

# HOW YOUNG PEOPLE INFLUENCE POLICY:

## A Literature Review



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# HOW YOUNG PEOPLE INFLUENCE POLICY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Summary.** Young people are an asset to any society, bringing innovation and energy. International organizations, governments, and organizations have increasingly looked at ways to involve young people in policy creation and implementation. However, there is a lack of theoretical and empirical work on the impact that youth are having on policy. **Methods.** This paper addresses this gap by conducting a systematic search of academic literature since 2000 (EconLit, JSTOR, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar), synthesizing cases and key theoretical papers on the topic of youth influencing policy. **Findings.** There has been an increase in the literature on youth influencing policy in the second decade of this millennium. The review identifies arguments in favor of the recent trend to focus more on policy influencing that is led and initiated by youth themselves, instead of being led by development organizations. The review also identifies and discusses a shift to a greater focus on influencing policies locally, compared to nationally. Multiple strategies that youth are using to influence policies are discussed along with how development organizations can best support youth initiatives. These findings should be tempered by the continued weakness of the empirical literature on how youth influence policies. Future research and case studies should more rigorously analyze the impact of youth on both policy formulation processes and their implementation.

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past decades there has been an increased awareness of the need to listen to the voices of young people and to involve them in decision making. This development can be traced to international documents such as the participation clauses of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and its 2007 supplement (General Assembly, 1989, 1995, 2007).

Initially development actors and civil society organizations focused on how adults could better create spaces for the voices and participation of children and young people in adult-led programs and activities(cf. Hart, 1992; Hart, 2008). At the same time there was a renewed focus on the assets and strengths of youth and how their participation in decision making could enhance their own individual development (Morton & Montgomery, 2013; Shaw, Brady, McGrath, Brennan, & Dolan, 2014).Results of this work include the creation of numerous projects and platforms focused on increasing youth participation. More recently, focus has begun to shift to how youth can impact policy, and not only have a voice at the table or an influence on a short-term project. While much has been written on the policy process and the influence of interest groups (Weible, Heikkila, deLeon, & Sabatier, 2012), relatively little has been written on the impact of youth efforts to influence policies.

There remain critical questions about how to structure such participation, and how organizations can support youth efforts to influence policy. One question that remains, is the role to be played by youth relative to adults in initiating and driving policy influencing efforts. Some arguments imply that more experienced adults should take the lead. Notably, traditional

policy influencing frameworks highlight the importance of experience, coalitions, and long-term investments, among other factors, which may favor adult leadership (cf. Weible, et al., 2012). Adults may be better suited to choose the topics to focus on, how to frame them, and the venues to choose for successfully influencing. Other work favors leadership by youth. Work informed by the frameworks from the participation literature, such as the work by Hart and Shier (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001), prioritize youth initiation and decision making.<sup>1</sup>

While youth initiation, responsibility, and leadership are necessary within the highest levels of these frameworks of participation, both Hart and Shier also underline the role of adults in joint decision making and support. Whereas joint decision-making within a participatory scheme is appealing, it might also be at risk of reproducing power structures which sideline youth (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). To borrow from the work of Gaventa, such joint partnerships may confer *visible power* to youth while the adults remain in control through the *hidden power* of agenda setting and the *invisible power* of deciding what policy topics are appropriate for youth (Gaventa, 2006; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). Such joint efforts – if housed in adult-led organizations – may also be biased in favor of providing spaces where young people are *invited* to exert influence rather than looking for spaces that young people have claimed and created for themselves (Cornwall, 2002). Due to the challenges facing such joint efforts, young people may be more motivated and effective in their policy influencing if they are fully responsible for the advocacy efforts.

A second critical question is about which mix of venues youth should target to influence policies. Should efforts focus more on influencing international, national, local, and/or

<sup>1</sup> While these frameworks were developed for working with children in light of experiences from developed country

contexts, they have been influential in youth programs in developing countries (Hart, 2008; Shier, 2009).

organizational policies? At which level are youth more motivated and effective – and at which level should development organizations provide support? Some authors on general policy advocacy have suggested a local focus due to lower levels of complexity (Weible, et al., 2012) and more immediate access to policymakers (Holyoke, Brown, & Henig, 2012). A local focus also aligns with the fact that countries around the world have been decentralizing in recent decades (UCLG, 2009). Given the stronger present bias among youth (Steinberg et al., 2009),<sup>2</sup> working on local policies and organizational policies now might be more salient and motivating since the results are likely to be more immediate and tangible. This desire among youth for seeing impact and change now, rather than waiting for larger policies to change, can be linked to the re-emergence of the concept of prefigurative politics, or “embodying in the present one’s vision of the future” (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2016, p. 78).

On the other hand, it may be preferable to focus on national policies as they often have a larger potential impact. Youth focusing on influencing national policies may also be more effective at shifting norms, perceptions, and images regarding policies (Wolfe, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2013). Such changes in public image can be key catalysts of large scale policy change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991). While there is likely no hard and fast rule, the importance of shopping around for receptive venues – both local and national – has long been highlighted as a key element of influencing public policy (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991; Beyers & Kerremans, 2012).

Recent reviews have highlighted the lack of literature on the impact of young people on policies (Halsey, Murfield, Harland, & Lord, 2006; Marcus & Cunningham, 2016). Compared to this review, these previous reviews mapped sets of literature that were

broader along some dimensions and more specific along others. Marcus and Cunningham focused less on conceptual papers and included any project where youth were agents or advocates, as a result only a minority of cases included focused on policy influencing and outcomes were a minority (Marcus & Cunningham, 2016). Halsey and colleagues focused more on evaluation literature and less on theoretical literature, and their review is now over 10 years old (Halsey, et al., 2006).

This review expanded on this work by focusing on theoretical and case literature centered on how youth are influencing policies at the organizational, local, national, and international levels. More specifically, this paper reviewed the academic literature on how youth influence policy in developing country contexts through the identification of cases, the assessment of their theoretical underpinnings, an analysis of the effectiveness of various approaches, and the identification of research gaps. The review addressed the following questions through a synthesis of the available academic literature:

- 1. What are the latest findings and theories within current literature on how young people organize to effectively influence policy?**
- 2. What are the current means that young people are using to influence policy and how are they predicted to shift in the near future?**
- 3. What roles have youth initiatives played within recent successful policy influencing?**
- 4. How have large international and national development organizations (DOs) engaged with, supported, and/or hampered youth initiatives to influence policy?**

<sup>2</sup> Present bias refers to the tendency to more strongly prefer short term gains when compared to longer term gains.

## 2. Methodology

This literature review used a pre-specified search method to ensure that the findings were broad and less susceptible to bias (Greenhalgh, 1997; Higgins & Green, 2011). Details of the search process were documented in line with PRISMA guidelines to ensure transparency (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & Group, 2009).

### 2.1 Inclusion & Exclusion

Cases were **included** in the coding process if they met the following criteria:

- Population: Cases must have been primarily comprised of youth aged 15 to 24<sup>3</sup> as actors in the policy influencing process and must have occurred in a developing country, defined as any country that is not classified as having “Very High Human Development” in the 2015 Human Development Index (UNDP, 2015).
- Intervention: Cases must have included an initiative in which young people aimed to influence policy change or policy implementation at either the organizational (both for-profit and non-profit) or governmental level (local, regional, national, or international).
- Date: Cases must have been published from 2000 onwards and must document actions taken since 2000 (inclusive), to ensure greater relevance to twenty-first century modes of organization and communication.

