



2014 Human Development Report Office
United Nations Development Programme
GUIDANCE NOTE

YOUTH

A Thematic Guidance Note for Regional and
National Human Development Report Teams, 2014

This note should be read in conjunction with the Regional/National Human Development Report Toolkit. It could also be read alongside one of several useful reports on meaningful youth participation, such as [this one from UNICEF](#).

While the toolkit provides general guidance on preparing a Regional or National Human Development Report, this note gives some specific suggestions on how to approach the issue of youth as a topic for such a report.

This note was prepared by the Human Development Report Office at UNDP. Christina Hackmann was the lead author.

Contents

A. Background	4
B. Getting started	5
The participatory approach - engaging with young people	5
C. Preparing the report	7
I. The conceptual framework	7
a) The mainstreaming approach.....	7
b) The life cycle approach.....	7
c) Empowerment and social inclusion	7
II. Potential areas of analysis	8
a) General considerations	8
b) Key human development dimensions	9
c) Economic empowerment	10
d) Political empowerment	12
e) Social empowerment: Leadership and youth as an agent of change	13
f) Best practices and components of youth policies	14
III. Data mapping	15
D. Having an influence.....	17
E. Resources	18

A. Background

There are more young people today in the world than ever before. About half the world's population - or 3 billion people - is under the age of 25,¹ while almost 80% of Uganda's population are younger than 30.

Defining Youth. How old are youth? There is no single definition of the age group that fall into the youth category. The UN has long defined youth as the population between 15 and 24 years old, but many countries consider the transition to adulthood starts earlier or takes longer. While in most cases the definition is age-based, some people consider *youth* to be a social and cultural construct that does not always coincide with biological transitions. Such a definition considers that young people are affected by social and cultural experiences, which can differ between young men and women². One option is to create age groups of young people that together comprise the spectrum of transition. In its new Youth Strategy, UNDP proposes a flexible definition of youth between 15-35 years old, broken down by sex in the following age groups: 15-18; 19-24; 25-30; 31-35.³

Opening up opportunities for young people, investing in their capabilities and recognizing their role, rights and responsibilities in society should be a priority for decision-makers. It is essential to provide youth with opportunities to engage in processes and initiatives that affect their present and future. They need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and have platforms to engage. Understanding the human development needs and challenges of youth has gained momentum over recent years

¹ UNDP Youth Strategy, Empowering Youth for Sustainable Development, New York, 2013

² [Honduras 2008/9](#)

³ The definition encourages the consideration of diversity and context in any definition to highlight the heterogeneity of young people. See the UNDP Youth Strategy, Empowering Youth for Sustainable Development, New York, 2013

worldwide, including in the UN system. The Secretary General (SG) has made working with and for women and young people a priority in his five year action agenda and appointed a Special Envoy for Youth. In line with the [SG's 5-year action agenda](#), his [Special Envoy on Youth](#) is mandated to bring the voices of youth into the UN system.⁴ UNDP has released a youth strategy in 2013.¹

A Regional or National Human Development Report (R/NDHR) can contribute by analyzing the capabilities and challenges of youth, the barriers they face and the opportunities to develop better policies. It can contribute to a process that fosters the participation of youth in decision-making. Three regional reports and 20 national reports on youth have been produced at the end of 2013⁵, starting in Lebanon in 1998 with a report on 'Youth and Development', and has increased, especially since 2008. In the [4th Human Development Awards Programme](#) for regional and national HDRs, three NHDRs on youth won an award for excellence: [Egypt 2010](#), [Nicaragua 2011](#), and [Somalia 2012](#).

Youth is a broad topic for a report and so we advise clearly identifying the objective and the areas to be covered at the outset to manage expectations, as well as defining who the youth actually are. This note does not provide one specific approach to preparing a report. Rather it reviews different approaches used so far in youth national and regional human development reports, and draws on other experience (including from UNICEF), summarizing experiences and lessons learned so that report teams are better placed to decide for themselves how to proceed. Although we looked at all youth NHDRs, this note mainly focusses on those reports published between 2008 and 2013.

⁴ See the resource section for more information on the SG's youth agenda

⁵ See [HDRO's website](#)

The [Egypt NHDR 2010 'Youth in Egypt: Building our Future'](#) was informed by surveying 15,000 young people in Egypt. The survey covered all governorates in Egypt, including the harder to survey frontier areas and informal urban areas. Young people were interviewed via household-level, community level and individual questionnaires.⁶

In addition to surveys interviewing a total of 6,000 individuals, the [2011 NHDR in Nicaragua](#) 'Youths Building Nicaragua', held 38 focus group discussions with roughly 400 individuals as well as regional consultation forums.

