WHAT WORKS

Finding their voice: engaging adolescents in meaningful participation strategies

Adolescent Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

ICP INNOVATIONS IN CIVIC PARTICIPATION

unicef

CONTENTS

EDITORS' NOTE

The Adolescent Development and Participation Unit of UNICEF in the Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (TACRO) and Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) are pleased to participate in this joint initiative.

ICP supports the development of innovative high-quality youth civic engagement policies and programs in the US and around the world. We embrace a positive view of young people that recognizes their potential to create beneficial and lasting social change in their communities through active participation in service opportunities. We have conducted research on youth civic engagement policies and programs globally and have consulted with governments on policy development and international organizations on investing in youth civic engagement, including a regional asset mapping study for the UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

For the past decade, UNICEF has developed our own internal capacity to provide advice and leadership to countries in LAC for a wide spectrum of activities to ensure that young people have a voice in the places where they live and grow. We have also supported the formation of policy and effective programs around adolescent participation and engagement. Consequently, this partnership with ICP is even more powerful and enriching for us and for readers of this particular publication.

TACRO has asked our office in Brazil, which has played a very important and influential role in strengthening its policy development around participation, to share in the publication some of its experience. UNICEF officers in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago have also been kind enough to share their thoughts on participation. UNICEF will continue to gather examples from the field and make them available to readers on http://www.unicef.org/lac/ through our What Works Series.

For additional examples globally, ICP maintains an online searchable database of youth civic engagement programs and policies as well as an extensive library of ICP and non-ICP publications. More information can be found at http://www.icicp.org.

We look forward to feedback and comments from those engaged in the field of adolescent development and participation. You may write to UNICEF at cnorton@unicef.org and to ICP at stroud@icicp.org.

Christine Norton
Senior Advisor, Adolescent Development and Gender Equality
UNICEF TACRO

Susan Stroud
Executive Director
Innovations in Civic Participation

FOREWORD

Adolescent participation in Latin America and the Caribbean is as diverse as the ethnic, cultural, geographical, economic, political and social diversity that characterizes this region. From participation of indigenous adolescents living in the Amazon region, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador, to boys and girls living in low-income communities of large urban centers in Mexico City, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Lima and Bogotá, to innovative experiences of peer education in the Caribbean, to youth communication networks in Latin America --- these are some examples of diverse regional adolescent participation.

The desire of children and adolescents to participate and their growing consciousness of participation as a right appear as a common pattern in all these contexts. And certainly the most important result of the various participation processes supported in the region is the fact that they increasingly evolve from a merely symbolic action to become more in-depth processes that are linked to adolescents' overall development.

Moreover the various participation processes have proven to enable adolescents to strengthen their competences and life skills to realize their dreams and expectations, or what educators and policy specialists identify as rights realization.

The authors of this report have successfully presented a typology of adolescent participation as a path to orient the various forms that participation can take and have focused on three approaches that hold particular promise.

Through participation, adolescents develop creativity, communication skills and social awareness. They become key players, and this provides a fantastic opportunity for families, communities, schools, policymakers, politicians and society in general to take advantage of these qualities and include adolescents in decision-making processes.

The ultimate goal of this report is to show that, regardless of the form, adolescent participation can enhance the capacity of adolescents to contribute to their own development and the development of their communities, placing them as strategic actors in promoting their rights and contributing to society. Thus, adolescent participation strengthens democracy and contributes to meaningful changes in society.

Mário Volpi
Youth & Adolescent Development Specialist
UNICEF Brazil

ACRONYMS

CLAYSS: Latin American Center for Service Learning (Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Social)

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

ECLAC: UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

FLACSO: Latin American School of Social Sciences (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales)

IADB: Inter-American Development Bank

ICP: Innovations in Civic Participation

OIJ: Ibero-American Youth Organization (Organización Iberoamericana de Juventud)

OAS: Organization of American States

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

ILO: International Labor Organization

TACRO: The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (UNICEF)

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNV: United Nations Volunteers

YABT: The Young Americas Business Trust

INTRODUCTION

In order to assist practitioners in Latin America and the Caribbean in the development of programs to engage adolescents through participation, Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) and The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office of UNICEF (TACRO) have developed this handbook, which addresses the link between participation and citizenship and serves as a guide to some of the most promising practices in the field. Adolescent participation in the region involves a wide array of program types and approaches. Due to varying approaches to participation and the proliferation of many program models, it is difficult to clarify all that the term "participation" encompasses.[1] Therefore, this handbook will focus on three approaches that have significant positive impacts on adolescents:

1. **Volunteering**
2. **Service-learning**
3. **Advocacy and Policy Influencing**

We have placed additional emphasis on vulnerable groups including afro-descendent and indigenous adolescents, out-of-school adolescents, adolescents living in ghetto or dense urban areas, adolescents living on the street, and adolescents living with HIV. These groups require special attention to their unique needs and, as such, may require different program models.

The methodology for gathering the data for this handbook included two approaches. The first was an initial desk review of adolescent participation programs in the region. Existing databases providing examples of participation programs were consulted, including ICP's international database of youth service programs and policies. All UNICEF country offices in TACRO were contacted and asked to submit program examples and interviews were conducted with UNICEF Adolescent Officers.

From the initial information gathered, we narrowed over 100 programs down to 35 that demonstrated some of the key elements for success. We contacted these programs and asked them to complete a questionnaire to obtain detailed information about all aspects of their program design. From the 35 pre-selected programs, 18 answered the questionnaire. Additionally, the process and results of the "Best Practices in Adolescent Policies and Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean" project were examined. That initiative started at the beginning of 2008 with the leadership of UNESCO and the Inter-American Development

Bank (IADB) Adolescents Program with the support of UNICEF, UNFPA, ECLAC, ILO, UNV, OIJ, OAS, OECD, YABT and FLACSO, among others.[2]

In each section on volunteerism, service-learning, and advocacy and policy influencing, we have included the most promising examples from our research, as selected by our team in consultation with adolescent participation experts from the region.

Latin America and the Caribbean in context

The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region is the most unequal region of the world, as measured by the large gap in income distribution between the richest and the poorest.[3] Currently, one of every two people in the region lives below the poverty line. Some countries have been successful in their strategies to reduce poverty, but indicators have not changed dramatically, showing stagnation. There are projections of increased poverty as a result of the current global financial crisis.

According to studies conducted by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the "youngest in age are more affected by poverty and by the negative consequences of poverty."[4] There is a direct relationship between poverty and birth rate, which tends to be higher in the poorest households. According to ECLAC, children and adolescents up to 19 years old are often trapped by the vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty, lack of education and violence.

In spite of this reality, the large adolescent population of the region can be seen as an opportunity to effect positive social change. More than 153 million adolescents currently live in the Americas. This "demographic bonus" is a historic opportunity for communities across Latin America and the Caribbean to channel the talents of adolescents into positive pro-social activities.

Fundacion Niño del Papel/Colombia/2009

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[1] There are many publications on participation for children in various age groups. For a comprehensive overview of available literature, see Child and Adolescents Participation Resources Guide, UNICEF EAPRO, Bangkok, 2006.
[2] See Acronyms page for explanations of these organizations
[3] Inter-American Dialogue (2009).
[4] CEPAL (2003).

Participation in the context of civic engagement

Participation should be viewed within the broader context of civic life, ensuring that adolescents are engaged in a variety of civic and pro-social activities that benefit themselves, their community and their society. Participation must move beyond involvement in one-time policy summits, events or councils. It must be integrated into the fabric of adolescents' lives, in order to provide them with the widest range of experience and prepare them to take up the rights and responsibilities of full citizenship.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a strong framework to promote adolescent participation, since it recognizes that all children, including adolescents, have the right to participate in all decisions that affect their lives, according to their developing capacities and abilities. However, there is still an evolving understanding of how the articles of the CRC that most closely relate to participation should be implemented in policy and programming. In July of 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child released a general comment on Article 12, which discusses participation.[5] While this document still focuses heavily on adolescents and children bringing their views to "decision-making, policymaking and preparation of laws and/or measures as well as their evaluation," it also adds new and broader meaning to the term participation.[6] In particular, it states: "If participation is to be effective and meaningful, it needs to be understood as a process, not as an individual one-off event."[7] The document also lists several important criteria for any and all participation programs: transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable.

