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Building Better Youth Programs Through Evidence: The YPAR-DMS Innovation

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Introduction

The *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK) (Youth Council) Reform Act of 2015 or the Republic Act 10742) in the Philippines mandates that each of the *Katipunan ng Kabataan* (Youth Association) should keep a record of their qualified members as part of their evidence-based practice in promulgating youth policies, studies and research. Prior to this initiative, the practice with the SKs exists only as a master-list of their youth constituency (at least) on an annual basis through a tally sheet or MS Excel format. In consultation with the various SKs and youth organization, there is a need to augment the master-list for the assessment of meaningful youth participation in their respective locality through the nine-centers of participation: (1) Health, (2) Education, (3) Economic Empowerment, (4) Social Inclusion and Equity, (5) Peace-building and Security, (6) Governance, (7) Active Citizenship, (8) Environment, and (9) Global Mobility. Furthermore, developing a database and data management system would enable a better understanding of the current status of the youth and the course of action to capacitate the youth in nation building.

Results and Discussion

The pilot implementation in seven Sarangani LGUs demonstrated the YPAR tool's effectiveness in enhancing youth profiling and informing targeted interventions. Youth leaders were able to access real-time data analysis through the YPAR-DMS, providing a clear snapshot of their constituents' status and needs. The tool helps identify emerging trends, gaps, and priority concerns, serving as a foundation for further research and investigation into the lived experiences and evolving needs of youth participants.

Key Demographic and Cultural Findings

The dashboard below reflects initial data gathered during the early (2022) use of the tool, involving ten youth participants.

Respondents:

- Male, with an average age range of 20-24 years old
- Single and living with their parents.
- A significant number reported having visual disabilities
- The Province of Sarangani is predominantly home to Indigenous People (IP), particularly from the Blaan and Bagobo tribes

Responsive Actions

One significant finding emerged when an SK chair discovered a high prevalence of depression and suicidal ideation among youth respondents. This alarming insight prompted immediate intervention measures, including community-based mental health support programs and youth counseling sessions. The ability to visualize and interpret data quickly allowed local leaders to realign programs and address pressing youth concerns more effectively.

Limitations

While effective, the tool requires ICT access and digital skills, which may exclude some youth. It mainly covers SK-affiliated members, limiting broader reach. Success depends on local capacity, and it lacks integration of historical data for long-term tracking.

Methodology

Development and Deployment of the YPAR Tool

To address these gaps, the Zuellig Family Foundation (ZFF) together with the Province of Sarangani, with UNFPA support, created the Youth Participation Action Record (YPAR) tool. It was later digitized as the YPAR Data Management System (YPAR-DMS) in response to COVID-19 restrictions. The YPAR initiative was implemented in Sarangani Province, where seven Local Government Units (LGUs) piloted the tool to enhance youth profiling and program development.

