



**The Impact of
Youth Participation
in the Local Government
Process**

The Sangguniang Kabataan Experience



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A study commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund
in partnership with the Department of the Interior and Local Government
- National Barangay Operations Office
2007

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National Youth Commission (NYC)
Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC)

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acronyms

BCPC	Barangay Council for the Protection of Children
BES	Board of Election Supervisors
CICL	Children in Conflict with the Law
CLGOO	City Local Government Operations Officer
COMELEC	Commission on Elections
DASCOFED	Davao Services Cooperative Federation
DILG	Department of Interior and Local Government
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
FGD	Focus group discussion
HRS	Hotel and Restaurant Services
ISKOLAR	Integrated Sangguniang Kabataan Organizational Leadership and Reorientation
KK	Katipunan ng Kabataan
LGC	Local Government Code
LGU	Local Government Unit
LFS	League of Filipino Students
MLGOO	Municipal Local Government Operations Officer
MPDO	Municipal Planning and Development Office

acronyms

NAPC-YS	National Anti-Poverty Commission - Youth and Students
NEAT	National Elementary Assessment Test
NSAT	National Secondary Assessment Test
NYC	National Youth Commission
PCYA	Presidential Council for Youth Affairs
PD	Presidential Decree
PLGOO	Provincial Local Government Operations Officer
PPDO	Provincial Planning and Development Office
RA	Republic Act
SAPIME	Situational Analysis, Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
SB	Sangguniang Barangay
SCAP	Student Council Alliance of the Philippines
SK	Sangguniang Kabataan
SKNF	Sangguniang Kabataan National Federation
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

acronyms

UN CRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
YAPS	Youth Attributes, Participation and Service Providers

Foreword



With the youth sector comprising roughly a third of the population, there has never been a better time to invest in young people than now. The Philippines has been making this investment for more than two decades now from its first forays into youth participation through the Kabataang Barangay of the 1970s, and up to its current form, now known as the Sangguniang Kabataan.

The Sangguniang Kabataan is the quintessential example of child participation in local governance. It is a testament to the Philippine Government's recognition of the potential of children and youth to contribute to national development.

Though it has been touted as a landmark institution that promotes the engagement of the youth in governance, this study reveals a system fraught with deeply-entrenched problems. The study underscores the need for greater support from adults, especially from barangay leaders who serve as role models for the youth.

The future of good governance rests on the shoulders of the youth. It is imperative that young people themselves actively take part in their own development and the development of their communities. The Sangguniang Kabataan is a venue for young people to reach out and engage their fellow youth in effecting positive change in society. In fact, the study stresses the importance of strengthening the Katipunan ng Kabataan, or the village youth assembly, which is the mass base of young people in each barangay from which the SK is elected.

The SK is a challenge to Filipino youth to step up and seize the opportunity to lead and be heard. But it is an even greater challenge to us adults, to guide and to listen. Indeed, these young people are the next generation of the nation's leaders, and we, as adults, have a responsibility to ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge, attitude and skills to take on this role. The leaders of today should create an enabling environment for positive youth engagement and empowerment in order to help shape the leaders of tomorrow.

I highly recommend this study as essential reading for the youth and political leaders alike, as it already provides us with what we need to know in order to address the problems facing the SK System. It is time for everyone - Government, the youth and the rest of civil society - to unite and make the solutions a reality. Let us work together to make the SK a resounding voice in the halls of government.

DR. NICHOLAS K. ALIPUI
Representative
UNICEF Philippines

Message

The right of children and young people to participate in governance has been recognized as early as the 1970s by the Philippine government through PD603 or the Child and Youth Welfare Code. It is further enshrined in the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1990. The spirit of the law is to encourage active participation of our children and young people in local governance.

This study on the Sangguniang Kabataan has been a welcome development as it gives us a deeper insight on the SK's need for capability building and their role as advocates of children and young people. While the study indicates good examples of SKs who were able to maximize their position to implement projects for children and young people, there is an urgent need to amend the Local Government Code to provide appropriate training to our young people, specify their role as SK leaders, and provide guidance and technical assistance so they can be better prepared to take on bigger responsibilities.

We should be proud that we may be the only country that has enshrined child participation in our laws. We should be equally proud of our young leaders who have made a mark in their communities.

Our congratulations to the team that conducted this very interesting study!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lina B. Laigo".

LINA B. LAIGO
Executive Director
Council for the Welfare of Children

Message



“There is no greater or better gift that we can offer the country than to teach and guide our youth.” This recognition is anchored on the belief that by helping develop and train the youth, we prepare for a generation of future leaders who will take the helm as they reach adulthood.

The Philippines pioneered youth and children’s participation in local governance. While other countries are still in the process of introducing youth governance, the Philippines, as early as 1975, had recognized the youth as viable partners in nation building through the creation of the Kabataang Barangay. The Local Government Code of 1991 further provided them the avenues for participation in all levels of local government, particularly in local legislation and implementation of programs and projects. This is through the organization of the Katipunan Kabataan and election of officers for the council, the Sangguniang Kabataan.

However, the SK, which was envisioned as a venue to develop the next generation of leaders, received criticisms for its alleged flaws and failure to respond to the needs of the sector it represents.

In response to these negative perceptions and to provide rational bases for legislative recommendations and policy formulation, a research was conducted entitled “Study of the Impact of the Youth Participation in the Local Development Process: The Sangguniang Kabataan Experience”.

With the publication of this book – we are optimistic that we shall be able to give our youth the encouragement and support they so rightfully deserve – for the future indeed belongs to them.


JOHN M. CASTAÑEDA,
CESO IV
Director IV

GUIDE FOR YOUTH LEADERS

Youth concerns matter to everyone. And why not, the continuity of what we have founded in our time and age fully rests on the youth.

This is the reason why we make sure that we guide the youth to paths that would make them responsible individuals, ready to take on the challenges that are waiting for them.

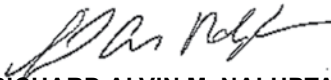
We at the National Youth Commission are glad that this research output is now ready for distribution. We take pride in the fact that we have also contributed in this successful project. The seven-month long study on the Sangguniang Kabataan's (SK) participation in the local development process is a tedious one, but we are sure that this publication is already a big psychic reward for the researchers and all their partner organizations.

On a personal note, I am glad that this study further affirms the importance of the SK not only in training future leaders, but also in engaging the youth in local governance processes. For all its inadequacies, the SK remains a major pioneering mechanism for the youth to participate in local governance.

My involvement with the SK, which began in 1992, opened doors for me in knowing the intricacies of public service at the local level. The experience was so fruitful that it motivated me to establish the SK Alumni Association, of which I am now President. More than half of my life has been dedicated to SK-related endeavors. And I do not feel that I have wasted any of those precious moments.

This study stands out as a guide. It contains recommendations to improve more the identified strengths and to address the identified weaknesses. Serving as a guide, we hope that this publication will be part of the formation of youth leaders worthy to continue the works our present leaders have started.

Mabuhay ang Kabataang Pilipino!



RICHARD ALVIN M. NALUPTA
Chairman and CEO, National Youth Commission
National SK President 1996-2002
Provincial SK President of Ilocos Norte 1992-2002

Message



Message



Dr. Jose Rizal, the country's national hero, immortalized in the poem *A la Juventud Filipina* (To the Filipino Youth) the line: "Ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan." Throughout the decades, the youth of our country has fared well in taking up that challenge.

At the turn of the 20th century, after our country's struggle for independence from foreign power and authoritarian rule, the battle continues and its line is drawn upon how our democratic institutions will bring forth equitable development and just living to all Filipinos. Once again, the Filipino youth are called upon to answer the clamor for change.

The Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) serves as one of the mechanisms for the youth to live up to this century-old challenge. The youth are not simply given space for participation in government; through the SK, the youth are given the right and obligation to govern. Given a government perturbed by corrupt practices, vested interests, patron-client relationship and administrative inefficiencies, the SK is fated to infuse new politics and good governance in public administration.