Creative initiatives can spur engagement of younger generations. While preparing the 2011 report, UNDP Nicaragua promoted a 'Being young in Nicaragua' visual arts competition. The competition let participants share their reflections about their lives and opportunities through art and design. This resulted in the presentation of 186 paintings, drawings, graphic designs and photographs. 53 pieces featured in the report to illustrate the messages of each chapter.

In Kyrgyzstan, the report team designed an awareness raising campaign strategy implemented through billboard advertising and a poster/photo competition. The competition offered young people the opportunity to participate, and winning entries became illustrations for the report.⁷

National ownership of an NHDR can get a particular boost when the youth themselves take responsibility for the production process. In the [Somalia NHDR 2012](#) 'Empowering Youth for Peace and Development', youth advisory groups from all regions played an important role at every step of the process. Members were selected by their peers from youth organizations, and advised on the main messages and the follow-up campaign, participated in consultative workshops and developed the Somali Youth Charter, a major report output.

B. Getting started

The participatory approach - engaging with young people

NHDR production is a participatory process that involves stakeholders from different sectors, such as the government, academia, CSOs, UN agencies, media, the private sector, etc. (for additional information on building the NHDR team, please visit the NHDR website). Depending on the areas the youth report covers, a variety of stakeholders might be involved, representing different fields of expertise, such as economics, health, education, community development, political engagement, human rights, sociology or violence prevention.

It is essential to include young people in the preparation process. Regional and national forums, workshops, and focus groups discussions are good ways of achieving this. Youth organizations often provide an entry point. Take care to include both young men and young women in the process and pay special attention to listening to the seldom-heard voices: young people from [indigenous groups](#), those living with disability or the urban poor for example should be included, but may be difficult to reach.

⁶ For information on approach and methodology: Survey of Young People in Egypt, Population Council West Asia and North Africa Office, January 2011, http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/2010PGY_SYPEFi nalReport.pdf.

⁷ For additional information and campaign guidance, please see here: <https://undp.unteamworks.org/node/354807>.

In a youth NHDR, the voices, opinions and aspirations of youth ought to feature strongly in the report, and if possible they should engage actively in the process. Key issues include:

- Participation and engagement should represent all regions in the country, different population groups, urban and rural residents as well as young men and women.
- Depending on the chosen definition of youth, different age groups can be considered in order to capture perspectives and inputs of the younger (e.g. under 20) and the older youth (e.g. up to 35).
- Surveys, focus group discussions and consultations should not only include the youth themselves but those they interact with, e.g. household members, elders, teachers, etc.

C. Preparing the report

I. The conceptual framework

Various conceptual frameworks might be used to report on human development and youth. The approach chosen for the report will depend on the report's context and objectives.

a) The mainstreaming approach

If the objective is to influence the updating of a national youth policy, or integrating the topic of youth in specific sectoral policies, a report might focus on (or mainstream) youth in areas of particular interest. Such reports analyze the national human development situation and national youth policies in areas such as: education, health, economic empowerment (in particular employment and entrepreneurship), participation in governance, social activities and lifestyle. The [Qatar NHDR 2012](#) 'Expanding Capacities of the Qatari Youth' focuses on strengthening capacities for the young generation. Some mainstreaming reports add cultural aspects to the analysis. The [2010 Kyrgyzstan NHDR](#) 'Successful youth - successful country' analyzes the values and attitudes of youth, revealing that large parts of the young generation have a pessimistic take on their opportunities and are generally dissatisfied with their lives. This influences long-term planning and may serve as a predictor of potential instability.

Some reports have opted to highlight one particular challenge youth is facing, such as the [2005 Bhutan NHDR](#) on 'The challenge of Youth Employment'. This allows for a more in-depth analysis and can provide more targeted recommendations, e.g., for specific regions or groups. However, keep in mind that young people are influenced by a variety of societal aspects and that challenges are interlinked. In general, mainstreaming carries the risk of sidelining a specific issue that might be important, but is not the focus of analysis.

b) The life cycle approach

The life cycle approach offers a holistic framework that looks at how history the economy, society, social pathways and relations influence an individual's life. It is a multidimensional approach, integrating different disciplines (from history, sociology to economics and psychology) and directing attention to the inter-linkages as well as the various steps and timing of events in the life cycle. It aims to understand how they depend on - as well as impact on - one another.⁸ For example, education and health can affect all stages of the life cycle, as can social values. The approach places particular emphasis on early childhood development as a critical phase.⁹ The [Egypt NHDR 2012](#) provides useful insights on this in its chapters on education, health, gender equality and freedoms. The global HDR 2014 offers input on life cycle vulnerabilities and life capabilities, with a particular focus on the relevance of early childhood development and managing youth vulnerabilities.¹⁰

c) Empowerment and social inclusion

Basing report analysis on the concepts of empowerment or social inclusion offer different approaches for holistic and people-centered analysis. Both include links to socioeconomic and cultural aspects, which are important when thinking about youth. History, society, culture and family frame and influence the development of an individual and his or her attitudes, aspirations and opportunities. This is

⁸ Elder, Glen H.; Monica Kirkpatrick Johnson and Robert Crosnoe: *The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory*. In: Jeylan T. Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan (ed.). *Handbook of the Life Course*. Springer, 2003, [ISBN 0-306-47498-0](#), pp. 3-19.

