

Capacity Building & The Youth Sector



Third Youth Partners Forum

18 February 2004

Johannesburg, South Africa

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Programme – Youth Partners Forum

8:30 – 9:00	Registration and Tea
9:00 – 9:10	Welcome and Introduction Naidoo Nyoni – INTERFUND
9:10 – 9:30	What Do We Understand By Capacity Building? Matshidiso Mathabela – INTERFUND
9:30 – 9:50	Experiences Around Capacity Building Mokoka Seshabela – South African Association of Youth Clubs (SAAYC)
9:50 – 10:10	Trends and Issues Emerging Around Capacity Building Samantha Stern – Youth Development Network (YDN)
10:10 – 10:30	Questions
10:30 – 10:50	Tea Break
10:50 – 11:30	Group Discussions
11:30 – 12:00	Reports
12:00 – 12:20	Response Russell Ally – Mott Foundation
12:20 – 12:40	Conclusions Clayton Peters – YDN
12:40 – 13:40	Lunch

Background – Youth Partners Forum

The Youth Development Network (YDN) realised that the relationship between youth development organisations and those who provide funding to the development sector is sometimes tenuous. Both parties have a vision for youth development, but that vision often exceeds the funds available. The impact of programmes and projects is often discussed in vague and glittering terms, rather than concrete and documented certainty. These frustrations, in a sector defined as much by its challenges as by its hope and energy, often impede effective dialogue about the very issues that both groups are passionate about.

The Youth Partners Forum is not intended to be a forum for the solicitation of funds. Rather, its intention is to provide a space to develop an understanding of the needs and visions of both youth workers and donors; to discuss how a more effective dialogue can be maintained between donors and youth workers; and to define and explore some of the major issues and challenges facing the sector.

The overall aim of the Youth Partners Forum is to provide a platform for donors and youth development organisations/practitioners to:

- discuss and clarify the most pressing issues facing young South Africans
- shape the revision of existing programmes and the development of new ones
- identify areas for improvement and offer concrete, collaborative ideas and solutions
- discover common interests and allow constituents to network
- devise more effective channels of communication to have a direct impact on the sustainability of youth work

The first Youth Partners Forum was held on 27 September 2001, addressing the theme: *Creating an Enabling Environment for Young People to Participate in the Economy*. Co-sponsored by the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund (NMCF) and the YDN, the forum focussed on the challenges and needs of those working in the youth employment sector, and explored innovative programmes and the need for partnerships. Attended by over 30 youth partners (donors and youth development workers), the forum provided an invaluable opportunity for discussion and debate. A call for continuing discussion and dialogue among youth partners was made, thus launching the YDN Youth Partners Forum. The second Youth Partners Forum conducted on 19 June 2002 was hosted by the Swiss South African Cooperation Initiative and the YDN. It focussed on *Measuring the Impact of Youth Development*. This year's Youth Partners Forum was conducted on 18 February and focussed on *Capacity Building in the Youth Sector*. It was co-hosted by INTERFUND and the YDN.

Capacity Building in the Youth Sector

The Youth Partners Forum Snapshot Survey

The third Youth Partners Forum, hosted by INTERFUND and the Youth Development Network (YDN), was held on 18 February 2004 and focused on capacity building for youth development in South Africa. The content of the forum was developed and based on a snapshot survey, conducted prior to the forum which elicited the thoughts of both the funding and development sectors, on current issues related to capacity building.

In the snapshot survey respondents noted that they were interested in attending the forum for a number of reasons. In particular, they were interested in sharing dialogue as a means to foster learning within the youth development sector. For instance:

“To share specific proposals on how capacity building for specific development goals can be implemented.”

“To get an opportunity to link and establish relationships with other role players in the field of youth work/community development.”

Beyond a dialogue for learning about capacity building, there was also a need to institute conversation about funding and what this meant for capacity building. The following response illustrates this:

“Dialogue between youth development organisations and donors will go a long way in addressing pressing issues in the sector. It is critical for the donors to know who they can fund, for what and why. Where and how can donors in certain aspects of youth development work co-fund and co-support implementing organisations and so forth? The donors need to be educated of the sector and trends, especially funding within the sector.”

Members of the youth development sector felt that a priority for the forum should be to explore what donors should know about youth capacity building in the development sector. Survey respondents noted that capacity building should be funded as a core project activity and for the long-term, as opposed to year to year. In addition donors should consider funding the organisational and administrative components, as these are fundamental to the success of a programme/project.