However, after more than a decade, the euphoria over the promises of the SK is slowly fading. The relevance and viability of the SK is now doubted by some sectors of the society. The mechanism for youth governance at the grassroots level is facing the threat of abolition.

The National Anti-Poverty Commission - Youth and Students (NAPC-YS) believes that the SK should not be abolished, but reformed instead. With the necessary policy and institutional reforms, the SK can still live up to its potential of being a democratizing institution that effectively responds to local youth issues and concerns and ensures that the youth and students are part of vital decision-making processes in the community.

It is thus critical to assess and evaluate the state of the SK and the limitations and challenges it faces in order to come up with a comprehensive SK reform agenda which is crucial in saving the SK from possible crisis. This study entitled "Impact on Youth Participation in the Local Development Process: The Sangguniang Kabataan Experience" is therefore pivotal and pioneering for it does not only conclude that the SK registered "a positive impact on the youth and the community" and thus must be retained; it also marks the coming together of the minds and the hearts of the different stakeholders who believe in the SK and what it can still offer.

In behalf of the entire NAPC-YS, I would like to congratulate all the people, organizations and institutions behind this study. May our concerted effort to reform the SK reverberate until the dawning of an empowered and progressive youth governance at the grassroots.

Power to the youth! Power to the people!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, fluid lines that form the name 'JOY G. ACERON'.

JOY G. ACERON
OIC-Sectoral Representative
Youth & Students Sectoral Council
National Anti-Poverty Commission

The Impact of Youth Participation in the Local Government Process

The Sangguniang Kabataan Experience



Executive summary

There is an emerging movement worldwide to give the youth a direct role in shaping policies and programs. Young people have tremendous creativity and energy that can be tapped to promote development and help ensure that they achieve their fullest potential.

The Philippines is way ahead of this movement. It has already institutionalized the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), a youth governance mechanism created by law, with its own budget and a national agency as secretariat.

Philippine law has already set the stage for the youth to learn leadership skills and create programs and policies that will benefit the Filipino people. The law also encourages mentors to teach the youth how to speak and be heard in the world of adults.

When Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code (LGC) created the SK in 1991, there was also an unspoken goal: to bridge generations of leaders by helping new ones to emerge.

The law creating the SK, however, is now more than a decade old. Whether or not the SK has served its purpose after all these years is subject to much discussion and debate.

House Bill 185, which seeks to abolish the SK, was filed in Congress. At the same time, an SK Reform Bill is being pushed to change the SK system. As these proposals are not based on empirical studies, the Department of Interior and Local Government sought the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-Manila. UNICEF-Manila funded a systematic and nationwide assessment of the SK's impact on the youth as basis for more rational and effective recommendations.

UNICEF-Manila commissioned the University of the Philippines' Center for Integrative and Development Studies Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program (UP CIDS PST) to look into the effectiveness of SK councils across the country.

Researchers used an extensive nationwide survey as primary tool, and validated findings through a study of related literature, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions where the youth actively participated.

Among the key findings of the study was that the SK's performance for the past ten years has been generally weak. This is especially true in terms of coming up with legislations, promoting the development of young people, submitting reports and holding consultations with their constituents.



An SK Municipal President participates in a regular meeting of the Municipal Council in San Juan, Manila.

On the other hand, the study also discovered notable strengths of the SK, including its tremendous potential to develop the next generation of leaders, engage the youth in the community and teach them accountability, honesty and creativity. The study revealed that SK officials learned to source alternative funding when their budgets were not sufficient.

They also gained skills in consulting and coordinating with various national and local government units and non-government organizations to improve their performance.

These findings led to the conclusion that the potentials of the SK are not being maximized, resulting in projects that are largely limited to sports, infrastructure development and environmental protection.

Best practices showed that while negative perceptions and inherent weaknesses weigh it down, the SK has great potential to become a true venue for youth participation in governance.

Giving the youth a seat in local governments, providing them with a budget mandated by law, listening to them and providing venues for them to meaningfully take part in shaping local policies and programs could transform young people into significant members of the community.



Introduction

Even before it became a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), the Philippines had already enacted a law to ensure that the voices of children and young people were heard on issues that directly concerned them. So far, it is the only country in the world to have a grassroots-based, government-funded political structure for young people that is recognized nationwide.

Republic Act No. 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1991, formed the *Katipunan ng Kabataan* (KK) to tap and harness the energy, enthusiasm, and idealism of young people. Those aged 15 to 17 years old in a *barangay* could register in the KK and have the right to vote and be voted into a governing body called the *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK). The SK chairperson assumes a seat in the *Barangay Council*, and is given full powers and authority like any member of the Council.

The idea is truly ahead of its time: a pioneering effort that sets the Philippines apart. The law sets the stage for the youth to acquire leadership skills by actually becoming leaders: learn how to speak and be heard in the world of adults, and be empowered to create programs and policies that will help solve society's problems.

R.A. 7160 is now more than a decade old. Policymakers are divided in determining whether or not the SK has served its purpose. Some argue that the SK introduced young people to political patronage and maneuvering instead of nurturing and strengthening idealism. There is also a perception that the SK has not engendered genuine youth participation since most of its members hail from well-to-do or political families.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that the SK's full potential has yet to be explored. In the 2003 Second National Consultation Workshop on Child Soldiers in the Philippines, participants identified the SK as one of the potential partners toward increased youth participation in the campaign against the use of children as soldiers.¹

These debates led to proposals to abolish or change the SK. In Congress, House Bill 185 was filed to seek the SK's abolition, while the SK Reform Bill introduces changes to the law. As these are not based on empirical studies, the government asked the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-Manila to

¹ Proceedings on "Enhancing Partnerships Towards Effective Strategies on DRR," Second National Consultation Workshop on the Use of Child Soldiers in the Philippines, 09-12 November 2003, Lauremar Beach Hotel, Opol, Misamis Oriental. Philippine Coalition to Stop the Use of Children as Soldiers/Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)/UNICEF- Manila.

fund a systematic, nationwide assessment of the SK's impact on the youth to serve as a basis for more rational and effective recommendations.

A. Objectives


The study looked into the effectiveness of the SK in developing programs that address the needs of children and youth across the country. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- gauge the effectiveness of the SK in the development of children, youth and their barangays in upholding and protecting the rights of children;
- identify issues that affect the SK's various roles in the KK and the Barangay Council;
- identify good practices and lessons to be learned; and
- propose recommendations on how to better tap the potential of the SK.

B. Methodology

The study employed a methodology that is participatory, gender-sensitive, culturally appropriate, and youth and child-focused. Research methods included:

- **Review of Literature.** This focused on existing studies on the SK and on children and young people's participation in local governance. Information gathered served as bases in developing tools for data gathering and the framework for analysis.
- **Survey.** The survey served as the primary tool for the research. The team surveyed 1,877 respondents from Luzon to Mindanao, with ages 14 to 80 years.
- **Key Informant Interview.** Key informant interviews brought out details that did not emerge from the survey questionnaire. The team conducted 48 interviews – 14 in Luzon and the National Capital Region (NCR), 15 in the Visayas, and 19 in Mindanao. Interviewees included 11 community residents; 12 SK officials, including the SK National Federation President; nine barangay officials; and eight local government unit officials, including a vice-mayor and field officers of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

- 
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD). FGDs deepened the research team's understanding of data gathered in the survey. There were six FGDs held by November 2005 – two each in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, involving 63 SK officials and representatives of youth groups. Validation and analysis workshops with young people were also conducted to ensure that their voices were heard throughout the important phases of the study.

Study Areas

Regions, Provinces and Cities: The study covered the NCR and selected provinces from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The randomly selected provinces include Isabela (Region II) in Luzon, Cebu and Siquijor (Region VI) in the Visayas, and Davao del Norte (Region XI) and Basilan (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao - ARMM) in Mindanao.

