

NGO's and Youth Policy Development in Stateless Syria:

- Unraveling Possibilities and Identifying Shortfalls

Policy Brief By M Karam Hilly



Abstract

This research investigates the ability of Syrian NGOs in North-West Syria to address gaps in Youth Policy in the period from 2019-2023¹. The paper abstains from exploring youth inclusion before 2011, where they faced exclusion and alienation despite the so-called economic reform (Elizabeth B and Khuloud S, 2010). It also refrains from focusing on youth post-2011, despite their initial active engagement in the movement, later revealing an apparent indifference to political participation and a perceived loss of political agency (ARI, 2021). This research is specifically interesting in the context of statelessness and the absence of a dedicated Youth Ministry or state policies. Drawing parallels with their established unusual roles for NGOs in service provision, the study is rooted in the same context as the [Youth, Peace and Security Agenda - Strengthening institutional capacity for implementation – FBA](#) of the Folke Bernadotte Academy in Sweden. But more important is the research data of Door Beyond War over the past five years and the lessons learned from the interventions and projects in Syria. This research data aims to assess the Syrian NGOs' implementation capacities in the framework of the FBA policy brief recommendations, with a primary focus on **partnership**. The study specifically delves into three distinct partnership models, emphasizing the tangible impact of genuine partnership on youth participation and ownership, while also addressing the associated shortcomings. By offering insights into both possibilities and shortfalls, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how NGOs can effectively contribute to shaping and addressing gaps in youth policy.

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18 Jan 2024

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1. The policy paper concentrates on youth policies primarily during the period of 2019-2023, characterized by reduced military actions and an increased trend of organizations integrating youth projects into their planning and programming.

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Introduction:

Beginning with fundamental questions, we inquire about the feasibility of developing a youth policy in the absence of a dedicated ministry or governmental counterpart for youth representation. Despite this gap, the viability of crafting and implementing a youth policy remains, necessitating a collaborative approach among stakeholders. The Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda should move beyond mere project operationalization and be institutionalized within organizations.

Sharing responsibility for policy implementation is envisioned among government bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and youth-led organizations to ensure a comprehensive and transparent process. NGOs, with their agility and community engagement, can play a pivotal role in collaboration, addressing diverse youth-related issues. In the absence of a dedicated governmental youth ministry, NGOs offer flexibility, innovation, and a nuanced understanding of youth challenges. Establishing accountability mechanisms, including regular monitoring and feedback, is imperative for all stakeholders involved. Collaborative efforts, despite challenges, can successfully drive youth policy formulation and implementation.

Moreover, the absence of a governmental counterpart emphasizes the need for a bottom-up approach. Empowering local communities and engaging grassroots leaders through participatory workshops ensures that the policy reflects diverse youth perspectives. Investing in local youth agencies' capacities is crucial, with training programs enhancing their contribution to policy development. Initiating participatory research and consultations, including surveys and focus groups, is key to shaping youth opinions and priorities. In conclusion, adopting a bottom-up approach enhances the possibilities for youth to hold NGOs accountable, providing the needed feedback to keep the policies and strategies in line with youth needs and priorities. This ensures that policies work for youth, with youth, and are led by youth.

FBA Framework: The Institutional Capacities of NGOs working with Youth:

To evaluate the institutional capacity of NGOs working with youth, the FBA framework (Erike Tanghøj and João Felipe Scarpelini, 2021) was employed, examining capacities across six distinct dimensions: mandate, leadership, executive capabilities, learning culture, partnership, and ownership. In order for NGOs to effectively contribute to mainstreaming and implementing the youth agenda, facilitating youth empowerment is crucial. This policy brief is designed to assist organizations involved in peace and security initiatives in enhancing their institutional capacity and operational readiness for expediting the implementation of the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda. It provides guidance for decision-makers, managers, and senior officials on creating an enabling environment within their organizations

Paper Methodology:

This policy paper extensively adopts the FBA policy brief as a model to assess the institutional capacities of NGOs supporting the implementation of the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda. Additionally, it employs a dual-component approach, emphasizing both research and action participatory need assessment, all within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (YPS) and the broader Youth, Peace, and Security agenda.