Cases were **excluded** if they focused on youth participation only at the classroom, program, or research project level unless such projects also aimed to influence a higher-level policy at the organizational or governmental level.

<sup>3</sup> In line with the UN definition of ‘youth,’ recognizing the exclusion these young people often face; acknowledging that youth can represent a more fluid category than a fixed age group would suggest. Cases

### 2.2 Search Process

The search was conducted in PsycINFO, EconLit, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. These databases were chosen due to their broad coverage of topics relevant to youth work and policy change. PsycINFO is the premier resource for psychology literature. Meanwhile, EconLit and JSTOR are both leading repositories for economic literature and are ideally suited to identify cases where youth influenced governmental policies. Finally, Google Scholar has advantages in terms of coverage of organizational working papers that may not yet be published or indexed in scholarly databases (cf. Jacsó, 2008).

Due to time constraints, the number of potential documents screened was limited for each database prior to beginning the search using the rules in the Appendix in Table 1. Search terms were pre-specified to ensure transparency and replicability. The search terms, results, and numbers of studies screened can be found in the Appendix in Table 2 and Figure 4.

### 2.3 Screening & Coding

Documents were de-duplicated and then screened for potential relevance by title and then by abstract. This was followed by screening the full documents.

All identified cases were then coded in multiple passes starting with a pre-specified coding scheme that was then updated based on the emerging findings from the cases. Differences in typologies were not pre-specified as they were grounded in the analysis of the cases. Typologies and trends were developed by considering characteristics such as the cases’ population, location, method of influence, scale, and success. For each case, the

with different definitions of youth were included if the ages represented substantively overlapped with this definition.

characteristics in Table 3 were coded when possible.

#### 2.4 Synthesis of Results

From the coding of the cases, the review identified trends in approaches to document different methods that youth have used to have an impact on policy along with cases and theoretical underpinnings for each. Positive and negative examples were highlighted to document both successes and failures when possible.

### 3. Results

The search resulted in 2,406 potential papers of which 2,210 were excluded by screening the title and abstracts using the inclusion and exclusion criteria above.<sup>4</sup> Many excluded papers included youth as program recipients and not actors influencing policies. Others were primarily about adults and only mentioned youth in passing. Of the remaining 196 papers, 31 cases were identified. Additional snowball searching from known reviews yielded an additional six cases for a total of 37 cases. Along with these 37 cases of youth influencing policies, 22 theoretically relevant papers and 8 reviews were retained to enrich the findings. In addition, six papers were suggested by Oxfam to further expand the included theoretical literature. The following synthesis includes inputs from 37 cases and 36 additional papers used to inform the findings (see Figure 4).

#### 3.1 Description of Cases

The 21<sup>st</sup> century marshalled in an increasing interest in youth participation, active citizenship, and how young people influence policies at organizational, local, and national levels (Halsey, et al., 2006; Musi & Ntlama, 2011; Restless Development, 2010; Taft & Gordon, 2013). This trend has accelerated in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with 76% of the cases identified in this review having been published from 2011. The cases covered 28 countries, with the majority being from Africa (see Figure 1).

The youth participants ranged in age depending on the local context's definition of youth. The most common age range was 15 - 24 while in Africa several papers included youth up to their early- or mid-30s. Most cases involved both male and female youth working to influence policies (81%) with three cases involving only female participants and four

cases involving only male participants. Because many cases focused on international, national, or regional initiatives most of the participants and topics covered included a mix of both rural and urban areas (57%); however, urban cases (30%) were more common than rural (11%) and rural cases were focused almost exclusively on agriculture.

Cases ranged in scale from the documentation of the influence of individual youth leaders (15%), to small and medium sized efforts with dozens to hundreds of youth participating (47%), to large scale efforts often with up to tens of thousands of youth involved (26%), and finally some cases having a mix of the above (12%). Roughly half of the cases were initiated and driven primarily by youth (52%), adult-led organizations initiated and drove most of the remaining cases (42%), with some cases including a combination (6%). Only 56% of the cases were driven solely by formalized organizations while many were informal groups



Figure 1: Number of cases per country ranged from 1 to 4

or individuals (22%), semi-formal entities that were not officially recognized (such as unregistered civil society organizations) (11%), and coalitions of formal and informal groups (11%).

The cases included youth working to influence the policies of national governments (35%), local governments and communities (30%),

<sup>4</sup> When conducting systematic searches, it is common for the search to result in thousands of potential papers despite only finding dozens of included papers at the end of the search. This common trait of systematic searches can be observed by

reviewing systematic reviews in the [Campbell Collaboration library](#).

organizations<sup>5</sup> (26%), and cases targeting several levels (9%).

Only 23% of the cases made explicit use of internet and communication technology (ICT) to exert influence, despite the recent interest in how ICT can increase civic activity among young people (Thackeray, 2010).

### 3.2 Trends

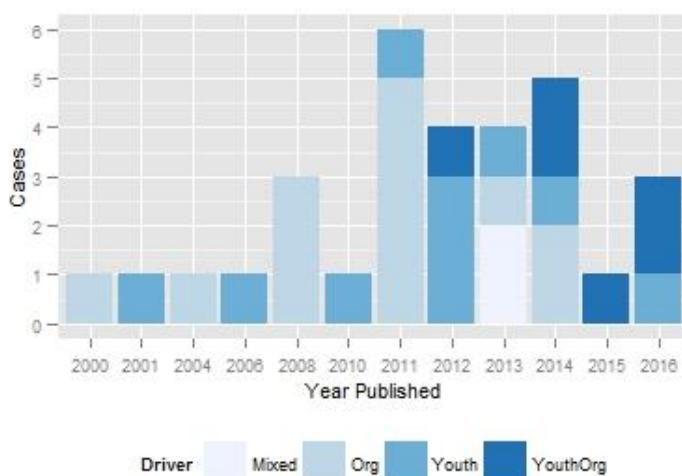
A critical analysis grounded in the identified literature uncovered two broad shifts in how the influence of youth on policy is conceptualized: firstly, a shift to focusing on how to leverage organic and existing *youth* driven initiatives and organizations, and secondly, a shift to focusing on influencing *local* policies.

Before covering the details of the impact of these cases on policy, it must be noted that policy impacts are notoriously difficult to attribute to any single effort. Furthermore, few of the papers are primarily concerned with understanding *how* youth influenced policy changes. As such, claims regarding the existence of a youth influence are taking at face value. However, this review critically appraised the direction and strength of these youth influences. The policy impact of youth influence was considered strong when the policy changed and the causal link to the youth actions seemed reasonable in terms of how much effort was exerted, how much time had passed, and how likely it was that other actors were driving the decision. A strong impact does not assume direct attribution, but rather a strong contribution to the policy. For cases where the impact is framed in terms of raising awareness or exerting a generic “influence” without any change in policy behavior the impact was coded as weak. When it was clearly stated that no change occurred despite the youth efforts, this was considered an unsuccessful case. Finally, if the young

people’s attempts to influence had a negative impact on them, others, or the policy, then the impact was considered negative.

