

Tackling Poverty Together

The Role of Young People in Poverty Reduction

Introduction

The first Millennium Development Goal¹ agreed upon by all Member States of the United Nations is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. In order to achieve this goal, national governments have created country-specific strategies that aim to promote economic growth and reduce poverty. Introduced in 1999, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, or PRSPs, have become defining components of the economic and social policies of several low-income countries. Yet much more needs to be done to achieve faster and broader-based poverty reduction, particularly by ensuring that the poor benefit from economic growth. As such, a key benefit to poverty reduction strategies is their ability to act as a vehicle for continuing national dialogues on the integration of economic and social policies. The diagnosis and prescriptions for poverty reduction will differ in many respects from country to country. This underscores the need for national debates in which all voices can be heard, not least those of young people.

The Role of Young People in Poverty Reduction

The World Programme of Action for Youth², a blueprint to international youth policy adopted by the United Nations in 1995, identifies ten priority areas to improve the lives of young people. Young people living in poverty and participation in decision-making are two priorities recognized in the Programme.

The World Youth Report 2005 estimates that currently almost 209 million young people, or 18 per cent of all youth, live on less than \$1 a day, and 515 million young people, or nearly 45 per cent, live on less than \$2 a day.³ Yet many strategies overlook the specific needs of young people, particularly of young women, living in poverty. Youth perspectives, such as an understanding of how poverty affects families and the allocation of resources for food, health and education, remain largely absent from most poverty reduction strategies. A content analysis of PRSPs completed to August 2003 shows that while just over half the PRSPs give some attention to youth in their action plans, *the papers do not identify young people as a major group experiencing poverty.*⁴ Only 16 % of PRSPs view young people as a focus for integrated interventions. Consequently, many initiatives are piecemeal and limited in their scale and potential impact.

Tackling Poverty Together

With the momentum generated by the MDGs, the call to cooperate directly with young people to review current poverty reduction strategies, share experiences and transfer knowledge has never been more promising.

The *Tackling Poverty Together* project consists mainly of two interactive workshops to examine strengthening the role of young people in poverty reduction strategies in Africa. The first workshop, to be held in 27-30 October 2005, will provide a thorough introduction to poverty reduction processes, including an overview of their historic development, as well as the current process for their implementation and review. During this time participants will share the information they have gathered prior to attending the



Landsrådet för Sveriges
Ungdomsorganisationer



DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

workshop and develop strategic plans for greater inclusion in their country-specific decision-making processes.

These strategic plans, envisioned to contain small but realistic and concrete actions, will be implemented during the period between the first and second workshops, during which time the participants will continue to share information and interact through electronic and/or teleconference communication. The second workshop, to be held in January 2006, will focus on reviewing the strategic plans and discussing problems encountered, lessons learned and next steps.

The project will recruit a team of 28 youth participants, four from each of the following countries: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Sweden. Participants are expected to dedicate time to working on the project before, between, and after the two workshops.

The project will benefit from the support of a team of advisors from academia and the United Nations system.

What will the outcomes be?

- The implementation of a series of strategic plans, developed through the support of the workshops and the country-specific research and analysis of youth participants, which will contain a number of small-scale actions to be implemented and reviewed as part of the project.
- Contributions in support of the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth.
- Contributions in support of achieving the MDG to eradicate poverty by 2015.
- A final project report incorporating the strategic plans and associated research undertaken by youth participants, the papers commissioned from academic and policy experts and the results of the two workshops. This paper can be presented to the sixty-first session of General Assembly through the Commission on Social Development in February 2006, as part as activities undertaken in support of the ten-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

For more information, please contact:

Heidi Huusko, Project Leader
Landsrådet för Sveriges ungdomsorganisationer (LSU)
The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations
Pustegränd 1-3, SE-118 20 Stockholm
Tel: +46 (0) 8 440 86 79, Fax: +46 (0) 8 440 86 80
E-mail: heidi@lsu.se
URL: www.lsu.se

The *Tackling Poverty Together* project is made possible through the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

¹ The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of eight time-bound targets that aim to end extreme poverty by 2015. For more information, see: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

² The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81) is available at: www.un.org/youth

³ The Secretary General's Report: World Youth Report 2005 (A/60/61) is available at: www.un.org/youth

⁴ "The Case for Investing in Young People as part of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy". Paper commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund, New York, 2004. Available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/publications>