We know that "participation promotes civic engagement and active citizenship."[8] According to Mario Volpi, Adolescent Participation Specialist with UNICEF in Brazil, throughout the 80s and 90s in Latin America, people from all sectors of society, including "indigenous and afro-descendent communities, low-income urban areas, landless and homeless populations, students, street children, religious movements and a great number of new social actors[,] came together in a strong social movement aiming to re-democratize society and claiming citizenship for all." As a result of this broad-based movement, citizenship and participation have become inextricably linked to the promotion of democracy and social justice. Increasingly, adolescents are engaging with NGOs, governments, and local community groups not only to advocate for their own rights, but to work for social justice for other groups of people, promote causes such as environmental sustainability, and to improve civic life through media and outreach campaigns.

In this context, a strong movement for children and adolescent rights has also emerged. The adolescent and child rights advocacy agenda's main objectives are access to basic social services such as education and health, the right to be heard, the right to take part in decision making concerning their lives, the right to be respected by their families, and the right to have access to culture, sports and leisure. Examples of this movement are happening all across the region. For example, in Brazil "it has been possible for 'street educators' … to collaborate with street children at the local level throughout Brazil and to coordinate these many groups in a powerful movement to give a voice to these children and improve their lives."[9]

Adolescent Participation

Adolescence is a key period in human development since it is the time when a young person transitions to the experience of full citizenship.[10] This period (10-19 years of age as defined by UNICEF) is marked by the progressive acquisition of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. At the same time, adolescents are experiencing profound cognitive development and the thoughts, ideas and concepts developed during this period of life impact their formation as adults and citizens.[11] That is why adolescence is a crucial period for encouraging even greater participation, which can lead to increased feelings of efficacy, understanding of one's role in society, and greater attainment of one's rights.

Adolescent participation allows the adolescent to self-manage his or her own projects, expectations, dreams, hopes and even disagreements in a channeled way. Through participation, adolescents are able to be the architects of their own lives and futures; developing themselves and the communities where they are involved and becoming a collective and creative force for new spaces and moments that generate a better future. Elaine King, Adolescent and HIV/AIDS Specialist in the UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Office further, cites direct benefits of adolescent participation such as self-actualization, enhanced self confidence and self-esteem building and strengthening of communication and basic interpersonal skills. Furthermore, participation builds an awareness and understanding of certain civic processes which can result in more awareness and involve young people andconsequently stronger communities.[12]

5 United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm
6 http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm, pg. 7
7 http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm, pg. 29
8 Landsdown, G. (2009), p. 6.
9 Hart, R. (1992), p. 24.
10 Kessler, G. (1996).
11 Pederson, S. (1961).
12 King, Elaine, Adolescent and HIV/AIDS Specialist, UNICEF Eastern Caribbean office

According to adolescent participation expert Dina Krauskopf, adolescent development requires a combination of participation, engagement and empowerment. This is possible when "boys and girls develop projects and proposals by themselves… and look for support and advice when they require it."[13]

Countries, organizations and individuals have taken a variety of approaches to implement participation programs for adolescents. There are many excellent and inspiring examples of effective programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, much of this work has been focused on events, councils and other forums where adolescents are not fully utilized or engaged in more long-term developmental programming.

It may also be necessary to promote a culture of participation, as adolescent participation may not be widely accepted. According to Marlon Thompson, HIV Officer in the UNICEF office in Trinidad and Tobago, it is important to have a 'champion' in the community who can bridge the gap between adults and adolescents. This could be a young person working to ensure that "their views are being heard and accepted," or an adult champion for adolescent participation that represents "adults saying we support you."[14] King advocates for "widespread sensitization and capacity building for adults to better encourage and facilitate adolescent participation" and argues that activities "facilitated by a skilled adult who respects the adolescents and who is respected by the adolescents seem to be more authentic and effective. Whether in structured settings or not, skilled adult facilitators are able to support mobilization and actions of adolescents around specific issues helping them to grow and develop until they can branch out on their own."[15]

Finally, it is important to mention that it is necessary to develop unique approaches for vulnerable adolescents, or those in especially difficult circumstances. These adolescents may have a family that cannot meet their basic needs, have no family at all, and may be affected by abuse, poverty, disaster, or armed conflict. Vulnerable adolescents may also be part of socially excluded groups including afro-descendent and indigenous adolescents, those living in ghetto or dense urban areas, adolescents living on the street and adolescents living with HIV. In his essay on Children's Participation, Roger Hart explains that vulnerable adolescents have difficulties developing competencies as well as meaningful roles in society. Participation programs need to be designed differently for vulnerable adolescents, beginning with having them reflect and act on their own lives. After they are empowered, they can play a public role in their community. Participation should include "recognizing and building

upon the resiliency and creativity"[16] of the adolescents. According to Mario Volpi's experience and research in the UNICEF Brazil office, "participation has proven to impact positively adolescents' capacity to build resources to overcome the challenges of this life stage."[17]

Overview of typology of adolescent participation

This handbook puts forward a typology for participation that emphasizes three approaches that show particular promise:

- **Volunteering**
- **Service-learning**
- **Advocacy and Policy Influencing**

Each of these approaches has strengths and weaknesses, and some approaches show stronger promise for engaging vulnerable adolescent groups. Our analysis of program examples from each of these categories draws out key elements of successful programs and makes recommendations for practitioners seeking to implement one of the approaches.

The following three sections of this handbook will be devoted to each of the three approaches, including strengths and weaknesses of each approach; the criteria and promising practices in this program area; and examples of good practices in this area from the LAC region, taking into special consideration those focusing on vulnerable adolescents.

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[13] Krauskopf, D. (2000), p. 128.
[14] Thompson, Marlon, HIV Officer, UNICEF Trinidad and Tobago
[15] King, E.
[16] Hart, R. (1992), p. 24.
[17] Volpi, Mario, Adolescent Participation Specialist, UNICEF Brazil

I. VOLUNTEERING

Strengths and weaknesses of this approach to participation

The concept of volunteering involves working to make a positive difference, individually or as part of a group, for the well being of another person, a community, the environment or the society in general and without the motivation or expectation of financial profit or compensation.

In the Universal Declaration on Volunteering[19] that was adopted on the occasion of the International Year of Volunteers in 2001, it was recognized that volunteer action is a creative and mediating force that:

- Builds healthy, sustainable communities that respect the dignity of all people;
- Empowers people to exercise their rights as human beings and, thus, to improve their lives;
- Helps solve social, cultural, economic and environmental problems; and,
- Builds a more humane and just society through worldwide co-operation

The Declaration also recognizes the right of every woman, man and child to "freely offer their time, talent, and energy to others and to their communities" regardless of their cultural and ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, and physical, social or economic condition.

Volunteering should meet at least four basic criteria:

- Is intentional: The volunteers seek a positive and realistic goal and must have the consent of the community or population with whom the volunteer is working.
- Is justified: It responds to a real need of the recipient of the volunteer action. It is not entertainment or a hobby for the volunteer and it seeks to fulfill a need that has previously been identified by the community or population with whom the volunteer is working.
- Is not mandatory: Volunteers are not forced or coerced into participation.
- Is not motivated solely by self-interest or profit: The volunteers' primary motivation is not self benefit or gratification. However, the act of volunteering is mutually-beneficial and the volunteer will likely experience reciprocal gains through the service provided.

