



THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

- A report about youth participation in Norwegian international development policy



About the LNU report series

LNU publishes reports on children and youth-related issues several times a year.

You can read more about the LNU report series at www.lnu.no

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The report is funded by Norad (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation)

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About LNU

The Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) is an umbrella organisation for around 100 Norwegian children's and youth organisations. Its member body is made up of voluntary organisations with democratic structures and represent a broad spectre of activities and values. By being part of LNU member organisations have the opportunity to meet other children's and youth organisations regardless of their activities, creed and political stance.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child underpin all of LNU's activities. LNU's work is concentrated in three key areas: advocacy, grant giving and capacity building. As a representative body, LNU works to promote children and youth-related issues. It also offers grants for organisational development and provides capacity building through courses and other forms of training. LNU manages 7, 47 million NOK through eight different grants, funded by three different government ministries.

Foreword

The world's population has never been younger. More than half the global population today are under 26, and 80 percent of youth live in developing countries. The Norwegian government takes this trend very seriously. In Norway, it is listening to recommendations from youth organisations. Internationally, it is working for the establishment of permanent arenas for meaningful and real youth participation at the United Nations (UN). Since 1971, it has included youth delegates in some of Norway's official delegations to the UN.

In 2013 the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) adopted White Paper no.25 (Meld.St, 2012-2013), "Sharing for prosperity", which recognised youth-led civil society organisations as important agents for change. In the same White Paper, the Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) was invited to enter into a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to strengthen the Norwegian Diplomatic Service's expertise on youth-related issues. In our international networks of UN organisations, politicians and youth organisations, Norway is often held up as a role model, ensuring, where it has been possible, that youth have a voice in public debate. While this praise is often well-deserved, there are also examples of poor youth participation measures initiated by Norway, both at home and abroad.

Despite a number of effective and important contributions to youth participation in Norway's international development policy, we are far from satisfied with Norway's effort to secure real

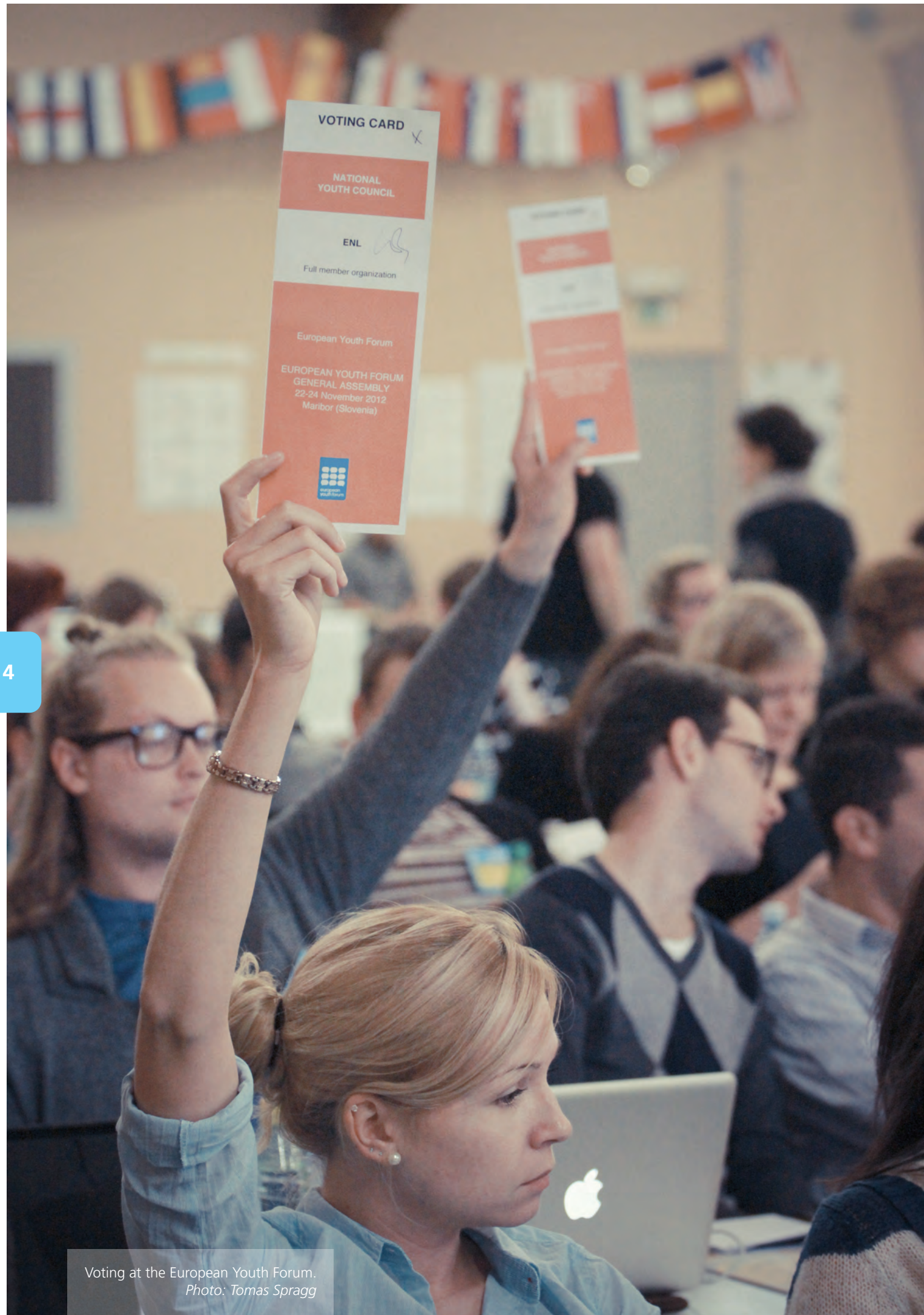
and meaningful opportunities for youth participation. Moving from a position of regarding youth solely as a target group, the Norwegian government now recognises the value of youth as critical actors, although this approach has yet to be implemented on a practical level. It took many years before youth delegates were included in UN delegations other than to the General Assembly. With regards to Norwegian international development policy, it seems that youth-led civil society organisations are seen as important contributors in the domestic debate, but when it comes to the implementation of policies and projects in developing countries, youth are rarely involved in a meaningful way.

