

CHAPTER

5



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER five offers a synthesis of the recommendations presented throughout the *Report*. Arranged in easy-to-read summary form, the recommendations are intended to be used by young people and policymakers to engage in dialogue aimed at finding ways to better support and enhance youth engagement.

YOUTH POLICYMAKING: LESSONS FROM THE DEMAND SIDE

Throughout the present *Report*, experts provide clear recommendations for both young people and policymakers on how to enhance youth-led civic engagement in economic, political and community life.

While young people need to play a central role in addressing issues that affect them, they cannot tackle the multitude of challenges alone. It is only through active partnership, inclusive policies and decision making processes, and meaningful involvement that solutions to some of the key problems experienced by young people can be developed. In promoting youth engagement, support to young people must be provided and the respective roles of young people, policymakers, and the institutions through which they work, clearly defined.

Chapter one of the Report provided a broad overview on the issue of youth civic engagement. The following recommendations should be considered in the development, design, and follow-up of all youth engagement related initiatives and programmes.

Be explicit regarding the degree of youth participation. It is important that civic engagement initiatives explicitly define the degree of youth ownership and the decision-making

authority young people have with regard to programme activities. Successful civic engagement programmes include youth involvement in design planning, development, execution, and in monitoring and evaluation. This should be included as a norm in all youth engagement efforts.

Be relevant to young people's own interests and lived experience. Young people are more likely to be engaged by and passionate about issues that are relevant to their own culture and lived experience. The knowledge youth possess must be valued, and young people need an enabling environment that allows them to develop a certain level of expertise on the issues that influence their lives.

Be action-oriented. Organizations and agencies working with youth on civic engagement initiatives should clearly specify the civic goals they wish to achieve and provide real opportunities for young people to engage in action directed towards meeting those objectives. They must also ensure that youth engagement is real, substantial, and significant.

Value and foster analysis and reflection. While action is essential in developing civic skills and experience, there is great importance in reflecting on civic activity. For example, young people may be trained and engaged in designing,

implementing and evaluating research, conducting surveys and interviews of their peers, and presenting findings and solutions in public forums.

Provide opportunities for youth-adult partnership. Youth leadership emerges

out of a complex set of skills, behaviours, actions and attitudes that are best developed through apprenticeships and other experiential processes requiring close partnerships between youth and adults. Adults often play a key role as mentors and motivators in youth leadership programmes.

Young people may be central figures in development, but responsibility for finding solutions to the problems of unemployment and underemployment, for ensuring youth representation in political processes, and for facilitating social inclusion at the community level lies largely with Governments, which must create enabling environments, policies and spaces for youth engagement.

The remainder of this Chapter sets out the key conclusions and recommendations arising throughout the Report as they pertain to the economic, political and community engagement of youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT

For many young people today, economic engagement has become more challenging owing to the dearth of decent employment opportunities, inadequacies in skills and education, the lack of support for entrepreneurship, and diminishing labour rights.

However, young people have shown themselves to be powerful agents in the creation of jobs and opportunities to enhance their engagement. Through internships, entrepreneurship and involvement in trade unions, young people are demonstrating their resourcefulness in overcoming the challenges and barriers to economic engagement.

The recommendations below focus on steps that can be taken to strengthen these efforts.

INTERNSHIPS

REVIEW INTERNSHIP OFFERS BY USING THE MAIN BENCHMARKS FOR QUALITY INTERNSHIPS

Young people considering or undertaking an internship should review the relevant terms and conditions in order to ascertain whether quality benchmarks are met in the internship offer. Examples of quality benchmarks can be found on page 39 of this Report.

COLLECT INFORMATION ON THE REGULATORY AND MONITORING FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING INTERNSHIPS IN A PARTICULAR COUNTRY, SECTOR OR OCCUPATION

Information should be collected on the minimal regulations and codes of conduct in place to protect trainees and interns to ensure that internships are in line with existing regulations.

