

#YOUTH2030

6th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum CONCEPT NOTE

Regional Session on the Caribbean

31 January 2017

Trusteeship Council Chamber

9:30 – 11:00 am

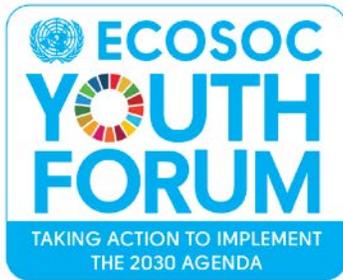
United Nations Headquarters, New York

1. Background & Context

Although no blueprint exists for “ending poverty and promoting prosperity,” it is clear that inclusiveness and sustainability must be the fundamental elements of any conceptual framework used to achieve the goal of poverty eradication. Poverty is not just an economic condition, nor do international indicators, such as the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) or Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) represent it in totality. Rather, it involves human and social elements set within the context of the particular country, that contribute to the lack of capability and the absence of opportunity to change one’s conditions.

Poverty is a complex, dynamic, multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional human phenomenon that is difficult to define, measure and eradicate, it can be seen as a condition where people lack essential assets and opportunity to improve their living conditions and to achieve a quality of life they consider acceptable.

Generally, there are two main definitional approaches which find application in the measurement and analyses of poverty and in policies and programmes for poverty eradication. The first and prevalent is the income or monetary approach which addresses the issue of resources available to the person or household to effect a standard of living. When the monetary or income situation of the person or household is set against an arbitrarily determined standard of living, one gets an absolute poverty line. In the Caribbean, spin offs of such an approach have manifested itself where poverty levels are rising and living standards falling in several countries, linked to low economic growth and labour market deficiencies. The second approach is the capabilities approach i.e. the ability to be and do a variety of things. This approach is linked to Amartya Sen’s work, especially on the interpretation of development as “a process of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy the removal of major sources of un-freedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states” (Sen 1999). Poverty, then, is deprivation of basic capabilities. The capabilities approach not only changes the measurement focus in poverty assessments, it alters quite significantly policy approaches to poverty eradication by directing attention to the need to strengthen the capabilities of individuals and households to take action for improvement



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of their own welfare. It directs attention to political and social constraints and to economic constraints external to the individual or household, and it emphasises the importance of participatory democracy. A number of these issues include deterioration in the quality of health and education services, an increase in crime and violence, retrenchment of workers, and a drop in the real value of social safety nets and gender inequality and lack of empowerment of women and girls.

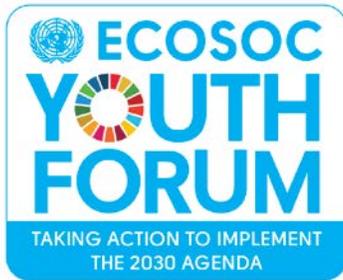
Poverty is a socio-economic development challenge which economies of developing countries in the Caribbean has to take serious consideration in their eradication effort to stem this systematic and intergenerational challenge. The inclusion of youth in such socio-economic development is critical in order to advance towards social and economic empowerment of a prosperous Caribbean within and contributing towards the global sustainable development goals (SDG) agenda.

The youth population (15-24 years) in the region tops 104 million, or 20 percent of the total population. A large proportion of the populations in some of these nations are increasingly being excluded from the social, political and economic progress and processes taking place due to these underwritten inequities. This exclusion has led to increases in social and income inequality, and the festering of tensions manifested at the individual, family, community and societal level. Furthermore, the invisibility and exclusion of youth are factors that are associated with the high levels of violence that exist in several countries of the region. Youth unemployment rates in the region are between two and three times higher than adult unemployment rates, a trend that has not changed over the past few decades. Moreover, youth employment is characterized by being unstable and in the informal market. Over one in five youth in the region, 29.7 million youth, are not involved in studies or in the labour market (referred to as 'unattached youth') and youth in this group are often highly stigmatized and linked to vagrancy, violence, and drug consumption.

This reality occurs in a context of marked inequalities – between countries and especially within countries. These inequalities in opportunities and outcomes limit the ability of millions of youth in the region to fulfil their potential and contribute fully to their societies. Socio-economic situation, gender identity, racial/ethnic background, place of residence, disability, sexual orientation, and HIV status are some of the dimensions that shape the prospects for young people in the region.

Governments in the region have taken positive steps to advance the situation of young people by enacting national youth policies and youth-specific legislation, and other positive steps consistent with SDGs 1, 4, 8 and 10, such as the adoption of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and its implementation guide, which has a strong focus on youth.

However, challenges remain, including the effective implementation and monitoring of these policies, achieving greater articulation and coordination among entities that promote youth participation in democratic processes and more importantly, youth economic empowerment as social and financial capital for investment. Caribbean countries of the region can harness positively the benefits of the youth demographic dividend. However, in order for this to happen greater investments need to be made in youth and providing proper education and skills training;



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removal of gender inequalities, socio-economic equities; and the positive potential of youth as strategic actors in development needs to be recognized, taking advantage of their higher levels of education, their mastery of technological tools, their more globalized worldview, and the innovative ways they find to make their voices heard.

2. Objectives

This breakout session will bring together a diverse group of participants interested in various aspects pertaining to youth development alignment to poverty eradication and socio-economic prosperity in the Caribbean. In a moderated discussion, breakout session participants will exchange views and engage in an open and candid discussion. In particular, the session will aim to:

- Consider the existing challenges facing and opportunities available for poverty eradication and economic empowerment amongst youth in the region;
- Reflect on youth engagement in the process leading to the eradication of poverty and the safeguarding of prosperity and on the role young people in the region can play in implementing the 2030 agenda, namely SDGs 1, 4, 8, 9 and 10;
- Provide a space for information and experience sharing and knowledge building.

From this discussion key messages and recommendations on how to continue to advance youth development in the Caribbean and how to further strengthen the youth focus and participation in the 2030 agenda will be distilled.

3. Questions

- What are the specific challenges facing the Caribbean youth, including in the areas of economic empowerment, employment and finding decent work?
- In light of the high levels of inequality in the region and the nation of the value proposition of the demographic dividend, how can governments and various stakeholders ensure inclusive and gender-sensitive youth development in the Caribbean?
- What are some key mechanisms to guarantee meaningful participation in economic development and poverty eradication among Caribbean youth in implementing the 2030 agenda and how can youth themselves be proactive to ensure this meaningful participation?
- What measures can be taken to effectively implement the national policies that are in place in the countries in the region to increase investment in youth and strengthen articulation and coordination among public entities working to promote youth economic citizenship and poverty eradication?
- How can we involve youth ministries and regional and sub-regional youth mechanisms, such as the Ibero-American Youth Organization in monitoring the implementation of 2030 Agenda (namely Goals 1,4,8 and 10), or at least achieve coordinated work with youth, social services and economic growth ministries?



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4. Suggested Readings

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11. Cunningham, McGinnis, Garcia Verdú, Tesiluc & Verner (2008), Youth at Risk in Latin America and the Caribbean: Understanding the Causes, Realizing the Potential, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLACREGTOPLABSOCPRO/Resources/YouthatriskinLAC.pdf>, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.