

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL



Creating Spaces for Youth Participation



September 2004
15th Edition

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL



Creating Spaces for Youth Participation

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Sindisiwe Ngcobo
Advocacy and Policy Co-ordinator
Youth Development Network
sindisiwe@ydn.org.za

Professor Claudia McGill
Professor and Chair
Durban School of Education
University of Kwazulu-Natal
claudia.mitchell@staff.mcgill.ca

Doctor A M Jinadu
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Federal University of Technology, Nigeria
jinaduolaoti@yahoo.com

Nhlanhla Mtaka
Provincial Co-ordinator
Community and Citizen Empowerment Programme
Institute for Democracy in South Africa
nhlanhla@idasa.org.za

Naomi Webster
Local Government Programme Manager
National Youth Commission
webstern@nyc.pwv.gov.za

CONTENTS

Foreword

Farzana Sader & Marinda Weideman 5

Editorial

Clayton Peters 9

Youth Participation and the Concept of Celebrating Young People

Sindisiwe Ngcobo 11

HIV/AIDS in Health, Education and Participation: An Action Space for Youth Involvement in the SADC Region

Claudia McGill 22

A Youth Empowerment Scheme as a Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: Project Impact Assessment and Constraints

Dr A. M. Jinadu 39

A Decade of Youth Development: Creating an Enabling Environment for Democracy and Development

Nhlanhla Mtaka 52

Are We Getting It Right? Effectiveness of Current Institutional Mechanisms for Participatory Local Youth Development

Naomi Webster 58

The Internet as a Tool for Promoting Youth Participation in Democracy

Ronald Kete 68

A YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SCHEME AS A STRATEGY FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA: PROJECT IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND CONSTRAINTS

Dr A. M. Jinadu

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the activities of the Youth Empowerment Scheme (Project YES) in the training of Youth in the Niger State of Nigeria. First, it considers the background to the establishment of Project YES and provides an account of the project's training activities, which include guidance and counselling, education development and vocational skills training. The paper then provides an assessment of the impact of the scheme on the beneficiaries of the project and notes a significant improvement in the economic condition of the graduates in the post-training period. Constraints of the scheme, such as inadequate monitoring, trade abandon and a high rate of loan default, are identified and the paper concludes with recommendations on how to fully realise and sustain the benefits of Project YES.

Children and youth constitute a significant proportion of the urban population in developing countries. The majority of children and adolescents in developing countries are poor (De La Barra, 1997) and they are more vulnerable to poor living conditions and a range of environmental concerns (Bartlett, 1999). The need to address the requirements of the members of this disadvantaged and vulnerable group has been a subject of both local and international discussions. In 1995, for instance, the 'Copenhagen Declaration' at the World Summit for Social Development made a strong case for the empowerment of youth through the provision of education and training. The declaration urges "various actors to join forces in designing and implementing programmes that stimulate the resourcefulness of youth, preparing them for durable employment or self employment, and providing them with guidance, vocational and managerial training, social skills, work experience and education in social values" (United Nations, 1995).

In recent times, civil societies have become more active in social provisioning and some have joined hands with democratic governments to minister to societal needs. Despite this, children and adolescents have not been fully attended to and their needs are often overlooked. This is a result of the assumption and perception that children and adolescents' problems are effectively dealt with by their families and specialised children's

organisations and agencies (Bartlett, 1999). This assumption must change if we are to empower youth to enable them to participate in the economic development process and prevent them from perpetrating crime.

The Youth Empowerment Scheme (Project YES) in the Niger State is one of the many innovative responses to the problems of young people in Nigeria. Project YES is designed to empower the youth by redirecting their energies and attitudes towards self and societal development. Its major aim is to economically empower young people through guidance/counselling and vocational skills training. This paper examines the activities of Project YES, with a view to assess the project's impact on its beneficiaries. First, it considers the background to the establishment of the project and the socio-political setting within which it operates. The project's training activities, impact, and constraints, are subsequently considered. The paper concludes with recommendations on how to strengthen and sustain the project for the benefit of youth in Nigeria.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN NIGERIA AND BACKGROUND TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROJECT YES

A high unemployment rate has been a common feature of developing economies for several decades. In Nigeria, the unemployment situation became more pronounced following the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the restrictions placed on employment in the public sector (in 1986). Between 1994 and 1998, unemployment increased as a result of the total ban placed on employment by the military regime of late General Sanni Abacha. As a consequence of almost two decades of adverse employment policies, the unemployment rates of the active labour force (persons within the age group 15 to 59, which constituted 53.7 percent of the total population in 1998) have remained relatively high and have fluctuated over the years. The average annual rate of unemployment for this group was estimated to be 62 percent in 1987 (Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), 1996) and this rose to 64.2 percent in 1998 (FOS, 2000).

