



Recognising young people in the post-2015 framework

Discussion paper

February 2015

1. Introduction

There are more young people in the world today than ever before, and nearly 90 per cent of them live in developing countries. Many suffer incredible hardships and serious socio-economic challenges. For example, young people are almost three times more likely than older people to be unemployed. At the same time, the engagement and empowerment of young people can ignite a demographic dividend, prevent extremism, promote social cohesion and allow young people's talents for nation building to flourish.

The demographic reality of most countries, especially those experiencing a youth bulge, means that the success of the post-2015 agenda hinges overwhelmingly on investing in young people and meeting their developmental needs. The socio-economic consequences of failure in this effort could be dire: not just for the young but also their families, communities, countries and, eventually, the world.

If the world's young people are to fulfil their aspirations and make their full contribution to the development of their societies and the world, they must have better access to education, health, technology, employment and skills development opportunities; they must be empowered and engaged to participate more substantially in governance and decision-making at the local, regional and national levels; and there must be an end to discrimination and marginalisation on the basis of gender, race, income, disability, culture or faith.

The current global focus on finalising the post-2015 development agenda creates an unique opportunity to ensure that young people receive their rightful attention on the global development map over the next 15 years - not just as development beneficiaries in need of jobs, education and health care, but also as development partners, agents of change and the stewards of the global effort to build an inclusive and sustainable world.

The endorsed draft framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will be adopted at the United Nations in September this year, does not yet adequately recognise the needs or the potential contributions of young people. It is therefore imperative that governments advocate strongly in the SDG negotiation processes for greater inclusion of youth-related targets and indicators. This paper provides support for such advocacy.

2. Young People and the Commonwealth

More than 60 per cent of the population of the Commonwealth is under the age of 30, so a focus on youth development is critical for Commonwealth countries and institutions. The Commonwealth has been at the forefront of international efforts to promote youth development for several decades. Since the establishment of the Commonwealth Youth Programme in 1973, the Commonwealth has used its good offices, technical expertise, extensive networks and convening power to promote youth development. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) is the framework that guides governments, partners and young people towards an optimal youth development agenda.

The Commonwealth has led development of youth-specific policy and programming tools such as the ground-breaking Youth Development Index that covers 170 countries. In 2012, Commonwealth Heads of Government underlined the commitment of the Commonwealth to youth development by enshrining the ‘Importance of Young People’ in Article 13 of the Commonwealth Charter. For the past two years, the Commonwealth has also led advocacy for strong recognition of young people in the post-2015 development framework.

3. Young People and global development

Young people are already participants in shaping the direction of global development; the United Nations’ *Million Voices: The World We Want* report, for which youth consultations were a significant component, was a clear indication of young people’s concerns and their aspirations for better life choices and possible directions for post-2015 goals, targets and indicators that relate to young people. During the consultations, young people highlighted the need for the development of their citizenship and employment skills. They also expressed the aspiration to work with dignity and in safety, their concern at the lack of effective policies for children and youth, and young people’s particular vulnerability to sexual harassment, discrimination and violence. Young people were particularly vocal in all national consultations on the need to be included in policy debates and policy implementation.

The pitfalls of not investing in youth empowerment and youth participation are also quite clear. In the CIVICUS *State of Civil Society Report (SOCS)*, which includes analysis of youth-dominated uprisings around the world, young people expressed “emerging disillusionment with global frameworks of government and a fundamental lack of accountability”¹. It is vital that more systemic rights-based pathways are created for youth-centric development paradigms that also enable young people to participate in the process of governance at all levels.

4. Aims and objectives of this paper

This paper aims to support Commonwealth member governments, youth leaders and other stakeholders to advocate for strong recognition of young people in the post-2015 framework. Its recommendations are based on wide-ranging consultations, expert group meetings, and resolutions at many global and regional forums including the Commonwealth Youth Ministers’ Meeting and the Commonwealth Youth Forum.

¹ CIVICUS, *State of Civil Society Report 2014*, p.2

The paper builds on the many consultations and reports related to a post-2015 youth agenda, to offer a set of proposed targets and indicators that are explicitly and especially relevant to young people around the world, and are anchored in Commonwealth values.

