

Marang

International Relations Newsletter

Edition #18

**Youth
Participation in
Democracy and
Development!**



a world class African city

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Dear Esteemed Reader

It is an immense pleasure to bring you the 18th edition of Marang, which focuses on the youth, their development issues, as well as exploring their involvement in governance globally.

The youth of South Africa, pre-and post-democracy, have always been key role-players in shaping society. Youth development has become a national priority across the globe, and the future of many countries, like South Africa, depends on swift changes that target the youth. Although the proportion of young people in cities is growing rapidly, few studies have considered the diversity of their views on urban life.

Nearly half of the people in the developing world and 30% worldwide are under 25 years of age. One in five people is between 15 and 24 years old. It is estimated that 80% of the global youth live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. However, there is a stark disparity in their geographical distribution within and between continents, regions, and countries, as well as between rural and urban areas.

Young people are the core of a nation's future, yet this significant stakeholder is rarely involved in poverty reduction strategies, environmental planning, and sustainable urban development. Despite the rhetoric about youth activism for positive social change, little consideration is given to young people's views, opinions, needs, and perspectives. This edition will therefore review the views, perspectives, and participation of the youth in development and governance.

Young people in the 2030 Agenda Youth are seen as an untapped economic resource and need to be viewed and treated as an asset and driver of safe, resilient, and sustainable cities.

Engaging youth in shaping the urban development trajectory—whether through meaningful participation in urban planning, informing legislation and regulations, or economic policies—enables them to take responsibility and ownership in supporting the realisation of integrated, inclusive, and sustainable cities as a key component of urbanisation.

This edition reflects and highlights the dire need globally for local authorities to create space for dialogue and consultation with young people.

Thusani Mulaudzi and Lesego Ngobeni – Editorial board

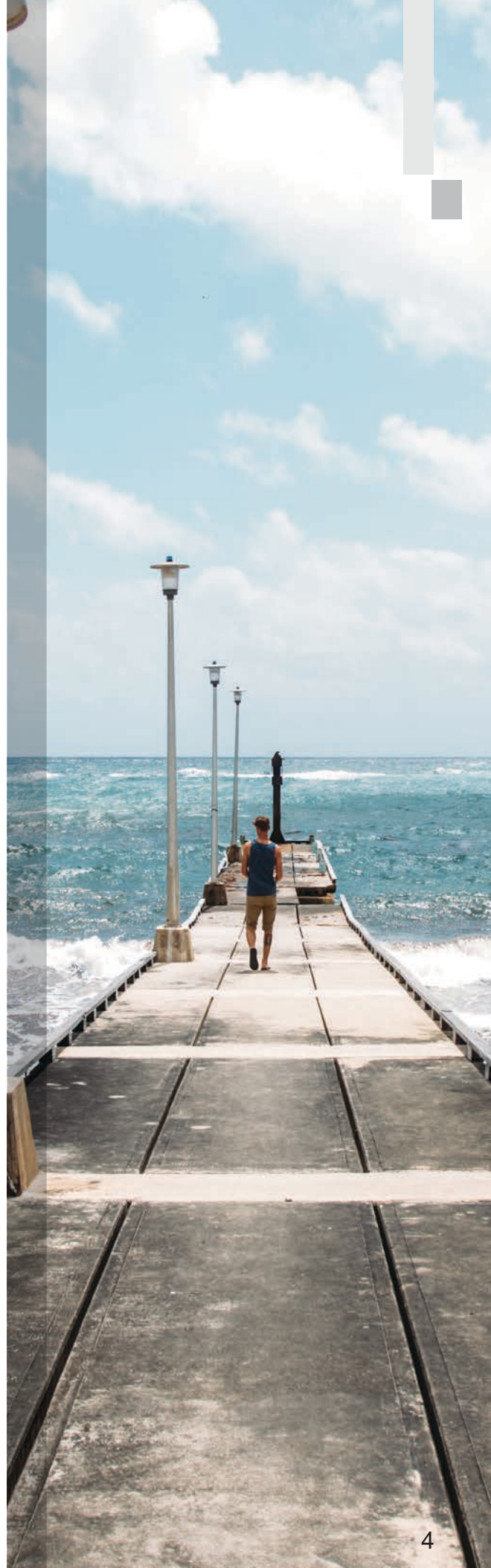
Young people urged to change “Di Riddim”

The world stands at a critical point, with its inequalities in sharp focus as the Covid-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact continue to increase unresolved challenges. World leaders are now tasked with deciding whether the global agenda will focus on the resumption of business as usual or a redefined collaborative mission that translates the hopes and aspirations of people around the world into new and lasting prosperity for all.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development offers a dynamic platform for young people across the world to engage in critical and interactive dialogue and career-building sessions, projects, and networking, all to prepare a Youth Declaration that will be submitted to governments at the UNCTAD15 ministerial Conference. With the theme “Pull up: Change Di Riddim,” the forum focuses on innovation, inclusion, and youth empowerment for developmental transformation.

The forum is open to students and young professionals between the ages of 18 and 30 who speak English and are interested in trade and development and want to contribute to shaping the world that their generation will be at the helm of in 2030.

Source: Government of Barbados



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The power of youth – The driving force for change post Covid-19



Young people are the leaders of tomorrow. They will drive forward efforts to create a more prosperous, more equitable, and resilient future. Yet it is the young that have been among the hardest hit by the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Investing in skills, education, quality jobs, and mental health will help them rejuvenate their educational and career prospects, empowering them to face the future with confidence – and become the best they can be.

One in 8 of young people (15-to-24-year-olds) in OECD countries are unemployed (pandemic peak: almost 1 in 5).

40% of 18-to-29-year-olds feel their views are ignored in the design of public services.

Covid-19 caused educational disruption for 1.6 billion learners (94% of total) in OECD countries.