The initial research concentrated on the meaningful participation of youth (Amal and Karam 2021) and the network and partnerships of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in Syria (Amal and Karam 2022). This phase also explored the impact of subgrants on CBOs (Amal and Karam 2023), emphasizing the dynamics of accountability and partnership in the context of youth engagement (Amal and Karam 2023). Simultaneously, the action participatory need assessment spans from 2019 to 2023, incorporating subgrants, needs assessments, and opinion polls led by youth aged 18 to 29. Youth-led election campaigns within the same age group aimed to elect representatives in seven thematic areas based on the results of opinion polls. Collaborative initiatives were implemented by youth teams, CBOs, and Local Development Committees of the Youth of Change Network.

The comprehensive research methodology involved conducting over 100 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with CBO representatives to capture diverse perspectives. Furthermore, more than 12 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working with youth participated in KIIs, contributing to a comprehensive understanding. Additionally, over 18 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) facilitated a participatory exploration of youth perspectives and experiences within youth-led groups and NGOs.

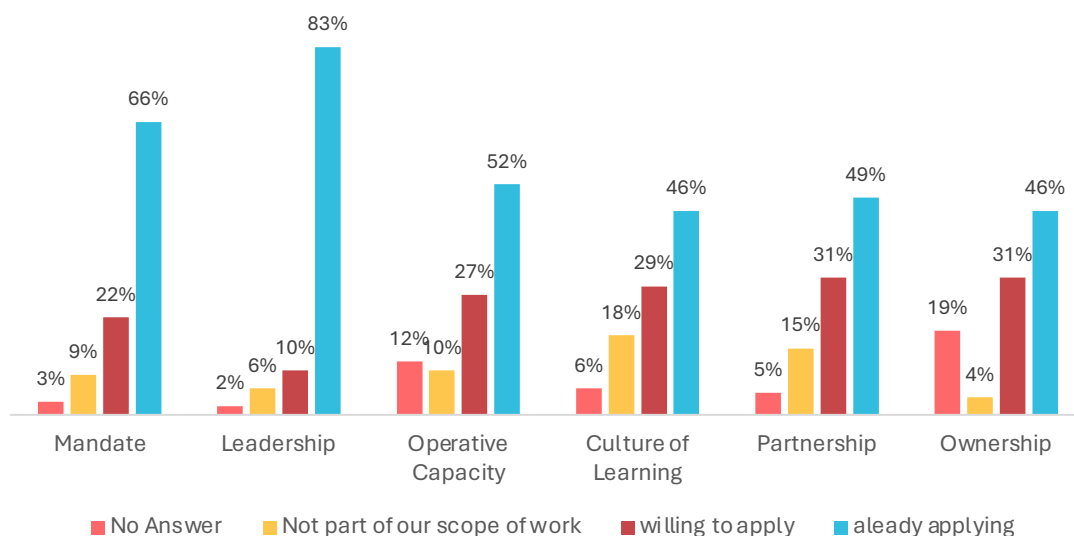
Desk reviews of relevant policy papers and toolkits, such as the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda by FBA (Erike Tanghøj and João Felipe Scarpelini, 2021) and (IASC, 2020) "With us & for us" by UNICEF and NRC, Youth participation in (OPC and Space of Hope, 2022) research, and another research for (Baytna and Kesh Malek, 2022) were consulted.

In summary, the methodology integrates research-driven investigation into YPS pillars with an action-oriented participatory approach, ensuring a thorough understanding of youth engagement dynamics and facilitating collaborative initiatives for positive change. The inclusion of KIIs and FGDs enriches the research with diverse insights and perspectives.

1. Syrian NGOs Institutional Capacity to work with Youth:

We asked the NGOs about their attempts to institutionalize youth participation in their mandate and mindset. However, the majority of the NGOs didn't manage to include youth in humanitarian work fully. **Protection** and **education** programs achieve the highest rates of youth participation as it is feasible to include youth in certain phases of the program, such as project design by involving them in needs assessment activities. Youth participation in other humanitarian projects was limited to volunteering in food basket distribution.

Some NGOs have been actually trying to institutionalize youth participation in their mandate or as a part of their leadership approach. In the interviews, they discussed their ability to apply youth participation recommendations in future. These few NGOs have already started to play leading roles to institutionalize youth participation principles through advocating and talking about youth meaningful participation in conferences and meetings and internally by encouraging integrating youth in all programs and by involving youth in practice as well. They are also working to improve their mandate to institutionalize the youth participation agenda mainly through including youth perspectives in their organization work and by disaggregating the data to include age groups in the reports.



