

Haiti's Greatest Resource

Ensuring the Participation of Children and Young People in Recovery Efforts

Guidance and Select Resources

February 01, 2010

Addressing the rights of all children is all the more critical in emergency affected settings. Supporting their “right to be heard”, to participate and contribute to the decisions that affect their lives can be a means of ensuring that the services targeting this age group are relevant and appropriate. Children and young people already contribute in numerous ways to their families, communities and societies. In July 2009, the Committee on the Rights of Child (CRC) issued a General Comment on the ‘right of the child to be heard’. In its recommendations, the Committee ‘*encourages States parties to support mechanisms which enable children, in particular adolescents, to play an active role in both post-emergency reconstruction and post-conflict resolution processes*’¹.

In addition, UNICEF recognises the importance of engaging children and young people in the revised Core Commitments of Children in Emergencies (forthcoming 2010), which commits the organisation to promoting the participation of adolescents in the analysis, design and monitoring of humanitarian programmes. Young people can and do play a significant role in preparedness strategies and further efforts should be made to strengthen links with young people and their associations that can be called upon to support the emergency response. Furthermore, young people are uniquely positioned to serve as positive agents of change, to contribute to a rights-based society and to contribute substantially to social transformation processes.

This note provides basic guidance to those striving to engage children and young people in the humanitarian efforts in Haiti. In the aftermath of the Asian tsunami, UNICEF developed *The Participation of Children and Young People in Emergencies: A guide for relief agencies, based largely on experiences in the Asian tsunami response*. The following includes extracts from this Guide which should be timely and useful in incorporating strategies for the participation of children and young people in the response across all sectors. The note begins with some key trends in the youth demographic in Haiti, lists some of the ways in which the participation of children and young people has already been included in current planning efforts (UN Flash Appeal, 15 Jan 2010), and offers aspects from the Participation Guide on concrete and feasible ways for involving this significant age group.

I. Situation of youth in Haiti

The following description on the situation of youth draws largely from three sources: a 2009 national youth survey conducted by the Norwegian research institute Fafo, a 2007 World Bank policy paper on the situation of youth development in Haiti, as well as a 2002 World Bank paper on gender roles in select countries including Haiti. Adolescents form a substantial percentage of the population at large. While young people (10-24 years old) factor as 33% of the overall population, adolescents (10-19 years old) alone comprise 23.5% of the Haitian population. Adolescents and young people are facing significant challenges:

Migration: Youth in Haiti are incredibly mobile with at least 50% of them having “moved” once. 75% of them move to more urban areas. In addition, of 13% of youth are likely to have moved twice and a further 7% is likely to have moved three times. The reasons for their migration vary, with 25% of adolescents are moving for educational opportunities.

Education: While 75% of children aged 6-14 attend school, 67% of youth aged 15-22 drop out of school for reasons including costs, marriage, housework, or illness. With respect to adolescents, 1 in 7 are in secondary school. For boys and girls who leave school to seek employment, the types of industries pursued vary according to gender. Boys work predominantly in agriculture, while girls work in service related work (domestic work, etc).

Violence against girls: 46% of girls have been sexually abused. Within this percentage, 33% are aged 5-9 and 43% were 10-14. Sexual violence is also thought to make adolescent girls, particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS with an emphasis on adolescents who are street children or who perform domestic work. Challenges facing young people include access to youth-friendly health services and access to information, including channels for reporting violations of their rights.

Security: Young people, in a large part, do not feel secure. 50% of youth expressed fear in going to their local markets and less than 28% expressed “trust” in others. These numbers vary across gender and age. The level of trust among young girls and boys decreases as they get older. In addition, young girls feel significantly more insecure than their male peers in moving around their neighbourhoods whether based in urban or rural environments. 67%, however, felt that the security situation had improved in the past year.

Haitian Youth in Numbers

- 36% of the population is younger than 15 years old,
- Less than 50% of children 10-14 live with both their parents
- 1 in 5 children do not live with either of their parents,
- 4% of 12 yr olds have completed primary education, 35 % of 16 yr olds have completed primary education,
- 63% of youth between 15 and 24 reported they were reading and writing easily (illiteracy being higher in rural than in urban areas),
- 50% or more youth have moved at least once, 13% have moved twice.
- 75% of youth, who moved in urban areas moved to other urban areas, while 67% of rural youth moved to urban areas,
- 25% of the moves undertaken by youth between 10-19 are due to pursuits in education,
- 50% of youth express fear in going to their local market.

