

29 May 2014

THE GLOBAL YOUTH CALL

“Prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda”

This Call reflects an unprecedented global consensus on concrete proposals for target areas on youth in the post-2015 development agenda. It is based on the top five thematic priorities of over 1.3 million young people who voted in the [MyWorld2015](#) survey out of a total 2.1 Million respondents – Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship, Health, Good Governance, and Peace and Stability.

A team of youth-led organizations and UN entities worked from **January 2014** to May 2014 to consolidate the proposed target areas with the participation of:

- Over 1700 youth organizations that participated in the Crowdsourcing Platform of the *Global Partnership on Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*,ⁱ
- The UN Major Group on Children and Youth,
- Global networks of international NGOs, youth organizations and regional youth platforms, including the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO, a network of 26 international youth-led NGOs and regional youth platforms), the Alliance for International Youth Development (consisting of 22 international NGOs),
- Various National Youth Councils,
- United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD, consisting of 40 UN entities)

And building on:

- Ideas submitted by participants of the Crowdsourcing Platform
- Outcomes of recent national, regional and global youth consultations and meetings (See *Annex*)
- UN Development Group National and Global Thematic Consultations on Post-2015
- The Colombo Declaration on Youth made at the World Conference on Youth and its call for a standalone goal, clear targets and indicators on youth
- Outcomes of various Regional and National Youth Forums

The Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the signatories of this call urge Member States to incorporate the following youth-focused target areas in the post-2015 development agenda:

- Ensure **universal access to quality education** for all children and youth.
- Ensure all young people achieve recognized and measurable **learning outcomes** with quality formal, non-formal and vocational education and training that equips them with the relevant knowledge and skills to lead safe, healthy and productive lives, to meet the demands of the job market and to foster global citizenship.
- Reduce the number of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) and increase access to **decent work and livelihoods** amongst young people by providing access to learning opportunities, putting in place school-to-work transition policies, strengthening public private partnerships for better skills-matching, and opportunities for financing and entrepreneurship, and promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- Ensure young people’s meaningful and inclusive **participation** in decision making processes,

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governance and peacebuilding, and develop, implement and adequately fund cross-sectorial youth policies and review mechanisms, which include for the World Programme of Action for Youth, at the local, national, regional and global levels.

- Improve the **physical, social and mental health** status of adolescents and youth, promote healthy behaviours for reducing the risk of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and substance abuse, and increase access to affordable, acceptable and quality-assured health services, including sexual and reproductive health and HIV.
- Ensure universal access to affordable, acceptable and quality adolescent-and-youth-friendly **health services and information**
- Eliminate all forms of **violence and discrimination** against adolescents and youth, including adolescent girls and young women, including child, early and forced marriage and harmful practices.
- Strengthen collection and analysis of **data** on adolescents and youth, disaggregated by age, sex and marital status, to promote monitoring, evaluation, accountability and transparency.

Let's remember, the world's demographic and development realities mean that the success of the post-2015 development agenda hinges on fulfilling the human rights and meeting the development needs of all young people. Connected to each other like never before, they are driving social progress, inspiring political change and building resilience. Countries with populations composed of large proportions of adolescents and youth can reap a demographic dividend for national development, resilience and sustainability, by investing fully in young people. Countries will need to promote human rights, eliminate all forms of discrimination, address all forms of inequalities, including gender inequality, so adolescents and youth can reach their full potential and in turn shape the development of their families, communities, and countries. Young people – their experience of engagement or of alienation, their inclusion or their marginalization – will determine whether their societies prosper or fail.

Let's ensure, as the global community gathers to review progress made after the Millennium Development Goals and put forth an ambitious and achievable vision for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, that youth priorities and targets are duly included. Investing in young people – particularly those most marginalised - could ensure the success of the agenda more than anything else. A failure to do so could jeopardize it altogether. The Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, in partnership with the United Nations System and all the signatories of the Global Youth Call, urge the international community to put young people at the centre of this agenda. The time for action is now.

Young people today...