⁹ Hardgrove, Abby/Pells, Kirrily/Dornan, Paul/Boyden Jo: *Youth Vulnerabilities in Life Course Transitions*, HDRO Occasional Paper, September 2013

¹⁰ Human Development Report 2014 (forthcoming), UNDP, New York, Chapter 3 and 4

particularly relevant for young women.¹¹ Governments need to understand these influences on young people when designing policies.¹²

Empowerment is about agency and being able to exercise influence over decisions that affect one's life. It is at the heart of human development. The development of young people is at risk from a cycle of poverty, economic stagnation, governance failure and exclusion, sometimes compounded by violence and fragility. Empowerment can interrupt this cycle and drive transformational change by changing existing power relations. The [Somalia NHDR 2012](#) identifies youth as agents of positive change. To increase their agency, it advocates for building their capabilities, expanding their assets and providing opportunities to engage in political, social and economic processes. Using the empowerment approach means focusing on how to increase young people's agency as well as their responsibility to make full use of available opportunities. Building the identity of youth is a crucial part of this as are strategies for their integration into institutions.

The [Honduras NHDR 2008/9](#) highlights that social inclusion is closely linked to developing an identity and building citizenship. This depends on improving certain capabilities, such as developing an interest in the public sphere and in interacting with it, or acquiring knowledge and being interested in societal affairs. The analysis considers the concept of youth to be

¹¹ See the HDR 2014 for a discussion on how the socio-economic context influences the development of youth, Human Development Report 2014 (forthcoming).

¹² There is no single right way to measure these concepts and several national human development reports have looked into this (such as Nepal, 2004 on empowerment, or Ghana 2007 on social inclusion, Search the NHDR library for more details at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports>

a social and cultural construct. Similarly, the [Cyprus NHDR 2009](#) looks at home society and history partly define youth and how that definition evolves over time, and can depend on social class and location for example. Based on this, the report analyzes the role of family values and traditions for Cypriot youth.

Feedback from surveys, focus group discussions or workshops on perceptions, desires, expectations and aspirations can broaden the analysis by looking at values or traditions. The [Nicaragua NHDR 2011](#) investigated the opinions of youth to show the different environments in which they grow up. The report uses a symbolic 'backpack' metaphor to describe the assets, needs and influences each individual carries. It highlights aspects, next to material resources, that are important, such as autonomy, confidence or aspirations. It underscores how opportunities of youth are divided among those that have technical resources, autonomy or power and live in relationships of trust and those that do not.

II. Potential areas of analysis

a) General considerations

An NHDR should generally include analysis by gender, region, population groups, and minorities. It should further include thinking about young people's human rights, with a particular focus on young women's and girl's rights.¹³ A new area to explore in the future will be the link between youth and the environment (most reports have not dealt with this topic so far).

¹³ See the resource sections for relevant Human Rights Conventions, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child

b) Key human development dimensions

Education and health are key human development dimensions and need to play an important role in every report.¹⁴

Education is one of the most effective tools for enhancing the capabilities, freedoms and choices among the young. Being equipped with knowledge can contribute to breaking an intergenerational cycle of poverty and inequality, linking the impact of education to social mobility. Education is a tool for social empowerment. Educational institutions can help shape civic engagement, the understanding of rights and responsibilities and guide the path towards citizenship building and democratic engagement. Education can help overcome social exclusion.¹⁵

The basic starting points for education analysis in an NHDR are the availability, accessibility, quality (including its relevance), affordability and the acceptability of education, its facilities and its structure. An NHDR might analyze whether a functioning education system exists in terms of facilities, teachers and materials, whether it is accessible for all groups, affordable, or acceptable to local needs and circumstances (e.g. are timetables, structures or language sufficiently flexible for nomadic groups)¹⁶ and whether there are a range of types of educational institutions.

Potential areas of analysis related to education

- Look into the state of - and opportunity for - education in the country: analyze literacy and enrollment as well as dropout rates at primary, secondary and tertiary level. Linking enrollment and

dropout rates to the question of family background and socio-economic status is useful to analyze inequality of opportunities. It is also essential to understand reasons of children and youth for dropping out of school and, if available, an analysis of completion rates can provide insights on dropouts and serve as a link to labour market analysis. While looking at enrollment and completion rates, the questions of a gender gap and rural/urban as well as ethnic divides should be looked at. Keep in mind that completion rates aren't always commensurate with good education outcomes.