Luckily, the operative capacities are applied through assigning youth officers and specialists in their organizations; however, those staff members are still project based and are not a part of a dedicated core team. The only way that NGOs are establishing partnerships is through supporting youth-led initiatives and voluntary teams, and they started some learning exchange and training opportunities on a very low scale with very few NGOs who are interested in Youth projects. NGOs have recently started to localize youth projects and to foster youth empowerment among local actors, mainly youth led teams and CBOs.

The initial findings indicate that Syrian NGOs are effectively addressing the first three areas of mandate, leadership, and operative capacities, as revealed in the meaningful participation research. However, a closer examination of the culture of learning, partnership, and ownership aspects is imperative. Subsequent sections of the paper will delve into crucial area;

- Analyzing Current Youth Partnership Models and Their Influence on Boosting Participation and Ownership.
- Exploring shortfalls in Partnership and Their Effects on Youth Participation and Ownership.

2. Youth Definition, Youth Participation, and Search for Meaning

Before going through the main discussion on partnership, our initial focus is on establishing the foundation for meaningful participation. This involves defining the concepts of youth and youth participation as primary objectives for youth policy. We aim to understand how the pursuit of meaning among youth contributes to their enhanced ownership, leadership, and participation.

• *Youth definition: inclusion and exclusion, from Rebels and Change Makers to a group needing empowerment*

We can not define youth without highlighting their roles in the Syrian revolution as agency for change and democratic transformation, moving to rebels protecting nonviolent movements to be engaged in institutions such as local councils, community based organizations, non governmental organizations and military groups. However, according to a paper published by The Arab Reform Initiative (ARI,2021), Syrian young people appear indifferent to formal political participation and elite-level peacebuilding processes; they share a distinct perception of lost political agency and no longer being an active part of the process, of being replaced by the interests of outside players. The international narrative is usually dominated by Syria's various national strategies, not by the realities faced by youth and their own visions for their future.

Due to the conflict and its consequences, many young people did not get to enjoy adolescence and had to take on responsibilities as adults quite quickly with the start of the crisis. This explains also why individuals up to 35 years old have been interviewed (Violet 2022).

or they can be 15 to 24 according to how the UN defines "Youth" or 18 to 29 according to UNSCR2250 which Door Beyond War adopted in its mandate.

Yes, framing youth as a "productivity" rather than solely an age group emphasizes the dynamic potential, energy, and contribution they bring to society. This perspective challenges the conventional view of youth as a passive demographic and underscores their active role in shaping the present and future. However, recognizing youth as a productivity force doesn't justify excluding them from decision-making platforms. And it is important to emphasize that young males and females, particularly those aged 18 to 29, should be respected participants in decision-making processes. Their unique perspectives, experiences, and innovative thinking are valuable assets that can enrich discussions and contribute to more comprehensive and effective outcomes.

Promoting meaningful participation involves providing youth with equal opportunities to engage in decision-making at all levels, ensuring their voices are heard, and acknowledging their agency. This inclusive approach not only respects the rights of young individuals but also strengthens the overall fabric of governance and community development.

By respecting and actively involving individuals in the 18 to 29 age group, organizations and decision-making bodies can tap into diverse talents, foster innovation, and promote a more inclusive and representative society. It's crucial to recognize that the active involvement of youth is not just a matter of inclusion but a strategic imperative for building a vibrant and sustainable future.

•Youth Participation in Decision making.

Incorporating youth in decision-making processes extends beyond token participation; it involves actively engaging them in various project stages, starting from the initial needs assessment to the actual implementation. By treating youth as equal leaders and right holders, rather than just beneficiaries, we create an environment where their voices carry weight in shaping outcomes (Amal and Karam 2021).

This approach goes beyond symbolic inclusion; it fosters a genuine sense of ownership among youth. When young individuals actively participate in decision-making, they feel a connection to the initiatives, and their commitment deepens. They become more than passive recipients; they become invested leaders who see their contributions as integral to the success of the project.

