

25-27 April 2023

Key Takeaways from the Youth & the SDGs Online Consultation

**Young People's Proposals
for the 2023 SDG Summit**

Acknowledgments

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Disclaimer: This paper's content directly summarizes the recommendations and reflections of young people and youth organizations from the SparkBlue consultations. It represents an insights paper for young people as they mobilize for the SDG Summit. The paper does not represent the institutional views or perspectives of any organization.

About

Launched in 2015, the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity for all people by 2030.

The 2023 Annual Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum focuses on this year's theme of the 2023 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) on "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels". It provides a platform for young people to present their assessment, vision, and recommendations for Member States' consideration before the SDG Summit in September 2023.

In preparation for this moment, an online global consultation on youth and the SDGs was held to surface young people's experiences and recommendations to achieve the SDGs.

"Young people are ready, willing, and able to participate in bigger conversations about their lives and futures."

- Ayesha Humayra Fayyaza, Indonesia.

This global online consultation engaged 649 participants from 109 countries from 14 March to 6 April 2023 with the support of United Nations entities (United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) and civil society organizations and youth partners (United Nations Foundation,

Major Group for Children and Youth) in charge of co-organizing the session on Youth & the SDG Summit at the 2023 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum.

Participants were invited to express their opinions and offer their unique outlook on

- The role of young people in the 2030 Agenda;
- Challenges and opportunities to accelerate the progress of the SDGs with young people in the driver's seat, and
- Young people's priorities and recommendations for the path ahead.

The online global consultation represents a milestone in gathering perspectives from young people, which serves as a foundation for the discourse on SDGs for the rest of the year, beginning with the annual ECOSOC Youth Forum in April 2023. The Forum provides a platform for young people, high-level government representatives, and other stakeholders to contribute to policy discussions by sharing their ideas, solutions, and innovations toward SDG implementation.

Building on these consultations, meetings will further take place at the ECOSOC Youth Forum, which will explore key priorities and recommendations to be highlighted at the upcoming SDG Summit in September 2023, ensuring a focus on youth empowerment, engagement, and leadership and sustaining the contribution of young people to the 2030 Agenda and vision for the future.

This insights paper is organized into three main sections that revolve around the experiences of

young people in advancing the SDGs. Firstly, the paper highlights the impressive efforts that young people are leading worldwide. Secondly, it outlines young people's challenges and issues when taking action on the SDGs. Against this backdrop, the final section puts forth five key recommendations to empower and engage young people to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, namely:

- Empowering young people for implementation of the SDGs by ensuring they have all the tools, skills, resources, and support they need to drive the 2030 Agenda forward.
- Empowering young people as designers of the future by engaging them in the design of policies and initiatives that impact their lives and the future of the planet.
- Engaging young people as pioneers of the SDGs by ensuring they have open access to critical information, as well as raising the profile of youth-led initiatives.
- Harnessing innovation and technology for action on the SDGs to devise creative solutions to complex challenges.
- Reaching the furthest behind and working with and for marginalized young people is key to ensuring no one is left behind on the journey towards progress on the SDGs.

"We should be finding ways to champion and showcase grassroots initiatives that implement SDGs, as well as youth research so that we can move beyond 'hear our voice' towards 'here is what we have to say.'"

– Nudhara Yusuf, United Kingdom.

A Generation of Doers – the Role of Young People in Delivering the 2030 Agenda

The Many Faces of Youth Contributions

The 2030 Agenda is a critical lifeline to all 8 billion people worldwide, most notably for the children and young people who make up nearly half of the global population and the [1.2 billion](#) more people who will call the world home by 2030, the target date for attaining the SDGs. Far from passive beneficiaries of the 2030 Agenda, young people were principal architects in its design and adoption, which began in Rio de Janeiro at the 2012 United Nations Conference Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

"I come from a community with many marginalized people, which gave me a vivid picture of their hardships. It inspired me to volunteer with NGOs and organizations that aim to alleviate poverty and improve lives."