This report has been prepared by Ane Norgård Brohaug in partnership with LNU to inform the debate about youth participation in Norwegian international development policy. In order to establish an international development policy that youth can benefit from, it is necessary to engage a diverse range of actors simultaneously. The government, international development organisations, the private sector, the UN, religious leaders and institutions – not to mention youth themselves – are all key actors in this process. As LNU is made up of and knows youth, this report is a contribution to the debate between the Norwegian government and international development organisations on how to best ensure youth participation in international development.

By Stian Seland, Chair, the Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU)

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Voting at the European Youth Forum.
Photo: Tomas Spragg



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to make a set of recommendations to the Norwegian government on how youth can best be included in international development policy. These recommendations are based on LNU's knowledge and expertise of international work, as well as experience from LNU's international grants and Youth Delegate Programme. LNU's international grants focus on organisational development and capacity building as tools for creating strong, youth-led civil society organisations, thus contributing to youth participation in a practical manner.

Chapter One provides the background for this report, examining key questions of what youth-led civil society organisations are and what role they can play in building robust democracies. It also looks at what characterises youth as a group, and why real participation for youth is important. Chapter Two provides an overview of how LNU works to ensure that youth are part of Norwegian international development policy and why organisational development as a tool strengthens youth participation. LNU's policy on real participation is presented in Chapter Three; which looks at what methods and approaches LNU uses to achieve real participation, and the key principles that underpin these approaches. Furthermore; Chapter Three presents LNU's proposal for a model of real and meaningful youth participation in Norwegian international development policy.

Following the outline of the model for youth participation, Chapter Four includes LNU's recommendations to the Norwegian government on realising youth participation in Norwegian international development policy.

LNU's political lobbying activities on international issues takes place both in national and international forums. LNU's policy is set by its member organisations. The member organisations are involved in a wide range of political issues and part of LNU's international work is carried out by working groups made up of representatives drawn from these organisations. The UN working group cooperates closely with UN youth delegates on related policies in preparation for major UN meetings, while the North/South working group annually develops a North/South-related campaign with political demands and suggested actions for member organisations.

LNU has over several decades developed a broad theoretical expertise on youth participation. Every year, LNU sends youth delegates to the UN General Assembly in New York and to other major UN meetings on climate change, HIV/Aids, education and culture. The Youth Delegate Programme is a direct channel for participation and youth representation. Through its international grants, LNU funds projects that in different ways contribute to youth participation in the global South. By focussing on organisational development and project development, LNU aims to make the grants a tool for strengthening democracies in the global South.

Through a newly established partnership with UN-Habitat, LNU is seeking to develop further its expertise on youth participation on an international level. Norway has for several years worked actively to draw attention to youth as an issue in international development, by, among other things, providing funding for UN-Habitat. The 2010 LNU report "More than nice words" offered six recommendations on how to strengthen children and youth's participation in Norwegian international development policy. Following this report, LNU was, through White Paper no. 25 (Meld.St, 2012-13), "Sharing for prosperity", invited to enter into a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to further develop the Ministry's expertise on youth and democratic participation. This latest report is a response to this invitation and will highlight LNU's expertise and relevance within this field. Norway and UN-Habitat have been leading the work to put youth participation on the agenda on an international level, but even after several years of effort, there is still a long way to move from words to action, both for Norway and for UN-Habitat. There is growing interest in youth issues at the UN and in other international arenas, but so far few initiatives and measures have been adopted and even fewer have been implemented. The challenge now is to translate the interest and initiative into permanent structures and find ways to normalise youth as an issue in international development.



1. Youth and civil society

1.1. The role of civil society in international development policy

Civil society can include a range of organisations and movements which differ greatly in purpose, size, level of professionalism and geographical reach. Civil society actors can be everything from political parties to independent media and voluntary organisations¹. What most civil society organisations and movements have in common is that they play an important role in the democratic process through constructive participation and as schools of democracy for members.

Building strong civil societies is a long-standing priority in Norwegian international development policy. In its 2014 budget, the government said:

Public engagement and participation is important for the role of and possibility for democracy in all countries. Civil society is understood as the diverse arena where the regular citizen, alone or together with fellow citizens, can further their interests and needs on behalf of themselves and others. A diverse and dynamic civil society gives a government the opportunity to understand, explain and adapt the way it implements policy in key areas. Civil society can create public debate and provide a voice for different groups in society.²

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 2013 review of Norwegian aid highlights that support for civil society has always been a strong element of Norwegian international development policy, where the notion of voluntary organisations as agents of change that can strengthen civil society and contribute to democratisation is key³.

Robert Putnam developed the concept of social capital and the link between organisations and the level of trust within a society. Norwegian research has shown that a strong and wide-reaching civil society contributes to increased trust within a society⁴. A diverse range of organisations and a high level of volunteering can help enhance trust and reduce levels of conflict within a society. Civil society organisations can at the same time contribute to the development of a political culture where citizens have a critical view of the government and politicians. That a strong civil society can be a tool to challenge power and promote democratisation has also been underlined by the Norwegian government, which has stated that it wants to support organisations that work to promote "development, democratisation and the redistribution of power"⁵.

Civil society organisations often emphasise their role as schools of democracy for their members⁶. This idea goes back to the classical description of modern democracies and the French political thinker Toqueville's argument that voluntary organisations operate as learning spaces for members to debate, make compromises and work together for common goals⁷. This role is realised in several ways; firstly, organisations usually offer their members training courses on organisational development and how to maintain democratic structure. This type of training is vital for youth-led organisations which have a high turnover in their membership. Furthermore, organisations offer direct and indirect training for members on how to operate within the organisation's democratic structures. The indirect learning takes place as members participate in the internal democratic process, learn to argue their case and promote their opinions, providing them with useful experiences of democracy in practice⁸. This democratic expertise can be utilised in their wider role as active citizens in society as a whole.

