



Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: The Role of Youth in Localizing Sustainable Development

Introduction

Youth comprises more than 1.8 billion people globally and represents a critical resource for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, young people are often marginalized in decision-making processes at all levels—from local to global. The question of youth's role in localizing sustainable development goals has become particularly urgent given the need to adapt global objectives to the specific conditions of different communities and regions. The localization of SDGs requires active participation of young people as innovators, activists, and leaders capable of implementing sustainable practices at the local level and ensuring the long-term viability of these initiatives.

Definition of Key Terms

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — 17 global goals adopted by the UN in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda, aimed at eradicating poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity.

For more information, see the UN website: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Localization of SDGs — the process of adapting, integrating, and implementing global sustainable development goals at local, regional, and national levels, taking into account specific socio-economic, cultural, and environmental conditions.

Youth — according to UN definition, people aged 15 to 24 years, although in various contexts the upper age limit may vary up to 35 years.

Youth Engagement — active participation of young people in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of sustainable development initiatives.

Leave No One Behind (LNOB) — a principle underlying the SDGs emphasizing the need to include all population groups, including youth, in development processes.

Background Information

The history of this issue begins with the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda in 2015, which established 17 sustainable development goals. Youth was recognized as a key actor in

implementing these goals; however, in practice, young people often face barriers to accessing information, resources, and mechanisms to influence decision-making.

The current situation is characterized by the following factors:

- **Global challenges:** climate crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, growing economic inequality, and political instability disproportionately affect youth.
- **Digitalization:** the younger generation possesses unique opportunities to utilize digital technologies for mobilizing and disseminating information about the SDGs.
- **Participation deficit:** despite recognition of youth's significance, mechanisms for their participation in SDG localization processes remain insufficient and underfunded.
- **Growing awareness:** the international community increasingly recognizes the need to include youth in policymaking regarding SDG localization at national and local levels.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Key countries actively engaged in SDG localization with youth participation:

Brazil — organizes youth forums on SDG localization, actively integrating young leaders into development policy processes.

Germany — implements programs supporting youth initiatives in sustainable development in developing countries.

India — launched a national program for youth participation in achieving SDGs at the local level.

Uganda — develops communities of youth activists working on goal localization in rural areas.

Mexico — actively uses youth as agents of change in SDG localization.

Russian Federation:

Young people play an important role in promoting sustainable development at the local level in Russia through their participation in decision-making processes, the development of initiatives, and the support of projects aimed at improving the urban environment, socio-economic development of territories, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This participation can take various forms, from participating in youth councils and forums to developing social projects and contributing to the improvement of public spaces.

For example: The Youth Ambassadors of the SDGs in Russia program is a public project of the National Council of Youth and Children's Associations of Russia aimed at promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among young people. It includes an annual selection of young people who implement projects in the field of SDGs.

UN Organizations and Structures:

UN Youth — a UN program supporting youth participation in addressing global challenges.

UNDP (UN Development Programme) — implements SDG localization programs with youth participation.

UNICEF — focuses on youth and children's rights in the context of sustainable development.

UNESCO — supports educational initiatives on SDGs among youth.

CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) — numerous international NGOs actively work with youth at the local level.

Relevant Treaties and UN Resolutions

Key documents and resolutions:

- **Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)** — the foundational document establishing the 17 SDGs. Paragraph 41 explicitly recognizes youth as a key actor in implementing the Agenda.
- **UN Resolution A/RES/70/1 (2015)** — General Assembly resolution adopting the 2030 Agenda, confirming the necessity of youth participation in all aspects of SDG implementation.
- **UN Resolution E/2020/L.1 (2020)** — ECOSOC resolution on youth and sustainable development, emphasizing the significance of SDG localization with active youth participation.
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)** — defines youth rights to participation and self-expression.
- **UN Resolution A/RES/75/262 (2021)** — dedicated to youth, peace, and development; emphasizes the need to create space for youth voice in peacebuilding and development processes.
- **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015)** — recognizes the role of youth in disaster risk reduction, which is linked to SDG localization.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Prior initiatives and their results

At the global level:

- **UN World Youth Forum (since 2015)** — an annual event where youth present their ideas and recommendations to ECOSOC. Despite its positive significance, the forum is criticized for limited influence on actual policymaking.

- **Youth 2030 Initiative (UN, 2018)** — a strategy to expand youth participation in all UN structures. However, funding and resources remain limited.
- **Global Youth Assembly** — an annual gathering where youth discusses SDGs and presents national reports on progress in localizing goals.

At the national and regional levels:

- **Youth-led SDG Localization Projects** — various countries (Belarus, Ecuador, Philippines) have implemented pilot projects to include youth in SDG localization processes. Results demonstrated that youth participation increases solution innovativeness and leads to more sustainable outcomes.
- **Youth Councils and Advisory Bodies** — creation of advisory bodies within governments and local authorities. However, these structures often remain decorative without real influence on decision-making.
- **Capacity Building Programs** — programs training young leaders and activists. Challenge: insufficient funding and non-systematic nature of such initiatives.

Challenges and shortcomings of existing approaches:

- Insufficient funding for youth initiatives on SDG localization.
- Absence of mechanisms for systematically incorporating youth recommendations into national policies.
- Limited access of youth from developing countries to international platforms and networks.
- Weak coordination between various youth organizations and UN structures.
- Low political will in some countries regarding youth inclusion in decision-making processes.

Possible ways to solve the problem

- To propose ideas — young people question existing decision-making mechanisms and propose more effective responses to contemporary challenges.
- To demand change — young people have the opportunity to take action and encourage others to do the same.
- To innovate — young people are aware of their problems and can propose innovative solutions.
- To influence public opinion — young people can share their goals with their peers and influence public opinion at the local and regional levels.
- Acting as leaders — with knowledge of their rights and leadership skills, young people can become agents of change in their communities.