

INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES OF MONITORING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

LITERATURE REVIEW





Armenia Civics for Engagement Program

International Best Practices of Monitoring Youth Engagement in Decision-Making

LITERATURE REVIEW for Armenia Civics for Engagement Program

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Introduction

Young people are a vital resource for meeting a nation’s present and future policy challenges. They have been a prominent force in setting the agenda for pressing global issues, such as climate change, public health, digital technology, minority rights, unemployment, the rule of law, and social justice (European Youth Parliament, 2022). Youth have the potential to effect positive change when invited to participate in problem-solving and decision-making processes. They are a source of innovative ideas, inspiration, and energy that can animate creative policy decisions. Young people’s commitment to sustained engagement is enhanced when they have a sense of purpose and ownership in the process. The experience that youth gain from meaningful participation in decision-making prepares them to be good citizens and effective leaders.

However, the requisite knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behaviors for positive engagement are not conveyed automatically. Intentional programs of civic instruction that emphasize active engagement are an integral and effective means of creating and sustaining a participatory citizenry focused on the public interest (Owen and Irion-Groth, 2020). Such programs can have carryover effects to decision-making in informal settings. Still, there are significant barriers to youth engagement in decision-making that preclude meaningful involvement in community affairs. Opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making are often limited and not widely available, especially to vulnerable and underserved populations. Youth may not find the existing options to be interesting or compelling. Further, there is a paucity of evidence of what works when programs are implemented that can inform the development of effective options. Longitudinal research on youth engagement in decision-making is sorely lacking.

The importance of constructive youth engagement in decision-making is especially pressing in democracies. Including young people in decision-making can build social cohesion (Steiner, 2020) and help to sustain civic participation in the longer term. It can strengthen civil society and increase the accountability of governments and corporations (Generation Unlimited, 2020). In recent years, Armenia has undergone political change. The 2018 “Velvet Revolution” witnessed a coalition of journalists, student movements, and citizen groups facilitate a peaceful transition to democracy (Lanskoy and Suthers, 2019). Young people ranging in age from teens to twenties and representing all walks of life protested in favor of political reforms that would enhance government transparency while encouraging civic engagement (McCabe and Burnes, 2020). Voter turnout in the ensuing democratic election was high, including among young people (Foster, 2019). While the movement toward freedom and democracy continues, there have been setbacks (Repucci and Slipowitz, 2022), including a 44-day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh took a significant toll. Caucasus Barometer data collected by the Caucasus Research Resource Center from 2019 to 2021 indicated that while 60% of young Armenians (18 to 25 years old) considered the “Velvet Revolution” to have been a success, they did not feel that youth had gained enough from their efforts. Young people expressed views that set them apart from their parents’ generation. They had concerns about their future, especially due to what they perceived to be poor quality education and low wages (Rhys Jones, 2022).

The Armenia Civics for Engagement (ACE) program strives to enhance the quality and scope of Armenia’s school-based and extracurricular civic education by fostering youth engagement in public affairs. The aim of ACE is to promote the advancement of democratic principles and practices by working with stakeholders to 1) improve youth civic skills and sense of agency through formal education and 2) improve the enabling environment for youth civic

engagement (International Center for Human Development, 2022). The program seeks to educate young people about the importance of civic involvement and to create pathways to participation in decision-making that will have enduring impacts. ACE has adopted the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework as a central tenet of its work. The program is implemented through a consortium of local Armenian partners assembled through Project Harmony, Inc. (PH) that includes the International Center for Human Development (ICHHD), the Armenian Center for Democratic Education (Civitas Armenia), and the National Center for Educational Technologies of Armenia (NCET).

A core element of the ACE initiative is to carry out a comprehensive assessment of youth engagement in decision-making which entails the development of a methodology and monitoring instrument. To this end, this literature review has the following major objectives:

- To define what meaningful and authentic youth engagement in decision-making entails within the context of the PYD framework
- To build on a review of leading literature on the PYD framework
- To identify best practices, experiences, and lessons learned about monitoring youth engagement at the local, regional, and national levels
- To propose a strategy for developing indicators for monitoring youth engagement in decision-making using the PYD framework

The Positive Youth Development Framework and Youth Decision-Making

The PYD framework as articulated by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) promotes a **holistic approach to developing civic skills and competencies** that empower youth.

PYD engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a way that recognizes, utilizes, and enhances their strengths. PYD promotes positive outcomes for youth by incorporating age-appropriate approaches to build skills and assets, foster positive relationships, provide safe spaces and enabling environments, and encourage opportunities for youth to contribute to their school or community environment (USAID, 2018).

USAID’s overarching education programming goal is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” in diverse contexts (USAID, 2022). Young people can play a vital role in securing peace, economic prosperity, and democratic stability when they have a voice in shaping their own future. The policy objectives associated with USAID’s vision are access, participation, and systems. Young people should have better access to youth-responsive information, services, and opportunities necessary to build the skills needed for healthy, productive, and peaceful lives. All youth, especially those with intersecting marginalized identities, should be able to fully participate in community decision-making and resource allocation. Finally, local and national systems should better coordinate services, practices, and policies that further the principles of positive youth development, ensure their physical health, and foster productive social and emotional competencies (USAID, 2021).

(See Appendix A, Figure A1.)

The PYD framework requires that young people be treated as **equal partners in decision-making and resource allocation** as they engage with school and community partners to promote policies that further local, national, and international wellbeing. The approach endorses **intergenerational engagement** and stipulates an ongoing developmental process that supports individuals as they progress through the life course from childhood to adulthood (USAID, 2021). PYD centers on the **four cross-cutting domains of assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment**. The domain of assets requires programs to incorporate the necessary resources and skills needed for young people to engage effectively in decision-making. These assets include the development of competencies associated with conventional modes of engagement as well as 21st century skills for using and innovating with technology. Agency posits that families, adults, leaders, and institutions engage in practices that reduce obstacles to young people using their assets and aspirations to set goals and carry out policy decisions to achieve desired outcomes. Young people should be encouraged to lead and participate in efforts that contribute to meaningful change through a range of channels. Finally, young people should be surrounded by safe, secure, and supportive environments that allow them to maximize their assets and agency. Opportunities for youth involvement should be developed by engaging parents, community leaders, and peers in the process. Enabling environment promotes the development of social and emotional competencies that allow youth to thrive (USAID 2021). “The term “environment” should be interpreted broadly and includes: social (e.g., relationships with peers and adults), normative (e.g., attitudes, norms, and beliefs), structural (e.g., laws, policies, programs services, and systems) and physical (e.g., safe, supportive spaces)” (Hinson, et al., 2016: 22).

(See Appendix A, Figure A2.)

The PYD framework specifies seven features associated with the four domains that are necessary for robust programs. Skill building is associated with the domains of assets and agency. Various forms of youth engagement, including involvement in decision-making at different levels of government, are features related to the domain of contribution. Key features of enabling environment are 1) healthy relationships and bonding with positive adult role models, 2) activities that foster belonging and membership for all young people, 3) creating safe spaces that are tailored to the needs of youth, and 4) access to age appropriate and youth friendly services and integration among those services to provide a continuum of care at the community level (Hinson, et al., 2016: 23).
(See Appendix A, Figure A3.)

Youth Engagement in Decision-Making

It is oft noted that there is **no consensus about the definition of youth engagement** which has been treated as synonymous with the terms participation and involvement as will be the case here (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015; Dotterweich, 2021; Yerevan, 2022). Youth engagement has been defined broadly as “the process through which young people engage with and influence the organizations, institutions, and systems that impact their lives” (Martinez, Jones, and Connolly, 2020: 976). Engagement encompasses a wide range of actions and behaviors that can improve communities and solve problems. It has different connotations for diverse groups in society (CIRCLE, 2022).

Meaningful youth engagement combines establishing cross-generational relationships, building community, and promoting democratic decision-making. Moving beyond tokenistic inclusion, young people are partners working with leaders and institutional actors to have a positive impact on society. In the context of the PYD framework, meaningful youth engagement has been defined as “inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful participation between youth and adults whereby power is shared, and respective contributions, including young people’s ideas, leadership, perspective, skills, and strengths are valued” (USAID, 2022: 12).

The Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement endorsed by over 200 organizations worldwide adds some specificity to the PYD definition and assumes that youth participation is a right:

Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement is an inclusive, intentional, mutually respectful partnership between adolescents, youth, and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people’s ideas, perspectives, skills, and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programs, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms, and organizations that affect their lives and their communities, countries, and world (World Health Organization, 2020).

Youth engagement in decision-making focuses specifically on involving young people in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs and offers profound opportunities for planning and/or decision-making affecting others (National Commission on Resources for Youth as cited in Dotterweich, 2021: 44). It can be construed as “the meaningful participation and sustainable involvement of young people in shared decisions in matters which affect their lives

and those of their community, including planning, decision-making, and program delivery” (McCreary Centre Society, 2009: 8).

Engagement in decision-making assumes **partnership or collaboration between young people and adult stakeholders** across a range of settings, including schools, civic organizations, and government institutions, working to achieve positive change. Youth are given opportunities to

Three basic levels of citizen engagement in decision-making have been identified. At the most basic level, people are given information about the decisions that affect them but are largely outsiders to the process. The second level of engagement is consultation where authorities give members of the public the opportunity to comment and act as advisors on future actions. Co-deciding is the highest level of engagement where citizens are granted the authority to actively participate in the decision-making process (Gomolka, et al., 2020). This level of engagement facilitates bidirectional capacity building where youth, partners, researchers, and leaders learn from one another and develop best practices.

identify and act upon issues of their choosing. Young people and adults are perceived as assets in decision-making who bring to the table important knowledge and expertise. Meaningful youth engagement in decision-making occurs when youth-adult partnerships are structured so that both groups contribute, teach, and learn from each other (Martinez, Jones, and Connolly, 2020).

Authentic youth engagement posits that all **young people are experts in their own lives** and should participate fully in decision-making that affects them (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2019). Engagement initiatives should be **youth centered, and not merely youth focused**. Young people should be respected as equal partners with adults in decision-making. Full participation should be encouraged by giving youth legitimate responsibilities that can shape policy outcomes that reflect their priorities, rather than offering them trivial or performative tasks (Lofquist, 1989). Authentic engagement requires a redistribution of power relations where young people are leading decision-making and goal-setting processes in partnership with supportive, caring adults. Important roles for adults include establishing opportunities for youth engagement, mentoring and coaching, supporting young people’s work, and providing connections to community and government resources (Wu, Kornbluh, Weiss, and Roddy, 2016). Youth also should be given control over resources that affect their lives (OECD, 2017). Where appropriate, young people should be incentivized for their work, such as providing stipends (U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2013; Patterson, 2022). (Wu, et al.’s Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric is included in Appendix B.)

The **benefits of youth engagement** in decision-making are manifold. Young people can develop important civic skills and sociopolitical awareness. Their experience with taking part in decision-making and having their voices heard can create civic agency and instill long-lasting motivations for engagement. Youth can develop a sense of belonging in their schools and communities that can enhance their sense of responsibility and civic duty. They contribute to decision-making by bringing local knowledge to the process, challenging conventional thinking, and providing a reality check. They also can be effective role models and peer educators. Adults have observed improvements in the quality of their relationships with young people as well as increased understanding of their needs. Organizations have reported advancements in their programs, policies, and culture. At the same time, there are barriers to youth engagement in decision-making. It can be difficult to sustain involvement when young people do not believe that they have a stake in decisions and outcomes, and when they have low levels of trust in institutions, organizations, and adult leaders. Some young people feel that they have been relegated to playing

a token role in the process rather than having real potential to institute change. They are not given the resources not provided safe spaces to effectively participate.

Conventional Engagement

Forms of engagement with established histories, traditions, and practices are abundant.

A restrictive conception maintains that conventional forms of youth engagement are predominantly concerned with “formal politics, broader policy goals, typically hierarchical institutions, and long-term engagement” (Bacalso as cited in Jovanovski, 2020). Most of these activities take place in formal settings where young people are invited to join as subjects who need to be guided, monitored, and controlled, such as voting, joining a political party, and attending a community meeting (ACE, 2018). This type of engagement assumes a developmental model where young people are viewed as being in training to become active citizens.

A more comprehensive definition of conventional youth engagement adopted here accommodates an action-oriented approach that encompasses decision-making. Young people have agency to pursue personal benefits and/or contribute to the common good by participating actively in advocacy, community affairs, and governance activities. This approach is underscored by an empowerment-based PYD model that emphasizes the relationship between individuals and the environment in which they are socialized. Young people who develop relationships within their schools and community that enhance their sense of belonging can become agents of change, even under the most difficult of circumstances. Consistent positive peer influences, parental modeling, productive collaboration with adults, and culturally appropriate strategies in conjunction with organization-based structural supports contribute to the perpetuation of meaningful youth engagement. These conditions can help to maintain a leadership pipeline that can increase community assets and expand opportunities for innovative policy action (Travis and Leech, 2013).

Many of the activities associated with conventional engagement in decision-making involve direct participation where people’s concerns, needs, interests, and values are brought to bear on decisions and actions on public matters (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015). The PYD framework is flexible and can accommodate a wide range of engagement activities, including expression, community service, participating on committees, advisory boards, and councils, designing and implementing community projects, developing and advocating for public policies, and planning public information campaigns (OECD, 2017).

Structures supporting youth engagement in decision-making exist within three major spheres. The public sphere supports formal political or organizational structures that are situated in youth organizations and groups, councils, parliaments, advisory panels, committees, and electoral processes. Formal and informal structures in the social sphere include civil society organizations, social or cultural groups, local services or projects, social movements, grassroots campaigns, housing associations, faith groups, informal networks, and identity or interest groups. Structures in the individual sphere support engagement based on personal choices, decisions, and interactions that have a direct impact on the individual, such as the judicial process, the educational system, and health care system (Gomolka, et al., 2020).

Digital Engagement

Active democratic citizenship in the twenty-first century requires digital age skills sets commensurate with the expanded realm of civic engagement facilitated by technology, including decision-making. Young people not only must access and monitor news and information from diverse digital platforms, they also must be able to critically evaluate its quality to make reasoned arguments. Youth can contribute productively to civic discourse online by sharing information, offering commentary and opinions, participating in civil debate, responding to posted material, and creating content. They can form networks of individuals and organizations, and connect with interested parties. Finally, they can work directly with public officials through digital conduits (Owen, 2019).

In some circumstances, digital engagement may be more conducive to facilitating youth participation in decision-making than traditional offline approaches. The barriers to entry are lower for digital engagement, and thus can offer more equitable opportunities for involvement. As digital natives, young people are adept at using digital spaces to articulate their personal identities and express themselves creatively. They are able to harness the affordances of digital culture to effectively convey ideas using videos, artwork, remixing, and other mechanisms. They can develop content that is readily shared and vastly scalable. Young people have successfully employed digital tools for mass mobilization (Cho, Byrne, and Pelter, 2020).

The potential for young people to be exposed to digital civic activism early in life is substantial due to the widespread availability of platforms. Studies demonstrate that making adolescents aware of civic issues and opportunities for engagement via digital spaces can put them on a path to political empowerment (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010; CIRCLE, 2018; Owen and Irion-Groth, 2020). Youth who participate in politics online are more likely to engage in offline activities, such as voting, involvement in political parties and campaigns, and working to solve a problem in their community (Hirzalla and van Zoonen, 2011; Mohamad, Abdu Dauda, and Halim, 2018). Preliminary evidence suggests that there may be developmental differences in the relationship between digital and traditional political engagement. Online participation may be a gateway to offline engagement during late adolescence while offline participation can precipitate online activation in young adults (Kim, Russo, and Amna, 2022.)