- With 1.8 billion strong, the world is home to the largest generation of young people in its history
- Close to 90 percent of the world's youth live in developing countries, where they tend to make up the largest proportion of the population
- More than 500 million youth aged 15 to 24 live on less than \$2 a day
- Some 75 million youth are unemployed, and more than 600 million jobs need to be generated globally in the life span of the new development agenda
- Young people are three times more likely than older segments of the population to be unemployed, and in some countries the youth unemployment rate exceeds 50 per cent
- Some 69 million adolescents of lower secondary school age remain out of school
- In developing countries, 1 in 3 girls is married before her 18th birthday and across the world, more than half of all sexual assaults take place against girls younger than 16
- 1.5 billion persons, the majority of them young people, live in conflict or in fragile situations
- Young people are under-represented and excluded in decision-making processes: Less than 2% of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20s and only 12% are in their 30s.
- Despite significant progress made since the MDGs were adopted, this generation of young people has been left behind. They are still denied the opportunities that they need to realize their full potential

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES: **FROM CONSULTATION TO CONSOLIDATION YOUTH PRIORITIES**

Education:

Ensuring basic literacy and numeracy skills for young people in low-income countries could lift 171 million people out of povertyⁱⁱ, resulting in a 12 per cent cut in global poverty. Despite large gains made in primary education in the past decade, 69 million adolescents of lower secondary school age remain out-of-school. These efforts are further undermined by the low quality of education systems: over 250 million children of primary school age are unable to read or write by the time they reach grade 4. In the least developed countries, one quarter of young men aged 15 to 24 and one third of young women aged 15 to 24 are illiterateⁱⁱⁱ. Yet, educational outcomes for youth have a direct impact on economic growth and stability: ensuring adolescent girls complete education beyond primary level, for example, could add 1.5% per year to the GDP of countries, while ensuring their participation in the job market through education and training could add up to 4.4% per year. The following have been identified as key target areas for education with a focus on the most marginalized^{iv}:

- Ensure universal access to quality primary and post-primary education for all children and young people;
- Ensure all young people achieve recognised and measurable learning outcomes at all levels, made possible through the provision of safe, relevant and quality education by a sufficient number of adequately and well-trained, supported teachers and education infrastructure;
- Ensure all young people have access to with quality formal, non-formal and vocational education and training, which can be provided through governments and partnerships with civil society organisations, private sector and youth organisations as to equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills to lead healthy and productive lives, to meet the demands of the job market and to foster global citizenship;
- Ensure access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), ICT, comprehensive education on human sexuality and life-skills, human rights, peacebuilding, sustainability, and lifelong learning opportunities;
- Increase national budget allocation to education and strengthen the accountability and responsiveness of national governments.

Employment and Entrepreneurship:

In 2013, almost 202 million people were unemployed, of which some 74.5 million were between the ages of 15 and 24. Young people are three times more likely than older sections of the population to be unemployed, and in some countries the youth unemployment rate exceeds 50 per cent. The

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number of young people neither in employment, education or training (NEETs) continues to grow and informal employment remains the norm for young people in many developing economies. Globally, 9 out of 10 jobs are created by the private sector, yet youth frequently lack access to these jobs due to poverty, marginalization, lack of work experience and social capital, poor educational preparation, relevant skills training and mentorship. Young entrepreneurs face similar obstacles, including youth-specific financial services, skills training and support for setting up and managing their own businesses. It is estimated that from 2015 to 2030, the global economy will need to create more than 670 million jobs to contain the current spread of unemployment and cope with the growth in the working age population. The quest for decent work and livelihood opportunities is a universal concern that affects young people in all countries and communities. The post-2015 development agenda should make employment and decent and productive work for young people a reality. Moving away from exploitive work and unpaid traineeships/internships and towards a decent work, which fulfils international standards and ensures equal pay for work of equal value. The following have been identified as key target areas to promote productive and decent work for young people in particular young women and reduce the number of youth not in employment, education or training:

- Put in place school-to-work transition policies to increase employment rates of young women and men, with targeted measures for disadvantaged youth;
- Strengthen partnerships between government, social partners and educators to ensure a better match between the skills of young people and the changing needs of the labour market;
- Provide access to learning opportunities to develop knowledge and skills, including professional, technical, entrepreneurial and vocational training, for work and life;
- Ensure young entrepreneurs' access to tailor-made financial and non-financial services;
- Ensure equality, including gender equality at work, including eliminating the gender pay-gap;
- Ensure universal global access to adequate social protection, including social protection floors, and decent work and livelihoods for young people in the formal and informal sector in accordance with ILO labour standards.

