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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the key issues and methodologies involved in the effort to internationalize youth policies and programs so that the exchange of information and experience could provide useful ideas for others. Related general processes of knowledge transfer and dissemination and the more specific strategies involved in replication and going-to-scale are examined. Section 2 provides a discussion of the global commonalities and local specificities of youth issues. Section 3 emphasizes the need for a corresponding international connectedness in developing responses as well as the possibility of learning from each other. Different approaches to these issues and related strategies are reviewed in sections 4 through 8, where a distinction is explicitly drawn between the universalist and the contextualist schools. The final section lists criteria for guiding practices with respect to coordinated policy formation and action. These criteria stress the importance of networking and the involvement of stakeholders. (Contains 59 references.) (SLD)

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# YOUTH POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

## STRATEGIES FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION AND DISSEMINATION

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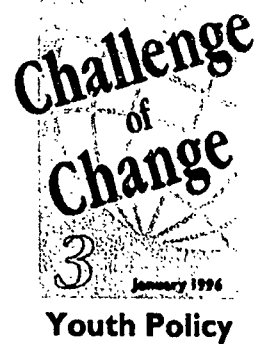
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# YOUTH POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES: STRATEGIES FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION AND DISSEMINATION

## 1 Background: Challenge of Change - 3

Since 1990, the Directorate of Youth Policy of the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport has been a key actor in promoting the internationalization of youth policies and programmes. This move was motivated by the belief that the exchange of information and experience would release new energies and ideas and offer useful lessons and guidelines for action. It was also hoped that such collaboration would eventually lead to joint action and policy formulation, resulting in better and improved programmes for children, youth and their families. To this end, the Ministry has initiated several important activities such as: promoting bilateral and technical exchange between The Netherlands and a number of countries; setting up an action-oriented network of youth policy makers and specialists (International Initiative); the establishment of a clearinghouse of international youth policy; and the organisation of major international conferences.

The present conference is the third in the series "*Challenge of Change*" which have brought together policy makers, researchers and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around youth issues. Following up on the directions charted out in the second conference, the organizers now aim to achieve more concrete results with respect to international **action** for children and youth. Examples of good practice from several countries will be presented with a view to reaching agreement on the common features of effective programmes. These will be used as a starting point for designing comprehensive, effective and sustainable programmes for youth and their families.

This paper reviews the key issues and methodologies involved in internationalization efforts. The related general processes of knowledge transfer and dissemination and the more specific strategies involved in replication and going-to-scale are examined. Section 2 provides a discussion of the global commonalities and local specificities of youth issues. Section 3 emphasizes the need for a corresponding international connectedness in developing responses as well as the possibility of learning from each other. Different approaches to these issues and related strategies are reviewed in sections 4 - 8 where a distinction is explicitly drawn between the universalist and the contextualist school. The final section closes with a listing of criteria for guiding practices with respect to coordinated policy formulation and action.

## 2 Commonality of Youth Issues

**"Skinheads in racist attack: Bratislava** - Rampaging skinheads set fire to a Gypsy youth, attacked a second and tried to torch a bar and a private flat in the central Slovak town of Ziar nad Hronom ... a group of some 30 skinheads attacked a 17-year-old Gypsy youth, dousing him with a flammable liquid and then setting him ablaze." *The Independent*, 25 July 1995.

This event received wide international coverage at the time of its occurrence and evoked universal horror and repugnance. The violent acts of these deeply-troubled teenagers, and the vulnerability of minority youth, are a cause for concern as it is clear that similar outbreaks could easily occur elsewhere as well. Racial brutality is only one of the many problems that countries share. In most, if not all countries of the world, youth face and deal with many other problems that are strikingly similar. Although opportunities for positive development of young people differ from country to country, the obstacles and risks threatening their well being have an element of commonality. A listing of the most pressing issues facing youth would not differ dramatically from one country to the next.

It should be noted that it is not only the problems of youth that are shared but they appear to have common origins and to be closely interlinked.

Korten (1990), writing about wider development issues, mentions by way of illustration over twenty "problems", that do not recognize North-South or East-West distinctions. Some of the needs that are increasingly shared in common are:

- resettling refugees;
- reducing chronic unemployment;
- controlling drug trafficking and abuse;
- managing population growth and distribution;
- reducing teenage pregnancy;
- providing housing for the homeless;
- making credit available for micro-economic activities;
- reducing hunger, illiteracy and infant mortality among difficult to reach populations;
- treating AIDS victims and controlling the spread of the disease;
- meeting the needs for bilingual education;
- facilitating reconciliation among racial, religious and ethnic groups;
- ensuring the preservation of human rights; and
- increasing citizen awareness of global development issues.

These global risk factors have a direct bearing on the well-being of youth, particularly those who already live under stress caused, for example, by poverty, discrimination, or disabilities. Youth in the richer countries are also sensitive to these problems. A recent study reveals that 15-30% of children in the OECD countries could be considered "at risk" for the same reasons (Evans 1995). Further, the causes of these problems, and their manifestations, do not run parallel to each other, but are closely **inter-dependent**. Being commonly rooted, these problems often appear in clusters. Studies from the United States confirm that risk behaviours are interrelated in children and youth: nearly 50% of American youth are involved in two or more of the four categories of risk behaviours that have been identified (Lerner 1995)<sup>1</sup>.

This connectedness also manifests itself internationally. Events in one country could have an immediate impact on the lives of people living at the other end of the globe and *vice versa*. Communication and exchange of values and ideas amongst youth occurs all the time and with considerable speed and few youngsters remain untouched. Ling (1989) notes, for example, that "lifestyle illnesses have become the new communicable disease -transmitted through the information media.... They are initiated as fast as communications speed information from one country to another".

It is obvious, therefore, that initiatives for alleviating pressures on youth cannot be developed in isolation. Practitioners, researchers, policy makers, project staff and parents function in the same inter-dependent system as their children. For people who work for and on behalf of youth there is no option but to join forces with their counterparts in other countries. By elevating their concerns to the international level, they will get a richer and fuller understanding of the environment in which children and youth grow up. It is at this level that they can share their experiences, learn from each other, and generate the kind of force that is needed to bring about change locally.

In recognizing the commonalities of youth issues across national boundaries, the underlying specificities of each local situation should not be ignored. Care needs to be exercised not to impose "international" solutions to problems which are intrinsically local. In fact, a sensitive balance has to be struck in developing approaches to internationalization which makes it possible to exploit the potentialities of cross-border exchanges while recognizing and protecting what is valuable at the local level.