#### Trend 1: Young People Leading Initiatives

There appears to be a growing recognition that existing formal and informal youth organizations, associations, and leaders can be more effective at exerting influence on policy than traditional development projects that are often initiated and conceptualized by



adults. Cases through 2010 were mostly driven

Figure 2: Increase in the number of youth-driven cases over time

by adult-led organizations (62%) while most cases published from 2011 onward were driven by youth themselves or youth organizations (57%).<sup>6</sup>

For this study, efforts by youth to influence policy were considered to be “adult-led” when the policy goals of the effort were pre-determined or initiated by an adult-led organization prior to involving youth. For example, in Tajikistan and Kosovo, UNICEF designed a participatory educational research project, but the study was led by adult researchers who then trained and supervised

<sup>5</sup> These are primarily cases of young people who are members / staff of an organization and are influencing the policies and strategies of that organization. In some cases the target of influence is another organization (such as a University) (Ahmad, 2016; Jeffrey & Young, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> The pattern is the same if the median year of publication (2012) is used as the cut-off. After 2012, 62% of the cases described youth led initiatives while cases published up until 2012 were mostly (56%) about organization led initiatives.

the youth researchers. As noted in the report, “youth researchers and UNICEF country office staff had different expectations and priorities” (UNICEF, 2011, p. 26).

On the other hand, policy influencing driven by the youth directly includes initiatives undertaken by individuals, informal groups, and formal youth organizations. Such initiatives were considered youth-led if they were initiated and managed by youth who exercised autonomous decision making power. Individual youth should not be forgotten, as individuals can be key agents of change. An example is a young Barangay Captain in a rural area of the Philippines who stopped local clientilistic policies by providing new housing to all community members equally rather than first building houses for the traditional elders (Narayan, Nikitin, & Petesch, 2010, p. 102). Informal youth associations include the unregistered youth organizations, such as Opantish, that started as small groups of youth working together to patrol the streets to intervene in the case of sexual assault but eventually informally organized themselves under a name and a set of policies and practices (Tadros, 2015). Formal youth organizations are legal entities led and managed by youth themselves – not merely programs or projects. An example would be the youth co-operatives in Uganda (Hartley, 2014). Even among these youth driven cases there were other adult organizations that provide support, but do not drive the agenda since their support was for youth entities that had autonomous decision making power over policy influencing. An example would be the funding support that youth co-operatives received from the Uganda Co-operative Alliance (Hartley & Johnson, 2014, p. 717).

There is preliminary evidence to suggest that when youth are the primary drivers there is more impact. Most of the cases that show a

strong influence are youth driven (7 of 10) while most weak influences are driven by adult-led organizations (6 of 8). An individual youth activist was able to compel the local government to build a road to a secluded village in a rural area by starting the work with his fellow villagers using borrowed tools and then using media to shame the local government into completing the road (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2016, pp. 85-86). Despite the fact that some young men wanted to restrict the roles the young women could play, female members of a youth association in Egypt instituted a strict, and effective, policy that anyone who did not support equal participation could no longer be a member of the organization (Tadros, 2015, p. 1360). Together with other informal youth organizations the young people mobilized parts of the community and shifted some social norms to intervene and prevent numerous sexual assaults during Egypt’s protests (*Ibid*). The importance and impact of youth directed efforts has also been recognized in recent updates of the participatory literature which have noted that the previous frameworks assumed adult involvement, this bias was in part due to the original frameworks’ reliance on experiences in developed countries (Hart, 2008; Shier, 2009).

This pattern of higher impact was particularly true for employment-related cases.<sup>7</sup> The strongest examples of organizations with policies governed directly by youth included informal youth companies in Ghana and Nigeria (Ismail, 2016); youth worker associations in Egypt and Sierra Leone (Ismail, 2016; Tugal, 2012); and youth cooperatives in Lesotho and Uganda (Hartley, 2014; Hartley & Johnson, 2014). These youth-led organizations not only enabled youth to influence organizational policies, but also government policies. Being a part of youth organizations that are self-governed, young people have direct influence over

<sup>7</sup> This review was tasked with highlighting employment related findings to help inform specific projects related to youth employment. Herein, cases were coded as focused on

employment when they included policies that impacted working conditions, payment and profitability, entrepreneurship, and active labor market policies.

organizational policies and strategies. With co-operatives in particular, youth are able to vote on decisions and make yearly plans for the organization(Hartley, 2014, p. 724). Youth-run organizations exerted influence on government policies as well. The 200,000 strong Bike Riders Unions in Sierra Leone were able to influence the Sierra Leone Transport Authority to reduce “extortion of its members by police” with support from a local NGO, the Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (Ismail, 2016, p. i48). Unsanctioned workers’ collectives made up of thousands of predominately young people in Egypt were able to exert influence via strikes and threats to resign that successfully changed company payment policies despite resistance from the official union leaders (Beinin, 2009). Large scale youth protests have also been a substantial force affecting regime change in countries as diverse as Egypt and the Philippines (David, 2013, p. 324; Tugal, 2012).

Not all efforts by youth are successful. In some cases, initial successes are followed by broader defeats. Protests by youth and motorbike taxi workers in Cameroon resulted in an initial victory of reducing fuel costs by 12 cents per liter. However, when protests continued and intensified against President Biya’s proposal to eliminate term limits, the President violently put down the protests using elite security forces and passed the elimination of term limits (Amin, 2012). It is important to note that policy theorists emphasize that the policy change process is not linear (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991; Wolfe, et al., 2013). As such, initial defeats might catalyze further action and change. However, in instances where youth are brutally repressed and do not achieve policy goals, the initial result is one of defeat and the tactic might not have been ideal for the context.

While discussions of youth influence and participation are often linked to normative perspectives with a strong positive bias in favor of youth participation (Brady et al., 2012; Shaw, et al., 2014), it is also true that youth organizations can have a negative influence on their members and policies. Negative behaviors and perspectives can become contagious among at-risk youth as authors have noted (Dishion, Dodge, & Lansford, 2006). For example the male student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT), has used violence and intimidation to promote anti-secular, Wahabist policies and practices at university (Ahmad, 2016, pp. 9-10). In this case, the influence of such organizations can also draw youth into a negative behavioral pattern as those “who may not otherwise share its ideology find joining IJT to be a way to enjoy power over fellow students and administration” (sic)(ibid., p. 9).

### Trend 2: Young People Focusing Locally

In recent years, the literature on youth efforts to influence policy has started to focus more on influencing local policy when compared to national policy. Efforts to influence local government, community, and organizational polices account for 67% of the cases from 2011 onward. This is in contrast to the first decade of the millennium in which the focus of the identified literature was more heavily focused on national policies (57%).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> As was the case with the first trend towards youth, this shift is robust to the choice of cut-offs. The trend remains the same if the median date of publication (2012) is used (77%

local or organizational level since 2012, and 53% national through 2012).

Herein, youth influencing changes in **organizational policy** is defined as when youth are influencing the long-term policies or approaches of an organization – not only limited to a particular project. An example includes when youth are able to direct the policies of their own youth-led organizations such as youth co-operatives and youth workers' associations (Hartley, 2014; Ismail, 2016).

Youth policy influencing that targets **local or community level policies** includes cases that directly target a government body at the local level, or efforts to shift how the community implements policies. An example of targeting a local government body is when youth conducted an audit of local projects in Kenya and found an improperly built school that the contractors had to rebuild according to proper specifications (Mwawashe, 2011). A community-based example is in the Philippines where a youth leader was able to change the traditional way that resources were distributed in the community after a disaster (Narayan, et al., 2010).

Cases targeting **national policies** include protests aimed to change the composition of the national government or attempts to enact or change a national policy. An example of the former includes the youth protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to encourage a joint government by both Fatah and Hamas (Esposito, 2008). An example of the latter includes the establishment of a “Shadow Children’s Parliament” to apply pressure to amend and pass the Children’s Protection and Welfare Act in Lesotho (Musi & Ntlama, 2011).

