence of the project.

5.2 UNFOLDING BEST PRACTICES

In the following chapter, best practices to ensure youth participation and influence will be unfolded. Individual cases have been included in order to exemplify how a best practice can be applied.



EMBED YOUTH IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES IN A TRANSPARENT MANNER

In the Arab region, the emerging focus on young people as ‘agents of change’ has yet to be coupled with support systems and structures that enable meaningful youth participation. Young people have unique skills and capacities, and while these can be further developed through ‘hands on’ experience, it is rare that communities, organisations and decision-makers actively create spaces or entry points for young people to participate meaningfully.¹⁴ To harness these skills and capacities, meaningful youth participation needs to take place. It is necessary to establish empowering platforms for young people to raise their voices and express concerns and ideas, both in organisations and at a societal level. Importantly, this holds true for both formal participation – e.g. board positions – as well as informal participation – e.g. a work environment where youth have influence on decision-making.

¹⁴ Affa, R. (2011): “Youth as Agents of Change. In Arab Youth: Civic Engagement & Economic Participation.” Beirut: UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Arab States

CASE

TRANSPARENT RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR FUTURE LEADERS PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Youth Culture and Diversity project provides useful and concrete examples of how to involve youth directly in project decision-making, which can easily be replicated in projects elsewhere. As an example, the Future Leaders volunteers and management co-created a 'Rules and Procedures' document for the project, which clearly outlines who is *responsible* and *accountable* for what and who must be *informed* or *consulted* regarding any aspect of project implementation. This is a powerful way to ensure transparency and accountability for all involved in the project, and the document facilitates a common understanding of roles and responsibilities among new and old members.



ENTRUST YOUTH WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION BASED ON INDIVIDUAL ASPIRATIONS AND IDEAS

Capacity development and opportunities to take on responsibility for project activities should go hand in hand. While it has been mentioned already with regard to supporting youth-driven international partnerships, it bears mentioning again: this means that youth should be entrusted with responsibility to set the agenda and design and implement projects based on their individual aspirations and capacities.

Considerations about ownership should take place already when designing projects. Ideally, youth volunteers should be directly involved in the design of the project. If this is not the case, then it is necessary that objectives, activities and milestones are loosely defined and avoid becoming too fixed or detailed. By having a flexible and open design, projects can adapt to changing needs and better respond to the ideas of young people as they are formulated.

The Youth Culture and Diversity project partners have made an effort to build a project framework that is conducive for youth to be actively involved in agenda-setting, rather than having a set of pre-defined goals with a checklist of activities. One way the project has enabled youth ownership is through support for small-scale projects, where individuals or groups of volunteers identify issues, choose partners and implement activities on their own (these will be further covered in Chapter 6). While small-scale projects do have to comply with some ground rules, volunteers have the mandate to implement them with support from the coordination team.

”With time, we have developed a clear understanding of how we work best together, and we are always learning. We have reached a level where it feels as though we are one big family, with the volunteers and coordinators.

Project Coordinator, Tunisia



NURTURE THE ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH AND TAILOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO EACH VOLUNTEER

Young volunteers have an appetite for learning and acquiring new skills. This means it is beneficial that responsibility for projects and activities are accompanied with a plan for their personal development. As ‘youth’ in reality refers to a highly diverse group of young people with different backgrounds and ambitions, it is important for any project to take each person’s particular hopes and dreams as a point of departure. This can be done by tailoring capacity development to the unique personalities and skill sets of young volunteers. When personal development plans are produced in collaboration with young people, the potential for project impact is likely to increase as volunteers feel appreciated and acknowledged as capable agents of change. Thus, youth ownership and project effectiveness go hand in hand!

Equally important, young people can apply the skills and capacities they develop in a project in other contexts, such as in their family, community, workplace or political engagements – provided there are entry points that allows them to participate meaningfully. In other words, when young people are given responsibility for a given project, their confidence grows, and they come to realise their potential for influencing society as a whole.

