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Youth Perspectives and Engagement on Sustainability

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Summary

“The youth” is an important group in the context of policy-making for sustainability. During these formative years, young adults make life choices, establish habits and engage in activities that will shape their lives in terms of health, wealth, political affiliation, social values, religion, and so on, and shape their immediate communities, societies and the world in the long run. The term “sustainability” means safeguarding opportunities for future generations. Including the up-and-coming generation is thus an important bridge into the future.

Definitions of youth vary: the United Nations defines youth as those between the ages of 15 and 24 years, while the African Union’s range is 15 to 35. It is essential for sustainability to recognise the complex nature of youth beyond being a liminal phase between childhood and adulthood. Rather, recognition as a global demographic group is important both normatively and practically. The way youth are studied, engaged, included and enabled to progress in society will ultimately determine the long-term success of sustainable development.

The youth need to be better involved in policy- and decision-making. Their ideas, interests and perspectives are crucial, as innovations are in urgent demand for a transformation to sustainability and cannot wait for gradual generational changes.

Recommendations:

- Political and economic leaders need to provide a positive perspective and seek new alliances for sustainable ways of life, so that younger generations see opportunities to engage with their future. The youth’s ideas, interests and innovations are needed in an inter-generational discourse in the quest to speed up transformation towards sustainability.
- Youth engagement requires moving beyond token representation, both in national processes and in the international sphere. An expansion of civic education, creation of inclusive spaces for political dialogue and linking economic empowerment to political participation are needed.
- Any public policy discourse on youth should avoid oversimplification. While a generational view (“Gen Z”) allows for better inclusion of defining circumstances and communalities, it is certainly not a comprehensive explanation for individual behaviour. Different contexts matter.
- Technology, a defining element of the younger generations, presents a dual-edged narrative. It empowers youth by providing (transnational) avenues for activism, economic participation and education. Yet, the pervasive digital divide, cybersecurity vulnerabilities and unsustainable digital consumption requires balanced and inclusive policies.
- Educational reforms, discussed in light of technological changes, need to follow holistic principles. Youth need space to develop skills, for individual success *and* to ensure democratic participation. Beyond technical knowledge, interpersonal and intercultural skills are needed to navigate and shape a “glocal” world.

Who is “the youth”? Different contexts matter

Youth and their involvement have become well-worn terms in international development and policy-making spaces. The concept of “youth” is often used as a vague demographic category, making it difficult to have meaningful discourse or recommendations that would benefit younger people. Age limits are the most common measure of who classifies as youth. Youth are considered a distinct group from children, but there is also overlap. Documents like The Convention on the Rights of Children define persons under the age of 18 as children, while the United Nations and the African Union define youth as those between the ages of 15 and 24, and 15 and 35, respectively. While useful, the numerical definition has clear limitations. Such an approach does not capture the nuanced lived experiences that differ individually, culturally and regionally.

Sociologically, youth is defined as a liminal or transitional stage of life for individuals in any society. Biologically, it is the period during which or immediately after the human body has fully formed, which psychologically also encompasses processes of identity and worldview formation. These years are formative, full of key determining factors that influence the opportunities and challenges that a person will face in life as they grow older in terms of health, wealth, political affiliation, social values, religion, et cetera. From an everyday perspective, it is the time in an individual person’s life when they take on increasing levels of responsibility for themselves and the world around them. In most cases it is a time characterised by many “firsts”: first degree, first job, first serious relationship, first income, first time starting a family or renting a home, first time voting or building a career.

Sociological literature has moved to a more comprehensive understanding that defines young adults based on the historical circumstances in which a young person was raised, the major events that characterised their world in that unique period, the trends in culture and values that were

prominent, and their overall behaviour and styles of living. The categories of Gen Z (1996-2010) and Gen Alpha (2010-2020s) help compare how these age cohorts are similar or different to other cohorts like the Millennials (1979-1995), Gen X (1965-1978) and the Boomers (1946-1964). While using rough categories, such a frame of analysis helps to distinguish between the political, social and economic aspirations of each group. However, it should not be used to homogenise, lumping young people into predefined categories that lack nuance and promote a cookie-cutter approach to youth engagement. Importantly, regional differences are blended over in the discussion on formative cohorts.