Source: The United Nations

3

Youth as servant leaders

For over 70 years, YMCA Youth & Government has been dedicated to transforming lives through civic engagement and education. The organisation nurtures innovation and fosters a sense of responsibility, building leadership skills to ensure future leaders are active and engaged servants of the people. They also empower teenagers to find their voice and develop the skills needed to fulfill their potential.

YMCA Youth & Government teens are leaders in their communities. They sit on boards, volunteer in schools, and educate their friends and neighbours about local issues. They know they have a voice and understand the importance of sharing their opinions and ideas. The future success of communities' rests in the hands of the next generation.

Youth Legislature

Middle and high school teens participate in a mock legislature, taking on the roles of representatives and senators in Olympia. Throughout the session, teens gain valuable civic education while honing skills in public speaking, research, and debate. Delegates learn about the variety of views and issues around Washington State as they discuss solutions and alternatives to problems facing their communities.

Mock Trial

In Mock Trial, teens collaborate with legal professionals in their communities to develop an understanding of real-life case law and the role of the court system in a democratic society. As part of a competitive team, students work



through a civil or criminal case while developing caring relationships with their peers and gaining skills in oral advocacy, research, and critical thinking.

National Programmes

National YMCA Youth & Government conferences and competitions offer opportunities for students to represent their state, meet and learn from peers, and discuss and debate topics of national and international interest.

Source: YMCA Youth and Government

Role of youth in governance in a post-Covid-19 world

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Crises of the magnitude of Covid-19 often deepen existing societal cleavages, exacerbate the structures of privilege and inequities, and worsen the avenues for social and political mobility. The emergence of such large-scale upheavals disproportionately disadvantages young people who suffer the ravages of declining employment opportunities, social welfare, and other measures meant to confront the pandemic.

Furthermore, as governments shift their energies to meet the pandemic's emergencies and address the plight of society's most vulnerable members, they frequently ignore the youth and their multiple concerns, ostensibly because governments are waiting for normalcy to return.

Similarly, the socio-economic and political recovery initiatives from such crises present vistas for youth to participate in changing the prevailing patterns and practices to enhance their stakes in leadership and governance. While pandemics have the potential to disempower youth, they could also unleash vital stirrings that produce inter-generational change.

Covid-19 has had a drastic impact on the youth in South Africa and Africa as a whole, primarily because it has heightened the already prevalent social ills that face them. Youth in South Africa endure most of the effects of socioeconomic marginalisation, deterioration in livelihoods, and unprecedented poverty, with an unemployment

rate of 35% for populations aged 18–35. Some estimates reveal that these unemployment numbers may double because of Covid-19, leading to further job losses and the erosion of decent livelihoods.

Most studies have reported that African youth are leveraging and harnessing digital technologies in the fight against Covid-19, serving on the frontlines as healthcare workers, raising awareness about the pandemic and launching advocacy and sensitisation campaigns in communities.

Most public health experts have described Covid-19 as a disease that primarily affects the elderly, providing Africa with the opportunity to transform its youth bulge into a socioeconomic and political dividend. With 60% of Africa's population under the age of 25, African countries have a unique chance to elevate young people to prominent positions across society.

Young people in Africa are already leading in critical domains, but, for most of the time, they have shown a reluctance to take politics seriously. This is, in large part, because under

authoritarian regimes, young people associate politics with negative images of abuse and violence.

In seizing the new opportunities for leadership in social transformation, African youth will need to recognise the significance of governance in the sound management of social and political affairs. For the youth, governance should be an everyday concern because it is at the core of resource allocation and distribution, with tremendous implications for social and political stability.

In the post-Covid-19 world, African youth should demand that there should be no return to normalcy without their engagement in leadership positions. This engagement should transcend the traditional practice of “inclusion of youth” that often smacks of sterile tokenism. Youth have made the first step in social advocacy and community mobilisation in the context of Covid-19 but will need to scale up these engagements to take frontal positions in agitating for fundamental transformation. They should first demand a seat at the post-Covid-19 reconstruction table, assisting in the design and implementation of a wide range of pandemic-response programmes and policies.

Written by Gilbert Khadiagala: African Centre for the Study of the US at Wits University, the Youth Bridge Trust, and the Africa Portal



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Challenges and successes of Joburg's Youth Unit



The youth of South Africa, pre-and post-democracy, have always been key role-players in shaping society. Youth development has become a national priority across the globe, and the future of many countries, like South Africa, depends on swift changes that target youth development as a critical component of development strategies. Given the youthful age of the South African population, many of the nation's socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and poor health, disproportionately affect the youth. Johannesburg has a large and diverse youth population.

This suggests the need for diverse models of service delivery, and the City has a youth policy that was approved and operationalised in 2020. The Youth Policy offers more opportunities for the Council to support young people within the City of Joburg. This policy builds on the work that has already been done by the City Council and City Departments and is situated within the context of the vision of the City for 2030, the Integrated Development Plans for 2017–2021, the City's Growth and Development Strategy 2040 and the Human Development Strategy of the City of Joburg.

The City of Joburg (CoJ) places priority on integrating youth issues into the wider council programme. Youth development can be achieved when strategies are supported by



funding, resources, and resolute staff. The policy aims to improve and update what is already being done to advance the situation of young men and women and to suggest areas of high-impact strategic focus.

The Youth Policy outlines the plight of young people in Johannesburg and describes the challenges and desired outcomes for them. It further clarifies roles and responsibilities and provides measures for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The City of Joburg has a youthful population and it should be taken into consideration that this is one of its most powerful interest groups. The population pyramid for the City reflects a large youth population (people aged 14 to 35), and this group constitutes over 40% of the populace.

Johannesburg's youth experience challenge of unemployment and marginalisation. According to the 2019/20 IDP review, the expanded unemployment rate for Johannesburg is 31.5%, compared to the youth unemployment rate of 41.2%. Unemployment is more prevalent among young people than the rest of the population.

Unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, is one of the City's most pressing social and economic challenges and also poses a major obstacle to transformation,

growth and development. Prospects for the future look bleak when almost half of the City's youth are unemployed.

Unemployment also affects economic welfare and production; it erodes human capital, breeds social exclusion, crime, and social instability. The social exclusion of youth from the labour market, coupled with youth poverty, substance abuse, crime and violence, all point to the need to address and improve the socio-economic conditions of young people in the City of Joburg.

Youth development initiatives take place across a range of line departments within the City. However, there is a lack of coordination on projects geared towards the youth. The City must implement the youth policy in an integrated manner. The Youth Unit coordinates, facilitate, advises and monitors the mainstreaming of youth development policies and programmes in the City, building relations and endorsing partnerships with other youth organisations and non-governmental organisations in Johannesburg.

The Youth Unit also provides a platform for young people to engage with the City through local forums, dialogues, conferences, summits, and seminars. The City has initiated ward-based youth development forums to allow young people to participate actively in governance matters and to foster a sense of civic pride.

The ward forums lobby and advocate for youth development programmes. Dialogues, conferences, summits, and seminars are convened at intervals to engage young people and capacitate them on matters about youth development and the broader agenda of governance. Through resolutions taken at such forums, young people will be able to drive the agenda of youth development and other issues in the City.



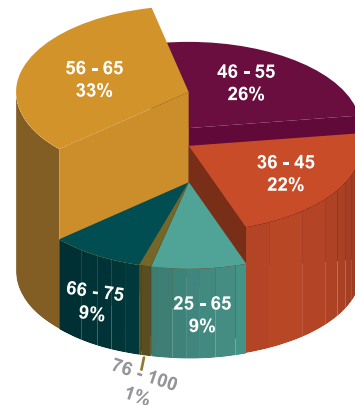
Call for youth to become parliamentarians

A fundamental principle of democracy is that political systems should mirror society as a whole and represent the desires and best interests of all citizens. In South Africa, the youth is defined as those from ages 14–35. Notably, in low-income countries with a demographic distribution skewed toward youths, the gap between the average age of parliamentarians and the average age of the voting population is exceptionally large.

The Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) analyses the birth-dates of all current Members of the National Assembly, except for Ministers and Deputy Ministers. From the data collated, PMG has found that the average age of Members of the National Assembly (NA) in South Africa is 59. PMG’s findings show only 30 members of the NA (9%) fall under the category of youth (35 and younger).

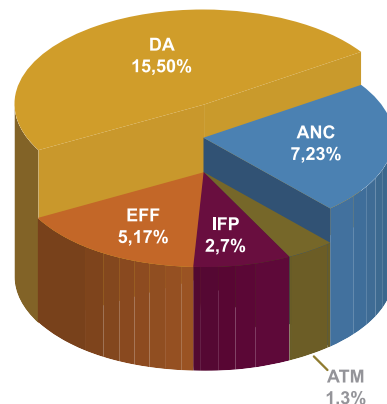
Out of the 14 parties represented in the NA, five have representatives younger than 35 and nine have no representatives in this category. There are six parties with two representatives in the legislative body and two with one representative.

AGE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF MPS



As illustrated in the pie-chart below, half of the 30 NA MPs below 35 are from the DA.

SHARE OF YOUTH MPS PARTY



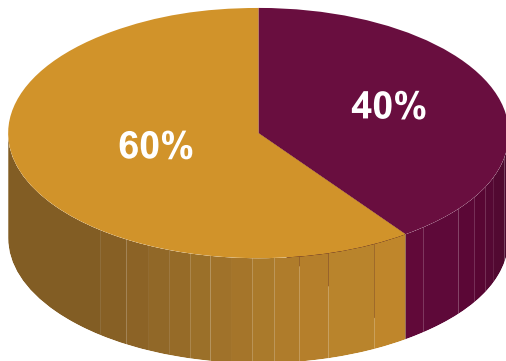
Age cohort	Number of MPs	%
25-35	30	9
36-45	77	23
46-55	90	26
56-65	112	33
66-75	31	9
76-85	1	0.3
86-95	1	0.3

*While there is 400 NA MPs, excluding Ministers and Deputy Ministers, this study looks at 342 MPs (86% of total).

Party	Total MPs from Party	No. of Youth MPs from Party	Youth MPs in %
ATM	2	1	50
DA	84	15	18
IFP	14	2	14
EFF	44	5	11
ANC	174	7	4

GENDER BREAKDOWN OF YOUTH MPS

■ Female ■ Male



The Inter-Parliamentary Union, an international organisation of national parliaments, have revealed instructive statistical findings on youth participation in parliaments around the world:

- Only 2.6 % of the world’s parliamentarians are under the age of 30, a slight increase of 0.4 % since 2018.
- Some 17.5 % of the world’s MPs are under the age of 40, up 2 percentage points from 15.5 % in 2018.
- Some 25 % of the world’s single and lower chambers of parliament have no MPs under the age of 30, nearly 5 % fewer than in 2018. Approximately 1 % of single and lower chambers have no MPs under age 40, down from 3 % in 2018.
- Only four countries, Rwanda, Morocco, Kenya, and Uganda have specially reserved seats for youth representatives.

The IPU report goes on to highlight the opportunities to increase the number of young MPs by eliminating barriers and implementing interventions. Most of their conclusions are positive:

- The numbers of young MPs continue to increase.
- Young people are becoming more engaged in parliamentary processes.
- Parliaments, government institutions, international agencies and the wider public continue to improve youth participation with legal, informal, and structural interventions; and;
- Young MPs address, at length and with great enthusiasm, new ways of working in the future, encouraging greater youth participation, and challenging established and institutional norms to create a more conducive and friendly environment for inclusive participation.

Source: Parliamentary Monitoring Group



"Adolescents and youth represent enormous potential for cities, as governments and the private sector are acknowledging through their investments in youth empowerment."