II. Current Response

On Jan 15, 2010, the UN and partners launched the Flash Appeal for efforts in Haiti. The appeal promotes the participation of children and young people underlining that participation is a strategy for a) enhancing the coping strategies of young people and b) addressing their rights c) and working with young people as partners. This is especially the case in the protection and education sectors. The protection sector explicitly notes participation as a critical strategy for achieving the overall objectives. A few of these project components have been reproduced below:

Project Title as listed in the UN Flash Appeal – 15 Jan 2010	Strategies and Objectives involving participation of Children and Young People
Education Sector	
Back-to-School project for earthquake affected children and youth UNICEF and partners	includes objectives of “re-establishing non-formal education for out-of school children and youth” through community involvement, among other strategies
Psycho-social Support to Primary School Children through Teacher Training with	Train teachers on the child-to-child methodology so that children are empowered to take active roles in the

Primary School Teachers Save the Children and partners	reconstruction and rehabilitation of their own lives, schools and communities
Emergency Education support to Preschool and Primary School Children PLAN and partners	Helping school management committees and students to get involved in decisions on safe reconstruction
Protection Sector	
Community-based child protection UNICEF and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen and mobilize children’s, adolescent’s, and women’s existing social support and protection networks; ▪ Community awareness raising to prevent and mitigate family separation, violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, including GBV; ▪ Establishment of community-based safe environments for children, including adolescents, and provide and strengthen the care and protection of children and women; ▪ Ongoing assessment of changing pattern of child protection issues. ▪ Prevention and response to involvement of children in armed violence
Psychosocial support UNICEF and partners	<p>Strengthen the ability of communities to provide psycho-social support to children and their caregivers including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobilizing community members such as youth and women to provide psycho-social support to children, ▪ Provision of information to children and their caregivers on psycho-social support, ▪ Provision of structured opportunities for children to build their coping skills and contribute to their community and the humanitarian response.

III. Engaging adolescents and young people

In the aftermath of the Asian tsunami in 2004, UNICEF prepared a guide on the *Participation of Children and Young People in Emergencies* aimed at relief agencies and drawing largely on the lessons learned from natural disasters. The Guide reviews the principles and rationale for involving children and young people in post-emergency efforts. It recognizes that children and young people are already making important contributions that children have their own distinct needs and concerns that they must articulate, and that participation is of benefit not only to the children themselves, but to their families and communities.

The guide is extensive and covers an array of references, strategies and issues. For your easy reference, a few useful and relevant elements to the Haiti context have been included below. For more details or further examples, kindly consult the Guide in its entirety.

1. On involving children according to their evolving capacities – See pg 10

<p>Children aged 5-10 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making toys for younger children 	<p>Children aged 12-17 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rescuing and saving younger children ▪ Caring for younger children ▪ Teaching younger children and peers ▪ Treating wounds and caring for injured people
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearing up after an emergency ▪ Helping to trace families ▪ Helping old people to collect food and rations ▪ Helping families with small children to collect food and rations ▪ Packing food for distribution ▪ Providing information about milk powder needs ▪ Cleaning camps ▪ Cleaning and painting buildings ▪ Developing businesses
<p>Children aged 9-12 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing first aid ▪ Playing and supporting children who lost family members ▪ Talking with and supporting friends who were sad ▪ Collecting food and rations for old people ▪ Helping prepare food ▪ Helping to clean IDP camps ▪ Making representation to adults 	<p>Young people aged 18 and older:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rescuing and saving younger children ▪ Organizing entertainment ▪ Developing businesses ▪ Providing community communications ▪ Negotiating with outsiders ▪ Collecting bodies
<p>Children aged 12 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching younger children ▪ Caring for younger children ▪ Working as part of emergency task group 	

1. On involving children and young people in assessments – See pg 26

- Children and young people should be first involved as respondents who are asked questions during any assessment. But at the same time, they can be involved in making any assessment. In emergencies, children have:
 - Been consulted in relief assessments;
 - Conducted emergency or risk assessments;
 - Identified roles and responsibilities for themselves;
 - Advised on housing designs;
 - Advised on school and resource centre designs for children;
 - Defined aims and functions of children’s resource centres;
 - Contributed to community reconstruction plans.
- Example from the Kashmir earthquake, children and young people in the situation – See pg 27
 Following the Kashmir earthquake in 2005, Save the Children found that “children engaging in assessments in many villages provided us quick and unbiased knowledge on the situation of their families, villages and schools.” From talking with children in one village, the agency decided to set up emergency education provision. In addition and based on assessments with participation from children, “We were helped to understand their specific needs, like warm clothing of the right size, need for emergency schools and education and recreational material that suited their needs.” The family kits designed by Save the Children included components for children, such as phirans (gowns) of different sizes and other warm clothes. (Save the Children, 2006)

2. On involving children and young people on issues related to sanitation - See pg 14

- Cleaning up: Following the 2004 tsunami, children gathered and burned debris and cleaned toilets in displaced-persons camps and other communal areas. Some even helped pick up bodies and construct

coffins. Not all children were comfortable handling the dead, and as one child noted during a workshop on participation in emergency situations, those who didn't should not feel bad because there were many other demands that needed their hands. Such as in the Maldives, where Boy Scouts and Girl Guides swept away debris.