CONTACT ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF YOUTH FOR ADVICE ON CONDITIONS GOVERNING INTERNSHIPS

Youth organizations, employers' organizations and trade unions can sometimes offer help in determining whether the basic conditions of internships are met and rights and entitlements are provided. They can also advise on the process to be followed in cases where such conditions, rights and entitlements are not respected.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

INCREASE AND IMPROVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Governments, educators and civil society should work together to improve and expand the delivery of entrepreneurship skills education and programmes. Although formal education is the most convenient way to provide entrepreneurship training, outside programmes should also be developed in order to reach out-of-school and at-risk youth.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

DESIGN SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITH TARGET POPULATIONS IN MIND

In designing relevant support systems, policymakers and practitioners should take into account the dynamism of youth as well as the local context in order to best serve the needs of young entrepreneurs, in particular young women. Programmes supporting young entrepreneurs should be flexible enough to accommodate young people's differences and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

INVOLVE THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND EXISTING ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMES

Young entrepreneurs should be provided with "soft" (non-financial) support, including mentoring. Mentors play a crucial role in facilitating networking and connections and serve as positive role models. Young entrepreneurs who are mentored appropriately are far more likely to succeed in their endeavours.

INCREASE ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Increased access to financial resources and services is needed to facilitate successful youth entrepreneurship worldwide. The public and financial sectors should work together to develop better funding policies and mechanisms specifically targeting young entrepreneurs.

CREATE AND SUSTAIN AN ENABLING YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

Governments, academic institutions, the private sector and others should work together to develop an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship. For example, policymakers can establish legal and financial frameworks to encourage entrepreneurship, the education system can provide an appropriate learning environment and relevant practical training such as facilitating technology exchange and innovation, including ICT training, and support of youth participation in research and entrepreneurship centres. Private sector entities can provide knowledge, expertise, social capital and financial support.

TRADE UNIONS

ENHANCE EDUCATION ON LABOUR RIGHTS

Adequately educating young people about their labour rights is essential for their full economic participation. Educational institutions (from primary to post-secondary levels) should form partnerships with trade unions and Governments to ensure that young people are made aware of their rights in the workplace—long before they start their first job.

<p>CHALLENGE POLITICAL APATHY AND EMPOWER YOUNG WORKERS TO GUIDE LEGISLATIVE CHANGE</p>	<p>Governments should actively involve young workers and unionized youth in the development and improvement of labour legislation and should promote their participation and representation in government structures and processes.</p>
<p>CREATE DECENT JOBS FOR YOUTH</p>	<p>Youth employment policies must recognize the labour rights of youth and support the role of trade unions in protecting young workers. These policies should facilitate the creation of decent work opportunities, moving away from the view of youth as a source of low-wage labour. Governments must consider the potential of youth in the development of national education and employment policies, working to ensure that the two are mutually supportive through the creation of internships, apprenticeships and vocational training.</p>
<p>ENSURE EQUALITY THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING</p>	<p>Unions should use collective bargaining to reduce gender and age inequalities in the workplace. Unions tend to be large and powerful enough to bargain effectively for fair treatment of their members, addressing problems of discrimination based on gender, age or experience and working to reduce wage and entitlement differentials.</p>
<p>INCREASE RESEARCH AND DIALOGUE</p>	<p>Global stakeholders such as the United Nations and the International Labour Organization must continue to provide support for research and discussion on young people’s rights in the workplace, creating a space for a broader dialogue about strengthening the collective capacity and power of youth to assert their labour rights.</p>
<p>INCREASE UNIONIZATION</p>	<p>Unions should connect with young employees to organize in new workplaces and sectors and should stand ready to defend and actively work to expand legislated labour rights. Governments should adopt legislation to facilitate the organizing of workers by workplace or sector to ensure that as many workers as possible are covered by collective agreements. Private sector employers should collaborate with workers and unions in the creation of fair and safe workplaces.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Young people participate in political life for a multitude of reasons and in a wide variety of ways. Low electoral participation and declining levels of engagement in party politics point to young people’s disillusionment with the Government and formal political processes. At the same time, institutional and legal barriers to young people’s participation, such as age restrictions in running for political office, have excluded many youth from institutional political processes. This exclusion undermines the representativeness and legitimacy of political systems and structures—and in many cases leads young people to seek alternative methods of political engagement. Through protests, demonstrations and digital activism, young people are expressing their opinions and demanding a greater say in political processes and outcomes. At the same time, the violent or extremist activity of some young people is indicative of the failure to adequately involve youth and meet youth development challenges.

