CHAPTER V
WHERE'S THE EVIDENCE?

EVIDENCE-BASED
YOUTH POLICIES AND THE ROAD TO 2030

YOUTH development is assigned high priority in a number of national, regional and international instruments. However, young people continue to face structural and societal barriers to full and effective participation in political, economic and community life (United Nations, 2016a), placing them at increased risk of poverty, violence, disadvantage, displacement and marginalization. The 2030 Agenda is universal in nature and sets out goals and targets to mitigate such challenges, but effectively addressing them requires targeted interventions through the development and implementation of youth policies and the mainstreaming of youth issues into broader policy and planning frameworks.

Youth policies can contribute to the success of the 2030 Agenda by enabling young people to fulfil their potential as active members of society. Targeted youth policies help reduce inequality not only among young people but between young people and the broader community by promoting youth empowerment and engagement in all aspects of life.[28]

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[28] United Nations (2017e).

Recognition of the value of youth policies for development is not new. The World Programme of Action for Youth was adopted in 1995, providing the first global framework for youth policy development at the national and international levels; it has also served as a tool for monitoring and tracking youth development in key areas, particularly since the 2012 release of 49 proposed indicators to measure its implementation. Over the past several decades, an increasing number of Member States have adopted and implemented youth policies and programmes to advance youth development, and youth employment has been a focal point, especially in recent years. Stubbornly high levels of youth unemployment since the global economic crisis of 2008 have led many Member States to develop youth employment and entrepreneurship policies and programmes.[29]

WHAT DOES A STRONG YOUTH POLICY LOOK LIKE?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to developing a strong youth policy. The nature of a youth policy will largely depend on the context in which it is being developed (for example, in a least developed or developed country, or in a stable or conflict-affected environment), as well as on the thematic substance of the policy (youth employment, health, participation, or one or more other focal points). Such specificities notwithstanding, it is possible to identify a number of core elements that inform the development and implementation of a strong youth policy; these are explored in more detail in the present *Report* and are outlined below.

- *Evidence-based*. Strong youth policies are informed by timely and accurate data and statistics on the situation of young people, gathered through both quantitative and qualitative means. Sources may include, inter alia, national household surveys and evidence provided or collected by young people themselves.

- *Participatory*. Strong youth policies require direct youth input. The knowledge, experience and expertise of young people must be integrated in the design, implementation and evaluation of youth policies; such input may be secured through the establishment of youth advisory bodies or cooperation with national youth councils, as well as through outreach to individual young people both online and offline. Engagement at all levels of government and across different ministries and departments also contributes to the development of effective youth policies.

- *Integrated and cross-sectoral*. Strong youth policies should be cross-sectoral and well integrated into broader policy frameworks. Care should be taken to ensure that youth policy objectives and outcomes are compatible with and supportive of other policies and mandates, including the Sustainable Development Goals, in a whole-of-government approach.

- *Funded*. Strong youth policies must be supported by adequate budget and resource allocations to ensure effective implementation.

- *Committed*. Strong political leadership and strategic vision are required to push for the implementation of youth policies at all levels of government.

- *Accountable*. Strong and transparent monitoring and accountability frameworks should accompany youth policies so that impact and progress can be tracked and measured, improvements can be made, and public officials can be held to account.

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[29] United Nations, General Assembly (2015c). See also United Nations (2012a), which provides an infographic for measuring youth development through the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

MAINSTREAMING YOUTH POLICIES

While stand-alone youth policies target youth-specific issues and challenges, the mainstreaming of youth policies and priorities into the sectoral policies of line ministries can contribute to more holistic youth development and may reduce the likelihood that vulnerable and marginalized youth will fall through the cracks in policy and programme implementation. Rural youth, for example, are often marginalized and hard to reach, and ensuring

BOX 5.1.
A TOOLKIT ON QUALITY STANDARDS FOR YOUTH POLICY

EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

In 2016 the European Youth Forum launched a toolkit on quality standards for youth policy, providing youth organizations with a means of assessing the quality of youth policy in their own local, national and regional contexts. The toolkit outlines eight quality standards that represent good quality youth policy, and a set of indicators for each standard allows a more precise analysis of the situation of youth in specific contexts.

The standards are also a valuable reference for governmental and intergovernmental institutions that work with youth policy or are involved in reviewing and developing national or European youth strategies.

While the toolkit is mainly used to assess youth policies at the local to regional levels, it can also be used by youth organizations to examine and reflect on their own youth policies, help inform their advocacy plans, and promote the rights of young people in their work.

Source: European Youth Forum (2017).

that the challenges they face—including limited access to education and broadband technology—are addressed in a country's livelihood/rural policy will increase the visibility of this youth demographic. Such an approach is fully aligned with the commitment of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Robust and comprehensive policies and strategies recognize young people as active agents of change and actors in their own and wider development. However, many polices with a direct or indirect impact on young people are developed and delivered without youth consultation or participation, reflecting both a lack of recognition of the value young people can bring to decision-making and a disregard for the rights of youth to participate in matters that affect them.

Young people are an essential resource in the development of youth and youth-related policies. They speak from personal experience of having lived as young people in today's world, giving them a unique perspective on their situation as well as innovative ideas and solutions that can guide policies to address some of the most pressing challenges they face. Involving young people in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and follow-up can enhance the success of policies and create a sense of ownership among youth—an important condition for inclusion and development.

Recognition of the value of youth input is growing, as evidenced by the gradual increase in the number of government entities establishing youth participation mechanisms in policymaking and decision-making. Acknowledging the critical role young people can and should play in sustainable development, governments at all levels are leveraging this resource that is youth through the creation of youth parliaments; the designation of

youth delegates; the engagement of youth-led structures in policymaking design, implementation and follow-up; online and offline consultations with youth; and youth engagement in processes pertaining to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (see chapter VI).

FINANCING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

One of the biggest obstacles to achieving the objectives of stand-alone and mainstreamed youth policies is the lack of adequate financing.

The political commitment to youth development can most often be measured by budgetary allocations to youth policies and programmes. Historically, youth policy and development efforts have been considerably underfunded at all levels of government and at the international level. Even the most ambitious and well-designed youth policies stand little chance of succeeding when little or no budgetary support is available.

Increased investment is needed to cover the costs of realizing the Sustainable Development Goals—including those directly or indirectly linked to youth development. UNESCO estimates that annual education expenditure will need to rise from $149 billion to $300 billion over the 15-year period covered by the 2030 Agenda if sustainable development objectives are to be met. While there is evidence that many low- and middle-income countries have been increasing their educational expenditure commitments since 2000 (the start of the Millennium Development Goal period), much more financial support is needed. Factoring in projections for continued improvements in domestic revenue mobilization, UNESCO predicts an annual shortfall of $39 billion in global education finance (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 134).

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda presents an opportunity to reinvigorate international financial commitments through the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and this, in turn, offers an opportunity to scale up investment in youth.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda outlines an array of financing sources and instruments that could effectively support sustainable development objectives and, by extension, youth policy objectives. Indeed, it explicitly promotes "national youth strategies as a key instrument for meeting the needs and aspirations of young people" (para. 16), highlighting the value and importance of incorporating youth strategies and policies into sustainable development actions.