Health:

Adolescence is a critical life stage characterized by rapid physical, emotional and social development, during which every person develops the capabilities required for a productive, healthy and satisfying life. Health and development during this period affects health in adult years. Nearly two thirds of premature deaths and one third of the total disease burden in adults are associated with conditions or behaviours that began in youth, including tobacco use, a lack of physical activity, unprotected sex or exposure to violence^v. An estimated 1.3 million adolescents died in 2012, mostly from preventable or treatable diseases. According to the "Health of the World's Adolescents,"¹ the top three causes of death among adolescents include road traffic crashes, HIV and suicide. Young girls continue to carry the heaviest burden of death and disability due to complications relating to pregnancy and childbirth, including unsafe abortions, with complications during pregnancy and childbirth are one of the leading cause of death among 15 to 19 year old girls globally, exceeded only by suicide. And 39% of new HIV infections occur amongst young people, which can be prevented with comprehensive and correct knowledge of how to prevent HIV and access condoms^{vi}. In order to ensure all adolescents and youth enter adulthood with the highest attainable standard of physical, social and mental health, the following have been identified as key target areas for health:

- Ensure universal access to affordable, acceptable and quality adolescent-and-youth- friendly health services and information, including integrated sexual and reproductive health and HIV services, and modern methods of contraceptives;
- Ensure early detection, treatment of and support for mental health issues among adolescents and youth;

¹ World Health Organizations 2014

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- Improve the health status of adolescents and youth by putting in place prevention programmes targeting adolescents and youth, including violence, accidents, injuries and early detection and treatment of mental health issues amongst adolescents and youth;
- Increase investment to promote healthy behaviours and health promotion programmes aimed at reducing risk of NCDs, tobacco use, obesity, violence and accident prevention and harm reduction for substance abuse, including drug use and alcohol;
- Recognize the social and political determinants of health and address all social, economic and political inequality and exclusion as a way to improve the health and well-being of adolescents and youth.

Peace and Security:

Building peaceful, inclusive and safe societies requires the participation and engagement of young people. Globally, the risk of becoming a victim of homicide is highest for young men between 15-29 years, with a homicide rate of 21.2 per 100,000 that is much higher than other age groups^{vii}. Young people aged 10-24 make up over 30% of the world's 42 million displaced by armed conflict. In situations of armed conflict, adolescents are disproportionately targeted for violence, abuse and exploitation, recruitment by armed forces or groups for use as (child) soldiers, and/or trafficked for exploitative labour or commercial sex^{viii}. Young people in conflict settings have even fewer opportunities to access education, opportunities to develop skills and get decent jobs. Humanitarian efforts seldom target youth and they are rarely allowed to participate in decisions affecting their lives. At the same time, it is also young people who hold the keys to sustainable and inclusive peacebuilding. The following have been identified as key target areas for Peace and Security:

- Ensure equitable distribution of development gains to young people to promote safe, peaceful and secure societies;
- Ensure that humanitarian response and peacebuilding efforts address young people's needs and protect their human rights;
- Eliminate all forms of violence against children and youth, including in schools, the household, alternative care, detention centres, and online;
- End all forms of discrimination against girls and young women, including child, early and forced marriage and harmful practices, in particular through empowerment of girls and young women, strengthening their leadership and involving boys and young men in gender equality and ending gender based violence;
- Ensure that all young people participate in peace and human rights education, either through formal or non-formal education, and have access to opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and volunteerism.

