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**MULTI-LEVEL PARTICIPATION:
A CROSS-CUTTING
STRATEGY TO EMPOWER
HONDURAN YOUTH**

Honduran youths have the ability to generate strategies that can solve problems in the national context. METAS Project, aware of their potential, provides them with spaces for participation through different activities that promote strengthening their leadership skills; this has enabled them to become agents of change. Young people who have been involved with METAS, through a participatory organization model are already generating initiatives to improve youth development in Honduras.

METAS PROJECT

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proyectometas.org



Executive Summary

When youth is given the opportunity to express their voices and have an influence on solving the problems that affect them in a daily basis, when they are supported by caring adults and spend their time in nurturing, positive environments, youth become truly engaged with their own development.

Including a participation strategy in youth programs and projects reinforces not only the prevention of risk behaviors; but it also contributes to the development of life skills and positive practices that prepare youth for the transition into adulthood. What is more, it helps projects and programs to go a step further: youth are empowered to be “agents for change”, and their connections with their communities and society are strengthened.

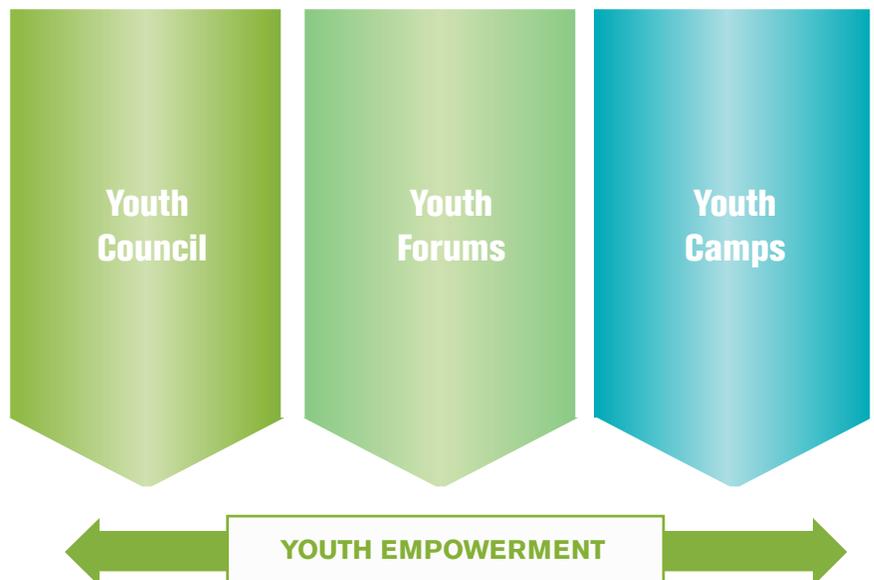
METAS project values youth participation as an empowerment strategy for their beneficiaries as well as a relevant input for the overall project management and implementation. For this reason, the project has launched a series of activities to promote youth participation in different levels – from on-the-ground experience with the Youth Camps to leadership roles in the Youth Council experience.

These experiences have allowed youth to connect with other youth and adults, learn more about the reality of their own country and mobilize to propose (and start planning the implementation) initiatives to address the most pressing problems that they have identified in their communities and for youth lives in general.



“Excellent project and vivid, unforgettable experiences. Thanks Project METAS”

-Yodany Amador



YOUTH PARTICIPATION: the Basics

Participation, understood as the action of having part or a share on something, has a potential to affect not only the lives of young people, but also the lives of their families and communities. Environments that promote youth participation bring a sense of ownership and empowerment as they enable youth to have an impact on issues that concern them (WHO, 2009).

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IS:

- A right of children and young people that fosters active citizenship
- Beneficial to youth's health, social and psychological development
- Beneficial to society as a whole, as it increases the effectiveness and efficiency of development initiatives and programs and strengthens social capital. (WHO, 2009; USAID, 2012)

Youth participation can be promoted in a variety of ways – trainings, spaces for interests and concerns sharing, developing action plans, implementing projects, evaluating results of interventions, etc. – and can impact in different levels such as family, communal, regional, national, international.