- Analyze the education system, curricula, infrastructure and budget, as those areas partly determine the quality of education. Consider plans for education reform and improving the quality of education (including remedial education), the quality of teachers' education (see [Honduras 2008/9](#)), their salaries or their social recognition ([Kyrgyzstan 2010](#)).
- Link the analysis of education to the labour market. In many cases, there is a mismatch between the education system and the needs of the labour market (see [Egypt 2010](#) or [Bhutan 2005](#)). Analysis could for example explore options of combining scholarly and vocational education and review possibilities for greater interaction between the education system and the private sector to better equip young people for the labour market.
- Explore transitions between education and employment.
- Analyze whether gender roles have an impact on opportunities, drop-out rates or non-attendance. Look into the importance of female teachers and other female role models for girls.
- Discuss the role of early childhood education ([Turkey 2008](#)).
- Where relevant and feasible, the role of informal and religious schooling systems

¹⁴ For a discussion on the relevance of universal social services, see the HDR 2014, Human Development Report 2014 (forthcoming)

¹⁵ See [Honduras 2008/9](#) for example.

¹⁶ See the [Somalia NHDR 2012](#), page 52

could be taken into account ([Kyrgyzstan 2010](#)).

- Education can serve as a peace builder or a bridge among population groups ([Cyprus 2009](#)).

Health is critical for young people's physical and psychological development. While most reports would explore various aspects relevant to health, some NHDRs focus on the links between health and a specific topic. For example the [Honduras 2008/9](#) NHDR focused on aspects of health that can cause social exclusion, such as early pregnancy, disability, HIV/AIDS or prevalence of violence. Mental health is also an important, and often overlooked, topic, especially for young people.

From a broad perspective, availability, accessibility, affordability and adaptability are again key questions when it comes to health care. Even if health institutions are available in an acceptable distance, services are often too expensive and can be discriminatory. They might not adapt to the needs of youth or be of low quality. Depending on the context, the report can explore all these aspects as well as options for health insurance.

Areas of analysis related to health

- Explore risky behavior, such as sex or substance abuse as well as stigmatization around it. These aspects should be linked to highlight the need for adolescent health care and education (the issue of hazardous behavior tends to be neglected). Awareness raising on leading a healthy lifestyle and how that impacts on well-being can be the basis of analysis for a life-cycle approach ([Egypt 2010](#)) and could be part of effective policy design.
- Look into sexual and reproductive health information and care, important for reducing early pregnancies and maternal mortality, regulating fertility and post-abortion care services. Family planning

and contraception, support to parents and peer health learning are important.

- Discuss practices of child marriage, dowry and early parenthood and link those aspects to the fact that young mothers are often poorly educated, which impacts on providing their families with adequate nutrition and health care as well as on their own development and opportunities. This can perpetuate an intergenerational low human development trap ([Turkey 2008](#)).
- External factors such as conflict, violence and accidents can play an important role in health. The [Nicaragua NHDR 2011](#) shows how violence and abuse affect the physical and psychological well-being of youth.
- Gender-based violence is an important issue, but data can be difficult to get. The NHDR can address the topic in surveys or focus group discussions through private settings, e.g., have an anonymous written questionnaire that can provide space for information but at the same time respect the privacy of the individual. Perceptions of those affected are of relevance and the NHDR can make a contribution by advocating for awareness raising.
- Schools, universities as well as private companies can play a role in raising awareness on health issues and the report can explore options. This should improve knowledge on physical aspects and questions of a healthy lifestyle, as well as target reducing stigma and discrimination.

c) Economic empowerment

In many countries, youth unemployment is one of the most pressing challenges. Youth un- or underemployment may have multiple causes: the integration into the labor market does not function properly, youth are not sufficiently educated or there is a skills

mismatch,¹⁷ the economy does not provide sufficient opportunities or labour costs are too high. The NHDR needs to identify the most relevant issues in the respective country. A RHDR can take a broader perspective, but should also look into the varying country contexts and can explore opportunities for cooperation.

Employment - Providing decent employment is more than an economic concern. It also provides a sense of self-worth and a broader social network. Employment analysis should always have a gender aspect.

- *Job availability:* Does the structure of economic growth generate sufficient employment for the young? Discuss the economic performance of the country and see whether economic growth is matching growth in productive employment, what types of employment opportunities are generated and what the challenges are ([Turkey 2008](#)). This is particularly relevant in countries with rapid population growth. The report can point to ways of taking advantage of a youth bulge. Linking the discussion to targeted macroeconomic and labour market policies and programs, such as public work, is relevant. If public sector jobs seem more attractive the private sector employment base may need to be supported ([Bhutan 2005](#)).
- *Type and quality of employment:* Analyze employment and unemployment according to regions, urban vs. rural, gender, population groups as well as to employment sector ([Kyrgyzstan 2010](#), [Qatar 2012](#), [Bhutan 2005](#)). Is unemployment the most pressing challenge? Or is it underemployment and poor quality jobs? It is useful to understand the numbers of jobs that are in the public or private sector, formal or

informal, regular or irregular, temporary and insecure, self-employed or unpaid.