Barangays: Those chosen for the study had a highly diverse profile. These ranged from highly urbanized cities,² such as those in the NCR and Mandaue City in Cebu to very poor barangays in the municipalities of Enrique Villanueva in Siquijor and Lantawan in Basilan.

Respondents

- Number of Respondents: A total of 1,877 respondents were interviewed for this study: 522 from Luzon (158 from Isabela and 364 from NCR), 675 from Visayas (452 from Cebu and 223 from Siquijor), 681 from Mindanao (372 from Davao del Norte and 309 from Basilan).
- Age: Respondents are aged 14 to 80 years old, with the average age at 34. Majority are adolescents. Of the 1,877 respondents, 1,004 are youth, while 873 are adults.
- Gender: More than 60 percent of the respondents are male. Luzon has the highest number of male respondents at 64.5 percent, while Mindanao has the most number of female respondents at 39.6 percent.
- Religion: Roman Catholics comprised majority of the respondents at 83.4 percent in Luzon, 90.5 percent in the Visayas, and 58.4 percent in Mindanao where there is a large population of Muslim respondents at 36.2 percent. None of the respondents in Luzon and Visayas are Muslim.

² Highly Urbanized Cities have a minimum population of 200,000, as certified by the National Statistics Office, and with the latest annual income of at least PhP50 million, based on 1991 constant prices, as certified by the City Treasurer's Office.

Review of Literature

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by the Philippine government, states that children are neither objects nor helpless creatures. They are individuals with inalienable rights. Yet, they are also members of society with responsibilities appropriate to their levels of development. UN CRC clearly recognizes children's right to participate in the community.

Even before the ratification of the UN CRC, however, there were already opportunities for children and youth to participate in governance. Filipino youth have shown they want and deserve a voice in their communities.

Youth participation in governance: from the 1970s to the present

1970s

1. PD 684 created the *Kabataang Barangay* composed of all youth 15-18 years old.
2. The Marcos administration expanded the age bracket to 15-21 years old and created the *Pambansang Katipunan ng Kabataang Barangay* under the Office of the President. Critics believe this countered militant youth activity and only exposed the youth to graft, corruption and opportunism.

1980s

1. The *Kabataang Barangay* became less popular with the youth.
2. Youth turned to student activism.
3. The *League of Filipino Students (LFS)* lobbied for the re-establishment of student councils and other rights lost during Martial Law.
4. Student activism waned after the EDSA revolution.
5. *Konsultahang Kabataan* was organized in February 1987; the NYC was proposed.
6. The Aquino administration created instead the *Presidential Council for Youth Affairs (PCYA)* with limited powers.

1990s

1. The *National Youth Commission (NYC)* was created as a national agency.
2. The 1991 *Local Government Code* abolished *Kabataang Barangay* and created the *Katipunan ng Kabataan* and the *Sangguniang Kabataan* that covers youth ages 15-24 years old.
3. Age bracket changed to 15-18 years old.

present...

1. Age bracket again changed to 15-17 years old.
2. The 2001 *Regional Youth Summit* tackled problems in SK.
3. *House Bill 185* aims to replace the SK system with "Youth Sector Representatives."

Sangguniang Kabataan

Researches show that involvement in governance at the local level can help develop young people's leadership skills and confidence. Through participation in the democratic process, young people are empowered. They gain experience and learn new skills, become responsible and accountable, develop confidence, and forge meaningful connections with other youth and adults.

The SK, the governing body of the KK, was designed to make this happen. SK officers represent the youth in their respective local government councils and have the same functions and privileges as any member of the council. They have a term of three years and receive 10 percent of barangay funds for youth projects.

So far, only three, instead of four SK elections, have been held since 1992 due to several amendments to the regular three-year term of SK officials.

Specifically, the functions of the SK are to:

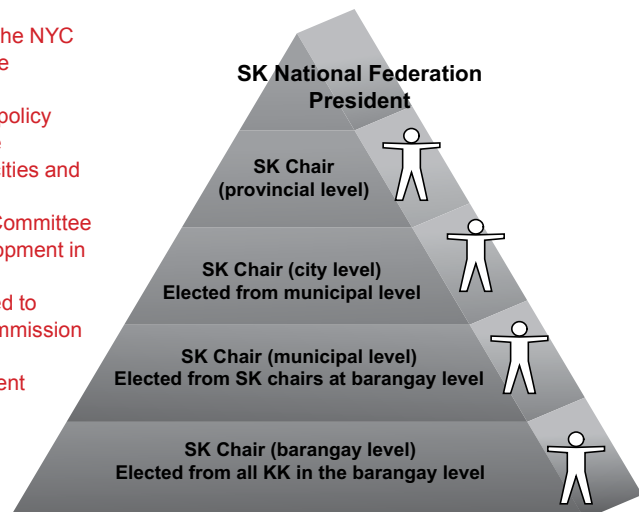
- promulgate resolutions necessary to carry out the objectives of the youth in the barangay;
- initiate programs designed to enhance the social, political, economic, cultural, moral, spiritual and physical development of the members;
- conduct fundraising activities;
- consult and coordinate with all youth organizations in the barangay for policy formulation and program implementation; and
- coordinate with the appropriate agency for the implementation of youth development projects and programs at the national level.

SKNF President

- ex-officio Commissioner of the NYC

- elected from SK chairs at the provincial level

- Chairpersons participate in policy formation in their respective barangays, municipalities, cities and provinces
- SK chairpersons head the Committee on Youth and Sports Development in their areas
- Government agencies tasked to coordinate with the SK: Commission on Elections, DILG, NYC
- DILG reviews SK development plans and budgets



Created in 1995 as a national government agency, the National Youth Commission (NYC), acts as the secretariat of the Sangguniang Kabataan National Federation. Tasked to train youth leaders, NYC has two notable programs:

- The Integrated Sangguniang Kabataan Organizational Leadership and Reorientation (ISKOLAR) Program was expected to fulfill the NYC's mandate to train youth leaders. Unfortunately, ISKOLAR only reached a limited number of areas due to budget woes and poor information dissemination.
- The Green Brigade was designed to encourage the youth to participate in environmental issues. Green Brigade covered more areas compared to ISKOLAR but was also hampered by budget limitations, lack of coordination among government agencies, and problems with project continuity given the fast turnover of personnel at key leadership positions. These are compounded by the internal problems of the NYC, namely the lack of teamwork, a non-strategic approach to program implementation, and the capability to handle a multitude of tasks. The NYC has become more of a planning and monitoring body than an implementer of programs.

SK accomplishments

Despite the weaknesses of the SK, there have been success stories that show its potential as an important organization. Like the KB, the SK has produced a crop of local government officials, as well as national legislators. SK Federations at all levels have also been consistent in celebrating the annual *Linggo ng Kabataan* (Youth Week), a yearly weeklong event when youth members get the opportunity to act as officials of all local government and national agencies for a week.

Other concrete examples of the SK's potential as a vehicle for youth participation:

- Some SK officials in the barangay and municipal levels consistently involve the KK and other youth in consultations and project development.
- A former SK chairperson mentored his successor in developing projects that went beyond holding the usual summer sportsfest such as basketball tournaments for young men in barangays.
- Another SK official coordinated with her fellow SK officials and with proper agencies to initiate a reforestation project in her area.



Public perceptions on the SK

A study showed that both youth and representatives from government agencies do not have a thorough understanding of the SK and its activities.

The SK's most significant function—the ability to make policies and resolutions—did not make it to the list of top three SK roles in the survey.

Based on the Youth Attributes, Participation, and Service Providers (YAPS) study NYC conducted in 2004, the youth believe that the SK should create role models for them, and organize sports and youth activities.

Asked the same question, government officials said the SK should:

- 1) Develop and initiate youth programs;
- 2) Serve as role models for the youth; and
- 3) Legislate measures to promote youth development.

The study revealed that the youth's interests vary across age brackets: those who are 15-24 years old shared the same level of interest in sports and recreation, studies and employment; while those between 25-30 are more interested in studies, work/employment, and skills upgrading.