Moreover, providing youth with the authority to hold other stakeholders accountable is a powerful mechanism. It instills a sense of responsibility not only among the youth but also within the broader project framework. This mutual accountability ensures that all parties are committed to their roles, fostering a collaborative atmosphere. (Amal and Karam 2023)

Furthermore, holding youth accountable when they take the lead, even in volunteer capacities, acknowledges the value of their contributions. It communicates that their efforts are essential, regardless of their formal status. This recognition encourages sustained participation and motivates youth to actively contribute their skills, creativity, and dedication.

In essence, when youth are treated as equal partners in decision-making, the resulting sense of ownership and accountability creates a powerful dynamic. It transforms them from passive participants into active leaders, driving positive change within their communities and fostering a culture of continuous and meaningful youth engagement.

• *Youth search for meaning*

The search for meaning among youth is a fundamental aspect that should be acknowledged and addressed in any engagement strategy. Ensuring the feasibility of youth participation requires recognizing their desire to understand the purpose and impact of their involvement. This is particularly crucial as many young individuals have endured negative experiences where they felt instrumentalized or marginalized.

Addressing Concerns of Instrumentalization: Many youth have experienced being portrayed as tools for violence rather than as individuals with agency and rights. It's essential to counter this narrative, emphasizing their role not just as participants but as right-holders. Creating platforms where their voices are heard, valued, and respected can contribute to changing this perception.

Visibility and Recognition: You raise a valid concern about the lack of visibility for youth in media coverage, especially when compared to the attention given to children and women. Recognizing the experiences, contributions, and challenges faced by young individuals is crucial. Efforts should be made to ensure their stories are told, their struggles are acknowledged, and their achievements are celebrated.

Peacebuilders and Change Agents: Promoting the role of youth as peacebuilders is essential for fostering positive change. Providing opportunities for them to engage in peacebuilding initiatives, contribute to conflict resolution, and actively participate in community development projects empowers them to become catalysts for transformation.

It is not acceptable to call youth “beneficiaries” or “target group” or “implementing partners” if you want to give meaning to their participation, call them “agent of change” or “right-holders” or “Partners”

Opportunities for Meaningful Participation: Creating avenues for meaningful youth participation involves not only inviting them to the table but also ensuring their perspectives shape decisions and actions. Youth should be active contributors in projects, policy development, and community initiatives, allowing them to witness first-hand the impact of their efforts.

Transformative Change: Offering opportunities for youth to witness transformative change is a powerful motivator. When their contributions lead to tangible improvements in their communities, it reinforces the belief that their engagement matters. This can be achieved through projects that directly address their concerns, such as education, employment, and social inclusion.

In conclusion, recognizing the search for meaning among youth requires addressing their concerns about instrumentalization, providing visibility and recognition, emphasizing their role as peacebuilders, and creating opportunities for meaningful participation. When youth see the positive impact of their involvement and feel valued as contributors to transformative change, their motivation and commitment to participating in positive initiatives are likely to increase.

3. Partnership: Youth as Partners

The FBA policy brief identifies six key areas for NGOs to enhance institutional capacities, with a primary focus on the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda. While sharing common goals with YPS and recognizing the importance of all six areas, this paper specifically delves into the concept of partnership. Acknowledging its significance as a pillar of UNSCR 2250, the paper explores various partnership models and tools, emphasizing their role in facilitating youth participation, providing prevention and protection, and establishing genuine ownership and leadership. The objective is to contribute nuanced insights and formulate additional recommendations for the FBA policy brief by scrutinizing the dynamics of effective partnerships within the context of youth involvement and UNSCR 2250.

• *Youth Networks as a partnership model and base for policy trigger*

Youth networks serve as a pivotal catalyst for policy triggers, as young individuals actively form teams and build networks to amplify their collective influence. Recognizing the potential of partnerships to sustain their efforts, share resources, and enhance their collective power, many organizations support the establishment of these networks, fostering capacity building and knowledge sharing. (Amal and Karam, 2022)

While such interventions have generally had a positive impact, challenges arise when limited resources create competition within voluntary teams and hinder equal opportunities. Some teams, fuelled by short-term sub-grants, struggle to return to a volunteer-centric ethos. In an attempt to institutionalize, some organizations unintentionally nudge voluntary teams towards NGO structures, an unsustainable shift given their resource constraints.

Further complexities emerge when organizations mix various forms of engagement, such as voluntarism, daily work, internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships. This blurring of lines can erode the essence of volunteerism. However, strategic networking and resource mobilization among teams with shared interests, goals, and values have proven effective, allowing them to sustain relationships and leverage resources for joint endeavors.