### **3 Responses: the Internationalization of Local Action**

International cooperation among like-minded people and organizations takes place at an informal level all the time. People attend conferences, exchange visits, and share documents and materials. During the last decade, however, a new kind of collaboration is emerging whereby local action groups, statutory bodies, and NGOs are building up international linkages.

The twinning of municipalities, the adoption of schools in poor countries by rotary clubs or schools in richer countries, and mutual visits by community workers are just a few illustration of this new cooperation. Many of these activities occur outside the sphere of organizations with traditional international mandates such as donor and aid agencies, church-missions or university-based exchange programmes and often go unnoticed by them. People engaged in local social action have started to look across borders for cooperation, support and also to seek and to give help. This latter objective of giving help is of particular interest here<sup>2</sup>. Currently, there is a steady flow of material and human resources from West to East and Central Europe. The number of persons who have advice and solutions to offer to their counterparts in the East seems only to be growing. All this is happening without any overall directive or plan of action. Most of these exchanges are unfolding spontaneously and are the outcome of entrepreneurial initiatives.

The internationalization of local action holds some promise. It happens without bureaucratic interference; there are fewer administrative hurdles and it provides for people-to-people contacts. In general, projects are formulated on the basis of felt needs and funds are sought accordingly. This is in contrast to the common experience of funding agencies where projects may be constructed to spend available monies. The bottom-up, informal internationalization of local social action could be reinforced and strengthened if it could draw on the resources available in the formal international cooperation structures. Their expertise, factual knowledge and skills, and access to people and organizations, could be of great value to local groups. Conversely, the formal sector could benefit from working with local action groups as these are more flexible and are in closer contact with people and their lives.

Collaboration and exchange, rather than competition and avoidance, between the organized and non-formal sectors, is desirable. This collaboration will not come about of its own accord. Local groups are in general too weak to take the initiative individually and there is little tradition of working collectively. Of necessity, change will have to be induced from above i.e. from the established organizations or from the government.

What is the role that government agencies, large NGOs and donor organizations can play in bringing about this change? A few considerations should be mentioned. First, such agencies have their own needs, mandates and working styles. How are these to be combined and integrated into coordinated action for youth? Second, it is well known that large organizations are bureaucratic and unwieldy, whereas local agencies are characterized by their flexibility and ability to adjust and respond to local needs. Would the former be able to undergo change in themselves? Third, seeking common solutions to shared problems could well imply a negation of underlying contextual differences and a stifling of need-based local action. How can local initiatives avoid being coopted into donor-determined, homogenized approaches? In other words, there is a need to combine the advantages of one sector while avoiding the pitfalls of the other. These questions strike at the heart of the discussions on how to disseminate and replicate youth policies and practices across cultures and borders. The following text is presented to inform these discussions.

#### **4 Dissemination and Replication: Can Scale and Quality be Combined?**

A review of international development efforts reveals that **effective** interventions are not easy to introduce; processes leading to **sustained** improvements take a long time to establish; and effective and sustainable programmes reaching out to **large numbers** of children and youth are few and far between. In general, good development programmes are small-scale, they are financed in a distinctive manner and are supported by special human resources. They are usually found in circumscribed communities which are well organized, where the number of children at risk is limited and where funds can be readily generated. The contacts between the key players are direct, personal, concrete and visible and there is a good understanding of the local context.

However, planners and policy makers responsible for regional or national mandates are in a somewhat different position.



The children they aim to reach are not directly known to them; their needs and living conditions are accessed through statistics and abstractions; the catalogue of problems is overwhelming and appears only to be accumulating. They are under continual pressure to produce solutions that are not only effective, but also reach as many children as possible, are low-cost, and above all, are speedy. Too often, this proves to be an impossible assignment. So far, the experience with large-scale programmes has not been encouraging and the majority of them show the wear and tear and inefficiency associated with top-down bureaucratic enterprises. Their impact on children and youth is limited, if not detrimental; their services are under-utilized and the bulk of the monies available are absorbed by the system, without reaching the children it seeks to serve. Finally, they appear impervious to change and have difficulty in reflecting local diversity and adapting to local needs.

In addition to the many instances of ineffective large programmes and appropriate, but small-scale, interventions there is some experience to suggest that these two extremes can be bridged. Pointers in this direction may be found in the field of health where it has been feasible to combine quality with quantity. For example, programmes such as mass immunization and Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) are good instances of interventions that have achieved both impact and coverage. These are single-issue interventions with universal appeal. As will be discussed below, it is more difficult to achieve this combination in multi-dimensional social programmes where the product may not have the same universal validity.

Arguments for increasing the coverage and impact of programmes are readily available. Practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and funding agencies would agree that there is sufficient knowledge and experience to address most of the serious problems facing children and youth<sup>3</sup>. As so many children are still not reached, there is an obligation to extend, disseminate, or replicate this information so that more can benefit. The assignment, therefore, is not so much to improve the "state-of-the-art, but rather to lift up the "state-of-practice" so that an ever increasing number of children can benefit.

A related angle is provided by the assertion that it makes sense on pragmatic and economic grounds to replicate what has proven to be working rather than reinventing the wheel by investing yet again in pilot, experimental, alternative, or innovative projects<sup>4</sup>. This argument is increasingly gaining ground with donors and policy makers alike. In an environment of shrinking resources for the social sector, foundations and governmental agencies are coming under increasing pressure to show "results". They are also accused of spending the bulk of their resources on innovation and project identification rather than on replication (Mott Foundation 1990). It is suggested that replicating good practice is a cost-effective means of utilizing scarce resources. The assertion is that money would be saved if project experience could just be transferred to other sites. Consequently, funding and implementing organizations are under pressure to focus on replicating existing programmes rather than supporting yet another project that "looks very much the same as the others"<sup>5</sup>.

Recently, a more developmental rationale has been put forward<sup>6</sup>. The spreading of good practice is viewed not merely as trying to persuade others to mount identical programmes, but rather as an opportunity for mutual learning and sharing of experience. A positive outcome of exchanging experience, according to this view, is that it allows networks to develop. These can, in turn, grow into coalitions that can demand more political attention and appeal for larger allocations of means and also evolve into institutional vehicles for internal problem-solving.