While the funding sources and instruments outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda are not specifically linked to youth development, they offer an opportunity to direct financing towards youth policy implementation. There is an increasingly diverse array of external, domestic, public, and private financing sources, including ODA, sovereign wealth funds, tax revenues, NGO donations, public borrowing, foreign direct investment, private borrowing, and philanthropic giving. Various financial instruments can be considered depending on the specific development context and needs of a country; examples include securities and structured funds, ethical funds, bonds, insurance, taxes, and results-based financing.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda lacks specificity on financing options for youth development. However, within the framework of the third International Conference on Financing for Development,[30] numerous commitments were made to creating funding mechanisms for particular development priorities. An important example is the Global Financing Facility, a financing platform launched to support the United Nations Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030) and the Sustainable Development Goals (World Bank, 2015a); this platform is

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[30]   See United Nations (2015e).

designed to serve as a catalyst for innovative financing in the areas of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health in the period leading up to 2030. Specific financing partnerships and instruments such as these allow targeted allocation of resources to youth-specific issues.

A political commitment to strategic resource development and allocation is essential if youth policies and the Sustainable Development Goals as a whole are to be adequately funded.

Some members of the international NGO community are demanding that global tax reforms be instituted to cover the costs of realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. At the national level, tax incentives given to the wealthy and corporations have a significant impact on the government budget. Collectively, tax losses in developing countries are estimated to be as high as $339 billion (Archer, 2016), and global losses from multinational corporate tax manipulation and undeclared offshore wealth are estimated to amount to $800 billion (Cobham and Klees, 2016). A global financial transactions tax could potentially generate substantial revenues. Financing for sustainable development (and, by extension, for youth development) could benefit from even a partial move in this direction.

BOX 5.2.
CASE STUDY: PHILANTHROPIC INVESTMENT IN YOUTH LIVELIHOODS

MASTERCARD FOUNDATION

The MasterCard Foundation has been responsible for some of the strongest philanthropic investment in youth development programmes in recent years. In particular, the Foundation has sought to address issues of youth transitions to employment through its Youth Livelihoods Program.

This Program provides skills training for economically disadvantaged young people and focuses particularly on the agricultural and construction sectors owing to their high absorption capacity at the entry level. The training modules deliver a combination of technical skills, foundational skills (numeracy/literacy), and soft skills (including critical thinking, communication and teamwork). There is a special focus on building financial literacy, and access to financial services is part of the programme as well.

Research commissioned by Williams and Pompa (2017) on youth livelihoods in Ghana and Uganda suggests that a focus on mixed youth livelihoods has important advantages. The report summarizing the research findings shows that many young people engage in diverse livelihood activities that reflect seasonal effects, combining informal sector employment, self-employment, and agriculture-related activities to sustain their livelihoods. This diversification increases income and reduces risk, and diversification within these categories (for example, growing crops and raising livestock) has similar effects. The report acknowledges that entrepreneurship is risky but argues that the low capital intensiveness of most youth businesses means that youth are able to move in and out of entrepreneurship relatively easily and safely. Surrounded by poverty and with little prospect of even regular informal sector employment, many African youth will have to rely on mixed livelihoods for the foreseeable future. Skills programmes that recognize and respond to this reality have the best chance of success.

TRACKING YOUTH EXPENDITURE

Aside from designating specific budgets for youth policies and programmes, issue-based mainstreaming into fiscal budgets is an increasingly popular mechanism that can be leveraged to support the implementation of youth development efforts by monitoring the amount of money spent on youth-related issues across broader policy and budget lines. The ability to identify and track youth-specific expenditure helps inform the development of evidence-based youth policies. In turn, greater transparency promotes accountability and allows citizens to understand and influence decisions on how public money is spent.

This concept is not new. Gender mainstreaming, the most widely known example, offers a way to decide on and track budget allocations and spending through a gender lens. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) has developed a handbook that presents the rationale for costing gender equality, outlines the steps of a costing exercise, and reviews case studies reflecting the application of this approach (UN Women, 2015). Similarly, the Poverty-Environment Initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has produced a handbook for mainstreaming environmental issues for poverty reduction and sustainable development (Green Fiscal Policy Network and others, 2016).

Another tool gaining traction and supporting issue mainstreaming is the Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review (CPEIR) (Dendura and others, 2015). The first CPEIR was conducted in Nepal in 2011 with the support of UNDP, and an additional 33 countries have since carried out CPEIRs. A diagnostic tool, CPEIRs are most often led by ministries of finance and planning to assess opportunities and constraints associated with the integration of climate change concerns in national and subnational budget allocation and expenditure processes

and to help accelerate budget accountability and responsiveness for sustainable development. The CPEIR analytical framework comprises three key areas: policy analysis, institutional analysis, and climate public expenditure analysis. The tool provides a useful framework for assessing budget allocations for policies and programmes, particularly for cross-cutting issues such as youth development.

Somewhat more relevant in the present context is child-based mainstreaming, which is increasingly being used to track public spending on children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is monitoring the growing number of countries developing tools to better measure and report on child-related expenditures (Cummins, 2016). UNICEF predicts that because children are prominent across the Sustainable Development Goals, targets and indicators, this trend will continue to grow, particularly in countries where demographic changes are placing greater stress on budgets and consequently providing more of an impetus to monitor child-related public spending. UNICEF is leading efforts to develop a global methodology for child-focused public expenditure measurement that takes into account different country contexts and their respective public financial management capacities.

Adapting the above-mentioned approaches to youth development could provide a tool for measuring and monitoring expenditures on young people and facilitate youth mainstreaming in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Such an assessment would provide a better understanding of the financing and needs gaps in youth development efforts and strong justification for evidence-based budget and resource allocations supporting youth development. Countries for which a World Bank public expenditure review is available could use this mechanism as a starting point (World Bank, 2016). In support of such efforts, the World Bank BOOST initiative collects and compiles data on public expenditure and makes this information publicly available in a user-friendly format, currently for about 40 countries (World Bank, 2017).

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While monitoring spending on children and other development priorities has gained momentum, monitoring of expenditure on young people lags behind. Youth expenditure tracking remains challenging owing to the lack of reliable and timely age-disaggregated data on youth populations. Efforts to increase the availability of age-disaggregated data in the context of the 2030 Agenda provide an opportunity to develop tools for better tracking of spending on youth across budget and policy areas.

THE ROLE OF DATA IN EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT

National, regional and international frameworks can provide impetus for the development and implementation of youth policies, but without timely and accurate data and evidence the effectiveness and relevance of such policies remain uncertain at best and the desired outcomes unattainable at worst. Lacking robust data and evidence, policymakers may have a partial or inaccurate

view of the situation of youth, which can lead to the development of policies that inadvertently divert scarce resources from addressing the needs of youth who are out of sight, including those who are already marginalized and vulnerable.

Quantitative and qualitative data and statistics, scientific knowledge, and practical information are all required for the design, monitoring and evaluation of effective youth policies. Such data deepen the understanding of the current situation of young people and serve to guide the development of appropriate and successful youth strategies and policies grounded in reality.

Reliable data are important because they help inform the design and development of youth policies, and when produced consistently using internationally agreed definitions, methods and standards, data can also be used to track the situation of youth over time, monitor changes, and allow policymakers and youth to assess the impact of policies. The use of standardized methods also allows intracountry and intercountry comparisons and the identification of best

practices to support policy development. These data are key to holding Governments and policymakers accountable in meeting their youth development commitments.