In essence the responses indicated that there needs to be a shift in the conceptualisation of the donor/development organisation relationship, moving from ‘funding’ to ‘partnership’. Capacity

building is about more than money; it involves strategic input into programmes and sustainability of programmes.

Based on the input received through the snapshot survey agenda for the Youth Partners Forum focussed on the following:

What do we mean by 'capacity building' for youth development?
How can we make capacity building initiatives in the sector more effective?

The one-day forum explored the challenges related to capacity building; capacity building priorities; factors for successful capacity building and recommendations for the future of capacity building.

This report summarises the perspectives that were shared at the forum. It intends to stimulate further dialogue, knowledge sharing and cooperation between the diverse people and organisations that seek to build their capacity for the development of young people in South Africa.

W

elcome & Introduction – Investing in the Future

Naidoo Nyoni – INTERFUND

The youth development sector in South Africa faces considerable challenges. Some of these challenges include unemployment, HIV/Aids, and access to opportunities. We all share these challenges, however, there are different degrees of understanding and engagement with these challenges. For youth development organisations there is a need to develop more consistency in their approaches and to consider the context in which they in their attempts to consider how to address issues facing young people.

There is an urgent need to empower young people with skills for the workplace and knowledge for healthy lifestyles. Are we prepared for and do we have the capacities necessary to engage in effective development processes?

Youth organisations tend to be isolated from mainstream development initiatives and securing funds continues to be difficult for the sector. Capacity building is often seen as an ‘add-on’ to programme funding; not an integral part of the funding package. In addition, funds cannot be allocated to projects or organisations that appear to lack the appropriate skills and capacities to achieve desired outcomes.

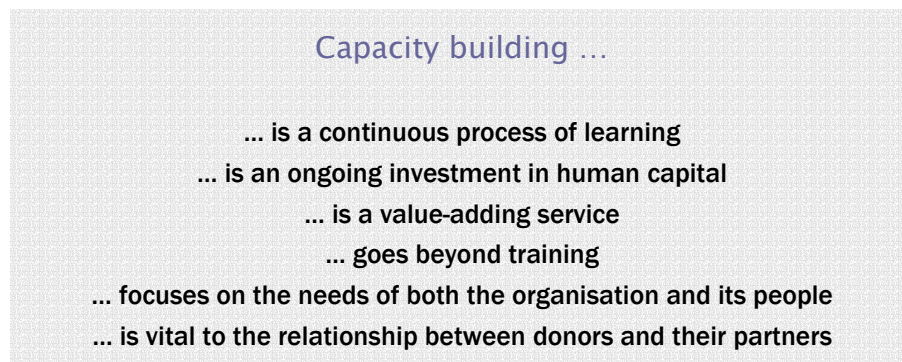
INTERFUND’s capacity building programme is all encompassing and includes the youth development sector. The organisation intends to invest more capacity building for the South African youth sector as part of its strategic plan for 2004 to 2007.

“We believe the best investment that donors can make is in the youth. Young people are South Africa’s future. We must offer them concrete options and positive opportunities.”

What do we understand by capacity building?

Matshidiso Mathabela – INTERFUND

The following provides an overview of Interfund's approach to capacity building:



INTERFUND sees capacity building as more than training. It is part of a broader contribution to human development in South Africa. It also goes beyond grant-making. Capacity building means that funded organisations develop the ability to continue with their work even after the funding partnership has ended. Donors see capacity building as a necessity, because partner organisations must be able to effectively carry out the work for which they receive funding.

When implementing capacity building programmes, organisations should ask themselves:

- What are our strategic goals?
- What resources and skills do we need to achieve them?
- How can we take advantage of and benefit from what is on offer?
- How do we ensure that skills acquired by individuals actually benefit the organisation?
- What is specifically needed to improve our organisational effectiveness?
- Are we planning career paths for the sector (volunteers, staff)?
- Is capacity building in its current form appropriate?

Importantly, we need to work out how to assist people with diverse abilities and knowledge to effectively manage development programmes. We should develop useful tools and fitting methodologies with them.

Donors that offer capacity building to their partners should ensure that the development *organisation* itself is going to benefit. Staff members need to bring their learning back to their organisations and share it.