The Youth Culture and Diversity project provides a strong example of willingness to let youth develop in their own pace and direction. A lesson from the project is that listening to and nurturing the aspirations of each volunteer increases their influence on the project and contributes to their effectiveness.

CASE

INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLANS, EGYPTIAN AMBASSADORS FOR DIALOGUE

The Egyptian Ambassadors for Dialogue project coordinators co-create personal development plans with Dialogue Ambassadors to ensure that activities and objectives are tailored to their individual needs. This includes a matrix that provides an overview of the ambassador’s skills and indicates specific areas where the volunteer could focus on strengthening hers or his capacities. This is accompanied by an evaluation workshop facilitated by the coordinators, in which volunteers get the opportunity to reflect on their progress and undertake self-assessments. This approach gives young people a sense of direction with their activities without taking over responsibility of their projects.



CREATE SPACE FOR REFLECTION AND LEARNING WITH YOUTH

Youth-led projects are characterised by being responsive to the thoughts and ideas of young people, incorporating and developing them as the project moves along. Making youth active participants from the design stage to the evaluation of activities is important but requires constant attention and flexibility. This is a vital aspect of adaptive programming, for which it is necessary to establish platforms that are easy for youth to access and participate in. Such spaces may take a variety of forms, and there is no one size fits all for how to do it. Some spaces may allow individuals to evaluate personally and share ideas, whereas others may be more focused on group learning and discussion. As many youth-driven projects rely on groups of volunteers, it is important that platforms for collective learning exists. Establishing regular learning activities and evaluations in close collaboration with youth promotes their sense of ownership, while also providing entry points for youth to shape the project along the way.

Similarly, conducting follow-up reflection sessions with and by youth at every stage of a project stimulates learning and unleashes the potential of young volunteers in the process.

CASE

ANNUAL MID-TERM RETREATS AND END-TERM EVALUATION, EGYPTIAN AMBASSADORS FOR DIALOGUE

On a biannual basis, the Egyptian Ambassadors for Dialogue coordination team invites all volunteers to go on a retreat to evaluate the progress of their branch of the Youth Culture and Diversity project and discuss the future direction. This creates direct and accessible entry points for all involved in the project to influence decisions and hold the coordination team accountable. Due to the learning and knowledge-sharing that takes place across the Youth Culture and Diversity project countries, Les Scouts Tunisiens decided to adopt a similar practice to increase the involvement and influence of their volunteers.

CASE

YOUTH-LED LEARNING ACTIVITIES WITH KFUM-SCOUTS AND LST

To gather success stories and changes resulting from the Future Leaders project in Tunisia, volunteers undertook an evaluation of results by use of the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach in collaboration with their peers from across the country. This entailed a participatory and inclusive process in which youth were able to identify changes and share lessons with each other, feeding into future project planning. Additionally, the collection of success stories provided the Future Leaders project with a youth-friendly way to communicate results externally and raise awareness of the project.

Such follow-up sessions are also important for cultivating the curiosity and commitment of young people. Further, when youth are in charge of learning-related activities, the process can empower them – both as facilitators and in terms of sharpening their understanding of how projects can be changed or improved. It is important to keep in mind that learning activities and workshops are more likely to be productive if they involve an interactive and participatory component that moves beyond reporting and draws on the personal experiences of young volunteers in a creative format.

There are good and concrete examples of this in the Youth Culture and Diversity project (see case below), where young people were in charge of gathering information on the results and changes resulting from the activities implemented.

An important learning aspect is to generate evidence and learning approaches that support youth participation and influence and encourage other actors to adopt these. One way that the Youth Culture and Diversity project partners aim to do this is through documentation and dissemination of new methods and approaches on how key stakeholders can enhance youth participation and influence – e.g. in the form of the ‘Dialogue Handbook’ and the ‘Civic Edutainment Manual’.



DESIGN ACTIVITIES THAT ACTIVELY INVOLVE EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION-MAKERS TO INCREASE INFLUENCE OF PROJECT.