As was the case in the first trend on youth driven policy influencing, efforts to influence policies at the local level appear to be more immediately effective when compared to those at the national level. Included cases where youth worked to influence the local government or community policies had a strong impact in the majority of cases (5 of 8). When attempting to influence national policies, there was a strong impact in only 2 of 11 cases. This

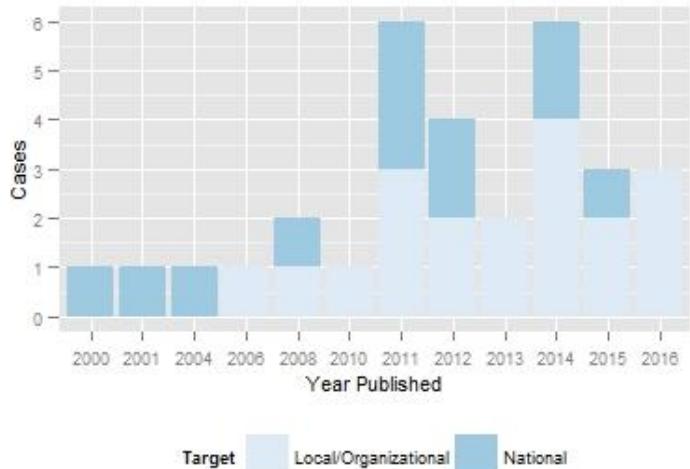


Figure 3: Increase in the number of local/organizational initiatives over time

pattern is driven by the fact that youth efforts to influence policy at the local or organizational level are often linked to implementation (rather than the formulation of new policies) and are thus more visible and more immediate. This should not necessarily be surprising given the proximity of local government, fewer actors at the local level, and broader trends to decentralize governments in order to increase participation in decision making (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006; Kauzya, 2007). However, it should be noted that cases of employment related policy influencing tended to focus on targeting organizational policies within the place of employment instead of local government policies. Although not geared directly at the government, such efforts to influence the policies of local organizations are also in line with a shift towards the local level.

In addition to the higher apparent impact of efforts by youth to influence local, community, and organizational policies, there are several additional arguments in favor of this shift. One argument is that many youth feel disillusioned by, or mistrustful of, politicians and the national government (Abd el Wahab, 2012; Berthin, 2014; Ilavarasan, 2013). Secondly, engaging with local governments can also create opportunities to influence national policies. For example, the Lilongwe District Youth Office was trusted by youth and this may have been

the reason that it served as a hub to connect youth organizations to the Malawi Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and many other national and local entities working on agricultural policy (Kadzamira & Kazembe, 2015, p. 7). A third argument is that young people are more motivated by local and current needs and impacts (Berthin, 2014; Sancar, Severcan, Percy-Smith, & Thomas, 2010; Taft & Gordon, 2013). This third reason can be linked to the recent interest in using the concept of “prefigurative politics”<sup>9</sup> to frame instances where youth attempt to embody, in the present, the policy changes they want to influence (cf. Jeffrey & Dyson, 2016; Tadros, 2015). In India an individual young man arranged 100 villagers to build a road to their village that was incomplete, this action brought media attention and pressured the local officials to complete the road (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2016, pp. 85-86). Finally, this level of politics is more accessible to many youth (Turkie, 2010), and can even open up an opportunity to be a member of a local council or decision making body. For example, running for the position of village leader in rural India (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2016, pp. 88-89), the two women who had participated in a female parliament project that influenced local district assemblies and then decided to run to be representatives in their District Assembly in Ghana (Akapire & Awal, 2011, p. 119), or the young women elected as members of local decision-making entities as part of Oxfam’s My Rights, My Voice program in Nepal (van Esbroeck, Chelladurai, & Verhofstadt, 2016). Indeed, this sort of increased participation and access is one of the arguments for decentralization processes (Kauzya, 2007).

Finally, it should be noted that there is still a need for a mix of efforts focused on both national and local levels. A local policy focus can be more effective at influencing implementation, can provide an accessible entry point for changing national policies, and

can be more motivating for young people. Meanwhile, the existence of national policies can be a necessary pre-condition for local influence by youth, such as lobbying the national government to lower the required age of membership on local decision-making bodies (Lekorwe & Mpabanga, 2007). Despite the importance of influencing local policies, we must remember that many policies need to be addressed at a national level – or will be more effectively addressed there. Indeed, the importance of judiciously identifying policy-making venues that are accessible, favorable, and currently attending to the policy area being targeted – known as venue shopping – is key to success in influencing policy (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991; Holyoke, et al., 2012). Young people should certainly engage in such judicious venue selection when considering how to best achieve their policy objectives.

### 3.3 Strategies

The cases identified cover a range of strategies to influence policies. The following will highlight six groups of strategies. These include (1) direct governance, (2) protests and industrial action, (3) model parliaments, (4) audits and research, (5) prefigurative politics, and (6) the use of media, art, and ICT. It is important to highlight that many efforts use a combination of strategies for policy influence that are also combined with capacity building and general awareness raising efforts (Ricardo & Fonseca, 2008; Tufte, 2014; van Esbroeck, et al., 2016).



**Direct Governance.** One of the most effective ways for youth to influence policy is to be members of the decision-making bodies. Cases included individual young people who became leaders in their community and changed the policies that were implemented directly (eg. Narayan, et al., 2010). Examples of youth having a strong influence on the policies at an

<sup>9</sup> See definition and reference on Page 4.

organizational level was most clearly visible when the organization was run solely by youth (Hartley, 2014; Ismail, 2016). The inclusion of young people in local leadership positions can even have a positive impact on economic outcomes such as agricultural yields (McCarthy & Kilic, 2015). It was more difficult for youth to feel that they had an influence on the policies of organizations that attempted to balance the influence of both adults and youth. For example, most youth members of the Youth Advocacy Network in Pakistan felt that decisions were “made behind closed doors” despite YAN’s participatory structure (Zeb, 2008).



**Protests.** A common strategy for having an impact on national policies and national governments is the use of protests and industrial action (such as strikes). Young people’s involvement in protests has been highlighted as a key factor in regime change in places as diverse as Egypt and the Philippines (David, 2013; Tugal, 2012). Such protests can be facilitated using ICT for coordinating, spreading awareness, and recruiting more individuals to the cause. In the Philippines, SMS was used to organize political rallies while in Palestine young people used Facebook to spread a petition and organize protests (David, 2013; Esposito, 2008). Strikes have also been successful in putting pressure on economic policies of companies and governments (Ismail, 2016; Tugal, 2012). It is important to note that in several cases the workers’ associations may be informal and in the case of Egypt the young people took action even though the union leadership did not officially endorse the strike (Tugal, 2012). Protests can also pressure organizations to implement existing policies, such as when young people in Pakistan blocked a road until bus drivers acquiesced and began servicing

the more remote villages at the end of the bus route (Zeb, 2008, p. 47). Finally, it is important to note that this strategy can fail and result in brutal retaliation by repressive regimes (Amin, 2012) and escalating violence when underlying ethnic and economic tensions are not resolved, as in the case of the Niger Delta (Anugwom, 2014; Ikelegbe, 2001; Oyefusi, 2010).