Both the 2030 Agenda (target 17.18) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (para. 126) place great importance on the availability of up-to-date, high-quality disaggregated data for informed and transparent decision-making and for improving policymaking at all levels.

> By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b, target 17.18)

> We will seek to increase and use high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by sex, age, geography, income, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. We will enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, for this purpose and provide international cooperation, including through technical and financial support, to further strengthen the capacity of national statistical authorities and bureaux. We call on relevant institutions to strengthen and standardize data on domestic and international resource mobilization and spending, as well as data on other means of implementation. In this regard, we will welcome proposals on improved statistical indicators for all means of implementation. We also

> request the Statistical Commission, working with the relevant international statistical services and forums, to facilitate enhanced tracking of data on all cross-border financing and other economically relevant financial flows that brings together existing databases and to regularly assess and report on the adequacy of international statistics related to implementing the sustainable development agenda. The availability of timely and reliable data for development could be improved by supporting civil registration and vital statistics systems, which generate information for national plans and investment opportunities. (United Nations, 2015e, para. 126)

For the Goals of the 2030 Agenda to be fully realized, transformative actions and improvements are needed in how data are produced, gathered and used, and in identifying the types of data needed to best serve particular groups—especially the vulnerable and marginalized. This will require investments and capacity-building in a number of areas, including the development of data systems, the improvement of data literacy and accessibility for citizens, and the fostering of public-private partnerships for data collection, sharing and analysis.

GLOBAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This new emphasis on evidence-driven action is manifested in what amounts to a "data revolution" for sustainable development.[31] Leading the charge is the Sustainable

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[31] The High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, appointed by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to advise on the global development agenda after the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, first expressed the need for a "data revolution".

Development Goal global indicator framework.[32] The framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), established by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2015 and composed of 28 Member States representing each region of the world. The framework consists of 232 indicators[33] that are classified into three tiers (see box 5.4) and are to be disaggregated at the national level. The indicators collectively serve as a tool to help countries monitor progress towards the Sustainable

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[32] The global indicator framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), agreed upon in March 2017 at the 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, and adopted by the General Assembly on 6 July 2017 (A/RES/71/313, annex I); the most recent version of the global indicator framework includes refinements agreed by the Statistical Commission at its 49th session in March 2018 (E/CN.3/2018/2, annex II); see United Nations (2018) for the full list of indicators.

[33] Ibid.

BOX 5.3.
CASE STUDY: YOUTH POLICY BUILT ON EVIDENCE

RWANDA

Since the conclusion of its devastating civil war and the genocide of 1994, Rwanda has experienced impressive economic growth, averaging nearly 7.9 per cent a year since 2000, and per capita GDP has more than doubled in real terms. The share of those living below the poverty line ($1.90 a day) has dropped from 77 to 60 per cent. For youth, though job quality remains a vital concern, the unemployment rate is estimated at 3.3 per cent. In spite of the political situation, Rwanda has made tremendous strides in resolving long-standing poverty, safety and employment issues for its youth. The efforts of the Government of Rwanda to improve development outcomes have garnered the support and praise of international agencies, along with occasional statements that its approach represents a new development model for the least developed countries.

Two key aspects of the Rwandan approach have been a commitment to evidence-based policymaking and the use of reliable data to ensure the effective and efficient use of scarce resources in all areas of development, including youth policies and programmes. Towards this end, Rwanda signed a programme of support with the United Nations in 2011, directing nearly $2 million towards strengthening local monitoring and evaluation capacities (UNDP, 2012). The assistance agreement included specific provisions for the strengthening of capacity at all levels of public administration and the preparation of a national monitoring and evaluation policy.

The country's openness and commitment to impact evaluation for pilot programmes is particularly noteworthy. Working with international donors, NGOs, and research institutions, Rwanda has undertaken a large number of experimental and quasi-experimental studies in recent years in order to better understand the direct impact of programmes in literacy and education, health-care provision, agricultural development, and youth economic empowerment. In terms of the country's approach to evaluation in the youth sphere, stand-out examples include evaluations of the Akazi Kanoze life skills and work readiness training programme and the entrepreneurship education programme in schools, both of which were run as randomized controlled trials. Despite employment declines for both the treatment and control groups, a higher percentage of youth in the Akazi Kanoze programme were employed after the programme ended (Alcid, 2014). The entrepreneurship education programme evaluation, currently under way, is examining the effects of a teacher training programme on student academic, economic and labour market outcomes, based on the understanding that entrepreneurship training will only be successful if instructors can deliver the material effectively (Blimpo and Pugatch, n.d.).

Development Goals and thereby facilitate the development of evidence-based policies and more efficient resource allocation.

The global indicator framework provides an important impetus to gather better sex- and age-disaggregated information, which should produce a far more accurate picture of the situation of young women and young men[34] and thereby lead to the development and implementation of sound, evidence-informed policies and programmes.

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[34]   See United Nations (2017e).

BOX 5.4.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL INDICATOR TIERS

To facilitate the implementation of the global indicator framework, the 232 indicators are currently classified into three tiers based on their level of methodological development and the availability of data at the global level:

Tier 1: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.

Tier 2: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries.

Tier 3: No internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.

Source: Reproduced from United Nations (2017a).

Youth-related indicators

Of the 232 indicators in the global framework, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has identified 90 that can be considered related to youth development. The statistical annex to the present *Report* collates available global and regional data for the 90 youth-relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators and for the 34 core indicators for the World Programme of Action for Youth. The enormous potential these indicators represent for youth development is limited by the large gaps in data availability. Moreover, not all of the indicators are disaggregated by sex, age, geographic location or other variables that would provide a clearer picture of the youth situation. Data availability issues for both sets of indicators are evident in the statistical annex and are summarized in table 5.1.

While some of the Sustainable Development Goal and World Programme of Action for Youth indicators appear to be similar, there are distinct differences in their descriptions and in the data they are intended to cover. The two sets of indicators should be considered complementary but do not overlap.

Using Sustainable Development Goal indicators to track Addis Ababa Action Agenda commitments on youth

Although the two instruments complement one another, the structural differences between the 2030 Agenda (formulated around thematic goals and outcomes) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (formulated around financial and non-financial flows and instruments) can make it difficult to align and track indicators, targets and commitments (United Nations, Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2016). As noted in the 2016 report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, the successful implementation of both agendas requires the harnessing of their

internal and external synergies. Synergies can be found through each Sustainable Development Goal drawing on relevant sources and instruments of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda's seven areas, while each area of the Action Agenda can draw from the means of implementation set out under every Goal. A comparison of the Action Agenda commitments with the Sustainable Development Goal indicators clearly demonstrates how the latter can help monitor and assess progress towards commitments in the former, including those pertaining to youth (de la Mothe Karoubi, Espy and Durand-Delacre, 2016).

This synergistic relationship is exemplified in the area of youth employment. Sustainable Development Goal indicator 8.b.1, which measures "total government spending in social protection and employment programmes as a proportion of the national budgets and GDP", has been established to measure progress towards target 8.b, which is to "develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization" by 2020. As this is the same commitment as that set out in paragraph 16 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, progress

can easily be measured through the relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicator.