Some significant **deterrents to youth engagement** in decision-making via digital channels alone have been identified globally. Young people are not heavily vested in acts of dutiful digital civic engagement designed to identify and address issues of public concern. They lack trust in digital platforms and news sites controlled by big media organizations due to the prevalence of misinformation, harassment and trolling, data breaches, and digital surveillance (Madden, Lenhart, and Fontaine, 2017; Cho, Byrne, and Pelter, 2020; Ray, 2021). While young people may become passionate about a cause, the unstructured nature of the digital environment makes it difficult to sustain interest or to move beyond a focus on a single issue. The digital realm supports activism, but backlash against online campaigns is prevalent and movements can be readily repressed (Powell, 2022). The success of digital engagement initiatives often depends on the offline social and political context in which they are situated. Specifically, young people are less receptive to digital decision-making initiatives in places where they perceive that government is corrupt and

political leaders are removed from the concerns of average citizens (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010).

Phases of Youth Development and Engagement in Decision-Making

Youth is a time in life characterized by an absence of well-developed cultural, social, and political awareness (Gomolka, et al., 2020). Adolescence and young adulthood are phases of development where people have an enhanced capacity to develop abstract thinking, complex problem-solving, and rational decision-making skills (McCreary Centre Society, 2009). Phases of adolescent and youth development are aligned with “the common milestones, events, and tasks that young people have to develop or cope with at certain ages” (Dotterweich, 2021: 21). These phases take into account changes in young people’s 1) physical growth, 2) gender identity, sexual identity, race and ethnic identity, and core sense of self, 3) cognitive skills and ability to think abstractly, 4) problem-solving ability, 5) capacity to cope with risk, stress, and conflict, 6) mechanisms for handling emotions, 7) development of a belief system to guide decisions and behavior, 8) acquisition of roles with respect to family, education, community, work, and citizenship, and 9) relationships with parents, adults, and peers as they balance independence and ongoing connections (Dotterweich, 2021). These traits underpin the PYD model’s assumptions of the developmental trajectories of youth participants based on the 5Cs of competence (socio-emotional, cognitive, academic, and vocational competencies), confidence (internal sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy), character (respect for social and cultural norms), connection (to positive relationship with people and institutions), and caring (internal sense of empathy and sympathy for others).

However, few PYD program assessments or monitoring instruments take these factors into account (Lerner, et al., 2019; Kaniusonyte and Truskauskaite-Kuneviciene, 2021).

Conceptions of what constitutes “youth” within the context of engagement in decision-making vary widely. PYD is broadly suitable for young people aged 10 to 29 (Hinson, et al., 2016). The age-based definition of youth prescribed by the government of Armenia’s draft *State Strategy on Youth 2021-2025* specifies youth as “persons between the age range of 13-30 transitioning from adolescence to adulthood” (Yerevan, 2022: 32). Age categories employed by YouthPower Learning in the context of PYD are younger adolescents (10-14 years old), older adolescents (15-19 years old), and young adults (20-29 years old). However, the age ranges of youth served by individual programs vary which complicates the establishment of hard and fast parameters for assessment and monitoring.

Roger Hart’s (1992) Ladder of Youth Participation (LYP) identifies eight levels of youth participation and decision-making power that have been applied to PYD assessments. The LYP was developed to help groups to clarify goals and establish outcomes of policies and programs for children, adolescents, and young adults that correspond to increasing levels of agency, control, power, and skills. While the ladder is a useful heuristic tool, Hart (2008) himself cautions that the LYP is not designed to serve as a comprehensive model for program evaluation. The levels assume a hierarchical progression that has been associated with youth development that can differ across cultures and societies. The first three levels—manipulation, decoration, and tokenism—portray young people as bystanders or pawns and are outside the parameters of PYD’s assumption of meaningful youth engagement in decision-making. The fourth LYP level specifies that young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how they are involved, which often characterizes their position on boards and committees, and runs counter to PYD’s expectation of active engagement. In level five, young people are consulted on projects or programs and informed about how their input will be used in decision-making by adults. At level six, adults initiate projects or programs and share decision-making with youth. This is opposed to level seven where young people initiate and direct a project or program with adults assuming a support role. Finally, level eight emphasizes collaboration between youth and adults where young people initiate programs or projects and share decision-making with adult allies while learning from their life experiences.

There are developmental variations in the needs and vulnerabilities of adolescents. It is crucial to consider the diverse age-specific and context-specific needs of youth. PYD seeks to enhance representation of all young people by engaging them in participatory processes that strive to achieve diversity, inclusion, equity, collaboration, and good governance. Programs should be structured so that they decrease power imbalances, unconscious biases, and discrimination (PMNCH, 2022).

The types of young people who traditionally engage are well-educated and situated in networks that connect them to participatory outlets. They can see a benefit to becoming involved for themselves or the greater good. Youth who have experienced and overcome hardship or a personal issue, such as bullying or coming to terms with their LGBTQA+ identity, and who are invited to engage by adults or peers also are motivated to engage. Young people from marginalized communities have few opportunities to engage in decision-making related to policies, programs, and services that impact their health, wellbeing, and development (Martinez, Jones, and Connolly, 2020). Those who are furthest away from engagement include youth who struggle to have their basic needs met, such as the homeless and those who have been excluded from formal education. Civic participation and engagement in decision-making is not an attractive option to a large segment of the youth population who do not perceive that their voice counts and do not see any benefits to taking part. These distinctions between active and uninvolved youth widen the civic empowerment gap, where political power is distributed unequally based on differences in socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic identity, and gender (Levinson, 2010).

Monitoring Youth Engagement in Decision-Making

Identifying ways of monitoring and measuring youth engagement in decision-making is a huge challenge, especially when the aim is to promote evidence-based policy-making (Lisney, 2021). Despite increased interest in youth participation over the past decades, scholars and

practitioners have struggled to conceptualize and devise reliable and valid empirical measures. The challenge is exacerbated by the fact that youth engagement in decision-making in practice is multidimensional, omni-locational, and involves diverse actors. Various conceptualization and measurement strategies have been applied ranging from rubrics that are meant to be universally applicable to project-specific perspectives applied at the local level. With a few exceptions, measures have been developed by adults without input from the youth to whom they pertain. Thus, they may miss the mark in terms of reflecting the lived experience of young people in decision-making. Some researchers suggest including young people in the process of developing engagement measures, especially adolescents whose knowledge of adult decision-making processes is limited. They may provide more open and candid perspectives that are not influenced by preconceptions (Charles and Haines, 2014).

While international indexes are useful, it is important to be cognizant of the limitations and challenges presented by the construction of a monitoring instrument for youth engagement in decision-making.

As the foregoing discussion indicates, clear consensus on the definitions and measurement of core constructs has not been achieved, especially considering social, political, civic, and cultural differences across sites. The choice of outcome measures is complicated by the diversity of approaches and goals of individual programs. It is essential that the monitoring data align closely with the program's theory of change. However, the gap between concepts and operations can be substantial for reasons that are unavoidable. The requisite data may not be readily or consistently available. Data collection often relies on the cooperation of government sources, NGOs, program administrators, teachers, and program participants, some of whom may consider measurement to be an unnecessary burden. The cooperating entities may be more likely to have positive outcomes than those who abstain from providing information, which can bias the index rating. Maintaining consistent data collection in the long-term can be difficult, especially as programs undergo changes in staffing and focus or disband.

Reliance on a quantitative index, especially one that produces a single numeric value for tracking youth engagement in decision-making, requires the highest level of data quality. Most of the monitoring indexes produced to date are composed solely of survey data. Best practices for monitoring efforts involve the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data which can be costly in terms of financial and staffing resources.

At present, examples of one-time and short-term assessments of youth engagement in decision-making employing the PYD framework are in **short supply**, especially in transitioning democracies. Efforts at monitoring youth engagement from a PYD perspective longitudinally are even more scarce. An inventory of youth programs globally conducted by YouthPower Learning (YPL) (2020) revealed that few programs met the criteria of PYD, as the framework has been introduced fairly recently. Only 11% of programs described themselves using PYD terminology, and even fewer employed assessment and monitoring strategies consistent with the PYD framework. Very few programs conducted evaluations that were judged by YPL to be of "high quality," and most of these were in the health sector. In fact, many of the YPD programs involved young people in health initiatives (79%) that provided training and services while notably fewer addressed democracy and governance programs (44%). While YPD initiatives target youth aged 10 to 29, most programs focused on 10 to 19-year-olds (Alvarado, 2017; YouthPower Learning, 2020). Thus, the pool of high-quality evaluation and monitoring research applicable to PYD

focusing on youth decision-making, especially across different stages of youth development, is limited.

The following are **examples of program assessments and monitoring strategies** that employ best practices. In keeping with the findings of YPL’s inventory, most of the programs are not designated specifically as PYD, but use frameworks consistent with PYD goals and outcomes.

Youth Progress Index

Source: Lisney, John. 2021. *Youth Progress Report 2021*. Brussels: Social Progress Imperative and the European Youth Forum. [YPI-report-10062021.pdf \(youthprogressindex.org\)](https://www.youthprogressindex.org/ypi-report-10062021.pdf)

The Youth Progress Index (YPI) provides a holistic approach to measuring societal progress as it relates to youth (defined as individuals aged 15 to 24). It is guided by the UN’s adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that focus on improving the social and economic wellbeing of all persons. The YPI measures a wide range of conditions related to youth, including if they have sufficient food and housing, access to quality jobs, and literacy. The SDGs specify as a priority increasing the opportunities for young people to influence decision-making and to shape politics and policies in ways that guarantee the wellbeing of future generations. The YPI is intended to enable public authorities and civil society organizations to systematically identify and prioritize the most pressing needs of young people, remove barriers to their wellbeing, and provide resources needed to shape a fairer society for youth. The framework considers the centrality of digital technologies and communication in the lives of young people. It also contextualizes the present research within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on youth wellbeing.

The YPI measurement instrument is meant to be applicable to all countries, regardless of their economic, social, or political status. It is directed by the Social Progress Framework which is guided by the following definition: “Social progress is the capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow citizens and communities to enhance and sustain the quality of their lives, and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential” (Lisney, 2021: 18). The YPI 2021 fully ranked 150 countries and partially ranked eighteen additional countries. Armenia was ranked 43 of 168 (tied with Mauritius) and had a YPI score of 73.33, indicating that the country’s youth progress had improved over the ten-year period from 2011 to 2020. Data were compiled comparing the YPI scores of countries with similar levels of economic development. Among eighteen countries in its category, Armenia was categorized as “overperforming” in terms of overall youth progress performance (3.87 points above the mean, ranking 6th highest among nine overperforming countries) (Lisney, 2021: 37).

The five components of the YPI that are most relevant to youth decision-making within the context of the PYD framework are 1) access to basic knowledge, 2) access to information and communication, 3) personal rights, 4) personal freedom and choice, and 5) inclusiveness. (See Figure 1.) The key research questions the YPI addressed in this regard are: 1) Can young people influence politics and hold their political representatives to account? 2) Are young people represented in parliament? 3) Do young people have the opportunities to live up to their potential, contribute to thriving societies, and shape their future?

Figure 1. Youth Progress Index
 (Source: Deloitte, Youth Progress Index.
[Youth Progress Index](#) | [Deloitte](#) | [About deloitte](#))

Youth Progress Index		
Basic Human Needs	Foundations of Wellbeing	Opportunity
<p>Nutrition and Basic Medical Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undernourishment Depth of food deficit Maternal mortality rate Child mortality rate Deaths from infectious diseases <p>Water and Sanitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to piped water Rural access to improved water source Access to improved sanitation and facilities Youth satisfaction with water <p>Shelter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth availability of affordable housing Access to electricity Quality of electricity supply Youth household air pollution deaths <p>Personal safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homicide rate Level of violent crime Perceived criminality Political terror Youth traffic deaths Youth safe walking alone 	<p>Access to Basic Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth literacy Primary school enrollment Gross secondary enrollment Gender parity in secondary enrollment Female population with some secondary education Male population with some secondary education <p>Access to Info and Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth mobile telephones Youth internet users Press freedom <p>Health and Wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy life expectancy at birth Youth mortality from non-communicable diseases Youth suicide rate Death rate from HIV/AIDS <p>Environmental Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wastewater management Biodiversity and habitat Greenhouse gas emissions Youth air pollution attributable deaths Youth satisfaction with air quality 	<p>Personal Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political rights Freedom of expression Freedom of assembly/association Private property rights Youth confidence in police Percent of young members of parliament <p>Personal Freedom and Choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth freedom over life choices Freedom of religion Early marriage Satisfied demand for contraception Corruption Youth perception of corruption <p>Inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth openness towards immigrants Youth openness towards homosexuals Youth community safety net Discrimination and violence against minorities Religious tolerance Youth not in employment and not in education Youth employment gap <p>Access to Advanced Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Years of tertiary schooling Women's average years in school Inequality in attainment of education Tertiary enrollment rate

The YPI measured the extent to which youth had access to civic space, defined as places online and offline where people exercise their rights to freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly. Healthy civic spaces (comparable to PYD’s domain of enabling environment) were considered essential to an open civil society that allows for discussion of issues and participation in public decision-making. The SDGs framework posits that civil society organizations amplify the voices of minority and other at-risk groups by raising their visibility and advocating with them by addressing youth-specific issues (analogous to PYD’s domain of agency). The YPI computed country-specific scores for peaceful assembly and inclusiveness. Armenia ranked in the middle of the distribution of countries, with about half of the youth population experiencing social protection and inclusiveness. (The complete YPI scorecard for Armenia which includes the indicators of each component appear in Appendix C.)

Civic Health Index (United States)

Source: Atwell, Matthew N., Bennett Stillerman, and John M. Bridgeland. 2021. *Civic Health Index 2021: Citizenship During Crisis*. Civic, National Conference on Citizenship, University of

Virginia’s Miller Center and Democracy Initiative, and the Partnership for American Democracy. [civic_health_index_2021.pdf\(millercenter.org\)](#)

The Civic Health Index (CHI) is a joint initiative of the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), Civic, the University of Virginia’s Miller Center and Democracy Initiative, and the Partnership for American Democracy that is designed to measure “civic health” in the United States. The CHI defines civic health as “the way that communities are organized to define and address public problems” (Atwell, Stillerman, and Bridgeland, 2021: 3). While aspects of the CHI reports are relevant for youth, the studies examine civic health broadly. The results are meant to inform decision-making on key issues, such as election reform and civic education, rather than to measure citizen engagement in decision-making. Since 2016, the CHI has periodically released reports that focus on themes surrounding challenges to citizenship and community, such as civic deserts, the rise of Netizens, veterans’ affairs, and the civic life of Millennials. The 2021 edition, which employs some indicators consistent with a PYD approach, examined citizenship during the COVID-19 pandemic in light of continuing problems facing American democracy, such as systemic racism, political polarization, cultural narcissism, and economic inequality. The 2022 national study offered an overview of COVID-19’s impacts on the lives of individuals, government institutions, and civic life. It covered the topics of COVID-19 health impacts, economic impacts, climate disasters, effects on employment and education, information access, the quality of data from the U.S. Census, and the implications for electoral democracy. Versions of the CHI addressing particularized issues have been implemented in regions (e.g., New England, the South), states (e.g., New Hampshire, Texas), and cities (e.g., Houston, Seattle) at different points in time. The CHI is not a monitoring instrument in the typical sense, as the temporal intervals between the studies, level of analysis (nation, region, state, city), topics, and measures are not consistent over time.