In practice, a combination of economic and developmental motives may well provide the justification for dissemination and scaling-up. However, it is important to make a clear distinction to help bring order to the discourse on the subject. For the purpose of this paper, two contrasting approaches are identified. The first will be called **universalist** - broadly speaking, proponents of this view share a belief in universal principles which can be applicable to a very wide band of practices and situations. The dissemination effort is supply-determined. The second approach is termed **contextual** - the emphasis here is on local practice, local initiative, spontaneity, mutual learning and problem solving. The dissemination effort is demand-driven. While both approaches are acceptable in principle, emphasizing one or the other would determine the choice and adoption of sharply contrasting strategies.

## 5 Knowledge Transfer and Replication: Some Conceptual Issues

The study of knowledge transfer and replication dates back to nineteenth century anthropology. After World War II, the debate has been pursued in a wide range of fields such as education, planning, sociology, medical practice, commercial and social marketing, and agricultural extension. During the last fifteen years, it has also gained ground in development work. A variety of labels, having their origins in distinct disciplines and social practices, are used to describe the phenomena but there is little uniformity or consistency in usage in the research literature and in development language<sup>7</sup>.

In the 1970s and 1980s research on dissemination and related activities reached its peak and culminated in a number of seminal publications. The work of Glaser et. al. (1983) and Rogers (1983) falls in this category and remains mandatory reading on this subject. Rogers, drawing on agricultural extension work, made a significant contribution to the formulation of key concepts and the theory of diffusion while Glaser offered a detailed overview of research and practice in the field of dissemination and a taxonomy of what to do, in which context, and under what circumstances.

The potentialities and limitations of knowledge use and transfer as applied in the social sector might perhaps be best understood through a consideration of the parallel discourses in other disciplines or areas of activity. Illustrative comparisons can be drawn with the fields of medicine, agricultural technology, sociology of education and consumer behaviour. In each of these, transfer, diffusion and replication can be viewed as processes linking the origin of an innovation, idea or **product** on the one hand, to a universe of potential **users**, clients or beneficiaries on the other. This separation between the source and the recipient of the impulse is central to this concept.

Underlying this process, there are other latent premises which need to be made explicit. **First**, the subjects (or the universe of potential beneficiaries) are assumed to be unable to generate the required change or transformation by themselves. This inability could stem from a wide range of factors. **Second**, it is implicitly assumed that the source (donor/supplier/innovator) has the capacity to accurately recognise and prioritise the needs of the recipient. **Third**, the product or innovation is expected to satisfy the needs of the recipients. **Finally**, there is the underlying assumption of the **universality** of needs within the universe of recipients.

Viewed in these simple abstract terms, the process then is characterised by three components: identification and recognition of a particular need of the target population; a system whereby a product can be generated externally for meeting this need; and finally, a mechanism for the effective delivery of this product from the producer or source to the user or recipient. This process can retain its validity at this high level of abstraction but an examination of specific instances reveals fundamental problems. It is important to identify some of these, since it will be argued later that the weakness of the universalist approach in social-sector applications, perhaps stems from a mechanistic dependence on a particular version of the process which is best suited and defensible in other contexts.

Consider the case of **mass immunization** programmes. The three assumptions listed above would appear to stand vindicated here. There could be little doubt or disagreement about the desirability of such a product, or of its intrinsic welfare-raising contribution. It would also be fair to argue that beneficiaries could not really be expected to generate such a product at the micro-level. The focus then falls on developing the best version of the product, of an efficient delivery mechanism and of ensuring the acceptance of the product by the beneficiaries. Large scale replication systems are thereby called for. This process is fundamentally uni-dimensional involving a single-effect product applied to a relatively homogenous population.

The example of the so-called **green revolution** appears, at first sight, to be similar. In the case of high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds as well the model of external generation, followed by mass diffusion would appear to be justified. However, decades of experience reveals that such thinking might have contained much that was simplistic. First, it became quickly apparent that the benefits of such technical change were very unevenly distributed within the target population, with those whose need was the greatest benefiting the least. **Second**, the externally generated product was defined exclusively in terms of positive attributes.

However, experience has revealed negative dimensions, most prominently in the form of the high degree of dependence on chemical fertilisers, and the consequent environmentally damaging effects. Third, contrary to the case of immunization programmes, the impact of this intervention was not self-contained and neutral with respect to other social outcomes. Fourth, partly as a result of the eventual discovery of these problematic side-effects, there has been a certain grudging recognition of the values of the original farming technologies, and new approaches attempt to build on the essential features of these endogenous systems.

Finally, a third arena in which diffusion and replicative processes need to be scrutinised is the social sector. If some of the assumptions which held validity in the case of medicine tended to crumble in the interactive socio-economic arena of agricultural technology transfer, the position is far worse when social-sector interventions are considered. Two examples are provided by **anti-poverty programmes** that attracted attention in the 60s and 70s - the Community Action Program (CAP) in the USA and Educational Priority Area (EPA) in the United Kingdom. While both were motivated by social needs which are widely recognized, the simple model for mass transfer and replication did not meet original expectations (Higgins 1978). There was a tendency to overlook the social heterogeneity of the population, and hence the diversity of their needs; there was an over-privileging of the external agency and undervaluing of the voiceless within the recipient population. The multi-dimensionality of the product, of the recipients, as well as of the context, got inadequate recognition.

These critiques notwithstanding, there is a tendency in the social sector towards adopting models of transfer, diffusion and replication which resemble those utilised in the sphere of medicine and, more recently, in the world of business franchising. What is equally pertinent is that advocates of the universalist and contextual approaches largely debate their separate viewpoints in insulated groups, with little or no acknowledgment, cross-referencing, cross-fertilization or exchange. It is remarkable that even the literature emanating from each side shows little knowledge of or interest in the main thinking and trends of the other.

## 6 Strategies for Increasing Coverage in the Social Sector

In many human development and research circles concerned with developing innovative and effective social programmes, dissemination was rarely an issue for deliberate reflection at the start of a project. It was more or less assumed that once a pilot project had been successfully completed, replication would follow as a matter of course. At most, a report would be written and a set of recommendations formulated "for further action". This further action was then considered to be the task of others. As a rule, no information was provided on who the others were, or only in general terms such as "practitioners", the "government", or the "NGO community". Neither was it made clear how these others should go about spreading the good news.