A noteworthy model involves NGOs supporting non-registered teams and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), contributing significantly to civil society and youth groups. Nevertheless, flexibility is essential, urging NGOs to adapt requirements and avoid imposing stringent donor criteria on CBOs. Direct funding avenues for non-registered teams could offer a more flexible solution, ensuring the support reaches local initiatives efficiently. Embracing adaptability within such models is crucial to fostering a resilient and dynamic landscape for youth-led initiatives.

•Subgrants for Youth-led CBOs as a model of Empowerment and partnership

Empowering youth agency and fostering ownership and leadership can be achieved through models like subgrants or support for local initiatives offered by various organizations to community-based organizations or voluntary teams. This effective model provides youth with opportunities to actively pursue their dreams and advocate for their causes, resulting in numerous positive impacts gained through hands-on efforts. It facilitates the institutionalization of teams and promotes collaborative work. However, this model comes with some challenges, including the potential over-institutionalization (NGOization) of teams, internal conflicts among team members due to limited resources provided by subgrants, and a misconception of the concept of volunteerism. (Amal and Karam, 2022)

At the team level, competition for subgrants can strain relationships among community-based organizations (CBOs), affecting future collaborations and negatively influencing networking methods. Another concern associated with subgrants is that some CBOs may resort to corrupt practices to navigate stringent regulations, which may not align with the capacities of the teams. For many teams, subgrants become a crucial lifeline for social work, given challenging livelihood conditions.

•Youth-Led Participatory Needs Assessment: Aligning Priorities with Youth Voices

Youth-led participatory needs assessment, encompassing opinion polls, listening campaigns, participatory research, and action research, stands out as a model for achieving meaningful partnership and youth participation. This approach ensures that the priorities identified genuinely mirror the voices and needs of the youth. A Youth-Led Participatory Needs Assessment adds significant value by instilling a genuine sense of leadership and ownership among the youth. This approach enhances the overall quality of the assessment because young individuals comprehend the purpose of the tools, effectively follow up with their questions, and possess a unique understanding of their peers. Additionally, youth participants in the research tend to be more open in responding to questions when they are posed by researchers of their own age group.

One crucial debate revolves around whether youth prioritize political participation or focus more on education and employment. This highlights the essential need to understand and address the diverse needs of the youth demographic, influencing their level of participation and the success of partnerships. Conducting participatory need assessments is key, offering valuable insights for answering such questions and fostering genuine participation, ultimately strengthening partnerships with youth.

Priorities Revealed: The Tug of War between Education, Work, and Political Participation

Numerous studies underscore the significance of education and employment opportunities as top priorities for youth, yet they remain formidable challenges requiring substantial efforts to address. Despite these challenges, youth exhibit remarkable creativity and dedication in contributing to innovative solutions. However, the pressing issues of education and work act as significant barriers to youth's active engagement in civic activities.

"youth should focus solely on their careers and families and not think beyond that"

Many youth express their financial struggles, unable to afford education fees, which compels them to simultaneously work and study, severely limiting their capacity to volunteer. The absence of a stable income further hinders their active participation in community events. The immense pressure stemming from the lack of work and educational opportunities not only impedes their ability to contribute but also erodes their belief in the value of their participation.

Tragically, some youth, driven by economic desperation, find themselves compelled to join military actions as a means of affording basic living expenses. The cumulative impact of these challenges often leads to negative coping mechanisms, fuelled by a pervasive sense of hopelessness. This, in turn, propels migration to the forefront of their priorities as they seek alternative paths and opportunities beyond the constraints of their current circumstances.

Contrastingly, despite youth objections to the notion that "youth should focus solely on their careers and families and not think beyond that", as indicated by a study conducted by the (Policy Research Centre (OPC) and Space of Hope 2022)The research itself revealed that only a small percentage participated in political life (less than 7% participated in political parties, some participated intermittently, and 14% participated in governmental institutions or councils, with some not continuing). The study also showed that education and living conditions are the main determinants of youth non-participation, with social, peace, political, and participatory issues ranking lower in importance compared to livelihood, education, and rehabilitation. Additionally, the research confirmed that a significant proportion of youth do not even participate in their immediate family environment and engage less through social media.