The unemployment rate in Nigeria is found to be higher in urban areas. The rate is highest for youth aged between 15 and 24 years, particularly those with primary and secondary school education. According to FOS (1996), 75 percent of the youth in this age category (15 to 24) in urban areas were unemployed in 1994. The peculiarity of the problem of youth unemployment in the country is summed up by the FOS, which observed that:

"It is worrisome to note, however, that while other groups have been experiencing declines in their unemployment rates, unemployment rates have continued to increase for the youth and those with secondary school education, both in the rural and urban areas" (FOS, 1996).

The relatively high unemployment rate among the youth is explained by the fact that young people are not sufficiently skilled to succeed in the competitive labour market. In addition, education at primary and secondary levels in Nigeria is neither technical, nor geared to ensure self-employment. Thus, the majority of the primary and secondary school graduates migrate to the urban centres in search of limited white-collar jobs. This fruitless search has exposed them to various negative factors, including poverty, delinquency and crime. This is particularly true in the northern States, which exhibit various features of poverty such as, a high illiteracy rate, low levels of education, poor nutrition, street begging, and child labour. Incidentally, the Niger State is situated in a less developed region of Nigeria. The State is adjudged poor, as 90 percent of its estimated population of 2.4 million people are living below the poverty line (Shiawoya, 2002). It has few industries, most of which are not functioning and the government's civil service employs the bulk of the labour force in the formal sector. Street roaming, prostitution, drug abuse and petroleum fuel hawking are, therefore, common among the youth in the State (Hassan, 2000). This situation formed the basis for the introduction of the Youth Empowerment Scheme (Project Yes) in the Niger State.

The Youth Empowerment Scheme was initiated and established in 2000 by the wife of the Executive Governor of Niger State, Hajiya Zainab Kure. Project YES is a politically motivated Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), which came to being shortly after the assumption of office of the Executive Governor of the Niger State. Its establishment follows the age long tradition of initiating and running social development\poverty alleviation programmes by the wives of heads of state in Nigeria. The tradition started with the establishment of Better Life for Rural Women (BLP) by the wife of President Ibrahim Babangida in 1987. Subsequently, Mrs. Mariyam Abacha established the Family Support Programme (FSP), while Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, the wife of President Olusegun Obasanjo, established the Child Care Trust in 2000. However, unlike the BLP and the FSP that were run as part of the programmes of the government of the day (and which were financed mainly with government money), the Child Care Trust and Project YES operate as NGOs, which are supported by both the government and philanthropist individuals and organisations. Specifically, Project YES is an NGO for children and youth of the Niger State. It aims to empower the youth economically, through career guidance and vocational skills training (Project YES, 2001).

PROJECT RESOURCES

The project has a proposed permanent site, which is yet to be developed. At present, its temporary training centre is located at the Abdul Salami Youth Centre - a building complex owned by the Government. Some of the training equipment and material available at the training centre includes, 20 personal computers, 12 sewing machines, 20 knitting machines, one designing machine, one weaving machine and catering utensils including 25 stoves, three gas cookers, one refrigerator and one oven.

The human resources of the project includes hundreds of volunteer lecturers/councillors and approximately 200 master trainers who assist in training the apprentices of the scheme in all the 25 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the State.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES AND THE BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT YES

Project YES enrolls both indigenous and non-indigenous people living in the Niger State. The scheme commenced in 2000, with a first batch of 730 participants. Due to a growing awareness of the project, 2000 participants enrolled in the second year of the scheme in 2001. Some of the participants received training at the project's Training Centre based in Minna (the capital city). For those vocations for which training could not be provided at the Centre, participants were attached, as apprentices, to volunteer master trainers in all the 25 LGAs of the State.

The training activities of the project are structured around three major action areas. These are an education development programme, guidance and counselling, and vocational skills acquisition. The education programme is focused on scholarships that are awarded to assist indigenous and drop out students by subsidising their education fees. Since its inception in 2000, the scheme has sponsored 120 young people for the remedial education programme, which enabled them to take, and pass, the Ordinary Level School Certificate Examinations. It has also awarded scholarships worth ₦1, 837,450.00 to 151 beneficiaries in secondary and tertiary institutions (table 1).

Table 1: Scholarship Award Under Project YES, 2000 - 2001.