The dominance of Western science reflects in sociological analysis of generational questions, as it does in other disciplines. Gen Z has often been characterised by Western-centric narratives, histories, priorities and values, replicating colonially reinforced social and cultural dominance of Western societies in the world. While in a globalised world, some of the events shaping the lives of younger generations are similar (e.g., COVID-19), the ways these events affect different societies or are perceived locally differ. Gen Z in the US is shaped differently by world events than Gen Z in Europe, Africa and Asia. Moreover, there are events and phenomena that are unique to the experiences of youth in some regions and that are not part of the lived realities of others. For example, youth in the EU have largely secularised in recent decades, while religion often significantly influences the decisions made by youth in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Youths’ engagement for sustainability will, thus, be triggered and sustained by different factors and needs to be locally grounded.

At the micro-level, youth become even more disaggregated, with experiences differing between urban and rural youth, youth of different ethnic or income groups, educated and uneducated youth, and youth from marginalised groups, for example, young women, youth with disabilities and LGBTQ+ youth. A combination of factors, referred to as intersectionality, matters and needs to be

considered when exploring key issues of concern to the youth.

Key topics for young adults

Exploring attitudes and beliefs of the youth is done in a substantial number of studies covering youth at the national level (e.g., in Germany by the Shell Youth Study (2024)) and at the global level (e.g., the World Youth Report by UN DESA (2024)). Studies also combine youth and key topics (e.g., the Future of Jobs Report by the World Economic Forum (2023)). In these studies, a number of themes come up repeatedly that clearly relate to dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainability.

In this paper, we explore some of the key youth topics, including the following. The social dimension, specifically securing an independent livelihood (a), is a key theme, and prospects for this have darkened. Relatedly, concerns about the natural environment have grown (b). Not least threatening, fundamental changes in climate and their tangible effects – extreme weather events, such as floodings, droughts, storms and heat waves – lead to some of the youth's anxieties about the future. Furthermore, (c) while technology is the defining feature of Gen Z, attitudes towards it and its use for sustainability are not fully explored in the 2030 Agenda. On the other hand, (d) education and training is clearly a topic for these formative years, as is, with concerns about their own future in mind, (e) participation of the youth in decision-making.

a) Concerns about decent work and economic growth

Lowering the rate of people not in employment, education or training (NEET) is a target in Sustainable Development Goal 8, which is about decent work and economic growth. Progress on this goal, however, is regionally very diverse: while the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported 110 (often high-income) countries as “on track” with regard to this goal, Latin American and Caribbean countries have seen only limited progress, and 51 countries in Africa and the Arab

world, comprising one-third of the global youth, were reported as “off track” (ILO, 2024). Youth unemployment in China, Southern Europe and Latin America is also a concern.

The ILO counts people between 15 and 29 years of age as “the youth”, an expansion on the previous 15 to 24. In higher income countries, this age bracket contains many pupils and students, and, thus, might conceal employment worries in the younger generation. Furthermore, unemployment affects young women (two in three) much more often than young men (one in three) and is an issue with different scale across country income groups (ILO, 2024). While four in five young adults are in work or training in high-income countries, this number drops to one in five in low-income countries (ILO, 2024). Disconcertingly, the demographic pressure in countries in Africa, that is, those with weaker labour markets, tends to be disproportionately higher, with an expected growth of the work force of 76 million people by 2050 (ILO, 2024) (see Figure 1).

In African countries, self-employed young people or young people working in their family business without pay may often opt for this type of work out of necessity, for want of a formal, remunerated job. Concerns about having the necessary skills to economically thrive or survive in the market are linked to the reach and the quality of the education and training systems in place (see below on technology and education). At the same time, time-bound work with a formal contract will not necessarily offer more stability or security in the lives of young people.