- Underemployment and precarious employment can deepen a vicious cycle of social exclusion. ([Honduras 2008/9](#)).
 - Sometimes jobs pay too little, resulting in working poor who live in a precarious situation.
 - Sometimes jobs don't match the qualifications of youth: there may either be an insufficient demand for skilled labor or limited opportunities for the uneducated.
 - Discuss who has higher quality jobs and the extent to which socio-economic background or health status determine educational achievement and, hence, prospects in the labor market.
 - Opportunities for young women are often more restricted and they earn less. Every report should address this in its analysis.
- *Improving the employability of youth* is a key issue for many youth NHDRs, e.g. providing adequate education or building skills. Youth need adequate labour market information and employment services can play a role here ([Qatar 2012](#)), as can technical and vocational training, which offers a path for skills development. Integrating hands-on private sector experience in the training cycle, through a combination of theoretical and practical training, can improve educational quality and directly links the trainee to an employer ([Bhutan 2005](#)).
- *Building Entrepreneurship:* financial literacy, experience and the availability of resources play a role, as does trust in the economic and financial system. It also depends on the enabling environment, with legislation, institutional management, access to land, credit and information, (such as clarity in licensing) all important. To empower youth entrepreneurs a report can explore

¹⁷ Human Development Report 2014 (forthcoming), Chapter 3

targeted initiatives ([Egypt 2010](#), [Bhutan 2005](#)), or mentorship could be explored as a way to build youth self-confidence and develop soft skills. Peer learning might again play a role.

- Related to employment and entrepreneurship, the role of technology and ICT can be explored. Fostering knowledge of and access to ICT can empower youth in pursuing creative entrepreneurship and employment.
- NHDRs have looked at the attitude of youth towards employment to better understand the problems the youth face ([Cyprus 2009](#)) and to see whether expectations match opportunities ([Kyrgyzstan 2010](#)).
- Depending on the context, the issue of child labor could be part of the analysis.

Migration has increasingly become a coping strategy for younger people in search of employment. While this can spur economic development in some countries, it poses a challenge for others. For example, urban areas attracting young workers can lead to a lack of labour force in rural areas as well as underemployment in urban areas ([Kenya 2009](#)). Issues of rural-rural, urban-rural as well as outward migration should be part of the analysis. Aspects of regional and international migration might be particularly relevant for RHDRs.

Multidimensional poverty remains one of the gravest threats to youth, exposing them to a lack of services and to different risks. It directly impacts their opportunities for employment and economic empowerment. Analyzing poverty alongside other human development indicators will improve understanding of the situation in a country ([Bhutan 2005](#)).

d) Political empowerment

Political empowerment implies meaningful participation of youth in political decision-making processes, from the grassroots to the national level, in order to make governments

more responsive to them. This is particularly important in countries with a large youth bulge, where an increasing number of constituents are not represented in governance and policy-making. Barriers to participation range from discrimination and exclusion or mistrust to a lack of capabilities or vision of purpose among youth themselves. An individual's engagement in political or societal life is not automatic and needs to be fostered: achieving youth engagement requires investment in youth capabilities.

A report analyzing political empowerment can consider two broad areas of strategy: how to build an enabling environment (through institutions and legislation), and how to promote meaningful engagement.

Institutional set-up and legislation

Participation of young people in formal, institutional political processes is low in many countries.¹⁸ Exclusion is often age related and enshrined in legislation. Barriers from institutional set ups, legal restrictions (e.g. for parliamentary candidates) or culture/traditional leadership systems can be addressed by youth policies ([Somalia 2012](#), [Nicaragua 2011](#)). Strengthening and engaging youth networks and organizations can help link youth to political processes and build trust, and can be particularly important for local governance. If youth groups/organizations do not exist, or are insufficiently organized, government institutions can be encouraged to develop them. A report can discuss options of youth engagement programs ([Kenya 2009](#)), or how youth can contribute to improving governance ([Egypt 2010](#)).

Education on human rights can foster political, social and economic empowerment, particularly for young women. And a report can contribute to this awareness raising

¹⁸ UNDP Youth Strategy

through a participatory preparation process and an analysis of human rights.