- Yussif Awudu, Ghana.

Young people have since been at the forefront as active participants and implementing partners in achieving the SDGs. Engaging in many ways, young people work across policy advocacy, capacity building, national and local implementation, monitoring and accountability efforts, research, and volunteering. They are engineers, political scientists, social workers, product designers, activists, student leaders, neuroscientists, lawyers, nature conservationists and more.

"When I read that, by 2050, nearly 200 million refugees would flee their homes due to global warming, I knew I had to do something to help."

- Jordi Lopez, Spain.

Young people also recognize the power of intergenerational dialogue and action to tackle not only today's challenges but also long-term risks that impact future generations, those yet to be born. This is a generation of doers who want to shape the policy agenda, drive innovative solutions, and strengthen partnerships between ages. They are determined to build a more holistic global ecosystem that stands up for people of the 21st century, both living and yet to be born.

Young people see the bigger picture and are breaking down SDG silos.

Young people are leading the charge to deliver the SDGs at the local, national, regional, and global levels through their innovative ideas and approaches.

"I am mentoring with Project Girls for Girls, a Harvard University born Project that has empowered over 8,500 young women in 27 countries to develop the courage, vision, and skills to take on public leadership roles in their spheres of influence."

- Patience. K Naamanya, Uganda.

The issues being addressed are as broad and diverse as the community of young people tackling them. There is technical and managerial support for local artisanal miners in Cameroon. At the same time, young people in southern Brazil are implementing civil defense programs to teach students self-protection from disasters and deal with climate change in their community. Young changemakers in Nigeria are

also launching initiatives that assist disenfranchised young people by delivering free mentoring, skills acquisition, business intelligence, and partnerships.

A Global Pool of Diverse Young Change Makers

These young advocates come from every corner of the globe, bringing with them knowledge, understanding, and experiences – stories of success and failure, and lessons learned alike – rich in local context while also echoing common themes that cut across geographical boundaries.

Many young leaders are already experienced in multilateral processes and global organizations, working closely with international bodies, and engaging directly with civil society and the governments in their own countries.

Alongside this, others have invested themselves in the grassroots movement in service of their community. Their insights and stories will be critical to ensure discussions and solutions are grounded in everyday realities and challenges.

Challenges Young People Face to Accelerate the SDGs

Need for Meaningful and Diverse Representation

Engaging with the multilateral system, especially the UN, can be challenging and inaccessible to many, particularly for children who face further administrative and political barriers to their participation. This perpetuates a 'golden circle' where the same young people are consistently spotlighted.

This system leaves many young people, especially from the Global South, contributing to the 'front lines' without a voice. In many cases, simple things such as visa access to participate in international meetings can be an insurmountable barrier to overcome, leading to a selected number of Global South participants attending.

Some consider this a form of 'youth washing' in which only a select few are platformed, and it is often those who offer complementary messages to that of the institutions that seek to amplify their voice. This limits young people's ability to influence SDG implementation at all levels, from policymaking to monitoring and evaluation. These challenges extend to the experience of those working within the United Nations system through the expectation that young people can complete unpaid internships to enter the system.

Young people are not always given sufficient time and support to meaningfully contribute to the preliminary and planning stages of critical global, regional, and national events and processes. There is also infrequent follow-up

with young participants, so how their contributions are acted upon is unclear.

Additionally, young people are rarely given access to policy processes or intergovernmental negotiations and are often limited to observer roles or separately organized youth forums. There is also a need for recognition and fairer compensation for young people who share their technical insights and experiences with United Nations agencies, international organizations, or governments. Many young people are required to self-fund their participation in International Summits and other decision-making processes, despite attending as part of an official delegation. This results in only a privileged few being able to be represented on global platforms, often excluding the most marginalized voices, making it difficult for young people to gain the support they need to deliver innovative initiatives and advocate for policy change.