**Model Parliaments.** Model parliaments or youth councils are increasingly common strategies for facilitating young people’s influence on policies. While the young people do not have direct decision making power, they often serve a dual function of raising the civic engagement of young people and increasing the interaction between youth and policy makers. When successful, they can garner the attention of the media and policy makers and motivate action. For example, in 2010, young people in Lesotho took part in a Shadow Children’s Parliament facilitated by World Vision. They debated the passage of the Children’s Protection and Welfare Act in the national parliament building in Maseru with ministers in the public gallery. The bill had been in draft form since 2004, but less than a year after the event the bill passed including an amendment that addressed some of the concerns raised by young people regarding the treatment of child offenders (Musi & Ntlama, 2011). In another case, a Female Parliament facilitated by ActionAid in Ghana called on the government to allocate 50% of the appointed District Assembly seats to women.<sup>10</sup> This contributed to a circular directing District Assemblies to allocate 40% of appointments to women (Akapire & Awal, 2011, p. 119). When using this strategy, it is important that young people feel that their actions in such model parliaments have an impact and are not merely acts of practicing to

<sup>10</sup> Both of these efforts included participants from rural areas. The supporting organizations ensured a representative mix of participants.



be like adults (Shaw, et al., 2014; Taft & Gordon, 2013).



**Audits and Research.** The use of audits and research to influence policy can be an effective strategy when young people can identify the needs

of a larger group of youth and present those to decision makers. In Kenya, a team of young people conducted youth-led social audits of public financial management at the community level that were initiated and supported by Plan International (Mwawashe, 2011). The young people collected data, created a report that was discussed internally, then presented their findings at a stakeholder meeting in which a social contract action plan was created for follow-up.<sup>11</sup> One result was identifying a poorly constructed school that was subsequently repaired to meet requirements. In another participatory research and action planning exercise, youth members of the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union were trained in HIV/AIDS research and action planning and were able to influence the approaches to HIV/AIDS at the district and provincial levels by collecting information on their peers' experiences alongside taking part in implementation (Hoy, 2008). It is important that a plan for follow-up and action be developed, and not merely a data collection plan (cf. UNICEF, 2011). It also seems that presenting the information directly, and in person, to decision makers is a key element of success in both developing and developed country contexts (Kwon, 2008; Mwawashe, 2011).



**Prefigurative Politics.** Youth also influence policies by embodying those policies in the here-and-now through prefigurative politics. By taking actions that

government or an organization, this can serve to shame the duty bearers into acting. This was the case in India when a young man started building a road with his villagers knowing that they could not complete the road. This prefigurative act brought media attention that shamed the local government into completing the road (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2016). In Egypt, young people organized into groups and used physical force to stop sexual assault and protect victims. They then used media attention and community recognition to (unsuccessfully) put pressure on other duty bearers tasked with protecting protestors but whose members were at times assaulting women (Tadros, 2015).



**Media, Art, and ICT.** Youth also are creative in their use of media and art, especially to raise awareness around an issue and create pressure on policy-makers. Some of these

efforts involve mass media efforts combined with edutainment (Tufte, 2014; van Esbroeck, et al., 2016). Traditional mass media, such as radio programs, is also used to exert influence (Ricardo & Fonseca, 2008). Other traditional youth activities are also used, such as street theatre, concerts, and art presentations that are often designed to raise awareness (van Esbroeck, et al., 2016).<sup>12</sup> The use of media, art, and ICT can provide powerful support for more traditional protest efforts, as has been noted in cases such as that of Y'en a Marre in Senegal and similar movements in Francophone Africa (Claire et al., 2017). However, as in the case of Y'en a Marre, the use of media, art, and ICT are often not sufficient on their own, but rather as a medium of support for other actions. Particularly with the case of ICT, authors cite the need to combine it with other traditional methods of policy influence and warn that there is a danger that ICT may create a tendency to

<sup>11</sup> Tips for practitioners that want to conduct a social audit can be found on page 182 (Mwawashe, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Many examples of youth using creative expression to raise awareness and act on their rights can also be found in the

[Aflateen story gallery](#) which provides youth with an online venue for sharing their social enterprises (and financial enterprises) <[Aflateen.org/story-gallery](http://Aflateen.org/story-gallery)>.



bypass local governance and issues in favor of national topics (Ben-Attar & Campbell, 2013).

All of these strategies will be influenced by existing power dynamics among the youth, and external to them. It is important to be critically aware of the roles being played by young women, youth with less education, and those with fewer financial resources. Such critical awareness will often highlight that such groups have less power. This is particularly true of young women as they can face all of these barriers to equitable participation and power-sharing. Most cases identified in this review noted that more affluent, educated, male members of the groups tended to be in leadership positions. In cases where this was not true, it was often because the traditionally “less powerful” group of youth were the founders of the organization or comprised the majority of its members. An example of such a re-balancing of power dynamics was in Egypt where young women in the organization demanded equal opportunity to perform any role and did not allow men who objected to join (Tadros, 2015, p. 1360). Most cases noted the power dynamics in passing and did not provide strong examples of strategies that effectively re-balance power. This was especially true of strategies to better share decision-making power between young men and women. A notable exception was when development organizations recruited only young women or aimed to recruit equal numbers of male and female participants for a policy-influencing initiative (Akapire & Awal, 2011; Musi & Ntlama, 2011). More work is needed to better understand the role of gender in youth-led policy influencing as well as the role of other potential dimensions of inequality – including education, wealth, and age.

### 3.4 What can Development Organizations do?

Following from the two trends highlighted above, this review recommends that organizations focus their support on efforts to influence *local* policies through *existing* youth

*initiatives, associations, and leaders.* Development organizations (DOs) can do this by facilitating connections, building capacity, and enabling the inclusion of under-represented groups of young people.

Youth organizations may not have strong ties to each other or decision makers. DOs can help facilitate these connections so that youth can combine their efforts and exert more direct influence. For example, a need for greater coordination was noted among youth organizations in Egypt and Malawi (Abd el Wahab, 2012, p. 76; Kadzamira & Kazembe, 2015). In the latter case, the Farmers Forum for Trade and Social Justice serves as one of the most well connected organizations and could serve as a model to help link other youth organizations together for influencing agricultural policy. Equally important is helping facilitate linkages between existing youth associations with decision makers. In Sierra Leone a local NGO, the Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities, helped connect the Biker Riders Unions to the transport authority (Ismail, 2016, p. i48). Conducting a network analysis for both the development organization and the youth entity can highlight where the DO can play a role in creating new links. Such linkages can help youth efforts more effectively target ideal policy venues in line with the concept of venue shopping.

Development organizations can also help develop the capacity of young people who are leaders and members of informal and formal youth associations. They can support existing youth efforts through leadership training (Stoneman, 2002), data collection as in the case of audits and participatory research projects (Hoy, 2008; UNICEF, 2011), or business management (Hartley & Johnson, 2014). Such capacity building can be particularly effective at empowering under-represented youth at having more of a voice within existing youth initiatives. For example, providing training to young women or youth

with disabilities and conducting awareness raising among the other youth to increase more equitable power sharing. It is encouraging that there is more literature on the effectiveness of such capacity building initiatives at improving young people's knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Marcus & Cunningham, 2016). However, organizations should be critically aware of the risks of favoring certain individuals as "leaders" and should ensure an open line of communication to other members of the youth initiative so that they can raise concerns about equity (Alvarez, 2000; Harcourt, 2013).

