**Youth and the SDGs**

T

oday, there are 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10-24 – they are the largest generation of youth in history. Close to 90 per cent of them live in developing countries, where they make up a large proportion of the population. Their numbers are expected to grow – between 2015 and 2030 alone, about 1.9 billion young people are projected to turn 15 years old. Connected to each other like never before, young people want to and already contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress and inspiring political change. They are also agents of change, mobilizing to advance the Sustainable Development Goals to improve the lives of people and the health of the planet.

Provided with the necessary skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, young people can be a driving force for supporting development and contributing to peace and security. Youth-led organizations need to be encouraged and empowered to participate in translating the 2030 Agenda into local, national and regional policy. They play a significant role in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Agenda as well as in holding governments accountable. With political commitment and adequate resources, young people have the potential to make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all.

**The UN and Youth**

Building on its global [](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Youth-1.png)convening role, the United Nations is uniquely placed to act as a source of protection and support for young people, and a platform through which their needs can be addressed, their voice can be amplified, and their engagement can be advanced.

The UN fully embraces young people’s diversity in all its forms. Therefore, the UN employs and advocates for methods and approaches reflective of this diversity to make sure all young people can reach their full engagement, empowerment and development. The UN recognizes young people as rights-holders, and promotes and facilitates transparency, accountability, and responsiveness from governments, international organizations and others toward young people.

**The Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth**

Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake was appointed [United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth](https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/) in June 2017. As a global advocate for youth, she works to ensure the participation of young people in issues that matter to them, giving them a voice at the UN and around the world. Championing the SDGs, she also brings the work of the UN closer to young people around the world.

The Young Leaders for the SDGs

In September 2016, the inaugural class of 17 Young Leaders was announced. Coming from different backgrounds, sectors and regions, Young Leaders are selected based on their efforts to end poverty, combat climate change and reduce inequalities.

They work with the Envoy on Youth to engage young people in the SDG, advocate for their achievement and contribute to a brain trust supporting the UN’s advocacy efforts to mobilize young people. A new class of Young Leaders will be announced in September 2018, during the UN General Assembly.

**Roles for youth and the SDGs**

1. **Critical thinkers**
   1. Part of being young involves making sense of personal experiences and asking questions about the world around you. Youth have the capacity to identify and challenge existing power structures and barriers to change, and to expose contradictions and biases
2. **Change-makers**
   1. Young people also have the power to act and mobilise others. Youth activism is on the rise the world over, bolstered by broader connectivity and access to social media.
3. **Innovators**
   1. In addition to bringing fresh perspectives, young people often have direct knowledge of and insights into issues that are not accessible to adults. Youth best understand the problems they face and can offer new ideas and alternative solutions.
4. **Communicators**
   1. Outside the international development sector, few people are aware that world leaders have come to a historic, far-reaching agreement to improve the lives of people and the planet by 2030. Young people can be partners in communicating the development agenda to their peers and communities at the local level, as well as across countries and regions.
5. **Leaders**
   1. When young people are empowered with the knowledge of their rights and equipped with leadership skills, they can drive change in their communities and countries. Youth-led organisations and networks, in particular, should be supported and strengthened, because they contribute to the development of civic leadership skills among young people, especially marginalised youth.

**Youth campaigns**

* [Be the Change](http://un.org/sustainabledevelopment/bethechange)
* [LittlexLittle](http://littlexlittle.com/)
* [Not too Young to Run](http://www.nottooyoungtorun.org/)

**Resources for Young People**

* [Lazy Person’s Guide to Saving the World](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction/)
* [SDGs in Action App](http://sdgsinaction.com/)
* [The World’s Largest Lesson](http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/)

Source[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)