Support for Young People amidst Closing Civic Space

Safe civic space and strong governance at national, regional and local levels is essential to delivering the 2030 Agenda, particularly for youth-led and youth-focused organizations. By forming associations, driving movements for change, and participating in public decision-making, young people use civic space to solve bottlenecks to SDG progress, hold decision-makers accountable, and provide vehicles for active public engagement.

However, young people's meaningful participation and influence opportunities are increasingly limited. Without an enabling environment free from offline and online risks, youth-led organizations struggle to drive collective actions for the SDGs. Young people living in politically unstable contexts face greater obstacles to their activism, even to the extent that it endangers their mental and physical well-being.

The rising trend of closing civic space worldwide also presents unique challenges. For example, youth-led and youth-focused organizations tend to be more fragile due to the high turnover, reliance on volunteer work for day-to-day functioning, and the lack of institutional, long-term funding. They also tend to face additional barriers to accessing established support systems, including financial opportunities and networks that require legal or financial accreditations. These obstacles are magnified for children and young people when access to support and resources is contingent on reliable internet connection, software, hardware, and other tech-driven resources, especially for those in rural and hard-to-reach communities. Young people are thus more vulnerable to burnout, disengagement, and demotivation.

In an environment where resources are scarce, young people are sometimes pitted against each other instead of being mobilized as a community. These challenges are compounded by privileging those with access to resources, excluding the most marginalized, and disadvantaging those younger than 18 years old who face further administrative and political barriers.

"Our youth movement frequently depends on goodwill funding and donations from charitable organizations that acknowledge and value the vital contribution of young people. While grants and funds from institutions such as the United Nations Funds and Governments can be an ideal source of financial support, the red tape, extensive requirements, and legal papers associated with these funds make them inaccessible to youth movements and organizations."

- Innocent Odongo, France.

There is a need for increased support to identify and mitigate specific offline and online risks that affect youth organizations, considering the diversity of activists and the specific risks faced by the most marginalized and vulnerable children and young people to address their own safeguarding needs. This includes increased capacity strengthening for youth-led and youth-focused organizations to manage projects, build resilient organizations, mitigate risks, and access flexible funding and resources.

Obstacles to Youth-led Community Action

At the country level, young people often find themselves on the fringes of decision-making processes and need better access to meaningful and active policy engagement.

In many parts of the world, community-led action is also being hampered by closing civic society spaces, which adds a further barrier to the accessibility of empowering spaces for emerging advocates. Amidst these challenges, young people struggle to envisage the future when they cannot influence the policy agenda that affects their lives and communities.

"In Brazil, so much more could be done or put into practice if the people have more access to information about the SGDs and the 2030 Agenda. So many have no idea what this program is, and those who do may not know exactly how they can be part of the 2030 Agenda."

- Camila Bertelli, Brazil.

As a result, many young people struggle to remain hopeful about their future as they feel they can neither control nor change it. At the country level, adults must have the skills and awareness to support and motivate young people to be active citizens in their communities and society. Spaces for intergenerational dialogue need to be encouraged and sustained. This cultural and competency-based shift is necessary for youth to be able to be agents within the international system.

Leaving the most vulnerable behind

Vulnerable and marginalized young people face magnified inequalities in access to opportunities for civic engagement. These inequalities affect how young people can participate in school councils, youth councils, volunteering, or peer-to-peer initiatives. Access to such opportunities is commonly influenced by socioeconomic status, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, and disability. Participation is dominated by young people from more advantaged backgrounds. Though these experiences of meaningful participation are known to develop the skills for future political leadership positions, they still rest within the hands of a privileged few.

"One challenge is the prevalence of discrimination and inequality, which limit access to opportunities and resources for marginalized groups, including youth, women, and indigenous communities. This is especially problematic in Peru, where discrimination against indigenous people is a significant issue that affects their ability to participate in decision-making processes."

- Hanna Wong, Peru.

There is a lack of disaggregated data and research on the impact of young people's participation and civic engagement, which hinders the identification of effective strategies. Due to these data and research gaps, initiatives designed to boost participation and civic engagement have limited capacity to foster evidence-based practice, inevitably limiting their access to funding and support.