While the reciprocity of volunteering is applicable to volunteers of all ages, there can be particular benefits for adolescents, including building professional and technical skills as well as leadership, teamwork and other social skills. Instead of being seen as merely recipients of services or victims, volunteering enables adolescents to be viewed positively as contributors to their societies by members of their communities, in addition to building a positive self-identity and sense of empowerment.

Volunteering takes place with varying levels of duration and organization. Duration can generally be placed in three categories:

- Formal, long-term service: 20 hours or more per week of service for three months or longer.
- Part-time volunteering: anything less than formal, long-term service but more than two hours per week for two months.
- Occasional volunteering: anything less than the above.

Volunteering can range from formal through an organization with structure and legal status to informal in which volunteers act individually or through grassroots/community based organizations without legal status.

Strengths of this approach include its flexibility, sustainability and structure. It has the potential to involve many adolescents through the varying levels of duration and organization, as it can easily be adapted to meet the needs and interests of a particular group. Volunteering programs can be designed according to the target population in terms of length and intensity of the experience, issue-areas addressed and level of structure. It has the potential to meet critical community and national needs while building solidarity among participants and community members and helping to bridge ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious differences.

Among the weaknesses of the approach, adolescents can have little control in decision-making processes if the program is very structured and bureaucratic. Additionally, volunteering programs can be manipulated by adults to advance political or party intentions. While this approach can be adapted to include adolescents from all backgrounds, care must be taken not to exclude groups (e.g. those needing some financial

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[18] International Association for Volunteer Effort, http://www.iave.org/ResourceView.asp?resourceID=166

support during full-time volunteering). Insufficient funding can be a challenge for volunteering programs, as well as the lack of proper training, monitoring and evaluation standards.   Formal, full-time volunteering can be used or viewed as free labor and even can generate conflicts with the paid staff that see volunteers replacing full-time jobs. A weakness of more short-term or sporadic volunteering is that it can have a short-term view and strategy that does not address root causes or make a real impact on the community.

Criteria and promising practices in volunteering

There are several promising practices and elements of successful programs in each program area that can help guide practitioners as they look for effective ways to engage adolescents. ICP and UNICEF have identified the following elements of successful volunteering programs with adolescents:

- *Democratic input and opportunities for adolescent leadership:* To obtain the best ideas and highest level of commitment, the program needs a balance of coordination and democratic input from community members, staff, and adolescents regarding policies and goals. The chance to develop leadership skills is an important learning experience that can empower adolescents and prepare them for future success.
- *Value of the service work:* Projects and programs need to be carefully designed to build on existing skills of participants while also responding to identifiable community needs. Adolescents can be engaged in the process of identifying needs in collaboration with the community.
- *Training, support and supervision:* Adolescents must be prepared for their service to enable them both to tie the experience to learning and skills development and to have the requisite knowledge and skills to perform assigned tasks. Young people must be supported and supervised throughout the program for positive feedback and to address issues when necessary.
- *Diversity:* Opportunities for participation should be made available to all young people so there is no stigma attached to participation, even if there are different program designs for different segments of the adolescent population.
- *Recognition:* Programs should reward adolescent participation through offering adolescents resources, such as skills development and training, as well as a certificate and/or celebration to attest to completion of the program at the end.
- *Manageable size:* While the program may be national or local in scope, the size of individual program units should be small. Adolescents need to know each other and the staff, and be known by the staff.

- *Coordination by a dedicated entity:* To achieve program quality, it is essential to have an entity that provides leadership, over-all vision and philosophy, as well as training and technical assistance.
- *Flexibility:* Leadership must be creative and have the flexibility to move quickly to respond to new opportunities and problems. This implies an efficient and responsive organization/management team.
- *Accountability to standards:* The program needs measurable standards for output and outcome variables. Standards must be sensitive to different circumstances and population groups. Evaluation should be aligned with the program mission and goals.

Examples of good practice in volunteering

In this section we will share examples of volunteer programs in the region that illustrate many of the promising practices listed above, as well as additional effective practices.

An interesting example of an adolescent-led grassroots program is "Heroes at Schools" in Costa Rica. This is an initiative of Fundación Desarróllate involving adolescents from 13-18 years old. During 2008, Fundación Desarróllate reached out to 1,000 adolescents from high schools, training them in ethics and character development, promoting leadership, helping them form life goals and informing them of their rights. This is a peer mentoring program, so the volunteers working with adolescents are other young people who have been trained by Fundación Desarróllate. Peer volunteer programs can be a very effective way of reaching the adolescent age group. This program design is particularly strong in the areas of adolescent leadership, training, good central coordination and diversity.

Another good program model comes from Uruguay. Puentes Sur is an NGO that works with more than 100 adolescents and young people from 17-23 years old in rural areas and small villages. Through the program "Soriano Joven," Puentes Sur creates youth groups where adolescents receive training on a variety of topics, from civic participation to sexual and reproductive health, through a non-formal educational approach. Adolescents then plan and manage their own community volunteer activities and programs. The experience and local impact of this NGO and its program have inspired the formation of a Regional Puentes Sur, within the countries of MERCOSUR.[19] This program design is particularly strong in the areas of adolescent leadership, training, good central coordination and recognition.

[19] MERCOSUR includes Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil as full members, Chile as an observer and Venezuela as the newest member.

One of the strongest models of a volunteer program we found was Panama Verde, a national environmental network managed by adolescent volunteers predominantly from the provinces and rural areas in Panama. Founded in 1996, Panama Verde was created under the umbrella of the Peace Corps and obtained legal status as an independent NGO in 2004. The program offers adolescents citizenship education as well as empowering them to be proactive agents in their communities for sustainable development. They offer training on the Convention on the Rights of the Child as part of the empowerment process of adolescents regarding their rights.

Each Panama Verde group in a community is able to adapt to local needs, as the adolescent volunteers that live in these communities know the community needs and can prioritize solutions. All the projects are based on environmental sustainability and development. Young people from ages 12 to 29 are engaged in this program, so it is flexible in including adolescents, as well as other age groups. This provides a continuous opportunity to serve as young people grow older and gain new skills and knowledge. The program has been very successful because it engages in public and private partnerships, receiving support from the government of Panama, as well as private and corporate foundations such as Kellogg and SAB Miller.

The structure of Panama Verde allows adolescents to gain leadership skills in a national organization, while still giving local groups flexibility. Groups around the country that are part of the Panama Verde Network have autonomy in the planning and implementation process, within the context of the work plan of the organization that is agreed upon in the annual assembly. Annually, each group sends 2 representatives to the national assembly, where major organizational decisions are made. The organization is currently in the process of generating a system for planning, monitoring, evaluating and reporting.

To date, over 500 volunteers have participated in the program (400 between 12-19 years old). There are 33 adolescent environmental groups around the country, mainly in the provinces. Each group has led at least one local community project regarding reforestation, environmental education, trainings in HIV/AIDS, leadership, drug prevention, and/or human rights.

Another excellent and award-winning example of a model volunteer program is Un Techo Para Mi País. This NGO, founded in 1997, mobilizes adolescent volunteers in solidarity with the poorest in urban areas to build quality affordable housing. Un Techo Para Mi País works to improve the quality of life of millions of families who currently live in poverty by engaging thousands of volunteers, mainly adolescents, and families in the building of transitional housing and the implementation of social inclusion programs. The organization started in Chile and today has inspired a regional network in 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, México, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

The program has received numerous awards, not only because of its excellent program design and mission, but because it also strives for rigorous evaluation and monitoring on program outcomes. Un Techo Para Mi País has a Center for Social Research that documents, systematizes and analyzes the whole program model. The evaluation itself is also led by adolescents and young people, mainly high school and university students. Currently, with the support of consultants, they are developing an impact evaluation system that will allow them to measure and compare the performance of each of the countries participating in this regional network.