In terms of priorities, the 15-17 age bracket ranked studies as top priority, and those in brackets 18-24 and 25-30 said family was their top priority. In addition, the 25-30 age group ranked the need to find a decent job as second priority.

The study also showed that the youth are concerned about three main issues:

- Health: related to drug and substance use and abuse, and sexual risk behaviors;
- Education: access to affordable education and to tertiary education, as well as accessibility to newer forms of information, communication and technology; and
- Employment: job availability as the top concern of those in the 18-24 age group.

None of the participants in the study raised concerns over youth participation issues. However, those who attended the 2001 Regional Youth Summits raised the following:

- Government-related problems;
- The SK;
- Lack of active participation of the youth;
- Lack of information on programs for the youth;
- Insufficient and inefficient budget allocation; and
- Suppression of student rights



An SK official orients a group of nursing students on a health project for young people in Marikina

Studies also show that the youth are worried most about corruption at the barangay and municipal levels. They are concerned about abusive politicians who engage in nepotism and narco-politics and meddle in election results via vote buying. Some participants complained local government authorities use SK officials as ‘tools’ in advancing their political agenda. They are dismayed over the lack of existing programs for the youth, and lack of support in terms of funding and implementation of existing youth programs that limit their projects to sports activities and street-cleaning initiatives.

At the Regional Youth Summits, participants candidly said there was lack of control and autonomy in the SK in the barangay such that SK leaders become mere ‘consultative bodies’ without real power to implement their desired youth programs. They say some political interventions stunt the potential of the SK. SK officials are also generally perceived as incompetent, inefficient, and lacking initiative.

These concerns reveal the disillusionment, indifference and apathy of the youth sector towards the government and youth-directed government programs. The low levels of youth participation in the SK and government-related programs, and the popular view that the government is self-serving, manifest these concerns.

This lack of faith in the SK could be borne out of the SK officials’ lack of understanding of their duties and responsibilities and the SK structure. They are also unable to navigate through the bureaucracy, create a development plan and budget, and encourage other youth to participate.

Other studies recommend changing the age bracket, currently at 15-17 years old, because of the youth’s political immaturity. At this age, the youth are also more concerned about studies rather than civic duties.

An SK official
conducts a meeting
with young volunteers
for an SK project



Abolition of SK

Several youth groups have opposed moves to abolish the SK. The Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP) said the SK is a necessary mechanism “to uphold the interest and welfare of the youth sector through a democratically established institution for governance.” It said abolishing the SK is equivalent to “the repression of the democratic rights and welfare” of the youth. Specifically, the SCAP seeks to strengthen youth participation through the SK system by:

- preventing the abolition or phase out of the SK;
- strengthening the KK and extending the voting populace of the SK to include those in the 18 to 21-year-old age bracket;
- pushing for necessary reforms in the electoral system, particularly the modernization of the Commission on Elections to allow automation of election and voter's registration; and
- establishing a collegial body to review, assess and recommend proposals to further strengthen and promote meaningful youth representation and involvement.

While allegations of corruption, inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the SK may not be true for all SK Councils, the Region 7 Delegates Corps of the 5th National Youth Parliament also said that the move to abolish the SK can be remedied by reforms. In a statement, the group said the government would “retrogress from its significant and notable achievement of institutionalizing wider youth participation and genuine representation” if the SK were to be abolished.


Results and findings

Among the key findings of the research is that the SK's performance of its functions is generally weak. This is especially true in terms of coming up with legislations, submitting reports and holding consultations with its constituents. There is also a mismatch between the needs of the youth and current SK projects.

On the other hand, the study also identified the strengths of the SK, including its ability to source alternative funding, and hold active consultation and coordination with various national and local government units and NGOs. Respondents said the SK uses its limited funds efficiently and affects the youth situation and the communities positively.

In understanding the experience of Filipino children and the youth in the SK and in gauging its effectiveness, it is important to highlight the following:

- While involvement in the SK has both positive and negative effects on young people, the youth reported a generally positive impact (e.g. greater appreciation for country and service, improved leadership skills) from their personal experience working with the SK.
- There is lack of knowledge among the public on the duties of the SK. This may account for the positive perception of the SK's relevance and contributions to the community and youth situation. This is despite the disparity between the youth's most pressing needs and interests, and the SK's projects.
- Aside from the low level of children and youth participation in the SK, there is also a low level of understanding and appreciation for children's rights and young people's participation.
- Degree and quality of support, supervision, and assistance from local government officials and organizations are extremely important to the success of the SK. Clear local and national policies on youth participation and procedures have tremendous effect on the youth. Poor awareness and understanding of legal frameworks affects elections and the release of funds, among other things, that can cause SK councils to function poorly. Individual situations and roles of SK members, such as school and work, also affect their performance.



These findings led to the conclusion that the potentials of the SK are not being maximized, resulting in projects and programs largely limited to sports and infrastructure development, and environmental protection.

The research also includes case studies that highlight principles of good practices among youth organizations. While negative perceptions, weaknesses or ambiguities in policies and the ineffectiveness or non-implementation of these policies weigh down the SK, it still has great potential to become a true venue for youth participation in governance. Through the SK, young people become assets and active forces in solving community problems.

Measuring SK's effectiveness

The study gauges the effectiveness of SK participation based on its functions, as mandated by law. Section 426 of the Local Government Code states that the SK is expected to:

A. Promulgate resolutions necessary to carry out the objectives of the youth in the barangay in accordance with the applicable provisions of this Code.

The SK's performance of its legislative function is weak. Out of 30 accomplishment reports in the NYC's records, only 12 made the cut for this study. Of the 12 reports, only three showed legislative acts as accomplishments. Of the three, only one submitted a copy of the resolution passed.

However, the outputs also showed SK representatives are capable of coming up with highly relevant ordinances. The immense potential of the youth parliament to engage in legislative action was showcased during the *Linggo ng Kabataan*.

One SK federation passed an ordinance observing curfew hours for minors while another pushed for the support of SK-initiated sports programs from the local government. The third SK federation listed 28 resolutions on volunteerism, education, livelihood, infrastructure and interaction among various youth groups. These included the following:

- tobacco ban for minors;
- creation of bicycle lanes;
- the provision of a legitimate venue for street vendors;
- sanctions for establishments that dump chemical wastes into rivers;
- housing; and
- training for teachers

Table 1. SK Federation Projects Based on Accomplishment Reports

Issue/Concern Addressed	Actual Number of Projects by SK Municipal/City Federations	Actual Number of Projects by SK Provincial Federations	Total Percentage of Projects
Sports	84	30	31.67
Infrastructure	17	50	18.61
Environment	33	34	18.61
Entertainment	8	26	9.44
Capacity-Building	4	22	7.22
Promoting Youth Participation (includes Linggo ng Kabataan)	4	9	3.61
Health	2	9	3.05
Vices	5	6	3.05
Education	6	3	2.5
Livelihood	1	4	1.38
Charity (gift-giving)	1	2	0.83
Total Number of Projects	165	195	100

From 2002-2004, the SK Provincial Federation President of Cebu authored five ordinances on these issues:

1. Provision of support to continue hiring new teachers;
2. Request for the construction of city and municipal libraries;
3. Monitoring of educational facilities, student-teacher ratio, NEAT and NSAT results;
4. Construction of a separate facility for children in conflict with the law (CICL), as well as male and female detainees;
5. Creation of an educational and livelihood training center in the provincial rehabilitation center; and
6. Promotion of peace and order among rival fraternities

B. Initiate programs designed to enhance the social, political, economic, cultural, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical development of members;

There is a mismatch between SK projects and what the youth really need. Based on the survey, the top three SK projects deal with sports concerns, environmental issues, and infrastructure. Programs on education and training, health and nutrition, anti-drug abuse and livelihood were hardly mentioned.

SK councils have also failed to follow the required budget allocations mandated by the 2001 SK Constitution and By-Laws. Each of these projects should have a 10-percent (10%) share of the total funds: Green Brigade, livelihood programs, capacity building, and anti-drug abuse campaigns.

