

CHAPTER

6





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CHAPTER VI

YOUTH IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people. (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b, preamble, para. 9)

THE realization of the 2030 Agenda relies on the active engagement of all segments of society, with a shared focus on addressing the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. The job of transforming the Sustainable Development Goals into meaningful policies and programmes that address the needs and challenges of the world's poorest and most vulnerable falls primarily to governments at the local and national levels. This is reflected in the 2030 Agenda, notably in Sustainable Development Goal target 16.7, which stresses the



importance of “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels” through accountable, effective and transparent institutions, and in target 17.14, which addresses the importance of enhancing “policy coherence for sustainable development”. Together, these targets reflect the indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the importance of embracing a whole-of-government approach to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans through cross-sectoral and multilevel policies and coordination.

Many countries have already started integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into their national and local development strategies and policies, establishing or revitalizing mechanisms to enhance institutional and policy coherence through the creation of national Sustainable Development Goal coordination councils and bodies. Such mechanisms play a vital role in ensuring ownership of and buy-in to the Goals from all sectors and levels of governance and allow various ministries and government structures to work together when advancing and integrating their sustainable development objectives.

Cross-sectoral, whole-of-government approaches to development necessitate increased dialogue, planning and coordination horizontally across government bodies

and ministries and vertically to include multi-level governance bodies and mechanisms, as well as a new way of thinking about resource allocation. Including non-governmental stakeholders such as civil society youth organizations adds another layer of coordination and further enriches the overall development perspective. While approaches featuring enhanced coordination may help leverage and promote the more efficient use of existing financial resources, they require substantial and increased investment in human resources to train and incentivize policymakers and public servants to work outside of their existing silos, and in particular with external stakeholders. At the institutional level, it is necessary to strengthen the ability of sectoral ministries and subnational governments to work in a participatory manner.

This inclusive approach to development is particularly beneficial for young people. The creation and implementation of strong and effective youth policies require a whole-of-government approach, drawing in different line ministries and departments as well as various levels of government and multiple stakeholders to ensure that policy development and implementation are robust and reflective of the whole of youth. Such a process provides an important opportunity to strengthen youth mainstreaming and youth policy implementation at all levels

BOX 6.1.

PRINCIPLES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA

In 2017, the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development’s Working Group on Youth and the 2030 Agenda developed a set of guiding principles for development partners on youth engagement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with UNDP and Restless Development leading the process (see box 6.2). The principles are intended to provide “guidance on how to effectively, proactively and responsibly foster youth participation in [Sustainable Development Goal] implementation across development contexts so that the collective power of young people can contribute to real and lasting change” (Restless Development, United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development and UNDP, 2017, p. 1).



BOX 6.2.

INTER-AGENCY NETWORK ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Guiding Principles for Supporting Young People as Critical Agents of Change in the 2030 Agenda

1. Approach youth participation and empowerment, in all actions, as an essential principle for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
2. Promote youth participation and empowerment in all phases and levels of 2030 Agenda actions, including planning, implementation and in monitoring and accountability for the Goals, including through youth-led initiatives.
3. Ensure that the alignment of development priorities with the SDGs at all levels addresses young people's specific needs and is responsive to their voices, respects, upholds and promotes their rights, especially by strengthening avenues for youth participation and increasing investments in youth-led development. Applying a human rights-based approach and the application of international labour standards and other United Nations normative frameworks relevant to the development of young people is key.
4. Foster and support overall enabling environments for inclusive and meaningful youth participation in all phases of 2030 Agenda processes, including through structured, substantive and effective participation in official policy processes, the promotion of formal and informal spaces where young people can engage with each other and the community at large, volunteering schemes, multi-stakeholder SDG initiatives and partnerships and sustainable funding.
5. Strengthen youth agency by supporting capacity development for young people, youth organisations, networks and movements, and all other stakeholders, including authorities and duty-bearers, to enhance mutual responsiveness, trust and collaboration in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
6. Recognise and value the diversity of young people's experiences by finding ways to systematically, sustainably and responsibly engage young people and their organisations, networks and movements, typically left out of development projects and programmes, in line with the Agenda's principle of "leaving no one behind".
7. Promote gender equality and girls' and young women's empowerment as critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda.
8. Advocate for youth-sensitive national and local SDG indicators, in addition to age disaggregation, as a critical avenue for ensuring development progress, make data sources youth-friendly and foster young people's role in generating data on the Goals.
9. Find creative ways to engage young people throughout the entire SDG programme, project or initiative cycle, from consultation and design to monitoring and evaluation of initiatives, while ensuring that M&E frameworks are sensitive and relevant to them.
10. Ensure that young people's participation in SDG action is meaningful by setting clear and substantive objectives and establishing channels whereby youth participation can have a visible impact on outcomes.