3. On involving children and young people in health related efforts – See pg 24

- Health awareness in an emergency: In Orissa, India in 1999, health campaigns were organized using groups of older adolescent girls. The groups dispersed information about sanitation and hygiene in the community. They also participated in the setting up of non-formal education centres in villages where there were no schools. (Palakudyil and Todd, 2003: 78)

4. On involving children and young people in strengthening protection mechanisms

- Consultations on community spaces for children – See pg 29
Following the earthquake in Western Turkey in 1999, children were involved in planning and designing new environments in Marmara. Children were consulted on how they lived before the earthquake. As a result, the reconstruction plans included special spaces for use by children, teenagers and women. This children-friendly space was to include indoor and outdoor areas, resources (such as books, computers) and health and education services. Children and young people helped select the site for the space. They were trained to read maps and take photographs before walking around to make a selection. (Chen and Thompstone, 2005)
- Community centres as catalysts for change - See pg 18
In some areas, development agencies established children's centres after the 2004 tsunami. These centres were intended to provide psychosocial support through sport and recreational activities. Older children took over the management and operation of some centres. And when they did, they changed some of the activities and identified issues to take up, such as the protection of children from cigarette smoke and smoking, which they realized was also a challenge for adults. Such opportunities for raising issues and taking action have been particularly important for children who wanted to contribute to community development and renewal. The participation opportunities provided through the centres stimulated some children to question their circumstances. After they looked at the process of relief and recovery, they wanted to find ways to help themselves and to teach others in the activities and skills they had learned at the centres. The new experiences and opportunities for engagement with social issues gave them inspiration. They wished to take over from those who had come to the tsunami areas from outside to provide relief and recovery.
- On utilizing various peer methods of communication (pg 55): Although the benefits of peer education include children being able to pass on information informally, they may also need to practice how to do this and ways of making explanations. If peer education is formally established, this might include setting up stalls for children to hand out information or having discussions with peers and with adults. Materials: Peer educators can be supplied with materials, such as information leaflets and comics
- Planning for reconstruction – See pg 60
Children live in and use the buildings and spaces in communities and neighborhoods. They can provide information on how children of different ages use those buildings, particularly homes (houses, flats and so on) and schools and other community structures. They may have a more intimate view of the layout of neighborhoods, villages and towns and any pitfalls. Reconstruction provides opportunities to eradicate past problems and particularly improve child protection and education by ensuring that places and spaces are appropriate for children.

5. On involving children and young people in Preparedness – See pg 20

- Prepare and educate children to contribute to emergency response:

- Educate children in emergency preparedness, response and first aid.
- Establish community-based disaster-risk reduction and emergency response mechanisms that involve children (Scouts, Red Cross). Involving children in preparedness activities before an emergency helps children survive and help others.
- Involve children in participatory, community-level planning and action. This builds their skills and confidence and prepares them to contribute in disaster situations.
- Develop training materials for children and young people.

6. On involving Children and their Associations and Organizations – Pg 35

➤ Children's organizations, both those run by adults and those run by children, have played a part – even a major role – in emergency responses. Many children are members of organizations, ranging from sports clubs to cultural associations and unions. The contributions and actions of groups and associations of children have been important and significant, particularly during relief and rehabilitation phases. In emergencies, groups and organizations of children have:

- Identified and communicated issues and problems;
- Provided information and facilitated forums and events to protect children;
- Organized rescue and tracing work;
- Been involved in health care and food distribution;
- Set up and run their own organizations;
- Set up businesses and radio stations;
- Negotiated with outsiders on behalf of their community.

➤ UNICEF through its networks with young people has come across the following youth organizations that are active in Haiti and have expressed an interest in supporting response efforts in their communities. Some of these organizations have already indicated that they are supporting efforts to create safe spaces for children and to provide psycho-social support to others in the community.

- **AID-HAITI (Action Intégrée pour le Developpement)**

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IV. References and Additional Resources

- UNICEF (2007) The Participation of Children and Young People in Emergencies: A Guide for Relief Agencies, based largely on experiences in the Asian tsunami response. (UNICEF).
http://www.unicef.org/eapro/the_participation_of_children_and_young_people_in_emergencies.pdf
- World Bank (2007) Factors Impacting Youth Development in Haiti
<http://go.worldbank.org/8GJF9KCOA1>
- World Bank (2002) A Review of Gender Issues in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica. This report examines the effect of gender on socio-economic outcomes in three Caribbean countries: the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica. Organized in three separate country notes, it covers: demographics, health and reproductive health, violence, education, labor and agriculture. (available online).
- Fafo (2009) Haiti Youth Survey
Haiti Youth Survey 2009: The chapters in the report document the situation for Haitian youth in key sectors such as education, labour force participation, migration and feeling of security. The report also contains data at the household level on central topics affecting the conditions for youth in the household, such as composition of households, household economy and access to infrastructure.
<http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/20143/index.html>

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ⁱ Para 126, CRC/C/GC/12