The targets and indicators will support:

- The empowerment and participation of young people in development processes;
- Solutions to address young people's social, political and economic needs;
- Youth-centric policy-making, institutional frameworks and programme delivery;
- Collection and measurement of data or evidence that supports the achievement of social and economic inclusion and well-being of young people.

Ideally, the paper will help:

- Achieve wide recognition and acceptance of the fact that the status and well-being of young people is critical to determining development outcomes, and that rights-based pathways, institutions and mechanisms should be created and nurtured for the benefit of young people.
- Ensure youth mainstreaming and a youth-centric approach are integral to defining post-2015 development agendas and cross-sectoral planning, and that youth targets are inserted into all relevant SDGs, along with corresponding indicators.
- Harness the capabilities, potential and dynamism of young people as heirs, custodians and champions of the post-2015 development framework, and as partners in the creation of a peaceful, sustainable, equitable, inclusive and democratic world.
- Promote goals, targets, indicators, processes and outcomes that are explicitly relevant to the empowerment of young people, their social and economic well-being and their participation in governance and decision-making.
- Sanctify the goal of a world that is responsive to the needs and concerns of young people in every sphere of development such as employment, livelihood, education, justice, governance, health, peace, environment and social cohesion.
- Recognise in policy and action the particular importance of providing legal, social and institutional protection to young people who are marginalised, vulnerable, disadvantaged or discriminated against.
- Emphasise the importance of standardised and consistent youth-inclusive indicators, age-disaggregated data and youth participation metrics in the monitoring and evaluation of the post-2015 agenda.
- Advocate for an inter-generational approach in development planning and promote the use of digital and mobile technology to bridge gaps between policy, programmes and young people - the most technology-savvy generation in history.
- Catalyse allocation of adequate funds to youth development in national policy-making and integrate youth priorities in global aid flows and infrastructure.

5. A ‘youth goal’ in the post-2015 framework

A youth-specific goal would ensure visibility of young people in the post-2015 development framework and focus the world’s attention on the idea that the success or failure of the post-2015 agenda will rest largely on the well-being and participation (or not) of young people.

A youth-specific goal has been endorsed at many global and regional forums, including the Commonwealth Youth Ministers’ Meeting and Commonwealth Youth Forum in 2013, the World Conference on Youth 2014, and by UNFPA, UN HABITAT and the UN Major Group on Children and Youth. A specific ‘youth goal’ was also suggested as a possibility at the High-Level Event on the *Contributions of Women, the Young and Civil Society to the Post-2015 Development Agenda* in March 2014. These endorsements still deserve serious consideration.

As suggested in the UN *Statistics and Indicators* document, “a standalone goal may draw on other themes but be tailored and limited to priorities for that group”². While young people’s needs can and should be addressed under goals related to education, health, environment etc, a youth-specific goal would provide focus on young people’s contributions to development - the empowerment and participation of young people, as well as strengthening of youth-related institutions.

However, with the endorsement of the seventeen draft SDGs (see Annex 3), such a twin-track approach now seems unlikely to materialise, and efforts should now be put towards ensuring a mainstreamed approach to youth development with youth-specific indicators in other cross-sectoral goals.

6. Existing youth-specific targets in the draft SDGs

Currently only six (6) youth-specific targets exist out of 169 targets total, and only one (1) that recognises young people’s capacity to act as agents of change. While insufficient, it will be vital to ensure that these existing targets are protected at the same time as advocating through the inter-governmental negotiation processes for stronger recognition of young people’s unique needs and capabilities. Specifically, they are:

Goal 4 **Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all**

Target 4.4 By 2030, increase by x% the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Target 4.6 By 2030 ensure that all youth and at least x% of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

Goal 8 **Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

Target 8.5 By 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

² UN *Statistics and Indicators for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, p 28

Target 8.6 By 2020 substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

Target 8.b By 2020 develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the ILO Global Jobs Pact.

Goal 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Target 13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change related planning and management, in LDCs, including focusing on women, youth, local and marginalized communities.

7. Proposed additional youth-specific targets for the SDGs

Critically, there are several areas that are key to youth development and empowerment, that do not yet have youth-specific targets in the draft SDGs. Unless such targets are specifically and clearly articulated for the next fifteen years of global development, it will be highly challenging to secure adequate investment and focus for the critical youth cohort, risking marginalisation and extremism, and wasting young people’s capacity to be agents for change.