Source: Excerpted from Restless Development, United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development and UNDP (2017), pp. 2-3.



and to promote better integration of youth perspectives across ministries and mandates, contributing to a more holistic approach to youth development.

In a time of fiscal spending constraints and often meagre budget allocations for youth development, mainstreaming allows for a more efficient allocation of resources and funding, fostering policies and programming that are designed and resourced in a more holistic way (see chapter V).

THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY: THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals depends on Governments addressing national priorities by taking ownership of the global agenda and turning the framework into measurable policies and actions at the local level.

Local authorities are often well placed to implement development efforts in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Working more closely with people, including the poorest of the poor, they are positioned to better understand the needs of those to whom they are delivering services and infrastructure. They are often more inclined to take holistic approaches to development, in part because of their smaller size and resource allocations, and can often work across sectors in service delivery. Because there tends to be greater overlap in functions, responsibilities, and practice between bodies and personnel, local authorities often enjoy a strong advantage in policy integration.

Localizing the 2030 Agenda requires taking into account subnational contexts in each country, identifying and adapting specific goals, targets, and indicators, identifying the means of implementation and funding sources,

and establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Another requirement is to ensure the meaningful participation of local citizens, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups, to further strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of the policy and programme response being implemented.

Presently, Member States are in varying stages of developing structures, processes and policies to facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level that allow for the vertical and horizontal implementation of policies, programmes and activities. This process provides an opportunity to analyse how youth policy outcomes can contribute to Sustainable Development Goals and targets and to enhance the integration and mainstreaming of youth policies and actions into local Sustainable Development Goal action plans and strategies.

YOUTH IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

The 2030 Agenda places strong emphasis on the engagement of all sectors of society in its adaptation, implementation, monitoring, follow up and review. The 2030 Agenda states that “children and young women and men are critical agents of change and will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world” (para. 51). To date, youth engagement in Member States’ implementation of the 2030 Agenda has been somewhat limited; however, it is starting to grow.

Young people have been at the forefront of activities and initiatives aimed at furthering the 2030 Agenda and meeting the Goals. Youth are engaging in a myriad of ways including awareness-raising, data collection and use, grass-roots and national initiatives, monitoring and accountability efforts, and shadow reporting on progress.



BOX 6.3.

YOUTH BUILDING CAPACITY: PARTICIPATORY APPROACH FOR SAFE SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS AWARENESS (PASSA)

COSTA RICA

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Habitat for Humanity International are working together to empower young people as agents of change in the twenty-first century. The two organizations are helping youth build resilient communities through the Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter and Settlements Awareness (PASSA), a tool aimed at developing local capacity to address shelter- and settlement-related risks, including mental health issues in fragile contexts. IFRC seeks to capitalize on the power of youth collectives and support the development of STEM skills in areas such as engineering and land mapping as well as skills in information acquisition, joint analysis and decision-making so that young people are equipped to take appropriate action in their communities, contributing to disaster preparedness in their neighbourhoods.

The priorities for moving from pilot to global roll-out are outlined below.

The first priority is to reach at least 10,000 adolescents in 70 cities and 10 countries over the next three years. A training structure has to be in place both within IFRC and with global partners. In the first phase, a small core global team will train regional trainers who will, in turn, train facilitators who will then run PASSA Youth activities with young participants. As part of this first phase, regional trainers will be identified to expand the core team and make the second phase more cost-efficient.

The second set of priorities includes making PASSA Youth sustainable by connecting with synergic initiatives, cultivating a PASSA Youth network to facilitate the sharing of resources and expertise, and devising a knowledge management strategy.

The third priority is to amplify the impact of PASSA by supporting the implementation of approximately 350 community projects that can benefit from seed funding and connections with local supporters, tool developers and potential cofounders.

The proposed approach will generate strategic opportunities for sustained youth action, encouraging young people to establish connections with communities facing similar issues, collect pivotal local data, and analyse aggregated data that can then be shared with the communities.

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

In June 2016, PASSA Youth was piloted in a disaster-prone area in Costa Rica. The training mobilized 20 young people between the ages of 12 and 18 from the community of Chacarita in Puntarenas Province, as well as a group of 15 young leaders from the community and the Costa Rican Red Cross. IFRC, Habitat for Humanity International, and the Costa Rican Red Cross contributed to the organizing team.

The training resulted in young people identifying floods as a critical problem in the area and waste disposal as one of the main factors contributing to flooding. To address this issue, the youth, under the leadership of two artist trainers and mentors, implemented clean-up activities and designed a mural to raise awareness in the community. They also developed an action plan to extend and expand their work.

Source: YouTube (2017).



Increasingly, Member States are recognizing how important multi-stakeholder participation is for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and are engaging civil society in national coordination and planning, reporting, and follow-up and review processes, including the VNRs submitted to the United Nations on progress achieved.

The subsections below highlight various ways young people are engaged in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the areas of advocacy, awareness-raising

and capacity-building; decision-making and policy development; financing and budgeting; data generation and indicator development; monitoring and accountability; and follow-up and review.

Advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building

Through online and offline campaigns, workshops, publications, and events, young people have been active in

BOX 6.4.

CASE STUDY: YOUTH AS TRAINERS – TRAINING DISASTER MEDICINE TRAINERS

Established in 2015, Training Disaster Medicine Trainers (TdmT) is a student- and expert-led programme that equips medical students with the knowledge and skills they need to take action in disaster situations. The programme is hosted by the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, together with the Research Center in Emergency and Disaster Medicine of the Università del Piemonte Orientale, and is supported by experts from the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, European Master Disaster Medicine Alumni, and Médecins sans Frontières.

The aim of this initiative is to train medical undergraduates in disaster medicine. Students learn about ethical challenges during disasters, the health consequences of different forms of disasters, international coordination systems, and international humanitarian law (including implementation challenges). Many medical programmes do not include a disaster medicine component, and this programme is designed to fill that gap.

TdmT students come from all around the world. After completing the programme, they return home and train others in their community using a peer-to-peer methodology. The programme utilizes various innovative teaching methods, including table-top and virtual simulations, role-plays, and real-size disaster simulations. Students also receive a mentor from their region who works in disaster medicine and can provide them with professional and research guidance.

To date, more than 60 students have graduated from TdmT programmes and have delivered over two dozen peer-to-peer training courses in disaster medicine in their communities. Overall, the initiative has directly impacted more than 520 medical students around the world. A detailed analytical evaluation is undertaken after every workshop to ensure that specific audiences are able to adapt sessions to the individual needs of affected communities. Such flexibility enables course graduates to tailor their activities to the specific challenges faced by their communities, which feeds into the individual yet collective approach to disaster risk reduction both globally and locally.

Source: Sinha and others (n.d.), available from <https://ifmsa.org/2016/09/18/expert-training-disaster-medicine-medical-students/>.



drawing attention to the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, and key youth development issues (see boxes 6.3-6.5). Through peer-to-peer education, training and capacity-building, youth-led organizations are also at the forefront in the planning and delivery of workshops and campaigns to provide a youth perspective on national sustainable development discussions and to ensure that youth are meaningfully engaged. While youth-led organizations are often well placed to provide training and support to policymakers and government officials in their efforts to integrate youth policies and participation into public planning processes, such organizations often suffer from a lack of resources, funding and recognition. Awareness of and capacity for development activities could be greatly enhanced

through increased financial and regulatory support for youth-led structures.

Decision-making and policy development

Coherence and coordination across government agencies, sectors and policies are needed to integrate the 2030 Agenda into development plans and to adapt the commitments, goals and targets of global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to local and national contexts. Increasingly, Governments are recognizing the importance of establishing and supporting mechanisms and structures for the meaningful engagement and participation of civil society stakeholders, including youth, in sustainable development

BOX 6.5.

CASE STUDY: THEGOALS.ORG – RAISING AWARENESS ONLINE, DRIVING ACTION OFFLINE

Focusing on turning the first connected generation into the first sustainable generation, TheGoals.org uses an innovative and transformative crowd-learning approach that goes beyond traditional e-learning. It draws from digital and analog learning tools and combines them for a fun and engaging learning experience that connects young people worldwide, encouraging them to explore global challenges and take local action.

Launched in 2012 with the creation of a digital platform accessible from the simplest mobile device, The Goals.org has since grown into a learning platform for sustainable development based on the 2030 Agenda. It offers courses on each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, allowing youth around the world explore, create, share knowledge, and provide feedback to each other as part of the learning process.

The platform generates unique mission stories based on distinctive youth voices. It was used by the Major Group for Children and Youth as an advocacy tool for the Ocean Conference held by the United Nations in June 2017. Participating in a course on Sustainable Development Goal 14, users immersed themselves in sustainability issues, carried out activities in their local communities, and reflected on issues concerning themselves, their lifestyles, and the oceans. The 1,500 users together generated approximately 3,000 mission stories that showcased their own activities, ranging from plastic collection to awareness-raising campaigns. Most importantly, the stories had a significant impact on the users' ocean literacy, helping to bridge the gap between highly knowledgeable ocean scientists and activists and the general public in terms of understanding the importance of the world's oceans.



efforts. Such participation can take many forms, ranging from consultation to collaboration and partnership.

Youth engagement in decision-making processes often takes the form of large-scale online consultations at the national level that are meant to provide a sense of the issues of concern to youth. Such consultations produce a useful snapshot of the situation of many young people that can be used to inform and elaborate policies and strategies. However, broad, generic consultations run the risk of excluding young people who are hard to reach, vulnerable or marginalized; indigenous and rural youth, for example, may not have access to online participation mechanisms. Moreover, while such participation and feedback can

provide a good overview of key issues concerning youth, it does not allow for a deeper discussion and understanding of why these issues are impacting young people.