Capacity building can play an important role in preventing skilled individuals from leaving the NGO sector. It is crucial that both donors and NGOs address people's career development. Layers of leadership need to be created. Leadership development programmes must be initiated if the non-governmental sector is to fight the 'brain drain' to government and business.

What contributes to a successful capacity building programme?

- **Clarity on needs and expectations.** Service providers and donors should go beyond basic interviews with participants. They also need to look at the environment in which the organisation operates and the challenges it faces.
- **Knowledge and understanding of participants.** Workshop delivery can be complicated by differing levels of participant knowledge and ability.
- **Agreement on parameters.** There must be clearly defined roles and responsibilities for service providers and donors. If no parameters are set, people may come into the programme with expectations that are high or off course.
- **Agreement on outcomes.** What is the aim? What are we responding to? What outcomes are we seeking?
- **Clear monitoring and evaluation process.** Measures are needed to keep the process on track and to ensure continuous improvement of capacity building programmes.
- **An exit point.** Each capacity building intervention should start with the end in mind.

Designing an effective capacity building intervention

Identify need

What is the problem?

Assess options

Is training the right intervention?

(Capacity building is not necessarily a cure-all!)

Get buy-in

Is there ownership of the process?

(Do the participants really want to be there?)

Clarify objectives

What are the desired outcomes?

Confirm timing

What are the timeframes?

(The programme needs to happen within targeted time limits.)

Evaluate success

What are the indicators of success?

(Participants and trainers need to know that they are on the right track.)

Capacity building is vital in any organisation because there are always new challenges to be addressed. These may be related to staff and systems, or presented by changes within the sector and broader environment. For successful capacity building, donors and service providers need to acknowledge that a good programme can be expensive, and that the process may be difficult to manage. Both parties also need to identify and acknowledge dynamics within their relationships, and how these may affect the programme. A healthy relationship between donors and their partner organisations is crucial to the responsible management of development funds.

Experiences of Capacity Building

Mokoka Seshabela – Southern African Association of Youth Clubs

Capacity building is premised on the principle of ‘value added’. We embark on capacity building endeavours as part of our continuous quest to establish ‘good practice’. This implies that ongoing capacity building interventions lead to the long-term sustainability of the organisation. However, in order for capacity building to lend itself to long-term sustainability the development context and the broader environment that we operate within must strategically inform it.

For the Youth Development Network (YDN), capacity building aims to create a conducive environment for healthy, integrated youth development. In order to achieve this, the YDN directs its capacity building efforts towards:

- The acquisition of skills *(Know how)*
- The acquisition of knowledge *(Know why)*
- Challenging attitudes *(Values and belief systems)*
- Shifting paradigms *(World views; operational spheres)*
- Managing resources *(Accountability)*
- Implementing development policies *(Contextual relevance)*

In its quest for continuous improvement, the YDN has graduated from pursuing capacity building exclusively through workshops, and has begun using a variety of capacity building methodologies. Some of these include:

- **Technical adventures** – member organisations work together to pilot and produce valuable tools, for example, the e.g. gender manual and impact assessment resource pack. In effect, this involves ‘packaging’ our learning.
- **Action learning** – structured activities are used to identify a gap or a need, with the emphasis on learning what is known and what is not known in the process. The focus is on learning what it is you don’t know and embarking on a process to find the answers.
- **Broad-based learning** – tailor-made training programmes are designed to meet an organisation’s specific needs (at different levels of organisational development).

In addition, the YDN uses various activities to build the capacity of member organisations. For example:

- **Peer reviews** – reviewing each others’ systems and practices in order to learn from each other as organisations
- **Study visits** – sharing information about the organisational deliverables
- **International Exchanges** – visiting other countries to compare youth policies and politics
- **Hosting interns** – providing different working environments and cultures

Through its capacity building initiatives, the YDN has developed effective indicators and measures to evaluate success. We have moved from anecdotal to scientific evidence of impact. For example, the YDN conducted a peer review of Integrated Youth Development within the seven member organisations. The results of this peer review include comprehensive ratings for each organisation according to a specific set of assessment criteria.

“Capacity building is the soul of any organisation. No soul, no life! No capacity building, no relevant organisation!”

Trends & issues emerging around capacity building

Samantha Stern – Youth Development Network

Through our work with the seven member organisations the Youth Development Network (YDN) has observed various trends and issues related to capacity building. Some of these are related to external contextual factors; others emerged from the programmes themselves.