Development organizations can help facilitate the inclusions of excluded groups of youth within existing youth efforts to influence policy. As with other groups, youth organizations tend to replicate existing power structures with male, older, more educated, and more affluent individuals exerting more influence (Berthin, 2014; Cardozo et al., 2015; UNICEF, 2011). All youth-driven efforts in this review were either led by men or a mix of men and women – with young women playing a dominant role in two of the cases including both women and men in Egypt (Beinin, 2009; Tadros, 2015; Tugal, 2012). Organizations could work to influence the youth organizations' own policies to include an equal number of men and women and help young people identify and address the barriers to participation for other under-represented groups and groups with less power due to traditional norms (Shier, 2009; Turkie, 2010). DOs can also help link youth organizations run by minority groups with majority groups to create opportunities for exchange.

The support from development organizations can have unintended effects that might weaken or constraint youth movements. One of these is the bias towards formalization, such as the financial and administrative requirements imposed on youth organizations that receive support. This can prevent DOs from partnering with informal organizations that lack the administrative systems necessary to meet the reporting and auditing requirements of DOs.

Even when partnerships are successfully established and formalized, such partnerships can direct the energy of youth away from their core advocacy work towards administrative tasks. Finally, the DOs have their own agendas and often have much more power than youth organizations. This power imbalance can unwittingly pressure the youth to align their work with the development organization and away from their own preferences. This is particularly true if funding is involved. At times youth may also have strong, and legitimate preferences, for engaging in more contentious forms of political pressure that are not compatible with the norms of some development organizations (Taft & Gordon, 2013). Partnership with DOs may pressure youth to avoid such contentious topics or methods. There is no hard and fast rule to avoid these power dynamics; however, being critically aware of their possibility and returning to reflect on them regularly is an important starting point. Tools such as the power cube can be helpful in such reflection (Gaventa, 2006).

### 3.5 Contextual Factors

Many contextual factors have an impact on how and where policy influencing can take place and succeed. Some of these factors arose among the identified cases. One factor is if the government is supportive of civil society. In countries where civic space is limited, there is a greater likelihood that youth will use informal means of organizing (Abd el Wahab, 2012). Another contextual factor, is the level of unemployment and education. When pursuing large-scale protests, high levels of unemployment and low levels of education should be assessed – especially in the context of long-standing policy conflicts – as it has been noted in the Niger Delta that such factors can put young people at a greater risk of using violent means of protest (Oyefusi, 2010). A third factor, is how decentralized and federalized the systems of government is. In countries with more decentralization, there are more local opportunities for youth to influence

decision making (Kauzya, 2007; UCLG, 2009). However, in contexts that are highly centralized, targeting local policies may be ineffective and focusing on national policies may be more fruitful. Finally, the existence of conflict will have an impact on initiatives, as it can disrupt efforts underway by displacing individuals, shifting the focus of the government on the conflict, disrupting sources of support, and shifting efforts to informal arenas (Cardozo, et al., 2015; Marcus & Cunningham, 2016). However, post-conflict situations can also create opportunities for new policies and new leadership afterward (Cardozo, et al., 2015; Marcus & Cunningham, 2016; Narayan, et al., 2010; Turner, 2006). In line with this review's findings, Cardoza and colleagues have also argued for a *local*, holistic, *youth-led* approach to engage with youth in conflict (Cardozo, et al., 2015).

## 4. Summary of Findings

### 4.1 Research Questions Revisited

The following will summarize the findings of this review under each of the four research questions:

1. What are the latest findings and theories within current literature on how young people organize to effectively influence policy?

This review's assessment of the literature supports an **increased focus on pre-existing youth entities** – both informal and formal – and how to support them in setting their own agenda to influence policies. Young people are organizing informally through organizations that are not legally registered, through informal associations of individuals and organizations, and as spontaneous collectives via large scale protests or small community acts. Young people are also making use of existing formal youth-run organizations to impact policies with and without the support of adult-led organizations. While adult-led organizations

can be instrumental in supporting youth policy influencing, they should avoid overshadowing youth entities and efforts.

Young people are working to impact policies at all levels including international, national, local, community, and organizational levels. However, **youth are often more motivated and more effective at improving policies at the local level**, including local governments, communities, and the organizations. This is particularly true when youth are seeking to influence the more effective implementation of existing policies. This focus should complement, rather than replace, efforts to influence national policies. When crafting policy-influencing strategies, a judicious selection of policy-making venues based on the policy of interest is needed.

2. What are the current means that young people are using to influence policy and how are they predicted to shift in the near future?

This review identified a range of strategies used by young people to influence policies. These include **direct governance, protests and industrial action, model parliaments, audits and data collection, prefigurative politics, and media, art and ICT**. In many cases, these strategies are combined both simultaneously and sequentially and are supported by capacity building activities for youth.

As noted, a shift is already underway to support existing youth-initiated efforts at the local level. Additional shifts include **the combined use of ICT to support the more traditional methods outlined**. There is also a call for **youth parliaments / councils to have increased power** over budgets and legislation to ensure that they are linked to concrete actions and policies and are not merely locations to imitate adults (Taft & Gordon, 2013).

### **3. What roles have youth initiatives played within recent successful policy influencing?**

The roles played by **youth initiatives in successful policy influencing cover the breadth of the policy process** and are not confined to one stage in policy development. Youth have been involved in lobbying for the creation and amendment of policies. Youth have also worked to successfully pressure duty-bearers to implement policies that may exist in theory but not in practice. **Local efforts have concentrated more on policy implementation** while national efforts have focused more on policy formulation. **There is less evidence of successful efforts to abolish undesirable policies**, although this review did identify cases in which youth attempted to prevent or abolish a policy unsuccessfully (Amin, 2012; Jeffrey & Young, 2012). Speculatively, this may be because of the vested interests involved in existing or proposed policies and the need for a broader coalition (beyond just youth) to block or rescind them (cf. Kingstone, Young, & Aubrey, 2013).

### **4. How have large international and national development organizations engaged with, supported, and/or hampered youth initiatives to influence policy?**

Youth initiatives **have tended to be more successful when they are truly youth-led**, including at the inception and agenda setting stages. Development organizations can support ongoing youth efforts by **facilitating links to decision makers and other organizations**. They can also help **build the leadership and organizational capacities of the youth**, while recognizing that at times more contentious, informal methods might be

required. Finally, development organizations can help youth organizations critically evaluate how inclusive they are of under-represented groups and can **facilitate the participation of disadvantaged youth in existing youth initiatives**. While this type of support from development organizations is key, such organizations **should be mindful of the potential unintended negative effects of their support**. Organizations should look for ways to avoid placing administrative burdens on youth and should be careful that leadership training programs and points of contact do not distort power dynamics within the youth organization.