Goal 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Proposed target Ensure early detection, treatment of and support for mental health issues among adolescents and youth.

Goal 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Proposed target Ensure equal access for young women to all employment opportunities, and encourage their participation in traditionally male-dominated professions.

Goal 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Proposed target Ensure that all young people have access to opportunities to participate effectively in peace-building and the civic life of their societies, and in decision-making and monitoring across all sectors of national development.

Goal 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Proposed target Ensure universal access to information and communication technology, and achievement of targeted outcomes in education, health care, social cohesion, training and employment opportunities among the youth through greater use of ICT.

8. Youth-specific Data

Also critical to ensuring real impact from the 2016-2030 sustainable development goals / targets will be the collection of youth-specific, disaggregated data, to allow comprehensive tracking of youth-specific outcomes over time. This will ensure that young people are prioritised, and their outcomes are not masked within data sets that include demographic cohorts with different outcomes on the same measures.

This is covered by:

Goal 17 **Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development**

Target 17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity building support to developing countries, including for LDCs and SIDS, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

9. Conclusion

The capabilities and potential of young people as agents of change and champions of the development process are clear arguments for strong recognition of young people in the post-2015 development framework, as is the potential risk of having a large population of marginalised, disenchanting or disenfranchised young people.

The post-2015 framework to be agreed at the UN in September will provide the global development world with clear directions and benchmarks for at least the next 15 years. The inclusion of youth-specific targets and indicators is essential in this world where young people form the majority of the population. It will also mobilise critical state, non-governmental and private sector commitments and resources to allow young people to play their crucial role as partners and leaders in development in the 21st century.

Annex 1: The basis for the proposed framework

At the core of the proposals in this paper is the very essence of youth development, a discipline that is based on:

1. The education and empowerment of young people to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and to contribute to national development; and
2. A youth-mainstreamed world that is responsive to youth needs in every sphere of development, such as economics, justice, education, employment, peace, health, environment, and social cohesion (i.e. development through a youth lens, which is only possible through a process of youth participation).

The youth-specific targets put forward in this paper are based on the broad-based, multi-agency consultations and outputs for a youth agenda in the post-2015 development agenda, including:

- UN's *Million Voices: The World We Want* consultation and report with particular bearing of young people's inputs;
- The zero draft of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals;
- The *Global Youth Call 2015: Prioritising Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda* reflecting input from over 1700 youth organisations worldwide;
- Practical, specific measurement made possible by selected indicators from indices such as the Commonwealth's *Youth Development Index (YDI)* and the *Youth Wellbeing Index (YWI)*;
- Indicators from the *UN World Plan of Action for Youth (UN-WPAY)* and Commonwealth's *Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE)*.
- Consensus submissions such as the *World Conference on Youth Colombo Declaration 2014*, the *Commonwealth Youth Forum Declaration 2013*, and input from other agencies such as UN FPA and UN Habitat.

Suggested indicators have varied status in the global development monitoring agenda, with some indicators already having robust methodologies and collected data, and others still requiring the development of methodologies and comprehensive data collection mechanisms.

While the proposed targets are aligned as much as possible to the recommendations set out in the UN document *Statistics and Indicators for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*,³ they yet need further discussion and consolidation.

It is not envisaged that the youth targets proposed by the Commonwealth for inclusion in the final version of the Post-2015 Development Framework encompass all those that are important to youth development. To increase the likelihood of inclusion, and to sharpen focus and investment, the proposed targets are realistic, measurable and actionable, to enable assessment of outcomes, as required by the UN's *Statistics and Indicators for the Post-2015 Development Agenda* document⁴.

³ United Nations, *Statistics and Indicators for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, (New York, 2013).

⁴ *Statistics and Indicators*, p.23. Annexure 2 of the document also sets out data sources for new forms of indicators emerging in the Post-2015 palette of targets and indicators.