As a starting point, the challenges of capacity building include:

- **Transference/Decentralisation of capacity (Individual vs. Organisational)** – We need to ensure that capacity is shared internally so that knowledge and skills are not lost when an individual leaves the organisation.
- **Planned, deliberate capacity building initiatives as part of a holistic strategy** – We need to guard against capacity building as a “once-off” event, and ensure that it is part of a deliberate process.
- **Commitment to and investment in the long term and costly nature of capacity building**
- **Knowing the capacity building needs/gaps** – We need to ensure that the appropriate and relevant needs are identified.
- **Proof that the capacity building is working!** – We need effective monitoring and evaluation systems that demonstrate the impact of capacity building.
- **Perceptions of the youth sector** – We need to promote an image of professionalism in order to legitimise the work that we do.

In managing these challenges, the YDN found it useful to step back and unpack what capacity building really means. In doing so, we identified certain characteristics of capacity building. **We discovered that capacity building:**

- Is related to a specific context (capacity building for what; in what)
- Is located within a wider system/framework
- Is a continual dynamic process (of assessing capacity needs, designing and implementing strategies, and monitoring and evaluation)
- Is an internal process which may be enhanced or accelerated by outside assistance
- Builds on what exists
- Has value on its own (job satisfaction and self esteem in addition to enhancing performance))

- Focuses on coping with change

The YDN uses a particular **framework for providing capacity building**, which has been adapted from a framework introduced to us by the Community Development Resource Association (CDRA). The framework identifies different factors and stages that need to be taken into account when developing capacity building programmes:

- **What is our PARADIGM; what do we believe about young people, communities, capacity building?** (Our principles and beliefs impact on the way we engage with our constituencies and the work that we do)
- **What is the CONTEXT?** (We conduct our work within a broader context/environment, which has a direct impact on the scope and nature of the work we do)
- **What is our VISION/MISSION (goals and objectives)?** (The marriage between our paradigm and our context is our vision and/or mission)
- **What APPROACHES and STRATEGIES do we employ?** (In order to fulfil our vision/mission)
- **What METHODS/METHODOLOGIES do we use?** (Which are appropriate to the identified approaches and strategies)
- **What TOOLS do we need?** (Which are appropriate and relevant to the identified methods and methodologies)

An increasing variety of **learning methods** are being used in capacity building programmes. The YDN's methods currently include training workshops, technical assistance, materials development (tools), learning forums, internships, study visits and exchanges, peer reviews, and mentorship.

The YDN's **capacity building priorities** are related to the context in which our organisations operate. They therefore include:

- Integrating HIV/AIDS into youth development
- Mainstreaming gender into programmes
- Measuring the impact of our interventions
- Integrated learning (and methodologies relevant to behaviour change)
- Accessing exit opportunities (employment)
- Accreditation (formal recognition as a service provider who is aligned to national standards)
- Building and maintaining partnerships
- Donor management
- Project and people management

In delivering capacity building programmes, the YDN has learned many lessons. In particular, we identified the following **factors for successful capacity building**:

- Local ownership and self reliance
- Practicing genuine partnership
- Understanding the context specificity of capacity and its development (to do what?)
- Examining capacities in a context of systems and strategic management
- Long term commitment/investment
- Measurability (over the long term)

In essence, the YDN's approach to capacity building is an ever-changing one. Currently, when we embark on a capacity building initiative, we try to ask ourselves the following questions:

What do we believe about capacity building?

What is the context / environment within which we do capacity building?

What is our vision and mission related to capacity building?

What are appropriate approaches and strategies?

What are suitable methodologies?

What are the best tools to assist us?

Case Study

The YDN introduced Integrated Youth Development (IYD) as an approach to working with young people.

We then developed a number of tools to support the implementation of the integrated approach. These included Measure It!, the IYD Manual, the HIV/AIDS Toolkit, and the Gender Mainstreaming Manual. Extensive training was provided on the use of these tools.

However, the YDN subsequently discovered that the tools were not being used, even within the YDN itself! After some reflection, we realised that we had not gone through the necessary stages of building 'buy-in' and an understanding of the rationale for the tools. We had started at the methodologies and tools phases of the framework, thereby skipping crucial steps that precede these.