Governance and Participation:

"Governance" has been identified as a high priority issue by young people, who want to see governments effectively held to account, and governance structures where young people have access to decision making processes. Concerns around corruption feature strongly in global consultations, together with transparency and accountability. Young people are not represented adequately in formal and political institutions and processes, such as parliaments, political parties, electoral processes and public administrations. Despite the fact that young people disproportionately face poverty and constitute a significant proportion of the population in low-income countries, 2 out of 3 countries do not consult young people as a part of the process of preparing poverty reduction strategies or national development plans. Good governance and the rule of law require the meaningful participation of young people, and in particular young women, in decision-making at all levels, including in the planning, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes, with young people as partners in development. Improved information and communication technology is making it easier for young people to collect and access data and hold decision-makers to account. At local and national level Youth Councils play an important role in bringing together young people and decision makers and best

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practice of co-decision and co-management, appropriate to each body, needs to be further developed at all levels. The following have been identified as key target areas:

- Strengthen inclusive participation of young people (including women) in governance and decision-making processes at the local, national, regional and global levels;
- Develop, implement and adequately fund cross-sectorial youth policies that are evidence-based and include participatory, monitoring and evaluation on a regular basis in accordance with the World Programme for Action on Youth (WPAY);
- Ensure freedom of media, right to information, association, and speech, for all, including the most marginalised youth;
- Strengthen youth-led movements, networks and organisations and improve their access to institutions that affect the lives of young people;
- Encourage and support youth civic engagement and volunteerism for development, including by ensuring education on and awareness of human rights and development;
- Strengthen effective, transparent and accountable institutions at all levels;
- Support and promote increased and equitable access to open, timely, reliable, accessible and quality information, including through ICTs to enable stronger accountability mechanisms and greater youth participation in decision making.

ANNEX II: List of previous consultations, findings, recommendations and policies related to youth

- World Program of Action for Youth for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81);
- The Future We Want: the outcome document of the Rio+20 UNCSA (A/RES/66/288), July 2012;
- Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020: Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, May 2011;
- Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding (A/RES/65/312), July 2011;
- Colombo Declaration on Youth “Mainstreaming Youth in the Post 2015 Development Agenda”, 2014;
- Quito Youth Declaration of the Regional Meeting for the Latin American and Caribbean Youth, 2014;
- Outcome Document of Dubai Regional Arab Youth Meeting, 2014;
- ILO Resolution on “The youth employment crisis: A call for action”,
http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/101stSession/texts-adopted/WCMS_185950/lang-en/index.htm;
- Growth and Employment in the Post-2015 Agenda: Messages from a Global Consultation, September 2013. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/publication/wcms_221951.pdf
- UNDG Report, A Million Voices <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/millionvoices> (2013)
- Final Report on the Global Thematic Consultation on Governance and the Post-2015 Development Framework <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/governance/finalreport> (2013)
- Commonwealth Youth Ministers and Youth Leaders, meeting in Papua New Guinea
- IFMSA Health Priorities Document
- Youth Voices on a Post-2015 World
<http://www.youthpost2015.org/wordpress/report/youthvoices.pdf>
- Report: Incremental Steps in Strengthening Youth Participation in the Development of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, developed for the UN Inter-agency Network on Youth Development
- Beyond 2015: Global Youth Summit - Costa Rica Declaration

ⁱ The online thematic discussions were moderated by the following organizations: Education: [UNICEF](#), the Global education First Initiative ([GEFI](#)); Employment and Entrepreneurship: ILO, UNIDO and the Major Group on Children and Youth ([MGCY](#)); Health: UNFPA, UNAIDS and the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations ([IFMSA](#)); Governance: [UNDP](#), the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations ([ICMYO](#)), [Restless Development](#) and [Plan International](#); Peace and Stability: [UN-HABITAT](#), the UN Peacebuilding Support Office ([PBSO](#)) and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders ([UNOY](#))

ⁱⁱ Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010, Education Counts

ⁱⁱⁱ United Nations Technical Support Team Issues Brief: Education and Culture

^{iv} The ‘most marginalized’, includes but is not limited to girls, adolescents and youth with disabilities; indigenous and minority ethnic groups; young people in poverty; key populations affected with HIV; working children; those living in disadvantaged areas, in informal settlements or on the street; alternative care settings; refugees and migrants; and those affected by emergencies and conflict.

^v WHO http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/adolescent_health/facts/en/index.html

^{vi} UNAIDS Global Report 2013

^{vii} UNODC Global Study on Homicide 2011

^{viii} UNICEF Adolescent programming experiences during conflict and post conflict, case studies 2004