Key Recommendations to Accelerate Progress with and for Young People

Theme 1:

Empower Young People for SDG Implementation

Young people are already investing in efforts to advance the sustainable development agenda, but several barriers hinder their impact. To unlock the potential of young people as a powerful engine for the SDGs, the system must empower and equip them to take ownership, contribute to building their expertise, and support them to participate in meaningful decision-making processes. They must be given the necessary knowledge, skills, tools, resources, and opportunities to succeed as productive agents of change.

1.1 Mobilize Early with Young People at the Forefront

Young people must be placed at the heart of all mobilization efforts to provide them with the opportunity to shape the agenda. This can be achieved by creating inclusive, open, safe intergenerational platforms that unite diverse youth-led and youth-focused organizations, networks, and movements.

“Young people are not given enough time and the capacity to contribute to planning. They are rarely given access to actual policy processes or intergovernmental negotiations and are often sequestered to observer roles or separately organized youth forums. More meaningful engagement of young people and their technical assistance to development corporations and multilateral organizations are needed.”

– Saru Duckworth, Nepal/USA.

1.2 Further Strengthen Capacities

Provide training, mentoring, and support to equip young people with the competencies needed to drive SDG implementation, monitoring, and review effectively. Additionally, investment should be made in familiarizing young people with the SDGs in ways that are accessible and relevant across different contexts, including how the SDGs relate to their immediate environments and communities. This should be agency-driven, encouraging young people to develop their convictions regarding the sustainable development agenda to be productive agents for change.

“I believe that providing opportunities to enhance youth leadership in SDGs implementation, monitoring, and review are KEY to ensuring that we build, all together, a democratic and safe future.”

– Jordi López, Spain.

1.3 Scale-up Support to Youth-led and Youth-inclusive Networks

A truly intergenerational multi-stakeholder approach that promotes child and youth-led and child and youth-inclusive networks is crucial to support young people in taking SDG action.

Partnerships between the private sector and youth-led organizations can include the provision of financing, mentorship, and

resources to create meaningful opportunities for young people to develop sustainable and socially responsible business practices. Enhancing collaboration between governments, United Nations entities, and youth-led organizations can help young people overcome bureaucratic obstacles presented by the international system by providing information, resources, and mentorship.

"I have taught more than 700 young people in Asia and the Pacific about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. I'm also the founder of GreenGeek, a university alliance whose mission is to build a platform for youth to participate in the localization of the SDGs and global climate governance."

– Zhang Yu, China.

1.4 Foster Relationships between Young People and Youth-led Networks

Strengthen youth networks by creating collaborative spaces for youth to reflect the SDGs' interdependent nature. This can include organizing and financing multilateral platforms, conferences, and workshops that unite young people to discuss and collaborate on SDG-related issues, share best practices, build networks, and apply for opportunities.

1.5 Allocate Adequate, Agile, and Flexible Resources

Support young people, their initiatives, and organizations with multi-year and flexible

funding, rapid response grants, technical assistance, and tools for monitoring progress. Important areas that require funding and resources include child and youth-led projects, community initiatives, advocacy, storytelling, research, and entrepreneurship.

"Across the African continent, we are witnessing a high level of interest by young people to engage, shape, and contribute to the future of Africa. In addition, we are also witnessing the evolution of youth innovations, social activism, and taking up initiatives to address the challenges faced by the SDGs. These opportunities have not been equally matched with development investment needed to scale up and contribute to the SDGs implementations."

– Emmanuel Ametepey, Ghana.

Better mobilization of funding, including pooling and channeling of financial resources in a targeted way, is crucial to prevent young people from competing or pursuing financial support in a fragmented manner.

Additionally, technologies and infrastructure are also required to help young people be better informed, targeted, and efficient in their solution-building, as well as to monitor the impact of their progress and to identify remaining issues and growth opportunities.