The 2021 national CHI is the most relevant of the recent studies for the development of a PYD monitoring instrument. The research engaged experts from a range of disciplines and organizations to compile “indicators that are measurable and movable” (Atwell, Stillerman, and Bridgeland, 2021: 4). These indicators include aggregate level data from sources, such as the U.S. Census Bureau and Freedom House, that measure voter turnout in presidential and midterm elections, membership in community groups, religious affiliation, trust in government, and social isolation. Data estimating the number of Americans participating in #BlackLivesMatter protests over violence against Black citizen were compiled from academic research studies. The Bureau of Labor Statistics and the University of North Carolina’s Hussman School of Journalism collected data on the number of news outlets in the U.S. and circulation figures for major news sources. Aggregate data on civic education were acquired from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Advanced Placement (AP) division of the College Board.

Survey data from a variety of sources also were compiled. A 2017 survey conducted by Bright Line Watch of 1,700 political scientists reported experts’ views of essential elements of democracy. The 2020 MIT Election Data and Science Lab’s Survey of the Performance of American Elections provided data on partisan differences in people’s confidence in the legitimacy of the presidential election, trust in the tabulation of votes, and use of nontraditional voting methods, including early voting and mail-in ballots. Data from the Pew Research Center (Pew) were compiled to examine longitudinal trends in public trust in government, government responsiveness to citizens’ needs versus big interests, volunteering rates, and electoral engagement. General Social Survey (GSS) data were used to analyze trends in religious affiliation, church attendance, and interpersonal trust. The American National Election Studies (ANES) provided data on union membership, involvement in community organizations, and partisan

tribalism since 1948. The Annenberg Civics Knowledge Survey compared American’s knowledge of the First Amendment in 2017 and 2020. The public’s news consumption habits and confidence in the press were measured by survey data from Gallup, Pew, and the GSS. The private polling firm Hart Research Associates in conjunction with Civic surveyed parents, teachers, and students about the status of civic education. The CHI augmented the quantitative data with spotlights on exemplary initiatives that enhanced youth learning.

The key takeaways from the 2021 CHI emphasized that COVID-19 exacerbated political and social divides among the American people. There were strong partisan disagreements about how to manage the pandemic, willingness to follow rules related to masking and vaccines, and satisfaction with the government’s handling of the virus. There has been a consistent decline in people’s membership in religious, civic, and labor organizations. However, the situation regarding civic engagement is mixed. Voting and protesting behaviors have increased, while social comity and civic knowledge have remained low or declined. The four major policy recommendations coming out of the report are 1) boosting civic education, 2) strengthening national service opportunities, 3) bolstering community institutions through improved civic infrastructure, and 4) harnessing the power of the internet and technology to enhance civic engagement.

Civic Health Index Bulgaria

Source: Sofia Platform Foundation. 2021. *Civic Health Index Bulgaria*. [CIVIL HEALTH INDEX – Sofia Platform](#)

The Civic Health Index Bulgaria (CHIB) was inspired by the NCoC CHI in the U.S. and adapted to the Bulgarian context by the Sofia Platform Foundation (SPF) with funding from the German Stiftung Mercator and marketing by Global Metrics. The CHIB employs the Europe as a Community of Citizens framework that was formed to combat the erosion of democratic values in Europe by building an ecosystem for the development of civic education in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and Hungary and providing an incubator of ideas for best practices that can be implemented at the local level. “Civic health” is defined as “the momentary set of components of civic participation and the conditions that enable or impede it.” Civic participation in this context is consistent with the fundamental principles of democracy and representation.

The goal of the index is to take a holistic approach to assessing the state of civic participation in Bulgaria that will 1) detect potential sources of democratic erosion, 2) capture the impact of various processes related to civic participation, and 3) help to define civic initiatives and polities that support civic participation. The CHIB has three primary modules with subcomponents as well as a special module focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic. (See Figure 2.) The index targets five groups: 1) citizens at large, 2) representatives of institutions, 3) children (age 12 to 18), 4) vulnerable groups, and 5) NGOs, pressure groups, and informal groups. A multi-method approach to data collection and analysis is specified to create the index. These methods include 1) legal analysis and an analysis of the institutional framework of participation, 2) analysis of court practices, 3) document analysis, 4) sociological research through qualitative methods, and 5) quantitative research.

Figure 2. CHIB Five Basic Modules

(Source: Sofia Platform Foundation, [CIVIL HEALTH INDEX – Sofia Platform](#))

Module	Components
Citizenship	Civic Literacy Civic Participation Political Participation Community Life
Institutions	Legal framework and scope of civic participation Institutional approaches to civic participation Access to information E-participation Assessment of institutions
Civic Infrastructure	Civil society sector Civic spaces
Vulnerable Groups and Children	Civic participation of vulnerable groups Children’s participation
Impact Assessment	Impact of civic participation

A pilot of the CHIB was conducted in 2021. Data collection consisted of a series of quantitative surveys. These included 1) a national survey of the adult population of Bulgaria with an oversample of the adult population in Vratsa municipality (an economically challenged area of the country), 2) a national survey of youth (age 12 to 18) with an oversample of youth in Vratsa municipality, 3) a survey of NGOs, and 4) a survey of representatives of vulnerable groups. A summary index was created that ranged from a score of 0 (deteriorating civic health) to 10 (very high civic health), with the country scoring in the midrange of the index (4.88). The full report is available in Bulgarian.

U-Report

Source: UNICEF. U-Report: Empowering and Connecting Young People Around the World to Engage With and Speak Out on Issues that Matter to Them,” UNICEF Office of Innovation.

[U-Report | UNICEF Office of Innovation](#)

U-Report is an open-source, mobile messaging platform launched by UNICEF alongside youth and NGO partners to allow young people to share opinions on issues that are important to them which are disseminated to decision-makers engaged in creating national policies that effect youth at the local level. Launched in 2011 in Uganda, the program’s footprint has grown exponentially. It takes an innovative approach to using technology to engage young people in

meaningful decision-making in a safe space where participants are protected from humiliation or bullying. U-Report provides mechanisms that allow young people to identify accurate and trustworthy information. Youth input through the U-Report platform is collected as data in real time, mapped at the local level, and compiled nationally. It then is relayed to public officials to be considered in decision-making. To ensure transparency, the results of the data mapping are displayed on a public website in the aggregate to ensure safe access by age, gender, and location. The project offers four distinct domains of impact: 1) feedback to young people from governments and NGO about how the information is being used, 2) live chats that offer training and services to U-Reporters, including one-on-one advising, 3) self-skilling where U-Report bots allow young people to navigate content and information to educate themselves on specific issues, and 4) community action which opens opportunities for young people to move from digital engagement to real-world political action for positive change.

U-Report contracted with Deloitte in 2018 to conduct an independent evaluation and fielded a monitoring and evaluation pilot in 2020. The research evaluated U-Report's alignment with UNICEF's strategy plan and its alignment with key result areas. A set of monitoring indicators was derived from the analytics associated with the U-Report platform. As of 2020, U-Report was active in 68 countries, employed 65 youth staff members in country offices, had 6.5 million reporters, and has benefitted over 11 million users. Over 1.4 billion message exchanges were recorded with U-Reporters. Metrics on the daily, monthly, and yearly growth of the platform are reviewed. The monitoring process makes use of U-Report's digital presence by fielding surveys of U-Reporters and users about their views on how their role in policy-making is facilitated by the platform. It also tracks their civic skill-building, self-efficacy, mental health, and other features that can be incorporated into the PYD framework. The monitoring process includes detailed case studies of the ways that U-Report has facilitated youth engagement in decision-making. The case studies not only provide descriptive information, they also include empirical evidence of how many people were impacted by the case. Examples include case studies of young people influencing policy during natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Irma, Jose, and Maria, helping Jamaica's health ministry respond to dengue fever, and assisting Venezuelan youth develop a program to provide services to diverse migrants and refugees.

The South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network

Source: Gomolka, Krystyna, Izabela Borucinska, Rimantas Stasys, and Remigijus Civinskas. 2020. *Youth Civic Participation in the South Baltic Region: Example of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden*. Report. Warsaw: Poltext, Inc., South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network. <https://sbycgn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/YOUTH-CIVIC-PARTICIPATION-IN-THE-SOUTH-BALTIC-REGION-PDF-ENG.-VERSION.pdf>

The South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network (SB YCGN) is a Polish, Lithuanian, and Swedish partnership formed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience about youth issues and participation to promote the development and implementation of grassroots solutions. It is guided by documents on youth engagement produced by the European Union (EU) and country-specific youth policies. It focuses on the civic participation and social inclusion of youth at the local and cross-border levels. The SB YCGN project objectives are 1) increasing cross-border cooperation by exchanging knowledge and experiences with youth civic participation, 2) increasing the capacity of local government units and their representatives to engage in civil dialogue with young people with the aim of increasing youth participation, and 3) dissemination of lessons learned and joint analyses on the future of youth participation in the South Baltic region.

The core hypothesis guiding the project posits that youth civic participation is an important element of civic society that requires strengthening in Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden through bottom-up actions at the local community level with the central role played by governmental and nongovernmental institutions. The institutional environment is an essential element of this process.

The SB YCGN assessed the state of youth civic engagement to get the lay of the land prior to initiating programming through large-scale surveys and interviews with institutional actors and young people. In 2018, a cross-national team of academic researchers fielded a study to identify the status of youth civic engagement and local needs related to increasing participation, including engagement in decision-making. Separate surveys were prepared for young people aged 14 to 24 and for adult actors within institutions with connections to youth at the municipal level, including municipal government offices, town councils, cultural centers, middle and high schools, technical training centers, libraries, scouting associations, theater programs, arts incubators, youth-related foundations, and sports organizations. The surveys addressed the following questions: 1) What is the current level of youth civic participation in decision-making from the perspective of public institutions, NGOs, and young people? What is the desirable level of youth engagement in decision-making? 2) What are the barriers to youth civic participation according to public institutions, NGOs, and young people? 3) What are the determinants of youth-friendly forms of political engagement? 4) What are the needs and expectations of public institutions, NGOs, and young people with respect to intensification of dialogue and cooperation with young people and stimulation of their civic participation at local and cross-border levels?

While these survey instruments were used to assess the pre-program levels of youth engagement in Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden, and are not in themselves monitoring instruments, they include measures that can potentially be adopted to the monitoring context. (The questionnaires for adult institutional actors and youth are found in Appendix D.)

Consistent generalizations about youth engagement in decision-making across the three countries were derived from the surveys. Institutional actors overwhelmingly reported that youth involvement in public affairs was inadequate. While youth often want to have an impact on issues and expect adults to help them solve problems, there frequently is a lack of mutual understanding about how this can be accomplished. These trends contribute to young people lacking the motivation to seek out opportunities and participate in decision-making. Institutional actors indicated that they hesitate to involve youth in decision-making because they are unclear if they are genuinely motivated to improve their communities or are mostly interested in building their resumes to further career aspirations. They identified a gap in the high level of interest that young people express and their willingness to actually participate in decision-making. The capacity of young people to influence local authorities' decisions was assessed by institutional actors as being uniformly low across municipalities and countries. Young people had little to no impact on distribution of budgetary resources and limited opportunities to impact governing strategies and policy decisions. Schools were the only institutions that routinely had mechanisms in place to engage students in decision-making. However, representatives of local authorities, who had less experience working directly with young people, rated the capacity for youth to meaningfully participate in decision-making higher than school officials who regularly interact with them.

Young people's survey responses highlighted significant barriers to their participation in decision-making. They cited a lack of willingness on the part of politicians to invite them to participate. They felt that their knowledge and experience were discounted, and their opinions were disregarded. They indicated a scarcity of formal opportunities to participate in decision-making on public matters, and they doubted that their engagement in the process would change anything. They also cited a lack of adult role models, coaches, and mentors who knew how to

communicate and motivate them to become involved in community affairs. There were country-specific differences in these trends, with young people in Poland and Sweden citing higher barriers to engagement than youth in Lithuania.

The survey evaluated the effectiveness of specific mechanisms for engaging young people in decision-making. In rank order, these include 1) promoting participation via the Internet, 2) publicizing opportunities for participation in the media, 3) creating youth councils in municipalities, 4) organizing round tables sponsored by public institutions, 5) developing cooperative networks among young people at the local level, and 6) providing opportunities for young people to comment on draft decisions of local and school authorities. It should be noted that these options fall short of meeting the criteria for best practices for higher level engagement in decision-making where youth are collaborators in the creation of policies, and as opposed to being relegated to commenting on drafts they did not have a hand in producing.

Youth Power Learning

Source: Alvarado, Gina, Martie Skinner, Daniel Plaut, Caitlin Moss, Chisina Kapungu, and Nicola Reavley. 2017. *A Systematic Review of Positive Youth Development Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. Washington, D.C.: Youth Power Learning, Making Cents International. [PA00MR58.pdf \(usaid.gov\)](#)

YouthPower Learning is a USAID project created in 2015 dedicated to helping youth in low- and middle-income countries contribute to broader development outcomes in developing nations, such as employment or health status. It seeks to expand the evidence base for what works in PYD to improve programs and practices. The organization and its partners identify areas where youth have been empowered and addresses inequalities or obstacles. YPL's mission is derived from USAID's 2012 Youth in Development Policy which is committed to strengthening youth participation and partnership by engaging young people across initiatives and programs through the PYD approach. The YPL mission statement takes a global development focus: "By engaging young people as leaders and change agents while striving to understand their interests and meet their needs, we nurture their potential to catalyze global development, social change, stability, and economic growth" (YouthPower Learning, 2020:2). YPL initiatives are led by Making Sense International. As of 2020, the program conducted thirteen program assessments that informed USAID youth strategies, had established seventeen youth-serving organizations in twenty countries, had over 1,900 members of four communities of practice engaged in collaborative work, had created over 300 resources and multimedia products to equip young people for youth development, and had held over 150 webinars and events to connect practitioners worldwide (YouthPower Learning, 2020).

YPL conducted a meta-analysis of existing evidence of PYD in programs in low- and middle-income countries. The majority of the program reviews analyzed did not employ the PYD framework directly. YPL identified 64 peer reviewed articles reporting on research that used the PYD framework and 44 articles that were related to, but did not specifically employ, PYD interventions, and constructed an inventory database of the 108 publications. The first stage of the meta-analysis was guided by the research question: How have PYD approaches been implemented in low- and middle-income countries? Variables included in the database were country, implementer, target population, types of activities conducted, and program objectives.

The second phase of the meta-analysis addressed the question: What does the evidence say about the effectiveness of PYD approaches? YPL created a Blueprints checklist of criteria to assess the quality of the program evaluation, such as the type of design used, sampling information, reliability and validity of measures, and level of analysis. They categorized study outcomes into topic categories of Health, Democracy and Governance, and Economic Development and Education. The settings of the interventions were classified by school, university, community-based organization, university, health care facility, workplace, home, and religious or faith-based organization. Other variables included age group, gender, sexual orientation, the duration of the program or intervention, the type of implementing organization (government, NGO, university), and co-implementation arrangements, such as partnerships between governments and universities. The number and type of program activities were measured (educational activities not led by peers, peer education, use of media, youth-friendly services, activities with adults, organization of social events, community meetings, and opinion leader conducted activities).

The YPL meta-analysis reached several conclusions. Most of the evaluations that were available were focused on the Health sector, and the quality varied greatly. A handful of studies addressed youth capacity building and civic engagement, which was treated as a subsector under the Democracy and Government category. While 30 of the 108 studies (28%) fell into this category, only five of these evaluated the effectiveness of the program intervention. The only evaluation that was considered “high quality” used a quasi-experimental design to examine adolescent males’ gender attitudes and increased positive bystander behavior. YPL composed short case studies of this intervention and several others that did not involve youth engagement. The report concluded that more robust evaluation is needed of PYD programs, as most offered insufficient information that could be used to monitor and assess their effectiveness. Much of the research consisted of short-term follow-up studies conducted after a PYD program had been completed. Few, if any, involved monitoring or evaluation of long-term effects of PYD on specified outcomes. Essentially, the major question of “what works” in relation to PYD in low- and middle-income countries remains unanswered.

