Vision

The vision of the SDG4Youth Network is to engage and empower the voices of young people in the relevant global discussions on quality education for all, and involve youth and students in their roles as advocates and change-makers.

Objectives

The SDG4Youth network aims to include young education activists in shaping global education policies through engagement in the multi-stakeholder SDG 4-Education 2030 High-level Steering Committee, while establishing the network as an accountable and representative youth and students platform.

Background and rationale

Around the world, young people are driving change and claiming fundamental freedoms and rights; improving conditions for them and their communities; as well as opportunities to learn, work and participate in decisions that affect them. The success of the school strike for climate is just one example of the mobilization power young people have and utilize for priorities which they consider urgent and important to them. Alongside climate, young people have placed education as a key concern and challenge affecting their lives. In particular, the skills and values they need for the present and future is very much at stake, affecting their ability to reach their full potential.

There are a multitude of stakeholders involved in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education, SDG 4, but one crucial element remains largely missing – youth and students. Besides them being the primary receivers education, they have continuously been excluded in discussions and decision-making processes which determine the course of the education sector's development. Moreover, young people also bring their experience and perspectives of learning across formal, informal and non-formal education. As the SG's Envoy on Youth mentioned at the 2021 Global Education Meeting Ministerial Segment, "we need to include young people as full-fledged partners and not only beneficiaries of the decisions that will impact them the most."

The recent Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda includes recommendations for meaningful, diverse and effective youth engagement, including through better political representation and by transforming education, skills training and lifelong learning. The idea for creating an SDG4Youth Network was born out of the recognition that **young people are key partners and actors** in creating a better future for all through education in their countries and communities and should have **an equal seat at the decision-making table**. As such, SDG4Youth will have a strong emphasis on co-creation with youth and students, by involving young people from the start of the initiative network to shape on how they would like to see the network developed, operationalized and sustained. The network will also forge strong links with the regional youth and education initiatives and strategies.

While the decision to establish a Youth Network (previously known as the Youth Advocacy Group) was taken at the Fifth Meeting of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee[1] in September 2018, its launch was deferred until the renewal of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism (GCM) in July 2021 where the High-level Steering Committee (HLSC) was established. The HLSC now includes two full seat for youth and students – one at the "Leadership Group" and one at the "Sherpa" technical level.

SDG4Youth Network Working Procedures

The SDG4Youth Network will be one of the key SDG 4 – Education 2030 mechanisms for strengthened dialogue, common reflection and revitalized partnerships as part of the renewed HLSC.

These working procedures set out the role and functioning of the SDG4Youth network in this respect.

1. Organization

- The network will be organized on shared virtual platforms with admin/community management volunteers involving youth from diverse backgrounds and regional representation to be identified for different topics/work streams with overall coordination provided by the Youth focal points in the GCM secretariat. This helps to ensure that young people are active in leading and developing the network, while allowing the network to grow organically by having specific topics for young people to decide to join based on their interests and/or availabilities.
- Guidelines will be developed together with members of the network to facilitate the admin and community management work with a view to ensuring that the platform remains a safe space for all young people.
- Membership is free and unremunerated.

2. Purpose

Recognizing youth, including students, as key partners for the achievement of SDG 4, the purpose of the SDG4Youth Network is to support the inclusion and mainstreaming of a youth/student perspective in the global education architecture, ensuring that there is a youth and student voice in all deliberations. It would also be a platform for better exchange of information between the global SDG4 process and the youth and student constituencies.

The network would also serve as a catalyst platform for youth and students' joint action and planning of activities and sharing of practices and experiences, including:

- Networking opportunities for young people and students engaged in education around the world
- Opportunities for young people and students to be engaged with the UN and multilateral organizations in the scope of SDG 4
- Opportunity to take part and speak in global education platforms/fora
- Latest news/updates on youth education issues
- Ways to engage with the global education body – the SDG 4 ED 2030 High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC). This will be done through nominating youth representatives (refer to point 6) who will organize and support the Youth and Student seat to the newly established HLSC and Global Education Meetings.
- Opportunity to leverage the SDG4Youth Network in mobilizing support for youth issues in education at the global level

---

[1] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265715

3. Functions of SDG4Youth members

The SDG4Youth Members shall:
  i.   endeavor to promote the work of the SDG4Youth through their organization and networks;
  ii. share their work, initiatives and joint advocacy and action opportunities with the rest of the SDG4Youth network members;
  iii. keep the SDG4Youth Leaders and GCM Secretariat regularly informed of their activities, particularly those carried out in the field of SDG 4 Education 2030 goals and targets;
  iv. invite the SDG4Youth Network to be represented at their meetings whose agenda is of interest and related to SDG 4 – ED 2030;
  v.   contribute to the decisions and discussions of the SDG 4 – ED 2030 High-Level Steering Committee and other relevant education meetings through the nominated SDG4Youth Leaders;
  vi. contribute substantially to the preparation of the work of the SDG4Youth network, including responding to consultations and surveys carried out in the framework of SDG4Youth.

4. Membership

The network will be open to all youth and student organizations, with a view to attracting membership from diverse youth/student organizations active on education issues. The representatives of the organizations should be mandated to represent their organizations and be between 16 and 30 years old[2].

In addition, they should meet the following criteria:

  1. They are active in the fields related to the objectives of the SDG 4 – ED 2030
  2. They have been active in advocacy and implementation of education issues for a minimum of two years
  3. They represent non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations.

SDG4Youth members are encouraged to work in a spirit of cooperation, tolerance and solidarity while respecting cultural diversity, UNESCO's mandate as defined by its Constitution and the working procedures of the SDG4Youth network.

5. GCM Secretariat contact team

The GCM Secretariat (hosted by UNESCO) will designate a focal point and a contact team/youth desk responsible for the following tasks:
- Providing conceptual, technical and administrative support to SDG4Youth network activities;
- Maintaining a platform and shared communication tools with and among the SDG4Youth membership;
- Regularly sharing information on UNESCO and HLSC partners' activities, the ED 2030 partnership, other education-related developments and opportunities for youth participation.
- Provide opportunities for inter-sectoral engagements that can support the SDG4Youth Network's work (e.g. related to health and education, democracy and education, etc.)

---

[2] The UN definition of 'youth' is someone from 15 to 24 years old. There is, however, no universal definition. The experience of being young can vary substantially across the world, between countries and regions. For example, the African Youth Charter defines youth as those between 15 and 35 years old. The flagship Young Leaders for the SDGs initiative considers youth between 18 and 29 years old.

6. SDG4Youth Leaders – interim arrangements for November 2021 to May 2022 (six months)

The SDG4Youth Leaders will represent the Youth and Students constituency in the SDG 4 – Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC). It is foreseen that the SDG4Youth Leaders will be nominated and selected through the SDG4Youth Network by its members, with elections held when the network has reached a certain level of maturity to organize this.

An interim arrangement of up to six months will be put in place, through an interim youth/student council, which is tasked to organize the modalities of work, representation and election of the formal SDG4 Youth Leaders Group.

This interim group will also select the representative to the HLSC in this round, until the elected Youth Leaders take up their positions.

The Terms of Reference will be finalized and adopted by the members of the network once constituted.

Linkages with other networks and processes on SDG 4 and Youth matters

The SDG4Youth network aims to complement existing processes and networks on SDG 4 and Youth issues rather than duplicate them. Partnerships will be a key tenet of the SDG4Youth platform and its open membership makes it possible for existing processes and networks to join the platform.

SDG4Youth Network

Draft Terms of Reference