

# Drawing up a participatory youth situation analysis in Kenya

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## Introduction

TAMASHA (Taasisi ya Maendeleo Shirikishi Arusha, the Institute of Participatory Development Arusha) is a youth participatory centre which was founded in 2007. Its primary objective is to promote the participation of young people in society and enable them to realise their rights and their rightful place in their communities in order to promote their own development and that of their communities. TAMASHA is in the process of registration in Kenya – it also has a team of trained facilitators from Kenya, and the aim of TAMASHA is to be truly pan-African.

## Why a national youth situation analysis?

The 2007 general election in Kenya and the violence that followed is a classic example of how young people have been caught up in destructive behaviour. In the aftermath, the government of Kenya was desperate to know why ‘young people were involved in violence’. The ministry of youth and sports called a preliminary meeting of

key stakeholders and the young people themselves, facilitated by TAMASHA, to discuss this issue and come up with recommendations on what should be done. However, the TAMASHA facilitator suggested that a different approach should be taken as only a small minority of young people were violent, and many young people were peace makers. The workshop participants were asked to first give examples of the positive roles played by young people during the violence. This was an important methodological strategy for breaking down negative stereotypes of young people on the part of the adults and strengthening the self belief of the young people, many of whom had been in the forefront of peace-making efforts.

As a result of this preliminary meeting, TAMASHA, working with the ministry of youth and sports and UNICEF, took advantage of the negative attention to young people to develop a highly participatory rights-based youth situation analysis. This enabled young people to break out of the negative and superficial

stereotypes imposed on them, and present the situation in which they found themselves in a holistic way, explaining why some of them had turned to violence. This in itself was a major achievement. In addition, the recommendations arising out of the situation analysis were to be taken up and implemented by the ministry of youth and other stakeholders at local, provincial and national level.

### Process

Eight young facilitators (two for each of four age groups, see below) were chosen from each province on the basis of their active involvement in youth affairs. The facilitators were trained by TAMASHA facilitators in participatory research methodology, including a mixture of appreciative inquiry and participatory rural appraisal (PRA). They then agreed on the main issues to be researched and the tools which would be used for each issue.

With support from provincial youth officers, young facilitators working in pairs identified and researched youth groups in their localities, using the tools developed at the workshop. This enabled them to document the varying youth issues from the different parts of the province and also to identify strong participants for provincial workshops that would work together to produce a provincial situation analysis. They also collected existing materials from the groups. In selecting participants for the provincial workshops, emphasis was placed on inclusion. Thus participants were balanced according to gender, in four different age groups (ages 10–14, 15–19, 20–24 and 25-plus).

The purpose of the provincial workshops was to use the events, plus materials collated and issues collected from different parts of the province beforehand, to conduct an in-depth analysis of the situation of young people in general, and specific groups of young people in particular. The research tools were used to identify, probe and analyse in greater

### Box 1: Participants' views

Asked about their views on education, the group aged 20–24 emphasised the need for skills-based education:

*We dream of a community whose education imparts practical skills that will make us competitive in the job market and prepare us adequately to meet the various challenges of life.*

*Wherever you go, you are told ten years' experience. OK, so they should open an 'experience school' where young people can attend before getting a job!*

The group aged 10–14 expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of school life. Common among the boys were complaints about what they saw as teachers' preferential treatment of girls. One such comment was:

*I was late to school with a girl. I was told to do punishment while the girl was told to go to class and teacher told me the girls are being given a lot of work at home.*

On law enforcement agencies' attitudes towards young people, younger respondents talked about the police harassing them, whereas older youths (aged 25–29) associated law enforcement with systemic issues like corruption or the collusion of law enforcement agencies in drug trafficking:

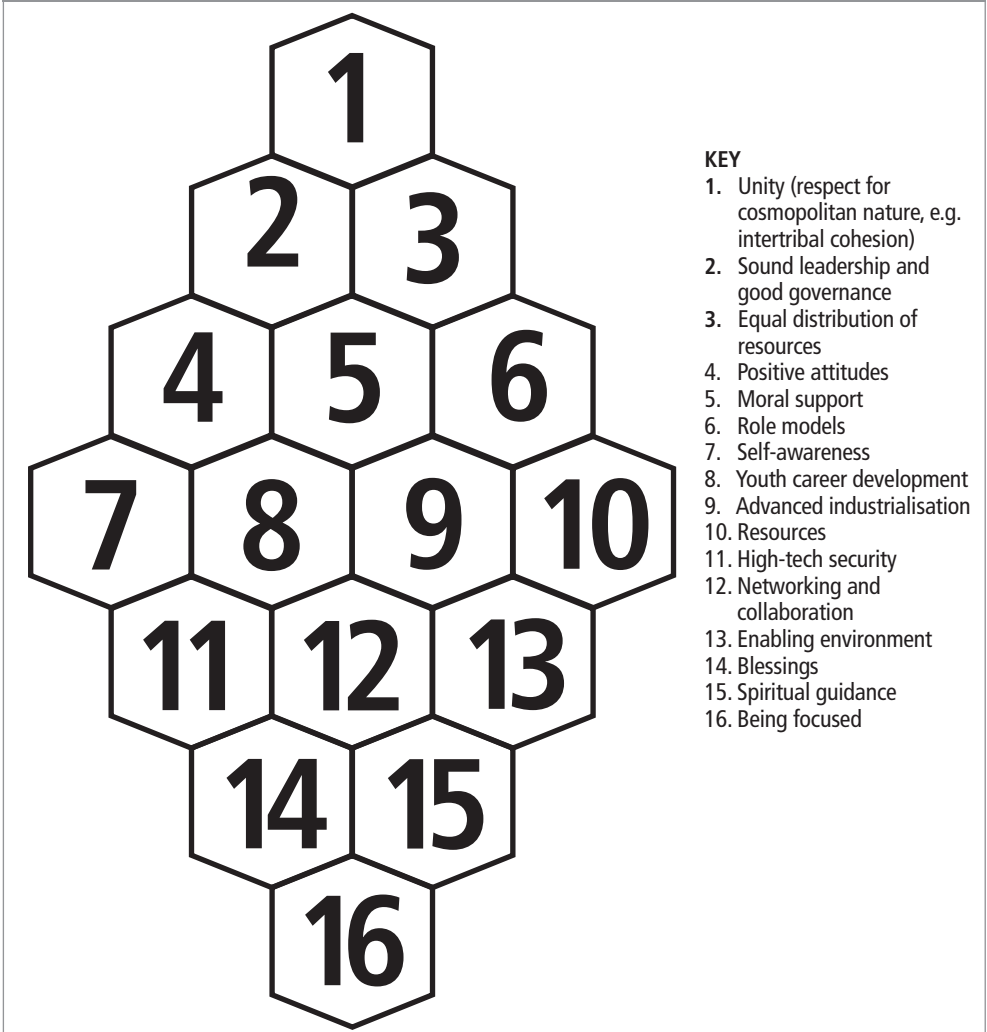
*Most officers in charge of different departments and ministries are there courtesy of the ruling party and the politicians they support. They do not consider merit...*

*Police are reluctant to deal with drug abusers, because they take bribes.*

depth. The research methodology included:

- **Appreciative inquiry:** dreams for themselves, their communities and Kenya as a whole, encouraging them to tell their stories. Overall the emphasis was placed on the positive aspects of young people and the final exercise was what they needed to do to achieve their dreams.
- **PRA:** mapping of their communities and provinces, ranking of issues and creating diagrams of social services and other forms of support to young people.
- **Diagrammatic causality analysis:** why is the situation as it is?
- **Art:** drama, pictures, poetry, rap and song.

**Figure 1: A diagram made of 16 diamonds showing elements that young people need to achieve their dreams. A creative way of prioritising what they consider important and why.**



As a result of the above process and methodology, the situation analysis was successfully carried out and written up in each province. At the end, participants prioritised key issues to be taken forward to the national workshop from their provinces.

Each province elected delegates to attend the national workshop. Again the delegations emphasised gender balance, equal representation of age groups, and included one person from recognised vulnerable groups in each age group.

At the national workshop, each age group developed its national report before TAMASHA prepared the final report, which was published by the ministry of youth and sports. The findings and recommendations were very wide ranging, but above all showed a concern for equity of opportunity (geographically, educationally etc.). The report recommendations were as follows:

- Youth were very dissatisfied with the education system and wanted much greater attention paid to youth livelihoods.



Photo: TAMASHA

Some traditional cultures place huge barriers that prevent girls from accessing education.

Both issues leave them frustrated and angry and susceptible to joining gangs as their only outlet.

- They criticised the country for lack of leadership saying that tribalism and corruption had contributed to the violence. They revealed that politicians had bribed them to take part in the violence. Giving specific examples, they noted that in Kenya 'if you want to get attention you destroy property', a lesson they learnt from their elders.

- They were very critical of the negative attitudes of law enforcement agencies towards them, saying that they were treated like refugees in their own country.

- They noted the widespread prevalence of gender-based violence, which is fuelled by the impunity of the perpetrators. This was especially true during the election violence.