From consultation to collaboration

Meaningful and sustained youth engagement requires that young people be involved in all aspects of policy-making and decision-making through mechanisms such as youth advisory boards for government entities, youth parliaments, and regular meetings and dialogue with members of parliament and local councils.

One way to facilitate such coherence is through the establishment of multi-stakeholder councils and similar bodies that provide advice to Governments on national development issues. Several countries have established national councils for sustainable development whose aim is to better coordinate sustainable development efforts and policies and facilitate their integration into existing plans and strategies. While examples of youth-led organization and youth representative involvement in Sustainable Development Goal coordination mechanisms remain sparse, the growing recognition of the value and importance of young people's engagement in policy development more broadly points to improved prospects for the meaningful and sustainable engagement of youth in Sustainable Development Goal coordination bodies.

A few countries have actively sought youth involvement in policy discussions. Canada, for example, has the Prime Minister's Youth Council, a group of young people aged 16 to 24 years "who provide non-partisan advice to the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada on issues of importance", including employment, access to education, strengthening communities, climate change, and clean growth (Canada, 2017, background). In Burkina Faso, the Government has appointed a youth leader to take on what is essentially an "ombudsman for youth" role during the Sustainable Development Goal advancement and localization process, and this individual reports

BOX 6.6.

CONSULTATIONS FOR ADAPTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

During the process of defining the 2030 Agenda, Turkmenistan held country consultations with support from the United Nations to discuss the lessons learned from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, to inform the public of the global discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals, and to seek input to the 2030 Agenda. These consultations engaged diverse stakeholders such as parliamentarians, academics, youth and schoolchildren (the Youth Union), women (the Women's Union), private sector actors (the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs), and NGOs working with persons with disabilities. The consultations resulted in a very high level of government awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals and contributed to the introduction of a whole-of-government approach to the Goals.

Source: United Nations Development Group (2016).



directly to the Prime Minister (Restless Development and the Commonwealth, 2016). The prominence of this role helps to elevate youth issues and to draw awareness to the importance of youth engagement at all levels.

National youth councils constitute a key point of reference for many Governments seeking to engage

young people in the development of youth policies. Such councils do not exist in every country, but where they do, they typically provide an independent, democratically structured platform for a country's youth-led organizations to convene and work together on common priorities and messages about youth development at the national

BOX 6.7.

CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING YOUNG WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION – THE BUTTERFLY PROJECT

INDIA–YP FOUNDATION

Established as a youth-led and youth-serving group in 2002, the YP Foundation endeavours to strengthen young people's engagement in policymaking and community advocacy at the local, national and regional levels through a number of programmes and projects.

Through its Butterfly Project, the YP Foundation seeks to empower marginalized and vulnerable young women with the confidence and skills to tell their own stories and demand change. Initiated in 2006, the Project provides a forum in which these young women can address issues of identity, human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and discrimination through digital media. Dalit, Muslim, and other disenfranchised young women and girls use the strength of their own digital stories to become powerful community advocates for equity, gender equality, and freedom from violence in their interactions with decision makers including families, community leaders and key stakeholders.

Currently, the Project works with more than 200 girls and young women living in three districts of Rajasthan and Delhi where gender inequality and rates of child and early marriage are high, female educational attainment is low, and women's health indicators are poor. Since its inception, the programme has successfully brought together young women and girls from Dalit and Muslim backgrounds in poor urban and rural areas. Empowered by the Project, girls and young women are advocating for their sexual and reproductive rights and have leveraged their collective influence to resist and subvert oppressive gender norms in their communities. Young Women Leaders from the project such as Shabana, Fancy and Bhanwari have rebelled against child and early marriage conventions and have negotiated with their families to continue their education and follow their career aspirations. Shabana, a Muslim girl who lives in a resettlement colony in Delhi, has convinced her family to allow her to continue her education and has made her parents understand why attending Project sessions is important. She has also motivated other girls from her community to join the Project. Bhanwari and Fancy, who are Dalit girls from a rural district in Rajasthan, conducted a short survey to assess the distribution of the workload between men and women in their village. They used their findings—which underline the enormous load placed on women's shoulders—to rally their neighbours and other families to promote gender equality and recognition of women's unpaid labour.

Source: YP Foundation (<http://www.theypfoundation.org/programmes/>).



level. Many Governments turn to the youth councils when developing and implementing youth policies and strategies. National youth councils can provide an important resource for policymakers in elaborating policies and efforts to meet youth-related goals and targets in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Financing and budgeting

As noted throughout the *Report*, youth development efforts often suffer from a lack of adequate financing. The adaptation and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda within the framework of national and local plans of action provide an opportunity to increase investment in youth development policies and programming. Young people play an important role in advocating for youth mainstreaming in financial planning and budgets and can work to ensure that a youth lens is used for decisions on sources and instruments of finance. Promoting better policy and programming coordination through a whole-of-government approach that includes ministries of planning and finance plays a key role in ensuring that youth issues, policies and programmes are considered in overall development decisions and are allocated adequate financial resources.