As is the case with the Sustainable Development Goals, the availability of age-disaggregated data makes it possible to measure and monitor investments in young people in areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that make no specific reference to youth. For example, progress on commitment 117, which focuses on maintaining an enabling environment for the sharing of technology and entrepreneurship, could be measured in part by Sustainable Development Goal indicator 4.4.1, which reflects the "proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill".

Mind the gap: how the lack of age disaggregation hinders potential

While the Sustainable Development Goal global indicator framework provides the opportunity and impetus to gather data on young people in important areas, it does not cover all areas pertaining to youth development. Youth nutrition is one such area, as noted in the recent

TABLE 5.1. DATA AVAILABILITY FOR YOUTH-RELATED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AND WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR YOUTH INDICATORS (GLOBAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS)

INDICATORS	NO DATA AVAILABLE AT GLOBAL OR REGIONAL LEVEL	DATA AVAILABLE AT BOTH GLOBAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS	DATA AVAILABLE AT GLOBAL LEVEL ONLY	DATA AVAILABLE AT REGIONAL LEVEL ONLY	TOTAL
Sustainable Development Goals	48	32	2	8	90
World Programme of Action for Youth	10	20	1	3	34
TOTAL	58	52	3	11	124

report of the Secretary-General on youth development links to sustainable development:

> *Although Member-States have repeatedly emphasized the need to increase youth awareness about nutrition[35], including eating disorders and obesity, it is currently not measured within the global indicator framework, as indicators 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 refer only to children under 5. (United Nations, 2017e, para. 29).*

Similarly, no specific youth or youth-relevant indicators exist for key environmental goals such as Sustainable Development Goal 14 (life below water) or Goal 15 (life on land). Young people are greatly affected by environmental policies and issues and have been at the forefront of efforts to mitigate environmental destruction, preserve the oceans, and sustainably manage natural resources.[36] While Sustainable Development Goal target 15.c on the pursuit of sustainable livelihood opportunities refers to local communities, which include youth, there are no youth-specific indicators to measure the contributions of young people.[37] Such gaps highlight the necessity and value of mainstreaming youth into environmental policies and working towards age disaggregation of all indicators, whether specified or not.

Age disaggregation is encouraged for all Sustainable Development Goal indicators. However, as the 2030 Agenda acknowledges in target 17.18, considerable effort and substantial resources are necessary to ready national statistics and data systems to achieve this objective. Therefore, it is unlikely that wide-ranging

age-disaggregated data will be available in many countries for years to come. Importantly, many other data collections currently have age included as a demographic variable, but they are not disseminated in age-disaggregated form, making it impossible for policymakers and researchers to analyse the data for different age cohorts.

Gaps in Sustainable Development Goal indicators on youth

Even if it were possible to gather age-disaggregated data on all 90 indicators relevant to youth, the story they would tell about young people would still be lacking.

A key requirement for effective monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals is the standardization of the indicators (to the extent possible) so that progress can be measured and compared within and between countries and regions. As noted, the capacity of some countries to collect, store and use data is extremely limited. A delicate balance must be struck; it is important to reach agreement on a set of indicators that propel countries towards realizing the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda while not overwhelming their capacity to collect relevant data and risk nothing being measuring at all.

The present list of 232 indicators, and indeed some of the 169 targets, fall short of other indicators for which many countries are already collecting and disseminating data and which more accurately measure development progress. When the indicators and targets are viewed through a youth lens, the issues with measurement can be magnified.

Such relative deficiencies are evident for some of the indicators relating to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education. For example, the indicator established to measure target 4.1 on free, equitable and quality education is based on a minimum proficiency level which will be measured relative to new common reading and mathematics

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[35]   See the following United Nations General Assembly resolutions on policies and programmes involving youth: A/RES/66/121, para. 14; A/RES/68/130, para. 6; and A/RES/70/127, para. 8.

[36]   See box 6.5 in the present *Report* for an example of youth contributions to environmental sustainability efforts.

[37]   United Nations (2017e).

scales currently under development. Given that even very low thresholds of this kind are not being met by the vast majority of learners in most developing countries, there is a risk that a very low threshold will be set that will have implications for fulfilment of the right to education.

Equality concerns within this context would include a focus on Tomaševski's 4-A framework (see table 2.1). However, there is little sense across the eleven Goal 4 indicators of notions of acceptability or adaptability. A limited exception is found in target 4.a, which calls for commitments to "build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all", with indicator 4.a.1 capturing some elements of availability and accessibility. The draft education indicators formulated by the education community do reflect more of a rights perspective, but these are of a lower (optional) status than are those developed to measure achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; the latter indicators focus strongly on outcomes rather than on structural and procedural indicators that could hold States accountable for honouring their obligation to progressively realize the right to education.

Indicator 4.4.1 measures ICT skills rather than a broader set of "skills ... for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" (target 4.4). Clearly, target 4.4 should be conceptually linked to targets 8.6 and 8.b, but that has not been achieved with this proposed indicator.

Differences in measuring sustainable development skills, knowledge and attitudes

Sustainable Development Goal targets 3.7, 4.7, 5.6, 12.8 and 13.3 embody important messages that should be communicated to youth through education. In looking at what is already known about progress towards the new education indicators, UNESCO (2016a) notes that there is considerable unevenness in terms of what is addressed in existing curricula and how well it is covered. Most countries report that human rights education is integrated into curricula. Three quarters of the countries in Asia and Oceania include comprehensive sexuality education in their secondary curricula. However, a study carried out by UNESCO (2013b) found that in the 32 countries surveyed fewer than half of the schools provided life-skills-based HIV education. Moreover, what was covered on gender, sexuality and sexual behaviour was often inaccurate or incomplete or actually reinforced problematic behaviours. Across Africa generally, there was a tendency to ignore sexual diversity, often alongside increasingly homophobic legislation. Equally, child marriage was often absent from the curriculum, in spite of issues surrounding this practice in a number of countries in the region.

As mentioned in chapter II of the present *Report*, UNESCO recently surveyed 78 countries on their inclusion of a range of topics related to sustainable development in their national curriculum frameworks. While almost all showed evidence of topics relating to rights, democracy and sustainable development, notions of social sustainability, gender sensitivity and gender empowerment were present in less than a quarter of the frameworks.

As with the other education targets listed above, there are concerns about who gets to define the related indicators and what is measured.

The problem with defining and interpreting indicators

Within the Sustainable Development Goal framework, the area of education offers a strong example of how issues with definition can affect the interpretation of indicators. For instance, in the indicators for target 3.7, there is nothing about the content of education, and the indicator pertaining to target 4.7 fails to address the target's acknowledgment of the need to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills "through education for sustainable

development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development" by excluding any reference to sustainable lifestyles, a culture of peace and non-violence, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. The sustainable lifestyles dimension also disappears between target 12.8 and indicator 12.8.1. However, indicator 13.3.1 is explicit about curricular inclusions—at the primary through tertiary levels—relating to "climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning". As UNESCO (2016a) observes, there is a need for consistency or coordination in responses to the challenges of measuring indicators 4.7.1, 12.8.1 and 13.3.1 where they overlap.

UNESCO notes that there are major challenges associated with these indicators (ibid.). There is a scarcity of relevant tools for assessment. The cultural appropriateness of such tools is a particularly serious issue, as is then moving from contextualized tools to comparative analysis.