Theme 2:

Elevate Young People as Designers of the Present and Future

Prioritizing young people's meaningful participation and engagement in SDG decision-making processes is vital to co-creating innovative SDG solutions. Young people often bring fresh ideas to the table, which is crucial in addressing the complex challenges associated with the SDGs. More inclusive and effective outcomes can be achieved by involving them in decision-making.

2.1 Deliver Intergenerational Action and Dialogue with and for Young People

Enable meaningful participation by actively working with and for young people at all stages of planning and administering programs. This includes involving them from the earliest phases of community assessment and promoting systematic participatory mechanisms like Youth Councils, Youth Advisory Groups, Student Representatives, and Youth and Child Parliaments.

Open and inclusive platforms help young people influence the global agenda and play a valuable role in spearheading intergenerational conversations and action across the multilateral system. Such alliances and networks help bring innovative solutions to the policymaking process and position young change makers as facilitators or conveners of discussions.

Such mechanisms should be considered for global consultations on and around the Secretary-General's ongoing policy briefs,

support for delivering Our Common Agenda recommendations, and other initiatives for the Summit of the Future. This includes designing intergenerational dialogues with and for young people during United Nations moments to ensure young people are actively engaged throughout all decision-making processes and spaces. These engagements should be seen as an investment in youth political participation.

Doing so will enable young people to be co-creators and co-leaders in these processes, taking ownership of their present-day reality and future potential. Such an approach also bolsters the future of the Sustainable Development Agenda by serving as a long-run talent development strategy.

2.2 The Appointment of Official Government Youth Delegates

For many years, several governments have consistently identified and supported the participation of young people in their delegations at significant conferences and summits. To be most effective, these youth delegates should be empowered as independent advocates, rather than restricted to amplifying their country's government policy. This can help to ensure young people's priorities are brought to the heart of multilateral negotiations and decision-making. Governments should also consider expanding age eligibility to include child delegates.

The United Nations Secretary-General can formally invite governments to select - through a transparent and consultative process - youth representatives to work with them at a national level towards the SDG Summit to ensure strengthened engagement.

2.3 Hold Leaders Accountable to Youth Recommendations

Ensure planning and decision-making mechanisms formally recognize submissions made by young people in official outcomes documents and that suitable accountability infrastructure follows. This should link to accurate metrics of success and transparent assessment processes, capable of delivering a definitive conclusion on the extent to which leaders and member states have responded to young leaders' submissions.

“Creating a better tomorrow is not just one stakeholder's responsibility; it is a shared mission, vision, shared planet, and shared humanity, so it should be a shared responsibility. We must connect the dots, find common ground, and focus genuinely and sincerely on one shared target.”

- Eliane EL Haber, Lebanon.

2.4 Work with Young People as Partners in Development Programming

Young people should be treated as equal partners in development programming, from design to delivery. Young people have a right to be informed, consulted, and have their voices taken into account on matters that directly and indirectly impact their lives and futures. This is inherent to realizing a right-based perspective that takes into account young people in all of their diversity, inclusive of all genders.

The realization of their right to participate must be guaranteed by duty-bearers and the United Nations. From an efficiency perspective, ensuring that diverse groups of young people are engaged and have a say in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes can significantly improve the relevance, legitimacy, sustainability and impact of projects.

2.5 Youth-led Tracking of Progress and Impact

Data collection is critical to understanding people's realities on the ground and monitoring progress toward achieving the SDGs. Young people, particularly those from marginalized communities, can be involved in data collection activities and be profiled as SDG monitors, providing a more accurate and localized reflection of their experiences and needs.

Developing youth-led monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can provide a platform for young people, particularly those from marginalized communities, to assess the progress toward achieving the SDGs. For example, youth-led and youth-informed complementary voluntary national review reporting has enabled child and youth researchers to join national delegations in presenting official Voluntary National Review reports during the High-Level Political Forum. These mechanisms can also provide feedback on the effectiveness of policies and programs designed to promote the SDGs.