The hardships faced in education and income should not diminish support for political participation.

A similar study by (Baytna and Kesh Malek, 2022) confirmed that 55% of youth do not engage in political discussions in their surroundings, and 62% do not engage in political discussions on social media. The majority of youth volunteers are in the internal Syrian context, while volunteering rates outside Syria decline. Furthermore, 86% of volunteer activities do not involve political participation, and 96% of volunteers were not engaged or active in any political activity. This aligns with the findings of a survey conducted by DBW, led by youth aged 18 to 29, where education and work ranked as top priorities, and there was low interest in political activities. This contrasts with the results of research by Baytna and Kesh Malek, which showed a high interest among youth in political participation. This discrepancy may be attributed to the confusion between concepts of community and political participation on one hand, and the nature of questions asking about political, social, and economic participation within a single category on the other.

The hardships faced in education and income should not diminish support for political participation. Political engagement is pivotal for sustainable peace, yet a generational gap sidelines youth in Track 3 peace talks. Rooted in traditional structures, this gap hampers innovative contributions. Intergenerational dialogues are crucial, recognizing unique contributions and fostering meaningful youth participation. Ethically imperative and strategically necessary, neglecting youth perpetuates disillusionment, undermining peacebuilding efforts. Bridging the generational gap is essential, transforming the narrative to see youth as active agents of positive change, not potential threats

4. The shortfalls of authentic partnership and meaningful youth participation

The impact of the lack of youth participation in decision-making extends significantly to the sphere of youth migration. Participation is intrinsically tied to a sense of identity, ownership, and citizenship. When young individuals are actively engaged in shaping the course of their communities and societies, they develop a profound connection to their identity and a sense of ownership in the collective future. This sense of belonging and citizenship becomes a powerful motivator for staying and contributing to the growth of their homeland.

Conversely, the absence of meaningful participation can create a vacuum where youth feel detached from their surroundings (Amal and Karam, 2021). This detachment, coupled with limited opportunities, may lead them to seek refuge and better prospects in new countries.

In conclusion, the nexus between youth participation, identity, and migration is intricate.

Emigration becomes a perceived solution, driven by the hope for a more inclusive environment where their voices are heard and their contributions valued. The pursuit of refuge is not solely an economic decision; it is a quest for a space where their identity and aspirations are acknowledged and respected.

In contexts marked by conflict and instability, parents may encourage their children to seek refuge as a protective mechanism. The lack of youth participation exacerbates the risks associated with military recruitment and negative coping mechanisms like drug abuse. Seeking refuge in a different country becomes a strategy for safeguarding the younger generation from the adverse effects of conflict and providing them with opportunities for a safer and more promising future.

In conclusion, the nexus between youth participation, identity, and migration is intricate. Meaningful engagement fosters a sense of ownership and belonging, dissuading youth from seeking refuge. Conversely, the absence of participation creates conditions that drive youth migration, prompting them to explore new horizons where their identity and aspirations can find expression and recognition.

When NGOs fall short of treating youth as equal counterparts, neglecting to recognize their ownership and leadership within the network, and failing to engage with them as partners in subgrants, while refusing to acknowledge their equal authority in both networks and subgrants, they overlook youth agency. Consequently, this failure undermines the achievement of meaningful participation of youth, resulting in decreased overall participation.

5. Conclusion:

The FBA model offers robust recommendations for NGOs to enhance institutional capacities across various domains. However, it falls short of delving into the specifics of sustaining strong partnerships or cultivating a sense of ownership among the youth. Consequently, it is essential to incorporate more practical suggestions to ensure meaningful participation and establish a sustainable, equitable partnership where youth agency plays a pivotal role. This approach fosters an environment where youth perceive themselves as having equal authority, defined roles, and clear responsibilities. It empowers youth to be accountable and enables them to hold NGOs accountable as well. Additionally, it facilitates increased input from the youth perspective in agreements and subgrants, enriching the overall decision-making process in Northwest of Syria.