How defining what is measured matters

Similar concerns exist with regard to Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth. Target 8.6 incorporates the NEET concept. This measure has been criticized for its application to youth labour markets that are significantly different from those in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, where the concept originally emerged. With its inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals, the NEET concept has assumed global relevance. The challenge is to make the concept work better as an accurate measure of what is supposed to be measured so that it leads to sensible policy interventions.

In a review of NEET measurement issues for ILO, Elder (2015) notes that a core group of organizations

dealing with labour market statistics, including Eurostat and ILO, define the NEET rate as the percentage of the population of a given age group and sex not employed and not involved in education or training.

The actual measurement, however, is dependent on how inactivity—in either labour market or educational terms—is defined. Eurostat, for instance, currently uses labour market status at the time of survey and educational activity within the month preceding survey as their measures. Changing either or both of these parameters can be justified on theoretical grounds but has major implications for the NEET rate.

Moreover, what counts as employment is controversial, particularly among those economists who point to the systematic undercounting of household activities, most notably caring work. This issue is relevant across all economies. For low-income countries, there are also specific issues surrounding what the indicator means. The NEET concept was originally applied to those who had completed compulsory education (to age 16) and was often linked to debates about youth being able to rely on welfare payments rather than actively seeking employment, but these realities are rarely mirrored in developing countries. What NEET means conceptually or policy-wise is not well defined.

The acquisition of reliable data is also a major issue. National data are typically derived from standard household surveys, including labour force surveys. However, these are often conducted sporadically, particularly in low-income countries. In many settings, there is simply insufficient statistical capacity to obtain data at the necessary level of detail (ibid.).

Many young people are forced out of education before they want to leave and do not have the option of surviving on welfare payments. Rather, they must seek employment, no matter how precarious or informal. As Elder notes, "without a qualitative employment indicator,

we will never gain proper insight to the labour market challenges faced by the majority of the world's youth population" (ibid., p. 7). Clearly, the achievement of target 8.6 must be linked to a range of other targets, including some of those under Goal 4. However, its closest link is to target 8.b.: "By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization".

CLOSING MEASUREMENT GAPS: USING COMPLEMENTARY INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS TO BETTER UNDER-STAND THE SITUATION OF YOUTH

Although 90 youth-related indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals have been identified, the lack of specific age disaggregation and weaknesses in the measurement of some indicators make it likely that gaps in data collection will persist. Given these limitations, it is important that each country select and adapt its own set of national indicators, responding not only to global monitoring and reporting commitments but to national realities and priorities. From a youth development perspective, this could consist of adapting and using youth-related indicators from the Sustainable Development Goal global indicator framework and using indicators from complementary frameworks at the national, regional and global levels so that the indicators selected address each country's specific youth development priorities.

World Programme of Action for Youth indicators

The indicator framework for the World Programme of Action for Youth—developed in 2012 and consisting of 34 core and 15 supplementary indicators (United Nations, 2012b)—remains an important tool for assessing the situation of youth and can provide information beyond the Sustainable Development Goal indicators. Available

data for the 34 core indicators are set out in the statistical annex to the present *Report*. The World Programme of Action for Youth indicators were formulated with the aim of being adaptable to national contexts, and as such could provide data on important areas of the Sustainable Development Goals that are not disaggregated by age and on issues not addressed in the Goals, bolstering efforts to reach and exceed sustainable development objectives by 2030 and beyond. In the area of nutrition, for example, World Programme of Action indicator 23 monitors the percentage of young people considered overweight and could inform targeted youth health policies in the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

When used together, the 90 youth-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators and the 49 indicators for the World Programme of Action for Youth provide a robust overview of the situation of youth. A comparison of the two sets of indicators shows that while many seem to be similar in wording, meaning or objective, there are distinct differences in the data they are intended to cover, suggesting that the Sustainable Development Goal indicators offer the potential, if data are disaggregated, to provide information to complement the World Programme of Action for Youth indicators for which data have not been collected or disaggregated. Where the two sets of indicators differ, each provides supplemental and supportive data not covered within the other indicator framework.

Other frameworks for monitoring the youth situation

For certain development priorities, adequate data collection and analysis are not included in global frameworks such as the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Sustainable Development Goals. The following is noted in the report of the Secretary-General on youth development links to sustainable development:

Access for youth to land and employment opportunities for youth in agriculture are key points of the World Programme of Action for which no indicators exist. The corresponding Sustainable Development Goal target 2.3, on agricultural productivity, does not specifically mention youth, while indicator 2.3.2, on the average income of small-scale food producers, is not disaggregated by age. (United Nations, 2017e, para. 25)

The report further notes the following:

While technical and vocational education and training are mentioned in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda and the narrative of the World Programme of Action, there is no specific target or indicator related to those activities. This is also the case with other World Programme of Action priorities, such as leisure-time activities and armed conflict. (ibid., para. 26)

The Sustainable Development Goal global indicator framework and World Programme of Action for Youth indicators together provide a comprehensive resource for measuring and tracking youth development, but there are also a number of national, regional and international frameworks that have been set up to monitor youth development and well-being, including the Commonwealth Secretariat's global Youth Development Index, the UNICEF Adolescent Country Tracker, and regional youth indices (described in some detail below).

The report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development mentions reliance on existing data in relation to advancing commitments in the context of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, noting that "international support to countries with particular needs and challenges can be monitored through existing OECD Development Assistance Committee indicators for ODA to child and youth-focused programme areas", while monitoring of "youth-related commitments in other areas of the Addis Agenda can draw on recent international data collection and harmonization efforts, such as under … the H4+ technical partnership[38] for the Secretary-General's Every Woman, Every Child initiative and the new Global Financing Facility for Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health" (Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2016, p. 28).

It is clear that the 2030 Agenda is heavily dependent on existing and developing sources of data/information and means of implementation for its success. In order to optimize the impact of these tools, however, enhanced efforts are needed at all levels to improve the capacities of those collecting and using data—including not only official sources such as national statistical offices and institutions, but also the private sector and civil society, including youth.

HARNESSING THE DATA REVOLUTION

Over the past several years, the importance of gathering youth-specific data has been increasingly recognized, and various tools and frameworks have been developed to improve the collection and measurement of data on youth development. Such data should be used to better inform the development and implementation of evidence-based youth policies and contribute to efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Below is a selection of existing and upcoming tools created to help monitor youth development on the road to achieving the Goals by 2030.

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[38]   WHO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, and the World Bank work together as the H4+ in a joint effort to improve the health of women and children.

The **Commonwealth Secretariat's global Youth Development Index** measures progress in youth development in 183 countries (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016). It includes 18 indicators relating to education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, and civic and political participation (see *http://youthdevelopmentindex. org/*).

The **UNICEF Adolescent Country Tracker**, currently being developed in collaboration with several partners, is an outcome-based framework and a proposed set of indicators closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (see *https://data.unicef.org/ wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Adolescent-Country-Tracker-postcard-30Apr18-2.pdf*).