Ensuring young people’s meaningful involvement in institutionalized political processes is essential. Efforts to enhance such participation should be coupled with efforts to engage with youth using new ICT, social media and other forums and platforms through which young people connect and communicate.

The recommendations below focus on ways to further enhance young people’s political engagement.

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

<p>PRIORITIZE YOUTH ISSUES AND INCLUDE YOUTH IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES</p>	<p>Governments should assign priority to the concerns of youth and maintain an open dialogue with them. Young people—including activists—should be actively encouraged to participate in efforts to articulate and achieve political goals.</p>
<p>EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS</p>	<p>Peer-to-peer mechanisms can be used to foster youth engagement. “Champion schemes” have proved effective as a recruiting tool, with youth urging or inspiring “people like them” to become more engaged.</p>
<p>IMPROVE YOUTH REPRESENTATION AND THE POLITICS OF PRESENCE</p>	<p>Measures such as the introduction of quotas or the creation of all-female candidate shortlists should be adopted to improve the representation of young people (especially female youth) in national parliaments and other decision-making bodies. Similar steps should be taken to ensure a more balanced representation of young women and youth from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds in the youth wings of political parties and youth representative bodies (such as youth parliaments and councils).</p>
<p>STRENGTHEN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION</p>	<p>Citizenship education should be introduced/improved and standardized in schools and in institutions of higher learning.</p>

TRANSITIONS IN POWER

<p>OPEN CHANNELS FOR INTERACTION</p>	<p>Institutional channels should be provided for direct interaction between government officials and youth to facilitate communication and joint action in policy development.</p>
<p>DECENTRALIZE POWER</p>	<p>Some decentralization is needed to facilitate youth access to the political process at the community level. For example, youth groups might bring members of parliament to gatherings of young constituents for consultations on education, unemployment, and other areas of special concern.</p>
<p>PROMOTE MEDIATION AND PARTICIPATION IN RESOLVING CONFLICT</p>	<p>Mechanisms should be created to promote inclusive institutionalized dialogue and participation in mediation and decision-making, in order to facilitate conflict resolution at the community and national levels in post-transition countries. Modules and texts on mediation should be developed for use in training by youth-led civil society organizations and political parties.</p>
<p>ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO SERVE AS ELECTION OBSERVERS</p>	<p>Youth should act as election observers, sit on national election commissions, and serve as polling station workers.</p>
<p>STRENGTHEN YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PARTIES</p>	<p>When political parties have strong youth wings and when youth quotas are introduced for central bureaus and decision-making committees, young people are better positioned to have a direct voice in policymaking.</p>
<p>ESTABLISH QUOTAS FOR YOUTH REPRESENTATION AND ENSURE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION</p>	<p>Quotas need to be introduced for youth on parliamentary lists and for youth participation in national dialogue processes. Steps should be taken to ensure that there is a commitment to meaningful participation, wherein youth are included not to fill quotas but to participate in actual decision-making throughout the electoral cycle (before, during and after elections).</p>
<p>ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES</p>	<p>Young people should be encouraged and provided space to share their experiences—through youth networks, across party lines, and within civil society—so that they can benefit from lessons learned and best practices.</p>

NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT

FACILITATE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Governments and policymakers can address political disillusionment and disenfranchisement by restoring political agency to young people, by providing them the means to become agents of positive change within their own societies, by teaching conventional political literacy and socialization, and by exploring and endorsing alternative forms of engagement that may be more appealing to a younger cohort.

Avenues for young people to legitimately express discontent with and grievances against the political establishment need to be created—and their concerns must be taken seriously.

CREATE INCLUSIVE IDENTITIES

More progressive and inclusive forms of citizenship should be promoted. Youth (and minority populations in particular) must be made to feel as if they belong and are not being marginalized; diversity, human rights and individual freedoms must be respected and supported. Steps should also be taken to eliminate intolerance, sexism, racism and xenophobia, and their highly corrosive effects on community cohesion, healthy identity development and civic responsibility need to be highlighted.