## **4.2 Limitations**

This review provides an overview of the current literature on how youth are working around the developing world to influence policies. While the review did not seek to exhaustively cover all cases of youth influencing policies around the world, it did seek to ensure global coverage across the academic literature to capture the dominant trends and themes.<sup>13</sup> The following limitations of this review can be addressed by future research. This study relies primarily on academic literature that has been indexed in PsycINFO, EconLit, and JSTOR along with citations in Google Scholar. Future research would benefit from a search of newspaper and magazine databases to identify press materials about youth initiatives to see if the trends outlined here extend to media coverage. Secondly, most of the studies identified did not provide in depth analysis of how and why youth had an influence. Often papers only state the fact that youth had an influence in concluding or passing remarks. Researchers and programs focused on youth influencing should make use of more robust methods to determine the contribution of youth to policy change. One way to strengthen these findings would be to ensure that case studies

<sup>13</sup> Although the search was conducted in English, the databases used index an array of non-English papers and translate titles and abstracts into English. However, there are unique databases, for example in Spanish and Portuguese,

that were not searched and may skew the results towards English publications.



triangulate<sup>14</sup> their findings by investigating how multiple sources have similar or differing ideas about the influence of youth on a particular policy – particularly if the perception of youth and policy-makers align. Other methods from the policy change literature are instructive and often include use of multiple data sources over longer periods of time (over ten years) (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991). More specific frameworks and methods for providing robust documentation of policy influence include process tracing (Bennett, 2010; Collier, 2011) and Qualitative Comparative Analysis (Wagemann & Schneider, 2010). Finally, as mentioned above, most cases did not critically address the role of gender in determining power dynamics or the selection of policies for influence. More work is needed to understand strategies that can contribute to empowering young women to take a leading role in policy influencing, especially on topics beyond sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence.

### 4.3 Implications for Practice

Based on these findings, here are some recommendations for practitioners, with a specific focus on Oxfam's current work on youth. Example cases are provided as references after each.

1. **Start off by identifying existing formal and informal groups of youth** and ask them what policies they are working to influence and how you can help (Hartley & Johnson, 2014; Ismail, 2016).
2. **Empower youth to set their own agenda for policy influencing.** For example, an employment program could focus on helping youth influence policies to formalize their work in informal settings rather than policies to increase training for formal jobs that they may not have access to (Ismail, 2016).

3. **Facilitate and strengthen connections** among youth organizations and between youth and policy makers – especially local policy makers (Kadzamira & Kazembe, 2015; Mwawashe, 2011).
4. **Create opportunities to build the leadership capacity of youth in existing organizations** and **encourage youth to run for office** and become a member of local decision making bodies (van Esbroeck, et al., 2016).
5. **Identify youth who are excluded from the existing youth efforts** and work together with youth organizations to include a broader array of young people's voices (Akapire & Awal, 2011).
6. **Help create opportunities for youth to influence multiple policy areas** beyond the traditional youth topics such as youth participation, education, and sexual and reproductive health (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2016; Marcus & Cunningham, 2016).
7. **Take a more critical approach to existing participation models** in light of the fact that the most common participation models drew their ideas from projects involving adults and children in developed country contexts. The papers identified used a number of old and new frameworks that are worth considering (Shaw, et al., 2014; Shier, 2009; Zeb, 2008).

### 4.4 Implications for Research

Conducting this review has also highlighted some areas for future research. Researchers should:

1. Work together with youth to provide **longer-term and more rigorous documentation of the impact** of their efforts to influence policy.
2. **Conduct in depth cases studies with input from young people, policy makers, and policy implementers** to more

<sup>14</sup> Any methods book on qualitative research will have information on triangulation. One example is (Patton, 2005).

- rigorously determine and document successful influencing strategies.
3. Conduct **comparative analyses of youth efforts to influence policies** in different countries and contexts. Such research could elucidate the different methods and levels of success under more versus less restrictive civil society regimes and under more or less decentralized governments.
  4. **Publish unsuccessful efforts** and initiatives that resulted in negative impacts so that future practitioners have a better picture of what has not worked.
  5. **Include more critical analysis of the role that gender plays** in policy selection and the distribution of leadership and responsibilities in policy influencing initiatives – especially those that are youth-led.

## 5. Conclusion

Large strides have been made in the past two decades to increase the participation of young people in decision making processes. The initial focus in the literature, and in practice, on providing young people with a voice is now shifting to how to empower young people to have an impact on policies. And there is greater recognition that young people are citizens who can provide useful inputs to policies beyond just youth topics. Increasingly there is a shift away from focusing on how to involve youth in projects that were conceptualized and housed by adult-led organizations to looking for youth-initiated efforts and associations that can be supported in their ongoing efforts to have an impact on their communities and countries.

Some researchers have argued that youth are less civically engaged than previous generations, but others have pointed out that youth may just be using different, more informal, methods of engagement (Barber, 2009; Cullen & Sommer, 2011; Licherman & Eliasoph, 2014). This review highlights that youth can and do exert their influence on policies around the world.

The most promising targets for youth to exercise direct policy influence are local. Local governments, communities and organizations are more accessible to young people and they can see more immediate impacts of their efforts. These local actions can also be the catalyst for national changes. This local focus is aligned with the increased decentralization and devolution of government operations in many countries (UCLG, 2009). Given the need to for long-term commitments to effect larger policy changes, the local level provides a good entry point, but it needs to be sustained. Development organizations can play a role in helping to sustain and scale such local efforts. Such scaling efforts can

be both horizontal – reaching additional localities – or vertical – by reaching higher levels of government.

It is certainly true that young people are able to be leaders and decision makers on their own. It is also true that organizations such as Oxfam can provide key support for youth as they seek to influence policies. This support may be in facilitating links, opening doors, and building the capacity of youth involved in both informal and formal initiatives. There is also a need for youth themselves, and the organizations that seek to support them, to be critically aware of the tendency to replicate existing power structures. Such critical awareness can open the door for facilitating broader participation for all youth in policy making.

Youth are active citizens. They are working to challenge power structures and policies around the globe. Let's work together with them as they seek to claim their right to a better life.



## 6. Appendix

Table 1: Initial rules determining number of articles to be screen per database

Database	Rule	# Reviewed
<i>PsycInfo</i>	1. Order by relevance. 2. Screen first 1000. 3. Order by citation count and screen the first 500 (after de-duplicating). <sup>15</sup>	1000
<i>EconLit</i>	1. Restrict to developing countries based HDI. 2. If less than 1000, screen all. 3. If more than 1000, calculate the percentage that 1000 represents and review that percentage for each country.	1000
<i>JSTOR</i>	1. Order by relevance. 2. Screen first 500.	500
<i>Google Scholar</i>	1. Order by relevance. 2. Screen first 500, stopping earlier if 100 in a row yield no new cases.	500
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3000</b>

<sup>15</sup> This was added after beginning the search when it was notice that some highly-cited papers (though not necessarily cases of youth influencing polices) were not included when sorting by search relevance. Most highly cited papers were already included; however, this did add 158 studies that were screened.

Table 2 Search strings used per database

Database	Search String	Date	Results	Reviewed
PsycInfo	<b>Search:</b> Abstract : youth? OR Abstract : young OR Abstract : teen* OR Abstract : adolescen* AND Abstract : polic* OR Abstract : govern* OR Abstract : law? OR Abstract : ordinance* AND Abstract : advoca* OR Abstract : engag* OR Abstract : influenc* OR Abstract : pressur* OR Abstract : lobb* OR Abstract : protest* OR Abstract : movement? AND Abstract : impact* OR Abstract : effect* OR Abstract : affect* OR Abstract : chang* OR Abstract : alter* OR Abstract : shift* AND Age Group : Adolescence (13 to 17 yrs) OR Young Adulthood ( 18 to 29 yrs ) AND Document Type : Chapter OR Dissertation OR Journal Article AND Year : 2000 To 2017	1 Feb	1,460	1,152 <sup>16</sup>
EconLit	<b>Search:</b> (youth OR young OR teen OR adolescent) AND (policy OR policies OR government OR governing OR govern OR law OR program OR programs OR ordinance OR ordinances OR civic) AND (advocate OR advocacy OR advocates OR advocating OR engage OR engaging OR engages OR engagement OR influence OR influences OR Influencing OR influenced OR pressure OR pressured OR pressuring OR pressures OR lobby OR lobbies OR lobbying OR lobbied OR protest OR protested OR protests OR protesting OR movement) <b>Limits:</b> Dissertations, Journal Articles, or Working Papers published between 2000 and 2017 (inclusive).	31 Jan	2,065	598
JSTOR	<b>Search:</b> (((ab:(youth? or young or or teen* or adolescen*)) AND ab:(advoca* OR engag* OR Influenc* OR pressur* OR lobb* OR protest* OR movement? OR "civic engagement") AND (policy or policies or govern* or law? or program* or ordinance*)) NOT (america*)) <b>Limits:</b> Articles or Research Reports published between 2000 and 2017 (inclusive).	30 Jan	456	456
Google Scholar	<b>Search:</b> youth civic engagement impact policy -america -europe -"united states" -"participatory research" <b>Limits:</b> Those published between 2000 and 2017.	5 Feb & 15 Feb <sup>17</sup>	14,400	200 <sup>18</sup>
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>2,406</b>	