Moreover, civil society organisations can be regarded as schools of democracy because they are an important arena for political socialisation. Almond and Verba put forward the idea that such organisations introduce their members to a political culture. This makes members more aware of their role as voters and it means they will be more likely to hold their politicians to account – also after elections have taken place. The internal democratic processes in voluntary organisations such as elections or statutes can be regarded as 'mini constitutions' that help train members in political work and foster a democratic mindset⁹.

1.2. Youth as a group

The group referred to as 'youth' is diverse and often defined in different ways in different cultures, political bodies and voluntary organisations. There is no legal definition of youth equivalent to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)'s definition of a child. The UN, for statistical consistency, defines people aged between 15 and 24 as youth, but this range is open to different

1. Budget for 2014 (Prop. 1 S (2013-2014)), chapter 160 *Civil society and democratisation*

2. Ibid

3. OECD (2014)

4. Wollebæk and Strømsnes (2007)

5. Norad (2009)

6. Norwegian Ministry of Culture (2006-2007)

7. LNU (2012)

8. Ibid

9. Almond and Verba (1989)



definitions in terms of age among its Member States¹⁰. How countries define youth in terms of age varies greatly and is often a reflection of youth's cultural and social status. In Norwegian law, children are defined as persons under the age of 18 in line with the CRC, but there is no legal definition of youth¹¹. LNU's international grants are open to youth under the age of 26, while membership of the LNU is open to persons under the age of 30, according to the organisation's statutes.

In the absence of a legal definition, it can be helpful to look at other ways of defining youth. If one regards youth as a social, cultural, economic and political life stage, one can better conceptualise how to address youth-related issues and youth right¹². By adopting a life stage approach, one can avoid stringent definitions that can exclude groups of people. However, this approach can make it more challenging to understand youth from a legal perspective, e.g. when discussing making youth participation a legal right. On the other hand, a definition focussing on life stage rather than age as its criterion can help improve the understanding of youth's role in the practical development of policies.

On an individual level, adolescence is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood – for many the transition stage between school and work, and between being a recipient to becoming an active participant in, citizen of and contributor to society. It is a temporary phase which consequently distinguishes youth as a group from women, indigenous people and other rights-holders who have permanent characteristics that define them as a group.

Collectively, one can look at youth as one big continuous group in society. When a young person leaves the group, there is always a new adolescent who enters it. Youth make up a substantial proportion of the world's population today, and if the definition of youth as a life stage is applied, this proportion is likely to be even larger than UN statistics currently suggest.

In order to apply a rights-based approach when working with youth, LNU believes one has to recognise adolescence as a temporary phase for the individual, while at the same time acknowledging that youth make up a significant and permanent group in society. These demographic characteristics make it necessary to adopt a specific approach when working with youth. It is also important to recognise adolescence as a phase when youth become more independent, want to participate more actively in issues they care about and try to influence the society they have become an active part of.

What all youth have in common is that they are developing, maturing and on their way to becoming something else. At the same time they have the right to and the need for being an active stakeholder in society right here and now.

To be an active stakeholder does not only entail having rights, but also implies having responsibilities and duties and playing an active role in society. If youth are given the opportunity to become actors, it will lead to a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for decisions that are made.

In human rights work, youth can often be caught between childhood and adulthood. In international aid and development policy, youth are often included in the same group as children. As children are more easily defined as a group and have corresponding legal rights, initiatives are often implemented on children's terms. In work to ensure that human rights are protected, initiatives often target adults, and do not address the specific needs of youth.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which refers to the right to adequate shelter, is an example of how youth fall through the cracks both in terms of CRC and the implementation of other human rights. In the context of children's rights, the article is interpreted as the right to a safe childhood and care. For the adult population, the right to shelter is often linked to the right to private property and the sale and purchase of such property. The right to care or being cared for and the right to private property is less relevant to youth. The cultural and economic characteristics of adolescence, with youth's limited financial means and a limited time frame when it comes to shelter, indicate that youth would benefit from expanding the right to adequate shelter to include the right to adequate rental property. This need is strengthened by the fact that a large proportion of youth move to cities and urban areas looking for work or to continue their studies. Property prices in cities and urban areas are often high and most youth end up in rented accommodation.


1.3. Youth-led civil society organisations

The role as schools of democracy is particularly pertinent to youth-led organisations. Such organisations often have a relatively high turnover in membership as members are replaced as they grow older and are no longer eligible for membership. As a result, youth-led organisations and networks have to offer their members comprehensive training programmes in the democratic process to maintain internal democracy and ensure continued organisational development. In addition, the high turnover of members requires organisations to have a strong democratic foundation for their policies and goals. Consequently, members

10. UNESCO

11. FN (1989)

12. Seland (2014)



Participants at LNU's study trip to Istanbul, Turkey in November 2013. Orhan Argun (Association of Youth without frontiers), Nikolai Nordli (PRESS), Romina Dehzani (Lawan Youth Organisation) and Tuva Widskjold (Changemaker).

Photo: LNU

gain valuable experience of political work by helping to shape the policies of organisations.

Research from UN-Habitat shows that organised youth, almost without exception, work for positive change in society as a whole, rather than merely promoting the interest of youth alone¹³. Examples of this are youth-led organisations' involvement in major social issues such as climate change, corruption, fair trade and peace work. Most demographic groups share this tendency, but the trend seems even stronger among youth-led organisations. Few, if any, of these organisations exist to promote the interests of youths alone. One reason could be that adolescents are aware they will not stay young forever, while at the same time they feel uncertain about what the future will bring. This starting point makes youth more likely to care about all parts of society to ensure it works well and improves further. This is a real strength of youth-led civil society organisations and can be used in international development work, even beyond measures that are directly targeting youth. The right of children and youth to participate should not only be confined to youth-related issues, rather it should be seen in the context of society as a whole as something that concerns youth.