The review of accomplishment reports shows SK councils had spent their funds mostly on sports-related, environmental, and infrastructure projects. They also focused on beauty pageants, talent shows, dances, social gatherings, music band contests and the like.

Participants in the study say projects that address the vital problems of the youth, such as education, health, livelihood, and vices, were lacking.

C. Hold fundraising activities, proceeds of which shall be tax-exempt and accrued to the general fund of the SK;

Less than 30 percent (30%) of the survey respondents have conducted fundraising campaigns. About 16 percent (16%) solicited funds from government officials and less than 10 percent (10%) asked for solicitations/sponsorships from private groups.

When asked if the SK budget was sufficient, majority said they had “just enough” funds. Slightly less than half of the respondents said they encountered problems in obtaining funds.

Table 2. Problems and Facilitating Factors in Obtaining SK Funds

Rank	Problems (in percent)	Facilitating Factors (in percent)
1	Problems in obtaining approval of barangay 38.18	Cooperative and supportive Barangay Council 31.67
2	Problems in the process 29.09	Good barangay operations 27.22
3	Too little barangay funds 17.00	Good SK plans 12.22

Table 3. Agencies that Support SK and Type of Support Provided

Rank	Source of Support	Type of Support
1	LGUs	Financial support
2	Government organizations	Technical support
3	NGOs / international NGOs	Technical support

The survey showed the tedious process of obtaining funds. SK councils found it difficult to get the approval of the barangay captains in releasing their budget.

D. Submit annual and end-of-term reports to the Sangguniang Barangay on their projects and activities for the survival and development of the youth in the barangay;

One glaring finding in the study is that SK councils do not submit reports, or these reports fail to reach the NYC. There was no standard format used in the reports as SK councils do not get guidelines on preparing them. Of the 30 reports readily accessible at the NYC, the study only used 12. The rest merely contained photos of SK projects.

E. Consult and coordinate with all youth organizations in the barangay for policy formulation and program implementation;

Surveys and interviews in the study revealed there was very little consultation with the youth in situational analysis, planning, monitoring, and evaluation. It should be pointed out that the SK is not an organization in itself. It is the council of officers that represents the KK which is a larger youth contingent.

F. Coordinate with the concerned national agency for the implementation of youth development projects and programs at the national level;

Majority of SK survey respondents reported having partnerships with national government agencies and LGUs. The SK usually coordinates with LGUs to ask for financial assistance. For their part, government agencies provide SK councils with technical support (training, materials, and human resources) during project implementation.



The Impact of the SK Experience on the Youth

The impact of the SK can be gauged by how it has shaped the lives of its members. Survey respondents said involvement in governance has had both positive and negative effects on them. Below are some of the positive effects that were mentioned:

- a. The experience begins with filing for candidacy. Young people could be internally or externally motivated to run as SK officer, and this affects how they view their responsibilities.
- b. SK members said they learned important skills and values, and encountered beneficial opportunities during their term.

Table 4. Positive Effects of the SK on Members

Skills and Knowledge Gained	Values/ Qualities Acquired	New Opportunities Met
Time management	Being responsible	Financial benefits (e.g., honoraria)
Knowledge of legal matters (law implementation, the justice system and legal processes)	The value and importance of gaining their constituents' trust	Scholarships
Decision-making skills	A better understanding of how to interact with others ("you can't please everyone")	Opportunities to travel
Prioritization skills	Selflessness	Meeting important people (e.g. high-ranking government officials)
Management skills	How to handle pressure and negative feedback	Making new friends
Leadership skills	<i>Tiyaga</i> or hard work and perseverance	Opportunity to serve as role models for the youth
Parliamentary procedures	That service means love (for constituents), treating them as <i>hindi ibang tao</i> (not different from oneself)	Opportunity to serve the community through projects
Interpersonal skills	Independence	Opportunity to practice legislative capacities
Confidence (e.g. in public speaking)	How to fight for one's rights and be vigilant	Immersion in the 'real world' contributed to social awareness
Teamwork	Nationalism	
	The value of transparency	

These results confirm previous studies that youth participation and involvement in local governance promote the full and healthy development of young people. SK councils also gained values that developed a sense of responsibility and service to others. Acquiring these values encouraged them to become public servants.

SK officials who shared their positive experiences also experienced negative effects. Their responses can be categorized into: negative behaviors learned, challenges and dislikes associated with entering politics. (See Table 5)

Some SK respondents mentioned they were exposed to, or were directly involved in, intolerable practices such as corruption and nepotism. Several respondents described one common practice: when the SK liquidates funds or receives solicitations/sponsorships for their projects, the barangay captain gives the SK chairperson ten-percent (10%) of the amount spent. This is reportedly ‘standard practice’ (dubbed as ‘SOP’), which some barangay captains insist on doing, even if SK chairpersons themselves refuse to accept the money.

Table 5. Negative Effects of the SK on Members

Negative Behaviors Learned	Challenges	Dislikes Associated with Politics
Became ‘plastic’ (phoney/fake)	Pressure from high expectations of community residents and LGU officials	Gained a negative image/ reputation
Became <i>mataray</i> (snobbish/ quick-tempered)	Less time for school, family, friends, religious duties, etc.	SK affected by politicking of government officials
Were exposed to corruption and nepotism	Facing failure when plans do not push through	Gaining enemies automatically (through elections)
Were involved in corruption and nepotism	Constant public scrutiny	Lack of acknowledgment for their services
	Dealing with conflicts between the SK and other public officials	
	Dealing with uncooperative SK officials	
	Non-participative youth	
	Misunderstandings between the SK and community members	

Table 6. Survey Results of Negative Effects of SK Membership

Rank	National Results (in percent)	SK Members (in percent)
1	No time for self, family, school 24.03	No time for self, family, school 29.35
2	Learned to lie, be corrupt 9.05	Made enemies 12.99
3	Made enemies 6.87	Stress 6.49

Some SK officials expressed confusion as to what constitutes corruption. Some were not aware that it is wrong to take office supplies for personal use or accept gifts and money. These findings create the impression that dubious practices are rampant within the SK. (See Table 6)

SK officials and some respondents said that the foremost negative effect of being an SK member is that they had less time for other responsibilities in school and at home. For the national results, the second most-mentioned negative effect was that the SK members “learned to lie or become corrupt.”

However, only a few SK members raised this point. The low number of responses on corruption and shady practices could be interpreted as follows:

- SK members want to preserve their integrity;
- SK members may be wary of implicating other government officials;
- The response was not important to them while answering the survey; or
- Incidents on corruption and shady practices were few.

While only a few SK members may actually learn to or practice corruption and other questionable practices, the view of non-SK respondents (e.g., barangay captains, councilors, and other LGU officials) could not be ignored.

Good SK practices

Being part of the SK changed the way SK respondents view public service and governance. The recurring theme in their anecdotes was that they realized public service and governance involved the personal commitment to serve, and that being in government is a difficult and very demanding task. Despite the hardships, they recognized that serving others could be an enjoyable experience. Below are some examples of good practices of some SK councils:

A. Cordova, Cebu

A guiding hand and a determined mentor made all the difference for SK councils in Cordova, Cebu. A DILG officer's active and hands-on approach helped Cordova's SK work hard and make a difference in the community. The DILG officer made sure political maneuvers could not be carried out during elections.

When asked how she did this, she replied: *“Ewan ko. Maldita siguro talaga ako. Nung nalaman ko na may ganoon na nangyayari, pinuntahan ko ‘yung lugar tapos kinatok ko sila. Sinabihan ko, ‘Bawal yan, hindi n’yo yan pwedeng gawin (I do not really know. Maybe I’m just strict. When I found out that that was happening, I went there and knocked on the door. I told them, ‘That’s not allowed. You cannot do that.’)”*

She used the same no-nonsense manner in preparing SK officials in her area in handling responsibilities. During the ISKOLAR training, she shared important information on allocating and acquiring funds, planning and implementing projects, and making accomplishment reports. She required SK officials to submit a development plan at the start of each year and an accomplishment report at the end of every year.