In response to rising pressure to look beyond the pilot phase of a project and to assume active responsibility for following up on project outcomes, many donor agencies made the inclusion of dissemination a mandatory objective for providing funding. Even when formally stated as one of the objectives, project designers tended not to look beyond the boundaries of their present work and think about its wider implications. Many donor agencies that carry the pursuit of replication in their banner tend not to move beyond mere rhetoric. The majority do not provide long standing support for replication work, resulting in the creation of "white elephants" and dependency on external funding<sup>8</sup>.

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in applying the principles of knowledge transfer in social programmes<sup>9</sup>. Donor agencies, governments and the international development community are all expressing a concern for making use of existing, well-tested experience. This has provided an impetus to documenting and broadcasting illustrative cases and there is now a steady flow of descriptions of commendable projects, models, and of approaches "that work". This information about good programmes is expected to assist others in developing their own work. Attempts have also been made to highlight the **ingredients or key features** that make for success and to provide practical guidelines and strategies for dissemination<sup>10</sup>.



The following distinct paths to replication may be distinguished in the social sector<sup>11</sup>:

**Franchise Approach:** Also known as the "cookie-cutter" approach, it is closest to the private sector in its policy and practice. It assumes that there is a product - in this case a programme - that can be replicated. The components of this prototype programme and performance standards are largely inviolable. There is a central agency, usually the franchiser, which provides technical assistance, marketing, training and other services.

**Mandated Replication:** This approach is usually, though not necessarily, sponsored by government and occurs when a parent body wants to disseminate a prototype programme through the organizations under its jurisdiction. Mandated replication is always top-down and there is usually no element of choice involved.

**Staged Replication:** This is the most structured approach to replication and takes place in three stages. The first is the **pilot** stage where the viability of the programme concept is tested; followed by the **demonstration** stage where the programme is implemented in a variety of sites. This stage is usually closely monitored and rigorously evaluated and successful demonstration is followed by **replication**. The analogy is often drawn with prototype testing and development in the private sector and the need for an independent replicating agency is often stressed.

**Concept Replication:** In this approach the focus is not on the universal and specific elements of the prototype programme but rather on **general** components and principles which can be transported to other sites. Unlike the approaches mentioned earlier, strict adherence to the strategies and the model of the prototype are not required and success is measured in terms of adaptation and sensitivity to each unique local context. There is also no accountability for how components are transferred and used at each local site.

**Spontaneous or Endogenous Replication:** The essential difference here is that the demand for information comes from below. It is need based and is characterized by spontaneous and informal contacts between like-minded individuals. Additionally, the communication flow is not one-way - from recognized model to recipient - but rather a two-way process of convergence where participants "create and share information".

There are sufficient commonalities in the first three forms of replication to warrant grouping them under the **universalist** label, while the fourth and fifth could be termed **contextualist**.

## 7 The Universalist Approach: an Appraisal

In recent years, concerted discussions and reflection on the theme of replication have taken place in the United States. It appears that the universalist viewpoint is gaining ground as a potential strategy for extending the scale of effective programmes in the social sector<sup>12</sup>. Two broad trends are discernible in the literature. First, while paying lip service to the validity and importance of concept replication, a strong preference is expressed for developing a more **planned, structured and controlled** approach to disseminating good practice<sup>13</sup>. This is reflected in a call for adherence to standards and principles; for protecting the identity of the programme that is being replicated; and for charting out admissions requirements for selecting local sites. This controlling function should be the responsibility of an intermediary organization which acts as the **replicating agent** and has "final accountability for program performance". A need has also been expressed for a national agency which can develop and promote replication strategies and speak with an authoritative voice on the subject<sup>14</sup>.

A second and related move is towards applying theories and practices developed in the private sector to replication efforts in the non-profit sector (Archie 1993; Backer 1992; Mannes & Meilleur 1989; Oster 1992; RPS 1994). According to RPS (1994:ii), replication in the social sector "... is entrepreneurial, market-driven ... In short it appears to be analogous to our market economy."

This conclusion is based on their finding that the most successful replication does not take place on account of deliberate policy but is the result of a private entrepreneurial effort, very similar to starting a new business. Thus, in the social sector as well, replication efforts would require a "champion" or "programme entrepreneur" who has the charismatic and leadership qualities required to design programme strategies, promote its achievements and secure long-term funding<sup>15</sup>. Once conceived, the programme would need to be "marketed" and "promoted" in order to raise its public profile and increase its ability to compete for scarce funding. Concern is expressed for the lack of "incentives", in sharp contrast to the private sector, which would be required to sustain commitment to the programme. Finally, there would be a need for protecting the programme prototype from being cloned or expropriated without due acknowledgement and payment. It is suggested that in order to avoid loss of revenue, protect the reputation of the programme, and prevent misuse of key concepts and strategies, the social sector would in future need to enforce copyrights and patents and levy licensing fees. In short, in order to be successful, replication strategies should look to the business sector for inspiration, in particular to the field of business franchising<sup>16</sup>.

Despite critiques of the universalist approach from various disciplines, it is once again in the foreground of social action, but this time taking its cue from the private sector. Several factors could be held responsible for this trend. The recent resource crunch has implied a move away from state funding of social programmes and a corresponding increase in the importance of the voluntary or non-profit sector for the delivery of such programmes. The state has increasingly incorporated principles of corporate philosophy with respect to the use of its own resources and also for the disbursement of funds to the voluntary sector. At the same time, social problems have not decreased and there is an urgency in the search for successful prototypes. Given this climate, and the parallel rise in corporate philanthropy, techniques developed in the private sector have percolated into the world of social programmes. While it is undeniable that there is a real and immediate need to search for solutions that reach more people, it remains necessary to consider the appropriateness of these techniques and to anticipate and examine their weaknesses.

**First**, replication is seen as the culmination of a uni-linear unfolding of discrete activities starting with the pilot and the demonstration stages. Agencies' annual reports, conference discussion papers and research and evaluation reports present innumerable examples of variations and elaborations of these stages. But the existence of these stages and their sequential order is hardly challenged. Yet, a close look at practice reveals that they are often not clearly distinguishable and they, or their elements, may exist simultaneously. Projects never work in total isolation, they have radiation effects and they respond to environmental influences from the onset. This is especially the case when project staff belong to varied networks and are in constant communication with others.

**Second**, this approach looks on programme replication as an activity to be carried out largely by the sponsor or initiator of the original project. These initiators are generally governmental or para-statal agencies and private or non-governmental organizations as well as so-called "pioneers", "champions", or "charismatic leaders" belonging to these organizations. The designation of the sponsor as the main directing and initiating actor has far-reaching consequences. It immediately builds into the work a "source bias" reflecting the interests, style and values of the sponsor<sup>17</sup>. Going-to-scale becomes a centralized, top-down process with the major decisions made at "headquarters"<sup>18</sup>.