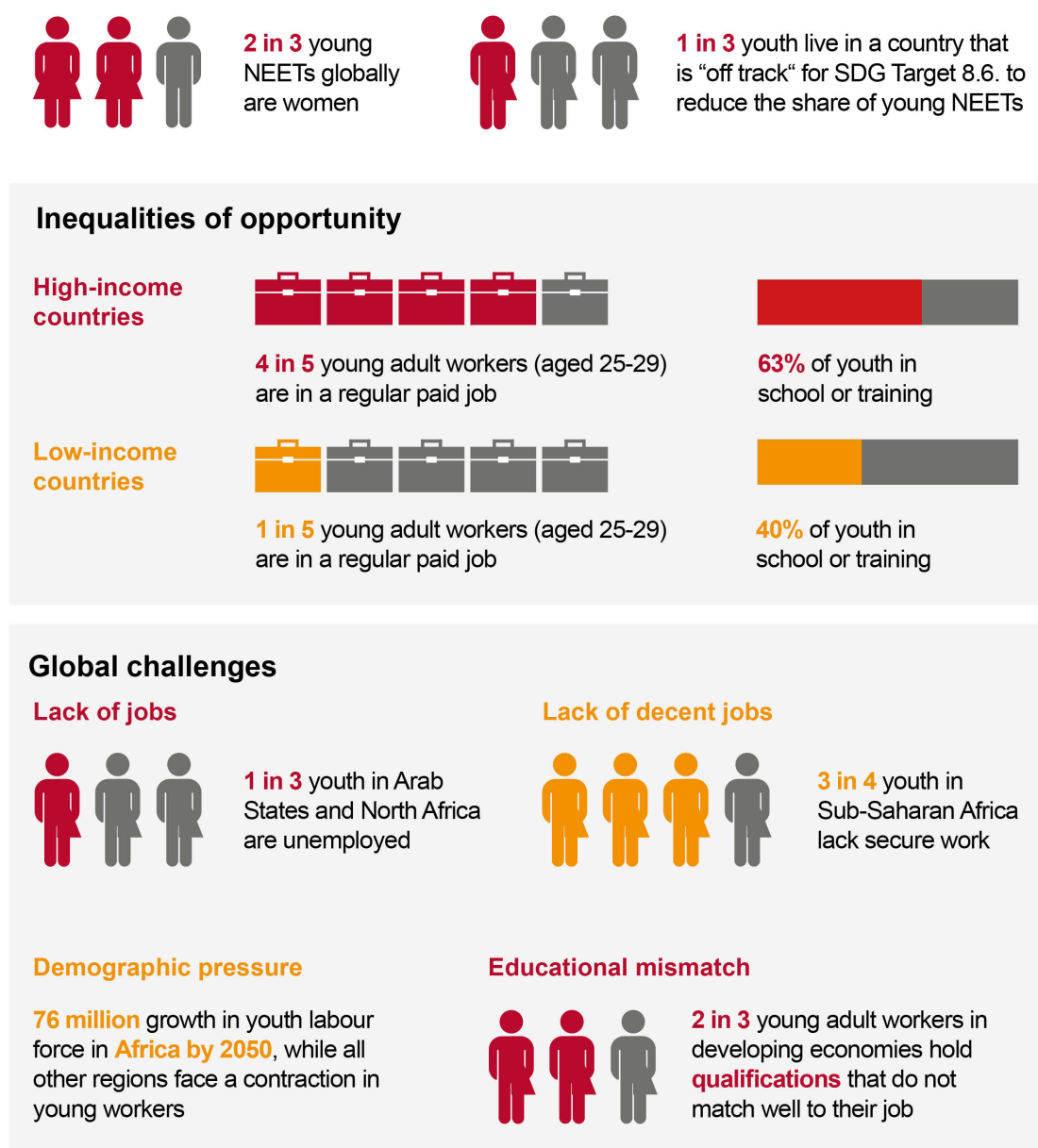
The sense of stability and security in young people is subjective and can be influenced by subjective inter-generational comparisons: do I fare better than my elders or do I struggle more? What is the longer-term prospect in my current situation? Among global youth, 65.3 per cent worry about losing their job; that figure is 88 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 77 per cent in Southeast Asia and the Pacific and almost 76 per cent in Latin America. Also, regional disparities in Europe matter. This instability affects levels of independent living

in high-income regions too: for the US, the ILO (2024) reports “the share of 25-year-olds living outside their parents’ home in 2021 was 68 per cent, compared with 84 per cent in 1980”.

