

Youth Led Development: A New Deal for Young People

Youth Led Development is a set of principles deployed by UN-Habitat to address the challenges of countries with large youth populations also facing rapid urbanization (see insert).

Youth Led Development does not simply mean that governments and other institutions abandon their responsibility to integrate young people into society. It is a call for these institutions to see young people as their leading asset for development.

Local and national development plans must view all youth as assets. This means contemplating the expected rewards of direct and sustained investments in a full spectrum of engagement activities, that also include the avoided costs of underemployment, idleness, ill health, and crime.

Moreover, as youth are seen as assets worthy of serious investment, the conversation shifts to the serious burden of responsibility that young people themselves must bear.

This perspective opens a social space for young people to practice leadership and self-governance from the individual to communal scale.

The growing phenomenon of state sanctioned youth-led institutions is a prime example of this new perspective. Youth led institutions can be important contributors to the ongoing process of defining and refining youth

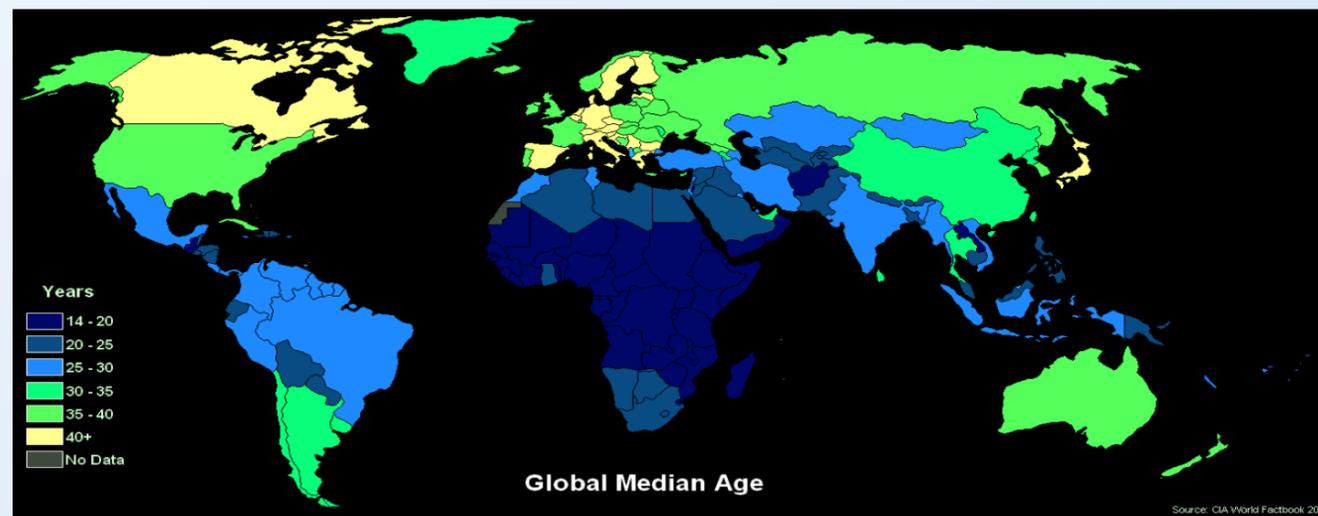
development solutions. They are incubators of leadership skills for many young people who would otherwise never have a chance to exercise their innate talents.

Even seen solely as service delivery agents, youth led organizations can multiply the efforts of other institutional actors to access the hard to reach marginalized youth populations.

But more importantly, state sanctioned and socially supported youth led organizations can become an ongoing symbol of the renewal of the social contract with youth. It implies that society will support those who show leadership and responsibility in organizing themselves for the betterment of themselves and their community.

Youth Led Development Principles

1. Youth should define their own development, goals and objectives
2. Youth should be given a social and physical space to participate in development and to be regularly consulted
3. Adult mentorship and peer-to-peer mentorship should be encouraged
4. Youth should be role models in order to help other youth to engage in development
5. Youth should be integrated into all local and national development programmes and frameworks



UN-Habitat Youth Programmes Overview

There are currently more than 1.3 billion young people aged 15 to 24—a demographic reality unprecedented in human history. Of those 1.3 billion young people, almost 85% live in developing countries, which account for over 90% of the global growth in the population of cities. 60% of this urban population is projected to be less than 18 years of age by 2030.

