



Youth2030: First Interim Review Executive Summary

YOUTH
2030



Foreword

The United Nations System-wide Youth Strategy, Youth2030, was launched in 2018 as a first-of-its-kind framework to drive the system's work with and for youth.

As we approach nearly six years since the inception of the strategy, our world confronts compounded global challenges – from the climate crisis to deepening inequalities and persistent conflicts – resulting in major set-backs in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Yet, amidst these challenges lies an unprecedented opportunity to prioritize youth issues on global, regional and national agendas, working with young people as full-fledged partners at every step of the way. The establishment of the United Nations Youth Office by the General Assembly marks a significant step in this direction.

Youth2030: First Interim Review report arrives at a critical juncture in this dynamic global context. It assesses the progress made by the United Nations System in implementing the Youth Strategy, identifies lessons learned and outlines areas for further improvement.

I commend the leadership of the Youth Policy Labs for driving this review and appreciate the collaboration of United Nations entities and country teams, Governments and youth partners who supported this initiative.

The insights and actionable recommendations from this review will help set the stage for the next phase of Youth2030 implementation.

I look forward to our continued efforts in creating a world where every young person's human rights are realized, where every young person is empowered to reach their full potential, and where their agency, resilience and positive contributions as agents of change are recognized.

Felipe Paullier

Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs

Executive Summary

*This report presents insights from the first interim review of Youth2030, the United Nations system-wide Youth Strategy. Launched nearly six years into its implementation and in a global context impacted by ongoing crises and emerging opportunities, **Youth2030: First Interim Review** conducted by a team of external experts reflects on achievements, lessons learned, and recommendations for boosting progress towards 2030 in line with the acceleration efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.*

1. Context

The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, António Guterres, launched [Youth2030, the UN system-wide Youth Strategy](#), on 24 September 2018, aiming to transform the Organization's work with and for youth at all levels. It emphasizes two main aims: (a) to address the needs, build the agency and advance the rights of young people in all their diversity, and (b) to ensure young people's engagement and participation in the implementation, review, and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. The Youth Strategy outlines its programme priorities under **five priority areas** and the shifts within the UN system under **four foundational areas**.

Priority areas

**Engagement,
participation
and advocacy**

**Informed
and healthy
foundations**

**Economic
empowerment
through decent
work**

**Youth and
human rights**

**Peace and
resilience-
building**

Foundational areas

**Leadership
example — Youth
in the UN**

**The UN as a
knowledge and
innovation pioneer**

**The UN as an
investment and
solutions catalyst**

**The UN as an
accountability
leader**

Nearly six years since its inception, Youth2030 has gained significant traction within the system. According to the Youth2030 Progress Report 2024, currently the Youth Strategy is actively implemented by 58 UN entities (of which 50 are reporting) and all 132 UN country teams (UNCTs). The progress report also emphasizes that significant acceleration is needed at all levels to achieve the Youth Strategy's goals.

The world is off-track to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Global progress has been significantly hindered by factors such as the climate crisis, conflicts, geopolitical tensions, persisting inequalities, rising living costs, demographic shifts, rapidly evolving job markets, migration, and broader societal developments such as a pushback on human rights and fundamental freedoms, shrinking civic space, and misinformation.

However, efforts are being intensified from the local to the global levels to regain lost ground and accelerate progress towards the global goals. To drive this process, in September 2021, the Secretary-General outlined a vision in [Our Common Agenda](#) report to turbocharge the path to 2030 and reshape global cooperation. The report represents an urgent call to strengthen solidarity with the world's young people and future generations. Since its launch, numerous recommendations, many pertinent to youth, have advanced and are at various stages of implementation. The Secretary-General also issued a series of policy briefs on key topics, including one on strengthening [Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-Making Processes](#).

Among the first recommendations from the Our Common Agenda report to come to fruition was the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office by General Assembly resolution [76/306](#), which marked a milestone in Member States' commitment to youth affairs across all pillars of the UN's work – peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. Led by the youngest Assistant Secretary-General in the history of the UN, the United Nations Youth Office integrated the former Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

Moreover, internal transformations within the UN are at the core of the vision to course correct and put the world back on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030. This vision - [UN 2.0](#) – represents a commitment from the Organization's leadership to rejuvenate the system to ensure it is better equipped to support Member States in the twenty-first century.