Personal prospects are, thus, often economically insecure, making economic and social needs a first priority over other sustainability dimensions. In wealthier societies, grievances or fear of loss of

status can result in an allure to populist, simplistic answers to complex challenges. This can result in ignorance or denial of interrelated sustainability, seeking refuge in nationalistic worldviews also among younger generations. In all regions, though, the uncertainty is closely related to and compounded by dramatic ecological shifts.

Figure 1: Current youth’s challenges in carving out a livelihood



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Source: Adapted from ILO (2024)

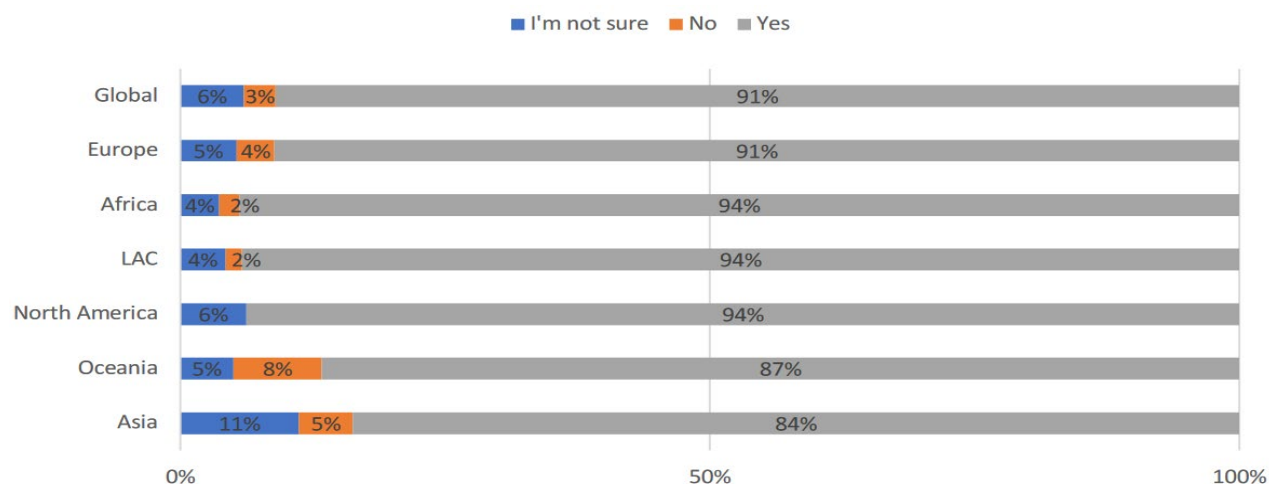
b) Climate change – from angst to action

The awareness of being affected by climate change is wide spread amongst global youth – and, in fact, high levels of awareness are shown across continents, with 94 per cent of respondents in Africa and Latin America answering in the affirmative in a, albeit not representative, UN CC:Learn survey (age group 15 to 35 years) (UN CC:Learn, 2023). People experience extreme weather events in all regions of the globe – be that heat waves, drought or flooding after torrential rainfall – combined with warnings about tipping points and clearly insufficient political actions to speed up transformations. This realisation can be overwhelming and lead to eco-anxiety, as experienced by 35 per cent of the youth in that same survey (UN CC:Learn, 2023). The facts can indeed be depressing. A challenge in engaging with the youth on climate change is to move from

a rather apocalyptic analysis to the awareness of leverage as an individual. Indeed, 60 per cent of respondents to the UN CC:Learn survey seek information about how to act on climate change (2023).