7

Four cities making youth empowerment a priority

A pressing question for many cities across the world is how to create the right educational, social, and economic opportunities for young people so that they gain the tools to build strong foundations for adulthood. The following examples from Jakarta, Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, and Bengaluru (Bangalore) demonstrate how a caring mentor, a specialised school, or a skills training programme can empower youth to transform their lives.

In Jakarta, the street child phenomenon is a real epidemic. In response, the government has created the Child Social Welfare programme, which works in collaboration with community-based organisations to provide street children with shelter and various life skills that enable them to survive and eventually leave street life. Support for street children also comes through corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Youth development initiatives led by the government and civil society organisations also play a crucial role in reducing youth unemployment in Lagos. The Youth Empowerment and ICT Foundation gives young people the opportunity to improve their professional skills and employment potential through workshops, seminars, and conferences on information and communication technology.

The foundation also runs the Urban Youth Empowerment Programme, which targets unemployed 18 to 24-year-olds who are

considered high-risk and supports their transition to stable careers with counselling, occupational skills training, and job placement. The Lagos state government's Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Social Development also makes continuous efforts to engage young people and to generate employment through school-based initiatives that foster entrepreneurship.

In Rio de Janeiro, the City government's Schools of Tomorrow programme is helping youth from low-income and violent neighbourhoods stay in school and improve academically. This ambitious initiative currently impacts more than 155 schools, with 6000 active teachers and 105000 students.

India's landmark Right to Education Act demonstrates the country's increasing investment in free education for all, as evidenced by a noticeable rise in primary school enrolment. But for at-risk youth who choose to forego secondary school, their prospects rarely stretch beyond the paths taken by their parents and other members of their local communities. In Bengaluru (Bangalore), an organisation called Mentor Together is working to expand these options.

Adolescents and youth represent enormous potential for cities, as governments and the private sector are acknowledging through their investments in youth empowerment. Visit URB.im to learn more about initiatives for youth and to join the discussion.

Written by Josephine d'Allant

8

World's first non-profit City to come out of Saudi Arabia

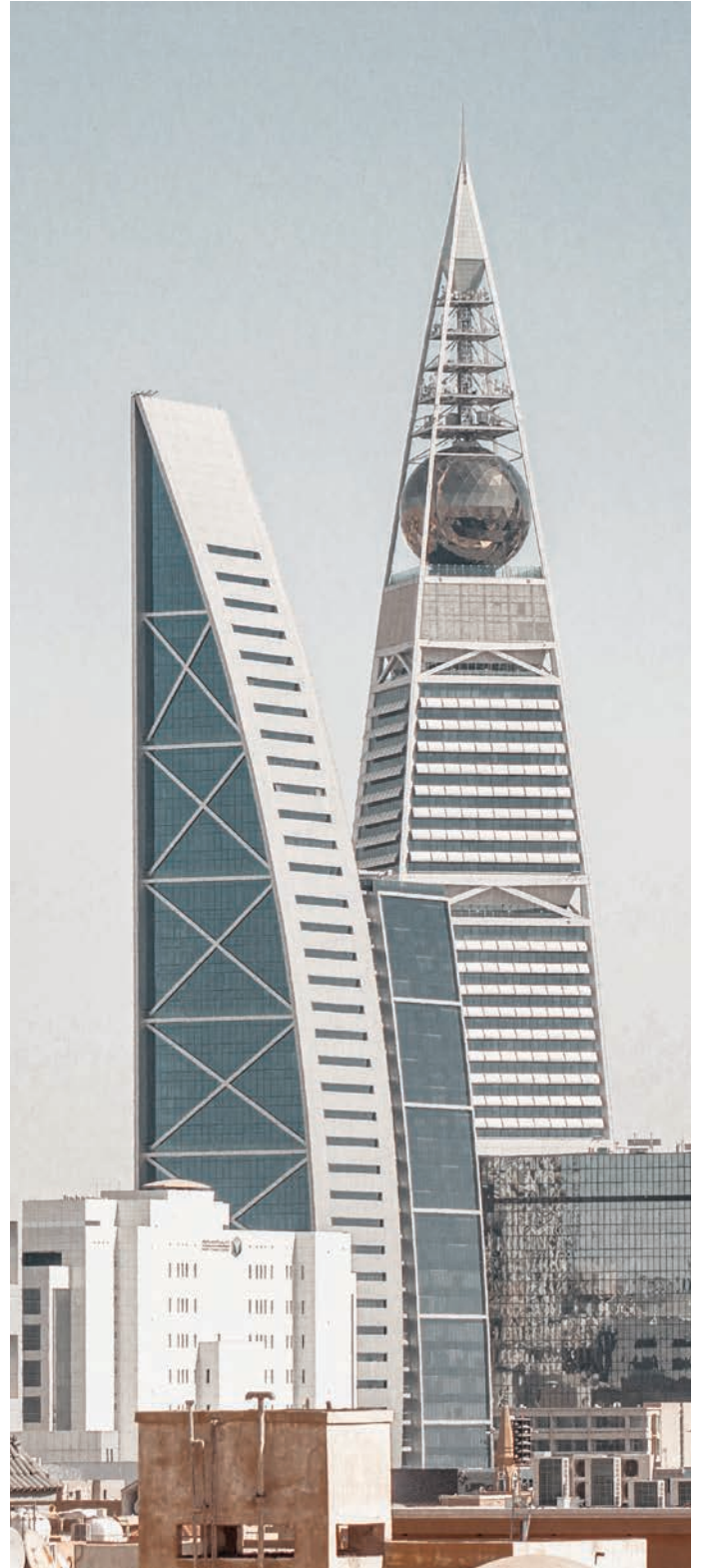
The establishment of the first non-profit City in the world, announced recently by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, will be a model for the development of the non-profit sector globally.