The **Youth Progress Index** is a joint initiative of the European Youth Forum, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Organization for Security and

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BOX 5.5.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION: WORKSHOP ON EVIDENCE-BASED POLICIES ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND WORKSHOP ON PROMOTING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE YOUTH POLICY TOOLBOX IN ASIA-PACIFIC

Member States working together at the regional level are able to pool resources, knowledge and capacity to enhance sustainable development efforts. Regional collaboration offers the opportunity to streamline processes linked to identifying and addressing national policy priorities and reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Bangkok, Thailand
Government officials, youth development practitioners and youth leaders representing 17 countries in Asia met in Bangkok from 29 May to 1 June 2017 to share their experiences with evidence-based approaches to youth development policies and programming. The discussions were part of an inter-agency effort spearheaded by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and Commonwealth Secretariat, bringing together ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Volunteers, and UN Women. Representatives from a number of regional organizations, including ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, presented regional youth frameworks including the ASEAN Youth Development Index.

More than 80 participants—including government officials, civil society and youth representatives, and international partners—discussed ways to increase the use of youth indicators and global data in national youth policy formulation.

Many participants acknowledged the vital role young people and evidence-based youth policies play in national development and called for investment in youth by Asian leaders. They also agreed to formulate national action plans to strengthen youth policy development and implementation in their respective countries.

Source: United Nations, ESCAP (2017).

Economic Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Social Progress Imperative. The Index has been set up to raise awareness of the factors contributing to the social progress of young people, offer input to stakeholders, and provide grounds for evidence-based policymaking to improve the lives of young people worldwide and ensure that they claim their rightful place in society (see *www.youthprogressindex.org*).

The **ASEAN Youth Development Index**, launched by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' Ministers of Youth in July 2017, targets individuals aged 15-35 years using various indicators closely related to the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2016-2020. Because youth in the ASEAN region are 6.4 times more likely than their adult counterparts to be unemployed (the global average is three times), youth employment and entrepreneurship are key to the Index and the Work Plan. The Index also focuses on education and leadership, health and well-being, participation and engagement, and values and identity. The Index is expected to serve as a key instrument in evidence-based policy formulation in the region and in the planning of new interventions and programmes for youth (see *http://asean.org/?static_post=first-asean-youth-development-index*).

The **European Youth Monitor**, launched by the European Commission in 2015, comprises 41 statistical indicators and is used to measure progress in the eight fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy (culture and creativity, education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, social inclusion, voluntary activities, youth and the world, and participation). The indicators cover young people aged 15-29 years across the 28 member States of the European Union and are based on data collected from 2010 onward, mainly from Eurostat and Eurobarometer.[39]

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[39] Eurostat is the European Union statistical office, and Eurobarometer is a compilation of public studies and surveys; see European Commission (2011) and European Commission (2015).

The **Ibero-American Pact for Youth** was adopted by heads of State in Latin America in 2016, identifying youth development within the Sustainable Development Goal framework as its first priority (UNESCO, 2016c). A commitment was made to "introduce the participation of young people in the 2030 Agenda by setting up a regional system of youth targets and indicators" (Youth Employment Decade, 2016).

Leaving no youth behind: enhancing data on marginalized and vulnerable youth

The lack of robust, disaggregated demographic data makes the development of effective policies aimed at marginalized and vulnerable youth particularly difficult. The United Nations *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017* notes that "children living outside of family care, persons with disabilities and older persons, for example, have largely fallen off the statistical 'map'" (United Nations, 2017c, overview), and the same is true for specific groups of young people, including indigenous youth; young migrants and refugees; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth; and youth with disabilities.

Although efforts are under way to ensure that data are collected on persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, and other statistically neglected groups, the information gathered is often not broken down by age. In countries in which the collection of data on vulnerable and marginalized groups has not been initiated or is in the nascent stages, it is virtually impossible to assess the situation of youth from these groups.

Circumstances such as these interfere with the ability of policymakers to develop evidence-informed policies that take into account the needs and challenges of the most vulnerable and marginalized youth and provide them with resources and opportunities to participate and thrive.

Building capacity for data

A focus on quantitative and qualitative data, including open data, and statistical systems and administrations at the national and subnational level will be especially important in order to strengthen domestic capacity, transparency and accountability in the global partnership. National statistical systems have a central role in generating, disseminating and administering data. They should be supplemented with data and analysis from civil society, academia and the private sector. (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015a, para. 125)

National statistical offices are at the heart of the data revolution, providing key statistics on the population at the country level. However, many national statistical offices, particularly those in least developed and fragile countries, struggle to collect accurate and timely data owing to a lack of infrastructure, including financial, technical and human resources. A massive increase in the capacity of data systems and institutions will be needed to enable national statistical offices to deliver and use data effectively and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is recognized as integral to the 2030 Agenda, as noted in the following:[40]

We will support developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems to ensure access to high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data. (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b, para. 76)

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[40] This need is echoed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015a, paras. 125 and 126).

Enhancing national statistical capacity is a major undertaking. Factors such as the level of development of a country, infrastructure, conflict status, and human and financial resources all impact the quality and quantity of data collected. Too many countries still have poor quality data that effectively exclude key populations such as those with disabilities, indigenous peoples and youth. The time between gathering, releasing and using data can often be so lengthy that the data are rendered obsolete, informing policies that no longer reflect the situation on the ground. Census data, generally collected every ten years or at best

BOX 5.6.
GAPS IN DATA ON INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Data on indigenous youth remain extremely limited. In some countries, including Botswana, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Rwanda, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania, a lack of consensus on the definition of the term "indigenous peoples" means they are not counted in national data sets and official statistics—which renders them invisible in terms of policy decisions and resource allocations. Those data that do exist often reveal wide disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous youth. Such gaps are particularly evident in the area of education; for example, while several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have made notable progress in primary education, statistics for the region as a whole indicate that of the 85 per cent of indigenous children who attend secondary school, only 40 per cent complete their education at that level (Champagne, 2009, p. 135). Similarly, evidence points to indigenous youth struggling in the area of mental health; suicide rates for this demographic are high, especially among young indigenous men. In some countries, life expectancy is up to 13 years lower for indigenous youth than for non-indigenous youth (Naciones Unidas, CEPAL, 2014).

every five years, provide the foundation for national statistical systems. With regular, wide-ranging census data and data from sample surveys and administrative records, national statistical offices can provide the comprehensive, up-to-date statistics and information required by the Sustainable Development Goal framework.

Even when data are disaggregated by sex, age or other criteria, this often occurs only at the national level. However, data can vary widely within municipalities and across the regions of a country. Subnational disaggregation of data is therefore critical to better understanding variations and differences in the challenges and needs of youth at the local and regional levels and is key to informing more accurate policy responses (United Nations Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, 2014).

While efforts are under way to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into national and local planning processes (see chapter IV), action is also needed to ensure that national statistical offices and institutions are ready and able to collect timely, accurate, and usable data for more robust policymaking at all levels. As emphasized in *A World That Counts: Mobilising the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development*,[41] this requires a new way of thinking and the adoption of innovative approaches that include integrating new technology for data collection and dissemination, leveraging public-private partnerships, complementing official statistics with new and varied data sources (integrating data gathered by civil society, for example), and creating an environment for civil society actors, including youth, to better access and use data, in part by providing data that is compatible with geospatial information systems (ibid., p. 9).

Financing data innovation

Inadequate financial investment in strengthening official data systems, infrastructure and administration is one of the clearest impediments to ensuring the provision of more robust, timely, and accurate data. For least developed countries and countries affected by conflict, the investment of scarce resources in building the data infrastructure is naturally much less of a priority than the provision of basic goods and services. It is important to take the long view, however; a strong statistical infrastructure can facilitate the production and use of more timely and accurate data, which in turn can make efforts to meet basic needs more fruitful.