The DILG officer's respect for young people's abilities has led to continuing efforts to maximize the SK's performance, while SK's appreciation for her guidance and mentoring has made them receptive to these efforts. As a result, Cordova's SK implemented relevant projects such as a medical mission for underprivileged youth in the area.

B. Panabo City, Davao del Norte

The youth can lead, but they can lead more effectively with the cooperation and support of concerned organizations.

The youth learned about culinary arts, basic electronics, and food and beverage/housekeeping through the Hotel and Restaurant Services (HRS) Livelihood Program initiated by the SK chairperson of Barangay San Fernando and conducted in cooperation with TESDA, and the Davao Services Cooperative Federation (DASCOFED), a local NGO in Panabo City.

This was the second in a series of livelihood training workshops San Fernando SK conducted. The venue provided a stepping stone for the youth to find jobs. One of the participants became the chief cook of a popular bakeshop in Digos City in Davao del Sur, while another found employment in a four-star hotel in Davao City. One of the participants landed work in Japan, while another returned to school. The SK is planning its next round of livelihood programs which will be on basic physical therapy, refrigeration and soap-making.

C. Gamu, Isabela

Genuine concern and consistent efforts to make the youth feel needed and supported in local policies and programs allowed youth participation in governance to bloom in Barangay Mabini, Gamu, Isabela. SK elections succeeded due to SK officials' intense door-to-door campaign, a symposium about the SK, and *miting de avances* (campaign assemblies) in each *purok* (district) of their barangay. These activities had positive results: all socioeconomic classes were well-represented in the 2002 elections.

Mabini's Barangay Council had a lot to do with these accomplishments. It lends financial and moral support to the SK and gives youth officials room to make their own decisions and craft programs. Mentoring and genuine trust boosted the SK's confidence in making its own development plan. Youth officials also consulted with the KK and systematically monitored their performance.

As a result, about 20 percent (20%) of the KK are active and functional. These active members are divided into working groups that take charge of various projects (e.g. environmental projects, training and workshops for out-of-school youths). KK members are aware of their functions. The SK heads the quarterly assembly meetings with the KK. Through these meetings, their accountability to the KK is ensured. The Barangay Captain asks young people to evaluate SK projects but does this informally. The SK consults the KK on how to use funds and is subjected to a regular audit.

Conclusion

The research team believes that abolishing the SK will not serve the best interest of children and young people. It will not shield them from the negative influences of politics and politicians, but would only destroy a unique system and a mechanism that has great potential for youth participation in governance and community service.

Providing the youth a seat in local government and a budget mandated by law, and allowing them to take part in shaping local policies and programs make them an important part of the community. While some regard them as a burden, the youth can be productive allies in seeking to solve society's ills. After all, they are experts on the challenges faced by their peers in the community.

Admittedly, the study reveals generally low levels of participation in the SK among young Filipinos. Respondents may not perceive the SK as a meaningful venue for participation. However, by retaining the SK system but with some changes, the youth's message is clear: they need and want to be involved in the local development process.

Recommendations

It is recommended therefore, that weaknesses in the SK be addressed by changing crucial aspects of existing policies and implementation.


Researchers established a framework composed of five general themes/goals and guides to attain these goals:

1. Strengthen the SK's partnerships with adult organizations like government agencies, NGOs, faith-based organizations, etc., and children/young people's organizations such as the KK, youth organizations, and children's associations.
2. Establish a standard, programmatic system for monitoring, supervision and technical support to the SK.
3. Provide programmatic capacity-building for KK members, SK officials and adult officials.
4. Ensure democratic, participatory, non-partisan, community-based and child-friendly processes.
5. Enforce existing policies.

Below are specific recommendations on how these could be done:

1. Strengthening the SK's partnerships with adult organizations.

- a. *Systematically tapping youth organizations – including formal, structured organizations and informal ones such as 'fraternities'*



and peer groups – in encouraging youth participation in planning, implementing, and monitoring SK projects. In terms of policy changes, this can mean amending Sections 43 (a) and 431 (d) of the Local Government Code to create a position within the SK council devoted to networking and coordinating with youth organizations in the community (i.e., youth liaison officer). This would ensure someone in the SK is in-charge of coordinating with youth organizations in the community for consultation and cooperation in SK initiatives. This means conducting consultation workshops (including activities for situational analysis, planning, monitoring, and evaluation), and implementing joint or co-sponsored projects in coordination with youth groups.

b. Fostering closer working relationships between the SK and the SB in performing the SB's function to make barangays child-friendly. In May 2005, UNICEF-Manila distributed a primer on “What barangay officials can do to set up a child-friendly locality.” The primer identified local institutions that can play important roles in making their barangays child-friendly. One of these is the SK, as it can work more closely with other barangay institutions such as the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC), and the Barangay Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Coordinating Committee. The SK can work with these institutions in monitoring the situation of children in the barangay. They can also participate in the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of these institutions' action plans on children, childcare, and child development.

c. Assigning additional functions to SK Municipal and City Federations, such as consultation and coordination with government agencies, youth organizations, and other civic groups, and situational analysis of children and the youth in their area of jurisdiction. This can be done by amending Section 1, Article V of the SK Constitution and By-Laws. Suggested means to fulfill these functions include:

- Creating a directory of the relevant organizations and groups and distributing these directories to SK councils in the barangay.
- Coordinating with government agencies and other civic groups that can help create programs and projects (i.e., resource persons or materials for capability-building or advocacy efforts).
- Encouraging youth organizations to help drum up support for SK and vice-versa. SK should also consult with youth organizations, not only on programs and projects, but also in policy formulation, situational analysis, monitoring and evaluation.

d. *Providing relevant, regularly updated information to national government agencies.* This can help the SK disseminate information to local SK councils. For example, the National Anti-Poverty Commission Youth and Student Sector (NAPC-YS) and NYC could work together to perform the following:

- Collection and consolidation of data on the national situation of the youth. This can include data on the most important needs, interests and concerns of young Filipinos. NAPC-YS and NYC can collate this information and forward it to SK councils on a yearly basis. The information can be disseminated through the SK National Executive Board and by SK Federation officials at various levels until they reach local SK councils
- Development of recommendations on programs that can address the youth situation


2. Establishing a standard, programmatic system for monitoring, supervision, and technical support to SK councils.

This system should balance young people's needs and adults' able supervision with the need for freedom from overly rigid and prescriptive structures. The issue of budget allocation is usually where conflict between the SB and the SK arises. Survey results show instances of both: on one hand, barangay captains who dictate how SK funds should be used; on the other, those who allow the SK to use their funds as they please.

Policymakers must maintain their respect for young people's rights and abilities. Changes in relevant policies and processes should also help ensure that SK councils receive adequate and appropriate guidance from adults—both from government officials whom they work closely with, and from members of civil society.

The recommended mechanism can function as a system of checks and balances to minimize irregularities or corrupt practices within the SK. In addition, establishing such a system is important to ensure that SK projects will have an impact on the holistic development of young people in the community and will be consistent with the larger context — that of the objectives and actions of adult local government officials and community members.

Adult supervision, guidance and mentoring can take many forms. Thus to be effective, it is crucial for the legal framework to clearly define the roles and functions of various government agencies and/or officials working with the SK. At the same time, the legal framework should provide for mechanisms that will facilitate the performance of functions of agencies and officials.



The following are some recommendations on how this can be done:

- a. Amend Section 426 of LGC to require the SK to formulate an SK Development Plan in consultation with the youth and in accordance with the Barangay Development Plan. This would help SK councils become more transparent and efficient, and minimize difficulties in obtaining funds and reducing conflict between the SK and the Barangay Development Council.
- b. Revise SK Constitution and By-Laws to include an article on procedures for reviewing development plans. It could specify that the Municipal Planning and Development Office (MPDO) should guide barangay SK councils in creating development plans, while the Provincial Planning and Development Office (PPDO) should guide municipal/city SK councils. On the barangay level, the review process could be as follows: Before budgets are submitted and reviewed for approval, barangay SK councils should first be required to submit an SK Development Plan to the MPDO. The MPDO should review the plans to ensure that these can be integrated into the Barangay Development Plan of their respective barangays, and with the development plan of their city/municipality.