UN-Habitat recognizes that the scale of this 'Urban Youth Bulge' requires a reformulation of the social contract between young people and their societies. Failure to do so within this crucial 'window of opportunity' risks consigning the largest youth cohort in history to the margins of society, with all the risks that entails.

UN-Habitat seeks to improve the livelihoods of youth, especially those living in slums and unplanned settlements, through their inclusion in governance and the social and economic life of cities. We work towards this by profiling and engaging young people in global, national and local development policy processes.

After a decades-long process to include women in development the central role of women in development is now widely understood. Youth too must be similarly considered and engaged in the development process.

It is time for youth to lead in development.



The Major UN-Habitat Youth Programme Delivery Modalities

Research on Youth and Urbanization

Field programmes have allowed us to generate new insight into the phenomenon of youth and urbanization. These insights have led to an ever expanding evidence base on the effectiveness of various approaches to unlocking the potential of large urban youth populations. Research reports and guides are published to aid local and national government in youth policy formulation.

Urban Youth Fund

The *Urban Youth Opportunities Fund* provides direct micro grant funding of \$5000 to \$25000 USD exclusively to youth led organizations in urban areas. Since 2009, 296 youth groups in 75 countries (28 in Africa; 17 in Asia Pacific; 20 in Latin America and the Caribbean; 10 in the Arab states). Grantees receive capacity building training before undertaking projects in urban entrepreneurship, governance, micro-credit, ICT, and the empowerment of young women.

One Stop Youth Resource Centres

One Stop Youth Resource Centres are multipurpose spaces that run arts, sports, employment generation, entrepreneurship, health services, and ICT programs. Specific arrangements vary by municipality, who determine, with a council of youth led organizations, which programs are needed in the centre. The core budget is usually provided by the local or national government, with other partners contributing funding or in-kind to centre programming.

Youth Mainstreaming - Youth21

UN-Habitat participates in building an international consensus on the importance of the consideration and participation of young people in the global development agenda. Through research, conferences, and strategic communication, we have contributed to the recent establishment of a *UN Special Envoy on Youth*. Further plans are for a Permanent Forum on Youth with global, regional & national youth assemblies.

CROSCUTTING TOPICS OF FOCUS

Employment, entrepreneurship and training for marginalized urban youth

Five hundred million young people will enter the workforce within the next decade. Today, 66 million young people are unemployed and an even higher number are underemployed. The unemployment rate for young people is two to three times higher than for adults. A generation without the hope of a stable job is a burden for the whole of society. For example a UN-Habitat funded project, *Micro entrepreneurship for Young Women in Pakistan* provided beneficiaries with business planning, marketing, accounting training. After the training, the 22 women requested and received a loan from Khyber Bank and First Women Bank to start their businesses.



Youth in governance through information & communication technology (ICT)

Youth populations are higher than any point in history, and their technological affinity represents a dynamic human resource available to cities. To support this UN-Habitat funds various innovative youth-led ICT initiatives on employment, access to affordable housing/secure land tenure, safer cities and participation in decision-making, and particularly considering disadvantaged youths in slum areas. For example in the *Digital Expression Project in Yemen*, young people are rehabilitated and trained in script writing, directing and editing television short films, news reporting, and writing short news stories.



Young women's civic engagement, employment, education and safety

Young women face additional challenges to their empowerment through gender based discrimination and sexual violence. Interestingly it has been found that women can be more responsible in applying development funds to help their family and community. A good example is *The Girls to Mothers*, a UN-Habitat supported project developed in **Nigeria**, where small loans were given to young girls and sex workers in slum areas to improve their economic situation through starting their own businesses. Fifteen girls benefited from the project, three using the new income to go back to school and improve their education. The others continued their business activities.



Social and physical spaces to overcome the exclusion of young people in cities

Many rapidly urbanizing areas lack physical space for young people to access the information and training for their own empowerment. UN-Habitat supported youth centres exist in several countries. The centre in Kigali, **Rwanda** is used by over 1000 youth per day, and is being replicated nationally. However, social space is also important. For example a UN-Habitat sponsored **Nepalese** youth group is using radio broadcasts to increase the self-worth of young people living in slums. The youth led radio programme brings youth together to talk about stigma, slum life, and their shared challenges and visions.