

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



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Civic engagement and participation of youth in politics and public institutions

Across the world, youth remain at the margins of the political, social and economic mainstream. Yet, youth engagement and participation is central to achieving sustainable human development. Young people have the right to participate in all levels of society and have the potential to be positive agents of change.

Youth participation remains limited in formal political processes and public institutions. Young women and men are largely excluded from decision-making, and policy development and implementation, creating a disconnect with political leadership. Throughout history and in diverse contexts, however, young men and women have participated in, contributed to, and been catalysts for change. Civic engagement and political activism of youth is not always organized according to formal groupings. More recently, youth mobilization has seen a resurgence particularly through social media channels, innovative informal groupings, and heightened engagement in volunteering.



Photo: UNDP/UNV

MATTERS OF FACT

- **Less than 6% of the parliamentarians globally are under 35 years old.**
- **The average age of parliamentarians in the world is 53.**
- **The average eligibility for single and lower chambers of the legislature is 22.1 years old.**
- **Voter turnout among 18-25 year olds continues to be lower than other age groups.**
- **45% of the world's internet users are below the age of 25, and 30% of the world's youth have been active online at least five years.**
- **Of the 1.6 million people who participated in the MY World Global Survey, more than half were below the age of 30. Honest and responsive governments appeared amongst the top priorities.**

Recent consultations supported by the UN on the Post-2015 development agenda acknowledged the critical concerns of young people and their ambitions to participate in the design and implementation of a new development agenda. Young men and women repeatedly expressed that they felt marginalized in their societies and communities. They also highlighted the need for participatory mechanisms, greater trust between youth and institutions, and increased capacities to meaningfully participate.

The United Nations Secretary-General has made youth a priority and appointed a Special Envoy on Youth, and UN entities have developed a United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP). Led by these initiatives, and to support policies aimed at empowering youth for a sustainable future, UNDP works to deepen engagement on youth and youth empowerment initiatives.

UNDP's approach

UNDP has identified the following strategic entry points to enhance youth engagement and participation:

- Strengthen youth political participation at all levels in formal political processes, platforms and institutions (e.g. elections, constitution-making processes, political parties, parliaments);
- Promote civic awareness and volunteerism as a means to facilitate more inclusive participation of youth;
- Promote youth access to and preparedness for civil service and strengthen trust and participation in public institutions;
- Support youth initiatives aimed at government transparency and accountability;
- Support awareness building and promotion of human rights of youth, implementation of existing human rights instruments, and promotion of access to information;
- Develop capacities of stakeholders to establish inclusive policies and mechanisms that support civic engagement of young people;
- Support legal reform to eliminate discrimination against marginalized youth, promote access to justice and security, and support a youth-friendly legal framework;
- Support strengthening of governance structures of youth organizations and networks of youth organizations at the grassroots level;
- Explore the role of social media and ICT in enabling access to information and fostering political participation, in particular the voices of historically marginalized youth;
- With regard to national youth policy, UNDP shall support processes for review or implementation of youth policies; advocate for youth-targeted budgeting to accompany youth policy implementation; continue to support the development of evidence-based instruments such as youth political participation indexes and National Human Development Reports on Youth to inform youth policy;
- Explore innovative technologies and approaches for engaging youth in data collection and analysis, decision-making, and monitoring of public policies and youth initiatives.

UNDP in action

- **Bangladesh:** UNDP supported the establishment of a National Youth Parliament to empower active citizens and provide an opportunity for youth to dialogue with parliamentarians about the national youth policy.
- **Ivory Coast:** UNDP strengthened a regional network on young leaders against corruption through youth integrity camps.
- **Jordan:** the first innovation camp on youth and local governance was organized, with strong emphasis on electoral candidacy preparedness. A database with online youth groups was developed to systematically solicit inputs from youth groups on how to spur political participation.
- **Mongolia:** UNDP developed recommendations for revising civic education curricula to better appeal to youth, trained young journalists and created social media groups where youth raised awareness about youth issues and advocated for the development of a youth policy.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean:** The [www.juventudconvoz](http://www.juventudconvoz.org) platform, supported by UNDP, the IberoAmerican Youth Organisation (OIJ), and Spain, has facilitated youth access to information and participation, through online activities, to enhance their contribution to formal processes and the definition of a regional youth agenda.

Enhanced UN coordination and coherence

- Support to Justice Sector Reform in **Moldova**, implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN Women and OHCHR, to empower young women and men from vulnerable groups to effectively use the legal aid system.
- Regional **Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future** UNV project with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, initiated in Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco with funding from Germany and UNV's Special Voluntary Fund in 2013.

For more information

<https://undp.unteamworks.org/undp4youth>

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#UNDP4YOUTH

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March 2014



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