Un Techo Para Mi País has won awards from the Gloria de Kriete Foundation, the government of Chile, and in 2008 was selected as one of the "Best Practices in Policies and Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean," led by UNESCO and IADB. It receives funding from international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank; companies such as LAN Chile, Chevron, Deloitte; and donations from individuals. In 2008, they coordinated over 98,000 volunteers. They have built over 40,000 houses in the region, benefitting over 16,000 families.

It is important to note that while this program is an excellent example, it engages mainly adolescents from educated, middle to upper class families. The program does seek to empower people in the poorest of communities to advocate on their own behalf, but it has not yet focused on including adolescents from the most vulnerable groups as volunteers. However, it seeks to build solidarity between young people with greater opportunities and those who are the poorest and most marginalized. The adolescent volunteers do a process of reflection on their experience in this program in order to assess its impact on their personal and professional life. Initial studies are showing that these young volunteers are greatly affected by the program and continue to work on behalf of the poorest living in dense urban areas.

II. SERVICE-LEARNING

Strengths and weaknesses of this approach to participation

According to the Latin American Center for Service Learning (CLAYSS) based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, service-learning is a "pedagogy that promotes student solidarity activities, not only to attend to the needs of the community, but also to improve the quality of the academic learning process and personal formation of values and responsible civic participation." Service-learning is a pedagogical tool in the category of "experiential learning" that connects knowledge acquisition with "service to others, which determines the purpose, nature and process of social and educational exchange between learners (students) and the people they serve."[20]

Program models in service-learning must balance service objectives and learning objectives. If students successfully complete a community service project, but have not learned the academic content required, then the program model should be reevaluated to ensure learning is rigorous. Likewise, service programs should meet community needs, not just the needs of students and teachers. Service-learning should be integrated into the curriculum to meet established learning objectives and identified community needs. Service-learning can have a positive impact on the personal, social, cognitive, and academic development of adolescents.

Service-learning is a dynamic approach because it provides so many benefits to participants. As a teaching and learning pedagogy, it promotes complex problem-solving in a real-world context, while the service work contributes to feelings of efficacy, and promotes cooperation, citizenship and personal development. "As a consequence of this immediacy of experience, service-learning is more likely to be personally meaningful to participants and to generate emotional consequences, to challenge values as well as ideas, and hence to support social, emotional and cognitive learning and development."[21]

Theoretical and methodological service-learning models have been developed in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and other regions. In this region, significant contributions have been made by CLAYSS. Educational reforms started in the 1990s by many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean further advanced a positive context for the development of service-learning since there was a clear need for linking the educational system with the labor market.

There was also a sense of urgency for promoting active citizenship that could give sustainability to the democratization process. Education is a key component in the debate on inclusion, citizenship building and social justice. In this context, the service-learning movement has grown along with broader social movements that promote the strengthening of civil society, citizenship participation and a culture of solidarity.[22]

Strengths of the service-learning approach include the ability to match the level of skills and abilities of students with an appropriate service project, and thus the ability to utilize service-learning broadly through a country's education system from early childhood through university education. Reflection activities offer opportunities for intentional and intensive discussion on the cultural and historical context of social issues, exploration of successful and less successful solutions, and the development of civic roles and responsibilities. Students gain targeted knowledge, meet academic objectives, and improve skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and leadership.

Two important strengths of this approach that are particularly relevant to the Latin American and Caribbean region, discovered by researchers and practitioners in this area, are:

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20 Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario, http://www.clayss.org.ar/as.htm
21 Stanton, T. (1990), Pg. 65.
22 Eyler, J. & Giles, D.E. (1999).

- Service-learning with vulnerable children and teenagers may lead to increased resilience.
- Service-learning empowers adolescents in local civic contexts.[24]

Weaknesses of service-learning as a participative approach for adolescents may include less flexibility and room for creativity and individual initiative, as instructors may be constrained by specific curriculum or school regulations. Service-learning requires training and support for teachers in integrating service into their curriculum, designing reflection activities and identifying and maintaining community partnerships, and thus it may take additional time and resources to establish new service-learning programs in schools and communities. Finally, since service-learning programs are sometimes mandatory (part of graduation requirement, for example), the sense of "volunteerism" may be lost.

Criteria and promising practices for service-learning

There are several promising practices and elements of successful service-learning programs that are useful for guiding practitioners in using this approach for adolescent participation:

- *Adolescent Voice -* Adolescents are involved in identifying the issue with the community and in developing the project. Adolescents are given opportunities for feedback, reflection, and evaluation throughout the course of the project.
- *Meaningful Action and Community Voice* - The service helps to address a real community need and is necessary and valuable to the community. Community members work in conjunction with adolescents to identify needs, form program goals and help design solutions. The academic instructor and students work in partnership with the community.
- *Orientation, Training and Support*– Students must be given adequate information about the community, the partner organizations and the issue being addressed. Learning goals should be clear to both students and community partners, and be appropriate to the skill level and development of adolescents. The distinction between students' community learning role and the classroom learning role should be minimized.[25]
- *Reflection* – Critical reflection is key to connecting the service with the academic, professional and social curriculum and learning objectives. Academic rigor should be maintained, and credit should be awarded for the learning, not for service.

- *Evaluation* – It is important to measure the students' learning (since academic credit is for learning, not the service) as well as the impact on the community (Was the project effective? Did it produce the desired outcome?). Be prepared for uncertainty and variation in student learning outcomes.[26]

Examples of good practices in service-learning

In this section we will share examples of service-learning programs in the region that illustrate many of the promising practices listed above, as well as additional effective practices.

The first example is not an individual program, but rather a governmental policy initiative to promote service-learning in Argentina through the Federal Program "Educación Solidaria" (www.me.gov.ar/edusol). Argentina has been a pioneer and has inspired the service-learning movement in the region. By 2009, over 15,000 schools and more than 100 universities have incorporated service-learning into their curriculum.[27] The Presidential Service-Learning Award has given public recognition to the best service-learning programs in schools and universities since its inception in 2000. Now Chile, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Ecuador also have Presidential Awards for service-learning.[28] CLAYSS has done research that shows that service-learning is widespread in schools and universities in Argentina, with every jurisdiction having some service-learning programs.[29]

The second example of a model service-learning program is the regional program PaSo Joven initiated in 2004 by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) with the support of organizations in Argentina, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic. CLAYSS was the regional technical agency for the program and Fundación SES from Argentina served as the execution agency. The technical execution agencies were: Alianza ONG (Dominican Republic) and CEBOFIL (Bolivia).[30] Through participation in service-learning projects, adolescents were inspired to be leaders in their communities. The direct beneficiaries were 12,000 adolescents that participated in the service-learning projects and 1,200 teachers and adolescent leaders who were trained in the service-learning methodology.

[24] Tapia, M., Service Enquiry, Pgs.213-214.
[25] Howard, J. (2001).
[26] Ibid.
[27] "Premio Presidencial Escuelas Solidarias" (2000-2001), Summary Report for the Grant Research Program, given by the Global Service Institute (GSI), CLAYSS, Buenos Aires, 2004
[28] Tapia, M. N. (2008). Service-learning in Latin America, past and present. G2G. The State of Service-learning. A report from the National Youth Leadership Council, 66ss.
[29] http://www.clayss.org.ar/investigacion.htm
[30] http://www.clayss.org.ar/paso_joven/biblioteca.htm

Finally, we will share in detail the example of Sirve Quisqueya, a program led by Alianza ONG in the Dominican Republic. This initiative is a network of public and private organizations promoting service-learning in the Dominican Republic and benefiting rural communities and marginalized urban neighborhoods. Founded in 1995, the program has four main objectives:

- Strengthen the structure of service-learning in the Dominican Republic.
- Create opportunities, with the participation of schools and community organizations, to engage adolescents in service-learning and in the implementation of sustainable community projects.
- Create healthy adolescents for healthy communities.
- Promote recognition of the practice of service-learning.