Knowledge, Advocacy, Responsibility, engagement (KARe) in Georgia

Source: KARe. 2020. “Promoting Unity Through Youth-Led Community Organizing in Georgia,” August 26.

[Promoting Unity Through Youth-Led Community Organizing in Georgia | IFES - The International Foundation for Electoral Systems](#)

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in partnership with USAID and Strengthening Democracy Through Partnership has been working since 2019 with diverse local partners and underrepresented groups to support electoral reform, enhance election administration capacity, increase gender equality and empowerment, prevent disinformation and hate speech, and empower youth and marginalized groups through civic education. Underrepresented groups served by the initiative include women, youth, ethno-religious minorities, and people with disabilities.

The Knowledge, Advocacy, Responsibility, engagement (KARe) initiative provides spaces for young people in Georgia to directly influence decision-making processes. The goal is to give young people from minority groups an equal voice in community decision-making.

The program is designed to build skills in community organizing and mobilization among youth from marginalized groups. Young people in Georgia’s minority community are brought together to reconsider forms of civic engagement and social solidarity that bypass preconceptions about personal identities. Community members are convened to negotiate public policy from the perspective of ordinary people.

Quantitative monitoring indicators are limited to the number of KARE initiatives and the number young people involved in the KARE program. In 2020, USAID-supported programs like KARE engaged over 5,000 young people in a range of activities. Other evidence collected on KARE consists of interviews with participants and observations from the field.

Monitoring the Future

Source: University of Michigan. 2022. *Monitoring the Future*. Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

[Monitoring the Future | A continuing study of American youth](#)

Since 1975, Monitoring the Future (previously known as the National High School Senior Survey) has been tracking the behaviors, attitudes, and values of Americans from adolescence to adulthood. It is the most extensive continuous monitoring survey of young people in the United States. Eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders, college students, and young adults are presented with the same set of questions over time. Youth engagement in decision-making is not addressed directly, although some related measures of perceptions of social change, interest in social programs, interpersonal relationships, goal-setting, self-esteem, and interpersonal trust are measured. Other topics include drug use and education, education status, work and leisure experience, sex roles and family, population concerns, conservation, materialism, and equity, religious preferences, the military, concern for others, happiness, loneliness, boredom, deviance and victimization, and health. Modules addressing particular issues and concerns are introduced periodically to update and maintain the relevance of the monitoring instrument.

Applying the PYD Framework to Case Studies

A PYD measurement toolkit was prepared for USAID by YouthPower Learning (Hinson, et al., 2016). While the toolkit was developed with a PYD approach in mind, it can be applied to other programs. The toolkit provides a list of PYD indicators and their sources, but the authors caution that this list is not comprehensive, especially as the bulk of program assessment and monitoring has been conducted in high-income countries. YPL advises that additional PYD evaluation and monitoring indicators specific to given contexts and outcomes should be developed where needed. Applying the PYD framework to extant program evaluations and monitoring instruments can facilitate this process. The PYD toolkit features a case study approach to program design and evaluation. Cases can consist of large-scale efforts to measure youth engagement in decision-making across a range of contexts or they can focus on a specific program.

What follows are case studies illustrating best practices for measuring, assessing, and monitoring youth engagement in decision-making in a variety of contexts. The PYD framework was not explicitly used by the program implementors and researchers. Instead it was applied post hoc by the author of this report to illustrate the potential to adapt measures from studies that take other approaches to the PYD framework as suggested by YPL. The case study approach identified

key research questions, PYD domains, as well as features, constructs, definitions, and indicators that are suitable for PYD assessment and monitoring purposes.

Young People as Social Actors: An Examination of Young People’s Perspectives on the Impact of Participation in DCYA Initiatives

Martin, Shirley, Catherine Forde, Audrey Dunn Galvin, and Angela O’Connell. 2015. *An Examination of Children and Young People’s Views on the Impact of Their Participation in Decision-Making*. Technical Report. Dublin: Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282098595_An_examination_of_children_and_young_people's_views_on_the_impact_of_their_participation_in_decision-making/link/5602bfcf08aeaf867fb749fd/download

This research project explored the outcomes of child and youth participation initiatives of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) in Ireland over a ten-year period. The aim of the research was to gain insight into the experiences of children and young people who were currently involved as well as those who had previously participated in, but were no longer taking part in, the initiative. The project examined six initiatives associated with the DCYA across Ireland. The key priorities for these programs were 1) the creation of formal and informal sustained links with adult decision-makers, 2) ensuring that the membership profile represented all young people in age groups from 12 to 18, and 3) the inclusion of “seldom-heard” young people. A primary goal of the study was to assess the extent to which taking part in the programs had a positive impact on youth themselves. The research took a holistic approach to the impact of participation in four distinct realms—personal, familial, communal, and institutional. It employed a participatory research approach to develop an evaluation and monitoring model that considered children and young people’s voices. Youth were treated as experts and agents in their own lives, which allowed for reflexivity in the research process. Children, adolescents, and young adults were included in the project’s Steering Group and were trained as researchers involved in the data collection and analysis. They were involved in designing, administering, and analyzing surveys, interviews, and focus groups of young people. The youth themselves conducted interviews with key decision-makers. They had the opportunity to present their research findings to key stakeholders. A total of 300 young people were involved in the program who worked with 28 adults skilled in child and youth participation.

The research employed Laura Lundy’s (2007) model for implementing Article 12 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child which identifies four interlinked conditions for engaging youth in decision-making: 1) space, 2) voice, 3) audience, and 4) influence. These conditions can be correlated roughly with the four PYD domains. The Lundy model emphasizes that young people have the right to express views and have them given due weight. The PYD domain of enabling environment corresponds to space, the notion that children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views. Assets is akin to voice, the concept that children must be provided with the appropriate information and opportunities to express themselves. Agency is similar to Lundy’s item of audience, that young people’s views are communicated and listened to by someone with the power to make decisions. The PYD domain of contribution is associated with influence, ensuring that young people’s views are taken seriously and acted upon where appropriate.

Longitudinal monitoring of the initiatives revealed that incorporating youth in decision-making is a slow process, but that meaningful progress had been made. Many of the adult stakeholders had little to no input from youth in decision-making prior to the initiative, and needed to develop mechanisms for including them, such as the creating or committees, boards, and working groups. The study found positive impacts for child and youth participants in the areas of personal development, social development, skills development, and career direction. It identified the local level as the primary contact point for successful consultation with youth especially as it related to their ability to bring ideas and problems to the attention of the community and increased young people's awareness of issues that affect them. The study identified positive outcomes specifically related to decision-making. Young people reported that participation spaces created through the DCYA were effective in terms of their 1) being listened to by other youth members, 2) being able to bring ideas and problems from young people in their area for consideration by the group, and 3) being respected and listened to by adults they encountered through their participation activities. However, young people reported that there were limitations to their impact on policy change. They felt that their views were solicited, but that their suggestions were not implemented. In contrast, interviews with adult decision-makers revealed that they took the views of young people seriously.

Both young people and adults perceived that schools played a pivotal role in engaging youth in decision-making. Schools provided a pathway to participation, but at the same time served as gatekeepers who could narrow the pool of potential participants by selecting students who were already engaged in activities.

Youth and adult participants felt that greater public awareness of the initiatives would improve recruitment and support for the programs. Initiatives could be publicized through local and national media. Young people who took part in the programs expressed a desire for formal legislative directives to require that young people be consulted on public policies.

Key Research Questions

Does the examination of formal evaluations indicate that the aims and objectives of the participatory initiatives of the DCYA have been achieved?

How have children and young people been selected for participation in these initiatives and what are the elements that precipitate or prevent their participation?

Drawing on the four realms of impact (personal, family, community, decision-making in Irish society), what evidence is there that involvement in these participatory initiatives produces short- and long-term changes in the lives of children and young people?

PYD Domains

Assets: Programs were assessed for their ability to provide young people with the social and civic skills necessary to engage meaningfully in decision-making, enhance their self-confidence, and improve their relationships with their families, peers, and adult allies.

Agency: Young people were provided with formal (commissions, committees, task forces) and informal mechanisms for interacting with adults in decision-making capacities. They felt that their voice was heard during deliberations, but that their impact on policies and creating change was limited.

Contribution: Young people took part in initiatives where they shared their views with decision-makers and contributed to the policy-making process at the community level. Youth were directly involved in the development of the measurement and monitoring tools used in the study. They conducted interviews and participated in focus groups with adult stakeholders.

Enabling Environment: Young people were provided safe and supportive spaces to engage in decision-making as well as to participate in designing the research and evaluation instruments for the initiative.

DOMAIN: ASSETS AND AGENCY				
FEATURES	CONSTRUCT	DEFINITION	Method	INDICATORS
Skill building	Individual level skill building	Impacts of and barriers to participation at the personal level	Survey of youth	Young people’s civic development, including critical thinking skills, and civic skills, enhanced
Skill building	Positive identity	Impacts of the program on young people’s social development	Survey of youth	Young people’s self-confidence increased
Skill building	Interpersonal skills (social and communication skills)	Youth development of leadership skills, group facilitation skills, and public speaking skills	Survey of youth Interviews with adult stakeholders	Young people’s social and communication skills enhanced
Skill building	Community level skill building	Impacts of and barriers to participation at the community level	Survey of youth Interviews with adult stakeholders	Young people’s peer solidarity increased Community’s awareness of young people’s issues raised
DOMAIN: CONTRIBUTION				
FEATURES	CONSTRUCT	DEFINITION	Method	INDICATORS

Youth engagement and contribution	Capacity building	Authentic youth engagement in decision-making where their views are respected, listened to, and used to inform policy	Interviews and focus groups with young people and adult stakeholders	Number of cases when views and opinions of youth are reflected in decisions pertaining to them
DOMAIN: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT				
FEATURES	CONSTRUCT	DEFINITION	Method	INDICATORS
Belonging and membership	Inclusion	Young people's access to decision-makers The extent to which the program, its activities, and young people's voices are publicized	Aggregate data analysis	Number of young people involved in the program at each site Equal geographical distribution of participants Personal attributes of participants Number of adult facilitators and allies
Belonging and membership	Support	Young people from diverse and vulnerable groups feel that they are cared for and supported by the program	Interviews with youth and adult stakeholders	Increased support for seldom-heard young people
Belonging and membership	Support	Commitment of program to young people	Survey of program administrators	Amount of time committed to youth decision-making reported by the program
Access to age appropriate and youth-friendly services; integration among services	Youth-responsive services	Safe, youth-friendly spaces are committed to the program Availability of school and other participatory spaces	Survey of program administrators	Number and description of programming spaces. Availability of links between youth participation forums

				Frequency of feedback and evaluation at individual program sites
Norms, expectations, and perceptions	Value and recognition	Young people’s engagement in decision-making is given public recognitions	Survey of program administrators	Amount of program advertising Amount of engagement with the media

Framework to End Youth Homelessness, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

Source: U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. 2013. “Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action,” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. [USICH_Federal_Youth_Framework.pdf](#)

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released *Opening Doors*, a comprehensive federal plan to prevent and end homelessness. One of the ten major objectives of the plan focused on ending homelessness among unaccompanied youth by 2020. Thousands of young people without the support of a family or home are left on the streets to fend for themselves. These youth often are from vulnerable populations, minority groups, and/or have experienced trauma. They lack positive support and opportunities as they struggle daily to survive. The USICH initiative builds upon existing programs in communities and schools where young people work with organizations, philanthropic partners, and researchers to address homelessness.

The framework to end youth homelessness seeks to build on work that has shown promise at the federal, state, and local levels. It focuses on two complementary strategies. A data strategy is designed to collect better information on the numbers, characteristics, and needs of youth experiencing homelessness. A capacity-building strategy will strengthen and coordinate the ability of federal, state, and local systems to act effectively and efficiently toward ending youth homelessness. Given the immensity and difficulty of the problem, the framework is continually refined through further planning and feedback with young people engaged in the data collection and decision-making processes.

The data collection strategy was seen as an opportunity to engage and collaborate with unaccompanied youth. Their direct experience of homelessness provided better data that informed the development of smarter and more targeted responses to the problem. Data collection was planned in three phases, with youth involved in decision-making and implementation. A pilot research program was implemented in twelve locations prior to scaling up to a national model in subsequent years. Phase I involved voluntary local point-in-time (PIT) counts of homeless people in diverse communities by age categories (under age 18, 18 to 24, and over age 24) on the street and in shelters. Homeless liaisons and agencies identified homeless and hard-to-reach youth to involve them in the process. Youth-centered methods for counting unaccompanied homeless youth were developed collaboratively. Youth participated directly in the count and were essential to “counting the hard-to-count.” For the second phase, youth helped to design an integrated national

study to estimate the number, needs, and characteristics of homeless young people. Phase three is the implementation of an assessment and monitoring strategy that would provide better data on youth experiencing homelessness. It is intended to develop collaborations, methods, and systems that will increase federal capacity to monitor changes in the needs and characteristics of homeless youth to deal with the problem more effectively.

The data collection strategy informed the capacity-building strategy. Young people were involved in the development of an intervention model that provided a structure for better profiling the promising practices already taking place in states and communities and met the service needs of a diverse homeless population. Young homeless people also identified programs and service strategies that did not work, which the USICH sought to change or shut down. The evidence provided by the data collection informed the development of a comprehensive approach to providing culturally appropriate services that meet the immediate and future needs of homeless youth. Input from young people from diverse and vulnerable populations with direct experience of homelessness were able to inform the development of interventions tailored to the needs of specific groups in particular locales rather than assuming a “one-size fits all” model. Progress monitoring and program evaluation during and after implementation of the intervention was undertaken to adjust and improve strategies over time. The core outcomes of the intervention strategy should strengthen factors protecting youth and reduce risk factors. The primary outcomes of the intervention that are monitored are 1) stable housing, 2) permanent connections, including ongoing attachments to families, communities, schools, and positive social networks, 3) education and employment, and 4) well-being, the social and emotional functioning of homeless youth.

The monitoring strategy and instruments were derived from the pilot study. A youth-inclusive national count of homeless people and national survey are conducted at regular intervals and integrated into a national government database that is available across departments and agencies. Longitudinal counts and data on the number of homeless youths engaged in the decision-making process are recorded. The program did not specifically employ the PYD framework as articulated by USAID. However, some of the project domains, features, constructs, and indicators conform to the best practices of PYD.

Key Research Question

How were young homeless people engaged in decision-making leading to the development of an intervention model for countering homelessness?

PYD Domains

Assets: The program offered homeless youth the opportunity for meaningful engagement in both the data and capacity-building strategies. Youth from diverse, at-risk, and vulnerable communities are disproportionately represented among the homeless, and were included in the process so that their unique perspectives could be considered. Young people were able to build skills in collaboration, identifying priorities, problem-solving, and research design and data collection.

Agency: Young homeless people were essential to the success of the first two phases of the program. It is difficult to reach and maintain connections with this group, so agency is largely determined on an anecdotal basis.

Contribution: Unaccompanied youth are especially difficult to identify and engage in policy matters. Young homeless people contributed to the collection of more accurate data on the number and circumstances of homeless people that is foundational for policy-making.

Enabling Environment: Homeless young people from diverse, at-risk, and vulnerable populations were offered a safe space to engage in decision-making and data collection pursuant to policy goals. Youth participants were screened and assessed based on risk and protective factors. The organizations and agencies involved identified multiple areas of risk and coordinated with appropriate services and systems to afford protections that reflected the participants’ goals and desires. Where possible, the progress of youth participants was monitored, and services adjusted as needed.