The City will be an incubator for youth and volunteer groups, along with local and international non-profit institutions. The Crown Prince indicates that the City will be the first non-profit City of its kind, which will contribute to supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, and qualifying future leaders by defining non-profit work in its internal operational concept and opportunities and youth training programmes that it will provide.

In addition, the project will provide services that contribute to creating an attractive environment for all beneficiaries of the City's offerings. The Prince Mohammed bin Salman Non-profit City will be located on land dedicated by the Crown Prince in the Iqra neighbourhood; it is adjacent to Wadi Hanifa and has an area of about 3.4 square kilometers.

The overall plan of the City embodies a human-centred, advanced digital metropolis designed to be sustainable and pedestrian-friendly. To promote sustainable development, it will allocate over 44 % of the total area to green open spaces.

Source: WION (World Is One News)



9

EMS gives youth hope through PIER programme

Who would have thought that in this day and age, with new technology, and access to any information at our fingertips, there are still some young people in South Africa that have not had the privilege of being reached by many programmes, such as Public Information Education and Relations (PIER), due to poverty as well as a lack of access to any services or equipment?

Imagine young people walking in the streets, dropping out of school, and getting involved in gangs and drugs. These same young people have a lack of respect for authority, other people, and even less respect for their peers, and they have been known to attack their teachers and fellow students. These young people, being unemployed and frustrated, would sometimes, unfortunately, resort to criminal activities.

The PIER programme is designed to assist with all these challenges as outlined above. This programme reaches out to schools in the wider sphere of the City of Joburg because most of these highlighted challenges are prevalent everywhere. The programme has also been implemented in institutions schooling kids with mental disabilities, as well as in schools for the deaf. This programme includes basic firefighting, basic first aid, CPR practices, Covid-19 related activities, evacuations, basic fire safety and injury prevention, amongst others. Young people that participate in PIER programmes receive a certificate of attendance.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the City's Emergency Management Services (EMS) have been hindered by a lack of access to schools. The PIER staff mitigated the lack of access to schools by making video tutorials in different languages, which are circulated on various social media platforms. The challenge experienced by poor students will remain a problem that needs careful planning by everyone, not just the EMS. The challenge of disadvantaged and poor students requires the planning and attention of the government at large.

Some tangible progress has been made in supplying some communities with a certain amount of internet access, and hopefully, this will lead to a greater spread in terms of progress in the city's internet roll-out.

Successes of the SERT Programme

What necessitated the programme was the fact that schools wouldn't permit stakeholders into the curriculum to engage learners on something that would be perceived as having little or no value to them. The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) recognised the value of this programme and partnered with EMS PIER on the provision of the programme to all their schools.

The last learners were trained just before the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, in five schools, and it was largely due to the initiative of the Gauteng MEC for Education, Panyaza

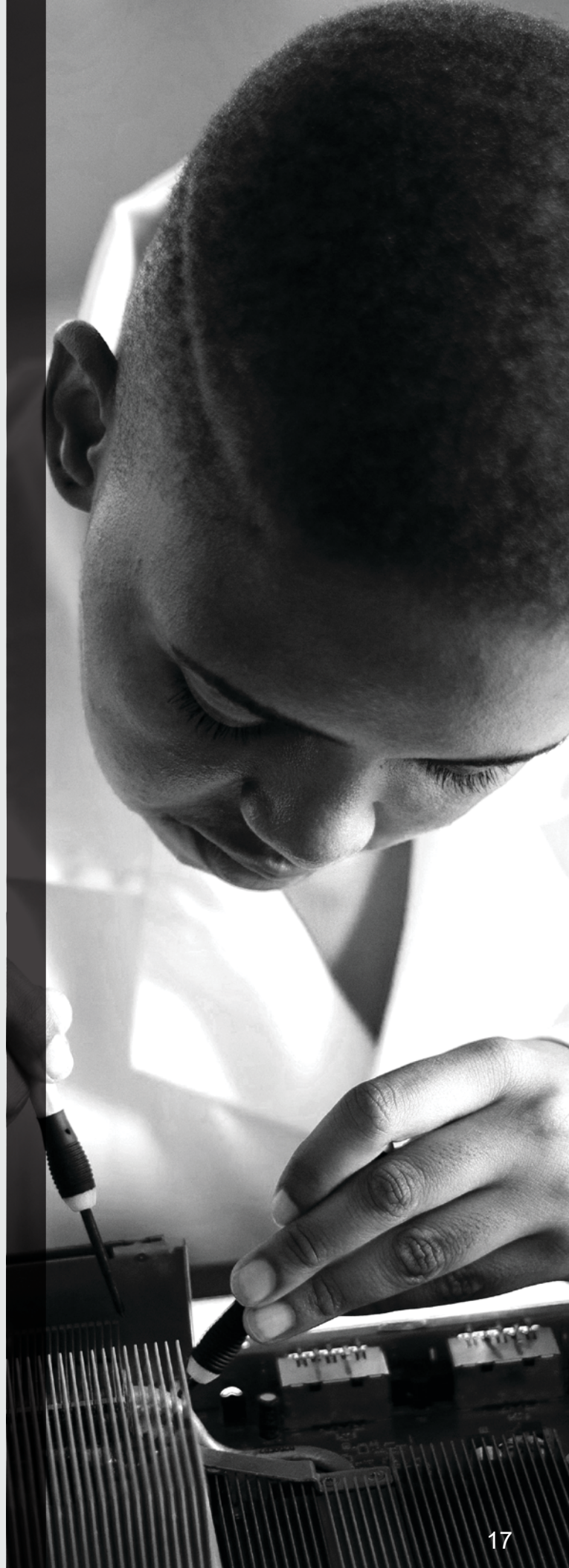
Lesufi. Lesufi initiated the awarding of these learners with accredited certificates, which they will be able to use after completing their schooling. The three (3) schools were Curtis Nkondo, St. Barnaba's, and the National School of Arts.

