



Photo: Liberia, Ricardo Ramirez

CONCEPT PAPER

# YOUTH EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Oxfam is guided by “Universal and Equitable access to Quality Education” and also the fact that “lack of access and poor quality of education have serious consequences for especially girls and women” (Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019)..

In November 2016, in Copenhagen, in a meeting convened by Oxfam IBIS, Oxfam constituted an “Education Community of Practice and Influence” agreeing that “Strengthening transformative public education for all to fight inequality” is the overall goal of our future education work. Achieving this goal will:

1. Have a straight redistributive impact – putting ‘virtual income’ into the pocket of poor and marginalized people – particularly in relation to girls and women.
2. Enhance social mobility.
3. Strengthen political mobilization - a transformative, quality education leads to knowing your rights and responsibilities, having a voice, being able to participate and organize, and building active citizenship for children, youth and adults.

This series of Oxfam IBIS concept papers define the Oxfam IBIS’ understanding and approach in key areas.

Each paper contains the following sections:

- A) **Justification** for Oxfam IBIS’ work on the issue
- B) Brief overview of relevant **theories and definitions**
- C) Presentation of **Oxfam IBIS’ approach** and lessons learned
- D) References to **further documentation**

## JUSTIFICATION

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Today's generation of youth is the largest in history, with nearly half of the world's population of 7 billion under the age of 25. Of these, more than 90% live in low income countries and fragile contexts. Young people are future citizens and only through formal and non-formal quality education will they have the possibility to become fully active, responsible and productive young women and men. The Oxfam IBIS Education for Change strategy highlights that 'participation in formal quality education as a child or during adolescence is the most effective base for developing skills and values needed for life and future work.' However, despite a global increase in the number of children enrolling in primary and secondary school, many challenges still prevail. In 2011, 57 million children and 69 million adolescents worldwide were still out of school and almost half the children out of school globally are expected never to attend school. This leaves millions of young people to face life without the necessary skills they need to make a decent living for themselves.

The Education for Change Strategy integrates the right to quality education for young people. Oxfam IBIS has many years of experience from working with youth and their organisations in relation to participation, education and skills development. However, youth have often not been treated as a group in their own right, but rather as a part of programming for children or adults. Generally, adolescents are defined as being between the ages of 12 and 18, while youth are between 15 and 25. However, being young is a complex age to define, as the definition of those considered as youth depends on their roles and responsibilities.

In the countries where Oxfam IBIS works with uneducated youth, educational systems have the following problems to differing degrees: poor ability to retain learners at a primary and secondary level; high levels of repetition and a high percentage of youths abandoning their education, as well as low levels of learning. Poor young populations, both urban and rural, are those who are most in need of skills training. In urban areas, the youth population is larger than it has ever been and is steadily growing, as also is the tendency for young people in urban areas to have less education than in rural areas. In general, the majority of youth without education are marginalised, poor and vulnerable and have insufficient reading and writing skills; they have very few opportunities for employment or to create their own work; they therefore have very few possibilities of improving their circumstances. Youth employment is a key aspect in strategic work with youth and education, and it is essential for Oxfam IBIS that employment happens under decent conditions. Some of the newest studies point out that, in many cases, young people actually have some kind of employment, but under unacceptable conditions. Youth with no education, or with a very low level of education, have got neither the technical nor the social skills to start up their own businesses and create work for themselves, nor the possibility to argue for better working conditions. This means that a large proportion of youth end up being exploited. In fact, most of them never become integrated members of society, and instead they can often be found in the big cities in situations of unemployment, work under very bad conditions, or involvement in crime or sex work.

Despite the above, youth often demonstrate commitment, innovation, energy and strength in their pursuit of a better life, and are therefore a huge asset and strength for all societies.

## THEORIES AND DEFINITIONS

### THE RIGHTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Adolescents up to the age of 18 are included in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The convention includes the right to survival, development (education, play, and leisure), protection (safeguard from abuse, neglect and exploitation) and participation (freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting one's life). Above the age of 18, youth are covered by the same Human Rights instruments as adults, as there is no specific convention or charter addressing the rights of young people. The need for such a set of rights is, however, currently being debated by the UN. With regard to youth and education, young people (as all other people) have a right to quality education - as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, if they do not have their education rights met as children, they are unfortunately at risk of never gaining access to education. This was recognized by the international community when they set the six Education for All (EFA) goals, where goal 3 concerns: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. This goal included the expansion of secondary education; special education programs for youth who have dropped out of school; life skills education and vocational training. However, no clear targets or indicators for how to reach the goal were developed, and progress has been slow.