The YDN thus revisited IYD as a paradigm and examined peoples' attitudes towards the integrated approach (including peoples' beliefs about young women, young men, communities, people living with HIV/Aids, etc.) and the constraints and opportunities presented by the context/environment within which we operate. As a result, we are now using multiple methods and activities to build the capacity of youth development practitioners to implement IYD.

Lessons learned

- It is important to use a variety of methods to build capacity. Activities should be relevant to the specific context and should be appropriate to the type of competency being developed. (Methods used for training around attitudes, values and beliefs should be different than those used for technical skills training).
- Modelling or learning from each other is crucial for participants. People need to see something in action before they believe it can work. For instance, with experiments in power and authority it is important that people witness the effects of different types of behaviour from sources of power and authority.
- We need to acknowledge the *integrated* nature of capacity building, knowledge development and advocacy. The value of capacity building is lost if it is not linked to other activities in the organisation.
- A body of knowledge needs to be developed that is informed by capacity building and at the same time informs the capacity building - a continuous, dynamic cycle of learning.

Towards more effective capacity building

Group discussions

Following the above presentations the plenary broke into two discussion groups. The aim of these groups was to promote discussion on the following questions:

- How should the youth sector address the imbalances in capacity building?
- What are the power relations that emerge between donors and youth development organisations when it comes to capacity building? What does this mean for future capacity building initiatives?
- What would an enabling environment for capacity building look like?

Imbalances in Capacity Building and how to address them

The discussion began with a focus on what is meant by 'imbalances'. It was determined that imbalances arise in capacity building because the youth sector enjoys less recognition and legitimacy than other areas of development. These imbalances are compounded by the fact that 'youth' are a dynamic target group with a wide range of needs and interests, which the youth sector must respond to. In addition, the youth sector has to manage a wide variety of community, political and donor interests.

In response to these imbalances, it is crucial that the youth sector is as clear and specific as possible about its objectives. It needs to define its focus much more clearly and be able to articulate this focus. Capacity building is required to assist youth organisations with addressing these imbalances.

Specific skills, which may be acquired by individuals in the organisation, need to be filtered through to empower the entire organisation. This would ensure the development of an institutional memory, which would prevent valuable knowledge from "walking out of the door" when individuals leave the organisation. The nature of the sector is such that there is a high staff-turnover rate, however, this should not prevent organisational capacity building.

Power relations between donors and youth development organisations

There is often a lack of agreement between Youth development organisations and donors on what is required for effective youth development. YDO's often have to make the choice to yield to the donor's programme design in order to access funding. In addition capacity building is often not a priority for donors. There is often an assumption that the YDO should already possess the necessary capacity. Where donors do recognise the importance of capacity building, they tend to dictate what is offered and how it should be provided.

Donors and YDO's often operate from different paradigms and contexts. It is often difficult to convince donors that new methodologies are effective. This makes it difficult for YDO's to be creative and effective in their interventions. Thus the question arises as to whether YDO's are being acknowledged for their expertise. Moreover, constructive feedback is often lacking from donor organisations, which makes it difficult for the YDO to engage in a dialogue which allows for learning and growth.

Donors often have their own priorities, for example, HIV/AIDS, and their own time frames, which may be rather short term and restrictive. However, in order to access funding, the YDO will choose to work within the parameters set by the donor. Both donors and YDO's appear to operate from a paradigm that donors have the power to set the agenda because they will be financing the project. This often results in the YDO taking on the role of victim in their relationship with the donor.

An effort needs to be made to shift donor paradigms with clear communication and increased dialogue. There is a need for YDO's to more clearly understand where the donor 'is at' (the phase of its programmes and what outcomes it is looking for). YDO's also need to be able to articulate their needs, strategies and perspectives so that the donor may have a clear picture of where the YDO 'is at'. This will limit conflict and misunderstanding in the relationship. YDO's need to more effectively measure and articulate the impact of their programmes. Being able to demonstrate their programmatic impact will enable them to advocate more effectively for resources for institutional support.

It is important to clarify the roles of the YDO and the donor/s in a specific project. Is it a partnership or a contract to deliver service? If it is a partnership, both the YDO and the donor need to have vision statements of the partnership. How a relationship is perceived may depend on the type of donor (e.g. foundation, multi-national, corporate, etc.). It was suggested that donors like foundations might be better placed to be in partnership relationships. It should also be remembered that donors often have 'expectations from above' that they have to manage, for example, the expectations from government.