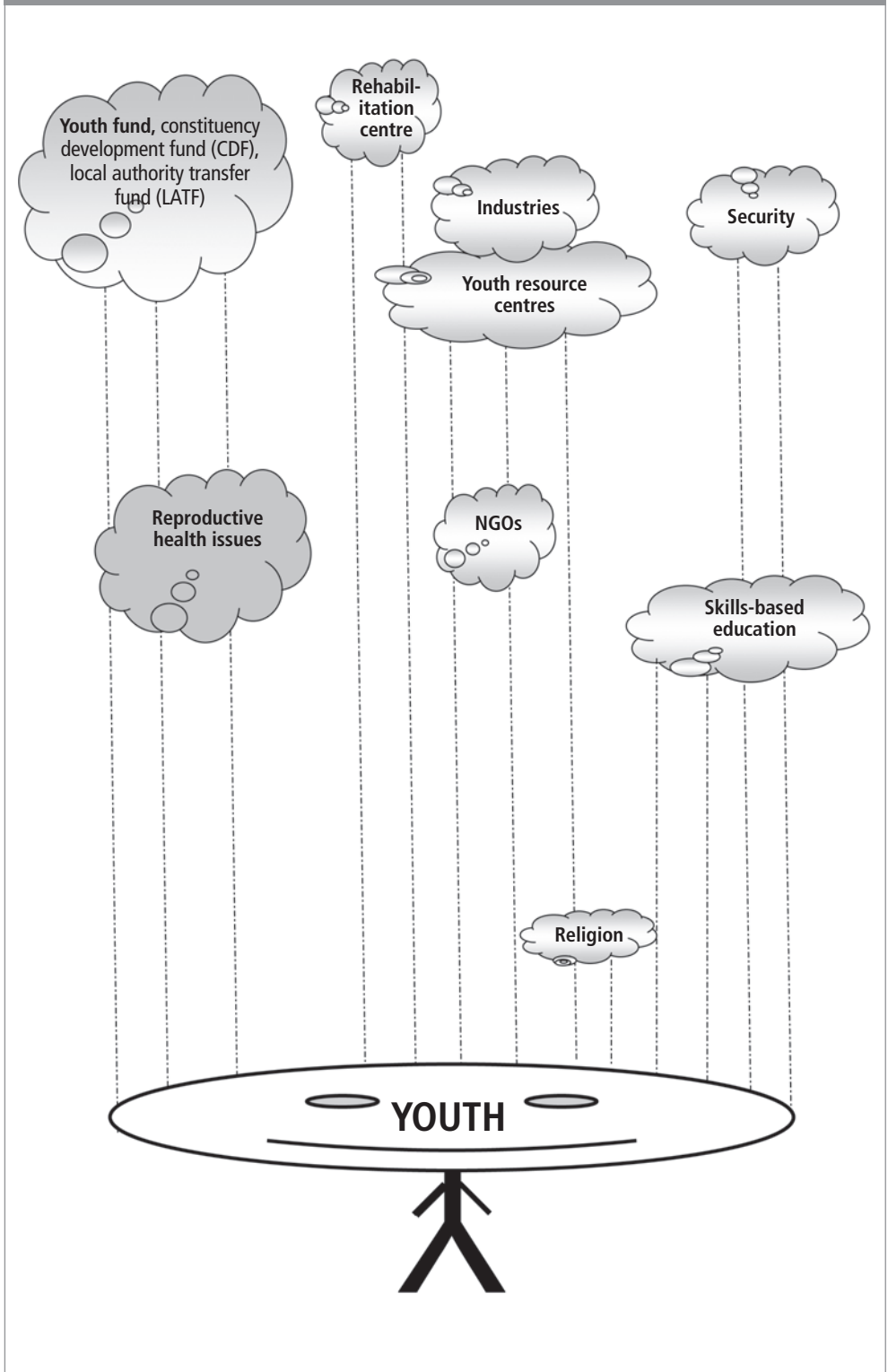
- Overall, there was a sense of hopelessness in many young people which they believed could easily be turned around once their issues were prioritised and they were able to participate fully in their own development.

### Comments on the process and methodology

The choice of young activists/peer educators as researchers was a successful strategy as they already knew their communities and the issues facing them. They also knew how to identify and reach the more marginalised groups of young people. It was easier for young people to talk to their peers than to adult, external researchers, even using PRA methodologies.