Since the inception of this programme at different schools, there has been a significant decline in fire incidents, coupled with a better understanding and acceptance of emergency services, as well as a growing interest in safety by learners as their career choice. The Gauteng Department of Education also invests in PIER in their early school camps, which are organised for schools that are problematic to conduct the PIER programme.

Challenges

PIER does not have the adequate capacity to develop proper learning videos to upload on social media platforms. Additionally, there is still a lot of work to be done in communities in the City. However, there is much in the PIER Section to be proud of in terms of the progress and the overall difference that has been made and will continue to be made in all communities.

Written by Theresa De Klerk: PIER Officer, EMS



10

Creating meaningful youth participation in Climate Action

Despite the numerous challenges presented by the Covid-19 global health pandemic, Johannesburg youth (13–24 years) from the Youth Programmes at the South African Institute of International Affairs (Youth@SAIIA) met with government officials from the City of Joburg and climate scientists from the Global Change Institute at Wits University for a series of virtual workshops to contribute to the City of Joburg's Climate Action Plan.

From the beginning of this process, the youth participants made it clear that they didn't just want to simply hand over a document for consideration by policymakers; they wanted to work with the City to create an independently written section of the City's official Climate Action Plan (CAP). What resulted was a youth-written section of the final CAP, a youth foreword, and youth inputs throughout the document. This unique partnership with the City of Joburg has demonstrated new possibilities for meaningful youth participation in climate policy spaces in South Africa.

Since the formal launch of the CAP, Youth@SAIIA has been continuing to meet with the City to develop an implementation plan. One of the first ideas put forward by the youth of the City is to create a ward-based youth climate ambassadors programme to hopefully be launched in early 2022.



The collaboration between Youth@SAIIA and the CoJ has received global attention through the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, and we are excited to share lessons learned with colleagues from other cities around the world.

The participation of the SAIIA youth in the development of the City's Climate Action Plan is aligned with the City's international relations strategic intent which highlights the importance of inclusive participation in international City networks and City bilateralism by stakeholders. Inclusive participation of stakeholders in international relations, and particularly by the youth; plays a vital role in the development of global cities.

Written by Desirée Kosciulek: Head of Youth Programmes, SAIIA



Joburg's student council embodies active citizenry

The Johannesburg Student Council (JSC) embodies democracy in action, one that is alive and well and utilised convincingly in the hands of the youth. The Johannesburg Student Council is made up of more than 100 energetic teenagers from 60 schools around the City. These are Johannesburg's future movers and shakers.

These teenagers have a mission: "to give a voice to the youth of the city; to raise issues and possible solutions specific to high-school learners". At the same time, these youth are learning everything there is to know about local government, from how political decisions take effect to the duties and responsibilities of everyone involved. The Student Council falls under the Office of the Speaker of the Council.

The Johannesburg Student Council has engaged in the following international collaboration which will assist in developing capacity for youth governance in the City of Johannesburg:

Last year, seven of the young girls from the JSC were selected to participate in the You WIL initiative championed by the City of Birmingham's Deputy Lord Mayor, Yvonne Mosquito. This international exchange afforded the youth an opportunity to travel to Birmingham, where they participated in an international programme aimed at developing young girls. Due to the outbreak of the Covid-19

pandemic, the programme was moved online and, for the past 10 months, the Johannesburg girls have participated in online engagements as part of the You WIL initiative.

Each day, the girls were invited to join a two-hour online session with inspirational women leaders in the fields of politics, business, sport, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths), media, and culture. During the sessions, girls were encouraged to ask questions via the online chat function.

The girls from Birmingham's International Sister Cities worked alongside Birmingham girls to develop presentations on a given theme. Mentors from Aston University assisted the girls in developing their presentations, which were shared with staff from the US Embassy in Birmingham and senior political representatives. The girls were then awarded a certificate of participation from Aston University, which was signed by the Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, Councillor Bridgette Jones, and the Lord Mayor, Councillor Yvonne Mosquitoe.

The collaboration of the Johannesburg Student Council with the City of Birmingham is exemplary in that it is a great showcase of Johannesburg's engagement in City-to-City relations which is bearing benefit for the City and its citizens, as outlined in the recently approved 2021 International Relations Strategy.

Written by Brenda Andrews, Manager: Civic Education (Student Council)

World Statistics on the Youth

12

GLOBALLY, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT AT THE CENTRE OF POLITICAL DECISION MAKING, ALMOST HALF THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS UNDER 30 YEARS OLD

YET, THE AVERAGE AGE IN PARLIAMENT IS **53** YEARS OLD

ONLY 1.65% OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AROUND THE WORLD ARE IN THEIR 20S AND FOR ONE THIRD OF COUNTRIES, ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL PARLIAMENT STARTS AT 25 YEARS OLD

2 OUT OF 3 COUNTRIES DO NOT CONSULT YOUNG PEOPLE AS PART OF THE PROCESS OF PREPARING POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES OR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

YOUTH ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN FORMAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, YET POLITICAL DECISIONS IMPACT THEIR LIVES AND CHOICES

What are youth doing to advocate for political inclusion on a local, national and international level?

In your community, do young people have access to political decision making?

Tell us why it is important to include youth voices in political agendas.

- Young people are not at the centre of political decision making even though almost half the world's population is under 30 years old.
- Globally, less than 6% of parliamentarians are under the age of 35 years.
- Globally, less than 2% of parliamentarians are under the age of 30.
- The average age in parliament is 53 years old.
- Only 1.65% of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20's and for a third of countries, eligibility for national parliament starts at 25 years old.
- Voter turnout among 18-25-year-olds continues to be lower than other age groups.
- Two out of 3 countries DO NOT consult young people as a part of the process of preparing poverty reduction strategies or national development plans



"Female representation in the UK government, at both local and national levels, is just over a third, and it could take 10 elections (50 years) to potentially achieve gender equality"

13

Birmingham inspires the next generation of young leaders

Young Women into Leadership (You WIL) is an exciting week-long, online summit for 14–16-year-old girls. Through talks and lectures by internationally renowned women, it aims to inspire a new generation of female leaders. It is delivered through a unique partnership between Birmingham City Council, UK and the City’s renowned Aston University and is also supported by the US Embassy in London.