DOMAIN: ASSETS AND AGENCY				
FEATURES	CONSTRUCT	DEFINITION	Method	INDICATORS
Skill building Youth engagement and contribution	Capacity building	Youth engagement in the data strategy	Aggregate Data Analysis	Number and characteristics of youth engaged in point-in-time counts Number and characteristics of youth involved in the design of the national survey of homeless young people Number and characteristics of youth who reviewed and screened assessment tools and effective interventions to improve outcomes
Skill building Youth engagement and contribution	Capacity building Civic Skills	Youth engagement in the capacity-building strategy	Aggregate Data Analysis	Number and characteristics of youth involved in creating research-informed intervention model for service delivery
DOMAIN: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT				
FEATURES	CONSTRUCT	DEFINITION		INDICATORS

Belonging and membership	Inclusion	Ability to participate in system and organization level planning, data collection, and development of an intervention model.		None
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Foundations for Success: A Strategy to Improved Civic Engagement at the City of Victoria

Source: City of Victoria. 2012. *Foundations for Success: A Strategy to Improved Civic Engagement at the City of Victoria*. Report. Victoria, BC.
https://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Communications/Documents/Civic_Engagment.pdf

The City of Victoria in British Columbia devised a strategy to identify principles and best practices for reaching out to, informing, and involving citizens in public decision-making that complemented established formal channels for public input. The City Council adopted principles from the International Association of Public Participation: 1) Those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process, 2) Promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision, 3) Promote sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers, 4) Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision, 5) Seek input from participants in designing how they participate, 6) Provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way, and 7) Communicate to participants how their input affected decisions. Four primary structures that offer routine access to government were employed to ensure regular channels for civic engagement: 1) advisory committees, 2) neighborhood associations, 3) presentations to councils by groups of citizens, and 4) public dialogue sessions at the start or end of a Governance and Priorities Committee or standing committee meeting.

A consultation process to identify challenges, priorities, and best practices was initiated and facilitated by an independent research team. The strategy was aimed at improving how citizens and community-based organizations connect. Six key challenges for engagement were identified: 1) Role Confusion: city council members, staff, and citizens were unclear about their roles in the decision-making process, 2) Prioritization: deciding which issues should be prioritized given limited resources, a decentralized approach to engagement, and time factors, 3) Resourcing: once priorities are established, the appropriate engagement strategy must be established, 4) Co-ordination and Consistency: deciding what methods should be used to discuss and act on particular topics in a timely manner, 5) Customer Service and Communication: navigating the many areas of City Hall to gain access to information and appropriate staff assistance, and 6) Diversity: engaging appropriate stakeholders for particular issues that represent different socio-economic, cultural, and demographic groups.

The overarching goal of the initiative was to enhance and expand civic engagement to improve government decision-making. The anticipated primary outcomes were 1) improving governance by giving policy-makers better access to information used in decision-making, 2)

meeting citizens' expectations about government transparency and responsiveness, 3) ensuring that decision-making is well-informed and offers citizens the chance to contribute to policy development, 4) increasing public trust in government decision-making, and 5) developing a clear and consistent set of policies and procedures to improve citizen engagement based on best practices. Additional benefits of the strategy for policy-makers were exposure to new perspectives, greater efficiency in decision-making, fewer conflicts, more diversity in voices involved in decision-making, and better solutions to problems that are consistent with community needs, values, and priorities. Citizens gained greater opportunities for collaboration and engagement that enhanced their impact on, understanding of, and ownership of decisions and public policies.

Downtown Late-Night Task Force

The Victoria City civic engagement strategy was implemented to develop policies to deal with the declining image of the downtown area due to rowdiness, fighting, and street noise at night. The mayor formed a task force in partnership with the chief of police and council members which brought together a range of stakeholders consisting of students, representatives of the restaurant and bar industries, and taxi drivers who participated in meetings over a two-month period. Participants were asked about their concerns, invited to propose solutions, and indicated how they could play a role in implementing the solutions.

Input from over 200 stakeholders was solicited. The task force prepared a report which was presented at a public meeting of the city council where it received widespread approval. The City implemented some of the solutions, including increasing transportation options, providing a greater law enforcement presence at night, establishing more food vendors in the downtown, and setting up a Late-Night Great Night Committee to promote continuity of the late-night initiatives.

A monitoring instrument was devised and used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Downtown Late-Night Task Force. While the evaluators did not specifically employ the PYD framework as articulated by USAID, the project elements and assessment tools conformed to the PYD domains, features, constructs, definitions, and indicators. A multi-method approach was used to triangulate data from current participant surveys, exit surveys of participants leaving the program, and aggregate indicators of capacity building and inclusion.

Key Research Question

How was citizen engagement in decision-making employed to improve conditions in the Victoria City downtown area at night?

PYD Domains

Assets: The task force offered opportunities for authentic youth engagement in decision-making. Young people (college students, restaurant workers, taxi drivers) were able to build skills in communication, sharing ideas, identifying priorities, problem-solving, and compromise.

Agency: The task force included young people as key stakeholders who were treated as equal collaborators in the decision-making process. Government officials created a transparent and open atmosphere which emphasized creating opportunities rather than clamping down on problems. Young people contributed to drafting the final report which included explanations for why some

solutions were included in the final plan while others required further work. Youth gained ownership in the process, the solutions proposed, and future courses of action.

Contribution: Young people were at the forefront of developing and implementing the policies governing downtown Victoria City during the late-night hours.

Enabling Environment: From the outset, city officials maintained a transparent atmosphere and a safe space for deliberating about the problems. They reassured the task force members that their goal was not to close the downtown area, but instead to make it more attractive to the public. They provided task force members with access to staff and resources necessary to achieve positive outcomes.

DOMAIN: ASSETS AND AGENCY				
FEATURES	CONSTRUCT	DEFINITION	Method	INDICATORS
Skill building	Civic skills	The engagement process provides youth with additional skills, knowledge, and experience on the issue	Exit Surveys	Enhanced civic skills
Youth engagement and contribution	Capacity building	The engagement process identifies opportunities for young people to continue to work on the issue	Aggregate Data Analysis	Number of additional opportunities identified for citizens to continue working on the issue Number of follow-up meetings, conversations, and other interactions related to the issue
DOMAIN: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT				
FEATURES	CONSTRUCT	DEFINITION		INDICATORS
Belonging and membership	Inclusion	All groups who are affected by the decision are involved in the engagement, including youth		Number of individuals participating in the engagement effort, including youth Number of agencies and/or stakeholder

		There are no practical or financial barriers to participating in the engagement process		groups participating in the engagement effort Number of individuals or agencies participating from underrepresented groups
Norms, expectations, and perception	Fair process Prosocial norms	Process uses methods that are appropriate for meeting the specified goals of engagement Youth are involved in the design of the engagement process Process offers multiple opportunities and venues in which to be heard Youth participants give feedback that the process was fair and transparent	Participant Surveys	Number of participants reporting on the fairness of process (e.g., participants felt the process was transparent, felt heard, had opportunity to offer ideas, had opportunity to dialogue with others)

Going Forward

Monitoring and ongoing evaluation of PYD programs engaging youth in decision-making are essential for 1) identifying how programs address designated outcomes, 2) assessing whether programs have been implemented with fidelity, 3) identifying areas for improvement, training, or adaptation, 4) justifying to stakeholders and funders that the program is effective, and 5) determining what aspects of a program should be expanded or cut.

Guidelines established for preparing assessments of youth engagement in decision-making using PYD suggest a process for developing a measurement strategy (Hinson, et al., 2016). The key elements of the PYD framework—domains, features, and constructs/indicators—should be considered at each phase of the process. Similar strategies have been used in research on youth

engagement in decision-making that does not explicitly employ a PYD framework (e.g., U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2013; Martin, et al., 2015). The following phases are suggested in the PYD toolkit (YouthPower Learning, 2020).

1. Define (or refine) key desired outcomes or research questions.
2. Determine PYD features and beneficiaries of the program.
3. Finalize the logic model and theory of change.
4. Decide what to measure, and how (study design and indicators).
5. Analyze the data, disseminate the findings, and adapt your program.

Measuring Youth Engagement in Decision-Making

The creation of a monitoring instrument for youth engagement in decision-making requires that the measures are **aligned with the project goals**. To effectively measure PYD outcomes, indicators should be selected that are **practical to measure** and **pertain as directly as possible to the PYD concepts** the program addresses. A clear **logic model** depicting the processes underlying the project's assumptions and reasoning related to expected outcomes should be developed that articulates the PYD domains and features. A **theory of change** should be articulated that defines the necessary preconditions and outcomes associated with short-term, intermediate, and long-term project goals. The **data should be aligned as closely as possible with the theory of change**. It is important that **data collection is feasible** and, when appropriate, can be **sustained over the long-term**. **The monitoring process should not place an undue burden on the program implementers or participants**. Measurement sources for the indicators should be relatively **low cost** and **easy to use**. Indicators that have been previously used in the national or international context have an advantage in that their validity and reliability can be assessed. However, **new PYD-specific measures should be developed** to meet the assessment and monitoring requirements of programs where mandated.

A first step in the development of a monitoring instruments is to determine how PYD approaches are being implemented in Armenia. The strategy for constructing a database of programs employed by YPL (2020) in its cross-country analysis is applicable. Variables might include location, setting, implementer, target population, types of activities conducted, and program objectives. This exercise, in conjunction with interviews with key stakeholders, would be helpful for defining desired outcomes, specifying research questions, determining PYD features and beneficiaries of the program, and finalizing the logic model and theory of change.

Adopting a **multimethod approach** to assessing and monitoring youth engagement in decision-making is a best practice, especially at the outset of the process when methods and measures are being identified. Measurement should take place at the program or organizational level and youth level. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research is optimal (YouthPower Learning, 2018; Maldziski, et al., 2019). This approach allows for the triangulation

Based on a review of the literature and reports on assessment and monitoring of youth engagement in decision-making, four major types of data have been employed regularly: 1) aggregate data, 2) surveys, 3) interviews and focus groups, and 4) case studies using observational techniques.

of different types of data which can facilitate a more accurate evaluation that takes into account both fidelity of implementation (process) and outcomes.

Aggregate data are numerical indicators that are collected from multiple sources and/or on multiple measures, variables, or individuals that are compiled into summary indicators. The benefits of using aggregate level data are: 1) they are often easier and less costly to collect than individual level data, 2) they minimize data privacy concerns, and 3) they have wide applicability and are appropriate for use in program evaluation and monitoring. The limitations of relying solely on aggregate level measures are: 1) the inability to generalize about individuals based on grouped data (ecological fallacy), 2) limitations on subgroup analysis, 3) longitudinal and growth modeling are not possible, such as tracking the long-term impact of a youth decision-making program on a group of participants, and 4) data quality issues that can be masked (Jacob, 2016). Aggregate monitoring and assessment measures provide data at the program or organizational level. Within the context of monitoring using the PYD framework, aggregate indicators have been used to track the number/percentage of 1) youth-centered spaces provided, 2) youth-serving organizations, 3) programs in place, 4) specific types of services, 5) youth-focused task forces, 6) committees, and boards, communities of practice, 7) young people served by programs, 8) diverse, vulnerable, and at-risk youth served, 9) young people involved in decision-making, 10) adult stakeholders and allies participating in programs, 11) networking connections, 12) resources available to young people, 13) multimedia products, webinars and events, 14) policy outcomes, and 15) practices influenced by youth engagement in decision-making.¹

Survey research has been used extensively to evaluate and monitor projects on youth engagement. Surveys can measure the quality of engagement which overcomes the limitation of aggregate measures that primarily indicate quantity. They have the advantage of being able to disaggregate measurement indicators by categories, including age, sex, disability, socioeconomic status, education level, and representation by diverse and marginalized populations.

Surveys have been designed and used to measure organizations' involvement in decision-making. The World Health Organization (2020) produced an extensive assessment checklist of items that measure an organization's commitment to, involvement in, and resources devoted to youth engagement in decision-making (See Appendix E for the Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement Assessment Checklist.) The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has created the Youth Involvement and Engagement Tool to be administered to youth development professionals (youth workers, teachers, agents, allies, collaborators) which exemplifies best practices. (See Appendix F for the assessment tool.) Similar survey instruments have measured organizations' involvement of youth in decision-making in specific contexts, such as the World Scout Bureau (2022), Middle East/North Africa OECD countries (Ader, Denise-Adam, and Tlili, 2019), and city councils (Finlay, 2010).

Surveys have been used to gain input from young people about their participation in decision-making. This approach has the advantage of collecting data on broad groups of young participants, including those that are hard-to-reach or vulnerable. In fact, young people themselves can be involved in the development and fielding of surveys within the context of PYD. Surveys have successfully identified what works and problems associated with youth engagement in decision-making in a range of contexts assuming a PYD framework. Examples include incarcerated youth involvement in decision-making about services within institutions (Coalition

¹ The indicators specified in the YEM Local Indicators document, "Determining the Outcome Criteria of the Measures Implemented to Promote Youth Participation in the Decision-making Process and their Alignment with PYD. Armenia," fall into this category of aggregate measures.

for Juvenile Justice, 2022), young people engaged in policies related to preservation of cultural heritage (Menkshi, Braholli, Cobani, and Shehu, 2021), youth participating in agricultural programs (Mielke and Butler, 2013), and involvement in decision-making surrounding health and nutrition programs (Tiffany, Exner-Cortens, and Eckenrode, 2012).

Interviews and focus groups are qualitative research methods that have been used both as the primary methodology for assessing PYD programs and in tandem with quantitative analyses. Interviews typically take the form of conversations guided by questions that are either highly structured, semi-structured, or open-ended. Focus groups gather information on groups through listening and observing interactions among the participants. Group size differs, but optimally should include between four and eight people. The discussion is planned, moderated, recorded, and analyzed by trained researchers. Research employing interviews and focus groups has been used to explore barriers to youth engagement in decision-making in Yemen's political parties (Qasem, 2013), policy formation in justice programs for youth (Zeldin, et al., 2000), and community development (Blanchet-Cohen, Manolson, and Shaw, 2014).

Case studies and observational techniques can add richness and context to program evaluation and monitoring data. Instrumental case study design studies take place in a real-life, present-day setting. Sites are selected for study based on established criteria, such as the type of youth-centered activities that take place, the types of stakeholders involved, the strategies for youth involvement that are employed, and the level of youth engagement in decision-making that is anticipated. Data sources include meeting and program site observations by research team members, participant debriefs, and review of relevant documents and materials. Comprehensive, thick notes are taken during each observation which are transcribed and analyzed thematically. A study of America's Promise Alliance (Martinez, Jones, and Connolly, 2020) is an example of how these techniques can be used effectively to evaluate youth engagement in decision-making.

Conclusion

This literature review was designed to provide guidance for the development of a monitoring instrument for PYD for youth engagement in decision-making in Armenia. Definitions of the core concepts of meaningful, authentic youth engagement in decision-making and elements of the PYD framework that are essential to this exercise were established. Extant research employing the PYD framework, constructs, and indicators directly is more limited than studies that employ measures that can be extrapolated to a PYD context. Further, assessments to date have largely consisted of short-term or project-specific efforts as opposed to longer-term monitoring enterprises. That being said, prior research exemplifying best practices provide instruments and measures that can be adapted to the Armenian PYD context. The opportunity to combine existing measures with novel indicators devised for PYD monitoring specific to Armenia that will contribute to the growing body of knowledge of PYD is a viable option.

