

2025 INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and Beyond

Concept Note

Introduction

International Youth Day (IYD) is commemorated annually on **12 August** to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing young people around the world. It serves as a platform to promote youth engagement and celebrate their contributions to society, development, and peace.

The theme for 2025 International Youth Day is "**Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and Beyond**" which places a strong emphasis on the transformative role of young people in the localization of the SDGs, translating the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into local realities.

This theme recognizes that young people are not merely beneficiaries of development, but are active agents of change, innovation, and leadership. It acknowledges the need for youth inclusion in local governance processes, as their creativity, energy, and community knowledge are essential for addressing the complex and interconnected challenges of our time.

Over the past decade, global institutions have increasingly acknowledged that the achievement of the SDGs by 2030 depends on how effectively they are localized—translated into concrete actions at the community level. Recent reports by UN-Habitat and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) revealed that at least 65 per cent of SDG targets relate directly to the mandates of local and regional governments (LRGs). Consequently, there is a growing imperative to empower youth as partners in SDG localization processes, as they are often deeply embedded in their communities and possess unique insights into local development needs.

Theme

Localizing the SDGs refers to the process of adapting and implementing the global goals within specific local contexts, aligning them with community needs while maintaining consistency with national and international commitments. This approach is vital to ensure that development is inclusive, participatory, and sustainable. When young people are empowered to engage in this process, they become catalysts for innovation and resilience in their communities.

The theme of 2025 IYD is deeply aligned with the **World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY)**, which sets a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international

support to improve the situation of young people. As the WPAY approaches its **30th anniversary**, the 2025 IYD theme offers a timely opportunity to renew commitment to its principles, particularly those emphasizing youth agency, youth engagement in decision-making, and sustainable development. Indeed, the WPAY provides a vital framework for guiding and advancing youth contributions to development processes. By aligning SDG localization efforts with the objectives of the WPAY, countries can promote their role as key partners in sustainable development, and ensure their inclusion in designing, implementing and evaluating policies that directly affect their communities. SDG localization supports the WPAY by enabling young people to take ownership of the development agenda, turning the global goals into localized actions that reflect their unique challenges and aspirations.

Building on this foundation, 2025 IYD connects with new global commitments such as the **Pact for the Future** and the **Declaration on Future Generations**, which emphasize the importance of youth in shaping a fairer, more equitable and sustainable world. The *Pact* calls for “meaningful youth engagement, recognizing young people as agents of change and essential partners in achieving sustainable development”. Similarly, the *Declaration* affirms “the duty to ensure that the interests and needs of future generations, including today’s children and youth, are reflected in public policy and decision-making at all levels”². Localizing the SDGs through youth-led efforts ground the goals of the Pact and Declaration—making them real in the places young people live and lead. The upcoming **Second World Summit on Social Development** (Doha, Qatar, November 2025) also presents a key opportunity to spotlight youth-led actions on social development and strengthen their role in shaping inclusive social policies.

Local youth actions are not isolated activities; they are integral to broader efforts to achieve national development plans and the SDGs. By highlighting and supporting these initiatives, the international community can help bridge the gap between top-down policy frameworks and bottom-up implementation, thus ensuring that no one is left behind.

Objectives

The 2025 IYD will serve as a strategic platform to:

1. Recognize youth as key local development partners:

- Elevate the visibility of youth-led initiatives and their impact on SDG implementation.
- Raise awareness about the WPAY and its role in recognizing the youth as local development partners.
- Celebrate young people as innovators, leaders, and mobilizers within their local contexts.

2. Promote policy coherence and institutional support for local youth initiatives:

- Encourage governments to integrate youth-led initiatives into local development frameworks and decision-making processes.
- Promote the integration of youth development goals within local development strategies, drawing from the WPAY’s framework and the *Pact for the Future* and the *Declaration on Future Generations*

- Advocate for inclusive policy environments that facilitate youth participation in governance.
3. **Encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration:**
 - Foster partnerships between youth and youth-led organizations, local governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, and UN agencies.
 - Promote knowledge sharing and joint problem-solving to enhance the effectiveness of local SDG implementation.
 - Leverage technology and innovation to connect youth across regions and facilitate collaboration.
 4. **Showcase youth stories and solutions:**
 - Provide platforms for youth to share their personal experiences, insights, and innovations.
 - Use storytelling as a tool to amplify youth voices and promote peer learning.
 - Document and disseminate lessons learned from youth-led localization projects.

Official commemoration

The global observance of 2025 IYD will take place on **12 August** in **Nairobi, Kenya**, hosted in collaboration with **UN-Habitat**, a key partner of **DESA** and a leading advocate for sustainable urban development and SDG localization. The event will bring together youth leaders, policymakers, municipal officials, academics, development practitioners, and UN representatives to explore strategies for enhancing youth engagement in local development.

Planned activities include:

- *Interactive Dialogue*: The event will feature an interactive dialogue between youth and other decision-makers. Topics will cover urban planning, climate resilience, social inclusion, innovation, and digital transformation, all through a youth lens.
- *Youth Innovation Showcase*: Youth organizations and social enterprises will have the opportunity to exhibit their work both in the community and at the UN compound.
- *Commemoration of 2025 IYD which will include youth, UN and government representatives*. The commemoration will be held in person on the UN compound and virtually, ensuring global participation of youth and youth partners.

Knowledge products developed include:

- *Infographics*: Visual tools that present data and analysis on the contributions of youth to SDG localization. Designed to inform policy discussions and advocate for greater youth involvement.
- *Youth storytelling series*: A multimedia collection featuring short films, podcasts, and blog posts. These stories will reflect diverse youth experiences in implementing the SDGs at the local level.
- *Social media engagement package*: A ready-to-use digital toolkit that includes infographics, video messages (e.g., from the UN Secretary-General or DESA's USG), and sample content.

Designed for dissemination by youth networks, Member States, and UN agencies to increase outreach and engagement.

Call to Action

The theme of 2025 IYD calls on the global community to move beyond symbolic support and to take concrete steps to empower young people as partners in development. Governments, international organizations, civil society, and private sector actors are encouraged to:

- Support youth-led and youth-serving initiatives at the local level.
- Integrate youth perspectives into policy formulation and local planning processes.
- Invest in youth capacity-building and infrastructure to facilitate their participation.
- Foster an enabling environment that upholds the rights of young people and promotes intergenerational dialogue.
- Strengthen national frameworks' alignment with the WPAY, Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations, ensuring that youth are engaged in local decision-making and play a central role in local development strategies.

Stakeholders are also invited to organize local, regional, and virtual events in commemoration of 2025 IYD, using the official theme and materials to raise awareness and mobilize action in their communities.

Conclusion

As we approach 2030, the importance of local action to achieve the SDGs cannot be overstated. Young people are uniquely positioned to drive this transformation, offering innovative ideas, solutions, and energy to meet local and global challenges. The 2025 IYD will celebrate and elevate these efforts, ensuring that youth voices are heard and that their contributions are recognized and supported.

The 2025 IYD is not only a celebration of youth achievements—it is a call to action for all sectors of society to ensure that young people are central to the development agenda. It is through meaningful youth participation at the local level that we can realize a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for all.