### YOUNG PEOPLE AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Young people hold the key to the initiation of change and an important task for Oxfam IBIS and other actors is therefore to support them through targeted education and/or training programmes to help them become constructive change agents in society. The EFA goal on youth education is based on the fundamental belief that education plays a very important key role in achieving equity and poverty reduction. It furthermore builds upon the understanding that education and human resource investments can promote economic growth. Youth with a high level of education can boost productivity and promote stability in their societies. Oxfam IBIS' Education for Change strategy states that the fulfilment of individual and collective rights to quality education for children, youth and adults is a cornerstone in the struggle against poverty and in the development of social justice and sound democracies. Educated citizens constitute a pivotal prerequisite for an active and legitimate civil society; they are capable of driving social change towards a more transparent and accountable democratic society and sustainable pro-poor economic growth.

### YOUTH AND GENDER

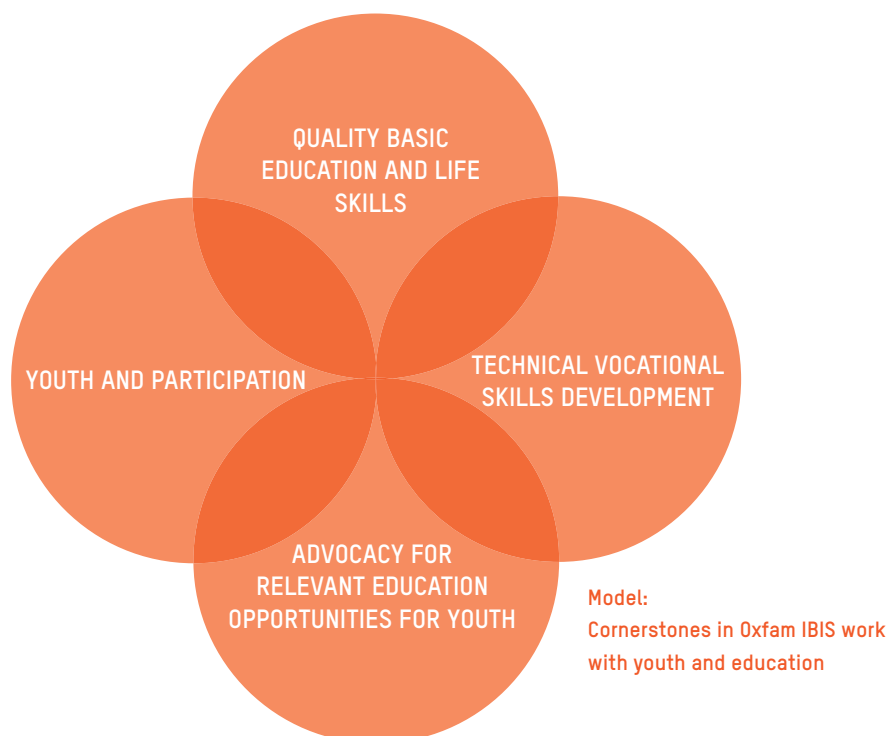
Gender programming is about looking at women and men, girls and boys – their specific needs, concerns and capacities, and their inter-relationships regarding access to education. In many countries, women and girls are deprived of equal access to education opportunities in more cases than men and boys, but still it is important to consider the inequalities and barriers to education that also young men may face. If the focus is only on women, there will be an incomplete view of gender equality. Due to inappropriate policies and/or the influence of culture, gendered decisions are often made about which skills young men and women select when they participate in technical and vocational skills development programmes. Male youth tend to select programmes like carpentry or motor vehicle mechanics, and young women select skills like tailoring or catering. These decisions are often the result of gender stereotypes in their communities and serve to further reinforce unequal social status and

income between the sexes. It is important to change the perceptions of masculine and female professions in order to create equal opportunities for both young men and women. Inclusion of women in traditional male work could be a possible solution; another could be changing education to suit the expectations of the local community by offering new classes that appeal to both young men and women. An element of getting women more engaged in education could also be to provide child care and sexual and reproductive health; men also benefit from this kind of education.