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APPENDIX A

Figure A1. USAID Youth in Development Guiding Principles

(Source: USAID, 2021: 12)

USAID YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES	
1)	Apply meaningful youth engagement and leadership in the design and delivery of projects and strategies. Meaningful youth engagement is defined as an inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, and respective contributions, including young people’s ideas, leadership, perspectives, skills and strengths, are valued.
2)	Recognize that youth are not homogeneous²⁰. Promote meaningful inclusion of diverse groups of young people to ensure equity and address systemic barriers to participation based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity.
3)	Recognize, map, and plan holistically with local systems to involve the private sector, community organizations, faith-based organizations, governments, and families in youth programming.
4)	Integrate intergenerational approaches to strengthen youth participation in decision-making with local leaders and systems. Recognize the traditional roles that youth play in their communities and families, and meaningfully address youth-adult power dynamics into interventions.
5)	Protect and support young people's overall wellbeing by building resilience to shocks, reducing harmful practices, and supporting mental health and wellness while applying trauma-informed approaches.
6)	Apply conflict sensitivity and do no harm principles , while recognizing that engaging young people as partners in peacebuilding and humanitarian activities is critical to success in fragile environments.
7)	Create pathways for youth who have experienced marginalization or disenfranchisement to access opportunity for development.
8)	Maximize innovation and use of technology by and for youth, by leveraging digital literacy, appropriate skills development, and citizenship for positive change, while reducing risks for digital harm.

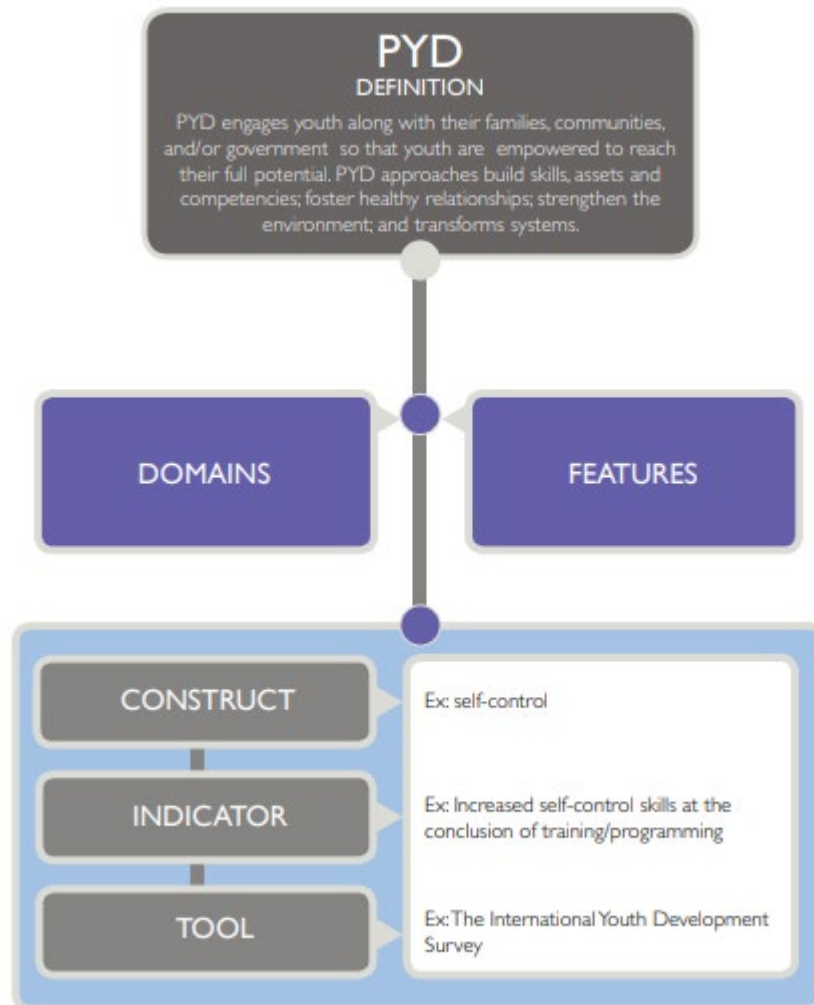
Figure A2. PYD Measurement Framework
(Source: Hinson, et al., 2016: 22)



Figure A3. PYD Domains, Program Features, and Key Activities
(Source: USAID, 2021: 11)

PYD Domains	PYD Program Features	Key Activities
Assets	Skill building	Develop soft and life skills through skill building activities within individual, family, peer and community settings
Agency		
Contribution	Youth engagement and contribution	Allow youth engagement to take different shapes. This can include youth expression, youth involvement in community service and creating opportunities for youth decision-making at various levels of government. This can also include programs that provide structure for youth contribution or that support youth leadership.
Enabling Environment	Healthy relationships and bonding	Identify and link youth to positive adult role models, mentors, coaches, teachers, health care providers, and community leaders. Ideally, youth have at least one caring and consistent adult in their lives. Healthy peer relationships are also particularly important to youth.
	Belonging and membership	Foster activities where youth feel included regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities or other factors. Identify activities that provide positive sense of belonging (schools, sports, community service, faith based youth groups, etc.)
	Positive norms, expectations, and perceptions	Have clear and consistent norms and expectations about health, relationships, and forms of engagement that provide youth an increasing amount of responsibility and independence and allow youth to grow and take on new roles.
	Safe space	Create safe spaces that are tailored to the needs of youth - including physical infrastructure as well as emotional safety. Space can be defined in a number of ways, including virtual. Many communities lack any space for youth to convene. Thus communities must be committed to providing youth with safe spaces to practice, engage, and learn creatively and collaboratively. An emotionally safe space is critical to learning.
	Access to age appropriate and youth friendly services; integration among services	Make information available to youth and families, connecting and integrating health and social services so there is a continuum of care and support at a community level.

Figure A4. Relationship Among the Definition, Domains, and Features of PYD
(Source: Hinson, et al., 2016: 26)



APPENDIX B

Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric

(Source: Wu, Kornbluh, Weiss, and Roddy, 2016)

Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric

Dimension 1: Authentic Decision Making— Youth are involved in meaningful decision making	AVERAGE	
1.1 Youths' voices are shared and valued.		
1.2 Youth participate in authentic decision making.		
1.3 Youth have key leadership roles or responsibilities.		
1.4 All youth fully participate in the conversation.		
1.5 The organization's culture or by-laws supports youth governance.		
Dimension 2: Natural Mentors—Adults intentionally support relationships with youth to help them develop	AVERAGE	
2.1 Adults support youth with appropriate boundaries.		
2.2 Adults are intentional in utilizing tasks to enhance youths' experiences and skills.		
2.3 Adults are able to work with youth to maintain an organized, inclusive, and collaborative environment for all.		
2.4 Adults are resourceful and intentional in enhancing youths' social capital.		
2.5 Adults are active listeners; youth reflect and develop own ideas.		
2.6 Adults help youth think through the complexity of issues and respect whatever conclusions they reach.		
2.7 Adults help youth think about goals and possibilities for the future and identify steps to achieve them.		
2.8 Adults celebrate youths' progress, strengths, and successes.		
Dimension 3: Reciprocity—Youth and adults work together as partners	AVERAGE	
3.1 Youth and adults create a mutual agenda.		
3.2 Youth and adults exchange ideas as supportive peers.		
3.3 Youth and adults work collaboratively as supportive peers.		
3.4 Youth and adults are co-learning partners.		
Dimension 4: Community Connectedness— Youth are engaged in communities	AVERAGE	
4.1 Youth develop a sense of community through program involvement.		
4.2 Youth are active contributors to the community.		
4.3 Youth gain essential social capital through program involvement.		
Total: The average of four dimension scores		%












APPENDIX C








Youth Progress Index Items and Scores for Armenia

(Source: Deloitte, Youth Progress Index.

[Youth Progress Index](#) | [Deloitte](#) | [About deloitte](#))

The scorecard highlights a country's relative strengths and relative weaknesses compared to 15 peer countries with a similar GDP per capita. Elements of the Youth Progress Index are marked with a blue dot where the country performs comparatively well, a red dot where it performs relatively poorly, a yellow dot where its performance is average for its peer group, and a gray dot when there isn't sufficient data to make a judgment. Elements marked with a blue ring are areas where the country slightly over-performs while areas where the country slightly under-performs are marked with a red ring.

Access to Basic Knowledge	85.79	57	
Women with no schooling	0	1	
Primary school enrollment	91.12	95	
Secondary school enrollment	97.2	17	
Gender parity in secondary attainment	0.2	86	
Access to quality education	2.43	69	
Access to Information and Communications	79.87	55	
Mobile telephone subscriptions	122.35	1	
Internet users	66.54	74	
Access to online governance	0.75	56	
Media censorship	2.68	68	

Inclusiveness	58.44	76	
Openness towards gay and lesbian people	0.06	121	
Discrimination and violence against minorities	5	53	
Equality of political power by gender	1.61	108	
Youth opportunities to make friends	0.84	50	
Youth openness towards immigrants	0.66	57	
Youth community safety net	0.86	91	

Personal Rights	80.43	40	●
Political rights	22	80	●
Freedom of expression	0.85	48	●
Freedom of religion	3.22	96	●
Access to justice	0.77	61	●
Property rights for women	4.84	23	●
Percent of young members of parliament	12.12	3	●
Personal freedom and choice	53.77	63	●
Early marriage	4.01	49	●
Satisfied demand for contraception	43.1	130	●
Corruption	49	47	●
Youth freedom over life choices	0.85	48	●
Youth perception of corruption	0.41	18	●
Youth not in employment and not in education	31.85	137	●

□







Strengths and weaknesses are relative to 15 countries of similar GDP PPP per capita:

Paraguay
Sri Lanka
Albania
Ecuador
Iran

South Africa
Ukraine
Algeria
Libya
Egypt

Peru
Moldova
Mongolia
Bhutan
Indonesia

Color codes

-  Overperforming by ≥ 1 point
-  Overperforming by < 1 point
-  Performing within expected range
-  Underperforming by < 1 point
-  Underperforming by ≥ 1 point
-  No data available

APPENDIX D

South Baltic Youth Core Groups Networks Surveys

(Source: Gomolka, et al., 2020)

SURVEY OF INSTITUTIONS

1. Do you cooperate with young people aged

- a) 14–17 b) 18–24 c) I do not work with young people

=> *please exit the survey*

2. How often do you come across the following attitudes in cooperation with young people in matters related to their impact on their nearest environment i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, commune, local environment: please rate each statement according to the scale: 1 – Very rarely, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Hard to say, 4 – Often, 5 – Very often

No.	Statements	Very rarely	Rarely	Hard to say	Often	Very often
1.	Young people want to have an impact on matters concerning them	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Young people are eager to engage in cooperation for the benefit of their nearest environment, i.e. school, neighbourhood, district, commune, local environment	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Young people expect adults to help solve their problems	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Only people who want to benefit their career become involved	1	2	3	4	5
5.	There is a lack of mutual understanding between young people and adults	1	2	3	4	5

3. Assess the level of youth involvement in the process of civic participation in your municipality:

- a) Very high b) High c) Medium d) Low e) Very low

4. Assess the extent of influence young people in your municipality have on the decisions made in following matters: please rate each statement according to the scale: 1 – Very small, 2 – Small, 3 – Medium, 4 – Large, 5 – Very large

No.	Statements	Very small	Small	Medium	Large	Very large
1.	Election of youth representatives in local authorities	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Election of youth representatives at school/ university	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Preparation of strategic planning documents	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Education issues in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Culture initiatives in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Public transport in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Spatial development in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Social assistance in the municipality	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Distribution of funds from the commune budget	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Preparation and implementation of international projects	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Other – specify the type	1	2	3	4	5

5. What would be needed to increase civic participation of youth in your municipality:

please rate each statement according to the scale: **1** – Quite unnecessary, **2** – Rather unnecessary, **3** – Neither necessary nor unnecessary, **4** – Rather necessary, **5** – Definitely necessary

No.	Statements	Quite unnecessary	Rather unnecessary	Neither necessary nor unnecessary	Rather necessary	Definitely necessary
1.	Increasing funds for activities engaging young people in public decision-making	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Increasing the competences of adults responsible for cooperation with young people	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Opportunity to exchange experiences with other institutions and organisations working with youth	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Greater openness of decision-makers to include young people in public decision-making	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Formal cooperation with institutions that implement youth policies, also in the Baltic Sea Region	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Finding a good leader who will be able to effectively motivate and engage young people	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Other – specify the type	1	2	3	4	5

6. In your opinion, what limits the involvement of young people in the affairs of their nearest environment:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Very low impact, **2** – Low impact, **3** – Medium impact, **4** – Strong impact, **5** – Very strong impact

No.	Barriers	Very weak impact	Weak impact	Medium impact	Strong impact	Very strong impact
1.	Young people's lack of interest in local life	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Lack of conviction that their (young people's) involvement would change anything	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Young people's lack of knowledge and skills	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Unavailability of careers allowing young people to get involved in local affairs	1	2	3	4	5

5.	Lack of formal possibility for young people to participate in decisions on public matters (e.g. because of an age limit)	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Excluding young people from participating in decisions on public issues	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Adults' disregarding the opinions of young people in the decision-making process	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Underrating the knowledge and experience of young people by decision makers	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Lack of adults who know how to work and communicate with young people and motivate them to engage in public affairs	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Lack of politicians interested in engaging youth in public affairs	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Lack of clear and understandable information about the opportunities for youth involvement in local affairs	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Other – specify the type	1	2	3	4	5

7. How do you assess the effectiveness of the following forms of action to increase the involvement of young people in the matters of their own environment: please rate each statement according to the scale: **1** – Very ineffective, **2** – Rather ineffective, **3** - Moderately effective, **4** – Effective, **5** – Very effective

No.	Forms	Very ineffective	Rather ineffective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very effective
1.	Meetings of politicians with youth	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Meetings of officials with youth in schools/ universities	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Meetings of officials with youth in public institutions, outside schools	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Youth meetings with representatives of non-governmental organisations	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Opportunity for young people to express their opinion on draft decisions of school authorities	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Opportunity for young people to express their opinion on draft decisions of local government	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Creation of a list of areas where young people can co-decide	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Opportunity for young people to have a say in decisions about the allocation of commune budget funds	1	2	3	4	5

9.	Organisation of public hearings for young people	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Creation of Youth Councils in municipalities	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Organisation of "round tables" e.g. by public institutions as forms of dialogue between officials, politicians and youth	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Information in the media about opportunities for youth civic participation	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Online promotion of civic participation among young people	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Promotion of civic participation by youth leaders in their own environment	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Development of youth cooperation networks at local level	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Development of youth cooperation networks at cross-border (international) level	1	2	3	4	5

•

YOUTH SURVEY

Participants were provided with the following definition of civic participation prior to completing the survey. *“Civic participation is the opportunity to speak and participate in activities and decisions taken by authorities, organizations, schools, etc. that affect us as citizens.”*

1. I am interested in topics related to:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Not interested, **2** – Rather uninterested, **3** – Moderately interested, **4** – Quite interested, **5** – Very interested

No.	Statement	Not interested	Rather uninterested	Moderately interested	Quite interested	Very interested
1.	My school/university/professional work	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My immediate neighbourhood	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My friends	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My town district	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My town/municipality	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My country	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The Baltic Sea Region (Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Germany, Finland, selected regions of north-west Russia)	1	2	3	4	5

2. Are you interested in influencing matters in your municipality?

a) definitely yes b) rather yes c) difficult to say d) rather not e) definitely not

- 4. What do you have a say in within your city/municipality?** please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – I have the opportunity and I speak up, **2** – I have the opportunity but I do not speak up, **3** – I have no opportunity and I do not speak up

No.	Statement	I have the opportunity and I speak up	I have the opportunity but I do not speak up	I have no opportunity and I do not speak up
1.	On the election of local authorities	1	2	3
2.	About the commune's development strategy	1	2	3
3.	About the distribution of funds in the commune budget	1	2	3
4.	About the spatial development of my commune	1	2	3
5.	About investment/renovation projects in my commune	1	2	3
6.	About cultural events in the commune	1	2	3
7.	About other issues such as	1	2	3

- 3. Do you have the opportunity to speak up on matters regarding your school/university:** Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – I have the opportunity and I speak up, **2** – I have the opportunity but I do not speak up, **3** – I have no opportunity and I do not speak up (*If you do not study then go to the next question*)