Global social movements like “Fridays for Futures” and the organisation of school strikes since 2018 have nurtured activism among younger generations and successfully mobilised millions of young people in dozens of countries, pressuring governments to adopt more ambitious climate policies. Additionally, the dissemination of creative media content that resonates with youth can significantly boost their engagement and effectively empower them in exploring new forms of climate action contributing to sustainable development. This requires strategic communication and the use of digital platforms that amplify the narrative, ensuring that it reaches a wide audience.

Figure 2: Youth perspectives on whether they are affected by climate change



Source: UN CC:Learn (2023)

To go beyond activism and advocacy, it is essential for young people to share best practices among themselves and rally strategic actors on collaborative projects that may positively impact their communities. School is also an appropriate space to guide youth toward a positive scenario amidst the climate crisis. Central to this effort is the implementation of environmental programmes that empower and incentivise students “to do”.

c) Technology – global challenges

Emerging technologies, particularly AI, big data and digital platforms, are reshaping industries globally, driving job creation while also contributing to job displacement. According to the World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report, 75 per cent of companies plan to adopt AI, creating demand for skills in data science, AI ethics and cybersecurity (2023).

The digital economy presents an immense opportunity for expanding youth employment. Positively speaking, with the growth of remote work and digital platforms, young people, especially in regions like Africa, gain access to global job markets without having to leave their home countries. For example, in West- and North Africa, a growing number of young professionals work for European and American companies remotely, gaining valuable experience and income. According to the ILO (2024), digital labour platforms can contribute significantly to youth employment, particularly in developing countries, by connecting young workers to international clients and projects. However, while these technologies open new career paths, they also displace jobs in sectors like administration and clerical. Digital jobs are an excellent opportunity for personal and professional growth, and at the same time, they can temporarily draw talent away from local markets, potentially limiting the availability of skilled workers for local enterprises. On the other hand, this trend often leads to a “brain gain” when these young professionals return to the local market with enhanced skills and experience.

However, young people in lower income countries are still struggling with the accessibility and affordability challenges. According to the International Telecommunication Union, there is a major disparity in the percentage of youth who use the internet between high-income countries (98 per cent) and low-income countries (45 per cent) (ITU, 2023). The digital divide not only exists between countries in different income groups, but also persists as a significant gap within nations, between regions (rural and urban), genders, age groups, et cetera. This disparity is evident in varying levels of digital literacy and skills among youth, resulting in unequal opportunities in the labour market.

The intersection of youth and technology presents a complex paradigm – while digital platforms enable unprecedented opportunities for social, economic and political engagement, they simultaneously expose young people to significant

risks, particularly in the realms of privacy, data security and digital violence. According to a UNDP study, young activists in Europe and Central Asia expressed that the top two challenges online are fake news (85 per cent) and extremists’ content (73 per cent) (2021). Recent studies highlight that nearly 60 per cent of US teenagers have experienced some form of cyberbullying, which can severely impact mental health, leading to more anxiety, depression and, in extreme cases, self-harm. Youth from disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly susceptible, facing compounded risks in both the virtual and physical worlds.

Lastly, as a generational challenge, the individual ecological footprint left by everyday digital activities, such as streaming videos, gaming and using cloud services, requires action at the structural level. The energy demand of data centres that power platforms like YouTube, Netflix, and Instagram has skyrocketed, contributing significantly to global carbon emissions. Recent studies show that the information and communication technology sector could account for as much as 14 per cent of the global carbon footprint by 2040, driven largely by the proliferation of energy-intensive data centres and the increasing demand for digital services (Belkir & Elmeligi, 2018).

d) Education and training

Youth is often in education or training or aspiring to transition into the labour market. Consequently, the quality of education and training is an important issue for youth and their prospects.