As previously noted, young people often find themselves outside the spheres of organisational and societal influence. Therefore, it is of value for youth-driven projects to engage and work with decision-makers, who may act as gatekeepers both within organisations and in the community. Especially working with decision-makers at the local or national level can be challenging and may require patience and long-term planning to be effective, as they may be less responsive to the thoughts and ideas of youth.

There are many different ways that youth-driven projects can influence other young people, partners and communities. In the Youth Culture and Diversity project, training sessions

CASE

USING DIALOGUE TO STRENGTHEN EXISTING YOUTH-LED PROJECTS IN JORDAN AND EGYPT

- » At the WE Center in **Jordan**, dialogue activities from the Ambassadors for Dialogue project were applied to projects managed by another department in the organisation, working with sports and the arts to prevent violence and hate speech. Dialogue was subsequently approached as something to reflect on and learn from the activities, which enhanced the perspectives of participants through new ways of discussing their projects.
- » The national team of Ambassadors for Dialogue in **Egypt** decided to partner up with the youth-led network Y-Peer that works with sexual and reproductive health. By introducing Y-Peer to dialogical methodologies over the course of several days, facilitators in the organisation gradually learned to appreciate their utility in their own work and activities. This proved especially valuable for Y-Peer as the organisation is working in a field that is perceived as controversial by some members of society and discussions on the subject can be difficult.

Both cases demonstrate the versatility of dialogue as a methodology that can be adapted to any specialised field. When led by youth, it can help them improve their confidence and overcome aggressive attitudes towards a given subject.

and workshops were two successful methods for building recognition of the value of youth influence in local partner organisations and institutions (e.g. by training of facilitators). Based on these experiences, it is evident that partnering with organisations that use different approaches or work in other fields is mutually beneficial and can increase the partner's appreciation of the value created by meaningful youth participation (see cases below).

The Youth Culture and Diversity project provides strong examples of how building relations with relevant stakeholders and potential partners at the community level using project activities can help challenge common misperceptions of youth as incapable or inactive. In the project, it is also evident that longer-term partnerships and repeated exchanges between organisations further boosts the impact of a collaboration.

CASE

FUTURE LEADERS INSPIRING THEIR COMMUNITIES TO PLANT TREES AND IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

In the Gafsa region of Tunisia, where air quality and environmental issues are a concern for young people, volunteers from the Future Leaders project launched an initiative to plant trees in their local community, close to a local school. The initiative also included the establishment of an environmental club at the local school and disseminating knowledge about environmental issues, such as pollution. This led to a collaboration with the local school and greater awareness of the issue in the local community. Subsequently there was an uptake of the idea by community members and other schools, who followed the Future Leaders example by planting their own trees.

6. HOW TO ENSURE YOUTH OUTREACH AND INCLUSION?

6.1 QUICK OVERVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES

OUTREACH & INCLUSION IN YOUTH PROJECTS

Outreach refers to the ability of organisations/projects to reach young people or groups of young people who would otherwise not have access to these opportunities. Outreach activities may have a youth-to-youth approach, e.g. through social networking, public events, or small-scale activities targeting specific groups of young people.

Inclusion refers to the creation of equal opportunities for young people within a project/organisation - that is, ensuring that they are equally welcome and able to participate.

Source: Adapted from the European Youth Parliament definitions

Box 3 - Defining outreach and inclusion

It is a common challenge for most organisations to ensure that project activities are in fact reaching all the people they were intended to reach. Organisations tend to focus on engaging young people in large cities, not least because universities and other educational institutions offer accessible entry-points to reach youth. Hence, urban youth have, in general, far more opportunities for getting involved in meaningful activities than youth living in rural areas. In addition to the rural-urban perspective, other barriers for youth participation include issues related to gender, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, and language. Therefore, considerations and plans as to how activities can reach young people who would otherwise not be included are important measures to take from the start of a project.