Once the plans have been approved, the MPDO should guide the SK in prioritizing planned programs so they could allocate resources accordingly. As the secretariat of the Municipal Development Council, the MPDO can also assist or endorse the SK to NGOs, religious institutions/organizations, civic organizations and other members of civil society to rally support for the SK's plans. The review process for municipal/city federations can follow a similar procedure.

- c. Amend Section 389 (b-11) of LGC to define the barangay captain's function more clearly. The study reveals the barangay captain's supervisory role over the SK is vaguely defined in the policy framework. Having relevant policies that stipulate the barangay captain's function can address this. These policies may include ensuring the SK's plans and activities are in accordance with the barangay's objectives, and that the SK Development Plan is consistent with the Barangay Development Plan. The barangay captain should be limited to ministerial roles in approving the development plan and a plan of expenditures.
- d. Develop a systematic and programmatic monitoring and evaluation system. Findings suggest that DILG officers at provincial and municipal/city levels, working in coordination with




SKs involved in a housing project

the NYC, can best perform overall monitoring and evaluation of the SK's performance. Policies on NYC's functions could be amended to include the development of a monitoring and evaluation guide DILG field officers could use in evaluating the SK performance. These agencies could also look into the possibility of forming an inter-agency, multi-sectoral body responsible for formulating this guide, similar to the Advisory Council incorporated in NYC's recommendations for strengthening the SK. This guide should help DILG officers determine the progress and identify lessons learned by answering the following:³

1. What SK councils want to achieve (deciding on their own goals);
2. What they have done (reflecting on their achievements);
3. What they still need to do (determining what action has to be taken); and
4. What changes were seen (examining the impact)

Appropriate policy changes could also be made to specify that the function of the Municipal/City Local Government Operations Officer (MLGOO/CLGOO) include monitoring and evaluating SK performance at the barangay level. The Provincial Local Government Operations Officer (PLGOO) includes monitoring and evaluating SK performance at the municipal/city level.

³ Jobs, K. 1997. *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines: Experiences in the Field*. Social Development Division, DIFD. London.



The monitoring and evaluation function of DILG officers should include:

- **Regular monitoring and evaluation meetings with the SK.** The meetings can be held twice a year. MLGOOs/ CLGOOs can minimize costs by meeting with SK councils from five or six neighboring barangays in a community center or DILG office at the same time. In clustering barangays together, the field officer can take into consideration the size and number of barangays in a particular municipality/city, as well as how to maximize the efficiency of the process.
- **Evaluation of SK performance based on a standard guide to be developed by the NYC**
- **Documentation of SK experience.** This is important to identify the good practices and the principles applied which could be documented and disseminated. Problems encountered and mistakes must also be recognized so they could be transformed into lessons learned. The documentation should include activity reports and action plans resulting from each capacity-building activity SK councils attend (e.g. Lakbay-Aral activities).

In general, the study shows that many perceive SK councils focus on sports more than any other youth concern. One of the possible reasons is the automatic designation of the SK Chair as Chair of the Committee on Youth and Sports Development. Renaming the Committee may prompt government officials and citizens to have a broader view of the SK's role. Amendments to Sections 430 and 438 (c) of LGC could pave the way for renaming the Committee on Youth and Sports Development as Committee on Youth Development.

It is also important to involve SK councilors in various committees in the barangay. This is because youth development should cut across different programs and projects of the community.

3. Provide programmatic capacity-building for KK members, SK officials and adult officials.

This will ensure SK councils are adequately prepared for their functions and continue to receive relevant training as their term of office progresses. The training program should involve KK as the bigger organization to develop a pool of future leaders and allow more youth to be involved in the community. Moreover, training should fulfill the important need for adult officials to work with young people in general, and with SK councils in particular.

The effectiveness of these capacity-building efforts can be ensured through the following:

a. Developing and implementing a continuous, culturally sensitive training program for SK councils at various levels.

Existing policies⁴ on ISKOLAR already outline the process that should be followed. They also identify responsible public officials and government agencies. However, the non-programmatic manner in which ISKOLAR is currently conducted suggests these policies are not being implemented strictly. Involved agencies (DILG, NYC, SKNF) and key officials (DILG Provincial/ City Directors, Municipal and Local Government Operations Officers, DILG Regional Action Officers) should be aware of their mandated duties. DILG Regional Directors must ensure the designated ISKOLAR Action Officer of their respective regions perform responsibilities assigned to them in DILG MC No. 99-86 (i.e., provision of technical assistance in the conduct of training, monitoring and evaluation of DILG participation in the implementation of the program).

DILG can handle continued training on topics they are equipped to discuss, such as SK functions, responsibilities, laws and resource mobilization. In addition, NYC and SK Federation can tap other government organizations, NGOs, and civil or people's organizations to conduct training on other important topics.

b. Ensuring ISKOLAR covers the following topics:

- SK functions and responsibilities
- Skills and processes

ISKOLAR training Phase I should include:

- making development plans;
- budgeting funds for activities;
- requesting and obtaining funds;
- using funds efficiently;
- mobilizing resources;
- adopting parliamentary procedures; and
- Situational Analysis, Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (SAPIME) process of project implementation

ISKOLAR Phase I should also include a discussion on child-friendly methods and processes. This can help them with activities and programs that will effectively reach out to the youth.

ISKOLAR training Phase II for SK Federation officials should include:

- skills in building and strengthening networks with NGOs, youth organizations, civic organizations, and other groups that can give support to the SK and

⁴ Executive Order No.24 (September 18, 1998), DILG Memorandum Circular NO. 99-86 (May 25, 1999) Local Government Code of 1991, 2001 Katipunan ng mga Kabataan and SK Constitution and By-laws.

- skills in formulating and implementing legislative measures at their respective levels.

c. *Increase the effectiveness of capacity-building activities aside from ISKOLAR (i.e. Lakbay-Aral activities) by establishing a selection process that allows SK officials to attend activities that match their capabilities.* The Barangay Council should supervise to ensure the process is transparent and participatory.

d. *Review training methods and resource materials currently used and make them more child-friendly or appropriate to SK officials' developmental levels.* Child-focused civic organizations can be tapped to improve materials and processes. The NYC could oversee equal distribution of resource materials through its area offices. They could ensure such materials are equally distributed at the provincial level. Different levels of the SK Federation should coordinate to make sure these materials reach barangay SK councils.

e. *Amend Section 431 of LGC to add to the SK chairperson's functions the duty to echo all training he/she received to all SK councilors.* Study findings show the need for SK councilors to gain information and skills SK chairpersons learn through ISKOLAR and other training workshops.

f. *Development of a voter's education program for KK and SK candidates, to be conducted by outgoing SK officials prior to general SK elections.* Educating the youth on the roles they can play as Filipino citizens in ensuring good governance can raise their interest in participation, as well as empower them. This necessitates a change in Section 426 of LGC by adding, "...conduct voter's education activities prior to the next Sangguniang Kabataan elections" to the functions of barangay SK councils. In particular, it is recommended that the outgoing SK be mandated to remain in office for one month along with the incumbent SK Council in an advisory capacity. This will ensure the smooth turnover of responsibilities.

g. *Development and delivery of orientation and/or leadership and citizenship training modules for the KK and other children's associations.* The orientation should deal with SK functions and responsibilities, their roles, expectations of elected officials and the local situation of children and youth in the community. Other modules can focus on basic laws and children's rights, identifying problems, planning, prioritizing, and implementing projects. The DILG could develop modules while other national agencies or NGOs could provide training. KK members and other young people should receive orientation/training prior to the SK election.

h. *Development of a training program for barangay officials and DILG field officers on working more effectively with the SK.* The suggested training program for adult officials could include the following matters:

- o Children's rights and children's/young people's participation;
- o Child and young people-friendly methods and processes;
- o SK functions and responsibilities;
- o Adult officials' roles in SK processes. For barangay officials, this includes important roles in reviewing the SK's Development Plan and budget, requiring the submission of SK accomplishment reports, and imposing sanctions on non-performing SK officials. For DILG officers, this includes capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, and networking.