Meaningful engagement by youth

Political and societal engagement of youth is low in many countries. Some people claim that youth are insufficiently experienced, disinterested or even the source of trouble and conflict. However, a lack of engagement can come from a lack of capabilities, a lack of trust in government, a lack of representation, a lack of opportunities or a feeling of disempowerment ([Cyprus 2009](#)). A report can investigate root causes and consider what would lead to a more meaningful engagement of youth, or how to change perceptions so that the young are seen as an asset to society.

A report can analyze the various levels of youth engagement, its barriers and how it is influenced by - and impacts on - society ([Kenya, 2009](#)). Civic engagement, voluntary work and participation in organizations and societal structures before adulthood can boost self-esteem and provide a sense of belonging and various learning opportunities, such as working towards compromise or learning leadership skills ([Turkey 2008](#), [Honduras 2008](#)). A report can also investigate ways of linking engagement to decision-making processes ([Somalia 2012](#)). Perception surveys and discussions can help understand how the youth see the political system and their opportunities to participate in it ([Egypt 2010](#)).

Social media and new technologies provide an avenue for engagement, awareness raising and for establishing communities. But meaningful engagement needs to reach digitally excluded groups and so should go beyond the digital sphere ([Egypt 2010](#)).

Political empowerment is strongly linked to education and social empowerment, with girls and young women often facing specific exclusions in many countries.

e) Social empowerment: Leadership and youth as an agent of change

Social norms, values, culture, religion and family ties all affect young people. Reports might look into the regional/country context to analyze social structures and discuss how the social background impacts other areas of development. The analysis can identify youth aspirations and their perceptions about the challenges and barriers they face. And there are many possible barriers, including their place of residence, socio-economic status of parents, lack of education and employment opportunities, lack of opportunity for political engagement, gender discrimination, stigmatization or belonging to a minority group. The role of girls and women in society are an important part of analysis.

In Cyprus, like many places, the family is the central social institution. Traditional values and structures can provide support but at the same time can impact on the freedom of decision-making ([Cyprus NHDR 2009](#)). Broader surveys can widen the perspective and help understand youths' attitude towards the political system, the economy and society. A survey in Kyrgyzstan highlighted that youth are mostly pessimistic and worry about their opportunities to find education and employment, which might lead them to emigrate. ([Kyrgyzstan 2010](#)). In Egypt, a survey underlined how youth see the state as responsible for meeting their needs and aspirations. The report identifies the 'waithood' period of youth as a social phenomenon, which complicates the transition to adulthood, leading to apathy and frustration ([Egypt 2010](#)). Surveys can further help decipher the perceptions of peace and conflict, which can serve as an input for engaging youth in state-building activities ([Somalia 2012](#)).

Knowledge about social attitudes and norms can influence policy-making and result in better targeting. If, for example, discussions about gender roles and sex don't happen within the family, schools can play more

important roles. If public sector employment is preferred policies need to make the private sector more attractive ([Egypt 2010](#)). If deeply rooted cultural conceptions and traditions pose obstacles, policy makers can tackle the norms that produce discrimination or exclusion ([Nicaragua 2011](#)).

Low social integration and civic engagement can be detected in surveys or in looking at how youth spend their leisure time. The [Kyrgyzstan NHDR 2010](#) reveals that the way young people spend their leisure time depends on their financial means, location, their freedom of decision-making and very often gender roles. The role of social media can be explored in that context, as a tool for better information, knowledge sharing and reaching out to peers.

A report can analyze 'idle' youth, targeting those that are neither in the work force nor in education, to understand how that impacts their choices and opportunities in society ([Turkey 2008](#)).

Youth violence and crime is an important topic in many places. The young are often both the perpetrators and victims of crime and violence. The reasons for this can be explored, such as in Somalia, where economic marginalization and the impact of conflict on law and order, and other parts of life, cause frustration and unrest. In Honduras, surveys among youth suggested that increased violence stemmed from poverty, social exclusion and a lack of opportunities.

Reports have an opportunity to portray youth as agents for peace and as leaders who can initiate change. The [Somalia NHDR](#) is an excellent example that looks to youth as the future of the country. It discusses how they could play a role in state-building and conflict transformation. Pointing to the more than 75% of the youth that want to be involved in the country's peace building process, the report sees a pivotal role for them in helping re-establish state legitimacy. Following the same thrust, the [Cyprus NHDR](#)

[2009](#) highlighted the feelings of youth toward peace and how they wish to play a role in the peace process. The question of youth as leaders and agents of change could be explored in any country, regardless of whether there is conflict. A lack of opportunity for youth in society often leads to them feeling that they are ignored in decision-making. ([Nicaragua 2011](#)), and so social empowerment links to political empowerment.

f) Best practices and components of youth policies

Contributing to new or improved strategies, policies or action plans is a visible outcome of a report. Therefore, one objective of a report on youth should be to initiate discussion around an existing youth strategy or fuel the idea of developing one. Influencing youth strategies can be the declared goal of a report or it can be pursued in a more subtle way. The [Turkey NHDR 2008](#) recommended that Turkey develop a youth policy and was successful in initiating that process. The [Kyrgyzstan NHDR 2010](#) became the foundation of a new youth policy that the national government developed. In Honduras, a National Youth Policy already existed and so the NHDR contributed to the development of an Action Plan, and policy guidelines.