**Third**, there are dangers inherent in transferring strategies developed in the business sector to improve replication practice in the social sector. There can be vast differences in objectives, guiding philosophy, target groups, values and mission. Principles and practices that have been developed to maximise profit might not be applicable, beyond a point, to agencies working for the benefit of disadvantaged sections of society. For example, notions of staff ownership and commitment, and the need for transparency and participatory decision-making are viewed very differently in the two sectors<sup>19</sup>. It would be difficult to juggle the need for local participation, ownership and responsiveness to contextual variables - crucial elements in social programmes - with the requirement of standardization which are central to the franchise approach. It is interesting to note that even franchised operations are increasingly allowing for local input and creativity and imposing standardization only where necessary.

There is yet another danger to "cookie-cutter" replications which remain faithful in their form and content to the original "model" programme. They may succeed and even be locally supported, especially if they appeal to a well-resourced leadership, but do they work to the benefit of their target group? Sustaining such a model may even become counterproductive as it could absorb all available resources and discourage the promotion of other, more appropriate models. Everything else becomes less attractive, not to be emulated. For example, it is a familiar sight in derelict or deprived areas to see "first class" community centres or sporting grounds that in all respects resemble the facilities available in better endowed places. These exact replicas have often been established by benefactors who, in tandem with local leaders, want "the best of the best" for youth. They are usually the show pieces reserved for visitors and the media but they may reach only a fraction of the youth living in the neighbourhood. It is also likely that the services offered would be appropriated by the least disadvantaged youth. For financial and psychological reasons, the existence of such a service could foreclose any other form of assistance to deprived youth in the area.

**Finally**, in the current trend towards "planned" replication, there is an undue stress on technical and organizational aspects at the cost of human and social aspects. Social reality is inherently complex and does not submit in a predictable manner to externally imposed interventions, no matter how well planned or technically sound they may be. At the heart of all social processes are people and they are also the intended beneficiaries of social programmes. Unless the human aspect is given due consideration in the design and dissemination of programmes, the effort is likely to fail. According to Cernea (1991:7) "the neglect of social dimensions in intervention-caused development always takes revenge on the outcome."<sup>20</sup> In the world of development practice and literature, there is an increasing awareness of the need to "put people first" in the planning of intervention programmes (Cernea 1991; Chambers 1994; Korten & Klauss 1990). A change is called for in the conventional approach to planning, which is dominated by technical factors and administrative details. The rationale for this change is sought not just on ethical and humanitarian grounds but is rooted in the belief that this is essential for assuring the effectiveness of programmes.

The Summer Training and Education Programme (STEP) - a remedial training programme for 14 and 15 year old poor urban youth over two summers - provides a very good illustration of a planned replication where more importance was given to form over content<sup>21</sup>. STEP has been hailed as a model of staged replication and is seen as an unqualified success as far as the replication process is concerned. However, long-term evaluations show that the programme had little or no impact on the youth it aimed to serve once they had left the programme. This outcome would not have been so surprising to the sponsors of the programme if the complex social dynamics surrounding issues such as poverty, urban deprivation, employment and teenage pregnancy had been acknowledged and incorporated into the programme at the outset. Few astute social observers would have believed that a short intervention like a summer programme could rid youth of multiple, structural disadvantages.

## **8 The Contextualist Approach: Some Concerns**

The contextualist approach recognizes the uniqueness of each particular setting, thus precluding the wholesale cloning of models and practices from one context to another. Primacy is given to addressing local needs, adapting to local environments and acknowledging the validity of local knowledge. The relationship between the giver and receiver is viewed as equal and non-hierarchical and each exchange is a potential opportunity for mutual learning. The very term "dissemination" is seen to carry the connotation of a dependent or passive receiver; as are the words "target audience", "consumers" and "takers". Instead, notions of "partnership" and "convergence" should govern all exchanges.

In a parallel discussion on the merits and demerits of centralized versus decentralized diffusion, Rogers and Marcus (1983) note that a centralized approach is preferred only when highly-technical expertise is required, otherwise a decentralized approach is preferred. Contrasting the two strategies they observe that decentralization invites local control, stimulates staying power, promotes peer-to-peer diffusion and horizontal networks, encourages local experimentation by local non-experts, is problem centred and demand-driven and has a higher degree of adaptation.

Centralization is dependent on highly-trained experts, is top down, draws on research for innovation, manifests a low degree of adaptation and is supply driven.

It is obvious that the contextual approach is more suited to the transfer of components and principles and not to the actual replication of a project or programme. The key words frequently used are: indirect, dispersed, inadvertent, spontaneous, less measurable, and less geographically bounded (Chambers 1993). Not surprisingly, no framework or blue-print is prescribed for implementing this strategy. Room is also made for using indirect means for achieving wider impact and coverage. Thus, activities such as lobbying, influencing policy, advocacy, training and networking are deemed to have equal, if not more, significant results than direct dissemination.

The contextualist approach is usually developed as part of a broader strategy which also includes other, more direct means of replication and going-to-scale<sup>22</sup>. Each individual situation should determine the choice of strategy to be followed; in certain cases a combination of approaches may well be the most feasible course of action. While "expansion" and "addition" are seen as obvious means of increasing impact and coverage, it is felt that indirect means of replication should be given due recognition as they can often have superior results. Advocates of the contextual school rarely approach dissemination and replication strategies in isolation but place them in the wider framework of development theory and discussions on NGO management, impact and efficiency<sup>23</sup>.

There are several merits to the contextualist approach - more particularly, its sensitivity to the local level, the importance that is given to local knowledge and to need-driven demands for information, and its acceptance of the relevance of direct and indirect means of increasing impact - to make it an attractive component of any replication strategy. It is empowering, ensures local control and encourages self-generated learning. At first glance, it would also appear to contain all the elements required for developing an appropriate strategy for internationalizing policies, programmes and practices - the starting point of this paper. Notwithstanding these strengths, critics of the contextualist approach would deny it the label of a strategy since there are few rules governing its implementation. The replication effort is informal and dispersed and there are few well-defined criteria for evaluating its success. A closer look at this approach in practice reveals some weaknesses.