BEST PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT YOUTH OUTREACH AND INCLUSION:

- ✓ Develop a plan for outreach, define target groups, and assess your progress regularly
- ✓ Decentralise project activities - move activities to areas where there are currently less opportunities for young people to participate and engage
- ✓ Explore new types of partnerships to expand activities to new areas, ensuring their relevance and local anchoring
- ✓ Increase public awareness of project activities through innovative and creative methods
- ✓ Foster an open, accessible, and respectful social environment for activities, based on cultural understanding ('safe spaces'), guided by policies on how to interact with each other and roles that ensure all participants are equally able to participate.

6.2 UNFOLDING BEST PRACTICES

In this chapter, best practices on how to ensure youth outreach and inclusion will be unfolded. Individual cases have been included in order to exemplify how a best practice can be applied.

DEVELOP A PLAN FOR OUTREACH, DEFINE TARGET GROUPS, AND ASSESS PROGRESS REGULARLY

A best practice that has emerged in the Youth Culture and Diversity project implementation over the years is that developing an outreach strategy and implementation plan is a useful tool for ensuring a project's outreach. Following years of working primarily in Cairo and Alexandria, the Ambassadors for Dialogue project in Egypt took a large step forward in 2019 in terms of the number of volunteers and youth reached outside of these cities. Prior to expanding their activities to new areas, the youth volunteers of the project were asked to develop a strategy and to set targets for the outreach activities. The strategy and plan that the Ambassadors for Dialogue in Egypt drafted aimed to establish activities in areas where the opportunities for young people are very limited or non-existing (see the case below). The strategy entailed the facilitation a large number of youth-to-youth dialogue workshops in other regions of Egypt. Drafting a successful outreach strategy and plan relies on a sound understanding of the particularities of each regional context. Subsequently there were follow-up and outreach visits to the young people who had participated in the workshops and were now eager to use the skills gained to engage more young people in their area.



CASE

DECENTRALISATION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- » Over the last years, the Ambassadors for Dialogue project in **Egypt** has worked on improving outreach and recruit an increasing number of ambassadors and youth volunteers from outside Greater Cairo and Alexandria. Before, the Youth Culture and Diversity project's presence in Upper Egypt was limited, because there were few Ambassadors for Dialogue coming from these areas. At that time, Ambassadors for Dialogue from other governorates were required to travel there to provide the assistance needed for facilitation, which created a number of logistical challenges. Due to a relevant outreach strategy and plan for decentralisation of activities, three governorates in Upper Egypt are now almost able to function on their own because of the increasing numbers of Ambassadors for Dialogue trained there. It is a huge step forward for Ambassadors for Dialogue to be present in an increasing number of locations across the country. The decentralisation of activities enabled Ambassadors for Dialogue to facilitate 10 workshops in 10 different governorates as part of the Ambassadors for Dialogue's 10-year anniversary celebration.
- » The Future Leaders in **Tunisia** are benefitting from the comprehensive outreach of Les Scouts Tunisiens across the country. The Future Leaders train young scouts to become Democratic Change Agents and Social Entrepreneurs, who are encouraged to facilitate advocacy campaigns or develop social initiatives in their local communities. To that end, local Young Voices Forums have been established, which provide training to young people across the country to qualify them for the national Young Voices Forums. This provides the opportunity for hard-to-reach youth to participate in national initiatives as well as creating a platform of democratic change agents who can initiate and facilitate change in more remote parts of the country.
- » A young female participant in the Future Leaders project was interviewed and provides a good example from Tunisia. Living outside of Tunis, she did not have access to youth activities in her area and hence was happy to participate in a national Young Voices Forum facilitated by the Future Leaders project. At the end of the Forum, she was elected President of the national Forum and later became a Future Leader herself. As part of her work in the Future Leaders project, she managed to establish a scout club for girls between 13-17 years, as the scout groups in her region were only for boys.



DECENTRALISE PROJECT ACTIVITIES - MOVE ACTIVITIES OUT TO AREAS WHERE THERE ARE CURRENTLY LESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE AND ENGAGE.