It is essential to incorporate more practical suggestions to ensure meaningful participation and establish a sustainable, equitable partnership where youth agency plays a pivotal role

6. Top Recommendations for the Policy Paper:

NGOs, serving as advocates for youth policies, play a pivotal role in advocacy, especially when governmental organizations are lacking. Their responsibilities should encompass mediating relations between the private and governmental sectors to secure support for the effective implementation of these policies. Achieving this goal necessitates the thorough implementation of all FBA policy brief recommendations, mainly:

FBA model offers robust recommendations for NGOs to enhance institutional capacities across various domains

Creating space for risk-taking and innovation is essential for empowering youth in project activities.

1. Investment in Partnership and Ownership: NGOs must increase their investment in fostering partnership and ownership among youth in their projects. Beyond developing internal capacities, a culture of learning, collaboration, and ownership is crucial for successful outcomes.

2. Cultural Change within NGOs: Initiating a cultural shift within NGOs is imperative, starting with a change in mindset and terminology. Adopting inclusive terms such as partners, leaders, and change agents when referring to youth, rather than beneficiaries or target groups, can contribute to a positive cultural change.

3. Centrality of Youth in Project Design: Practical implementation should place youth at the core of project design, allowing them to lead the need assessment process and take charge of implementation. Creating space for risk-taking and innovation is essential for empowering youth in project activities.

4. Increased space for youth to reach decision making platforms: youth should have their own representatives; they should have the opportunities to be part of political and nonviolence channels for solutions.

5. Creating Spaces for Learning: NGOs should facilitate learning spaces such as communities of practice and joint training sessions with other youth-led organizations or entities working with youth

Recommendation for stronger partnership with youth and youth led-CBOs:

1. Activating Complaint Mechanisms: NGOs should establish clear complaint mechanisms that encourage youth to provide feedback without fear of exclusion from subgrants or facing punitive measures.

2. Transparency in Feedback Mechanisms: It is crucial that feedback mechanisms are transparent, and youth are well-informed about the channels through which they can provide their input.

3. Empowering Youth through Subgrants: Recognizing the strength of subgrants in giving leadership opportunities to youth is essential. Donors should acknowledge the flexibility needed to work with non-registered entities, allowing for greater youth involvement.

4. Building Life Skills through Subgrants: Subgrants should focus on building life skills for youth rather than imposing rigid NGO procedures. This approach prevents the "NGOisation" of youth initiatives and preserves the spirit of voluntarism.

5. Fair Treatment in Subgrants: Subgrants should be fair and treat youth as partners. Clear trust-building measures and written agreements are necessary to ensure that youth feel valued and not used as tools by NGOs.

6. Clear Roles and Responsibilities in MOUs: Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) should outline clear roles and responsibilities, providing a sense of ownership to the youth involved in the projects.

7. Guidelines for Subgrants: Despite their positive impact, subgrants can lead to harm without clear criteria and for a short duration. Guidelines should be established to prevent conflicts over resources and negative competition among Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

8. Effectiveness of Networks: Networks are effective tools for capacity-sharing and empowering youth agencies. These networks should treat youth teams and CBOs as owners, not mere members, thus emphasizing ownership over membership.

9. Youth-Led Networks: Networks should be explicitly led by youth, not NGOs. Clear terms of reference (TOR) should reflect this leadership structure.

10. Protection of Volunteerism Culture: The culture of voluntarism should be safeguarded, and distinctions between volunteerism, internship, fellowship, and apprenticeship should be maintained. Avoiding the pitfalls of "paid voluntarism" is crucial to preserve the genuine spirit of volunteerism among youth.

You can read more recommendations after each DBW research on SAY platform

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Door Beyond War (DBW) organization is a civil society organization registered in Turkey since mid-2018, working with the Syrian community structures to reach its vision of a decent society capable of overcoming challenges through creative utilization of available resources. To this end, DBW is committed to working within the scope of community development programs and economic empowerment, building the community strength to effectively organize and assemble its resources through capacity-building, self-sufficiency, and microfinance projects. DBW is motivated by its belief in community work and the importance of building strong relationships between the Syrian people parts by the means of dialogue and advocacy in promoting community cohesion. DBW is experienced in projects that aim at increasing community cohesion, activating dialogue, and distributing roles among the various segments of the Syrian society. through these projects, DBW has also focused on building the capacity of CBOs and grassroots, enhancing their self-sufficiency opportunities, and enriching their ability to launch initiatives using their local resources.

- Youth are right-holders
- Youth are Agent for Change
- Youth are Partners
- Partnership is Equitable
- Network includes youth as owners not members