**First**, the premise of the uniqueness of each situation can sometimes be taken to an extreme. If all commonality is denied, room can be left open for unnecessary re-inventions of the wheel, with each local agency expending time and resources to find new solutions to problems that are not unique. It is not rare for small organizations to become self-serving and inward-looking with little or no contact with other like-minded actors. This precludes them from coalition-building and from joining forces in the interests of a common cause. A major avenue for increasing the impact of the work of the local sector could then be lost.

**Second**, the objective of increasing impact and coverage is also not served well if there is an undue focus on **processes** at the cost of **outcomes**. Some proponents of this approach would go so far as to reject the notion of planned, step-wise change, especially in community-based work. According to Smale (1993:16), "most people need to reinvent their own wheels and want to use them in their own way". Consequently, there cannot be a blue-print for community-based practice as "there are no destinations, only journeys". However, it would be difficult to deny that journeys could and should be undertaken with some sense of destination in mind. If the aim of social programmes is to mitigate the effects of social disadvantage, the interests of the target group will not be served well by a strategy which leaves so much to chance.

**Third**, an element of wishful thinking and romanticization can be detected in the notion of decentralization of diffusion efforts. It is necessary to bear in mind the critiques developed in the discourse on decentralization where devolution of authority is sharply distinguished from democratization. It is emphasized that the focus should not be just on shifting the responsibility for financial allocations and decision-making but equally on understanding the nature of local power structures and political processes which get "empowered" as a result of decentralization.



Writing more than a decade ago about the "myth of decentralization", Bryant and White (1982) warn that it can invite corruption, internecine warfare and take-over by local elites.

**Finally**, it is important to ask the question: who assesses local needs and how are they legitimized? All too often, this is done by an outside agent - the "animator" - or by the representative of a donor agency. Needs, priorities and areas for intervention are often defined on the basis of a short exposure or a superficial knowledge of the field. Local hierarchies, power structures and disagreements may not be reflected in the message that is taken back? For example, this may reflect the voices of the most vocal and visible youth, who may not be the most vulnerable and marginalized.

## 9 Internationalization of Youth Action: Some Guidelines

Involving large numbers of children and youth, particularly those who are marginalized, in sustainable activities that promote their positive development has all too often proven to be an elusive process. In 1975, life for youth in the inner cities of North America had only worsened after a decade of intensive debates and federal, state and municipal involvement (Goldman and Dotson 1975). Twenty years later, the situation is not better and has, in fact, deteriorated further<sup>24</sup>. This has happened, or has been allowed to happen, against the back cloth of efforts to expand programmes that "work"; the availability of tried and tested programme and policy scenarios; and the existence of - assumed - skills and knowledge on how to implement these.

The situation of children in other countries is often not much different<sup>25</sup>. Given this disappointing track record, it behooves politicians, researchers, donors, and policy makers, to adopt an attitude of profound modesty, or even wariness, about their recommendations for youth and about any future scenarios they set in motion. Unfortunately, accumulated experience permits statements on what should **not**, rather than on what **should** be done. What is obvious is that increasing the coverage of effective and sustainable programmes for children and youth "at risk" is a complicated, cumbersome, costly and time-consuming process. There are no easy solutions and no short cuts. However, it is useful to look at the various trends in youth policy and practice that offer some promise - including those found in development experience - and also to explore the long research tradition in related social science disciplines. The integration of inputs from these distinct fields of practice and research will point to some realistic criteria for guiding international action for youth. The following trends appear to be relevant:

- understanding the principles and processes underlying good practice;
- giving validity to all knowledge, including that of users;
- outcome-oriented networking of networks;
- government and NGOs working together for children and youth;
- involvement of stake-holders from the stage of project design; and
- establishment of a monitor to oversee the situation of children and youth.

**What makes programmes work?** Most reviews of "good practice" are mainly descriptive in nature, they seldom go further than offering evidence that the project has a positive effect on children and should, therefore, be supported or emulated. Analytical studies that reveal **why** programmes work, under what **conditions**, and **how** are rare. Without this understanding, the disseminating of projects, or of their elements, could degenerate into a form of blind cloning or become a matter of intuition. A first step to understanding why programmes work is to uncover the principles and processes underlying the practice.

A number of principles have already been referred to in the text as they appear to be essential to most successful programmes. They include empowerment of users, recognition of cultural diversity and local needs, promotion of holistic development, and parental involvement. However, mechanical adherence to these principles will not automatically lead to positive development of children and youth; their meaning and function should be continually analyzed. For example, a deeper understanding of the processes underlying parental involvement can be attained by asking questions such as: how does parental involvement work?; what mediating role do parents play between the child and the environment?;



what factors affect this mediating role of the parents?; and, do similar social conditions affect the father and the mother, in what ways and why?

It is important to bear in mind that knowledge and practice are not stable - they have to be reviewed and evolved all the time. Questions have to be posed continually and in each different context as the answers will vary accordingly. Understanding the issues underlying wider principles is, therefore, necessary to counter the mechanical application of outdated practice. It will also ensure that programmes and policies are not static but remain responsive to the changing needs of children.

A **second** set of guidelines emerge from critical writings in the field of knowledge use and transfer and are of particular relevance in situations where government departments or large funding agencies take the lead in dissemination efforts<sup>26</sup>. The most fundamental conclusion of these critiques is that knowledge is not objective or value-free; it is identified with the groups that create it and it serves to further their interests while disregarding others. In order to ensure that dissemination does not become a way to exert power and control over small, local organizations care should be taken not to treat "knowledge users" as empty receptacles with no mechanisms for their own knowledge creation. This requires giving validity to all kinds of knowledge - be it research or practitioner knowledge. Similarly, in order to be truly effective, knowledge should not be imposed from outside but should be owned or internalized by users. Ideally, two-way information **sharing**, rather than knowledge emanating from a single source, would be one way to avoid this situation. At the practical level, it would be more effective to present users with a range of programme and policy options rather than promoting one particular prototype. This would allow them to make comparisons and to select and combine elements to suit their particular environment.

A **third** pointer is provided by the recent trend towards disseminating good practice through **networking of networks**<sup>27</sup>. Ideally, the participants should belong to vertically and horizontally linked structures, connecting public and private organizations. These networks should be multi-nodal and comprise autonomous subsystems. There should not be a tightly-structured chain of command or communication. The participants should have the capacity to act and learn without being forced to do so and they should have the potential for voluntary and collective action. Most importantly, they can form coalitions of smaller NGOs, or even GOs, who can act together to make an impact. Networks that are constructed to operate in this way are potentially strong **learning organizations**<sup>28</sup>. They have the capacity to absorb and generate new knowledge and are an appropriate system for dissemination and implementation.