No.	Statement	I have the opportunity and I speak up	I have the opportunity but I do not speak up	I have no opportunity and I do not speak up
1.	About the extra classes which I can choose	1	2	3
2.	About the type of homework	1	2	3
3.	About the school timetable	1	2	3
4.	About the assessment of the teacher's/ lecturer's work	1	2	3
5.	About the school/university rules	1	2	3
6.	About the school/university canteen	1	2	3
7.	About the appearance of the school/university building	1	2	3
8.	About the leisure activities offered	1	2	3

4. **What do you have a say in within your city/municipality?** please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – I have the opportunity and I speak up, **2** – I have the opportunity but I do not speak up, **3** – I have no opportunity and I do not speak up

No.	Statement	I have the opportunity and I speak up	I have the opportunity but I do not speak up	I have no opportunity and I do not speak up
1.	On the election of local authorities	1	2	3
2.	About the commune's development strategy	1	2	3
3.	About the distribution of funds in the commune budget	1	2	3
4.	About the spatial development of my commune	1	2	3
5.	About investment/renovation projects in my commune	1	2	3
6.	About cultural events in the commune	1	2	3
7.	About other issues such as	1	2	3

5. What do you do if you want to influence a decision in your school/town/ municipality:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – No, **2** – Rather no, **3** – Difficult to say, **4** – Rather yes, **5** – Yes

No.	Statement	No	Rather no	Difficult to say	Rather yes	Yes
1.	I ask my parents for help	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I ask my teachers for help	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I ask a local government official/representative of the authorities for help	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I ask a well-known politician for help	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I ask for help someone from a non-governmental organisation	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I talking to my friends about the problem	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I write about the problem on the Internet, on a blog or Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I organise a group of young people who will work with me on the matter	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I take action through a student government at school or at university	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I take action through a youth organisation	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I participate in public social consultations					
12.	I contact local journalists	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

6. In your opinion, what limits the involvement of young people in public affairs:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Very low impact, **2** – Low impact, **3** – Medium impact, **4** – Strong impact, **5** – Very strong impact

No.	Statement	Very low impact	Low impact	Medium impact	Strong impact	Very strong impact
1.	Lack of understanding of young people's needs by adults	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Lack of youth motivation to participate in decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities	1	2	3	4	5

3.	Lack of information on how to get involved in the decision-making at school or organisations or local and central authorities	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Politicians' unwillingness to talk with young people	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Parents do not allow their children to engage in public matters	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Young people's inadequate knowledge and skills of to participate more in the decision-making at schools or in organisations or local and central authorities	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Lack of adequate knowledge and skills of officials, representatives of schools and non-governmental organisations in increasing youth participation in decision-making	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Young people's doubt if their ideas would be implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Not enough contact between young people and local politicians and officials	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Lack of young people's interest in participating in decision-making in schools or organisations or local and central authorities	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

7. What would increase your involvement in shaping the local environment:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Very low impact, **2** – Low impact, **3** – Medium impact, **4** – Strong impact, **5** – Very strong impact.

No.	Statement	Very low impact	Low impact	Medium impact	Strong impact	Very strong impact
1.	Meetings with people who tell us how to get involved	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Meetings with people who actively work for the local environment	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The possibility of youth participation in meetings of local authorities	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The possibility for young people to present their opinions to local authorities	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Activity of Youth Councils in municipalities which can influence local government decisions	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The opportunity for young people to present their opinions to the school authorities or non-governmental organisations	1	2	3	4	5

7.	Implementation of youth proposals (for example by local authorities, by schools or non-governmental organisations)	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Development of social projects for youth civic involvement	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Establishing more local youth organisations	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Creation of an international youth organisation	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Building a new model of relations between youth and public institutions/non-governmental organisations	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Raising social awareness about the importance of youth participation in public life	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Exchange of information between young people about their actions (self-promotion of young people)	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Information in the mass media showing examples of civic youth participation	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Development of cooperation between youth organisations at the local level	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Development of cooperation between youth organisations at the international level	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Wider knowledge or skills of representatives of local authorities, schools, non-governmental organisations in the field of increasing youth civic participation	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

8. What additional knowledge and skills would increase your involvement in public matters:

Please rate each statement on the scale: **1** – Very weak impact, **2** – Weak impact, **3** – Medium impact, **4** – Strong impact, **5** – Very strong impact

No.	Statement	Very weak impact	Weak impact	Medium impact	Strong impact	Very strong impact
1.	On how the decisions are made at school, university, municipal office, company, non-governmental organisation	1	2	3	4	5
2.	On the possibilities and ways of influencing decisions at school, university, municipality/ town office, company, non-governmental organisation	1	2	3	4	5
3.	About how to establish and develop contacts with representatives of various public institutions, organisations and enterprises	1	2	3	4	5

4.	On the methods of debating or arguing	1	2	3	4	5
5.	About how to write official letters/applications	1	2	3	4	5
6.	About the ways to motivate yourself and other people to act	1	2	3	4	5
7.	About how to organise various events	1	2	3	4	5
8.	On the creation and financing of non-governmental organisations	1	2	3	4	5
9.	About politics	1	2	3	4	5
10.	About society functioning	1	2	3	4	5
11.	On social psychology	1	2	3	4	5
12.	On economy	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

9. Have you done any of the following activities in the last 12 months?

Mark the answers according to your experience on the scale: **1 – Yes, 2 – No**

No.	Statement	No	Yes
1.	Contacting a politician or town/municipality official	No	Yes
2.	Presentation of proposals (postulates) to local politicians or local authorities regarding resident issues	No	Yes
3.	Presenting applications (postulates) to school or university authorities or teachers related to student problems	No	Yes
4.	Participation in a demonstration	No	Yes
5.	Discussions on political topics in forums or blogs on the Internet	No	Yes
6.	Sharing posts on social/political matters on the Internet	No	Yes
7.	Participation in public meetings for the local community	No	Yes
8.	Participation in a youth organisation	No	Yes
9.	Participation in a church/religious association	No	Yes

10. Your status:

- a) A primary school student
- b) A junior high school student
- c) A high school student
- d) A secondary vocational school student
- e) A university student
- f) I do not go to school or work
- I work
- h) Other (specify)

APPENDIX E

Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement Assessment Checklist

(Source: World Health Organization, 2020)

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 1: Supporting youth leadership in decision-making

Support young people's leadership by facilitating opportunities for them to be part of the decision-making in all stages of programmes and initiatives. This includes working with adolescent and youth-led organizations as a core partner, creating and/or supporting projects, establishing an advisory group of young people with a clear structure for influencing the direction of the organization or initiative, and reserving spaces for young people on planning and decision-making groups. It also includes ensuring that these roles are clearly defined and young people are adequately supported in every way to ensure that they can influence decisions.

ESTABLISH / MAINTAIN / INVEST IN YOUTH PARTNERSHIPS

- Does your organization work directly with any youth-led organizations, initiatives, coalitions, networks, movements in a sustained partnership?
- Are these partnerships equally defined / shaped by youth partners and their priorities, and resourced accordingly?
- Are youth partners able to access core funding as a result of their engagement with your organization? Are their overhead and personnel costs covered as a component of this partnership?
- Is your organization as accountable to them as they are required to be to you? Are you displaying radical transparency / dynamic accountability?

SUPPORT YOUTH PROJECTS

- Does your organization specifically fund / resource / support any youth-led projects, where young people are setting the agenda from the beginning of your engagement all the way through the project life-cycle?
- Have you considered a small grants or technical assistance mechanism for your organization to offer to youth-led projects?
- Does your organization support a youth-led mechanism that directly informs decision-making?
- Does their input hold equal weight to other stakeholders in decision-making and governance roles?

ESTABLISH / FUND YOUTH DECISION-MAKING ROLES / BODIES

- Is this advisory group given resources to meet regularly, strategize and plan together, and review relevant materials involved in the engagement?
- Is there a specific mandate to ensure that marginalized youth voices are included, especially girls / young women?
- What formal opportunities do adolescents and youth have to make decisions within your organization from start to finish along the project / programme life-cycle?
- Does their input hold equal weight to other stakeholders in this decision-making body?
- Are they given adequate resources to engage meaningfully in the decision-making structure?
- Are they given adequate time to consult with young people in their networks to ensure that their voice is representative and meaningful?

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 2: Agree upon the roles, responsibilities and expectations

Make a commitment to discuss and agree upon the roles, responsibilities, and expectations together with young people, preferably in a written agreement. These discussions should explore the aim, goal and purpose of engagement with young people to ensure mutual accountability. Before engaging, young people should be involved in determining how their participation will take place, its scope, purpose, and potential impact, and how or what they would like to contribute. After engagement, young people should receive clear feedback on how their participation has influenced outcomes, and be given opportunities to participate in follow up processes or activities, including monitoring and evaluation of young people's participation and its overall impact.

CO-CREATE A WRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH YOUTH PARTNERS

- Does your organization design MOUs directly with youth partners?
- Is the nature of your partnership with youth initiatives spelled out clearly in your MOU?
- Is your role versus the role of the youth partner clearly articulated?
- Is there a clear breakdown of the timeline, objectives, scope of work, etc. of your partnership?

CO-CREATE A YOUTH POLICY WITH YOUTH PARTNERS

- Does your organization have a youth strategy, with clearly articulated objectives about how youth partnerships will be set up?
- Does your procurement team have any special policies in place for establishing the terms of a youth partnership?
- Have these policies been checked and validated by your youth partners?

INVOLVE YOUTH PARTNERS IN MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

- Are young people clear to whom they are accountable?
- Are young people leading the design of your partnership with them?
- Are they given space to spell out their values, boundaries, dreams and limitations?
- Are they defining the measurement of success / MEL metrics?
- Are there comprehensive processes for offboarding after a project is completed?
- Does your organization have a formal review process that can be applied equitably to youth partnerships?
- Can youth partners meet with your MEL team to review how their impact is being reported and communicated?

ESTABLISH FEEDBACK MECHANISMS FOR YOUTH PARTNERS

- Are youth partners able to review documents that are submitted to the projects' / programmes' donors?
- Are youth partners able to use that reporting to showcase their own work to their own donors and partners? Are they given support to do this?
- Are there capacity-building opportunities on reporting, MEL, communications, etc. available at this stage of the partnership that can be formalized / made available to youth partners and their networks?
- Are youth partners able to share critical feedback about their experience with your organization's team?

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 3: Establish a clear method for addressing and responding to feedback

Regularly discuss with young people whether or not their views and ideas are being heard, and how meaningful engagement of young people can be improved.

FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH PARTNERS

- Does your organization value feedback from young people in trying to improve its partnership?
- Is specific attention paid to young people's safety as they share critical feedback with your organization?
- Are there commitments made at the beginning of a partnership for which young people can hold your organization accountable?
- Does your organization have a formal safeguarding policy?
- Further, if your organization works with adolescents, do you have a child protection policy?
- If young people need to file a complaint with human resources, are they given clear instructions on how to do that?
- Are young people safe from any potential backlash if they report issues or concerns?

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

- When a partnership is designed with success metrics, are young people invited to participate in the evaluation?
- Is there a feedback survey or offboarding process at the end of a partnership that specifically focuses on MAYE?

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 4: Create and identify opportunities for young people

Create and identify opportunities for young people and support them to advocate for issues and causes of their choice, and to safely share their experience and knowledge as experts by connecting young people with key population networks, mentoring young people to speak at advocacy events, and hiring young people as members of staff.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Is your organization involved in coalitions or networks where youth issues are discussed, where you can recommend a youth partner to join?
- Are youth partners able to shape key messages according to their values and priorities?
- Are youth partners able to tell their stories from their own perspective?

YOUTH ISSUES ARE A PRIORITY

- Are you able to determine issue-specific alignment and similar values with your youth partners?
- Are youth partners gagged from speaking about key issues when they engage in a partnership with your organization, such as abortion or sexual rights?

YOUNG KEY POPULATIONS ARE REPRESENTED

- Do youth partners have time and resources to engage with young key populations about issues that are affecting them?
- Does your organization have materials that explain clearly what type of engagement you are seeking from young key populations, and where their feedback is going?
- Do you use communication channels that are user-friendly for young key populations to engage safely and confidentially?

MENTORING YOUTH SPEAKERS BEFORE AND AFTER A MAJOR EVENT

- Does your organization provide support – from logistics and administrative support to developing talking points and making connections – to youth partners and speakers at major events?
- Is there a specific role on your team to support youth speakers and spend time with them to determine their needs?

HIRING YOUNG PEOPLE AS STAFF

- Are young staff provided with meaningful and relevant capacity-building opportunities?
- Are young staff provided with meaningful and relevant networking opportunities?
- Are all young professionals who work with your organization, including young researchers, youth speakers, and youth consultants, remunerated adequately for their work?

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 5: Support sustained engagement and ongoing relationships

Support sustained engagement and ongoing relationships between young people and the communities they represent. This may include providing young people with enough time, space and other necessary resources for meetings with community members to multiply their impact and reach within their community, including before, during and after major events.

YOUTH PARTNERS STAY CONNECTED TO COMMUNITY

- Is your organization seeking diverse perspectives from young people (not just the urban elite)?
- Does your organization provide adequate time for youth initiatives to consult with their peers before signing onto a process or advocacy document?
- Does your organization provide adequate time for youth initiatives to consult with their peers before speaking on behalf of young people in their community at a major event?
- Are youth partners able to elect a young person from their group to speak at an event based on their internal process?
- Does your organization provide funding for young people to meaningfully engage with their community?
- Does your organization provide support for youth partnership to report back to their peers?

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 6: Build skills and knowledge

Build skills and knowledge of young people and the adults working with them. Young people may need help to develop their ability to engage other stakeholders and specific training on a variety of topics and to ensure their successful involvement. Additionally, adults need preparation, skills and support to facilitate young peoples' engagement effectively. This may include training adults to listen to, work jointly with and engage young people effectively in accordance with their evolving capacities.

PROVIDE TRAININGS FOR YOUTH PARTNERS

- Are there capacity-building opportunities for young people who work in partnership with your organization?
- Have young people defined these capacity-building needs directly through dialogue with your organization?
- Are these trainings offered at times that are convenient for young people, on platforms they can easily access?

PROVIDE TRAININGS FOR ADULT ALLIES

- Does your organization offer training opportunities for adult staff on MAYE?
- Are these training opportunities designed with / facilitated by / with leadership from youth partners?
- Does your organization ensure that any adult allies working within youth partnerships are fully aware of MAYE principles and practice?

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 7: Use language and communication methods that are understandable, respectful and accessible to everyone

Use language and communication methods that are understandable, respectful, and accessible to everyone by avoiding overly technical language and jargon, developing material for disabled young people, and providing translation support to those who should require it.

USING USER-FRIENDLY AND PLAIN / NON-JARGON LANGUAGE

- Does your organization have a working list of abbreviations and jargon in the sector?
- Are you able to determine at what point youth partners are starting in their professional journey, assessing their familiarity with key terms, institutions and actors, and provide training to ensure they are prepared?
- Is it a part of your partnership to sit down and ensure that youth partners know the language, the actors, the systems?
- Does your organization offer options for communicating with youth partners on more informal channels that may work best for them, like WhatsApp or Facebook?

RESOURCES FOR DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE / IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

- Does your organization curate resources specifically for young people with a range of disabilities?
- Are young people with disabilities able to offer feedback on the accessibility of different resources and events?
- Does your organization offer simultaneous translation during its major engagement points with young people?
- Does your organization include resources in other languages besides English?

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 8: Provide young people sufficient support and resources

Provide young people sufficient support and resources, including financial resources, in a timely manner. This includes giving appropriate priority to funding and officially partnering with adolescent and youth-led organizations. It also includes heightened transparency and diversity in funding arrangements by allocating funds to young people in an equitable way and ensuring sufficient funds are available to guarantee that participation is truly accessible for a range of young people. Within culturally appropriate boundaries, young people will be compensated for their participation in recognition of their skills, expertise, and time.