4. Ensure democratic, participatory, non-partisan, community-based and child-friendly processes.


Survey results show SK processes are hampered because of the lack of participation of the youth, intervention of partisan politics, and non-democratic and non-child-friendly processes. Partisan politics influences the election process greatly, and may breed non-performing SK councils.

The following are examples of specific recommendations that can ensure democratic, participatory, non-partisan, and child-friendly processes:

- *Adjust the age bracket for KK members to 15-21 years old.* This allows young people belonging to a wider age bracket to participate in SK activities, vote in SK elections, and take part in the KK assemblies and consultations. Thus, Section 6 of RA 9164 can be amended to read:

"SEC. 424. Katipunan ng Kabataan. The Katipunan ng Kabataan shall be composed of all citizens of the Philippines actually residing in the barangay for at least six (6) months, who are fifteen (15) but less than twenty-two (22) years of age, and who are duly registered in the list of the Sangguniang Kabataan or in the official barangay list in the custody of the barangay secretary."

- *Adjust the age bracket for SK officials to 18-21 years old.* Compared to adolescents, young adults are generally more concerned about social involvement, are more



systematic in approaching problems, and are more adept at applying acquired knowledge. Thus, the recommended adjustment could ensure that the youth eligible for SK positions are already prepared to hold public office. Therefore, Section 7 of RA 9164 can be changed to:

“SEC. 428. Qualifications. – An elective official of the Sangguniang Kabataan must be a Filipino citizen, a qualified voter of the Katipunan ng Kabataan, a resident of the barangay for at least one (1) year immediately prior to election, at least eighteen (18) years but less than twenty-two (22) years of age on the day of the election, able to read and write Filipino, English, or the local dialect, and must not have been convicted of any crime involving moral turpitude.”

Changing the age bracket, however, is no assurance that all SK councils will be able to perform their duties and responsibilities well. Other changes should accompany these adjustments to enable and maximize the youth to participate to the maximum extent of their evolving capacities.

Another possible qualification is for SK candidates to come from KK or any duly registered youth organization.

- ***Strengthen KK groups in each barangay.*** Members must clearly understand the objectives and have a plan of activities. The KK should also be registered at the municipal/city level as a recognized organization so members can take part in elections. Members of other children’s organizations should also be encouraged to register to participate in the SK elections. This process will also help increase the awareness on KK at the community level.
- ***The number of elected SK kagawads (councilors) may be reduced from seven to three.*** There have been reports of non-performing SK *kagawads* and SK Councils that function with only three active members. The SK Council can be streamlined to include one chairperson and three *kagawads* who would perform specific duties (e.g., secretary, treasurer, liaison officer). Due to the reduced number of SK officials, all SK members may sit during Barangay Council meetings so that the youth representatives would not be intimidated. The SK representatives to local government councils at the municipal and city levels can also be increased to two; at the provincial level, depending on the number of districts, an SK representing a district can sit at the Provincial Board.

- *SK officials could be excused from classes to attend council meetings.* The age bracket of 18-21, the recommended age for SK officials, and the current age bracket of 15-18, are when most young people are enrolled in school. To enable SK officials to fulfill their responsibilities in school and in SK, they should be excused from classes during *barangay* or LGU council meetings. SK officials should also be given the opportunity to make up for academic lessons or work missed.
- *Add a provision in LGC that will safeguard SK councils' access to funds for approved projects.* Financial autonomy is an issue that the SK has been pushing for many years now. However, as a government organization, the SK's financial activities must undergo the same rigorous checks and balances other political bodies go through. An additional safety net is needed to guard against barangay captains and treasurers who refuse to release SK funds despite an approved budget plan. The provision could read: "As a signatory to the voucher, the Punong Barangay's signing of the voucher should be ministerial provided that the SK Development Plan/budget plan has been approved."
- *SK Federations should assess the situation of children and the youth in their areas of jurisdiction.* SK Federations in cities and municipalities, through participative methods, should produce a situational analysis of the youth in their areas. This can be done by selecting certain key informants from the youth and adult sectors (e.g. members of the City/ Municipal Council for the Protection of Children, NGOs/ people's organizations, members of youth organizations, KK members and concerned adult and children residents) to participate in discussions that deal with the needs, problems, concerns and interests of the youth in their area. A documentation of this situational analysis should be distributed to the barangay SK councils and other concerned agencies, and submitted to higher federations. Higher federations (Provincial, Regional, and National Federations) should compile these situational analyses submitted by SK at the city/municipal level until they reach the national level. These can aid in the creation of an assessment on the national youth situation that could be used as a guideline for programs and policies.



SKs taking part in a community housing project



- *Registration schedules and venues should be more accessible to young people.* Legislators should consider the accessibility of registration venues and schedules to young people. This would allow more young people to participate in SK elections, thereby enabling the SK to have a greater impact due to the increased participation of young people in the process. There can be a memorandum of agreement between the COMELEC and the SK, directing the Election Officer to coordinate with the incumbent Barangay and SK Councils to set up registration stations in areas where young people congregate. If necessary and feasible, they should also hold registration sessions during weekends or after school/office hours.
- *SK elections should be held during summer, separately from the barangay elections.* Holding SK elections during summer would increase the chances of the youth's involvement in elections. Separating SK elections from barangay elections would also lead to non-partisan elections. Amendments should be made on RA 9164 so SK elections can be held during the summer vacation (between March and June).

5. Enforcement of existing policies

Some weaknesses of the SK are directly linked to inconsistent enforcement of policies. The following are recommendations on strengthening enforcement of oft-violated policies:

- The Board of Election Supervisors (BES) should monitor SK Federation elections at all levels more strictly. Irregularities, such as the conduct of elections without prior

completion of ISKOLAR training, should be considered a failure of the elections. BES should also ensure the fair, non-partisan conduct of SK Federation elections in accordance with the Omnibus Election Code. They should be vigilant in preventing the commission of any of the prohibited acts described in Article XXII, Section 261 of the Omnibus Election Code, particularly vote buying and selling and the exertion of undue influence over voters (e.g., 'housing' or 'hamletting').

- COMELEC should investigate any offenses allegedly committed during SK Federation elections
- Mandatory attendance of SK chairpersons at ISKOLAR training should be enforced more strictly
- Non-performing SK members should be identified and monitored and given appropriate intervention. There are specific guidelines in the SK Constitution and By-Laws that deal with non-performing SK members but SK federations were reluctant to intervene in such cases. Thus, there is a need for DILG support to identify and monitor non-performing SK members and give special re-orientation programs for them to fulfill their functions. Giving incentives to productive SK members would also encourage members to perform better. The NYC already has this incentive program and should coordinate with SK federations to promote high-quality performance. Consideration should also be given to SK members in 4th to 5th class municipalities where barangay funds are less but SK members are able to accomplish relevant projects.
- Monitor Barangay Captains to prevent them from abusing supervisory powers over SK. Several SK councils complain that their barangay captains refuse to sign vouchers for the SK to access funds despite having approved budget plans or SK Development Plans. Other SK councils reported barangay captains who tap into SK funds for non-SK expenditures.

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There is an emerging movement worldwide to give the youth a direct role in shaping policies and programs. Young people have tremendous creativity and energy that can be tapped to promote development and help ensure that they achieve their fullest potential.

The Philippines is way ahead of this movement. It has already institutionalized the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), a local youth governance mechanism created by law, with its own budget and a national agency as secretariat.

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