Networking also has its drawbacks: network meetings are not low-cost. They can easily degenerate into talking shops, or turn into elite groups, excluding others and monopolizing the debate. These unproductive dynamics can be avoided by encouraging the participation of groups or sub-networks working close to children and youth. This can be done by identifying specific needs and problems among the network partners; by setting goal-oriented agendas; and by facilitating and monitoring progress. Sustained, effective and locally rooted dissemination is most likely to take place through outcome-directed networking. Replication through networking is not likely to evolve spontaneously or from the bottom up; guidance and direction by a centralized force is usually needed, not only to initiate but also to supervise and sustain the process. Traditionally, government agencies and grant-making organizations assume this role. Some of the problems associated with this could be avoided if NGO coalitions were also to take on these functions.

**Fourth, The relationship between NGOs and government** is yet another area that needs to be carefully explored. Whether this should happen or not is no longer an issue for debate. Barring dictatorial regimes, NGOs and governments have no option but to cooperate as they are dependent on each other. There will always be a sense of uneasiness between them as their operational styles, incentive systems, responsibilities and distance from constituents are dissimilar. Yet, in any discussion about going to scale in a sustainable manner, governments will have the final vote as they have the resources to finance these programmes and to facilitate them through other means such as legislation, priority setting, guided networking, and technical support.

NGOs have a role to play in safeguarding local control, in prodding governments into action, and generating new impulses and visions<sup>29</sup>. Even when working in complete unison and drawing on monies from the private and commercial sector, NGOs will never be in a position to replace the government. This is not to say that activities for children and youth cannot be sustained outside the government. In many countries, the YMCA and Scout movements are perfectly able to survive without governmental subvention but their users belong, in the main, to middle-class families who can afford these services. When it comes to poor or otherwise disadvantaged children, the situation is radically different.

**Fifth, involvement of stake-holders** is increasingly seen as a necessary precondition for successful replication. There are strong economic, political, ethical, psychological and developmental arguments for investing in children. Effective programmes for children and youth benefit not just their immediate target group, but virtually all of society. In a sense, everybody is a "stake-holder" in programmes for children. This is now common understanding although not yet common practice and the welfare of children and youth is still seen as the responsibility of parents and of specific government departments and specialized NGOs. But all responsible citizens, whether as individuals or as members of organizations, should realize that positive development of all children is in everyone's interest. Therefore, they too are stake-holders<sup>30</sup>. Dissemination schemes should include strategies that identify stake-holders, make them aware of their interests and encourage them to act on these. They should experience ownership of the programme, feel that they can give it direction and make critical decisions on policy and programme matters. This entails that prospective stake-holders should be involved as early as is feasible in the design of any dissemination efforts.

**Finally**, there is a need for an overall body that could **monitor** the situation of children and youth. The progress of replication efforts is often measured in terms of criteria such as the number of children reached; the spread of project sites over the country, region or world; the volume of services extended, of the institution or of its staff. When these indicators meet expectations, the programme is judged to be successful. Frequently, achievements are reviewed in terms of the growth that the organization achieved over a certain period. Seldom, or ever, are advances gauged against the needs of **all** children in a given country or region. Thus, while an organization is expanding its exemplary programmes, involving more children, sites, services, and staff, the impact on the total population of children may remain insignificant. It is important that dissemination programmes should be carried with a clear understanding of the total picture. A monitoring system or agency would be required to facilitate this process.

At the most basic level, such a monitor could gather data on children and youth, their needs, what programmes are offered for them, how many participate and who and how many are left out, or require special attention<sup>31</sup>. Additionally, the monitor could feed back information and demonstrate the effectiveness of dissemination programmes. Governments have the main responsibility for setting up such a monitor while NGOs could play a role in gathering data about groups that are traditionally hard to reach<sup>32</sup>. The internationalization of these monitors would be a mandatory next step to allow for cooperation and comparisons. UNICEF already provides vital statistics on a national basis in its annual "Progress of Nations" reports. But these data are based on national or regional averages and do not provide differentiated information on the various sections and groups within each country.

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# Notes

<sup>1</sup> The four categories of risk behaviours have been identified as: drug and alcohol use and abuse; unsafe sex, teenage pregnancy, and teenage parenting; school failure, underachievement and dropout, and; delinquency, crime and violence.

<sup>2</sup> There could be severe perils to this approach, especially between economically unequal partners. The relationship between rich and poor, industrialized and under-resourced is fundamentally unequal and carries with it the seeds of exploitation, imposition, and the creation of feelings of superiority in the donor and inferiority and resentment in the recipient. The very notion of "giving help" is of questionable value and barring some emergency situations, untenable. Effective international cooperation should include an element of mutual give-and-take which appeals to the self-interests of both parties and which promotes full empowerment of and participation by all "stake holders".

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Myers (1992), NASW (1993), Schorr (1989).

<sup>4</sup> There is little evidence in the literature to suggest that planned or staged replication of project prototypes is in any way less costly than starting a new programme. On the contrary, it can be an expensive process requiring vast human and financial resources.

<sup>5</sup> This trend is particularly strong in the United States as witnessed by the fact that many foundations have taken up "going-to-scale" as a major topic in their programming. See for example, Birman and Kaufman (1991); Council of Foundations (1993); Mott Foundation (1990); Paisly et al (1983); and International Youth Foundation (1991-1995).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Cernea (1991), Chambers (1993), Edwards and Hulme (1992) and Pottier (1993).

<sup>7</sup> The following descriptors are useful in accessing the subject area: acceptance, adaption, additionality, adoption, application, assimilation, communication, coverage, diffusion, dissemination, distribution, exchange, expansion, extension, flow, going-to-scale (also scaling up and upscaling), growth, innovation, multiplication, new knowledge research, new practice research, new products research, reception, replication, retrieval, spread, transfer, transmission, utilization, and also, frequently, planning.

<sup>8</sup> There is also a discernible tendency in donor agencies for new staff to undertake new initiatives in order to make their mark, while old staff often succumb to "donor fatigue" and tend to respond much more readily to innovations than to variations of the same.

