

E-discussion on YOUTH – summary of preliminary results

Day 4:

How can young people better participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of these strategies? How can this be done in collaboration with youth work, youth organisations and youth projects?

In *Kosovo* the ‘opportunity group methodology’, which encourages young people to come together in peer groups to share, learn and apply newly acquired technical, entrepreneurial and life skills, has proven to be a successful tool to equip young people with needed skills within a short period of time, in particular disadvantaged young women and minorities. In *Handicap International*, participation of beneficiaries and partners (from first assessment, design, implementation to final evaluation) is one of 12 project quality criteria. In *Mali*, by way of example, a participatory project involves youth organizations, local authorities, community representatives including representatives of persons with disabilities and women to identify, for instance, green market job opportunities. The “Making it Work” methodology was used to identify good practices for ensuring inclusion of women and youth with disabilities in vocational skills training and self-employment. A pool of experts (representatives of youth organization, women organization and disabled people organisations, + local employment and youth services) helped identifying good practices. The quality of VSD projects can be enhanced by considering participation of young people as primarily stakeholders in the sector selection and in the design and implementation of relevant VSD strategies, by focusing on a ‘holistic’ approach in skills development and on non-formal and informal types of training, by addressing skills development in an integrated way together with other dimensions of labour market system and by involving young people in monitoring & evaluation systems of VSD strategies.

How can relevant themes such as intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship- and human rights be included in VSD strategies? What are the experiences so far?

In *Handicap International* Human Rights considerations are included in all projects and advocating with evidences is a key component to improve inclusion of the most vulnerable people. In *Mongolia* the Youth Development Project is based on a Human Rights Based Approach. Thanks to the project life skills are brought to the education sector; schools have now life skills education halls and life skills trainers who organize extra-curricular activities. Lessons learned: combination of hard and soft skills in VSD is more effective, yet requires more resources.

Intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship and human rights are cross-cutting themes, and these concepts should be fostered throughout the curricula at different levels of the education system, including VSD in order to make the education more holistic and the graduates’ skill sets more complete with skills that go beyond the technical part. However, is VSD the right means to foster these complex issues besides life skills training? With the current trend to focus more on labor market insertion via short course training, time is already limited. VSD as a strategy to insert the drop-outs back into the system cannot fix up all the missing pieces, and to substitute for a holistic education of 9-12 years. There is often a divide in societies where inequality is very prevalent, human rights are neglected and poverty prevails: is it enough to just talk about these concepts in a classroom? How can this really be addressed in order to make a change?