1.4. Not all participation is good participation

Youth should be regarded as agents of positive change rather than simply a target group in international development policy. The CRC confirms youth's right to have their voices heard on matters that concern them. At the same time, securing youth participation is about more than just upholding human rights. Real and meaningful youth participation strengthens democracy by ensuring that decisions and projects have a basis in a larger proportion of the population. Participation also strengthens the

quality of decisions made and the decision-making process by providing legitimacy. The distinct characteristics of youth and their fresh perspectives require policies, projects and structures to facilitate their participation in all stages of the decision-making process, from planning to implementation and evaluation.

To ensure that youth participation works, it is important to acknowledge that not all youth participation initiatives are positive. Youth representation can operate as an alibi for decision makers so they can say youth have been involved. Guro Ødegård has found that youth who participate in structures with no real power find it demotivating¹⁴. The belief that getting involved will make a difference is central to further political mobilisation of youth. Ødegård's research focused on youth councils in Norwegian municipalities. Some of the youth councils in her study had very limited powers and were unsuccessful in promoting their issues. Ødegård concludes that *"if individuals who from the outset are highly motivated to participate in the political process experience that they are not heard, they can end up becoming cynical about politics"*¹⁵.

Providing youth with opportunities to participate that are not real and meaningful can consequently reverse some of the positive effects that youth-led civil society organisations offer. It is crucial that the different actors in democratic structures are aware of the limits to their powers, and that the structures are open to debate. In a similar manner, youth participation initiatives must be organised in a manner that ensures real and meaningful participation for youth. Chapter Three of this report will take a more in-depth look at how this can happen.

13. Solberg (2014)

14. Ødegård (2010:28)

15. Ibid



2. Experience from LNU's work

This chapter concentrates on the work that LNU carries out to ensure that youth are heard when it comes to shaping Norwegian international development policy. LNU's international work focuses on the international grants and the Youth Delegate Programme. Through its four international grants, LNU administers 7,47 mill million Norwegian Krone (NOK), equivalent to US \$ 1.26 million. The funding is provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) and the Norwegian Peace Corps, and is channelled through LNU to support Norwegian children's and youth organisations.

A key aim for LNU is to strengthen civil society and promote awareness of and respect for voluntary work among children and youth, both at a domestic and international level. It is important to note that LNU's members only encompass organisations that are youth-led, member-based and have democratic structures. Their partner organisations in the global South will have similar characteristics. Consequently, LNU does not represent the full span of civil society organisations in Norway or partner countries in the global South.

Children and youth's right to be heard on issues that concern them is confirmed in the CRC, which forms the basis of LNU's policies. To meet these fundamental rights; the right to participate, to organise and to be heard, it is particularly important to ensure that youth-led civil society organisations can contribute to strengthening the democratic process. By supporting youth-led organisations, LNU helps to fulfil these rights.

2.1. International grants

LNU manages four international grants (see next page) that are open to children's and youth-led organisations with democratic structures. All LNU's international grants have their own separate aims and objectives, but they all have a shared goal that awarded projects should contribute to organisational development. LNU defines organisational development as *a process where organisations strengthen their own capacity to implement activities, problem-solve and meet their own goals*¹⁶.

Several of the grants also demand that projects aim to strengthen the role of children's and youth-led organisations in the development of a sustainable civil society. Applicants have to submit a detailed activity plan which requires the organisations to carefully assess their project goals. Project plans should have a logical structure and include goals that show the wider value of the project and how the project activities contribute to meeting these goals. The grants also have criteria for youth participa-

tion in the projects, e.g. applications for the North/South Youth Grant have to empower youth as agents of change through their project activities. Equality and reciprocity are also concepts that occur in the guidelines and LNU requires organisations to cooperate and communicate well with their partner organisations.

As an umbrella organisation for around 100 Norwegian children's and youth organisations, it is an LNU priority that the grants and the Youth Delegate Programme are open to a diverse set of organisations. To help facilitate this, LNU spends a substantial amount of its financial and human resources on supporting grantees through project follow-up and capacity building. Such activities include training, information sharing, guidance and support for each individual project and grantee.

As is evident from the different grant guidelines, LNU requires applicants to display a high degree of self-reflection in their project proposals. The aim is on one hand to encourage high-quality applications that can meet its targets, and on the other, to make sure applicants are able to see the role of their project in the wider context of strengthening youth-led civil society organisations and promoting democratisation.

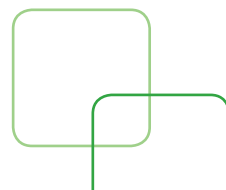
16. www.lnu.no

17. LNU (2013)

LNU's partnership with UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat, or the United Nations Settlements Programme, is the UN organisation responsible for sustainable urban development. In 2013 UN-Habitat and LNU signed a partnership agreement. This partnership will help UN-Habitat improve its understanding of how to best include youth in decision-making processes, at the local, national and global level. UN-Habitat wants to build on LNU's experiences of how youth-led civil society organisations can participate in important decision-making processes to further develop them at the UN as a whole and within UN-Habitat itself.

We have a shared goal in increasing youth's participation in the young world that we live in. We look forward to working with LNU to create a strong framework for the role of youth in our work, says the Deputy Director of UN-Habitat, Dr. Aisa Kirabo Kacyira, about the partnership¹⁷.