An important step to improve outreach is to decentralise project activities, so that more activities take place in areas where there are less opportunities for young people to become actively engaged. Further, to ensure that youth activities reach young people who otherwise would not have access to activities, it is necessary to consider how the design or planning of the youth-led activities strengthen outreach and inclusion of a diverse demographic of youth, for example in terms of gender, ethnicity and religion..

CASE

LOCAL PARTNER NETWORKS TO FACILITATE OUTREACH

In Jordan, outreach activities in the northern part of the country resulted in a good number of young people from the region becoming Ambassadors for Dialogue. One of them managed to establish the NGO Opinions without Borders in his hometown and is implementing activities there. The WE Center in Jordan established a partnership with the organisation, thereby expanding Ambassadors for Dialogue outreach activities to the north of Jordan.



EXPLORE NEW TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND ACTIVITIES TO NEW AREAS, ENSURING THEIR RELEVANCE AND LOCAL ANCHORING.

Another best practice, which underpins outreach and inclusion activities, is to collaborate with local partners and draw on their existing networks to expand activities to new areas, thereby ensuring their relevance and local anchoring. There are good examples of this from the Youth Culture and Diversity project, e.g. from Egypt. Due to the security context, the Ambassadors for Dialogue were not able to travel to certain regions of the country, however, by drawing on their network of like-minded partners who operate across the country, project activities were nevertheless able to reach these regions. Likewise, the WE Center in Jordan benefitted from and managed to expand their youth-led activities by linking up with local partners' networks. Local partners are familiar with the local area and can provide guidance and ensure the relevance of dialogue activities in that particular area. Further, they can support and facilitate contact to local venues where workshops and other activities can take place and help draw in young people from their communities. Finally, local partners can ensure that activities become locally anchored, as exemplified in the case from Jordan below.

Exploring new partnerships with relevant organisations, communities and governmental institutions is a valuable measure to take, both in terms of reaching new or broader target groups, and to inspire and support partners to adopt youth-friendly approaches in their work and organisations. By seeking partnerships and collaboration with a range of different external partners, the Youth Culture and Diversity project message – of peaceful coexistence and



After a dialogue workshop at our school in one 10th grade class, it became obvious that the dynamic between students had changed to a much more inclusive environment. Also, us teachers now use the dialogue method, and we would like to expand the dialogue workshops to include all upper level grades.

High School Teacher in Jordan.

young people's right to engage in inclusive democratic processes – is amplified and carried out to different parts of society (as seen in the quote below).

The Youth Culture and Diversity project partners have been successful in exploring new types of partnerships, such as the collaboration in Egypt with UNFPA's Y-peer network, as described in Chapter 5. Other important partnerships have been established in both Tunisia and Jordan, including with schools, high schools and universities.

The Youth Culture and Diversity project partners further aim to build good relations and partnerships with key stakeholders such as local authorities and ministries to support them in adopting youth inclusive approaches and methods. A proven method to do so is to conduct training of facilitators, who work in key stakeholder organisations and following the training can replicate the Ambassadors for Dialogue's work within their own organisation. One example of such a collaboration is in Egypt, where the Ambassadors for Dialogue team has promoted dialogue as a relevant method in the Ministry of Youth when they work with young people and has educated a number of staff to become facilitators.



INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES THROUGH INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE METHODS

In order to reach a wider and more diverse audience of young people than those already targeted by a project, it is useful to consider how to create and raise awareness of the project and its activities. Across all Youth Culture and Diversity project countries, the project is generating a variety of innovative methods to reach more and diverse young people. A clear best practice has emerged, namely, to harness young people's creativity to raise public awareness of the project through innovative and creative activities, ranging from public events to social media campaigns and small-scale projects. The youth-led activities demonstrate the empowerment of young people to take action, which can inspire and perhaps also empower other young people to trust the power of their own voice.