A number of tools exist to help development actors identify the best sources of financing for their sustainable development efforts. Development finance assessments (DFAs) accessible through the United Nations system, for example, provide decision makers with strategic support including a panoramic dashboard-like view of all available financing options and the information needed to use them (Stratta, 2015). DFAs assess financing policies and institutional arrangements with a view to strengthening coherence and connectedness between different financial flows and national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations Development Group, 2017), and they offer the opportunity to integrate

BOX 6.8. ARAB YOUTH CLIMATE MOVEMENT

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTHERN AFRICA

The Arab Youth Climate Movement is an independent entity working “to create a generation-wide movement across the Middle East and Northern Africa to solve the climate crisis, and to assess and support the establishment of legally binding agreements to deal with climate change issues” within the framework of international negotiations. The Movement was launched in September 2012 by youth from more than a dozen Arab countries in the lead-up to the 18th annual session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC/COP18) in Doha.

The Arab Youth Climate Movement believes that climate change constitutes a serious threat to humanity and that “young people—as the inheritors of this planet—are the key stakeholder[s] in humanity’s response to the climate crisis”. In addressing the climate crisis, there is “an opportunity to create a more sustainable, prosperous, meaningful, just, and fair world”.

By fostering “formal and informal climate and environmental education, building the capacity of local populations to understand the effects of climate change on their communities and to take action”, the Movement endeavours to empower “young people in their local communities to create change on a national, regional and international scale” while engaging youth in Conference of the Parties “and international climate policy sessions, as well as in grassroots solutions in their respective countries”.

Source: Arab Youth Climate Movement (<http://aycm.org/about-us/>).

various perspectives into financial planning and decision-making. While integrating a youth lens and the monitoring of youth spending into financial planning is not yet the norm, DFAs could provide countries with a way to facilitate issue-based mainstreaming and, in particular, the integration of youth perspectives into budgets in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Participatory budgeting, which engages citizens in decision-making on government financial allocations,



is another way to involve youth directly in financial planning processes, particularly at the local level. An approach that emerged in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989, participatory budgeting helps address inequality by expanding and strengthening the involvement of citizens in the allocation of public resources (LaJeunesse and Derr, 2016). It has been described as an “attractive and politically malleable device, ... [simplified and reduced] to a set of procedures for the democratization of demand-making” and increased transparency (Ganuza and Baiocchi, 2012, abstract). Over a period of almost 30 years, participatory budgeting has spread to more than 1,500 cities worldwide (Participatory Budgeting Project, n.d.). While the approach has historically not found much traction among youth (LaJeunesse and Derr, 2016), recent developments indicate that this is changing (see box 6.9).

Data generation and indicator development

As noted previously, regularly updated, high-quality disaggregated data are needed to effectively monitor and review progress towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, many countries suffer from a lack of robust data on youth, largely because a great many national data and statistical systems are weak and under-resourced. This interferes with efforts to monitor the situation of youth and ultimately affects the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Where gaps exist, complementary and supplementary systems for data collection and analysis must be set up to help provide a more robust and comprehensive picture of development efforts.

Young people can play a key role in filling in these gaps through the generation and usage of youth-driven data, which in turn can inform policy decisions and

BOX 6.9.

YOUTH LEAD THE CHANGE: YOUTH PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN SCHOOLS

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In 2014, the City of Boston launched Youth Lead the Change, the first youth participatory budgeting programme in the United States. Through this initiative, youth change agents volunteer to develop ideas for capital projects that will bring long-term improvements to the city and make it a better place for young people to live. Provided with some support and guidance, the change agents are responsible for not only conceptualizing projects but also creating budgets and proposals, which they vote on annually. In programme surveys, young people have identified heightened civic awareness, skill-building, increased motivation to act, and feelings of empowerment as important benefits of participation (Grillos, 2014, in LaJeunesse and Derr, 2016).

Similarly, the Phoenix Union High School District in Arizona initiated a participatory budgeting process in 2016 that saw five schools undertake six months of training, outreach efforts, idea collection events, and meetings with district staff to transform ideas about ways to improve their schools into project proposals (Brennan, 2017). These student-led efforts culminated in an entire week of voting in which 3,854 students in the five public high schools (an average turnout rate of over 80 per cent) directly decided how to spend \$26,000 in school district funds. The district that initiated the process has established partnerships across Phoenix that have already inspired other school districts and cities to reimagine ways to work together (ibid.).



development efforts. Young people generating and using data are not only helping policymakers better understand the full situation of youth, but are coming up with initiatives and activities that help meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

Young people, who have direct access to youth communities, are often well placed to collect and use quantitative and qualitative data on youth at the local level. Such data and information can supplement official data and statistics and contribute to the

BOX 6.10.