Theme 3:

Engage Young People as SDG Pioneers

Effective communication is crucial in achieving the SDGs by promoting transparency, building trust, and fostering a sense of ownership and accountability with young people. It is necessary to raise awareness of the SDGs among young people and ensure they can access critical information about the goals and actively participate in their implementation.

"Many young people may not be aware of the SDGs and their relevance to their lives and communities, which can make it challenging to mobilize support for SDG-related activities."

– Jacob Blasius, Denmark.

3.1 Facilitate Access to Transparent and Open Information

Provide young people with the opportunity to access critical SDG information and communication materials, including establishing a transparent and open process so that they can easily follow and engage with the content and ensure it is communicated in youth-friendly language. Translation and interpretation of documents, information, and discussions into multiple languages are also crucial to ensure meaningful access to information by people from diverse backgrounds and regions.

This can be done for young people and with them through building networks of young leaders to engage in peer coaching and mentoring between young leaders.

3.2 Partner with Young People to Lead Targeted Campaigns around SDGs

Co-develop targeted and official social media campaigns with inputs from young advocacy experts, who can ensure messaging that resonates with diverse audiences. Recognize the importance of community mobilization and hotspots of growing activism, and reflect this in the broader SDG communication strategies.

"Leverage social media to engage and mobilize young people towards SDG implementation, as well as provide a platform for them to discuss their experiences, struggles, and triumphs with SDG implementation."

– Kennedy Kris Ubani, Nigeria.

3.3 Recognize Diverse Young People as SDG Champions

Recognizing young people as designers of the SDG transformation process and champions for the rights of future generations has a vital force for holding current authority figures accountable. Sustaining this engagement starts with incentivizing young people through awards, scholarships, sponsorships for youth-led projects, and participation during key global moments. Innovative mechanisms to help raise the profile of child and youth-led initiatives should be actively tested and supported, including showcasing their impact and encouraging other youth to participate.

Theme 4:

Harness Innovation & Technology for SDG Action

Achieving the 2030 Agenda hinges on embracing innovative and creative solutions, including tapping into the power of technology to create new channels for youth engagement and participation. By harnessing the power of innovation, we can create new opportunities for youth participation, amplify their voices, and accelerate the implementation of sustainable development strategies.

4.1 Develop Youth-led Innovation Hubs

Develop youth-led innovation hubs to provide shared spaces where young people, entrepreneurs, and policymakers can interact, connect and collaborate. These innovation hubs could be constructed physically or virtually with their design tailored to the unique needs of their host community. This may range from computer and technology labs in communities where technology is inaccessible; to creating spaces for dialogue and guidance where the focus is better placed on community building and interpersonal support. These hubs also provide a creative space to explore and challenge the process of generating innovation and cultivating a supporting ecosystem.

4.2 Invest in Non-formal Education Opportunities

Non-formal education pathways often enrich lateral and creative thinking competencies. Increasing the investment in non-formal

education opportunities will bolster the foundational skills required to innovate.

4.3 Leverage Technology and Digital Skills for Insights and Resources

Technology should be utilized to track and analyze SDG program data more effectively to derive valuable insights that can guide further action. Creating a centralized database of all existing SDG-related projects and available financial and technical resources can also be a game-changer in helping connect young people with the support they need to make a difference.

4.4 Catalyze Youth Entrepreneurship

Encouraging entrepreneurship will allow young people to design, implement, and scale SDG innovations. This can include seed funding, mentoring, and other forms of support for young entrepreneurs.

“Growing up in a village without access to electricity, I experienced firsthand the challenges of living off-grid. This inspired me to develop innovative solutions that could provide affordable and sustainable energy to rural communities.”

– Gibson Kawago, Tanzania.

Theme 5:

Reach the Furthest Behind

The SDGs aim to promote sustainable development for all, leaving no one behind, which means that efforts must be made to address the needs and priorities of marginalized communities. Through the 2030 Agenda, Member States also committed to reaching the furthest behind first.