## OXFAM IBIS' APPROACH

### OXFAM IBIS' AREAS OF PRIORITY IN WORK WITH YOUTH AND EDUCATION

As previously mentioned, Oxfam IBIS has extensive experience with working with youth and youth organizations in the fields of education and skills development, participation and inclusion. Oxfam IBIS globally has prioritized which areas to work with and as a result, the following four cornerstones have been established to guide Oxfam IBIS' work.



### Quality Basic Education and Life Skills

In the Education for Change Strategy, youth are seen as an important and integrated part of Oxfam IBIS' target group and, in all the education programs, activities concerning development of quality education for youth have high priority. Formal quality education is the most effective way to develop the skills needed for both work and life. Oxfam IBIS believes that an expansion of primary quality education leads to higher enrolments at the next level of education, including better opportunities for skills development through technical and vocational education. Education also gives young people a higher level of human fulfilment and equips them to contribute as active citizens to both social progress and change. Oxfam IBIS works in countries where many children never get the opportunity to be enrolled in a formal quality education system and therefore need a second chance. An important part of Oxfam IBIS' work is therefore to ensure the development of "second chance" education programmes. This means that alternative pathways to learning basic skills must be provided, for example by introducing accelerated learning programmes or by integrating strong basic skills components in technical vocational skills development. For Oxfam IBIS, education is not only about ensuring that children and youth can attend school. It is also about setting young people up for life, by giving them opportunities to contribute to the development of their communities and societies, and fulfil their potential. The development of both academic skills and life skills is therefore prioritized; secondary education curricula should provide a balance between vocational and technical skills, including IT, and skills such as confidence and communication which are indispensable for the work place. Furthermore, entrepreneurship, citizenship and protection of rights, including Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) should be incorporated in education for youth.

### Technical Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)

TVSD is a relatively new area for Oxfam IBIS. Therefore it is important to define how Oxfam IBIS understands and works with TVSD. Oxfam IBIS has a flexible understanding of the concept of TVSD in order to ensure that strategic work does not limit the local practice of the programmes, where context-specific needs are known and taken into account. For this reason, Oxfam IBIS takes its point of departure in this relatively broad definition of TVSD: "Those aspects of the educational process involving the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge related to occupations in various sectors of economic and social lives" (UNESCO). Oxfam IBIS' work with TVSD is structured around four key elements: Technical and Vocational Skills training, education in literacy and numeracy, active citizenship and relevant life skills. How these aspects are prioritized depends upon the needs in the specific context. Still, it is important to emphasize that all four elements are mutually interconnected, and that the involvement of each one is therefore necessary in order to achieve Oxfam IBIS' overarching goal of Transformative Quality Education. For example, 'literacy' can also be seen as a 'life skill', as it enables people to take social action and thereby participate in the community, and is in this way also connected to 'citizenship'.

### Youth and participation

Oxfam IBIS aims to support youth in achieving their right to participation and in organizing themselves for active citizenship. When youth are trained to see multiple viewpoints and put forward constructive solutions to relevant social problems such as a lack of relevant skills training, barriers to access to lower-secondary school, corruption, youth unemployment, etc., they are strengthened in promoting and claiming their individual and collective rights. Participation should be seen in close relation to cornerstone 4 below (Advocacy for relevant education opportunities for youth), in relation to capacity development of civil society and Oxfam IBIS' thematic area/programme for democratic governance. Oxfam IBIS supports youth

organisations with organisational capacity development and facilitates the empowerment of youth to be critical actors, contributing to societal change through thoroughly planned advocacy processes.

### Advocacy for relevant education opportunities for youth

Both Oxfam IBIS' Education for Change- and Governance programmes work with advocacy as a key strategy. Engaging in partnerships and coalitions to work on joint advocacy is most effective and advocacy processes produce most results when they are well coordinated. Strengthening the interface and information flow between different actors at local, national and global level is key to Oxfam IBIS' and partners' advocacy work. Furthermore, relevant capacity building and advocacy approaches are developed as part of each thematic programme.