Economic empowerment initiatives focussed on youth employment, entrepreneurship and vocational training are essential to better equip the youth. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has emphasised the need for continuous investment in education reform to address a skills mismatch, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where it is a significant barrier to youth employment (UNESCO, 2019). From a macro-perspective, skills development is one crucial step towards enabling countries to shift from being a consumer to becoming a producer,

fostering local industries and driving economic development. Disconcertingly, as illustrated in Figure 1 above, the ILO states a clear educational mismatch: two in three young adult workers in developing economies hold qualifications that do not match well to their job (2024). Reforms in the educational systems, as well as secure funding, are needed. Collaboration with industries is also vital to expose students to real-world challenges.

To minimise the digital divide and enhance digital capacity and competitiveness in the labour market, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive literacy and skill programme in the current education system. This not only includes basic digital information literacy, but also proficiency in safety and problem-solving through technologies, such as fighting misinformation, cyberbullying, data security and wellbeing in digital space.

To thrive in the modern labour market, young people must possess a diverse range of skills that extend beyond traditional academic knowledge. They also need cognitive, technical and, importantly, socio-emotional skills. Both are key for success and require training.

Cognitive and technical skills: Critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and adaptability are essential for navigating a rapidly changing work environment individually. Proficiency in digital technologies – including programming, data analysis, artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity – is increasingly in demand.

Socio-emotional (soft) skills: Interpersonal communication, teamwork, empathy and emotional intelligence are foundational to all other competencies. In globally operating industries, roles become more dynamic and interdisciplinary. The rise of remote work and global teams makes these skills invaluable and highlights the need for schools, universities and workplaces to integrate soft skills training into their programmes.

To foster necessary skills, educational systems must prioritise project-based learning, multidisciplinary approaches and problem-solving tasks that encourage creative thinking.

e) Youth participation – democracy and self-determination

Youth are the present and the bond with the next generation, but they do not always have the opportunity to be agents of positive change. The extent to which youth engage in or disengage from political systems is, in large part, determined by their understanding and perception of provided opportunities to shape them.

Limited access to economic resources compromises the ability of youth to exercise their political rights. Specifically, unemployment (see above) is stifling for their contribution to the edification and consolidation of a democratic society. Without the economic basis, youth will strive to please the political kingpins who control the economic resources. To change this dynamic, it is crucial to empower the youth to actively participate in governance and the political sphere, thereby influencing key decisions and contributing to the common good.

Younger generations have the energy and the desire to make their contribution to building a society by participating in the political space. A variety of social, psychological and educational elements influence how youth engage in democracy (Barrett & Pachi, 2019), nevertheless, youth participation in democracy can be a powerful force in addressing many of the development and sustainability challenges we are attempting to tackle. Important factors for youth engagement are inclusivity, a system space where youth are part of the decision-making, beyond casting a vote, and a system space that allows them the freedom to choose, no matter their gender, socio-economic circumstances or ethnicity.

While democracies, by definition, should see a particular need to include the voices of all generations, the challenge is ultimate to all forms of government. Activism and advocacy are key to hold duty-bearers accountable and foster new values for a better future. Yet, in many countries this space is still highly contested with little or no trust between youth and politicians across the political divide. While the ability to engage in and

contribute to a more equitable political system need to be strengthened, youth engagement, however, is often institutionally limited, including by high age restrictions to run for public offices. For instance, the minimum age to run for a parliamentary seat in Nigeria is 30 (Lelwic-Ojeda & Akintola, 2024).

Beyond legal barriers, expanding civic education and improving access to reliable information would empower youth to engage more effectively. When young people are well informed, they become aware of their rights and duties and are enabled to meaningfully participate in political spaces. Additionally, inclusive spaces for dialogue, such as youth councils, can foster trust and help young people to influence policies that impact their futures. Real political engagement requires youth-led platforms and mentorship programmes to ensure young people contribute meaningfully to decision-making.

Young people are increasingly engaging in political initiatives through new technologies, especially social media, that are becoming their main allies. The internet and social media became essential means through which youth coordinate and, through protests, make their ideas and opinions more influential in the political process.