ADDRESS GRIEVANCES AND NARRATIVES OF VICTIMHOOD

Grievances and narratives of victimhood, whether real or perceived, should be addressed so young people know that their concerns are taken seriously.

ADDRESS SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

The international community should address all forms of socioeconomic inequality by pushing for better governance, increased transparency, and greater democratization. This is particularly important in post-conflict States.

DIGITAL ACTIVISM

SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND ACCESS OF A RELIABLE, FREE AND OPEN INTERNET

Efforts must be stepped up to ensure that youth have reliable, open access to the Internet for social, political, economic and educational purposes. Action is needed to increase the availability of reliable broadband Internet access to youth, particularly those living in least developed countries.

Efforts are needed to combat the suppression and mass surveillance of online activity, as both inhibit political expression, and to address oppression and harassment online.

<p>TEACH DIGITAL AND CIVIC SKILLS TOGETHER</p>	<p>Youth should be developing digital media production and programming skills while also being exposed to political knowledge and critical and systems thinking applied to social and political problems and changemaking.</p> <p>Educators should provide young people with opportunities to apply these skills in practical projects focused on changemaking at the local level. Such projects allow youth to test their mental models of theories of change, construct new media or technologies with a purpose, and gain confidence in their ability to assume a civic leadership role.</p>
<p>ENSURE DIVERSITY IN DESIGN</p>	<p>Ensuring that future technologies are inclusive and representative in terms of who can use them and how they can be used requires a community of designers characterized by diversity—in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language and socioeconomic status—who can design with that diversity in mind.</p> <p>Access must be provided to digital tools, relevant learning opportunities, and pathways to political participation that validate youth as effective citizens.</p>
<p>FUND DIGITAL ACTIVISM IMPACT STUDIES</p>	<p>Funding should be provided to support research on the evolving technology and impact of digital activism. Politically engaged youth can and should be at the forefront of this research as both practitioners and scholars.</p>
<p>DEFINE THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE: TAKE THE LEAD AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY</p>	<p>Youth should support their peers through collaboration, mentoring and advocacy to ensure that more young people can participate civically and politically using digital tools. Youth who ascend to leadership roles in traditional institutions of corporate or government power should push for reforms that make those institutions more accessible, transparent and responsive to current and future generations of actualizing citizens.</p>
<p>DEFINE THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS: ADDRESS MISTRUST BY ENGAGING WITH YOUTH</p>	<p>Governments may be able to address the mistrust and disengagement characteristically associated with traditional political processes by engaging more authentically with youth both online and offline. This means not only promoting civic hacking or creating more efficient channels of official communication and partnership, but also strengthening protections for freedom of speech, assembly, the press, and privacy.</p> <p>In abidance with the rule of law and respect for human rights, governments should engage further through the provision of public services; access to public information and open government; accountability; and inclusive decision-making and responsiveness.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Growing recognition of the value youth engagement adds to the development process has led to a shift in how young people participate at the community level. Stakeholders, including youth themselves, have become progressively more aware of the personal and community benefits of youth engagement, and young people today are becoming more and more involved as collaborators, team members, leaders and decision makers within their communities. Such engagement often sets a young person on a lifetime course of broader engagement in political and economic life. Through their participation in voluntary activity, peacebuilding and sport for development, young people have been key stakeholders in shaping and contributing to community development. At the same time, the development and use of social media platforms and new ICTs has allowed young people to engage in new and innovative ways at the community level, further changing the landscape and allowing young people greater opportunities for engagement.

The benefits of such engagement and approaches to better supporting community participation among youth are outlined in the recommendations below.

VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY

ENABLE YOUTH TO SHAPE VOLUNTEERING

Policymakers and programme coordinators need to adapt approaches to fit the needs and motivations of young volunteers. Agencies, organizations and Governments should create an environment that enables diverse groups of youth to shape the respective agendas on what youth volunteering should be. In particular, efforts to ensure the meaningful engagement of young women should be undertaken at all levels.