The Education for Change strategy should serve as a framework for Oxfam IBIS' support to partners in defining specific education advocacy goals at local and national levels. The strategy emphasises that the partners and their constituencies have ownership of the processes that lead to the definition of these advocacy goals. Oxfam IBIS supports the introduction and piloting of quality improvements related to TVSD as part of national education reforms. Oxfam IBIS also advocates for countries to develop a youth policy. Youth policies should be developed with the active involvement of young people and their associations, and government should be held accountable for its implementation, monitored with the participation of youth themselves.

Oxfam IBIS also supports the national EFA coalitions and, in line with the recommendations of the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012, wishes to align with the pathways guiding advocacy work for improved youth education opportunities (the priority of the pathways will depend upon the context):

- Provide second-chance education for those with low or no foundation skills
- Tackle the barriers that limit access to lower secondary school
- Make upper secondary education more accessible to the disadvantaged and improve its relevance to work
- Give poor urban youth access to skills training for better jobs
- Aim policies and programs at youth in deprived rural areas
- Link skills training with social protection for the poorest youth
- Prioritize the training needs of disadvantaged young women
- Harness the potential of technology to enhance opportunities for young people

## YOUTH AND EDUCATION IN OXFAM IBIS' EDUCATION FOR CHANGE PROGRAMMES

An important task for Oxfam IBIS' thematic programmes is to consider how to integrate and strengthen the work with Youth and Education.

### Key points for strengthening the work with youth and adults

- 1 It is important that technical and vocational skills development initiatives take the local community into account by ensuring the relevance of the courses offered, so that young people build job and life skills that are relevant for the community.
- 2 Securing a good relationship with the formal education system is important in order to ensure the transfer of merits from TVSD courses. Furthermore, the relevant government should be influenced when possible to pay for the educators' salaries. Good relations with the relevant government actors and alignment also increase the likelihood of sustaining youth education projects after IBIS' programme ends.
- 3 Youth should be introduced to the power structures in society and be given the opportunity to develop abilities to relate critically to these and to take part in democratic processes; they should be encouraged to organize associations and to share their skills; and educational projects should become a resource for the community by providing services such as internet access, library etc.
- 4 It is important to carry out a careful initial selection of the educators for youth programmes. The educators working with youth education need special skills in order to carry out good teaching from both an academic and pedagogical point of view. Educators with well-developed technical skills might have deficient knowledge about teaching and learning processes and will not be able to facilitate transition from education to work. If the target group is poor marginalized youth with low academic skills, it is important to ensure that the educators are interested in working with this group of young people.
- 5 Continuous supervision and professional development is needed for educators to keep using innovative models in the education process; it is important for the management and the educators to engage actively in the learners' education processes and to adjust the programmes to the specific prerequisites of the learners; and for the project to provide inspiring and motivating learning facilities.
- 6 To ensure the inclusion of women participants, it is crucial to address patriarchal structures and cultures in the community through dialog and education; and to provide relevant skills and classes for the women participants as part of the project. Also securing child care and food have proved to be an important strategy to enhance the participation of women.
- 7 In the countries where Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) is a right in primary education, it is important to ensure that IBE is also applied in secondary schools, higher education and in the non-formal education of youth. It also ought to be extended to cities, where many young bilingual migrants live.

## FURTHER DOCUMENTATION AND REFERENCES

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- *Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work*, UNESCO, 2012.
- *The African Economic Outlook*, OECD, 2007/2008.
- *Expert Meeting on the Human Rights of Youth*, UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2013.
- *GEG Summary of experiences in youth education and skills development*, IBIS, 2012.
- *Youth Position Paper*, IBIS, 2011.

### ABOUT OXFAM IBIS EDUCATION FOR CHANGE CONCEPT PAPERS

Oxfam IBIS Concept Paper: Education and Gender, version 1, March 1st, 2017

This series of concept papers was introduced June 1st, 2014 with the target audience being Oxfam IBIS staff and management as well as partners and stakeholders. The papers have been developed through a participatory process and are living documents to be revised whenever needed. At this point the series includes the following concept papers:

1. Quality Education
2. Transformative Education
3. Educator Professional Development
4. Youth Education and Training
5. Mother Tongue - Bilingual Education
6. Education in Fragile Situations
7. Education and Gender Equality

All Oxfam IBIS concept papers can be found at [www.oxfamibis.org](http://www.oxfamibis.org)

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