Creating public events to raise awareness is a very interesting and relevant method because of the potential to reach a large and diverse audience. The Ambassadors for Dialogue project illustrates how many different formats public events can have, engaging the audience e.g. through art, theatre or the media, touching on many different kinds of subjects. Public spaces are many, and a public event can be facilitated by only one or a few young people, making implementation both low in cost and in resources. All that is needed is a specific topic for dialogue or an innovative idea to spur dialogue on various subjects.

The box below presents a few examples of creative and innovative public events facilitated by young people as part of the Youth Culture and Diversity project.

Social media is also a powerful platform for communication in the Arab region, as a great majority of the population, and youth in particular, are connected and use social media on

CASE

REACHING THE PUBLIC AND INCREASE AWARENESS

- » One very innovative method used by the Ambassadors for Dialogue in **Jordan** was to gather a few young people with bikes and ride around the city of Aqaba. As biking is unusual in Aqaba, the event had an element of surprise, which drew a lot attention and resulted in many people engaging in dialogue with the ambassadors.
- » Another example is the Peace March that volunteers initiated on the International Day of Peace. The Peace March was an invitation to youth and other members of the public to have dialogues on peace, fighting extremism and the role of women in society – while walking.
- » A final example from **Jordan** is the 'taxi dialogues'. A few volunteers reached out to taxi drives and convinced them to help spread a message of tolerance and peaceful co-existence through dialogue with passengers.
- » In **Tunisia**, the Future Leaders took the initiative to facilitate seminars to raise awareness among local organisations on 'youth and citizenship' and 'volunteering in Tunisia' and to share good practices on how to work with youth.
- » Also in **Tunisia**, the volunteers have initiated several public campaigns such as the 'Say Something' campaign to raise awareness about violence in Tunisia.
- » A final example from **Tunisia** is a large public event that LST organised in collaboration with UNHCR on the topic of refugees called 'Stand with Refugees'. The event included workshops and concerts and was held at the centre of Tunis on Avenue Habib Bourguiba.

a regular basis. Likewise, many organisations and governmental institutions communicate with the public on Facebook. Social media is able to create links between national, regional and even global events, connecting young people in dialogue across borders. In Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt, Facebook constitutes an important communication and outreach platform for the Youth Culture and Diversity partners and through a focused scaling of activities and campaigns on Facebook, they have managed to reach more than 25,000 people. In Egypt, for example, Facebook has been used to promote a small movie about the Ambassadors for Dialogue project and the Egyptian team of Ambassadors, which received considerable attention. Further, the continuous presentation and promotion of upcoming events have enhanced outreach by reaching a large number of young people with no prior knowledge of the Ambassadors for Dialogue and the Future Leaders.



FOSTER AN OPEN, ACCESSIBLE, AND RESPECTFUL SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT FOR ACTIVITIES, BASED ON CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Fostering an open, accessible and respectful social environment is key to ensuring that all youth feel respected and included in the activities. This is connected with the best practice on ensuring youth ownership and a sense of belonging (see Chapter 4). The Ambassadors for Dialogue and the Future Leaders have had great success in establishing ground rules that enable an environment where youth form strong interpersonal relations and gain a sense of belonging. Youth participants in the Future Leaders project stress that the project fosters a sense of having value as an active citizen and participant, by virtue of the inclusive and respectful social environment. A key point to mention in relation to ensuring the accessibility of the project is that the barriers that youth face to joining a project must be addressed. For example, it is often necessary to cover transportation cost for those who are travelling long distances in order to participate.

At the heart of the Ambassadors for Dialogue workshops is the facilitation of open, honest, and judgement-free conversations between participants. It is echoed by both the Ambassadors for Dialogue and Future Leaders that when bringing young people together to talk about issues of concern to them, it is important to know the background of the participants and to show respect for their situation and the culture they are part of.