In order to bridge this gap, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data has set up a funding initiative to support low- and low-to-middle-income countries in collaborative data innovations for sustainable development. Through a series of pilot projects, the initiative focuses on data production, dissemination and use in 20 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, encouraging collaboration, experimentation, knowledge acquisition, and capacity development in the field of sustainable development data (Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, 2017).

Such partnerships are consistent with the prevailing wisdom that the production of robust and accurate data is increasingly reliant on leveraging the nexus between official and unofficial data streams. Drawing together stakeholders from government institutions, the private sector, technology, academia, and civil society (including youth) helps to inform a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities surrounding efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

Collaboration and integration can extend in many directions, both within and between countries. Multiple-source data, effectively managed, greatly enrich national data sets and contribute to more informed policymaking.

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[41]   See United Nations, Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (2014).

Furthermore, through cooperation at the regional level, national statistical offices can support and build capacity in neighbouring countries.

Power to the people: democratizing the data revolution through new technology and open access to data

Every day, individuals produce more and more data about themselves, both passively (through monitoring by new technologies such as street cameras and trackers) and actively (through Internet searches, online purchases, and the use of social media and wearable technology). New technology is linked to a massive increase in the amount of data being produced; IBM estimates that 90 per cent of all data in the world have been created over a recent two-year period (2015-2016) (IBM Marketing Cloud and Comsense, 2016).

With the enormous amount of data being created, the speed of data acquisition, and the detail and accuracy of the data collected, it is now relatively easy to obtain up-to-date statistics and information on human needs and challenges for the purpose of informed real-time policymaking (United Nations, Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, 2014, p. 5). However, transforming massive quantities of raw data into actionable data requires careful analysis, classification and quality assessment. Fortunately, there are many data quality frameworks available; national quality assurance frameworks can be found using the United Nations Statistics Division search tool (United Nations, 2015c).

Technology offers a means of ensuring that data are open, accessible, fit for purpose, and usable. For data to be accessible and usable they must be concise, understandable, and developed and presented with users in mind. Efforts to enhance user-friendliness through increased reliance on data visualizations such as info-graphics and interactive websites/databases highlight

the important role technology plays in bringing data to the people.

The nexus between the development of technology and the push towards open data provides opportunities to empower citizens to access and use data and to hold public officials accountable through the tracking of data related to policy outcomes over time. BudgIT in Nigeria offers a powerful example of how technology and data can work together to enhance transparency in financial planning and tracking within the national budget framework (see box 5.9).

Bridging the technological divide

Technology provides an important opportunity to improve openness and transparency in data collection and availability; however, many countries still lack basic technology infrastructure, including broadband Internet, which greatly limits data accessibility for both policymakers and the public. People who are marginalized, vulnerable or experiencing poverty are often at the greatest disadvantage, as they are less likely to have access to technology or to have the data and technology literacy skills they need to meaningfully access and use data. Situations such as these threaten to widen the digital divide and expand inequalities between technology haves and have-nots (United Nations Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, 2014, p. 7).

Efforts to enhance not only statistical infrastructure but also technology infrastructure and access through, for example, increased broadband coverage, reduced technology costs, digital and data literacy skills development, and increased access to mobile devices will help narrow the digital divide and will also ensure that the data revolution leaves no one behind. Increased financial and human resource investment is needed to strengthen data

BOX 5.7.
CASE STUDY: FARMDRIVE

KENYA

Youth in Africa are using technology to contribute to the development of new, smarter agricultural practices.

Less than 10 per cent of Africa's 50 million small-holder farmers have adequate access to credit. Two recent computer science graduates from the University of Nairobi decided to use their skills and innovative ideas to bridge the gap between small-holder farmers and financial institutions, setting up FarmDrive to provide credit scores for small-holder farmers in Kenya so they can access credit to invest in equipment, fertilizer, irrigation and other key inputs and generate sustainable business opportunities.

FarmDrive has developed a technology platform that collects farmers' data and tracks their farming activities via free short message service (SMS) on mobile phones while also acting as a financial record-keeping tool, making farmers financially aware of their businesses as they begin keeping records. It then combines this information with other agricultural data (from input suppliers and produce buyers, for example) as well as satellite, mobile and other data. These data are then transformed into a credit profile and shared with financial institutions for credit assessment and funding. In February 2017, FarmDrive was selected as part of telecommunications firm Safaricom's $1 million Spark venture fund, which provided FarmDrive access to $250,000 in new funding. So far, the company has reached 372,000 farmers and approved 6,000 loans.

Source: Olingo (2017); see *https://farmdrive.co.ke/* for more information on the initiative.

capacity, infrastructure and skills development to close the gaps in data access and use.

Youth-driven data

Although the digital divide persists, with many of the world's most vulnerable at risk of being left behind, there is promising evidence that young people are making significant strides in the use of technology. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimates that in 2017, 71 per cent of youth worldwide were online, in comparison with 48 per cent of the general population (ITU, 2017). However, this high percentage masks significant variations. While 94 per cent of youth in developed countries are using the Internet, the same is true for only 67 per cent in developing countries and 30 per cent in least developed countries. ITU estimates that nearly 9 out of 10 young people not using the Internet reside in Africa or in Asia and the Pacific. The vast differences in Internet access among countries have an enormous impact on the world's ability to harness sufficient data for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Such challenges notwithstanding, it is often young people in developing and least developed countries who are adopting technology and effectively propelling their communities into the technological age. While access to reliable fixed-line broadband remains an issue for many countries, mobile broadband systems (wireless wide area networks accessed through mobile devices) are providing an alternative route to digital access, and this is allowing many developing countries to skip ahead in terms of technology advances. In the space of a decade, Africa has witnessed the fastest growth in mobile subscribers in the world, with the total estimated at 759 million in 2017 (ibid.). Young people have been at the forefront in embracing mobile technology; as shown in box 5.7, some are even using it to devise solutions to development challenges.

Young people have also been leading in the area of data visualization and communication. There are

numerous examples of young people transforming raw data into information that is readable and digestible; their input is critical to translating complex ideas surrounding sustainable development efforts into ideas that can be communicated not just to a youth audience but to civil society more broadly.

The utilization of open source technology, access to open and transparent information and data sources, and own-means data collection have enabled young people to use data in a variety of innovative ways, helping to create a more robust analysis of their situation and bring about positive change (see box 5.8).

BOX 5.8.

YOUTH IN ACTION: MENSTRUAL HYGIENE INNOVATION CHALLENGE

U-REPORT IN PAKISTAN

U-Report is a text-based mobile phone service designed to give young people a chance to voice their opinions on issues they care about in their communities, encourage citizen-led development, and create positive change.

Youth following @UReportGlobal on Twitter receive polls and alerts, and their input is processed using a system that allows for real-time response mapping and data collection. Issues polled relate to health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, youth unemployment, HIV/AIDS, disease outbreaks, and anything else people want to discuss. The results are then shared with the community.

In Pakistan, results from a U-Report poll showed that 49 per cent of young girls had no knowledge of menstruation prior to their first period and that 23 per cent wanted to learn about menstruation in school.