In this context, the Youth2030 High-level Steering Committee (HLSC) commissioned the first interim review of Youth2030. The HLSC is an intergenerational committee that strategically guides the implementation of the Youth Strategy by leveraging expertise from UN leadership alongside insights and solutions from youth-led organizations, networks and movements. This interim review seeks to assess the UN's progress in implementing the Youth Strategy, draw lessons learned thus far, and identify areas for further improvement on the planned course of action. It also examines the changing environment so as to formulate recommendations for the remainder of the implementation period.

2. Methodology overview

The review assesses the progress made in implementing Youth2030 and emphasizes the achievement of its two primary aims. Carried out in 2023, the review utilized a mixed-method approach, combining insights from a desk review of self-reported data from the UN system and published reports on relevant youth issues and global contexts, online surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews with key stakeholders such as UN entities, 33 UNCTs, Government representatives, and Youth2030 governance and coordination structures. Some 750 respondents completed the online surveys, complemented by 12 focus group discussions and 15 interviews conducted at the country level, along with five focus group discussions and two interviews conducted globally. The insights presented in the report are synthesized from data and information gathered from these diverse sources.

3. Findings

3.1. Overall findings

The implementation of Youth2030 has lived up to its intent. Significant progress has been made to advance it at all levels. Over the years, the number of UN entities reporting on Youth2030 has steadily increased, rising from 33 in 2020 to 50 in 2023 (with a higher number contributing to the Youth Strategy’s goals but not involved in reporting). Notably, Youth2030 has successfully attracted participation from several UN entities that historically did not focus on youth issues. At the same time, all operational UNCTs (130 in 2020, 132 in 2023) are actively implementing the Youth Strategy.

While there is overall progress, much acceleration is needed to achieve the goals and the 2024 milestones. Also, variations in the rate and effectiveness of implementation are evident between UNCTs, within and between regions, and among UN entities.

The review also reveals that young people perceive greater progress towards the Youth Strategy’s first aim compared with assessments by Governments and UNCTs. Governments generally view progress on the second aim positively, albeit less optimistically than UNCTs and young people.

Youth2030 Aim 1	Youth2030 Aim 2
To address the needs, build the agency, and advance the rights of young people in all their diversity.	To ensure young people’s engagement and participation in the implementation, review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda.

3.2. Priority areas

UN entities' contributions to Youth2030 priority areas have consistently aligned with their mandates. Across all respondents, there is a positive assessment of progress in the five priority areas outlined in the Youth Strategy, with **"Engagement, participation, and advocacy"** showing the most significant advancement. Overall, young people, actively engaged in the implementation of the Youth Strategy across various levels, assess progress more positively than Governments or UNCTs.

However, respondents highlight opportunities for improvement across all priority areas. Entities reporting across all three cycles of (2021, 2022, and 2023) generally view progress more favourably than those reporting in one or two cycles.

The work of UN entities and the collective actions of UNCTs at the national level have positively influenced government efforts concerning youth. These efforts include:

- ♦ Providing data and evidence to shape national legal frameworks and policies.
- ♦ Offering technical assistance to develop or update national youth policies, with a focus on Leaving No One Behind.
- ♦ Capacity-building for Governments and stakeholders.
- ♦ Implementing projects that contribute to national impact.
- ♦ Supporting innovative initiatives with and for youth to address challenges and gaps.
- ♦ Facilitating youth engagement in policymaking and Voluntary National Reviews.
- ♦ Bridging global agendas with local contexts.

The UN also plays a crucial role in nurturing and empowering youth-led organizations, networks and movements to catalyse positive social change. Support for youth networks, particularly those led by or supporting young women, includes financial backing, capacity-building for youth organizations and amplifying youth voices.