Last year, over 80 participants attended the summit, including girls from Birmingham’s more deprived neighbourhoods along with girls from Birmingham’s international partner cities. The largest international cohort came from Johannesburg, where seven girls joined online.

Each day all participants joined online sessions led by inspirational women leaders in the field of politics, business, sport, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths), media and culture.

Championed by Birmingham’s Deputy Lord Mayor Yvonne Mosquito (now Lord Mayor’s Deputy) and the Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, Councillor Brigid Jones, the online programme aims to build wider participation, promote equality of opportunity, and offer a unique forum for cultural exchange.

Female representation in the UK government, at both local and national levels, is just over a third, and it could take 10 elections (50 years)

to potentially achieve gender equality. While in business, only six of the FTSE 100 companies have a female chief executive.

Participants had online mentoring sessions provided by academic staff to help them develop a presentation on women who had inspired them. The girls then presented this to the US Embassy on the final day. The women who inspired them also included Michelle Obama, Palesa Mokubung, and Marie Curie.

You WIL fit within a broader Birmingham youth strategy, “Creative Future,” which describes the need for cultural provision for children and young people. The strategy also reflects an increased emphasis on supporting young people into training and employment, as pledged in Birmingham’s Youth Promise guarantee. Two cultural needs sit at the heart of the strategy:

Universal provision: ensuring resources are accessible to all, and targeted activity – providing opportunities for those with additional needs and specialist provision to support young people with identified talent.

The second edition of You WIL takes place in 2022 when Birmingham welcomes the Commonwealth nations to the City for the Commonwealth Games. The summit is another excellent example of how Birmingham, UK is investing in future generations.

Written by Heather Law: Senior Programmes Co-ordinator, Birmingham City Council

14

Malawi empowers civil society leaders

In Malawi, a growing cohort of young people are entering into careers in politics and are looking to reshape the future of governance and development.

With over 50% of the population under 18, the number of young people joining new initiatives and seeking to make a difference will continue to increase. Yet, there are limited options for young people, even once they can join civil society, to be recognised by older generations for their ability to provide meaningful input and be given opportunities to develop new skills of engagement.

Recognising that Malawi's youth is critical to the country's future development aspirations and democratic outcomes, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) asked how the young civil society members can become leaders of the sector's future. The NDI is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organisation that works in partnership around the world to strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions, processes, norms, and values to secure a better quality of life for all. NDI envisions a world where democracy and freedom prevail, with dignity for all.

The Academy began in early 2020 with a nationwide call for applications. The 13 fellows selected were chosen from a pool of 150 applicants and participated in a series





of training events with local and international experts over seven months. Ultimately, fellows were required to apply the academy's lessons to a community-based project. For young leaders, the Academy has been an empowering journey that has left them well-equipped with the necessary skills to participate in more meaningful ways within their organisations.

Upon completion of the academy, the fellows had increased confidence in their communication, monitoring and evaluation, project development, and advocacy skills. When asked how completing the academy affected their leadership capabilities and skills, 83% of fellows reported they are a better leader in their organisation now than before the academy, and 92% believed that through participation in the academy they are now a better leader in their community.

A key aspect of the academy is the implementation of a community-based project to apply skills gained and demonstrate to their organisations the ability to independently lead projects. Multiple executive directors reported that these projects allowed them to gain credibility within their communities.

In the Phalombe District, a fellow from the Phalombe Youth Arms Organisations (PYAO) implemented a project to bring more young

people into community budget tracking. While the project initially targeted 12 youth leaders, the community interest was so great that it was scaled up to cover the entire district; 24 leaders were trained to track how public resources are allocated and utilised.

Through the academy and subsequent projects, fellows built positive relationships with their communities and gain new credibility as leaders within their organisations. The NDI anticipates that all alumni of the academy will be able to contribute to future work in their organisations in a meaningful and transformative way.

Written by Chimwemwe Kalea: Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant for Malawi, Brian Ernst: Programme Manager on the Southern and East Africa team and Lana Yarkin: Project Assistant on the Southern and East Africa team.

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Donors called on to invest in youth projects post Covid-19

Several large donors have already begun responding to the impact of Covid-19 by re-directing their efforts towards research focused on the virus as well as being more flexible with their existing funding models.

As donor behaviour continues to shift amid the pandemic, it is becoming apparent that the current Covid-19 reality cannot be solely addressed by health-related non-profit organisations (NGOs). NGOs are compelled to respond to the crisis by assisting and mitigating its impact on vulnerable and marginalised communities. One marginalised group, in this regard, is the youth.

A report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) indicates that young people, globally, have borne the brunt of job retrenchments due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report reveals more than one in six young people have stopped working since the onset of Covid-19, while those who have remained employed have had their hours cut by 23%. As it stands, global youth unemployment is on the rise in sectors that have been hard-hit by the pandemic, namely manufacturing, hospitality, healthcare, and the informal sectors.

Although the continent accounts for a small share of the total number of Covid-19 cases globally, African economies are already



finding themselves in an impending global economic downturn due to the decline in oil and commodity prices as well as a crippled tourism sector due to closed borders. The outbreak is hitting the continent's three largest economies—Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola—due to weak growth and investment.