A three-hour live chat allowed space for more than 2,500 young people to ask questions related to menstruation, such as "Can I take a bath during my period?" and "Why should girls not play games during periods?" The polls and feedback from the live chat signified to UNICEF Pakistan Innovation and WASH colleagues that more needed to be done to enable young people to access information on menstruation without shame.

Based on the results, UNICEF WASH and U-Report in Pakistan launched the Menstrual Hygiene Innovation Challenge in June 2017, encouraging youth to take action on menstrual hygiene management in their communities.

As part of the Challenge, young people and U-Reporters were called upon to submit innovative ideas on tools, models, and services that might be used to enable girls and women to manage their menstruation hygienically. UNICEF received 60 proposals; seven winners were selected and awarded grants to help fund their projects. The winning entries included an initiative to provide convenient, cashless and timely access to a range of menstrual hygiene products, packaged around a digital media campaign; a virtual support network for menstrual hygiene management aimed at destigmatizing conversations around menstruation by educating young girls and boys in a fun and interactive way; animation featuring an adolescent girl dealing with diverse menstruation-related issues; and a mobile application to help girls track their period cycles.

Source: U-Report (*http://ureport.in/*).

Young people have also been using data and technology to hold Governments accountable for their development efforts, monitoring progress and using data to explain and relay statistical information in easily digestible formats to a wider audience (see box 5.9).

Safeguarding privacy in a data-rich world

While exponential growth in the quantity, quality and types of data accessed and collected is linked to a corresponding expansion in the amount of potentially useful information available on people and planet, it also comes with a higher risk of privacy breaches and the misuse of sensitive information. Increasingly, concerns about online hacking and the release of personal information are making news headlines, and the issue of how information is used and tracked by private companies (such as social media and mobile service providers) and government entities is leading to greater levels of distrust in both.

With many young people already experiencing a crisis of trust in their Governments, creating robust and continually updated regulations that safeguard the rights of citizens to privacy and protect the security of information will be an essential component in ensuring that the data revolution is based on respect for human rights, equality and dignity for all (United Nations, 2016a).

CONCLUSIONS

Not only do sound youth policies make a vital contribution to advancing many Sustainable Development Goals today, but they also shape the leaders of tomorrow. Sound policies are necessarily tailored to local and national contexts but often share some common elements. They are based on evidence. They seek youth participation in their design, implementation and monitoring. They are integrated and aligned with other government policies. Most importantly, they are backed by a strong commitment, accountability, and adequate funding at the policymaking level.

Current levels of spending on youth-related development are inadequate. Without increased investment in areas such as education, many countries are unlikely to meet Sustainable Development Goal targets by 2030. Recent domestic and international initiatives aimed at boosting youth-focused investments are encouraging, but gaps remain.

Relevant and timely data on how much and how well public financial resources have been utilized to achieve youth-related goals are essential for evidence-based policymaking, addressing gaps, and improving the effectiveness of existing spending. Recent efforts to monitor spending in other cross-cutting areas such as gender, children and climate provide a useful reference for similar approaches to enhance youth mainstreaming in the context of 2030 Agenda implementation.

The 232 Sustainable Development Goal indicators underline the critical role data play in the realization of the 2030 Agenda. They also reveal limitations in the coverage of youth-related goals and targets and the widespread lack of age-disaggregated data in reporting.

Innovative approaches and considerable capacity-building will be needed to address the lack of age-disaggregated data as well as data inequalities and inconsistencies within and between countries. Governments should also take full advantage of the opportunities new technologies provide and should foster partnerships among different stakeholders.

Evidence and transparency are necessary but are not sufficient to achieve real transformation in policies and the use of public resources. Greater participation by citizens—especially youth—and improved accountability on the part of Governments are needed to bring about the desired changes.

BOX 5.9.
CASE STUDY: SIMPLIFYING THE BUDGET THROUGH DATA VISUALIZATION

BudgIT in Nigeria

Founded in 2011 by young entrepreneur Oluseun Onigbinde, BudgIT is a civic organization that works to simplify budget and related public spending data for citizens across all literacy levels using an array of technology tools (including infographics), with the primary objective of raising the standard of transparency and accountability in government.

BudgIT has four areas of focus:

- *Budget access*, which empowers citizens with budget and public finance data, allowing them to demand improved service delivery and take action within their communities.

- *Tracka,* a project tracking tool used to build a community of urban and rural residents in Nigeria that can follow up on nearby public projects and demand efficient service delivery (see below). Offline, citizens participate in community engagement meetings and can give feedback on development projects in their areas using SMS. Tracka is now functional in 20 of 36 states in Nigeria.

- *Extractives*, enlightening citizens on extractive resource issues with a focus on accountability and fiscal inclusion.

- *Institutional support* provided to the media, other civil society organizations, and the Government to advance transparency and civic engagement.

So far, BudgIT has engaged more than 1.9 million residents of Nigeria, both online and offline, leading discussions on government finance and spending and public sector efficiency. BudgIT has rapidly become a trusted source for public finance data in Nigeria, receiving more than 5,000 unique data requests monthly from private, corporate, and developmental entities/individuals. Its growing success has led to offices being set up in Sierra Leone and Ghana, and there are plans to cover more countries in Western Africa.

Tracka

Launched in 2014, Tracka (*http://tracka.ng*) is a social platform of and for active citizens who are interested in tracking budgets and public projects in their communities. Tracka is layered on open data and integrated with existing social media tools, enabling people with common interests to share photos, videos and documents and to post comments on existing projects.

Using grass-roots monitors and partners for public projects located across Nigeria, this approach explores the use of technology to track budgets and monitor progress, with project tracking officers (PTOs) reporting feedback to the appropriate executive and legislative bodies. Social media is used to amplify discussions on projects. Tracka has more than 12,000 user-generated reports and has successfully advocated for the completion of more than 80 projects across 20 local communities.

BudgIT works with willing institutions interested in deepening transparency, citizen engagement and capacity-building. It has supported more than 35 institutions in Nigeria and is working with the Kaduna State Government in implementing the Open Kaduna Project. BudgIT is working with other NGOs and the Federal Government on the Open Government Partnership, a cause it has championed for several years.

Tracka action: primary health-care centre in Magarza

The construction of a primary health-care centre in Magarza Town (Kebbi State, Nigeria) has been a priority for the members of the community. Prior to the inclusion of this initiative as a constituency project, BudgIT PTOs "were informed that residents had to travel across rivers to the neighbouring community of Kalgo to access health-care services. Residents were … unaware of the existence of the project until they were met with and informed about it in August 2016 by the principal PTO. … The PTO encouraged them to monitor the implementation of the project by visiting the project location and speaking with their Representative, Hon. Abdullahi Farouk, to ensure speedy delivery" (BudgIT/Tracka, 2017). This project represents the BudgIT model of engaging citizens with data, initiating action to demand accountability, and ensuring the delivery of service in an inclusive manner.

In September 2016, Tracka held a town hall meeting with residents of Magarza, further encouraging them to write letters to their ward representative and the Ministry of Health to make inquiries on the status of the project as captured in the 2016 budget. The head of the community reached out to Tracka in January 2017 to confirm that the construction of the clinic building had commenced. At the time of writing, the next phase of advocacy is to ensure that the health-care centre is properly stocked with adequate medications.

Source: BudgIT/Tracka (2017).