3.3. Foundational areas

The UN System is advancing in the Youth Strategy's foundational areas. However, progress has been uneven, with significant strides in some areas while others require greater momentum. UNCTs highlight **"the UN as an accountability leader"** on youth issues as the area showing the most progress, whereas **"the UN as a knowledge and innovation pioneer"** as the area that has seen the least advancement. Meanwhile, UN entities identify **"Leadership example – Youth in the UN"** as

the most improved area, with **“the UN as an investment and solutions catalyst”** and **“the UN as an accountability leader”** lagging. The review identifies a robust integration of youth empowerment and development as priorities in the UN System’s strategic plans across different levels but notes the absence of comprehensive mechanisms to track youth investments across the system.

While the review acknowledges the pioneering efforts of several UN entities in strengthening internships and attracting and retaining young talent in their organizations, it notes a clear need to ensure policy coherence, which currently serves as a critical barrier, to accelerate these areas of work across the UN System, particularly within the UNCTs.

A significant contribution of Youth2030 has been strengthening inter-agency coordination and collaboration on youth issues at both country and global levels. The concurrent rollout of the Youth Strategy and UN Development System reform processes has positively influenced coherence, collaboration, and advocacy for youth issues, and youth engagement in SDG actions. Leadership from Resident Coordinators and the Joint SDG Fund (where available) has played a crucial role in facilitating coherence and collaboration. Alignment with national and global priorities, availability of guidance, and opportunities for capacity development have facilitated strong performance by UNCTs and UN entities in implementing the Youth Strategy. However, challenges such as alignment issues, financial constraints and lack of human resources remain significant barriers.

3.4. Meaningful youth engagement

Meaningful youth engagement is at the heart of Youth2030. All respondent categories – UN entities, UNCTs, Governments and youth – report progress in integrating youth voices into the UN’s initiatives. Youth respondents, actively engaged in the implementation of the Youth Strategy across various levels, express more favourable views compared with other groups. They highlight the role of the Youth Strategy in advancing their agenda. Also, UN entities participating in all three reporting cycles of Youth2030 note a stronger impact on youth engagement in their contexts compared with those participating in fewer cycles.

Significant and encouraging progress has been made in how the UN engages youth in shaping country-level work. For instance, youth involvement in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework processes has increased ten-fold between 2020 and 2023. Moreover, diverse groups of young people are engaged in strategic planning, policy advocacy with Governments, and project design and implementation. Networks of young women and grassroots-level youth are notably active participants.

However, policies and processes for youth engagement need to be strengthened across all levels of the UN System. A cultural shift is necessary to ensure that youth engagement becomes genuinely meaningful.

3.5. Governance and coordination structures

The review underscores the role played by the existing Youth2030 governance and coordination structures –specifically the High-level Steering Committee, the Joint Working Group and its Task Teams, and the Youth2030 Secretariat (formerly under the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth and now within the United Nations Youth Office) – in providing strategic direction and fostering collaboration within the UN System during the initial implementation years. However, the review also identifies a clear need for increased youth representation and more robust and inclusive youth engagement within these structures. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for broader participation of UN entities and enhanced involvement of regional structures and UNCTs in Youth2030 governance structures.

4. Recommendations

While progress is evident in implementing Youth2030, there is a pressing need to accelerate the pace. To enhance this process, the review highlights the following concrete recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Boost Youth2030 alignment with global, regional and national actions and pathways for SDG acceleration anchored in the six key transitions, with meaningful youth engagement at the centre

Six transitions: investment pathways to deliver the SDGs

Rooted in the 17 Goals, six transformative entry points or key transitions can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs:

- (1) food systems
- (2) energy access and affordability
- (3) digital connectivity
- (4) education
- (5) jobs and social protection
- (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Learn more [here](#).

Our Common Agenda

Our Common Agenda is the Secretary-General's vision for the future of global cooperation. It calls for inclusive, networked and effective multilateralism to better respond and deliver for the people and planet and to get the world back on track by turbocharging action on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). It outlines possible solutions to address the gaps and risks that have emerged since 2015, calling for a [Summit of the Future](#) in September 2024.

Read the report [here](#).