ACT!2030: YOUTH-LED, DATA-DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND HIV RESPONSE

ACT!2030 is a global movement of youth* demanding accountability around the Sustainable Development Goals and other frameworks relevant to young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights including access to HIV and other sexual and reproductive health services. Launched in 2013, ACT!2030 is a collaboration between the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and The PACT (a coalition of more than 80 youth organizations working on HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights at the community, national and international levels). ACT!2030 is in its fourth and final phase and focuses on empowering young people to prioritize policy barriers that jeopardize their access to sexual and reproductive health support (such as age of consent for HIV testing and treatment, access to youth-friendly health care, or the lack of comprehensive sexuality education), gather their own data and evidence on the impact that these barriers have on young people, and translate the findings into national advocacy strategies to build accountability mechanisms that respond to these challenges.

Since the launch of ACT!2030, more than 600 young people have been trained in data collection and research using a customized curriculum and have been carrying out their own research projects on the biggest barriers to young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights. In Algeria, young researchers gathered evidence on stigma and discrimination faced by targeted youth populations and engaged in advocacy with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health and UNAIDS, to influence the national strategic plan on HIV and AIDS. In Zimbabwe, young people are undertaking direct assessments of clinics in 20 districts according to youth-friendly-service criteria. They have presented their data to the Ministry of Health and Child Care and continue to advocate for better services for young people. In addition, the evidence produced by ACT!2030 Zimbabwe informed the country's 2017 Sustainable Development Goal VNR, and ACT!2030 advocates were invited to participate in the country's official delegation during the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Funding youth-led organizations directly has also supported organizational development, including new websites, better infrastructure, and capacity-building in grant management and budget tracking. This ensures that ACT!2030 invests in youth leadership and empowers young people to deliver sustainable programmes to end AIDS and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Source: ACT!2030 (<http://www.act2030.org/>).

* The movement presently includes youth from Algeria, Bulgaria, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



BOX 6.11.

CODEPHIL: DEMOCRATIZING ACCESS TO DIGITAL LITERACY

THE PHILIPPINES

CodePhil seeks to strengthen the digital literacy skills of youth in rural Philippines and other developing areas. Founded in 2016 and targeting low-income high school students, this initiative provides instruction in typing, computing and programming in order to prepare young people for decent jobs, promote community resilience, and break the cycle of poverty in the community. CodePhil piloted the initiative in Northern Samar, the fifth poorest province in the Philippines, teaching computer programming logic (Scratch and Python), website development (HyperText Markup Language, Cascading Style Sheets, and Javascript), and three-dimensional architecture modelling (computer-aided design) to more than 150 high school students and also training teachers in these subjects. Significantly, 83 per cent of students said that they were more comfortable using a computer after a three-week workshop organized by CodePhil.

CodePhil developed free software called TypePhil (available online and offline) to improve basic keyboarding skills among youth in areas lacking Internet connectivity. TypePhil teaches students how to type properly in English, Tagalog, and various local Filipino dialects, enhancing digital literacy and preserving local traditions. In the summer of 2017, the TypePhil software was piloted at 13 elementary and high schools spanning five municipalities in Northern Samar. In partnership with the Department of Information and Communications Technology of the Philippines, CodePhil is currently distributing the software to 1,628 community e-centres (Tech4ED centres) across the country.

Encouraging youth entrepreneurship as a way to meet community-identified needs, CodePhil connects rural youth to mentors in the information technology (IT) industry through the annual Innovation Summit held in Northern Samar. The inaugural Innovation Summit, an ideathon for low-income high school and college students in the area, took place on 26 and 27 August 2017 at the University of Eastern Philippines in Catarman. There were 160 participants from five different high schools and three universities in Northern Samar and Mindanao, and numerous high-profile keynote speakers from industry, government, and academia were present. The Innovation Summit built on the momentum of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals by challenging young people in Northern Samar to identify challenges, contextualize them within local settings, and develop sustainable solutions with the support of mentors in an interactive and exploratory setting. By the conclusion of the Summit, the participants had developed 20 different technological solutions to local issues.

Source: CodePhil (<https://www.codephil.org>).

monitoring of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Harnessing the technological advantage many young people have is key to strengthening data transparency and accessibility in support of development efforts. As shown by the BudgIT example in box 5.9, youth are well placed to transform large and often unreadable data sets into easy-to-read visualizations and infographics, which brings critical information on development indicators and progress towards achievement of the Goals not only to other young people but also to policymakers and the general public. For such efforts to be successful, it is important that relevant data and information be transparent and accessible. Open access to information is at the heart of ensuring transparency in meeting the Goals, and in empowering young people as active stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable development efforts.