Sirve Quisqueya partners with both public and private entities, such as the local government in Santo Domingo, UN Volunteers, Adolescents for Peace and many others. Sirve Quisqueya also has a partnership with the Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC), Instituto Tecnológico de las Américas (ITLA) and Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo to develop the service-learning methodology and infrastructure for the program.

Adolescents engage extensively in the implementation process through consultations and guided questions when the activities are being planned. Reflection is also a key component of their approach. The methodology used by Sirve Quisqueya includes participative workshops where the adolescents present the results obtained in the implementation of their project. This information is compiled by an advisor, who then prepares a report with final results and recommendations. The evaluation process occurs directly after completion of the project in order to harness the momentum and motivation of participants. Sirve Quisqueya also organizes national forums for adolescents to exchange their experiences in service-learning, where they highlight the benefits for their communities.

The adolescents involved receive constant supervision. Some of the projects require the involvement of an adult volunteer in order to follow up on the activities and to guide the financing. Adolescents also receive support from the general coordination and the local organizations linked with the service projects.

Sirve Quisqueya has demonstrated multiple important impacts on the adolescents involved in service-learning programs:

- They become leaders in their communities, disseminating the knowledge acquired during the service-learning experience through seminars, trainings, and more.
- They are able to design small proposals, set goals and implement them with success. Some examples of these projects are: environmental education campaigns; reforestation projects; community murals; recycling projects; community libraries in marginalized areas, etc.
- 100% of the participants in the service-learning projects have shown interest in studying up to university level.
- There is very low school desertion in the adolescents involved in these projects.
- The service projects benefit rural groups as well as urban marginalized neighborhoods.

Colombia Niños/Colombia/2009

III. ADVOCACY AND POLICY INFLUENCING

Strengths and weaknesses of this approach to participation

For the purposes of this handbook, we are describing a third category of adolescent participation as advocacy and policy influencing. Within this area of participation, there is an internal component which includes adolescent participation in councils and representation in government bodies, involvement in local development projects, or participation in NGOs that monitor government policies. It also includes an external component in which adolescents are involved in campaigning on a particular issue, raising public awareness or consciousness, and working to change policy/legislation from the outside. This could involve the tactic of youth media, such as video, radio, film, newspaper or other form of media production by young people for an audience of other young people and/or adults.

It is important to note that adolescent participation can be beneficial not only to advance adolescents' rights, but also to address a range of issues affecting adolescents and their communities. While adolescents engaging in activities to advocate for adolescent rights and to influence policy to support adolescent rights is important, full participation and citizenship entails rights of all citizens and responsibilities to all citizens. Participation should have meaning and a target outcome beyond the act of participation, otherwise that participation is tokenism. It is important to recognize the value of adolescent participation and the ability of adolescents to have a positive impact on society, not just in matters that solely affect them. Thus, in this category we include examples of advocacy and policy influencing in which adolescents are working to address issues that affect them and their communities (however this is defined). While a first step may be to get a seat at the table (have their voices heard), participation in advocacy or policy should be aimed at a desired change to affect a particular issue.

While the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child acknowledges the benefits of "the growing number of local adolescents parliaments, municipal children's councils and ad hoc consultations where children can voice their views in decision-making processes," it also notes that "these structures for formal representative participation in local government should be just one of many approaches to the implementation of article 12 at the local level, as they only allow for a relatively small number of children to engage in their local communities."[31] The Committee has also warned of tokenist approaches in which adolescents are manipulated, told what they can or cannot say, or not given full weight to their views.[32] It is also important to emphasize that, "if participation is to be effective and meaningful, it needs to be understood as a process, not as an individual one-off event."[33] While the importance of adolescent participation in councils is to have adolescent voices heard, longer-term action is necessary.

The Committee also acknowledges the importance of supporting and encouraging adolescents to form and lead their own organizations and initiatives. It is important for adolescents to be directly involved and even initiate advocacy and policy influencing activities rather than solely be the recipients of services or advocacy on their behalf.[34] Thus we include in our promising practices below examples of train-the-trainer models that engage adolescents in peer education on rights and responsibilities.

Strengths of this approach are that it can provide adolescents with hands-on experience in political processes and knowledge of how governments function, and it allows adolescents to give direct input and feedback to government authorities about their views, needs and interests, giving them a sense of enfranchisement. This type of participation enhances adolescents' understanding of their rights and responsibilities, mobilizes them around civic and political topics and creates space for their voices in the public sphere. It builds leaders for the future, empowering them in the decision making roles and protecting and giving value to their voice in the policy making process. Campaigning and awareness-raising can mobilize and reach large numbers of adolescents and has the potential for impact on the policy or 'big-picture' level. This higher level of visibility of adolescents in positive, contributing roles also helps build positive perceptions of young people in society.

Among the weaknesses that we identify in this type of participation is that it can be seen as a threat to the established and traditional forms of political participation. Adolescents' participation in government processes can be mere tokenism as opposed to real participation, leading to further disillusionment and disenfranchisement. There is a concern that adolescents participating in governance bodies can be more easily influenced or manipulated by adult politicians or bureaucrats, particularly preceding an

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31 United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2009).
32 Ibid, paragraph 132.
33 Ibid, paragraph 133.
34 Ibid, paragraph 130.

election or vote on a particular issue.   Adolescent participants are sometimes not representative of their peers or may be hand-picked by government officials rather than elected by other young people. The mechanisms for participation may be time-consuming and hard to navigate.   Finally, while there is potential for great impact, the effects of participation may not be as tangible, direct or immediate.

Criteria and promising practices in advocacy and policy influencing

The elements of successful programs in rights advocacy and policy influencing, which ICP and UNICEF have identified, are the following:

- *Adults share power and decision-making with adolescents:* Avoid tokenism through establishing mechanisms for adolescent input into decisions outside of formal structures of voting.
- *Nonpolitical/nonpartisan education about issues, context, and history:* It is important to provide unbiased background so that adolescents are not being manipulated for political purposes.
- *Hands-on experience:* Provide young people with practical experience in political processes and how governments function.
- *Relationships and partnerships:* Be transparent, flexible and inclusive to adolescents of different backgrounds, and be committed to developing long-term and broad relationships, rather than short-term interactions.
- *Multiple strategies:* Involve adolescents in multiple strategies for participation, as one strategy might not produce the desired result.
- *Realistic goals:* Teach adolescents that change is a process and is incremental – encourage adolescents to set realistic goals that can be achieved.
- *Solidarity:* Foster it with other adolescents while continuing to offer inter-generational opportunities for understanding and collaboration.
- *Civic values:* Encourage continuation of active citizenship beyond adolescence by instilling civic values, skills and understanding that citizens of all ages have civic responsibilities.[35]

Fundacion Anar Peru /Peru/2009

Examples of good practices in advocacy and policy influencing

In this section we will share examples of advocacy and policy influencing programs in the region that illustrate many of the promising practices listed above, as well as additional effective practices.

A good example of a program in which adolescents are working to address issues facing their communities is the Dominican Institute for Supporting Adolescents (INDAJOVEN) in the Dominican Republic. In 1995, INDAJOVEN created the "Community Network of Adolescents in Santo Domingo" (REDJUVENECE), which has more than 300 volunteers and that has benefited more than 18,000 adolescents to date. The network has focused its attention on training adolescents in participation, capacity building, entrepreneurship, HIV/AIDs prevention, child labor prevention and policy advocacy. It is independent and nonpartisan and encourages and supports adolescents in promoting democracy, fairness, tolerance, social justice, solidarity and environmental protection.