LNUs international grants

LNU Democracy Grant:

- **Who can apply:** Norwegian children's and youth organisations with democratic structures that work in partnership with children's and youth organisations in Eastern Europe and Caucasus
- **Purpose:** strengthening the role of children's and youth organisation in building sustainable development of civil society in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus
- **Maximum size of grants:** open

LNU North/South Youth Grant:

- **Who can apply:** Norwegian children's and youth organisations with democratic structures that work in partnership with children's and youth organisations in the global South
- **Purpose:** contribute to strengthening the role of children's and youth organisations in the development of sustainable civil societies
- **Maximum size of grants:** up to 50,000 NOK (US \$ 8,350) for a preliminary project, and up to 150,000 NOK (US \$ 83,500) for a main project

LNU Exchange:

- **Who can apply:** Norwegian children's and youth organisations with democratic structures that work in partnership with children's and youth organisations in the global South, the Caucasus and the Balkans
- **Purpose:** to build stronger and more effective organisations and increase the knowledge about North/South-issues within the organisation. Grantees also improve their awareness of and knowledge about democratic working practices and youth's participation in decision-making processes as well as establishing strong, equal and long-term partnerships
- **Maximum size of grants:** 500,000 NOK (US \$ 83,500)

LNU North/South Information Grant:

- **Who can apply:** Norwegian children's and youth organisations with democratic structures
- **Purpose:** to improve the expertise and knowledge about North/South-issues among children's and youth organisations in particular, but also in the general population
- **Maximum size of grants:** 50,000 NOK (US \$ 8,350)

LNU Youth Delegates 2014. Ingrid Kleppenes Verne (Changemaker), Tone Vesterhus (NSO), Ragnhild Lunner (Spire), Adrian Lorentsson (Mental Helse Ungdom) and Maria Kristine Göthner (Unge Høyre).
Photo: LNU





2.2. Organisational development

Organisational development has become LNU's preferred approach to reach the goal of strengthening youth-led civil society organisations, improving children and youth's influence both internally within organisations and in society as a whole, and promoting children and youth as agents of change. Several of LNU's grants have been evaluated over the last couple of years. The evaluation of the Democracy Grant highlights LNU's focus on organisational development as a tool to meet its goals of contributing to the democratisation process and promoting democracy¹⁸. By adopting this approach, LNU manages to put organisational development in the greater context of promoting democratic processes. The approach has made LNU's work more tangible and measurable, while maintaining the organisation's normative and political stance with its focus on youth-led organisations; improving the influence of children and youth and strengthening civil society, which in turn can contribute to democratic development. The evaluation of the North/South Youth Grant concludes that knowledge and experience is retained within the organisations, creating a lasting impact of the projects that are funded. This is the case for organisations both in the global North and South, making them more capable of meeting their social responsibilities¹⁹.

It is worth noting that LNU's definition of organisational development includes an active phrase; it is a process where organisations *strengthen* their ability. The organisations have to be innovative and have a clear vision for their work. A number of organisations implement the same type of project for several years running, but adapt the aims and activities each year. For instance, an organisation can take lessons learned from one project, reflect on its own learning and development as part of its project evaluation, and build on this experience when developing new projects. By adopting this approach, grantees ensure they are able to further develop both their projects and their organisation as a whole.

Youth Delegate Programme

Every year LNU sends several delegates as part of larger official Norwegian delegations to various UN bodies. The programme has been a partnership with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since it was established in 1971. Through the LNU Youth Delegate Programme, youth have the opportunity to represent Norway and LNU at the UN. The delegates attend large UN meetings where they are part of the Norwegian delegation.

LNU sends two delegates to the UN General Assembly in New York every year, but the programme also includes other major UN meetings on issues such as climate change, sustainable development and education. Several of today's leading Norwegian politicians such as Jan Tore Sanner, Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, Jens Stoltenberg, Marit Arnstad and Trine Skei Grande were all LNU Youth Delegates to the UN. For more information about the youth delegate programme, please see the LNU report: *On the world's rostrum*.

2.3. The LNU Youth Delegate Programme to the UN

Norway has, in partnership with LNU, sent youth delegates to the UN General Assembly since 1971. Over the last couple of years, LNU has also developed youth delegate programmes for other issues and now sends delegates to a range of UN meetings. Since 2013, delegates carry out their roles for a full year, sometimes for two years, overlapping with other delegates. They take part in a detailed training programme and have a comprehensive set of tasks linked to the representative role they have been selected for. The delegates are nominated by LNU's member organisations, and LNU's political aims and adopted strategies provide the framework for their activities. As part of their preparations, delegates work with LNU's working group on UN-issues. This approach ensures that delegates' work has a broad basis in LNU's policies and is representative of the organisation.

The aim for the delegates' work is two-fold; firstly they have a political mandate from LNU to promote the livelihoods of children and youth as an issue on the international stage, while secondly, they work to secure real and meaningful participation for children and youth on youth-related issues at the UN. If the Norwegian government, the UN and LNU facilitate the work of the delegates in an effective manner and the work of the delegates has a strong link to children and youth, the participation goal is to a large extent met. How effective the delegate programme is, depends to a significant degree on how effectively the Norwegian government facilitates the participation of the delegates. This includes the access delegates have to information in advance of meetings, their right to participate in meetings during their missions and how much room they have to promote their own issues. The long-term work of the youth delegates requires continuous follow-up and organisational efforts from the youth themselves. In Norway this is done through LNU. To ensure its political contribution to lengthy and elaborate UN-processes, LNU has a long-term strategy for its UN work. In order for this strategy to be an effective political tool, it is important that the youth delegate programme has a predictable framework in place. Such a framework includes the shape of the delegate role as well as long-term funding of the programme.

The Youth Delegate Programme has been an important tool to make sure that youth are not omitted from the Norwegian UN delegation's agenda. The programme has thus fulfilled three important roles: it has given youth power at the UN through the decisions delegates have successfully lobbied the General Assembly to adopt, it has made the UN a relevant arena for Norwegian children's and youth organisations, and it has provided space for these organisations to influence the way the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs works from the inside.