WHO ARE THE YOUTH AT METAS?

METAS Project focuses on at-risk youth aged 12 to 35 living in the 5 Honduran departments with the higher rates of violence in the country (Francisco Morazán, Yoro, Atlántida, Cortes, and Comayagua). The project aims to reach diverse sub-groups within at-risk youth population by offering services according to different youth characteristics and needs.

“Thanks for the opportunity to give us a space to express ...”

-David Vásquez



Strategy No. 1

Youth Services

- Proportionates services in education, training, sports and life skills
- To date it has benefited 7532 youth from 12 to 35 years old, the majority aged between 15 and 19 (46.9%) and 12 to 14 (27.6%) with incomplete secondary education, and living in Cortes, Francisco Morazan and Atlantida departments

Strategy No. 2

Alternative Education

- Strengthens alternative education programs focused on out-of-school youth that help them complete their studies and be more prepare to participate in the labor market.
- It includes 8200 out-of-school youth, mostly from 15 to 19 years old (55%), women (58.7%) that reside in 33 communities in 4 departments (Cortes, Francisco Morazan, Yoro and Atlantida)

Strategy No. 3

Work Readiness Training and Certification

- Certifies Basic Workforce Competencies? (is the translation ok?) for local youth and supplies local companies and business with skilled labor that help them be competetive in the global market
- Currently, it has served 24518 young men and women mostly from 15 to 19 years old (66.7%) from 5 departments (Cortes, Francisco Morazan, Yoro, Comayagua and Atlantida)



METAS gives youth an encouraging message:

“all what you think, propose, do and implement is valuable and important”

**LEVEL
MACRO**

BROADENING PARTICIPATION SPACES:

INCLUDING MICRO TO MACRO level experiences

Youth Council: representing youth and promoting youth public agenda

Being part of the Youth Council has strengthened youth's leadership and coordination skills. Since their initial preparation as candidates for the Council – organizing their speeches and learning how to appeal to their audiences – to the experience on representing METAS and Honduras youth outside the project, such as the Population and Development International Conference in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, the Presidential Candidates' Forum “Less words, more actions” and the National TV Show: “Because we care: youth voices”. Additionally, the council members had an active role in the design and implementation for the Youth Forums by validating the methodology, elaborating the materials and coordinating the logistics for the event.

LEVEL
MID

Youth Forums: volunteering and elections experience

The Youth Forums gave a fruitful space for volunteer involvement and networking – METAS beneficiaries learn about different volunteer opportunities and a group of them worked as facilitators and moderators for the event. On the other hand, the elections process for the Youth Council enhances civic engagement practices that can prepare youth to exert those rights outside the project setting.

LEVEL
MICRO

Youth Camps: reinforcing personal and social development towards a successful life

Enhancing youth's communication skills and promoting their interaction with other stakeholders such as the private sector, NGOs and government contributes to increase youth self-esteem and therefore, creates a more enabling space for real participation. Youth Camps have provided a perfect setting to reinforce these skills through their diverse activities (one-on-one mentoring, motivational talks, real-life and practical exercise).

YOUTH COUNCILS: Strengthening Leadership Skills through Representation

The Youth Council is a participation and representation space for METAS youth. The creation of the Youth Council aims to strengthen the alignment between youth's expectations, thoughts and feelings with the METAS project services; which in turn, contributes to the overall project's goal of supporting the creation of opportunities for youth at risk through facilitating the access to knowledge, and developing the skills, attitudes, behaviors and perspectives needed to create a more positive future.

The Youth Council works as an organized body that facilitates the communication, participation, relationship and support among the Honduran youth who are involved in the METAS Project. Also, the Council helps METAS' team to evaluate the best ways to approach and implement the services supply for the youth beneficiaries.

The Council responsibilities include working as a consultative body for the METAS project technical team and usher the actions generated from the project; encouraging and supporting the different spaces (forums, conferences, talks) for METAS youth beneficiaries and disseminating the work and results of these events; being the liaison and stimulate communication between the project and the local communities; and finally represent the Honduran youth and the METAS project in the public sphere in order to gain more visibility for the youth and promote more and better opportunities for them.