Regarding adolescent led-organizations, a promising example is the "Coordinadora de Juventud por Guatemala" (Adolescents' Coordination for Guatemala), a network of adolescents and grassroots organizations and movements that works to influence policy. The main goal of their program is to promote the active engagement of adolescents, to open spaces of dialogue and advocacy in the creation of public policies on the state level in Guatemala, and to involve adolescents in all decisions made by actors that drive public policies. Training is provided on human rights, and, based on their needs, adolescents in the program propose activities and actions that then become inputs to the planning undertaken by representatives elected by each organization, and the adolescents are involved throughout the process of determining the themes and focus of the actions. Progress is evaluated through general assemblies in which the various organizations participate to evaluate results and offer guidance.

In terms of policy influencing on the local level, a model program is the "Consortium Boliviano de Juventudes" (Bolivian Adolescents Consortium). This program operates a house for adolescents and from this space they promote a culture of participation among children and adolescents. Working in policy influencing through an intergenerational dialogue, they seek higher budget allocations for programs impacting adolescents and youth. In 2003, they were able to get the participation

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[35] In addition to ICP's research, we consulted the following publication: Bynoe, J. (2008). Confronting the glass ceiling of youth engagement. Academy of Educational Development. http://www.aed.org/Publications/loader.cfm?url = /commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&pageid = 29074

and engagement of the Municipality Development Plan 2003-2007 in Sucre. This mutual learning process resulted in the adolescents' public policy proposal being integrated into the Strategic Development Municipality Plan 2025. In April 2009, 739 representatives from 65 adolescent organizations from 8 municipal districts, 3 rural and very poor, participated in "Adolescent Municipal Conferences" to build their public policies proposal.

A strong example of a local initiative of an international organization comes from Save the Children, one of the largest NGOs working for children's rights around the world, with a presence in 120 countries. Participation is a cross-cutting component for all of its programs, and it focuses on vulnerable groups in urban and rural areas including adolescents with disabilities, in situation of violence, child workers and adolescents involved in armed violence. Save the Children-Ecuador leads a program working with adolescents that belong to ethnic minorities and over 10% of the population with major economic needs. In particular, in the provinces of El Oro and Guayas, the organization is working for the right to an inclusive and quality education for children and adolescents who are victims of abuse, protecting them from violence by offering them a safe, participative and friendly environment. Moreover, the program empowers adolescents in creating and strengthening student councils in schools. These councils help monitor new policies and practices implemented in the schools. The councils also serve as a space for capacity building, since adolescents are able to advocate for their rights to education and protection. They exchange best practices at the local and provincial level so they can inspire and be inspired by other models of intervention.

Another example of an advocacy program is the Sou de Atitude Network in Brazil. This program works to empower adolescents on their rights through promoting social and political participation of adolescents who are at risk and/or live in poverty, in the states of the northeast of Brazil, with a majority Afro-Brazilian population. Sou de Atitude works to promote the exercise of citizenship and encourages participation in advocacy and monitoring of public policies. The first area includes activities and programs related to the promotion of media education and social mobilization, as well as training in public policy and budget monitoring along with other social themes. In the second area of action, Sou de Atitude raises awareness about access and quality of basic education and monitors the actions of the government in this field, crafts proposals for social projects and promotes partnerships with grassroots organizations and the public sector in different areas.

The adolescents are included from the beginning of the program in identifying the need and in designing the action process. Cooperation and strategic public-private partnerships are also key elements in Sou de Atitude's success. These partnerships include local public institutions (state councils), civil society advocacy spaces (national and international NGOs) and, in particular, media and communication channels available in low-income communities.

UNICEF/GBell/Dominican Republic/2007

Participants of the program are gathered at different times to monitor progress of their projects and identify required adjustments and new strategies. The conclusions are included in reports that are shared online with all the organizations and members involved. There is also a monthly follow up with the adolescent participants to evaluate their personal and professional development. Impacts of the program have been found to include:

- More interest and participation by the adolescents in the public sphere at the local level in their communities.
- Higher levels of education achievements and increased learning and communication skills.
- Better dialogue and communication among adolescents with families (mutual respect, as well as family understanding of the importance of motivating their children to keep studying).
- The adolescents feel valued and capable of making meaningful changes in their communities, mainly through peer education and the interaction with other adolescent organizations.
- Improved adolescents' perception of how the government functions, including the process of budget allocation and distribution.
- Improved analysis and identification of the causes of social problems and efficacy in acting in coordination to design strategic solutions.
- Increased participation of adolescents in the community, schools and other social groups.
- Media education and social mobilization serving as key aspects of communication and a path to understand and build a critical view of information sources available.

Sou de Atitude believes that its method of non-formal education is flexible and able to adjust to the needs of different groups of adolescents, including those in vulnerable situations. As a result of its experience with establishing this communication network and monitoring public policies, Sou de Atitude has produced a Guide called: Guia de Atitude – Reflexões e Práticas sobre Monitoramento e Ação Política, where adolescents can learn about political action, social mobilization and communication, in a very friendly and didactic fashion. This Guide and more information are available at: www.soudeatitude.org.br

The ANAR (Help to Children and Adolescents at Risk) phone program in Peru is an example of a rights advocacy initiative reaching thousands of children and adolescents through a confidential service by phone where they can express their concerns and demands. This service works under the principles of the CRC, promoting the participation of adolescents, listening to their opinions and considering them to be part of the solution. This is a nationally and internationally awarded program that has been considered a leading example in empowering children and adolescents on their rights as full citizens. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child[36] has recommended that the Peruvian government strengthen the service in order to reach remote areas and benefit more children and adolescents.

Due to the adolescents' participation and feedback,it (ANAR) has promoted a train-the-trainers program in schools, training students, teachers and parents on adolescent rights and the service offered by this help line. It serves as channel for the demands of adolescents and their families, promoting citizenship and the development of social capital.

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[36] United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child,
<http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/b67fbbfa8f470bdfc125715600319d7e/$FILE/G0640887.pdf>

Colombia Niños/Colombia/2009

The issue of violence is the second most common problem (after inter-personal problems) raised by adolescents in the ANAR phone program, and thus it was prioritized as a focus area. The initiative of one adolescent participant led to the development of a strategy to promote and expand the phone service, particularly regarding issues of violence. Through this project, "Right to be Well Treated," adolescents from secondary schools are trained on their rights and duties, identify what it means to be well treated or poorly treated, and then receive information on the ANAR phone service. They are also trained as trainers themselves, so they can then replicate the workshops and further spread the information on the ANAR phone service among their peers, teachers and parents. During 2008, the adolescents developed workshops with almost 1800 students, 160 teachers and 160 parents in three secondary schools.

ANAR works widely in partnership with public and private institutions, through memorandums of understanding with government ministries, municipalities and corporate foundations (Telefonica Foundation in Peru). ANAR also participates in national and international networks made up of civil society, government and international organizations.

Monitoring is an ongoing process and it is done by a group of practitioners from different professional backgrounds working with ANAR, as well as the teachers involved in the Project and the adolescents leading the train-the-trainer workshops. The evaluation is done by the same stakeholders every time training is finished in one school.

The ANAR phone has had an impact in the following ways:

- Empowers adolescents about their right to be treated well and their duty to treat others well and contribute to their communities.
- Trains adolescents on their rights, the ANAR phone service, and on the methodologies and tools to be trainers to replicate it with their peers at schools, thus having a greater impact on the wider education community (students, teachers and parents).
- Offers counseling and concrete solutions to adolescents' problems (legal, psychological and social) by guiding them the appropriate services.
- Promotes values such as peaceful resolution of conflicts and a culture of well treatment among persons without violence and abuse, reflecting on both adolescent rights and duties and their civic responsibilities. This has led to improvements in the inter-personal relations between students, including changes in attitude and knowing how to respond to a threat in a nonviolent way.
- Offers a space and support to vulnerable groups such as adolescents in conflict with the law, victims of sexual abuse, those living with HIV/AIDS, etc.