Often, the youth lead political protests, and – from Gabon (2023) to Bangladesh (2024) – have been successful in recent years. However, while youth were key actors in revolutions, they have often been sidelined afterwards, and the political space available to them has shrunk. For instance, in Tunisia, the democratic backsliding after 2021 and the centralisation of power have led to greater youth disengagement and a growing sense that the political system is both untrustworthy and unresponsive (Jmal & Lakhal, 2024). In many contexts, youth quotas have remained largely symbolic (see Box 1).

Box 1: Youth engagement – experiences in post-revolutionary Tunisia

During the so-called Arab Spring, youth initially played a vital role, and the introduction of youth quotas in local councils in 2018 was designed to institutionalise youth participation. However, this system quickly revealed its limitations. Research shows that young councillors in Tunisia felt marginalised, experiencing significant age and experience gaps that hindered their ability to contribute effectively to governance (Lakhal, 2022). Many young people's disillusionment with both traditional politics and figures such as President Kais Saied, once seen as an anti-establishment candidate, reflects the growing scepticism among Tunisian youth regarding their role in shaping their country's future.

Furthermore, we need to acknowledge that the youth is not automatically progressive and has also been instrumental against democratic governments, such as in the Sahel region in West Africa. And in some regions, youth have been abused as a weapon against regimes, be that in the most perverse form as child soldiers (Sudan) and abducted “wives” for terrorist organisations (Northern Nigeria), or in fights that resulted in oppressive regimes, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Youth is shaped by circumstances; it is not monolithic. The above range of topics for youth engagement is, thus, illustrative, not exhaustive.

Youth in political processes – assumptions and pitfalls

Besides key issues from a youth perspective, almost equally important is the “how” of youth engagement in sustainability debates (UNDP 2022). While the surge in global youth activism – particularly in climate change and sustainability movements – highlights the potential of young people to drive change, several pitfalls hinder their meaningful engagement. Recognising and addressing these issues is crucial for harnessing the full potential of youth contributions, including in global decision-making processes and multilateral settings.

Tokenism: Tokenism manifests when organisations include young people in sustainability initiatives merely for appearance's sake, without granting them real influence. For instance, youth delegates are often given minimal speaking time during international climate conferences or are placed in side-events rather than the main sessions. This superficial involvement was evident at COP25 in Madrid, where many youth activists felt sidelined despite their significant efforts in mobilising global climate strikes (cf. Taylor et al, 2019). Such practices can lead to frustration and erode trust between youth and institutions.

Youth-washing: Youth-washing occurs when corporations or governments showcase youth involvement to project a progressive image while continuing unsustainable practices. An example is when companies sponsor youth-led environmental events but fail to address their own carbon footprints. Youth activists highlighted this during the Davos World Economic Forum in 2020, where they criticised businesses for promoting youth engagement publicly while lobbying against environmental regulations (World Economic Forum, 2020). Youth-washing not only undermines genuine efforts but also exploits the credibility of youth movements.

Ad-hoc engagement: Ad-hoc engagement refers to sporadic or one-off involvement of youth without sustained commitment. Governments may consult young people during the drafting of a sustainability policy but exclude them from implementation and evaluation phases. For example, some national climate action plans mention youth consultation but lack mechanisms for ongoing youth participation (cf. UNFCCC, 2021). This intermittent approach prevents the development of policies that substantively reflect youth perspectives and fails to build long-term partnerships.

Mono-generationalism: Mono-generationalism involves placing youth in isolated forums without facilitating intergenerational collaboration. While youth conferences and events are valuable, excluding policy-makers and other stakeholders limits the impact of youth proposals. The Global Youth

Climate Summit illustrates this issue when resolutions created by youth lack pathways to influence official policy due to insufficient interaction with decision-makers (Transform Our World, 2022). Effective solutions to sustainability challenges require cross-generational cooperation.

Lack of clear goals: Engaging youth without clear objectives can lead to confusion and frustration. Young people need to understand the purpose of their involvement and be shown how their input will be used, or else they might disengage.