ENSURE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A SAY IN THEIR VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT

Young people should have a greater say in defining the terms of their voluntary engagement. There should be open discussion about the length and conditions of the volunteer activity, including whether or not any stipends for living expenses or compensation are offered.

PEACEBUILDING

<p>DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING AND IDENTIFY YOUTH NEEDS AND PRIORITIES</p>	<p>A comprehensive and nuanced understanding of youth and their contributions to peacebuilding should be developed, including on the needs and priorities of youth. In particular the specific needs and situation of young women should be given attention. This will require further analysis of holistic and cross-sectoral theories of change.</p>
<p>ACKNOWLEDGE THE DIVERSITY OF YOUTH</p>	<p>It is important to acknowledge the diversity of youth experiences rather than simply focusing on youth as victims, troublemakers or peacemakers in conflict settings. Young people participate in informal governance and peace structures in a wide range of contexts outside of those affected by armed conflict. More youth-led research and analysis is needed to create a better understanding of such diversity so that positive youth voices and identities are given the attention they deserve.</p>
<p>ENSURE THE INCLUSION OF ALL YOUTH</p>	<p>Respect the experiences of all young people and develop targeted strategies to include youth from different backgrounds. Avoid stereotypical assumptions about gender norms and focus on the roles that girls, boys, young men, young women, and young transgender individuals can play in peacebuilding.</p>
<p>PRIORITISE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION</p>	<p>Enable young people's ownership, leadership, and accountability in peacebuilding processes and projects by involving young people in all phases of programming and policy development. Platforms and mechanisms for youth engagement in decision-making should be created.</p>
<p>ENSURE THAT EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH POLICIES ARE ADOPTED</p>	<p>Governments should ensure that national youth policies are evidence-based, cross-sectoral, and are designed with the active participation of youth.</p>
<p>SUPPORT YOUTH MONITORING AND EVALUATION</p>	<p>Practitioners should develop programmes that provide youth with the ability to monitor and evaluate their own work to support their development and growth.</p>
<p>INVOLVE YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS AS ADVOCATES</p>	<p>Practitioners should explore the possibility of engaging youth-led organizations as advocates of youth inclusion and involvement in policy decisions. Providing advocacy training would offer members of these organizations the opportunity to enhance their peacebuilding and mediation skills.</p>
<p>STRENGTHEN YOUTH-LED DIALOGUE IN THE COMMUNITY</p>	<p>In addition to facilitating communication between decision makers and youth, young people should engage in dialogue with the surrounding community as a means of establishing accountability and securing local and regional support.</p>
<p>ENGAGE CHILDREN AS PEACEBUILDERS</p>	<p>In order to promote continuity and strengthen the impact of their participation, children should be engaged as peacebuilders from a young age. Child and youth participation in peacebuilding must be supported by multiple stakeholders in a multitude of ways in order to strengthen the impact of their contributions.</p>

SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

FACILITATE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Young people should be actively involved as both leaders and informants in the design of sport for youth development programmes so that it may be determined from youth themselves what is wanted and needed. Young people should be involved in the inception, adaptation and outreach of sport for youth development initiatives.

DESIGN POLICIES AND PROVIDE FUNDING FOR SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Government policies and educational curricula should be designed or adapted to ensure that the potential of sport can be actualized to benefit youth on multiple levels. Funding support and a safe and accessible sport infrastructure should also be provided to engage as many youth as possible.

PROMOTE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COOPERATION

Governments should cooperate with a wide range of stakeholders from various fields and sectors (including sport and academia), utilizing existing expertise in the development of sport for youth development programmes.

IMPLEMENT PROGRAMMES FOR MARGINALIZED YOUTH

Programmes should be implemented for marginalized youth, including migrant youth and youth with disabilities, in the areas where they feel safest and most at home.

* M.T.A. Lopes Cardozo and others, *Literature Review: Youth Agency, Peacebuilding and Education* (Amsterdam, Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding, 2015). Available from <http://learningforpeace.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Youth-Literature-Review-May15.pdf>.