Often YDO's are managing multiple donors with different agendas and criteria. Sometimes the agendas and criteria of different donors are contradictory. Thus YDO's need to have a clear

understanding of the needs and expectations of each donor; and how these impact on the service being delivered.

An enabling environment for capacity building

In order to begin to create an enabling environment for capacity building, the issues identified above would need to be addressed. These include:

- The need for an investment in a ground-up approach so that donors are aware of organisations needs;
- the need for more consistent dialogue between donors and YDO's, in order to highlight the work being undertaken and in order to highlight the impact that capacity building has had on youth development;
- the perception of a lack of accountability and the need for a space where donors and YDO's hold each other accountable;
- and an ongoing dialogue regarding quality programming and scalability, sustainability, measurability and marketing/advocacy.

The Way Forward

Mechanisms need to be put in place to change both internal and external perceptions of the youth development sector. There needs to be agreement between YDO's and donors on the priorities, strategies and methodologies for programmes. Working in conjunction with donors, YDO's should put structures in place that will ensure quality programming in an attempt to foster sustainability. YDO's also need to effectively measure the outcomes of programmes, which will allow for effectively marketing and advocating for their continuation. In order to do these things however, most YDO's need further capacity building! Therefore, the essence of the way forward is for YDO's and donors to continue to explore the scope and nature of capacity building provision.

Lastly, 'Partnership' between donors and YDOs often has the connotation of delivering the 'donor's programme'. This perception needs to shift for both the donor and the YDO. With consistent communication of paradigms and vision, there may be a more effective understanding reached with regard to programme delivery.

Back to basics

Russell Ally – Mott Foundation

Complex theories and frameworks can blind us to the fundamental, implicit questions - Capacity building for what? And for whom?"

“Youth” is a big, amorphous category. Organisations need to decide what or who their constituency is. They shouldn’t try to do too much with too little, but rather pick a specific issue that can be effectively tackled with available resources. Strategic focus is key to successful capacity building.

We also need to carefully identify and address factors that inhibit the success of capacity building initiatives in the youth sector. Is the problem access to resources, or do we need to challenge power relations?

Capacity building is not the solution to all problems. Yet without capacity building - especially in being financially accountable and in being able to demonstrate programmatic impact - it is difficult for donors to provide funds.

The starting point for capacity building initiatives should be: How do we ensure the sustainability of youth development organisations and their interventions? It is important that youth development organisations avoid becoming too dependent on a particular donor. Recipient organisations need to develop and diversify their own resources.

This leads to further questions that need to be addressed by both donors and youth development organisations. These include: What determines organisational sustainability? and What do we mean by being respectful of the people we serve?

From talk to action

Clayton Peters – Youth Development Network

Both the Youth Development Network and INTERFUND recognise the importance of building capacity in the South African youth sector. In order to successfully meet the needs of young people, it is vital that our organisations share perspectives, knowledge and learning at all levels.

The reality of the youth development challenge in South Africa demands that we address complex problems of poverty, alienation, lack of skills and unemployment. It is vital that we address these with confidence, positive energy and a quest for continuous organisational improvement.

This forum is part of our efforts to ensure that capacity building initiatives 'belong' to all stakeholders who have an interest in youth development and young people. We hope that this forum has stimulated your interest in issues that affect the success of such interventions.

We also hope that it has motivated you to begin to explore the implications that capacity building has for your organisation so that you may be involved in moving the youth development agenda forward.

We need to find ways to further promote capacities for youth development in South Africa and thereby ensure the effectiveness of all our interventions.

Our approaches to the needs of young people must be informed, relevant, inclusive and accountable. The need for further dialogues amongst youth development NGOs and donors around capacity building is critical. This dialogue will assist all stakeholders in effectively meeting the needs of young people.

This third Youth Partners Forum has played a part in creating an environment for youth development organisations to bring tangible hope to South Africa's young people.