18. Skedsmo (2008)

19. Thowsen and Krøvel (2009)



CASE STUDIES:

LNU North/South Information Grant:

Fantasiforbundet and the Peace Freedom Youth Forum (PFF), Palestina - "Till death do us apart"

Fantasiforbundet has worked in partnership with PFF in Palestine since 2011. The two groups first met at the Wergeland conference organised by LNU in 2008. Both organisations want to develop live action role plays (LARP) as a tool for human rights education.

The goal of the project was to strengthen the Palestinian civil society through developing PFF into a strong organisation which raises awareness among young Palestinians about their rights and mechanisms which can lead to social exclusion. The partners wanted to raise awareness about human rights issues and gender equality both in Norway and in Palestine.

The project was implemented in 2012 and consisted of a workshop and two seminars in Norway and a workshop and a live action role play (LARP) in Palestine. The organisations particularly wanted to engage girls in the project. The project has led to a long-term partnership between Fantasiforbundet and PFF. The two groups are planning to extend their work to involve organisations from Lebanon and Belarus. The LARP- community in Palestine is still fairly new and "Till death do us apart" has helped increase the enthusiasm for and interest in using live action role plays as a tool to raise awareness of the human rights situation in Palestine.



Live action role play (LARP) organised by the Peace Freedom Youth Forum and Fantasiforbundet in Palestine.

Photo: Fantasiforbundet

LNU Democracy Grant:

Labour Youth Wing (AUF) and Young Socialists of Georgia - "Young women can, Georgia"

AUF has worked in partnership with the Young Socialists of Georgia (YSG) since 2006. The partnership has focused on the organisation of local branches, democratisation processes and improving the quality of political work. The project 'Young women can, Georgia' was a women's project, where the long-term goal was to develop more strong women in Georgian youth politics.

The project was implemented in 2012 and consisted of two training courses in Georgia and one in Norway. YSG and AUF jointly developed the project proposal and were both active in planning the content of the training courses. The course activities were based on a training manual which had already been developed, but were adapted to the participants' needs. Among the priorities were presentation skills and campaign planning.

A total of 30 girls took part in the training. Participants reported they felt more able to speak their mind within their organisations and were more confident in their elected positions following the courses. YSG now has a stronger focus on gender equality, and has started a campaign on the issue with both external and internal activities.

LNU Exchange:

Queer Youth and Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) - "Sexuality and Spirituality"

Queer Youth and GALCK have a long-standing partnership and organised their first exchange project in 2010. The project addressed hate crimes, marginalised groups in local communities and capacity building. Experience from the exchange project showed that religion is an important factor in homophobia, both in Kenya and in Norway. The partners thus chose sexuality and spirituality as the theme for their next project in 2011, with a particular focus on Islam and Christianity.

For the second exchange the partners chose to strengthen the reciprocity of their partnership and improve both organisations' ownership of the project. A key aim was to establish links with religious groups and faith communities to challenge stereotypes and increase openness among them. The participants in the exchange took part in a number of events with Norwegian religious groups and put a lot of effort into creating dialogue about LGBT-rights.

The project contributed to organisational development in a number of ways. The partnership helped the organisations to develop expertise on topics they had previously not been able to prioritise in the same way. The exchange also enabled them to provide more effective support to local branches and groups, particularly through their work with local communities to organise events.



3. Real and meaningful youth participation

Strong models of real and meaningful youth participation are crucial to secure an effective international development policy for youth. While youth make up a large proportion of the population in developing countries, they are often under-represented in decision-making processes. This is particularly evident in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), where youth are only regarded as a target group and not actors in the international efforts to meet the goals. Yet, youth make up a large proportion of vulnerable (demographic) groups around the world²⁰.

Norwegian international development policy has a direct impact on youth in the global South, and the Norwegian government should take a lead in the efforts to secure real youth participation. If youth are involved in decision-making processes, the manner in which this is organised can vary greatly. Both how and how much youth are engaged determine how real and meaningful the initiatives to facilitate participation are. Often youth experience that decision makers, both at national and international levels, do not understand why they raise critical questions about who the youth representatives involved in participation efforts are and what they represent.

The Norwegian government has shown a growing commitment to and interest in efforts to include youth in international development projects. In White Paper no.25 (Meld. St 25, 2012-13), "Sharing for prosperity", the government emphasised the important role youth-led civil society organisations play in democratisation processes. This argument was further highlighted in the notes from Parliament (Stortinget) when it adopted the White Paper²¹. This display of interest in youth is encouraging, but it needs to be followed up with action. It is crucial that youth, together with representatives for the government and international development organisations, develop a shared understanding of what is required to ensure real and meaningful youth participation in Norwegian international development policy.

3.1. Theories and models

To ensure that youth participation is real and meaningful, certain requirements must be in place. Based on relevant theories, its own experience of managing international grants and political lobbying activities at both national and international levels, LNU applies the following principles in its definition of meaningful youth participation;

3.1.1 Independence

First and foremost, it is important to establish that youth should independently choose what issues they want to engage in. It

is youth's right to be involved and have their voices heard in decisions that will impact on them as well as decision-making processes for issues youth are concerned about in general. What processes youth are able to participate in should not be decided by the government and international development organisations. This point is particularly pertinent with regards to international development projects, where donors often have a powerful position and can replace youth's priorities with their own.

Ødegård's research shows that autonomous youth networks without interference from adults are more successful at mobilising youth and ensure a stronger belief among youth that they can make a difference by getting involved²². Using independent youth structures as a starting point for models of participation can give youth's contribution greater legitimacy. Robert Hart's ladder of participation – a typology for thinking about children and youth's participation – shows that models of participation that are youth initiated and where decisions are shared with adults turn youth into citizens with real influence.