Institutions	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount/candidate (N)	Total (N)
Universities	48	12,000.00	576,000.00
Polytechnics	28	9,000.00	252,000.00
Colleges of Education	38	8,000.00	304,000.00
School of Nursing	6	13,200.00	79,200.00
School of Health tech.	5	8,850.00	44,250.00
Secondary Schools	11	12,000.00	132,000.00
DECS New College	15	30,000.00	450,000.00
Total	151	-	1,837,450.00

Source: Project YES, 2003

The guidance and counselling programme is incorporated into the vocational skills training programme and it is meant to re-orient the participants towards future challenges, as well as, to develop positive societal values. Vocational skills training, as a major activity of Project YES, provides short, medium and long-term skills training. The short term vocations include knitting, soap making, tie and dye, catering, barbing\hair dressing, photography and video coverage among others and they span a period of two to four months. The long-term training, on the other hand, includes electrical installation works, welding, carpentry and furniture, vulcanising and automobile mechanics. The long-term training has a duration of between six to thirty months. Table 2 shows the different training programmes available under Project YES.

Since its inception in 2000, the scheme has trained a significant number of young people in the different vocations. Between February and December 2002, 3 261 participants had graduated from the scheme (in five batches). Table 3 shows the statistical distribution of beneficiaries according to trade/vocation.

Table 2. Training Programmes of Project YES.

No.	Trade/Vocation	Segmentation
1	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships • Extra Mural Class
2	Short term vocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry cleaning • Barbing • Tie and dye • Bee keeping • Knitting • Catering • Soap Making
3	Medium term vocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailoring • Ceramic Pottery • Aluminum pottery • Shoe Making • Hair dressing • Photography\ Video Coverage • Fine Arts • Typing • Plumbing
4	Long term vocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automobile Mechanics • Electrical Installation Works • Carpentry and Furniture • Printing • Bricklaying • Vulcanising • Welding • Poultry

Source: Project YES, 2003.

Apprentices under training receive stipends of N 250.00 each as allowances to sustain them and to offset any economic pressures they may face. Successful graduates of the scheme are normally supported in setting up their own businesses post-training. Each of the beneficiaries is given a take-off grant of N 10,000.00 and, the requisite equipment to establish her/his businesses is loaned to her/him. The beneficiaries are expected to pay back 50 % of the cost of the equipment and material loaned to them within a year, with a moratorium of three months before commencement of payment. Table 4 shows the types of equipment and material loaned to the beneficiaries.

Table 3: Statistical Distribution of Beneficiaries of Project YES.

Trade/Field	Specialisation	No. of Beneficiaries
Home \Office Management	Knitting	234
	Soap Making	182
	Catering	252
	Fashion Design	30
	Tailoring	1240
	Fine Art	8
Vocational Skill	Automobile Mechanics	74
	Tie and dye	29
	Typing	2
	Poultry	18
	Barbing	127
	Dry Cleaning	25
	Agricultural Production	66
	Aluminum Pottery	21
	Blacksmithing	2
	Bricklaying	17
	Carpentry & Furniture	134
	Ceramic Pottery	3
	Electrical Works	139
	Hair Dressing	80
	Photography	126
	Plumbing	30
	Printing	8
	Shoe Making	36
	Video Coverage	2
Vulcanising Work	3	
Welding Work	30	
Education	Computer Skills	343
Total		3, 261

Source: Project YES, 2003.

Table 4: Equipments and Materials Loaned to Beneficiaries of Project YES.

Vocation	Equipment and Material Loaned
Tailoring	One sewing machine, scissors, tape and treads
Knitting	One machine (broader), scissors, tape and treads
Catering	One freezer or gas cooker, one bag of flour, one bag of sugar and butter
Hairdressing	Two mirrors, two driers, two chairs, four towels, one full set of rollers, a table, washing bowl, shampoo, rubber drum and washing stand.
Barbing	Two sets of clippers, two sets of mirrors, hand drier and set of combs

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

Table 4: Equipments and Materials Loaned to Beneficiaries of Project YES. (continued)

Vocation	Equipment and Material Loaned
Shoe Making	One filling machine, one sewing machine, one gallon of gum, a pair of scissors, knife, shoe flakes, animal and leather skin
Photography	One camera and one flasher
Soap Making	Half drum of soda ash, caustic soda, silicate, hardener, Pk. Oil, powder, cutting machine, knife, table and chair.
Fine Arts	Oil brush, sable brushes, frame board and half drum of paints

Source: Compiled from Project YES, 2002.

ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT IMPACT

Project YES has successfully provided training to a significant number of young people in the Niger State. Accordingly, a similar programme has been incorporated into the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Nigeria. In order to assess the impact of the scheme on the youth of the Niger state, 308 beneficiaries, who have established their own businesses, were interviewed. The respondents were identified, in the field, with the assistance of monitoring officials. The interviews were conducted in May 2004. An analysis of the responses shows that 191 (62.0%) of the beneficiaries were idle (i.e. not engaged in any economic activity) before their enrolment into the YES programme. Another 75 (24.4%) were petty traders, who engaged in hawking, load peddling and shoe shining, while 42 (13.6%) of the respondents were school dropouts.

Assessment of the economic situation of the beneficiaries before and after the YES training reveals that 94.3% of the respondents experienced income improvement after the vocational training. Table 5 shows that the number of youth who had no income was reduced from 155 (50.3%) in the pre-YES training period to 5 (1.6%) in the post-YES training period. The table also shows improvement in levels of income for most respondents in the post-YES training period. For instance, the number of respondents who earned a monthly income of between ₦2001.00- 6000.00 increased from 64 (20.8%) in the pre YES training period to 217 (70.4%) in the post-training period. Although there were a few cases of a slight reduction in monthly income post training, particularly among beneficiaries who were petty traders, these cases can be explained by the fact that these beneficiaries had just changed trade, and the new trade had not begun to show a profit.

Table 5: Monthly Income of Beneficiaries Before and After YES Training

Monthly Income	Before YES Training		After YES Training	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
No Income	155	50.3	5	1.6
< N2000.00	72	23.4	37	12.0
N2001.00-4000.00	49	15.9	114	37.0
N4001.00-6000.00	15	4.9	103	33.4
N6001.00-8000.00	6	1.9	22	7.1
N8001.00-10000.00	7	2.3	11	3.6
> N 10000.00	4	1.3	16	5.2
Total	308	100.0	308	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

In order to test the significance of the improvement in respondents' income, a two-sample Chi-Square analysis was computed for the frequency values in table 5. The analysis yielded a calculated X^2 value of 260.4. The critical value at $\alpha = 0.01$ and 6 degree of freedom is 22.46. This very significant result shows that there is a significant improvement in the economic status of beneficiaries after the YES training programme. Arising from the improvements in income, all the respondents agreed that there had been an improvement in their living conditions. In specific terms, 114 (37%) respondents agreed that they could now feed themselves and their families, while 102 (33.1%) respondents affirmed that they could now also afford clothing. Thus, it could be asserted that 70.1% of the beneficiaries can now afford the basic necessities of life - food and clothes.

CONSTRAINTS OF PROJECT YES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Although Project YES has recorded an appreciable level of success, its operations are constrained by a number of teething problems. First, it must be recognised that the scheme is a capital intensive one. A large financial investment is required for the training and post training setting up of beneficiaries. As a result, the scheme has not been able to accommodate the growing number of applicants. Also, the level of training facilities available at the temporary training centre in Minna is presently inadequate. This results in several trainees crowding around or sharing single training equipment at the centre.

A further challenge is that of effective monitoring of both apprentices and graduates of the scheme. Firstly, the monitoring programme of the scheme is limited to apprentices under training to the exclusion of the graduates who were set up in various vocations. Even with the apprentices, the scheme does not carry out routine monitoring of trainees (attached to master trainers outside the training centre) due to logistical problems, such as staffing and transportation.

The absence of on-the-business visits and monitoring of the beneficiaries in the post-training period is partly responsible for the increasing rate of trade abandon and loan default. Post-training investigation revealed that some of the graduates of the scheme did not establish their trade upon receiving the ₦10,000.00 take-off grant and the on-loan equipment. It was found that this category of beneficiaries had sold the equipment loaned to them, and had used the proceeds (together with the grants) to meet other socio-economic and material needs.

The problem of trade abandon is also attributed to lack of sufficient skill by some of the graduates of YES. This problem may have arisen from the short period of training, which ranges from between two to four months for short-term training and six to 18 months for long-term training. This training period may not be sufficient.

The existing arrangement for loan recovery is rudimentary and lacks any official sanction for defaulters. The method is characterised by occasional house-to-house, or workshop-to-workshop visits, by staff of Project YES, to collect as little as ₦400.00 as part payment of a loan. The principle of loan repayment is governed by "free will," in which those who "feel" like paying, pay, and those who do not, do not pay at all.

The two problems, of lack of post training monitoring and the ineffective method of loan recovery, have resulted in a high rate of loan default. Survey findings revealed that about 200 (64.9%) of the beneficiaries interviewed had not paid back anything, while only 97 (31.5%) had made part repayment of between ₦1,000.00 - 20,000.00 (Table 6). The problem of loan recovery thus threatens the sustainability of Project YES as substantial sums of money, which could be used as revolving loans, are not recovered.