<sup>16</sup> The top 1000 were exported after sorting by relevance. However, to avoid missing key studies I also exported the top 500 most cited papers. The de-duplicated combination of these two resulted in 1,152 to review (158 of which were from the top 500 most cited papers).

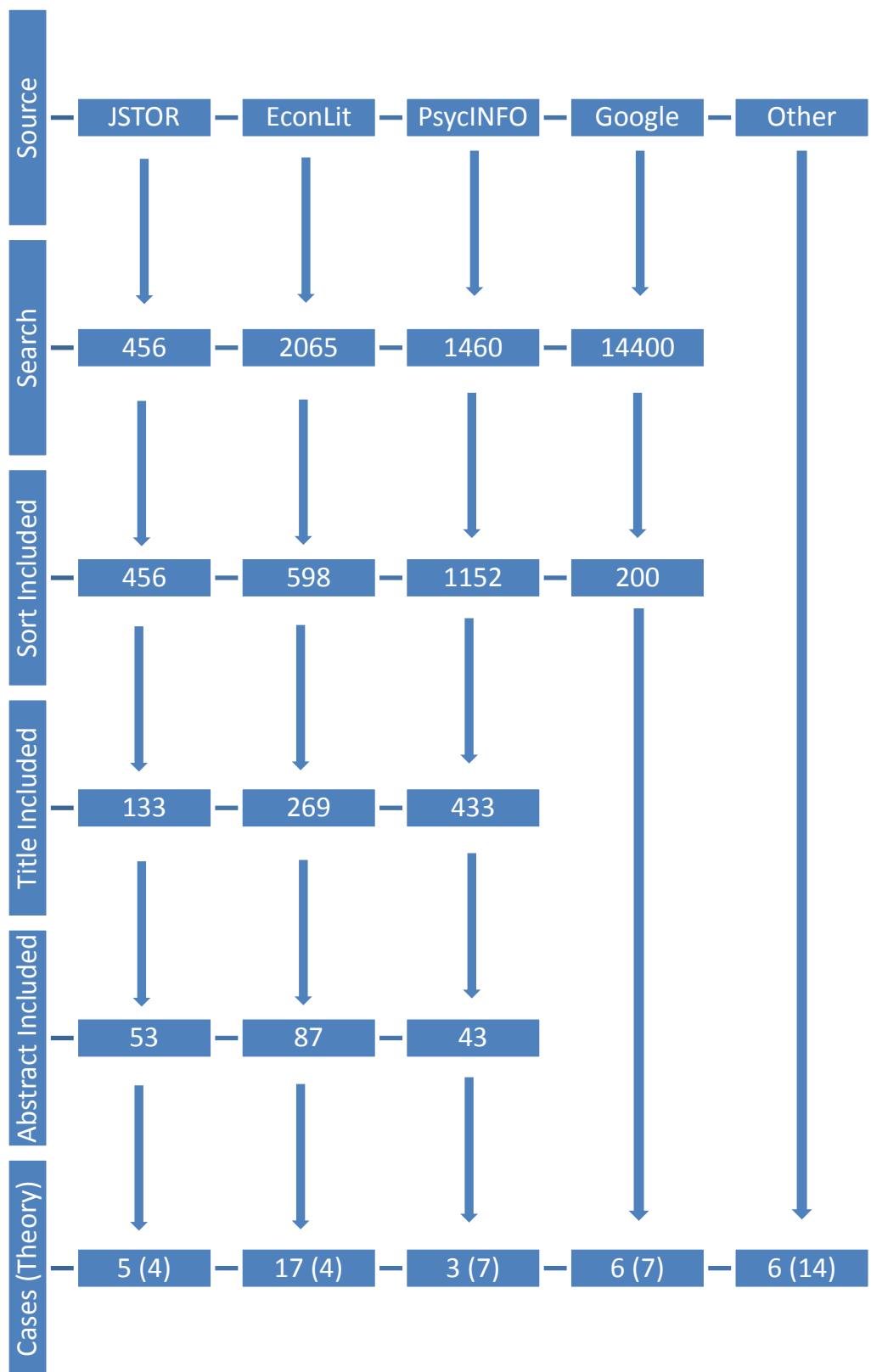
<sup>17</sup> The first 100 were screened on 5 Feb while the remainder were screened on 15 Feb.

<sup>18</sup> The original protocol aimed to review the top 500 (see Table 1); however, this was reduced in consultation with Oxfam due to timing and no substantial changes in typologies or trends.

Table 3 Preliminary coding framework for cases

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Levels / Labels (multiple choices possible)</b>
<i>Country/Countries</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ISO-3 country labels</li> <li>2. Region</li> <li>3. Global</li> </ul>
<i>Gender</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Predominately male</li> <li>2. Predominately female</li> <li>3. Mixed</li> </ul>
<i>Geography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rural</li> <li>2. Peri-urban</li> <li>3. Urban</li> <li>4. Mixed</li> </ul>
<i>Supporting Institutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local civil society organization</li> <li>2. Local associations</li> <li>3. International civil society organization</li> <li>4. Governmental organization</li> <li>5. Multi-lateral organization (e.g. UNICEF)</li> <li>6. Private sector organization</li> <li>7. Mixed</li> </ul>
<i>Methods of Organization</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use of Internet and Communication Technology (ICT)</li> <li>2. Traditional Only</li> </ul>
<i>Formality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Informal</li> <li>2. Semi-formal</li> <li>3. Formal</li> <li>4. Mixed</li> </ul>
<i>Policy Focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Creation</li> <li>6. Abolition</li> <li>7. Amendment</li> <li>8. Implementation</li> <li>9. Influence</li> <li>10. Mixed</li> </ul>
<i>Role of Youth</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design</li> <li>2. Pressure</li> <li>3. Lead</li> <li>4. Support</li> </ul>
<i>Scale of Initiative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Individual</li> <li>2. Small</li> <li>3. Medium</li> <li>4. Large</li> <li>5. Mixed (when using multiple initiatives)</li> </ul>
<i>Target of Policy Influence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organization (private, public, or non-profit)</li> <li>2. Local government</li> <li>3. Community</li> <li>4. Regional / state government</li> <li>5. National government</li> <li>6. International</li> <li>7. Mixed</li> </ul>
<i>Perceived Policy Impact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Negative</li> <li>2. None</li> <li>3. Weak</li> <li>4. Medium</li> <li>5. Strong</li> </ul>

Figure 4: PRISMA flow chart of included papers



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