Young Somali men and women developed the Somali Youth Charter as a guiding set of principles that presents the aspirations, perceptions and needs of youth. The [Egypt NHDR 2010](#) directly targets the National Youth Policy and recommended in-depth analysis on the obstacles that need to be overcome, as well as the development of action plans to foster implementation. The [Nicaragua NHDR 2011](#) suggested an agenda for youth that focuses on using education as a tool for promoting equal opportunities and targeting vulnerable and excluded youth groups. The [Kyrgyzstan NHDR 2010](#) proposed that each sectoral policy should have a youth component.

Overall a youth policy needs to be relevant for all youth groups, and should be informed by youth perceptions and aspirations. Along with youth policies and strategies, opportunities for ongoing interaction and participation could be established, such as youth organizations, councils, societies or centers. For example, in Malaysia youth societies work with the National Youth Council and government on implementing youth programs. Useful examples of youth strategies and legislation can be found in the resource section. A RHDR can propose a regional charter that can guide national policy.

Elements of a youth policy might include:

- Rights and responsibilities of youth;
- Cross-sectoral analysis to highlight the interrelatedness of challenges young people face;
- An appropriate definition of youth;
- Policy and institutional reform, including legislative reform, to foster political empowerment
- The rights to health and education;
- Social inclusion and empowerment – the role of culture, social norms and traditions;
- Economic empowerment – including addressing the issue of migration;
- Political empowerment – including the need for citizenship building, fostering participation as well as voluntary engagements;
- Environmental aspects;
- Young people’s knowledge and awareness of ICT;
- Fostering a positive attitude towards youth;
- Advocating gender equity as well as equity for other vulnerable groups.

III. Data mapping

Different types of surveys can provide data for analyzing youth development, such as

household surveys, censuses, employment surveys, etc. But the specific collection of youth data has been rare in most places. Therefore, youth NHDRs have taken the opportunity to gather target group data, with a special focus on gender disaggregation. Data collection on youth has allowed reports to meet several important quality criteria for NHDRs: surveys of youth and focus group discussions can ensure a higher level of inclusiveness and insight, a solid research base, and pave the way to the development of innovative indices.

NHDRs often attribute an important role to perception surveys. Report teams have implemented them to understand the feelings and emotions of the target groups and how they differ (e.g. among male and female youth). In the [Honduras NHDR](#) the report team used a range of methodologies, but the National Survey of Human Development Perception was the first of its kind. More than 4,000 young Hondurans participated in addition to fifty focus groups from different parts of the country. The [Nicaragua NHDR](#) conducted a perception survey to demonstrate the heterogeneity of Nicaraguan youth. Information is differentiated according to age groups and regions.

The [Turkey NHDR](#) chose to investigate different categories of youth, in particular those that make up the ‘invisible’ youth group, who neither participate in education nor employment. A comprehensive State of the Youth Survey was carried out to identify the socio-economic conditions of youth, their opportunities, obstacles and the disparities among them. Views and proposals of the young are integrated into the report, mostly through direct quotations, informing the overall research and analysis process.

The survey for the [Somalia NHDR](#) included questions on perceptions. Related to the concept of empowerment, perceptions of power dominate the survey: youth were

questioned about their perception of decision-making in the family, of trends in conflict, of the level of trust in the existing justice system and of discrimination in accessing justice. It also asked about their values, the obstacles they experience, and their causes of frustration. More than 3,000 households were interviewed by national stakeholders and the youth themselves, targeting the young as well as household heads while paying attention to gender balance.

The [Egypt NHDR](#) is based on the Survey of Young People in Egypt,¹⁹ conducted by the Population Council. The survey collected data according to the geographical location, gender and by age group. Six versions of individual questionnaires used different questions for males and females in various age groups. Questions looked at behaviours, such as hygiene practices, as well as those relating to social aspects, such as out of school learning support. Further, the survey asked about youth attitudes to marriage, family formation and gender roles and the issue of time use.

Disaggregating data according to sex, regions, age or ethnicity is useful, as different influences and stages in life can affect perceptions. It allows for better policy targeting.

The new data led the report teams in Egypt and Somalia to construct youth indices which can be used by policy makers to understand whether youth well-being is improving and to monitor the impact of policies. Indices are often most effective as a communication tool.