3.1.2 Representation

Youth have the right to represent themselves in a similar manner to other groups in society. Youth themselves have a wide range of perspectives and opinions and are best placed to establish dialogue with other youth. The UN has argued for the inclusion of youth representatives in its own bodies and stresses that youth participation is important to its work. At the same time, it is vital to ensure that any youth participation initiative has a critical view of the issue of representation. A young person cannot represent youth merely by being young if (s)he is not seen to have legitimacy among the youth (s)he is supposed to speak on behalf of. Youth should themselves have the opportunity to select who is going to represent them. To represent youth carries with it the responsibility to promote youth's views and opinions. It involves having knowledge about the specific topic; having an insight into what policies would be in youth's best interests, and having an overview of youth's opinions on the topic. It is possible to argue that everyone who meets these criteria, no matter if they are youth or adults, can represent youth. However, in LNU's opinion, youth have the right to represent themselves along the line of other groups in society.

To ensure effective representation, youth participation initiatives should use existing youth organisations and networks as a starting point. These organisations and the networks that represent

20. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012 – 2013)

21. Ibid

22. Ødegård (2010:62)



youth have mobilised on issues they care about and believe in under their own initiative. Youth representation should be regarded as any other democratic institution. Representatives should be elected by their constituents. If existing youth networks do not include marginalised groups, it is important that the youth organisations themselves are responsible for including such groups. It is not the government or international development organisations which should choose representatives for such groups; rather they should try to encourage youth organisations to be more diverse and inclusive.

Unfortunately there are frequently examples of institutions with youth participation initiatives that only involve youth who are not organised, and as such do not represent anyone but themselves. This represents a trend where youth are treated differently to other demographic groups in society. Most democracies are based on the principle of representation and this should also apply to bodies of youth representation.

3.1.3 Expertise

Decision makers and international development organisations should regard youth as a professional resource with the necessary expertise to strengthen international development work. This expertise underlines the need to include youth in a wide range of decision-making processes.

However, it may still be necessary for bodies that would like to embed youth participation in their work to set aside time and space for initiatives that will increase youth's expertise. There are several aspects of the participation process that can be challenging due to lack of experience and a lower degree of professionalisation among youth compared to other organised groups. Youth-led organisations often spend a large proportion of their time and resources developing project management skills and strengthening their internal processes, leaving political lobbying and research activities in a vulnerable position. Considering the high turnover of members in youth-led organisations, it is particularly important to prioritise on-going organisational development initiatives. In this way youth can reach a level where they can be effective contributors that can impact on and influence the processes in which they participate. The government and international development organisations which would like to engage youth in their projects must consider the need for training and capacity building and acknowledge that such activities are necessary when working with youth compared to other, more professionalised organisations and networks.

3.1.4 Sufficient information

Governments and international development organisations have the responsibility to facilitate comprehensive and inclusive information sharing with youth who are participating in political processes. The information should be relevant, accessible and shared well in advance to enable youth-led organisations and networks to process it in a timely and detailed manner. Voluntary

organisations require more time to carry out consultations and make decisions jointly than other, more professionalised bodies. Unlike professional international development actors, voluntary and democratically-based organisations need to ensure that their policies have strong support among their members. Without legitimacy and ownership, these organisations will lose their members. This need for legitimacy and ownership should be seen in context of the requirement for on-going capacity building and support for organisational development.

3.1.5 Continuity

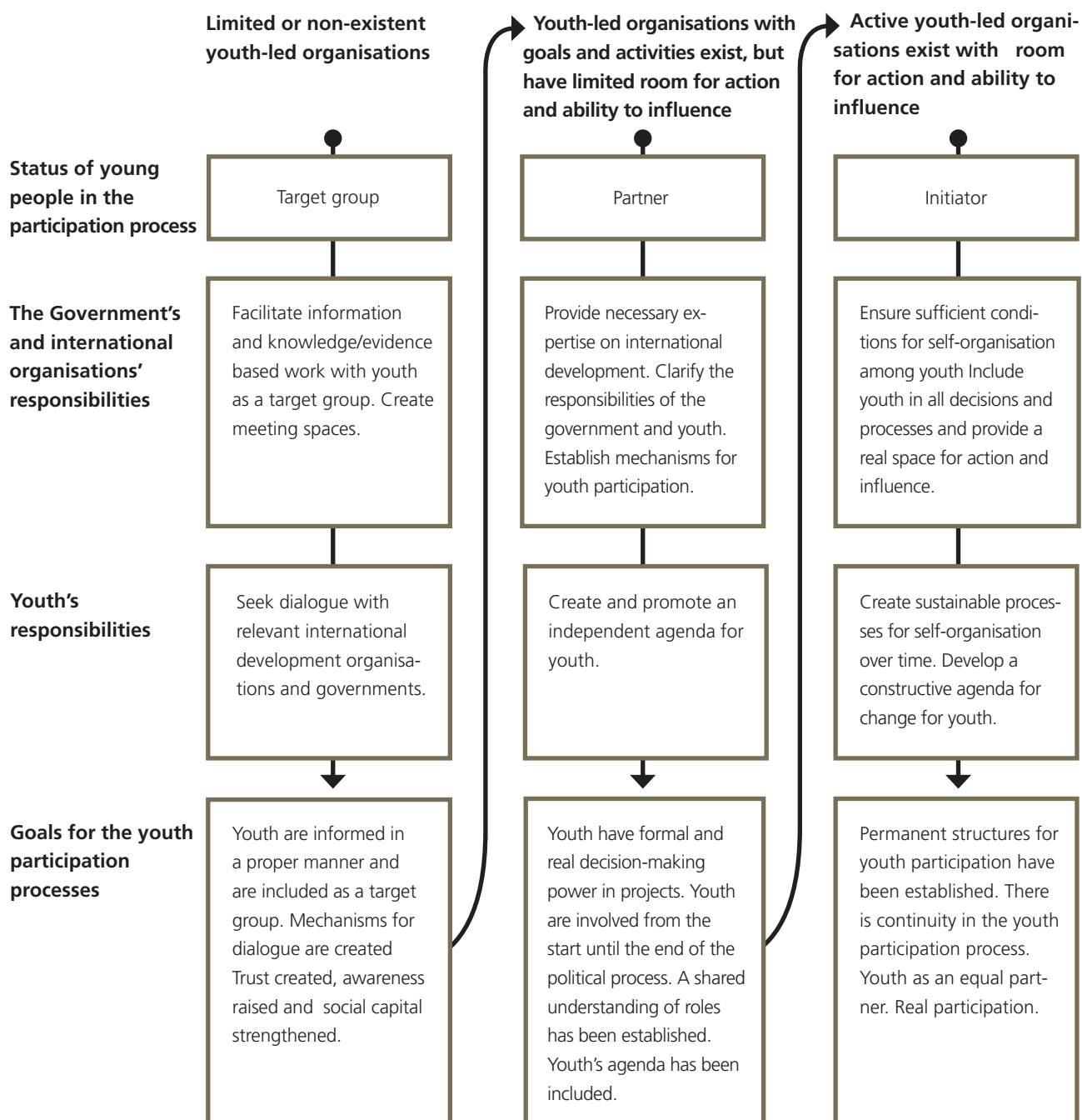
Most political decisions are reached following a comprehensive process. Often, youth are brought in towards the end of the political process, almost to provide a youth alibi. To ensure that youth participation is real, it is important to refrain from such tokenistic measures, and rather make sure youth are involved in the process from the start. Youth should be part of the development, discussion, decision, implementation and evaluation stages of policy making.

