



World Urban Forum

Cities: Crossroads of Cultures

Inclusiveness and Integration?

14-17 September 2004, Barcelona, Spain

Global Partnership Initiative (Gpi) For Urban Youth In Africa

Enhancing the engagement of youth in the work of un-habitat

In many cities around the African continent, more than 50 per cent of inhabitants are under the age of 19. The lives of young people, in Africa are blighted by a combination of intense human injustice and disasters. In addition, youth have over the past 20 years been particularly affected by growing urban poverty, child trafficking, sexual exploitation especially girls and young women, high unemployment, and the growing phenomenon of street children. Crime and violence by young people, the breakdown of family life, environmental degradation, worsening health conditions and the transmission of infectious diseases, new and old, and, of course, the worsening HIV/AIDS pandemic unfortunately also add to the list. International Labour Organisation estimates indicate that young people comprise 40-75 percent of the total number of the unemployed. Moreover, *World Youth Report 2003*, states that most warfare that rages today is in developing countries, particularly in Africa, where an estimated 300,000 young soldiers – many of them child-soldiers are forced into armed conflict willed by adults.

Everywhere in the world, and Africa is no exception, young people have similar dreams and ambitions, but all too often, their voices remain unheard. Young people when given the opportunity can positively influence their communities and distinguish themselves as positive agents for change. They are now asking that their voices be heard, that their issues be addressed and that their roles be recognised. Rather than being viewed as objects of grooming for future citizens, they want to be accepted as *partners* in development, in helping chart and shape our future.

The Global Partnership Initiative will be launched by UN HABITAT in co-operation with selected cities in Africa and the world in Barcelona, Spain, at the Second World Urban Forum in 2004. Other target multi-lateral institutions include World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, UNDESA and UNODC.

Goal and purpose

UN-HABITAT regards young people as a major force for a better world. Thus their empowerment through effective and meaningful participation in decision-making is crucial.

Adopted by 171 countries at the 1996 City Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, the *Habitat Agenda* recommends a participatory approach to promote employment, training, and crime prevention. It also stresses the role of young people in the alleviation of poverty and inequality.

In May 2003, the UN-HABITAT Governing Council adopted a resolution on the engagement of youth in the work of UN-HABITAT. Resolution GC19/13 directs the Executive Director to “ensure the active participation of UN-HABITAT in the Secretary General's initiative on youth employment; as well as to develop a Global Partnership Initiative on Urban Youth Development in Africa, in partnership with other relevant United Nations agencies, multilateral institutions and private foundations in the context of New Partnership for Africa's Development”. This coincides with the development of a strategy for the engagement of youth in the work of UN-HABITAT.



The Global Partnership Initiative is important because it seeks to integrate the Millennium Development Goals with development programmes at the city level focusing on and working with urban youth in Africa. Consistent with a number of the MDGs, including Goal 7 Target 11 and Goal 8 Target 16¹, the GPI seeks to fulfil the MDGs and their targets.

The overarching goal of the initiative, while respecting and integrating the various international covenants on human rights, gender equity, democratic values and sustainable development, is to mobilize and harness the resources of Africa's youth, to empower them and improve the quality of life for young people in cities and towns. This requires tackling amongst others unemployment, crime and governance issues and also devising concrete methods and partnership projects to fulfil the overarching goal of the GPI.

Partnerships

The GPI will be based on innovative partnerships between grass root actors, civil society, private sector and entrepreneurs, educational institutions, governments at all levels and the international community, both at bi-lateral and multilateral levels. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) will play a key role by providing the young with a means to promote its objectives. The partnerships should be used to promote policies related to youth empowerment at the appropriate level, pursue fair gender policies, strengthen and upgrade educational opportunities for urban youth, develop strategies for youth employment through skilled and professional vocational training, with the aim of developing bona fide apprenticeship diplomas. The partners will become part of the network to promote youth in urban development through measures such as a common website, exchange visits, and one-on-one project/thematic pairing to build local capacities.

The role of art and culture will be central in building consciousness and raising self-esteem among young people. This is why in part, UN-HABITAT has arranged the world's first international Hip-Hop concert in Barcelona, and dialogues with the stars featuring as "Messengers of Truth" during the World Urban Forum.

Intended outcomes

At the end of a three-year pilot phase, when UN-HABITAT celebrates its 30th anniversary, scheduled to take place in Vancouver, Canada in 2006, concrete results of the GPI should be evident. These should show progress in four fields:

In Employment and capacity building replicable systems for vocational training and apprenticeships should be in place with increased employment opportunities, gender mainstreaming, new employment ideas, and slum upgrading.

In crime prevention – there should be progress on crime and delinquency prevention, and information on HIV/AIDS.

Urban governance young people should be participants in governance projects, and there should be local and national policies in place on youth empowerment with tangible results through arts and culture.

In regional networking a NEPAD system should be functioning to promote urban youth development.

Conclusion

The efforts are many and varied. UN-HABITAT's Global Partnership Initiative on Urban Youth Development in Africa being discussed in Barcelona will be a test case for the governments, and the international community of agencies and organizations addressing the impact of rapid urbanization and social exclusion on vulnerable categories of young people.

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