METAS PROJECT

YOUTH COUNCIL STRUCTURE

The Youth Council structure and members' election is a highly participative, gender sensitive and youth-led process. The candidates –one male and one female representative per organization - are selected among the different institutions, partner NGOs and alternative education centers from the METAS project's 04 results, considering their leadership, performance and commitment in the different METAS' results.

Before the election process, youth is informed about the Youth Council's objectives and is asked about ideas for the council's operation, work plan and internal procedures. After candidates are nominated, each one is asked to give a one-minute speech to present them to the plenary: talk about themselves, their interests and motivations to be part of the Youth Council. Finally, the participant youth votes through paper ballots and elects the Youth Council members.

Once elected, the members of the Youth Council perform their duties for one year and before the period ends, they should call for new elections for the Council. The internal structure is flexible and based in work teams, which will consider activities or projects proposed by youth. The team's roles will be assigned according to the age, experience, seniority, knowledge and personal skills. In parallel, other tasks will be assigned according to the development of new initiatives. The first Youth Council was elected on August, 2012 after the I Youth Forum was held in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, where the METAS project works.

Youth Council Structure

Strategy/Result		
Total of youth representatives per result/ strategy 02 holders 02 alternates	City	National
	Total of youth representatives per city 06 holders 06 alternates	Total of youth representatives national level 18 holders 18 alternates
Total: 04	Total: 12	Total: 36

WHY IS THE YOUTH COUNCIL IMPORTANT?

Research shows that significant youth participation is a main protective factor from risky behavior. Independently of the individual circumstances, strong youth participation helps youth to overcome life obstacles and manage risks, increasing their resilience.

The Youth Council has become an empowerment strategy for METAS' youth – from its conception as a space from and for youth where they select their own representatives and assume steering roles to design and implement activities for their peers and communities, to its role as a leadership training and participation space. The Council allows youth to feel included and truly taken in account for decision making; it also permits youth to organize and facilitate their own development process within their communities and to connect with other organizations, institutions and projects.

By promoting youth participation in the planning and implementation of activities and strategies, the project is more aligned with the METAS youth's interests and, therefore, the project assessment becomes more meaningful for all the parts involved. Moreover, the Council, as an interchange space among youth and the METAS team, maximizes the learning and growth opportunities for all the participants – youth and adults. When the project provides youth with the tools to self –direct their own lives and invites them to shape their projects and programs to help others, METAS gives youth an encouraging message: "all what you think, propose, do and implement is valuable and important"



Youth Forums

Creating connections for
EMPLOYMENT, VOLUNTEERISM AND EDUCATION

WHAT ARE THE YOUTH FORUMS?

The Youth Forums are one of the core expressions of METAS youth participation: they are planned, organized, implemented and evaluated by youth for youth. Since the 1 Youth Forum promoted by METAS in 2012, these spaces have stimulated the dialogue among different stakeholders – youth, government, private sector, civil society and NGOs - involved in the achievement of Honduran youth development. The forums foster the interchange of knowledge and experiences on youth development, which in turn can contribute with the promotion of peace, violence prevention, and the sustainable development of local communities. The Forums cover a wide array of topic discussion such as education, employment and self-employment, art, culture and sports, environment, participation and youth representation.

How is the participatory approach implemented in the Youth Forums?

Youth participation is a core element in the design and implementation of the Youth Forums. Through the experience of the Forums in 2012 and 2013, youth has gained more visibility; their participation has strengthened and it has grown as an essential channel for matching more closely youth's expectations, interests and doubts with the Forum's objectives and activities.

The Forums' participatory methodology is reflected in each of the activities.

1 Youth Success Cases creates a space where METAS participants interact with local youth (with their similar background); learning about their life experiences, challenges and successes on addressing difficult environments. Arts and sports, employment and self-employment, and education opportunities are showcase as real and achievable alternatives for METAS youth.

2 Motivational Talks conducted by experts provide youth with practical advice and tools to accomplish their goals. All in all, conveying the message that youth are "agents of change and capable to succeed".