Table 6: Loan Repayment by Respondents (in Naira).

Amount Paid back	Frequency	Percentage
Nothing	200	64.9
1000 - 10,000.00	37	11.9
10,001 - 20,000.00	60	19.6
20,001 - 30,000.00	3	1.0
30,001 - 40,000.00	8	2.6
Total	308	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2004.

The totality of the current constraints of Project YES constitutes a stumbling block to the full achievement of its objectives. There is no doubt that the scheme is of immense economic benefit to the youth who have successfully established their businesses. However, certain reforms are desirable to sustain the scheme and increase its benefits. Accordingly, the following recommendations are made to enhance the performance of the scheme.

- i. The training duration for both the short and long-term vocations needs to be reviewed in order to accommodate weak and average participants. Graduates of the scheme require sufficient skill in order to be able to compete favourably with other business outfits. The apprentices should, therefore, be allowed to train for as long as is necessary for them to acquire sufficient skills and they should be tested for proficiency before they are discharged.
- ii. The current facilities at the training centre must be expanded to reduce the high apprentice - equipment ratio. This will ensure that learning becomes more effective. Project vehicles and motorcycles need to be provided for field monitoring of trainees, particularly those attached to master trainers outside the Youth Training Centre.
- iii. Graduates of the scheme should be mandated to establish their trade within a maximum of three months after graduation after which the grant and/or the equipment loaned to them may be withdrawn. Beneficiaries should undertake an oath of allegiance not to divert their grants and equipment/materials to other uses. They should also produce two guarantors and enter into a documented agreement on the terms and schedule of loan repayment. Above all, the loan should be issued under the principles of a revolving scheme and the beneficiaries should understand that prompt repayment is required for other trainees to benefit.

- iv. A special monitoring unit with a monthly responsibility of on-the-business assessment of beneficiaries should be created within the scheme. The unit should ensure post-training establishment of beneficiaries. It should monitor their progress and ensure loan recovery. The monitoring unit should be provided with a vehicle and other logistics to facilitate its operation.

CONCLUSION

Economic empowerment is seen as a necessary precondition for poverty reduction and the participation of the youth in the development process. Project YES in Niger State, Nigeria, is adjudged to be a laudable empowerment scheme, which has impacted positively on the economic and social lives of the beneficiaries despite the constraints observed. The level of success attained by Project YES within the short period of time since its establishment (e.g. training and provision of grants amounting to ₦ 32, 610, 000.00 and equipment worth several millions of Naira to 3,261 beneficiaries, as well as the award of almost two million Naira scholarships to 151 students), supports the argument that NGOs and Self-help groups are better at reaching the poor than the State bureaucracy is.

The lesson to be learnt from Project YES is that political good will and support, amongst others, are necessary for NGO success in the developing world and, that such political goodwill could be used to mobilise resources to the advantage of the youth in the society. As an NGO with strong political support, Project YES provides the means to address poverty among the youth. The Project YES experience in Nigeria, therefore, adds a new dimension to the growing relationship between the State and civil society in social provisioning. However, there is the need to improve on the operations of the scheme in the areas of effective monitoring and loan recovery. The revolving loan principle should be introduced to sustain the scheme (particularly when the current political support is no longer assuring) and to make it replicable in other parts of Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- De La Barra, X. (1997). *Do Poor urban Children Matter?* The Urban Age. 5(1).
- FOS (1996). *Socio-Economic Profile of Nigeria*. DiiPRINTS Limited. Lagos.
- FOS (2000). *General Household Survey*. National Report.
- Hassan Nuhu (2000). *Youth Empowerment Scheme (Project YES). The Journey So Far*. Radesco Printers Ltd. Minna.

Sheridan B (1999). Children's Experience of the Physical Environment in Poor Urban Settlements and the Implications for Policy, Planning and Practices. *Environment and Urbanisation*. 112.

Shiawoyer, E.L. (2002). *Poverty and Access to Infrastructures in Minna*. A paper Presented at the Minna City Consultation for an Urban Poverty Reduction Strategy Organised by the Development Policy Centre, Ibadan and Chanchaga Local Government Council, Minna, between 6th and 7th March 2002.

United Nations. (1995). *The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action*. World Summit for Social Development. United Nations. New York.

YES (2001), *Focus on Youth Empowerment Scheme in Niger State*. Halygraph Nigeria Ltd.

YES (2003). *Focus on Youth Empowerment Scheme (Project YES) in Niger State, 2000 - 2002 in Retrospect*. Third Edition. January 2003.