The **Y**outh Development Network

Formed in July 1998, the Youth Development Network (YDN) is a national network of seven youth development NGOs that work in the areas of skills training, youth entrepreneurship and community youth development. These youth development organisations are:

- School Leavers' Opportunity Training (SLOT)
- Southern African Association of Youth Clubs (SAAYC)
- Resource Action Group (RAG)
- Establishment for Comprehensive Youth Development (ECYD)
- Joint Enrichment Project (JEP)
- Junior Achievement South Africa (JASA)
- The Centre for Education and Enterprise Development (CEED)

The YDN aims to build capacity and influence the South African youth sector to deliver quality youth development programmes with demonstrable impact. This involves:

- Measuring and increasing the impact of youth development programmes
- Sharing information and best practices with youth development practitioners
- Securing resources to support youth development programmes
- Advocating for the interests of young people

The YDN and its member organisations subscribe to Integrated Youth Development (IYD). This approach seeks to respond to the full range of young people's needs within the broader social context. It is a strategic approach that takes into account the interrelated social, personal, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects of a young person's life. This holistic view also proposes that youth development policies and programmes strive to achieve sustainable, comprehensive growth for young people by addressing their diverse needs within their communities. In essence IYD aims to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable them to be self-sufficient individuals who positively contribute to society.

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Interfund was founded in 1986 as a consortium of donors mainly based in Europe to help advance democracy through offering financial support for South African civil society organisations. Interfund's core operations are aimed at the mobilisation of financial, as well as non-financial resources to support civil society initiatives aimed at transforming society and the ultimate alleviation of poverty.

Interfund is committed to:

- Building genuine, interdependent relationships with their donor and project partners.
- Creating a learning environment for civil society organisations, INTERFUND, donors, and policy makers through research, debate, documentation and information sharing.
- Building the capacity and skills of civil society organisations and the INTERFUND staff.
- Supporting advocacy and lobbying initiatives on strategic development issues.

Interfund fulfils these commitments through its seven programme areas:

- economic justice,
- HIV/AIDS,
- gender and women's development,
- human rights and democratisation, capacity-building,
- arts and culture,
- environmental sustainability
- research and information.

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Evaluation of the Youth Partners Forum

In order to assess if the participant's expectations were met an evaluation was conducted. The evaluation was designed to capture both demographic data and the participants' perceptions of the forum and its effectiveness in examining current issues related to capacity building.

The evaluation sought to:

- Determine the type of institutions that were represented in the forum
- Determine if the participants' expectations were met
- Determine the relevance and quality of the forum's content and presentation
- Explore issues/factors that made the forum valuable or not valuable
- Establish whether an initiative such as the Youth Partners Forum should be pursued in the future

31 delegates attended the Youth Partners Forum, 17 females and 14 males. While the majority of the participants were from Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Western Cape were represented. The gathering brought together 7 donor organisations and 14 youth development organisations. In addition to the hosts – the YDN and Interfund – the following organisations were represented:

- The Ford Foundation
- Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa
- The Mott Foundation
- The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund
- National Development Agency
- The Establishment for Comprehensive Youth Development
- Nations Trust
- Conquest for Life
- Youth for Christ
- Umsobomvu Youth Fund
- Joint Enrichment Project
- Centre for Education and Enterprise Development
- Girl Guides South Africa
- South African Graduates Development Organisation
- School Leavers' Opportunity Training
- Southern African Association of Youth Clubs
- Resource Action Group
- Youth Development Trust
- Young Men Christian Association, SANC

Of the 31 delegates, 12 responded to the evaluation. 82% of the respondents were from the youth development sector, while the remaining 18% represented the donor sector. The evaluation responses were gender balanced with female respondents (58.3%) slightly higher than male respondents.

Overall participants felt that the forum provided a platform to share information and experiences around capacity building in the youth sector. It also helped them to understand the underlying issues related to capacity building. “[The forum] interrogated questions that our organisations are grappling with.”

The forum comprised a small number of people and this was viewed in a positive light as it encouraged a high level of participation. Most participants indicated that they enjoyed the presentations and group discussions, which they considered stimulating and helpful in unpacking and defining capacity building. “The forum helped in sharing some important points especially when it comes to problems that emerge between donors and youth development organisations.

A few responses indicated that there were elements in the presentations that were repetitive. There was also an indication that some presentations were too long, allowing little time for discussion.

There was a strong feeling that the Youth Partners Forum is a vital initiative to pursue in future as it allows dialogue on current and pressing issues. Participants indicated that it would be important to explore if forum learnings are applied, and to monitor the impact of learnings. Other participants said that the forum gave them an opportunity to network.

It is clear from the responses that the YPF largely met its objectives. It provided an opportunity for stakeholders to share experiences and to learn from one another. The specific comments in the evaluation forms will be examined closely in the planning of future forums.

List of forum participants

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