Annex 2: Principles behind a youth framework for the post-2015 agenda

Goals, targets and indicators relevant to young people must be based on a fundamental set of principles that are essential to the value base of a youth agenda in the post-2015 development framework, and in developing measurement tools for indicators. These principles guide the shaping of the specific, measurable indicators that help define the status of youth in relation to poverty, education, employment, health, rehabilitation etc. and the effectiveness of youth development mechanisms such as institutions, governance, movements and processes. Values identified for these indicators can therefore be used to monitor success in achieving youth development goals.

These principles are:

A. Perceiving young people as assets

A post-2015 youth agenda will recognize young people as assets. It will focus on their productivity, agency and power and see them as co-creators, along with adults, in shaping a peaceful, sustainable and democratic world.

B. Meaningful participation of young people

A youth agenda will require development mindsets and cultures that are based on:

- ❖ A solid understanding of, and capacity building for, democracy; and
- ❖ Meaningful, independent, truly representative participation in general, and youth participation in particular.

How do young people participate? Are all young people supported to participate? At what levels do they participate? For what purposes do they participate? What is the impact of this participation in positively influencing decisions and practice that affect young people's lives?

Youth participation will also be a key consideration in monitoring and evaluating the post-2015 development outcomes.

C. Youth mainstreaming

Youth mainstreaming refers to cross-sectoral planning, with a youth lens, to ensure a constant youth-centric approach in defining development agendas. This infers that young people's concerns must be planned for in terms of their specific experiences and contexts.

Youth-inclusive indicators and/or disaggregated data across all relevant post-2015 development goals will allow assessment of the levels to which all sectors are youth-centric in their planning. Such planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation would ensure:

- ❖ Assessment and understanding of specific youth concerns in formulating and implementing development agendas
- ❖ Use of youth-friendly / youth sector approaches in cross sectoral implementation of programmes for youth
- ❖ Youth participation and youth-friendly approaches in monitoring and evaluation.

D. Enhanced social protection for young people

In a context of deepening social inequalities, unemployment and poverty, this lobby

recognizes the importance of social protection for all young people, including subsidies and grants for those who are unemployed, or marginalized in education, and those in need of healthcare, etc. It entails enhanced public-sector investment in education, public financing for health, and the inclusion of youth targets in all post-2015 goals that reflect the basic foundational policy principles of distributive economics, restorative justice and public sector service provision.

E. An empowering youth development paradigm

A strong youth agenda in the Post-2015 debate must be underpinned by an enlightened youth development paradigm based on:

1) An enabling macro-economic and political culture: The Commonwealth sees the requirements for nourishing these “empowering” attributes in young people as “1) an economic and social base, 2) political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks, 3) a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy, and 4) access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system”⁵.

2) A thriving youth sector contributing to the education and empowerment of young people: A robust youth sector provides critical support for the social and political education and empowerment of young people, and plays an important role in building young people’s self-esteem, citizenship, leadership, collectivization, conflict-resolution and peace-building skills, representation, democratic action and contributions to social change. An optimally supported and functioning youth sector therefore plays a critical role in creating a culture of progressive, sustainable global development, and investment in and professionalization of the youth sector is integral to achieving the targets set for young people’s participation, empowerment and wellbeing.

F. Human Rights, democracy and equality

Youth development is underpinned by the values of human rights, democracy and equality, which ensure equitable, sustainable development for all, based on the responsibilities of duty bearers, particularly the State, and the rights and responsibilities of young people themselves. Young people will be both agents in upholding these principles, and receiving the benefits of a world that espouses these principles.

⁵ Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2008-2015, p.15.

Annex 3: The draft Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Annex 4: Key resolutions, reports and mechanisms

Key resolutions, reports and mechanisms relating to the recognition of youth in the post-2015 development agenda include:

- ❖ UNDG’s “*Million Voices: The World We Want*” consultation and report. Coordinated 11 thematic dialogues and 88 national consultations on the post-2015 agenda, with particular inclusion of young people’s inputs.
<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/mdg/a-million-voices--the-world-we-want/>
<http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf>
- ❖ Colombo Declaration on Youth “*Mainstreaming Youth in the Post 2015 Development Agenda*”, World Conference on Youth 2014
<http://wcy2014.com/pdf/colombo-declaration-on-youth-final.pdf>
- ❖ The ECOSOC Youth Forum outcome document “*The Global Youth Call: Prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*”. Based on the five thematic priorities from the MyWorld2015 survey - Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship, Health, Good Governance, and Peace and Stability - this outcome document proposes youth-focused target areas for the post-2015 agenda.
http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/The_Global_Youth_Call.pdf
- ❖ The *Commonwealth Youth Development Index*, launched September 2013. Measures progress in youth development for 170 countries across five domains of health, education, employment, civic participation and political participation.
<http://www.youthdevelopmentindex.org>
- ❖ Outcome statements from various Commonwealth meetings:
 - Communique of the 8th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, April 2013. Ministers of the 53 Commonwealth countries called for a youth-specific goal, and youth related indicators on all goals, in the post 2015 development framework.
<http://secretariat.thecommonwealth.org/files/254433/FileName/8CYMMCommunique.pdf>
 - Commonwealth Heads of Government Magampura Commitment to Youth, November 2014. Heads of 53 Commonwealth countries recognised the importance of putting young people at the centre of sustainable and inclusive development.
<http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/events/documents/Magampura%20Commitment%20to%20Young%20People.pdf>
 - Youth Declaration from the 9th Commonwealth Youth Forum, November 2013. Youth representatives from Commonwealth countries called for a youth-specific goal in the post 2015 agenda, and action on various development issues key to young people.
<http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/ninth-commonwealth-youth-forum-declaration-young-people-commonwealth>

- Communique of the 18th Commonwealth Conference of Educations Ministers, August 2012. Ministers CCEM. Instigated Ministerial Working Group to define key education targets for post 2015 development framework.
- ❖ ILO Resolution on “The Youth Employment Crisis: A Call for Action” June 2012
http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/101stSession/texts-adopted/WCMS_185950/lang-en/index.htm;
- ❖ The Youth Wellbeing Index, launched April 2014. Measures progress in youth development in 30 countries across six domains: citizen participation, economic opportunities, education, health, information and communications technology, and safety and security.
<http://www.youthindex.org>
- ❖ UN World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/RES/50/81)
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf>
- ❖ The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2008-2015. A framework, with indicators, for youth development and empowerment.
http://secretariat.thecommonwealth.org/shared_asp_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=169313
- ❖ The Future We Want: The outcome document of the Rio+20 UNCSD (A/RES/66/288), July 2012
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E
- ❖ Other principal documents:
 - The Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals. At the Rio+20 conference in 2012 member states agreed to launch an inter-governmental “Open Working Group” to put forward suggestions for a set of post-2015 “Sustainable Development Goals”. The group was constituted in early 2013 and is chaired by the Governments of Hungary and Kenya. It will deliver its final report before the September 2014 session of the General Assembly.
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>
 - The High-Level Panel Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. In mid-2012 the UN Secretary-General asked 26 eminent development leaders to propose a framework for the post-2015 Development Agenda and to highlight priority areas for post-2015 goals. The panel, which was chaired by the President of Indonesia, the President of Liberia, and the Prime Minister of the UK, submitted its report to the Secretary-General in May 2013.
<http://www.post2015hlp.org>
<http://www.post2015hlp.org/the-report/>
 - The Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Also commissioned by the UN Secretary-General, the SDSN mobilizes scientists and development practitioners to accelerate problem solving for sustainable development at local, regional, national, and global scales. Following an extensive public consultation, the network published An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development, its report on the post-2015 development agenda, in June 2013.
<http://unsdsn.org/resources/publications/an-action-agenda-for-sustainable-development/>

<http://www.unsdsn.org/>

- United Nations System Task Team (UNTT). UN organizations have formed a task team to support the post-2015 Development Agenda. The team issued a first report on the post-2015 agenda in May 2012 and a second in March 2013.
http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/index.shtml
http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/report.shtml
http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/report2.shtml
- United Nations Global Compact. The UN Global Compact is interacting with the global business community to understand the role of the business sector in the post-2015 Development Agenda. Drawing on consultations with business, the Global Compact published its report on the post-2015 development agenda in June.
<http://www.unglobalcompact.org/>
http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/9.1_news_archives/2013_06_18/UNGC_Post2015_Report.pdf
- High Level Political Forum (HLPF). Another outcome of the Rio+20 conference, the HLPF is designed to follow-up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments. The Forum replaces the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD).
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1556>