UNICEF/GBell/Dominican Republic/2007

IV. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Adolescence is a crucial period as a young person transitions to becoming a full citizen, progressively acquires rights, and develops the thoughts, ideas and concepts that will impact their formation as adults and citizens. Adolescent participation, as described in this handbook, can lead to increased feelings of efficacy, understanding of one's role in society, and greater attainment of one's rights. Through participation, adolescents are able to become the architects of their own lives and futures, contributing to their own development and benefiting the communities where they are involved. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the 'demographic bonus' of over 153 million adolescents presents an opportunity not to be missed.

This handbook has argued that participation must be a process with more meaningful and long-term engagement, and must move beyond involvement in one-time policy summits, events or councils.   It is also important to note that adolescents are engaging with NGOs, governments, and local community groups not only to advocate for their own rights, but to work for social justice for other groups of people, promote causes such as environmental sustainability, and to improve civic life through media and outreach campaigns.

While there are multiple ways to approach the design of effective adolescent participation programs, this handbook has focused on three approaches with particular promise. Volunteering, service-learning, and advocacy and policy influencing each has strengths and weaknesses as an approach, and practitioners should consider the key criteria and promising practices for engaging adolescents in participation.   We recognize the need to adapt effective practices in each of these participation areas to the context and culture of the community it engages and serves.

It is also important to have a specific approach when working with adolescents in vulnerable situations, as we have seen with the examples in this handbook. Participation activities should begin with empowering adolescents within their own lives, and then engaging them to play a public role in their community. Best practices working with this target group include the following elements:

- Go where the adolescents are.
- Create safe spaces.
- Flexibility: Adapt traditional approaches to the adolescent population (provide stipends, flexible hours, training that will increase employability).
- Customized strategies: Select strategies best suited for the adolescent population (service-learning may not be best for out-of-school adolescents, as it may be difficult to involve them in a traditional service-learning program, whereas volunteering or advocacy & rights program provide a better opportunity for learning through participation).
- Foster solidarity: Encourage adolescents to remember circumstances of their peers as they work to better their own circumstances.

In the process of reviewing adolescent participation programs in the region, we found that many programs do not have monitoring and evaluation systems in place, making it difficult to assess impact on adolescents and communities. This is a common challenge faced by youth civic engagement programs of varying types throughout the world. Evaluation of youth service is a complex process and has not been systematized.[37] Many programs lack the capacity (expert knowledge, tools, staff time, funding) to undertake impact evaluation, even though it is crucial for determining whether the program is having the desired impact and for improving program quality. Programs should build in monitoring and evaluation from the beginning and policymakers and funders should provide technical assistance and funding to support impact evaluation.

ICP/Mexico/ 2007

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[37] World Bank Children and Youth Unit and Innovations in Civic Participation. (2008).

While this handbook is designed for practitioners and the focus is on promising practices, it is also important to consider policy implications that can further support (or hinder) adolescent participation. Strong national policies for adolescents not only deliver needed services, but also recognize adolescents as assets and provide opportunities for adolescents to contribute to their own development and to the development of their communities.[38]

Many of the examples of good program practices have strong public and private institutional partnerships supporting adolescents' participation. Research has also shown the importance of NGOs, international organizations and adolescents themselves in advocating for, creating and supporting policy for adolescent participation. In this regard, it is crucial to have a proper strong policy framework that guarantees adolescents' rights and offers incentives to the civil society institutions working with this target sector of the population.

The following list outlines elements of National Youth Service Policy as found through a survey of 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.[39]

UNICEF/GBell/Cuba/2007

Implications for Policy – Elements of National Youth Service Policy

- A policy supported by the national government's legislation, as its own legislation or as a component of other legislation
- Legal regulations that establish the rights and duties of adolescents participating in the programs or councils (municipal, regional or national adolescent councils) to develop plans to promote participation
- A defined target population, either focusing on inclusiveness by providing opportunities for all adolescents (regardless of age, background, economic background) or by targeting a specific population of them (e.g. students, unemployed, rural, indigenous, afro-descendents, etc.)
- A defined policy objective, such as enhancing student learning and civic engagement while addressing community needs; providing a mechanism for fulfilling adolescents' participation in pro-social activities; or increasing employability skills and to enhance citizenship
- A defined objective for addressing community needs: poverty, environment, response to natural disasters, increasing democratic participation, etc.
- A defined public budget since the presence or absence of funding is a key issue for implementation of policy
- Local implementation of the national policy in partnership with schools, NGOs, community organizations, etc. who deliver the participation programs
- Support to the participants in the programs (adolescents, practitioners, teachers, parents, etc) with training, professional development, modest monetary support or stipends, grants and seed capital for community organizations, awards, distinctions, etc. that can serve as incentives for participation
- Awareness campaigns to inform, promote and facilitate the adolescent participation using traditional and alternative mass media tools that help both to recruit and share success stories

[38] Metz, E., Alessi, B., Stroud, S., Acevedo, R., & Smith, G. (2006).
[39] Adapted from ICP's study, Policy Scan: An Exploratory Study of National Youth Service Policy in 19 Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. (2006).

As we have shown with program practices throughout this handbook, policies should also provide and promote opportunities for continued engagement, not one-time or periodic participation in events or councils. Additionally, while some countries have policies requiring service-learning or mandatory community-service hours as a graduation requirement, there are mixed opinions on this as a policy strategy – some find it to be an effective policy that engages large numbers of young people in a pedagogy that enhances academic learning and is a way for young people to repay society for their public education, whereas others cite inconsistencies in program quality and challenges of the perception of 'required' service.

It is our hope that each of the three promising approaches to participation can be utilized to greater affect in Latin America and the Caribbean, giving adolescents further opportunities for skill building, empowerment and civic engagement. The following appendices can further assist practitioners in assessing program models and in understanding the concepts presented in this handbook. Policy makers and practitioners should also seek to explore these participation approaches together in order to better align implementation needs with regional and national political discourse.

UNICEF/CVillar/Belize/2006

UNICEF/LDeLeon/Panama/2010

APPENDIX ONE:
Self Assessment Chart for Practitioners

This self-assessment chart is intended to help practitioners assess the extent to which they are incorporating good practices from the "What Works" handbook into their adolescent participation program. It can be used to assess existing programs or to assess initial plans and designs for programs.

The chart is split into four sections: 1) Adolescent Participation Fundamentals, which are relevant to all adolescent participation programs and then a section for each Participation area: 2) Volunteering 3) Service-Learning and 4) Advocacy and Policy Influencing.

In each section, the elements of successful programs outlined in the handbook are presented in the first column with a number of guided questions. Practitioners can assess the current state of their program or program design in the second column, and make notes on plans for improvement in the third column.

Adolescent Participation Fundamentals

Elements of Successful Programs	Self-Assessment	Plans for Improvement
1. Are adolescents engaged in meaningful participation that has a specific purpose beyond the act of participating?		
2. Is participation an on-going, longer-term process rather than a one-time or periodic event or meeting?		
3. If the program works with vulnerable adolescents, is the program specifically designed and adapted to engage them?		
4. Does the program build in monitoring and evaluation systems from the beginning of the program and throughout the experience until the end?		
5. Is the program aligned with the skill and developmental level of the adolescent?		

Participation Approach: Volunteering

Elements of Successful Programs	Self-Assessment	Plans for Improvement
Adolescent Input and Leadership		
1. Are adolescents engaged in the program design?		
2. Are there continual opportunities for feedback and input from adolescents?		
3. Do adolescents participate in the evaluation of the program?		
4. Are adolescents encouraged to take on leadership roles? Are they given the tools and knowledge to be successful leaders?		
Value of the service work		
1. Does the program engage the community and adolescents together in identifying needs?		
2. Is the service valuable to the community?		
3. Are adolescents and community members engaged in identifying solutions to meet needs?		