In the Ambassadors for Dialogue project, when sensitive topics are discussed, it is of the utmost importance that the space for dialogue is a 'safe space' that is inclusive of all young people. With safe spaces, there is no 'one size fits all' – it is a dynamic process that happens

between the participants and the facilitator. That being said, there are certain principles that the facilitators emphasise as important, namely mutual respect, trust, openness, equality and honesty. The following two quotes from a Jordanian and a Tunisian Ambassador for Dialogue (respectively), capture the importance of safe spaces and how they are established by the facilitators:

” Establishing a safe space for dialogue is very important to ensure inclusion of all participants; that all participants can present their views without harassment or interruptions. The safe space could be a nice and tidy spot that encourages dialogue, but the most important thing is that the ground rules are set, and all are ready to abide by them, so safe spaces are building on trust. The facilitator needs to be open-minded and ready to facilitate dialogue on whatever subject comes up as we do not hide differences of opinion, instead we address them and talk about them.

The facilitator needs to be very flexible as each workshop is different as it all comes down to the people attending. And you need to be 100% neutral as organiser or facilitator, nobody should get the feeling that the facilitator is on your side or against your side. The safe space you create as a facilitator is very important to create a meaningful dialogue and ensure inclusion of all participants. In my experience, it is really good to stay in a circle, the circle welcomes you and creates an inclusive space.

Ambassadors for Dialogue, Jordan & Egypt

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Throughout this publication, three dimensions of youth-driven projects have been highlighted, drawing on the experiences of the Youth Culture and Diversity project. It has sought to shed light on tangible methodologies that ensure truly youth-led partnerships and projects, with a view to inspiring other organisations to create strong platforms for meaningful youth participation and influence. While the best practices covered here by no means provide an exhaustive list of how to engage with youth, they provide an important step toward building the evidence base on what works and common pitfalls when engaging in youth-driven projects.

For others seeking to work on youth-led projects in the Arab region and beyond, the following take-aways – based on the best practices that have been covered in this publication – can provide guidance.

WALK THE TALK – CHANGE STARTS FROM WITHIN.

An important first step is to look inwards and ensure that young people are involved in setting the agenda and have opportunities to take on leadership roles within the organisation. The Youth Culture and Diversity project demonstrates how young people's active involvement in the project and partner organisations has sparked inspiration among their peers and challenged prevailing misperceptions about young people by illustrating the enormous potential and agency they hold.

PUSH THE BOUNDARIES.

Insofar as possible, integrate spaces for youth participation and influence across the full project cycle – so youth have agency from the design to the evaluation phase. Rather than being mere participants, youth must be treated as capable agents and given an actual say in the way projects develop over time.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS.

Working in an international partnership can propel learning and spark new ways of thinking. In the Youth Culture and Diversity project, not only does the international partnerships lift the project to new levels across all the organisations, but young people also express a sense of pride in taking part in something global – something that is bigger than themselves.

CREATE PLATFORMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S OWN INITIATIVES.

When youth are given platforms to take leadership, they prove resourceful and often find creative ways to reach their goals and engage others. In the Youth Culture and Diversity project, the result of supporting young people's own initiatives has been a great diversity of innovative activities, the novelty of which has sparked the interest of a broad audience,

including prospective partners. The innovative communication initiatives and the wide range of activities have been integral to expanding the outreach of the project.

YOUTH ARE DIVERSE.

Young people do not constitute one big, homogenous group, and therefore it is important to keep in mind when working with young people that they have different opportunities and barriers to entry, as well as different motivations driving their engagement. Opportunities to participate should therefore take a variety of forms in order to attract a broad range of young people.

FOSTER A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND BELONGING.

The Youth Culture and Diversity project represents a powerful example of how young people's identities are shaped by and through voluntary engagement, by seeing their relationships with other volunteers and roles within the project as formative, and by providing learning that will follow them throughout their personal life and career. There are two elements that support the strong group identity. The first is an inclusive environment that fosters a sense of belonging and strong interpersonal relations between volunteers and project coordinators. The second is the ownership that young people feel over the project when they hold roles of responsibility, while also having the opportunity to mould it into something that they feel proud to be a part of.



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