Marginalized communities face systemic barriers and discrimination that limit their access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, making achieving their full potential and contributing to SDG progress more challenging. By addressing these inequities, young people from marginalized communities can become active agents of change, contributing their unique perspectives, experiences, and talents to the SDG transformation process.

5.1 Promote Localisation and Regional Approaches by Empowering Communities

Young people are not a homogenous group and should not be classified as a monolith as perspectives differ significantly across age, geographic, social, cultural, economic, racial, and political backgrounds. By bringing together young people in regional and community-based engagements, a more localized approach can be taken that caters to the nuances of differences rather than propagating uniformity. Through these localized approaches, rich discussions can be undertaken on SDG implementation, monitoring, and review, which can then be fed into international processes.

A community-led approach recognizes young people's distinct experiences. Community leaders are vital in gathering information and organizing discussions to ensure that young people are heard locally. Providing interpreter services and translations is crucial in overcoming communication barriers and accurately representing young people's views. In some cases, the capacity of adults must be built to understand the importance of engaging children and youth and to support their engagement with those groups. Additionally, proactive outreach and dedicated resources are necessary to reach new communities unfamiliar with the United Nations or the SDGs to engage them culturally and contextually in the appropriate manner.

It is also critical that safe spaces where young people from marginalized communities can express themselves with bravery, share their ideas, and participate in decision-making processes are created. These spaces should be inclusive, accessible, and respectful of different opinions and backgrounds.

5.2 Ensure Inclusive and Diverse Representation, and Promote Self-selection

The space for diverse representatives from varied backgrounds to be considered in the formal process leading up to and during the SDG Summit should be intentionally created, with young people being allowed to self-select their representatives and spokespeople. All calls for applications to be part of the official

delegation as a Young Leader should also be widely promoted to ensure they reach beyond the 'golden circle.' Proactive outreach should be undertaken to community groups and networks that represent intersectionalities that are underrepresented. It should also remain front of mind that, as these strategies are implemented, strengthened policies will be required for financially supporting and compensating young leaders for sharing their intellectual and cultural property.

5.3 Implement Multiple Accessible Levels of Youth Engagement

To increase the accessibility of key national and global events and to ensure the participation of marginalized youth, multiple levels of engagement need to be established, ranging from formal representation (youth delegates, action tracks, and advisory committees) to informal representation (campaigns, communications, local consultations, and experiences). It is also vital to ensure that marginalized young people are given the funding support and resources necessary to participate, including ensuring they have access to visas and sufficient lead time to apply and attend these global events.

"Innovative communication and outreach strategies, such as social media and other digital platforms, can help engage young people and ensure their voices are heard. These strategies should be inclusive and accessible to young people from marginalized communities."

- Khadidiatou Selle Sourang Diop, Senegal.

5.4 Invest in Education and Social Protection for Long-term Development

For young people in marginalized communities to meaningfully engage in SDG implementation,

efforts must be made to ensure their basic needs are met. This includes investing in public social protection, access to justice, and social security systems that support unemployed youth, upskill informal economy workers, ensure protections and dispute resolution mechanisms, and provide pensions, health insurance, and savings schemes. Universal Child Benefits is one such scheme that has proven particularly effective in improving coverage of social protection systems.

"Much of the climate discourse right now and regarding SDGs talks about impact in communities from an outsider's perspective. The discourse must be empathetic and understand that people must satisfy their basic needs (food, safety, health) to consider further impact. It comes down to empathy, the GLocal perspective (Think Globally, Act Locally), and understanding the needs of the group you speak to so that it becomes a two-way dialogue."

- Luis Gerardo Carvajal, Mexico.

Another vital investment is building skills and training programs within public education and health systems to reach and include marginalized youth over generations. Holistic programs with soft skills and digital and information technology skills are also necessary to help build social capital and job readiness. These systems must specifically consider the needs of girls and young women and the challenges they face accessing education and health services.

For more information please visit:

[2023 ECOSOC Youth Forum](#)

[Plenary Session on Youth & the SDGs: Youth Insights and Recommendations in the Lead Up to the SDG Summit 2023](#)



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