Monitoring and accountability

Monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda holds government officials and policymakers at all levels accountable for their actions and decisions and contributes to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Monitoring mechanisms can take many forms, ranging from official institutions such as ombudsmen and independent auditing bodies to community-led initiatives set up to monitor and track policy implementation, spending and progress.

Armed with the right tools, information, and methodologies, young people can play a critical role in the areas of monitoring and advocacy. They can review existing strategies and plans and identify gaps, map Sustainable Development Goal interconnections, make preliminary recommendations to the Government on how to mainstream youth in



planning and policies, establish nationally relevant targets, and formulate plans and strategies using predictive and systems analysis and other critical-thinking skills.

Many youth organizations have already begun the process of reviewing and monitoring national plans for alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. Restless Development, a youth-led development agency, partnered with the Commonwealth Secretariat⁴² in 2016 to prepare *Youth-Led Accountability for the SDGs: A Guide to National Action*. Recognizing that “there is a lot of rhetoric around harnessing citizens’ role in formal review and accountability processes, but few practical suggestions” (Restless Development and the Commonwealth, 2016, p. 8), the *Guide* stresses that “it is vital to expand the enabling environment for young people’s engagement in decision-making, and to mainstream youth-led engagement at national and regional levels” (ibid., p. 4).

Follow-up and review

Our Governments have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing the Goals and targets over the coming 15 years. To support accountability to our citizens, we will provide for systematic follow-up and review at the various levels, as set out in ... [the 2030] Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council will have the central role in overseeing follow-up and review at the global level. (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b, para. 47)

⁴² The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign States that are home to 2.2 billion citizens.

BOX 6.12. YOUTH IN ACTION: YOUTH-LED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE SDGs: A GUIDE TO NATIONAL ACTION

RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT

Youth-Led Accountability for the SDGs: A Guide to National Action offers a series of concrete recommendations on how young people’s involvement in review and accountability processes surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals can be implemented and operationalized in Commonwealth countries at the national and subnational levels. The *Guide* provides practical ways for leveraging youth opportunities to participate in government processes for reviewing existing national plans and adapting the Sustainable Development Goals to national contexts. The recommendations (excerpted from the *Guide*) are as follows:

Youth participation in review and accountability mechanisms:

- A. Assess and strengthen spaces for institutionalising youth participation
- B. Develop co-management structures for national and local accountability platforms
- C. Implement regular dialogues and action planning with young constituents
- D. Create official roles for youth at the national and regional levels

Data for monitoring and review:

- E. Empower a generation of SDG infomediaries
- F. Develop “shadow” indicators grounded in lived experiences

Transparency and access to information:

- G. Ensure open access to information for young people on the SDGs and state-led reviews

Emerging accountability approaches and practices:

- H. Develop communities of practice on data-driven social accountability
- I. Put ground level panels and platforms at the forefront of accountability
- J. Embed review in everyday life and popular culture

Source: Restless Development and the Commonwealth (2016), p. 10.



High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, a mechanism established at the 2012 Rio+20 Conference,⁴³ is the main forum for the monitoring and review of progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Forum meets annually at the ministerial level and once every four years at the heads of State level, providing Member States the space to share experiences, successes, challenges and lessons learned in their development efforts through VNRs. These are “regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven” (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b, para. 79), and are aimed at strengthening policies and institutions and

mobilizing multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Crucially, as set out in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, VNRs are to be State-led and involve multiple stakeholders.

With the inclusion of youth perspectives in these reviews, the VNR process presents a leverage point for youth engagement at the national level in the follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda implementation. In 2017, the second year of reporting, some countries’ reports mentioned or referenced youth, while others detailed how youth had been involved as consultants or active participants in the drafting and preparation of the reports.⁴⁴ As part of its mandate, the Major Group for Children and Youth submits a sector paper as a formal input to the High-level Political Forum. This document includes the views of the youth

⁴³ United Nations (n.d.(c)); see also United Nations, General Assembly (2012).

⁴⁴ United Nations (n.d.(a)).





constituency on all aspects of the formal deliberations of the Forum and is welcomed in the ministerial resolution, translated into the six official United Nations languages, and recorded as a formal input document to the Forum.⁴⁵

A number of countries have included youth delegates or youth representatives as part of their delegations to the Forum, showcasing their commitment to youth engagement in the monitoring and review of their sustainable development efforts (see box 6.14).

Shadow reports

Informal “shadow” reporting is being carried out by civil society organizations to supplement the information provided via official VNRs as part of the formal reporting process. As noted by Global Policy Watch, “the most comprehensive report has been compiled by a civil society alliance of around 20 environmental, development and human rights organizations and trade unions under the title *Spotlight on Sustainable Development*” (Martens, 2016); published in 2016, the first *Report by the Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* included contributions from more than 50 countries (Adams and others, 2016).⁴⁶ In 2016, the Spotlight on Sustainable Development alliance compiled 35 country spotlight reports from civil society organizations around the world (Spotlight on Sustainable Development, 2016) and also produced a synopsis of the national reports (Bissio, 2016). Similarly, in 2017 the Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability produced a youth-led shadow report for *Japan’s Voluntary National Review*, elements of which

⁴⁵ As per General Assembly resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2013 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290).