In Somalia, the report team aimed to capture youth frustration from feelings of disempowerment, violence or conflict. Respondents were asked to rate their

opinions about the lack of family support; poor governance and justice; the lack of employable skills; the lack of employment opportunities; the absence of outlets to express aspirations & needs; inadequate recreational facilities; drug abuse; feelings of humiliation; and lack of self-esteem. Answers are aggregated to an overall score and analysed by region.

Researchers on social sustainability of youth for the UNDP Bratislava Human Development Summer School worked on selected indicators for a Youth Sustainability Index, which can also provide useful information.²⁰

¹⁹ http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/2010PGY_SYPEFinalReport.pdf

²⁰ For more information, please see following Teamworks discussion <https://undp.unteamworks.org/node/354807> and the document on Youth Social Sustainability.

D. Having an influence

The Human Development Awards Programme, organized by the Human Development Report Office every few years, point to the excellence of youth NHDRs. Three of the four awards given to NHDRs in 2013 were on the topic of youth - Egypt 2010, Nicaragua 2011, Somalia 2012. One common feature of excellence of these (and other) youth NHDRs is the inclusive engagement of the target group.

A prominent example of influence through extensive media coverage is the Turkey 2008 HDR, which brought the perceptions of youth to the center of a human development analysis. More than one thousand news reports about the report placed youth issues on the national agenda. In a spontaneous development, youth NGOs who had participated in the NHDR established a “Youth NGOs Platform”, a yahoo group to continue the work on a youth policy. They advocated for the recommendations of the report through television programs, seminars and conferences. As a result the government established a team to develop a strategy and presented to the Parliament the first youth law in Turkey. The report also helped mobilize funds for a youth knowledge-fair and for youth projects.

In Egypt the youth NHDR received considerable media attention during its launch in June 2010. It was commended for speaking openly about youth's challenges. The report was referred to during the revolution that took place in 2011 (the revolution echoed many of the messages in the report about freedom, equity and social justice). The report was also reprinted after the revolution and handed to all parliamentarians including the Youth Committee, in an effort to push for more concrete youth legislation. Working with parliamentarians post launch is an important step to ensure high level policy discussions followed up by evidence-based policy making.

E. Resources

[National Human Development Reports](#) – website to guide R/NHDR production

[Regional and National youth HDRs](#)

[Teamworks discussion](#) on the production of the youth guidance note. Includes information on:

- [Survey of Young People in Egypt](#) January 2011.
- The Kyrgyzstan Billboard campaign
- Examples of youth policies: Malaysia Youth Development Act, African Youth Charter, Indonesia Youth Employment Plan
- Example of a background paper for a Regional HDR from Europe and the CIS region

UNDP Youth Strategy, Empowering Youth for Sustainable Development, New York, 2013

The [UNICEF website](#) is also a useful resource

UN DESA have [a website on youth](#)

The [Young Lives study of childhood poverty](#), involves 12,000 children in Ethiopia, Peru, India and Vietnam over 15 years.

Human rights conventions that protect the rights of youth

The [International Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) protects the specific needs of those under 18 of age, with an [optional protocol here](#) (covering the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) . For young people of age 18 and over no specific convention exists, but they are subject to the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) as well as the international covenants on [Civil and Political Rights](#) and [Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) and the [Convention on the Rights of People with Disability](#). There are regional youth/child rights covenants, such as the [African Youth Charter](#), the [African Charter on the Rights](#)

[and Welfare of the Child](#) or the [Iberoamerican Convention on the Rights of Youth](#). Knowledge and awareness of international, regional and national human rights instruments and their implementation is however not always widespread. A report can contribute to human rights awareness and advocate for human rights implementation by looking at national instruments and their suitability. For example, education is a human right, recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and some countries explicitly acknowledge it in their constitution.

The Secretary General's Youth Agenda

The SG's agenda focuses on the participation of youth, advocacy for youth issues in various development frameworks, facilitating partnerships for youth as well as harmonizing youth work among UN agencies. A collaborative Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development has worked since 2012 to develop a [UN System-wide Action Plan on Youth](#) (Youth-SWAP), reflecting the priority areas outlined by the SG. UNDP is working on its first Youth strategy (see the discussion on the [UNDP youth strategy](#)). The strategy 'Empowering Youth for Sustainable Human Development' will provide a framework for engagement with youth and define UNDP's priority areas of work. Priority areas reflect UNDP's commitment to the Youth-SWAP and focus on employment & entrepreneurship, civic engagement & political inclusion and resilience building.

Elder, Glen H.; Monica Kirkpatrick Johnson and Robert Crosnoe: *The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory*. In: Jeylan T. Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan (ed.). *Handbook of the Life Course*. Springer, 2003, [ISBN 0-306-47498-0](#), pp. 3-19.

Hardgrove, Abby/Pells, Kirrily/Dornan, Paul/Boyden Jo: Youth Vulnerabilities in Life Course Transitions, HDRO Occasional Paper, September 2013