Recommendation 1 calls for:

- (a) Engaging youth in the operationalization of the Our Common Agenda policy brief on “Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-making Processes” and other relevant briefs at all levels;
- (b) Engaging youth in the implementation of global commitments such as the Transforming Education Summit, the Summit of the Future and A Pact for the Future, Beijing Declaration, Financing for Development, and more, anchored in the six key transitions, through support for designing policies and implementation at scale;
- (c) Equipping young people, UN youth focal points (and other relevant focal points) in UN entities, UNCTs and Governments with skills and expertise for integrated policy support, emphasizing tools like strategic foresight, design thinking and participatory approaches;
- (d) Building a portfolio of youth-relevant strategic initiatives in line with these SDG transitions and engaging young people as partners in developing a pipeline of actionable national projects and innovative initiatives at scale, involving both public and private sectors.

Recommendation 2: Accelerate implementation of Youth2030 with a focus on internal transformations within the UN linked to UN 2.0 priorities

UN 2.0 and the Quintet of Change

“UN 2.0” encapsulates the Secretary-General's vision of a modern UN family, rejuvenated by a forward-thinking culture and empowered by cutting-edge skills for the twenty-first century – to turbocharge the UN's support to people and planet. It is based on a fusion of innovation, data, digital, foresight and behavioural science skills, and culture, known as the “Quintet of Change”.

Learn more [here](#).

Did you know?

According to data from the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2022:

- ♦ The average age of UN personnel is 46.1 years
- ♦ Less than 4 per cent of UN personnel are under 30 years of age.

Read the report [here](#).

Recommendation 2 calls for:

- (a) Rejuvenating the UN workforce and enhancing its composition, skills and diversity through implementing targeted talent management strategies to attract and retain young people and investing in a dynamic and balanced multigenerational workforce capable of meeting current and evolving needs of the Organization;
- (b) Transforming internship programmes in the UN and ensuring that such programmes are coherent, fair, inclusive and accessible for all young people everywhere;
- (c) Fostering a UN-supported knowledge ecosystem on a range of youth issues, leveraging diverse data, evidence and knowledge from various processes, including SDG processes, youth-led research and Youth2030 reporting cycles;
- (d) Brokering strategic partnerships, including with academia, think tanks, the private sector and other stakeholders to foster innovation, scale-up results and boost technical, technological and financial resources;
- (e) Developing a UN Youth Academy or partnering with existing academies as platforms for scaling capacity-building, skill development, and knowledge dissemination globally;
- (f) Unlocking funding from diverse sources and scaling funding mechanisms like the Joint SDG Funds to advance youth-led and youth-focused initiatives. Establishing a marker system to track investments for youth across the UN;
- (g) Scaling up and strengthening youth advisory bodies and relevant mechanisms, exploring technology and online engagement to diversify models of inclusive and accessible engagement, ensuring active communication, outreach, accountability and transparency, and enhancing policies and processes for meaningful youth participation in the UN System at all levels.

Recommendation 3: Revamp Youth2030 global governance structures

Recommendation 3 calls for:

- (a) Expanding the Youth2030 High-level Steering Committee and Joint Working Group, anchored in the United Nations Youth Office, to secure broader representation from UN entities, regional commissions and UNCTs, as well as enhance buy-in, collaboration and coherence in the UN's work with and for youth;
- (b) Broadening participation of youth-led organizations, networks, and movements in Youth2030 global governance and coordination structures and investing in more robust, accessible, and inclusive youth engagement within by tapping into innovative tools and leveraging digital technologies.

Recommendation 4: Prioritize high-level political engagement and UN leadership engagement.

Recommendation 4 calls for:

- (a) Moving the UN System at the leadership level, including by engaging with the UN System's senior management groups, positioning youth-related issues and meaningful youth engagement in the forefront of global affairs, and integrating the youth agenda as a strategic priority;
- (b) Emphasizing high-level political engagement with Member States on Youth2030, aiming to advance the Youth Strategy's implementation within UN entities and UNCTs through Member States' involvement in entity boards and at the national level in Cooperation Framework agreements, to promote national youth agendas and meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making with Governments.

With less than six years left until 2030, the implementation of these recommendations during the Youth Strategy's second phase (2025–2030) will be crucial to leverage opportunities and advance the UN's work with and for youth at all levels, championing meaningful youth engagement at every step of the way. The leadership of the UN Youth Office is critical in shaping the future.



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