⁴⁶ The *Spotlight* reports are published annually; in addition to the first publication (*Spotlight on Sustainable Development 2016: Report by the Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*), the series now includes *Spotlight on Sustainable Development 2017: Reclaiming Policies for the Public* and *Spotlight on Sustainable Development 2018: Exploring New Policy Pathways*.

BOX 6.13.

BIG IDEA

AND ACT!2015 – TRACKING PROGRESS TOWARDS 2030

The global ACT!2015 meeting Tracking Progress Towards 2030, held in Lusaka, Zambia, 7-11 December 2015, brought together youth representatives of national alliances to build capacity on Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) and indicator processes to ensure indicators on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and HIV are adopted in country and global reporting mechanisms.

Recognising that young people in the AIDS response have strong experience in advocacy, the training focused on building technical knowledge on monitoring and evaluation processes. Young people also mapped accountability “ecosystems” to ensure that no one is left behind in the AIDS response in the monitoring of the SDGs at [the] country level. As a result, participants will host national trainings with key youth partners, with support from UNAIDS, to build an effective knowledge-based advocacy strategy that influences country-level indicator processes.

Source: Reproduced from Tobón Garcia (2015).

were included in the official Japanese civil society shadow report. Shadow (or spotlight) reporting is an increasingly popular mechanism for youth interested in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and can serve as an important tool for advocacy.

CONCLUSIONS

Adapting the Sustainable Development Goal framework to national and local conditions and priorities is essential both for stakeholder buy-in and for stimulating targeted development efforts at the country and community levels. This chapter highlights the enormous—and often untapped—potential of youth to contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals through advocacy and awareness-raising, capacity-building, policy development, data production, and monitoring progress to enhance accountability. Governments are starting to



recognize the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in the realization of the 2030 Agenda and are increasingly aware of the need to support youth initiatives

and activities at both the grass-roots and national levels to accelerate the process of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

BOX 6.14.

UNITED NATIONS YOUTH DELEGATE PROGRAMME

The United Nations Youth Delegate Programme, coordinated at the global level by the Focal Point on Youth, supports the participation of young people as part of their respective Member State delegations to intergovernmental deliberations and negotiations at the United Nations, most notably those of the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development.

Increasing numbers of Member States are including youth delegates as part of their delegations to the High-level Political Forum, helping to strengthen the youth voice at the event and, through the VNR process, highlighting the role youth play in implementing and reporting on the 2030 Agenda. The Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden, which were among the nine countries that had at least one youth delegate as part of their delegations in 2017, allowed their youth delegates to speak on behalf of their country during their national review to detail the engagement of youth in the process.

Youth delegates have also been exploring other ways of bringing their views and work related to the 2030 Agenda to the attention of their Governments. The 2017-2018 youth delegates from Ireland prepared a report entitled *Generation for Change: Spotlight Report on Young People, the Sustainable Development Goals and Ireland, 2018* (Dockery and Flanagan, 2018) to provide a youth perspective on key issues for government departments leading Sustainable Development Goal work in advance of the country's 2018 VNR.

SLOVENIA

In 2017, the preparation of the *Slovenia Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda* was carried out under the auspices of the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. As part of this process, the Office of the National Youth Council of Slovenia and the United Nations youth delegate from Slovenia were

invited to prepare a special report which provided direct input to the VNR. The report constituted a youth-based reflection on the Government's work in the area of sustainable development. It highlighted persistent challenges for young people in Slovenia, such as structural unemployment and the lack of skills for the future of work, as well as positive achievements, including youth participation in decision-making, education and gender equality efforts. The report was presented at the 2017 High-level Political Forum in New York, where the United Nations youth delegate of Slovenia was given a chance to address the plenary session on behalf of the youth sector in Slovenia. (Slovenia, Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, n.d.).

NETHERLANDS

The Dutch National Youth Council is responsible for the selection of United Nations youth delegates. The youth delegates often travel throughout the country gathering the ideas of young people aged 12-25 years on topics of relevance to the United Nations and work to translate complicated policy language into actionable ideas. In 2016, the Youth Council launched its own national Sustainable Development Goal project with three objectives: informing youth about the issues underlying the Sustainable Development Goals; inspiring young people to take an active role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Goals; and inviting policymakers to facilitate meaningful youth participation throughout the Sustainable Development Goal process. Ahead of the 2017 High-level Political Forum, and based on consultations with its youth constituency, the Dutch National Youth Council prepared a paper on how youth thought the country was performing in its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The paper was included in the official process of drafting the country's 2017 VNR. (Dutch National Youth Council, 2016; Lebada, 2017)