<sup>9</sup> See, *inter alia*, Backer (1993); Chambers (1993); Conservation Company (1993); Conservation Company & Public/Private Ventures (1993); Dichter (1989); de Lone (1995); Edwards & Hulme (1992); Mott Foundation (1990); NASW (1993); Public/Private Ventures (1990); Replication and Program Services (1994); Rothman & Edwin (1994); Synergos Institute (1992).

<sup>10</sup> With respect to the area of children and youth, a review of in-depth as well as meta-studies shows that most successful programmes meet a certain combination of criteria. Briefly, they focus on children; promote positive growth; are preventative; allow for optimum participation by the children, parents and communities; are contextual and respond to local needs; have a positive bias towards vulnerable groups, especially poor children and girls; are horizontally and vertically embedded in organizational structures; and are low-cost. They are also well managed; conduct regular evaluations and offer training opportunities to their staff (Grant 1990; International Initiative 1991a,b; International Youth Foundation 1991-5; Van Oudenhoven 1989).

<sup>11</sup> These first four forms of replication have been identified by RPS (1994) on the basis of their survey of US practice. They also provide a listing and descriptions of US-based youth programmes which fall into each of the four categories.

<sup>12</sup> The main proponents of this approach are: Backer (1992a,b); Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (1990); Conservation Company (1993a,b); de Lone (1990); Public/Private Ventures (1990); Replication and Program Services (1994).

<sup>13</sup> An important study on replication, which was conducted under the auspices of some of the most influential sponsoring agencies and which included inputs from leading individuals in the field concluded with three recommendations: a how-to publication which will pull together relevant information in a manual; establishment of a replication resource group designed to "serve the interests and needs of private and corporate philanthropy, concerned with the most cost-effective use of program development, demonstration project and replication strategies"; and a national fund for programme replication (RPS 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Recognizing the importance of such an agent, private organizations in USA have established the specialised agency Replication and Program Services, Inc (RPS). Based in Philadelphia, this new office provides support to foundations and private voluntary organizations in disseminating their work.

<sup>15</sup> The role of the "champion" is seen by many as crucial for dissemination efforts. The argument runs that somebody is needed who believes in disseminating programme outcomes, who is committed to it, is internally motivated, who can push and move things, and has the skills, endurance and personality to carry on and to convince others to follow. However, as these champions are not always easily found, it is often recommended that an external, professional "replication agent" be appointed to guide the dissemination. What they would lack in personal qualities would be made up by their expertise, professional interest, and external incentives.

<sup>16</sup> The franchising of programmes, products, names, or even logos is common practice in the field of social programmes in the USA. More than half of the top one hundred charitable non-profits, e.g. American Red Cross, YMCA, and Scouting groups are franchising organizations (Oster 1992). They transfer to franchisees the exclusive right to use their "trademark" or sell certain products, usually in a particular territory, for which they receive payment. The franchiser provides assistance and exerts control over aspects of the operation. Profits, losses and liabilities are borne locally.

<sup>17</sup> According to Rogers (1976) research and evaluation studies of replication have also been heavily "source biased" as they have mainly been commissioned by sponsors.

<sup>18</sup> It is not surprising that most of the deliberations on replication take place at the behest of organizations that wield power to implement their decisions.

<sup>19</sup> What, for example, is the **commitment** needed to sell a McDonald hamburger?

<sup>20</sup> A re-evaluation of 25 World Bank financed projects shows that 13 of these were unsustainable, not for financial reasons, but because socio-cultural factors had been neglected at the stage of project formulation and implementation (Cernea 1991).

<sup>21</sup> For a comprehensive description of the replication process involved in the STEP programme see Walker & Vilella-Velez 1992.

<sup>22</sup> See Cernea (1991); Chambers (1993); Clark (1991); Edwards & Hulme (1992); Korten & Klaus (1990).

<sup>23</sup> A recent publication exploring the different ways in which NGOs could increase their impact lists three strategies for dissemination: **additive** - implying an increase in the size of the programme or organization; **multiplicative** - where impact is achieved through deliberate influence, networking, policy and legal reform, or training; and **diffusive** - where spread is informal and spontaneous. No preference is expressed for any one strategy as each would be effective in a different circumstance and no clear-cut criteria are provided for implementing the different strategies (Edwards & Hulme 1992). It is interesting to note that this volume makes no reference to the parallel discussion on replication taking place among American organizations.

<sup>24</sup> Kozal (1995), writing about children in urban ghettos reports that child poverty in USA has reached its highest level since 1964. "People have become tired of shouting", he notes.

<sup>25</sup> Evidently, much has gone wrong and several attempts have been made to reflect on these poor outcomes and on what could be learnt from the past. See, for example, Grant (1989) and Klein and Gwaltney (1991a,b). The implicit suggestion in their work is that if certain missing areas were given proper attention, things would go better. It is not certain if this optimism, which is expressed at many fora, is warranted.

<sup>26</sup> See Huberman 1994-95; Nilsson & Sunesson 1993; Watkins 1994-95.

<sup>27</sup> The present conference provides an apt illustration of this trend.

<sup>28</sup> Mayntz (1993) argues that learning organizations have their own logic. While the market logic is characterized by competition, authority and obedience, the organizational network logic is that of negotiation. It takes into account the goals and the interests of one's interaction partners.

<sup>29</sup> According to Mackie (1995) NGOs can be effective in providing a planned multiplication of "micro-level" inputs, rather than in designing and implementing maxi-level projects. The issue of the relationship between NGOs and GOs is far more complex than outlined in this text. NGOs do not form a homogenous entity; there are many different kinds of NGOs and relationships are changing continuously.

<sup>30</sup> Civil organizations, the commercial and the service sectors, as well as the "public-at-large" should be seen as having a stake in the well-being of children and youth and should, therefore, be involved. The media form a special group of stake-holders. Potential **competitors** and **opponents** to investing in children and youth programmes should also be recognized at an early stage as their views and position influence the outcomes of dissemination programmes.

<sup>31</sup> See Van Tilborg & Riemersma (1995) and Zusovsky (1994) for detailed descriptions of the role of monitors.

<sup>32</sup> Computer technology makes the construction and upgrading of a monitoring system feasible. Local groups can now feed in and feed off the system without major difficulties. It is too early to assess the role of interactive technology in disseminating good practice. Some argue that it is a strong democratizing and empowering force, especially for grassroots organizations (Annis 1990). However, recent research shows that computers tend to do little to the prevailing structures. The context in which computing is used seems a much stronger influence than the technology applied (Berman et al, 1995).

## Colophon

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