Exclusion of marginalised groups: Some engagement efforts overlook marginalised groups, such as youth with disabilities, rural youth, or LGBTQ+ youth. Excluding these voices perpetuates inequality and fails to capture the full diversity of young people's perspectives. For instance, climate policies that do not consider the unique challenges faced by indigenous youth may inadvertently marginalise these communities further (Indigenous Climate Action, 2019).

Inadequate preparation and training: Engaging youth without equipping them with the necessary skills, information and tools to participate meaningfully is ineffective. Youth should receive adequate training to contribute fully to discussions and decision-making. A lack of capacity-building initiatives often leaves young participants feeling unprepared to engage with complex sustainability issues (UNESCO, 2018).

Monetary exploitation and chronic underfunding: Expecting young people to engage in significant efforts without proper compensation or support can exploit their time and labour. Fair compensation or at least acknowledgment of their contributions is crucial for sustaining engagement. Many youth-led organisations face chronic underfunding, making it challenging to implement projects or participate in international forums. Commitments to youth inclusion require backing by unrestricted or flexible funding support to empower youth to affect change on the ground.

Conclusion

Any effective discourse on youth should be based on these key axioms:

- a. Youth is a fluid concept that may change based on the purpose, context or field of inquiry.
- b. Youth experiences are not universalisable or generalisable and must be understood in a contextual and intersectional way.
- c. Youth are both agents and subjects of change in the societies in which they live.
- d. As the inheritors of a globalised world, contemporary youth embody a hybrid identity incorporating a mixture of local, national and international characteristics. Transnational networks are, thus, a key element to foster, as they offer opportunities to address complex issues by impacting *glocally*, that is, at both global and local levels simultaneously.
- e. The path through young adulthood is not linear and may be disrupted, stunted or accelerated by social, economic or political factors leading to a disjunction between expected and actual outcomes.

Regional and global organisations recognise the impact that youth can have in addressing development and sustainability challenges. Yet, the majority of organisations and nations still have major gaps to fill in ensuring that the youth voice is more fully integrated into decision-making and that their ability to catalyse change is maximised. Providing resources and platforms for youth to share their perspective, voice their concerns and mobilise support could enhance their ability to act and cooperate effectively in democratic systems. Engaging youth needs to entail a sincere dialogue and truthful communication that make sure that

their voice is heard – what they live, what they need and what they dream.

Furthermore, education is key – specifically, even if not exclusively, for the youth. Younger generations need to develop new skills to address contemporary challenges. By participating in community dialogues and educational programmes, they can better understand and tackle the root causes of political and structural issues. Here again, skills development is key to fostering a new set of values and mechanisms necessary for individual futures as well as for democratic societies.

Technology, as a defining element of the younger generations, merits particular attention with regard to its opportunities and challenges. The role of technology as a catalyst in driving youth engagement in global development presents a dual-edged narrative. While it has undeniably empowered youth by providing avenues for activism, economic participation, and education, the pervasive digital divide, cybersecurity vulnerabilities and unsustainable digital consumption highlight the pressing need for balanced, inclusive and responsible policies.

Addressing youth disengagement requires moving beyond token representation, expanding civic education, creating inclusive spaces for political dialogue and linking economic empowerment to political participation. These actions can foster a new generation of youth who are actively engaged in shaping their societies' futures.

Last, but far from least, considering that the younger generation will live under substantially different conditions than their parents, an optimistic perspective that seeks opportunities and new alliances is needed. Shaping sustainable futures is a positive challenge.

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This Policy Brief is written in the context of the Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC). The HSC aims to bring together global decision-makers and stakeholders from politics, the private sector and civil society in order to accelerate progress and achieve breakthroughs towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, it aims to enhance trust and create new alliances, while providing an open space to discuss challenges and solutions in the implementation of the SDGs. The conference is organised jointly by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Michael Otto Foundation, and the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. IDOS supports the HSC with its scientific expertise and through its global partnerships on the various dimensions of the SDGs and its interlinkages. This Policy Brief provides research-based recommendations on key overarching issues of the HSC process.

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