Training, support and supervision		
1. Is there a significant training or preparation element for adolescents in the program design?		
2. Is the program designed to build and enhance adolescents' skills and knowledge?		
3. Are there supportive and knowledgeable staff working with adolescents?		
4. Is there a training element for support staff?		
5. Are adolescents given positive feedback and advice throughout the program's duration?		
Diversity		
1. Where appropriate, does the program encourage participation from adolescents with diverse backgrounds and experience?		
2. Does the training provided to adolescents include diversity appreciation and respect for varying viewpoints, experiences and beliefs?		
3. Where appropriate, does the program seek to build solidarity between adolescents from diverse backgrounds and experiences?		
Recognition		
1. Does the program design include opportunities for praise and recognition of adolescents by adults, the community and/or their peers?		
2. Is there a celebration or event planned to recognize the successful completion of the program?		
Program size		
1. Is the program size manageable given the allocated resources?		
2. Do all adolescents in the program know one another?		
3. Do staff know all the adolescents and are they known by the adolescents?		
Program coordination		
1. What organization, body or individual is responsible for the program? Are responsibilities shared among different groups?		
2. Is the program designed to ensure that all program coordinators are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities?		
Flexibility		
1. In planning the program, is there room for flexibility to try new approaches if one approach isn't working?		
2. Are adolescents able to continually provide feedback on their experience in order to make adjustments throughout the program to meet their needs?		
3. Are there contingency plans in case of unforeseen circumstances or events?		

Accountability to standards		
1. Has the program identified specific outcomes and goals?		
2. Has the program designed an effective way to measure these outcomes and goals?		
3. If goals or outcomes are not met, does the program have a plan for future improvement in the program design?		
4. Does the program have a plan to disseminate the findings of its evaluation in order to promote effective practice in the field?		

Participation Approach: Service-Learning

Elements of Successful Programs	Self-Assessment	Plans for Improvement
Adolescent Voice		
1. Are adolescents involved in identifying the issue with the community and in developing the project?		
2. Do the adolescents have a choice in selecting which issue to work on?		
3. Is there continual opportunity for feedback from the adolescents?		
Meaningful Action and Community Voice		
1. Does the service help to address a real community need?		
2. Has the community with whom you are working identified the need or issue?		
3. Is the service performed by the adolescents necessary and valuable to the community?		
4. Are the instructors and adolescents working in partnership with the community to develop the approach to addressing the issue or need?		
5. Does the project leverage the assets of the community and the educational institution?		
Orientation, Training and Support		
1. Prior to service, are students given adequate information about the community, partner organizations and background on the issue being addressed?		
2. Have you set specific learning objectives that are appropriate to the skill level and development of the adolescents?		
3. Are the learning goals clear to both students and community partners?		
4. What have you done to minimize the distinction between the classroom learning role and the community learning role?		

Reflection		
1. What reflection activities are you using to connect service with the curriculum and learning objectives?		
2. How are you facilitating thoughtful, critical and meaningful reflection?		
3. How are you incorporating the service into the curriculum of the class in an academically rigorous way?		
Evaluation		
1. Are you giving academic credit for the service hours or for the students' learning?		
2. What measures are you using to assess students' learning?		
3. How are you assessing the impact on the community? (How do you know if they project is effective? How do you know if it is producing the desired outcome?)		

Participation Approach: Advocacy and Policy Influencing

Elements of Successful Programs	Self-Assessment	Plans for Improvement
Share power and decision-making		
1. What mechanisms have been established for adolescent input into decisions outside of formal voting structures?		
2. How are adolescents' views received and taken into account in decision making?		
Nonpolitical/nonpartisan education		
1. What information is provided to adolescents about relevant issues, context and history?		
2. Who provides this background information and how do you ensure that it is balanced and unbiased?		
3. What safeguards are in place to ensure that adolescents are not being manipulated for political purposes?		
Hands-on Experience		
1. Are there opportunities for adolescents to learn about political processes and how governments function?		
2. What kind of practical experience are adolescents gaining about policy and governance, both as policymaker and citizen?		
Relationships and Partnerships		
1. How would you rate the level of relationships and partnerships between adolescents and others (adult advocates, policymakers, community groups, etc) on the following points: a. Transparency b. Flexibility c. Inclusivity to adolescents of different backgrounds		

2. Are you committed to developing long-term and broad relationships, rather than short-term interactions with adolescents?		
Multiple Strategies		
1. How are the strategies developed to produce the desired result?		
2. How do you respond or recommend adolescents respond when a strategy does not produce the desired result?		
Realistic Goals		
1. How do you work with adolescents to set realistic goals that can be achieved?		
2. Do you help adolescents understand that change is a process and is incremental?		
3. How do you help keep adolescents engaged and motivated if the desired change does not happen or does not happen as quickly as desired?		
Foster Solidarity		
1. What do you do foster solidarity among groups of adolescent peers and among adolescents from different backgrounds?		
2. What do you do to maintain solidarity among adolescent participants and their communities or peers who are not participating?		
3. Do you provide inter-generational opportunities for understanding and collaboration?		
Civic Values		
1. Do you explicitly teach about civic values, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens?		
2. Do adolescents have the opportunity to see people of all ages participating?		
3. How do you encourage continued participation beyond adolescence?		

APPENDIX TWO:
Glossary of key terminology

- **Adolescent:** The United Nations defines an adolescent as a person between 10-19 years old. Adolescents' rights are protected under the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

- **Advocacy and Policy Influencing:** Related concepts of participation that have internal and external components. Internal participation in this approach includes participation in councils and representation in government bodies, involvement in local development projects, or participation in NGOs that monitor government policies.   External participation involves activities such as campaigning on a particular issue, raising public awareness or consciousness, and working to change policy/legislation from the outside. Participation may be internal or external or both.

- **Child rights:** The child and adolescent rights established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the CRC include non-discrimination; adherence to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the right to participate. They represent the underlying requirements for any and all rights to be realized.[40]

- **Civic Engagement:** working to make a difference in the life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference; promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

- **Child Participation rights:** The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) includes two articles relating to the right to participate:

  Article 12
  1. State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
  2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

  Article 13
  1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
  2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
     (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or
     (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.[41]

- **Full citizenship:** Refers to the progressive acquisition of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights by adolescents, culminating in the understanding, acceptance and action on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.[42]

- **Reflection:** activities designed to connect service with the academic, professional and social curriculum and learning objectives in a thoughtful, critical and meaningful way.

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[40] United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm
[41] Ibid
[42] Kessler, G. (1996).

- **Service-learning:** a "pedagogy that promotes student solidarity activities, not only to attend to the needs of the community, but also to improve the quality of the academic learning process and personal formation of values and responsible civic participation."[43] Service-learning is a pedagogical tool in the category of "experiential learning" that connects knowledge acquisition with "service to others, which determines the purpose, nature and process of social and educational exchange between learners (students) and the people they serve."[44]

- **Volunteering:** working to make a positive difference, individually or as part of a group, for the well being of another person, a community, the environment or the society in general and without the motivation or expectation of financial profit or compensation.

- **Vulnerable adolescents:** adolescents living in especially difficult circumstances, such as: (1) do not have a family or come from a family that cannot cover his/her basic needs; (2) are traumatized by disaster, poverty, or armed conflict; (3) or even live with abusive families and need to be protected from them;[45] or (4) come from socially excluded groups including afrodescendent and indigenous adolescents, those living in ghetto or dense urban areas, adolescents living on the street, and adolescents living with HIV.

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[43] Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario, http://www.clayss.org.ar/as.htm
[44] Stanton, T. (1990)
[45] Hart, R. (1992) p. 24.

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