Data Collection and Participatory Implementation

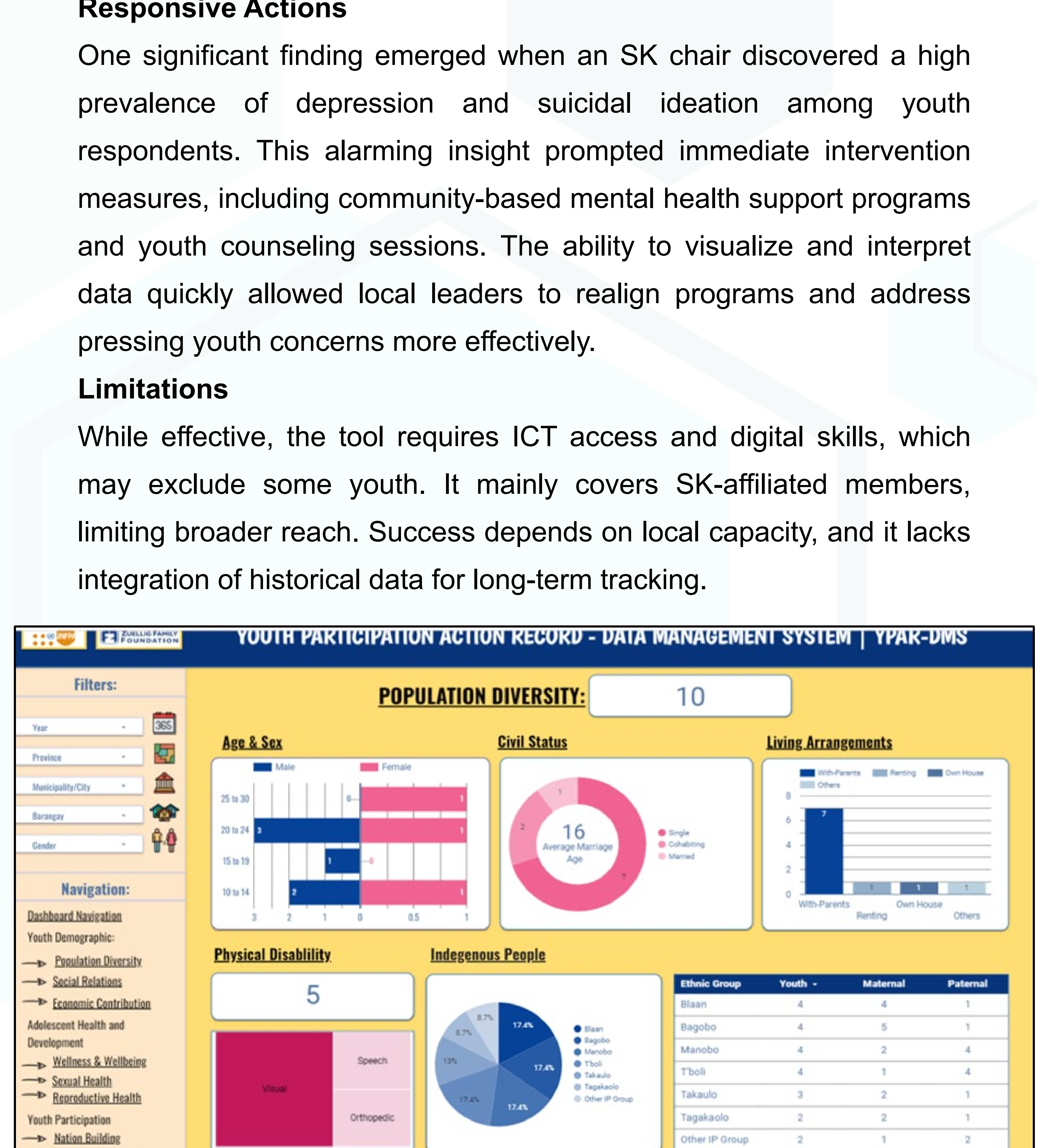
The survey was conducted through the YPAR-DMS, leveraging KoboTool digital data collection. It targeted youth beneficiaries under the *Katipunan ng Kabataan*, engaging both SK officials and community youth leaders. The assessment covered demographic profiles, health indicators, educational status, economic opportunities, and other key aspects aligned with the nine centers of youth participation. The implementation followed a participatory approach, involving local youth development officers, information and communication technology (ICT) specialists, and SK officials to ensure the tool's relevance and usability.

Data Analysis and Evaluation

The survey results were analyzed through the YPAR-DMS, which generated data visualizations and reports to guide evidence-based decision-making. The evaluation focused on the tool's effectiveness in profiling youth, identifying priority areas for intervention, and its adaptability for wider application across LGUs.

Reference

1. Republic of the Philippines. (2015). *Republic Act No. 10742: Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015*. Manila: Congress of the Philippines.



Conclusion

The YPAR initiative not only fulfilled its intended purpose but also laid the groundwork for a more dynamic, inclusive, and data-driven approach to youth development in the Philippines. The YPAR-DMS demonstrated strong potential for scaling up youth data systems. It enabled timely, evidence-based interventions and promoted intersectoral collaboration. Continued refinement, training, and policy integration will be key to its sustainable implementation nationwide.