3.2. A universal and comprehensive model for participation

LNU's proposal for a more comprehensive model of real and meaningful participation of youth in shaping international development policy is based on LNU's experiences and other models, such as Hart's participation ladder²³. The aim of the model is to ensure that youth participation has a basis in representative youth-led initiatives, where youth actors have sufficient expertise and time to process issues throughout the political process. This approach helps secure real and meaningful youth participation. Within this model, youth-led organisations and the government have a shared, but differentiated responsibility regarding the role of youth in a project or a decision-making process. To ensure real and meaningful participation of youth in this context, it is necessary to regard youth as a relevant stakeholder, either as a partner or initiator.

To develop a universal model, it is necessary that a framework can be adapted to different political, cultural and economic contexts. The model should set out the key principles for youth participation, while at the same time being flexible enough so it can be adapted to the individual context and project. To be relevant in different situations, the model should be capable of assessing how meaningful any participation effort is based on underlying conditions. The mentioned categories where youth are partners or initiators are dependent on the existence of active youth-led civil society organisations. Where such organisations do not exist, it is important to strengthen the role of youth in society by recognising them as an important target group for international development projects.

23. LNU (2010)



This model illustrates how the government and other actors involved in international development work can promote the inclusion of youth in decision-making processes. The transition between the different statuses of youth-led civil society organisations is gradual and the model is a simplification of reality. It can nevertheless be a useful tool. If few or no youth-led organisations exist, the opportunity for real participation will be limited as youth will lack experience and opportunities to organise themselves.

At this level, the government and international development organisations must focus on creating mechanisms for dialogue that will help build trust and develop youth's social capital. This is necessary if youth are to become partners for the government and be able to develop and promote an independent agenda for

youth. Taking the step from dialogue to permanent structures for youth participation requires a commitment to organisational development at the grassroots level, according to LNU. This work has to take place on youth's terms. Partnerships among youth-led organisations in Norway and the global South can play an important part in this process, e.g. through capacity building.

Without representative and independent youth-led civil society organisations that have the necessary expertise, any permanent structures for participation will be meaningless. It is the government's and international development organisations' responsibility to ensure that the necessary financial and non-financial conditions are in place to ensure that youth-led organisations can operate in a sustainable manner.

4. The road ahead

The government and other actors in international development that wish to engage youth have a responsibility to ensure that the whole decision-making process is open to youth participation. The starting point should be a clear definition of what real and meaningful participation is (see Chapter Three). It is important to ensure that the whole process, from the project development stage through to evaluation, is accessible. To enable this, it is necessary to contact youth organisations that are independent and representative. Any such invitation should be open and allow youth's needs and opinions to influence the purpose and activities of the project in question, limiting the government's opportunity to influence youth's priorities and areas of focus.

The process should also provide youth with sufficient resources so they can participate based on the principles of information

sharing and continuity. If professionalised institutions such as governments and established international development actors want to facilitate real and meaningful participation for youth, they have to adapt to the pace and capacity of the youth-led organisations, and not vice-versa.

This report has highlighted the Norwegian government's willingness to alter its focus away from youth as a target group and towards youth as actors in shaping Norwegian international development policy. This shift in focus has not resulted in the implementation of any practical policies or initiatives. Youth participation is a way of working which, in LNU's eyes, has to start at the grassroots level. LNU calls for action and implementation in Norwegian development policy, not just words. The time has come to give youth the right to participate.

LNU's recommendations to the Norwegian government:

1. Youth should be a priority in Norwegian international development policy.
2. The Norwegian government should promote progressive development goals for its post-2015 agenda. The goals should identify youth as an important target group and as an actor in the efforts to meet these goals.
3. The Norwegian government should review all international development projects which target youth to ensure that they involve youth as actors with opportunities for real participation. Projects and initiatives that provide youth with real opportunities for participation should be prioritised when funding is allocated
4. The Norwegian government should enter into a strategic partnership with LNU to further develop the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' expertise on youth and democratic participation as outlined in White Paper no.25 "Sharing for prosperity".

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Intervju

- Aurora Nereid, International Adviser, LNU, 17.01.14
- Jon-Andreas Solberg, Strategy and Policy Advisor, Youth and Livelihood Unit, UN-Habitat, 20.01.2014

Andre dokumenter fra LNU

- Guidelines for LNU Democracy Grant
- Guidelines for LNU Exchange
- Guidelines for LNU North/South Youth Grant
- www.lnu.no



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