



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development



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Human Rights in Development Policy

The rights of children and youth

**Overview,
challenges and approaches**

The importance of children's and youth's rights in development policy

Children and youth make up the absolute majority in almost all developing countries, accounting for up to 70 per cent of the population. In the 1989

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of girls and boys up to the end of their eighteenth year of life are laid down. In addition, Article 3 points out the preference to be given to the "best interest of the child". For young people over the age of 18, the other UN Conventions apply. The comprehensive realisation of all children's rights is a huge challenge because, all over the world, the rights of young people are violated in many different ways.

The main reasons for not implementing the UN children's rights convention are weak or non-existent state structures in the child and youth sector, the low priority given to the social sector, a lack of networking among state duty-bearers and non-state actors and often weak civil society representation of interests. The age of children and youth, like their physical state of development, make young people particularly vulnerable to violations of their rights.

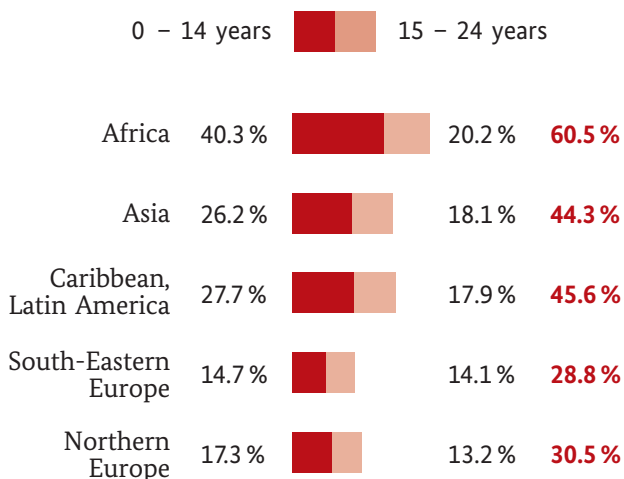
- The child mortality rate in sub-Saharan Africa is 121 out of every 1,000 children under five. Common causes of death are diarrhoeal diseases, respiratory tract infections and malaria. Many of the children in this region are under-nourished, lack clean drinking water and must live under inadequate hygienic conditions.

- Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest percentage of working children between the ages of five and fourteen (32 per cent), followed by Asia (12 per cent). Another serious problem is the marrying off of girls and boys under the age of 18. About 35 per cent of all children are married before they reach their 18th year. These problems are frequently accompanied by child trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- The Middle East and North Africa have the highest youth unemployment rates in the world, more than 24 per cent in the formal sector. The lack of prospects and exclusion from society that this implies lead to frustration among many adolescents. This in turn is a driver for youth violence and also makes young people easily mobilised by fundamentalist groups – a growing danger in Pakistan and Yemen for example.

Children and youth as a separate target group

In development cooperation it is important that children and youth are seen as an independent, quantitatively strong target group with a high need for protection and great potential. Only if their rights are protected and promoted can they hope to realise their potential and play an effective role in development processes. On a global scale, it is mainly the developing countries that have a large proportion of young people. The highest percentage is in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in Uganda, where about 70 per cent of the inhabitants are children and youth.

Percentage of children and youth in the global population, divided into world regions



The ten countries with the lowest and highest average age for comparison

15.0	Niger	1	Japan	44.7
15.6	Uganda	2	Germany	44.3
16.6	DR Congo	3	Italy	43.3
16.7	Burkina Faso	4	Finland	42.0
16.8	Malawi	5	Switzerland	41.9
16.8	Zambia	6	Austria	41.8
16.9	Afghanistan	7	Bulgaria	41.7
17.4	Angola	8	Croatia	41.6
17.4	Timor-Leste	9	Belgium	41.3
17.5	Tanzania	10	Sweden	40.9



The approach under official German development cooperation

Under official German development cooperation many contributions are made towards realising the rights of children and youth within the framework of a **human rights-based approach** for German development policy. The approaches used focus, among other things, on the enabling environment, i.e. **developing and promoting state and non-state structures** in the child and youth sector. This includes in particular policy advice, support for cooperation activities, developing and strengthening institutions, and training key players at various levels.

- At the **political level**, the governments of the developing countries where there is German development cooperation are advised on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international agreements. This includes, for example, elaborating and implementing appropriate laws and developing national and local child and youth strategies and plans of action aimed at protection, support and participation.

- At the institutional level, the support provided is directed towards capacity building, e.g. in organisations working with children and youth and in independent youth organisations. Developing networks between the institutions is also important.
- At the individual level, the focus is on training youth workers, youth social workers and youth leaders. Priority is given to empowering young people, especially at the local level.

The rights of children and youth are also implemented in a targeted way in the priority areas of development cooperation with a country. Young people are the direct or indirect targets of a large number of measures.

No future without rights

Children and youth have rights of their own. The BMZ sees the realisation of their human rights as a key task of development cooperation.

The human rights-based, gender-sensitive approach to development used by the BMZ is expressed in a BMZ cross-sectoral strategy paper* which makes this approach binding for German development cooperation.

Additional reading:

- * Human Rights in German Development Policy; Strategy – BMZ Strategy Paper 4/2011e

http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/strategies/Strategiepapier305_04_2011.pdf

A position paper** defines the development policy approach for the target group youth. It helps Germany identify, appraise, plan, implement and evaluate development projects that are of relevance for young people.

The BMZ has commissioned the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to properly embed human rights-based approaches for children and youth in projects and programmes under official German development cooperation.

The tasks to be carried out by GIZ include in particular:

- Supporting selected overseas projects and regional structures in implementing the rights of children and youth through accompanying advisory services;
- Developing, preparing and disseminating practice-based methods and instruments for the implementation of children's and youth's rights in various sectors (e.g. systemic prevention of youth violence, participation, analysis of child and youth policy); and
- Conceiving and implementing training courses, workshops and expert events.

Contact: youth@giz.de

Additional reading:

** Young people in German development policy – a contribution to the implementation of the rights of children and youth; a BMZ Position Paper – BMZ Strategy Paper 12/2011e

http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/strategies/Strategiepapier312_12_2011.pdf

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