

INTRODUCTION





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IN September 2015 the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an ambitious plan of action aimed at ending all forms of poverty, fighting inequality, and tackling climate change—while ensuring that no one is left behind. The 2030 Agenda includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 targets, to be achieved by the year 2030. A list of 232 indicators, developed in 2017 and refined annually, constitutes a mechanism for monitoring and assessing progress towards the Goals and related targets.¹

The 2030 Agenda provides a comprehensive systems map for Governments, the private sector and communities—a global plan of action through which the inherent interconnections between people, planet and prosperity are fully optimized to inform strategies and actions for a common future of universal peace and freedom.

The *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* examines the mutually supportive roles of the new Agenda and youth development efforts. The *Report* is intended to offer Member States and other stakeholders information and analysis that can help them gauge the progress made in addressing youth issues, assess policy gaps, and develop policy responses.

The *Report* also provides insight into the role of young people in sustainable development in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and related frameworks, in particular the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing

¹ Throughout the present *Youth Report* reference is made both to the priority areas of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and to the fully articulated Goals and related targets and indicators (United Nations, 2015d; United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b; United Nations, 2018).



for Development² and the World Programme of Action for Youth.³

The *Report* considers the role the 2030 Agenda can play in enhancing youth development efforts, while examining how evidence-based youth policies can help accelerate youth-related objectives. In doing so, the *Report* explores the critical roles and responsibilities young people have in the implementation of sustainable social, economic and environmental development efforts at all levels.

YOUTH AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The innovative 2030 Agenda is intended to bolster development efforts and policies by providing a comprehensive and well-articulated set of goals and targets for the creation and implementation of policies and actions to reduce poverty, achieve peace, and promote equality, leaving no one behind. It emphasizes the importance of integration and synergy across policies, frameworks and actions, and in doing so emphasizes the vital role all stakeholders play in its implementation.

The Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each

Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b, para. 55)

The Sustainable Development Goals are integrated, indivisible and universal, but their long-term success is largely contingent upon how well youth development efforts are integrated into the policies, plans and actions adopted to bring about their realization. While all the Sustainable Development Goals are critical to youth development, this *Report* focuses primarily on the two interrelated areas of education and employment; both feature largely in the Agenda, underlining the realization of targets under these Goals as fundamental to overall youth development. Other Goals that address priority areas for youth—including gender equality, good health, reducing inequality, combating poverty and hunger, and action on environmental issues and climate change—are also addressed briefly within the scope of the *Report*.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH POLICIES IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Youth are being referred to as the “torchbearers” of the 2030 Agenda and have a pivotal role to play both as beneficiaries of actions and policies under the Agenda and as partners and participants in its implementation. Indeed, both explicitly and implicitly, the 2030 Agenda calls for the development and activation of sound, evidence-based youth policies and actions to ensure its full realization.

With the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth in 1995, Member States and young people were provided with a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve

² Hereafter referred to as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015a; United Nations, 2015e).

³ United Nations (2010); see also General Assembly resolution 50/81 of 14 December 1995 on the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81) and resolution 62/126 of 18 December 2007, “Policies and programmes involving youth: youth in the global economy—promoting youth participation in social and economic development” (A/RES/62/126).



the situation of youth around the world. Under its auspices, many Member States have increased efforts to develop and implement robust youth policies and policies affecting youth across the 15 priority areas⁴ addressed in the World Programme of Action.

These efforts have been complemented by a number of targeted youth development strategies and frameworks adopted at the international level, including the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth; the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030); and the Education 2030 Framework for Action. A significant number of national and regional frameworks have been developed to bolster these efforts.

With a broad array of frameworks, strategies and guidance available, fresh impetus and innovative thinking are needed to determine how existing and newly launched tools for youth development can drive youth policies that advance the 2030 Agenda. Strategic planning and coordination can help ensure better alignment of efforts and resources and increase the likelihood of success.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN ADAPTING THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TO NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

Institutional and structural synergies and integration at the local and national levels are essential for meeting the objectives embodied in the 2030 Agenda. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will require working not only horizontally across policy sectors and

frameworks, but vertically among community, local, national, regional and global authorities, together with civil society stakeholders, including youth.

Critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda are the role of young people in engaging with local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes on the ground; the role of public-private partnerships in driving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including financing and harnessing technology for data collection and utilization; and the role of youth participation in informing equitable and diverse policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The *Report* comprises six substantive chapters.

Chapter I provides an overview of global youth population trends and their implications, the role of youth in relation to the 2030 Agenda, and how youth are referenced in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Chapter II explores the area of youth education, outlining opportunities and challenges for young people and policymakers. The chapter details aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals that pertain to education—with particular emphasis on Goal 4 (quality education)—and examines related targets. This chapter also explores the multidimensional issues surrounding education and how they impact youth, with special attention given to disparities in education; the rights-based approach to education; education challenges for young women, youth with disabilities, migrant youth and youth affected by conflict; entrepreneurship education; and financing education.

Chapter III explores the area of youth employment, highlighting development challenges and opportunities

⁴ The priority areas are education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, substance abuse, juvenile justice, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making, globalization, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, and intergenerational issues.



for young people and policymakers. The chapter focuses on aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals pertaining to employment, looking specifically at Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), and examines the relevant targets. This chapter also explores global and regional trends and priorities such as underemployment, formal versus informal work, entrepreneurship, and disguised employment; it further considers employment challenges specific to youth living in poverty, youth with disabilities, young women, youth in conflict and post-conflict settings, and young migrants.

Chapter IV explores the nexus between the youth education and employment issues addressed in chapters II and III. It specifically examines those areas in the context of the transition from school to work, providing a set of case studies on skills development targeting marginalized and vulnerable youth. It also explores the human development approach to youth education and employment.

Chapter V examines the key elements of youth policies and their role in advancing youth development objectives in the context of the 2030 Agenda. Special emphasis is given to the importance of accurate, timely and high-quality age-disaggregated data for the development of evidence-based youth policymaking. The chapter considers how enhanced efforts to ensure the collection

of such data, including data on marginalized and vulnerable youth, can be undertaken through statistical and data system capacity-building, public-private partnerships, and support for youth-led data collection and use. It also addresses issues related to defining and interpreting indicators, and provides an in-depth analysis of indicators associated with both the Sustainable Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Chapter VI moves to the concrete aspects of implementing the 2030 Agenda, analysing the role young people have and can play at the local and national levels. It sets out a series of principles to help guide such engagement, while highlighting, including through case studies, the many ways young people are contributing to the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda through engagement in awareness-raising, policymaking and data collection, as well as through participation in national and international review processes.

A **concluding** chapter summarizes and synthesizes the key messages put forward in the *Report*.

A **statistical annex** presents the most recent data available on the 90 youth-related indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals and the 34 core indicators for the World Programme of Action for Youth.



THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