PROVIDE SUFFICIENT FUNDS IN A TIMELY MANNER

- Does your organization adequately compensate youth partners for their contributions?
- Does your organization provide payment up front, rather than reimbursement models, for youth partners?
- Does your organization require youth partners to go through extensive paperwork processes to receive funding, including being reimbursed?
- Does your organization establish official partnerships with adolescent- and/or youth-led initiatives?
- Does your organization provide technical support to youth partners when it comes to implementing your organization's procedures and policies?
- Do you have open and honest conversations with youth partners about funding? Do they know how secure their funding is?
- Do youth partners know the terms of their funding arrangement with your organization?
- Establish official partnerships with youth initiatives, rather than asking them to join voluntary spaces, where their engagement is compensated.

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 9: Provide enabling environments

Provide enabling environments and ensure that adequate time and resources are made available to young people so that they are prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to participate in decision making. These approaches should be mindful of the differing levels of support needed, based on the age and evolving capacities of young people, and acknowledge that the expertise and participation of some young people may draw from adverse personal experiences that could trigger emotional trauma that may require the provision of psychological support.

PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE TO WORK WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION

- Are young people set up to succeed when they engage in a partnership with your organization?
- Are young people given enough time, resources, and funding to engage meaningfully in whatever space they are invited to with your organization?
- Are young people supported to share their story in a way that is comfortable for them, non-extractive, and surrounded by supportive team members?

PREPARE YOUR ORGANIZATION TO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- Are adult allies in your organization trained on MAYE?
- In every project / program / engagement / initiative involving young people, is there someone engaged who is familiar with MAYE best practice?
- Does your organization have a mechanism that allows young people to flag or 'whistleblow' mistreatment or bad MAYE practice?

ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST ITEM 10: Promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women

Promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women in all processes. This includes implementing gender-sensitive measures to facilitate the engagement of girls and young women in participatory governance. By meaningfully engaging women and girls, we will transform gendered social norms by legitimising their engagement in decision-making arenas.

GENDER SENSITIVE / GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE INTERNAL POLICIES

- Does your organization apply a gender-transformative lens to adolescent and youth programming?
- Does your institution have a specific mandate to target and engage adolescent girls?
- Does your organization ensure that adolescent girls' voices are highlighted in different speaking engagements, panels, fora, etc.,

EMPOWER GIRLS AND WOMEN THROUGH PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

- Does any advisory group or youth board within your organization include an approach that ensures equal gender representation?

APPENDIX F

Youth Involvement and Engagement Assessment Tool

(Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2017. “Guide for Engaging Youth in Decision Making and Planning. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. [Guide for Engaging Youth in Decision Making and Planning \(hudexchange.info\)](http://hudexchange.info))

Youth Involvement and Engagement Assessment Tool

A key component to positive youth development is to make sure youth not only have quality experiences, but are also fully engaged as active participants. However, this process takes time. It is suggested that organizations and community-based partnerships should assess their programs every six months. Please take a moment to respond to the statements below. Please indicate at what level you agree or disagree.

Youth Involvement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Youth take lots of initiative working on projects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Youth are always busy with things to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Youth arrive to meetings/events on time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Youth take ownership when responding to specific tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Youth rely on themselves to make key decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Youth always share ideas about things that matter to them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Youth help one another learn new skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Youth are fully committed to their duties.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Youth are very excited about their involvement with this project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Youth are involved at all levels of program development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Youth Engagement (within the Community)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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11. Youth display a willingness to accept leadership responsibilities in their community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Youth have full access to information that is needed to make decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Youth express a genuine interest in the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Youth display a desire to help others in their community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Youth display a desire to mentor other youth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Youth take part in discussions at community forums/hearings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Youth are applying what they learn by getting involved in other community activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Youth take pride in their community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Youth seek the advice of adults in the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Youth come up with their own ideas for improving the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Youth are involved in several community-based projects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Youth express a sense of belonging toward their community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. Youth are very concerned about community change.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Youth Retention

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
24. Youth are recruiting their peers to join the program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. A majority of the projects are led by youth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Youth consult with adults on project activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. Staff/volunteers (adults) have the skills to serve as mentors to youth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. The ideas of this project were generated mostly by youth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. Most youth have no difficulty in getting to the meetings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. Adults feel comfortable working with assertive youth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. Youth make decisions based on their own experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Some youth have been involved in this project for one year or more.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. As older youth leave the program, they are replaced by their younger peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Youth see this experience as a chance to socialize with friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. Youth choose to work on this project instead of other activities (playing sports, watching TV).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. Youth are routinely recognized for their accomplishments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. Youth make efforts to attend every meeting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. Most of the youth return to this program year after year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Youth are passionate about the issues addressed through this project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. Youth recognize their strengths in working as a member of the team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. Youth feel challenged to do their best.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Instructions for Using the *Youth Involvement and Engagement Tool*

1. **Youth development professionals (e.g., youth workers, teachers, 4-H agents/educators) who work closely with youth should complete the *assessment tool*** after the group has been working together for awhile (i.e., near the middle of the project/program). This will give those completing the assessment an opportunity to more thoroughly examine the extent to which youth are involved as leaders. Administering the scale too soon will not allow for accurate perceptions or experiences.

2. **Examine the computed mean scores (averages) to determine whether there are high or low levels of youth involvement or community engagement, and whether retention of youth is at risk.** The items on the scale are grouped accordingly.

The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), indicating whether the program provides positive or negative experiences within each of the three areas. A mean score for each category between 1 and 2.4 would be classified as “low”, while scores between 2.5 and 3.4 could be considered “average” and 3.5 or above would be classified as “high”. Compare these scores to the table below to determine which areas may need improvement. The arrows in the table only signify whether levels are “low” (↓), or “high” (↑).

Descriptions of high levels of youth involvement, community engagement and youth retention are provided below the table. Low levels would be the opposite of these descriptions. Details on the potential causes of low or average levels are also explained.

Level of Youth Involvement, Community Engagement and Youth Retention existing within Community Programs

Youth Involvement	Community Engagement	Youth Retention	Description
↑	↑	↑	<p>This is the optimal result for positive youth development. It indicates a program that is youth-driven, being led by young people who are empowered to promote change. They are beyond mere involvement, and are putting into practice those leadership skills that have been developed and mastered over time.</p> <p>Programs reflecting youth participation at this level are likely implementing practices that are not episodic, but instead are consistent and sustained. This is apparent due to the high number of youth willing to remain active in the program. Youth are able to assume roles as decision-makers, and therefore have opportunities to develop their skills and abilities.</p>
↑	↓	↑	Low engagement. See tips on increasing community engagement among youth.
↓	↑	↑	Low levels of involvement. See tips on increasing youth involvement.
↑	↓	↓	Low engagement and youth retention. This could be a situation where most of the youth participants are younger and the older youth are leaving for various reasons. Take time to determine if the youth are disengaged because of bad experiences. At the same time, be sure to focus on the youth who are involved, and build their skills in hopes of preparing them for deeper engagement.

↓	↑	↓	High engagement only. This is what can happen when older youth are leaving the program and are getting involved in broader roles throughout their community. Follow up with them to determine if your program had a role in their desire to pursue higher levels of community engagement. If so, take pride in knowing that this is truly a major goal of positive youth development, especially if youth are serving in leadership roles within other groups and organizations.
↑	↑	↓	High involvement and engagement, with low retention. This can occur when youth are forced to choose other options (e.g., jobs, organized sports, graduation), despite having positive experiences within a particular program.
↓	↓	↑	<p>This can occur when youth are allowed to serve as only passive participants. They may be a part of a program, but they have no role in decision-making. This is most common with a younger audience. Teens would rarely settle for and remain in such settings.</p> <p>It may be time to get on board with new strategies! Form community collaborations to determine what youth in the area really need. Solicit the help of caring adults willing to mentor and partner with youth. Most importantly, ask youth for advice!</p>
↓	↓	↓	It may be time to get on board with new strategies. Form community collaborations to determine what youth in the area really need. Solicit the help of caring adults willing to mentor and partner with youth. Most importantly, ask youth for advice!

Note. ↓ (1-2.4) = Low; ↑ (3.5 - 5) = High. A score from 2.5 - 3.4 is considered “average”.

High Youth Involvement: Youth demonstrate high levels of active participation. They are willing to work with others while also taking on leadership roles. They feel a sense of belonging and are

therefore at ease in sharing their ideas, while welcoming the opinions of others. At high levels of involvement, youth have full access to details that assist in their social, intellectual and leadership development. Also, programs with high involvement are not controlled by adults, but foster a youth-led approach, allowing young people to take ownership. Youth are intrinsically motivated to embrace the responsibilities of projects and take advantage of the opportunity to have their ideas heard, considered, and implemented.

Low or average *youth involvement* scores (1 through 3.4)

Youth development programs may be designed with the best intentions, but youth play a critical role in determining the success of their involvement level. Often they may be excited to serve as community leaders, but are lukewarm towards a project idea. On the other hand, youth may be the driving force behind a new concept or initiative that can benefit the community. However, the demands on their time due to school, other extra-curricular activities, or work may inhibit their participation.

These and many additional factors can contribute to a mediocre or average rating for youth involvement. This is common when programs/projects are new or if youth are just beginning to gain first-hand experiences as engaged citizens. They may not feel comfortable taking the initiative to lead projects or rely on their own capabilities to make key decisions. Therefore, youth development practitioners must decide if this outcome appears to be only temporary, or if it is time to move forward with implementing strategies to support and encourage youth in this area of their development. A few techniques are listed below that may help address low to average youth involvement.

Steps to improve *youth involvement*:

- Recruit youth who are experienced leaders and pair them with those who are younger and less experienced.
- Make sure youth are afforded opportunities for independence. Give them chances to make decisions and express their opinions.
- Whenever possible, allow youth to decide what project they want to implement. When they have ownership, commitment levels increase.
- Have adult support in place to assist when it is solicited. Despite their independence, youth still want help from adults when needed.

High Youth Engagement: Youth Engagement refers to youth contributing to their own development by applying learned life skills and being afforded the chance to function as effective decision-makers. Youth have the confidence to take on leadership roles and the competence to make informed decisions. Therefore, they seek out opportunities to participate in youth-driven programs and initiatives. Youth are also applying their skills by getting involved in other organizations, participating in civic affairs and serving on boards and councils.

Low or average *youth engagement* scores (1 through 3.4)

Perhaps the youth participants need more training in this area. Don't get discouraged if they seem disinterested in promoting change. It takes time for young people to develop the unique, transferable skills required to function effectively as confident and competent leaders. Less than desirable results may be revealing an opportune time to provide training on basic principles of needs assessments (what does our community need?), asset mapping (what resources do we already have?), or how to facilitate meeting discussions. Youth, as well as adults, should be knowledgeable on these topics if they are to develop a stronger sense of community.

It is also important to nurture skills and attributes that promote goal setting, communication, critical thinking, and the ability to manage conflict. All are necessary if youth are to perform efficiently within the realm of civic engagement. Unfortunately, these are not typical lessons that are always taught to young people in formal educational settings (e.g., school). However, with some assistance from caring, more experienced adults, and those youth who are more engaged, youth can emerge as leaders who are equipped to serve and be valued for their efforts and opinions.

Steps to improve *youth engagement*:

- Take time during program meetings to discuss issues affecting the community. Both youth and adults should bring topics to the meeting. One way to stimulate discussion is to have everyone bring a copy of the local paper (no more than two weeks old), then identify pertinent articles and discuss the topics in detail, including a discussion on whether the group can address a topic of interest and how.
- Invite community leaders to come and speak to youth about issues in the community.
- Let youth decide if they want to develop action plans to address any specific concerns. This allows the youth to have ownership from the very beginning. If they are not passionate about a particular issue, their willingness to become engaged decreases substantially.
- Youth-adult partnerships are very useful in promoting youth engagement. A partnership can provide youth with several adult mentors who may have a better understanding of the community and can impart this wisdom to youth. On the other hand, youth can provide their expertise on those issues that are important to them and their peers. Also, social change can be a daunting process for those new to community organizing. Partnerships can balance the responsibilities between youth and adults as they strive to make a difference.
- In some cases, youth may not be ready to take on issues on a broader scale. If so, don't force them. It may be wise to spend more time developing their leadership and social skills, through involvement, in order to equip them for civic engagement.

High Youth Retention: Success in retaining youth in programs is demonstrated by youth consistently returning to the program on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. It should be clear that they are making a choice to participate when they have other options to choose (i.e.,

serving in this program in lieu of sports or going home to play video games). Key factors that foster retention include, but are not limited to:

- Caring, supportive adults;
- Opportunities for youth to connect/socialize with peers;
- Recognition of youth for their efforts;
- Opportunities for youth to make decisions;
- Youth enjoyment of the challenge of serving and being recognized as community decision-makers;
- Genuine youth interest in the issues being addressed; and
- As older youth leave the program due to graduation, jobs, etc., other youth are encouraged to join the team to sustain efforts.

Low or average *youth retention* scores (1 through 3.4)

This can be interpreted in multiple ways. It could reflect weaker relationships and a disconnect between those involved. At times, the strategies adults put into action to recruit youth may not be the most effective. That is why it is important to solicit the advice of youth, inquiring what they believe to be useful in recruiting others. Youth want to be amongst their peers, and working within the community can serve as an ideal setting.

Retention rates could also be influenced by a low sense of camaraderie between youth and adults. Although youth have a strong desire to associate with peers, they need to form affirming relationships with adults as well. Youth development practitioners must always realize that some youth may have limited encounters with positive adults and are looking for those with whom they can form a bond. Occasionally, they may deem a relationship to be threatened or non-existent if they don't feel a supportive connection with adults, or if adults seem too preoccupied with other youth or responsibilities. As a result, a young person may decide that the only option is to seek the desired attention elsewhere. Although it is critical that youth learn to deal with community issues, it is equally important for them to be comfortable forming friendships with adults who are willing to stand in as mentors and role models.

Another cause for low to average retention could be related to some lack of a vested interest. Adults may be passionate about a project that is of no relevance to youth. This could also hold true for youth who want to implement an idea, but who have little support from skeptical peers or adults. In both scenarios, those with no interest may begin to feel pressured to get on board or they may become convinced that they have no say in decision making. The end result in both cases is that participants eventually abandon the program or project. This, in turn, causes disappointment among the leaders of the group, who ultimately shift their energies elsewhere.

Lastly, location of programs and events can affect retention. It may be a challenge to consistently attend meetings or events if a youth lives several miles away. Often, changing meeting locations periodically to accommodate participants may help address issues with attendance.

Steps to improve *youth retention* may include:

- Allowing time for socializing among peers. Youth need to recognize the program as a venue to *have fun*. The news will spread quickly when a group of youth can tell others about opportunities that build confidence while having a good time.
- Giving youth a chance to get to know adults and form trusting relationships with them. Bonding time can occur during field trips or other scheduled events.
- Being sure youth are involved from beginning to end. This contributes to feeling valued.
- Being assertive in recruiting younger participants who can gain experience while being mentored by older peers.
- Using the expertise of adult volunteers by allowing them to work with youth to help create and enhance programs that are more appealing.
- Recognizing youth for their efforts on a regular basis, both formally and informally.
- Considering the location of the program, and making sure all youth feel as though the meeting place is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment.
- Trying not to demand too much or expect too little from young people. Heavy demands can cause stress and frustration. Asking too little can be perceived as a waste of their time.
- Changing the focus. If the youth keep changing (coming for a short time and then leaving the program), then it may be time to change the program or project!

ARMENIA CIVICS FOR ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

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