However, when working with national partners, care should be taken to ensure that those who are chosen to do the research are those who are recognised as activists by their fellow youth, and are not the preferences of the ministry or national organisation. Those who had no experience in youth work had great difficulty in coping with the research. Some were rejected by their peers. Others did not have a grasp of the issues which would enable them to probe them in depth and revealed their ignorance on other issues. This was mostly experienced in urban settings, where young activists refused to be part of

Figure 2: A creative diagram of services and other forms of support to young people



the process because they felt ignored and betrayed by the ministry.

The youth-to-youth nature of the participatory research, facilitated by young people from the local areas, worked very well. They were already familiar with their areas and accepted by their fellow youth, who were therefore more open. The tools designed did not differ very much from those prepared by adults, as they were the product of training by TAMASHA facilitators. However, the nature of questions explored with the tools was significantly sharpened by the inputs from those who were experienced in working in their communities.

Where it was followed, the insistence on different age groups, gender balance and the inclusion of representatives from vulnerable groups worked very well. Even on specific issues such as education, the views of the younger youth were significantly different from those of the older youth. Young people with disabilities were able to input into the process, as well as adolescent mothers, sex workers and orphans. Without disaggregation these views would never have been heard.

The emphasis on the positive was also very effective. Young people were already tired of being stigmatised as 'violent' and being blamed for many of the problems in Kenya. The emphasis on their dreams and aspirations and how to achieve them was very well received and led to passionate discussions. At the end of the dream exercise at the national workshop, it was concluded:

*Although there are many constraints, they should focus on the positives that will enable them to fulfil their dreams instead of concentrating on the negatives. Young people have a lot of potential to fulfil all these dreams.*

The variety of tools (including artistic methods) inspired a lot of creativity, with the young people adopting and presenting

their feedback in different ways, through song, drama, dance and poetry. The diagrams of services did not provoke so much discussion, but the ranking and prioritisation exercises were very powerful. Once again, the age disaggregation worked well because the priorities of the different age groups were significantly different.

The emphasis on encouraging the participants to look at causal links between different issues enabled them to look for the connections between issues and the roots causes for each.

### Conclusion

The situation analysis was launched nationally, and several commitments were made to young people on the strength of it. In terms of government actions taken as a result, it is hard to distinguish actions that resulted from the situation analysis from what would have happened anyway as a result of the government's fear of youth after the 2007 electoral violence. For instance, a national youth council was set up, but this may have happened without the situation analysis.

One related outcome is that UNICEF and the ministry of youth established a programme for promoting the talents and strengths of youth through their engagement with key figures in society, such as renowned artists. On another level, the young participants in the situation analysis formed their own groups to try to follow up on the promises made, and demanded that the ministry agreed parameters for future engagement, to ensure they did not become puppets in ministry-led processes.

Within this context, the participatory tools worked well to bring out the diversity of situations and viewpoints faced by young people in Kenya, which could then be included in the report. There were no complaints about the use of these tools from either government recipients of the report or the youth participants, and we witnessed very active engagement through-

**Box 2: Tips to help facilitators manage adults in a participatory process with youth**

Some issues for facilitators to raise and discuss with adults:

- Learn to 'hand over the stick', just as PRA researchers need to – appreciate the creativity and new thinking of young people.
- Practise 'enlarging your ears' and 'reducing your mouth'.
- See the engagement as a process in which they too have a stake, not a one-off event; and allow it to be grounded in the realities of the young people as the young people perceive them.
- Be ready to accommodate change – young people will not always think as they are expected to think.
- Believe in children and young people's capacities. The Convention on the Rights of the Child mentions children participating 'according to their evolving capacities'; adolescence is a stage of rapid evolution so should be a stage of rapidly increasing participation.
- Take a leap of faith. The results will be so positive that you will want to continue.

out. The national youth situation analysis was successful and presented a strong and holistic document to the ministry of youth and sports, which did not stop at simplistic solutions, but rather looked at the underlying and basic causes for the position of young people. The emphasis on the posi-

tive nature of young people also enabled them to present that side and show how much can be achieved if young people are not manipulated or silenced.

However, the quality of participation and the quality of the final report were compromised by the superficial and/or negative understanding of participation by some ministry officials and other adults. This meant that they did not follow the guidelines agreed upon, especially in the selection of facilitators and participants, nor did they allow participants the freedom to express themselves on any issue.

Independent researchers may not face these problems to such an extent, as they are more in control of their own research – though they may have to revisit their own commitment to participation and 'handing over the stick'. However, when working within institutional contexts where adults hold sway, much more work needs to be done with adults about the meaning and practice of participation. This includes addressing the stereotypes and prejudices of adults about youth (see Box 2). The process also has to be tightly overseen by people who are fully involved in and committed to participatory principles and the full participation of young people.

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