3 Social and Cultural activities performed by local youth lit the sparkle for openness and participation among the attendees.

Youth Forum 2013 – Youth participate in the planning stage

Youth leaders designed the activities for the 2013 Forum working together with local experts, determine to promote active participation among youth.

A clear example of this was the creation of the sociodrama script "Juana in Honduras", performed in the Forum. It gives the message that beyond the stereotypes that society imposes to youth (the Fashion, the Bully, the Rich Guy, the Teenage mom,

Forums FACTS



When?

In August 2012 and
September 2013

How many participants?

Increase from 300 to over 750 youth
participants in the latest forum

Who participated?

METAS youth participants, youth
leaders, Government institutions,
Private Sector, NGOs and other civil
society organizations



etc.), there are always ways to overcome those negative images, such as the character of Superacion Hernandez – Champion Hernandez, who works to help his family, studies and volunteers with the Red Cross, did.

...and also in the implementation.

Youth assume active roles during the event: the Discussion and Debate Group Coordinators motivate and guide the conversation in the groups and document the conclusions that will be presented during the plenary; and the Forum Facilitators help the working groups to keep in track with the discussion topics and the timing, and guarantee the delivery of the Final Forum Declaration that will serve as a guidance for the forum participants (youth, government, private sector and civil society).



“We are committed to improving Honduras! Not just words ... if not facts”

-Taty Mejía

4

Discussion and Debate Groups give youth the opportunity to share their experiences, express their points of view and propose solutions to address pressing issues that affect them, such as lack of employment, low quality education or the little youth representation in public spaces.

5

General Plenary each group presents their results to all the participants in the iv) General Plenary and finally, participants made concrete proposals and commitments to overcome the obstacles that hinder Honduran youth development.



YouthCamps

REINFORCING CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

METAS project aims to reduce the gap between school preparation and the demands of the labor market, addressing one of Honduran youth's major concerns: how to be effectively prepared for employment and business opportunities. The Youth Camp for Training and Entrepreneurship, sponsored by the METAS project and Fundacion Honduras Global, is part of that major goal, the "bridging strategies" from school / training to workforce.

"Thank you, Project METAS for giving us the opportunity to young people who could be heard and take our opinions"

-Johana Tobar

The Youth Camp offers a dialogue space between private sector representatives, strategic partners and METAS youth (aged 18 to 30 years olds) to discuss employment opportunities, provide mentorship, and strengthen skills and competences necessary to successfully participate in the labor market.



Dialogue Space to discuss

- Employment opportunities
- Provide mentorship
- Strengthen skills
- Competences necessary to successfully participate in the labor market.



+



More than 30 private sector Companies representative

Aged 18 to 30 Years olds

2 Cities
Tegucigalpa (116)
San Pedro Sula (106)
222 youth

Youth were actively involved during the camps and participated in panels with

i) Private Sector and **ii) Education and Training for workforce development experts.** Well-known entrepreneurs gave youth advice on positioning themselves in the employability market and share the expectations that private sector has for future workers, whereas education and training experts talked about the connection between training and employability. Furthermore, youth received **iii) One-on-one mentoring to develop their C.V.** previous to the event and had the opportunity to learn from **iv) Real –life** and practical exercises and be part of **v) Motivational Talks.** Finally, youth had the chance to put all the learning in practice by joining the **vi) Career fair** offered Camp's closing activity – it allow them to be in contact with prospective employers.

NEXTSteps

The Youth Participation strategy is an on-going learning process that aims to strengthen youth empowerment as well as the impact of METAS project. In that sense, the upcoming events of the Youth Forums in 2014 aim to strengthen these experiences – revise the activities considering youth's input and suggestions, reflect on new topics or trends to be included and involve more youth in the overall design, planning and implementation process.

On the other hand, new participations spaces are going to be explored, specifically through the connection with volunteer opportunities that respond to the needs and interests of their communities.

Finally, one of the goals for this coming period is to strengthen the relationship among youth and METAS in each of the project's components – to enhance the communication channels for feedback and suggestions from the youth in order to continue improving the services that are offered to them.



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