This downturn is expected to have a dramatic effect on jobs. At the start of April 2020, the African Union estimated that close to 20 million jobs were at risk given the projected shrinkage of the continent's economies. With 60% of Africa's population under the age of 25 in 2019, the most vulnerable to such job losses will be Africa's youth. A step in the right direction in addressing this and the harsh effects of Covid-19 would therefore be for the development sector to work together with the youth in Africa.

Covid-19 presents an opportune moment for NGOs and donors to consider gearing their funding more aggressively towards the most vulnerable due to the pandemic. Thus, potential partnerships with youth-led and orientated initiatives working towards the social and economic mobility of youth during this time are crucial.

The donor and NGO community need to engage with young people, through formal discussions, with youth-focused organisations that have broad reach and impact on the continent on post-Covid-19 possible funding and investment opportunities. Solutions that integrate youth priorities with digital technology could also aid in the actual fight against Covid-19 whilst uplifting the most vulnerable. Donors need to consider funding projects geared towards the youth and the threats and opportunities facing them during this pandemic.

Written by Noxolo Ntaka



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Inter-Parliamentary Union data on youth participation in national parliaments

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is a global organisation that empowers parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy, and sustainable development. IPU research on youth participation in the world's parliaments has produced a wealth of data and generated a series of recommendations to enhance youth participation.

Key findings

- Young people under 30 make up just over 2.6% of the world's MPs
- Around 25% of the world's single and lower houses of parliament have no MPs aged under 30
- Seventy-three % of the world's upper houses of parliament have no MPs aged under 30.

Trends for different age groups

- 2.6% of the world's MPs are aged under 30 – up from 2.2% in 2018.
- 17.5% of the world's MPs are aged under 40 – up from 15.5% in 2018.
- 30.2% of the world's MPs are aged under 45 – up from 28.1% in 2018.
- Male MPs outnumber their female counterparts in every age group.

Encouraging signs

- The gender imbalance is less pronounced among younger MPs, where the male/female ratio is 60:40.
- The share of young parliamentarians has continued to increase across all age categories.
- Youth quotas, lower eligibility ages, proportional representation and inclusive parliaments are all factors that increase the number of young MPs.

Best performers

- Over 10% of members of parliament are aged under 30 in Norway, Armenia, San Marino, Gambia (the) and Belgium (Senate)
- Armenia, Ukraine, and Italy have the highest proportion of MPs aged under 40 in lower or single houses of parliament.
- Belgium, Burundi, and Jamaica have the highest proportion of MPs aged under 40 in upper houses of parliament.
- Over 60% of MPs in the single and lower chambers of Armenia, Ukraine, and Turkmenistan are aged under 45.
- More than 40% of MPs in the upper houses of the parliament of Belgium, Afghanistan,

and Burundi are aged under 45.

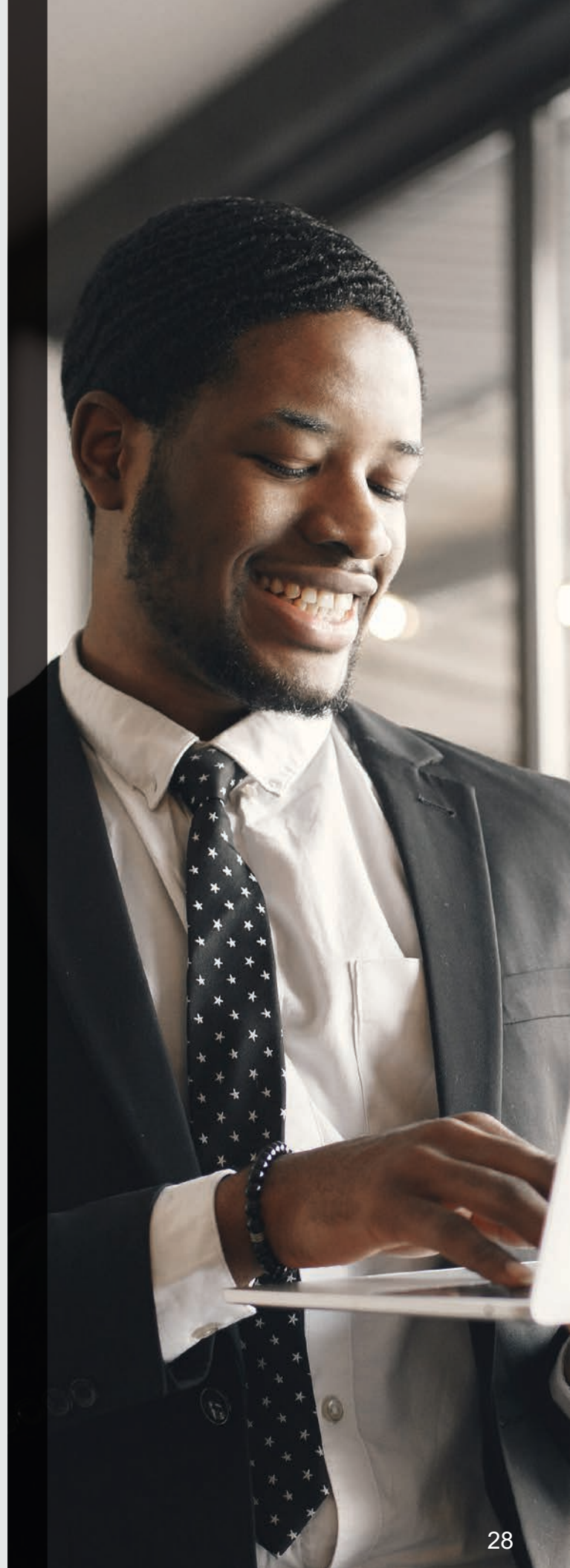
Youth and policymaking in parliaments

Networks of young MPs, as well as caucuses that promote youth issues in public policy, are present in a small but growing number of parliaments. Parliamentary committees dealing with youth issues exist in more than 60% of countries, with most taking the form of standing committees.

Other strategies to engage young people in parliaments

Youth parliaments exist in 56% of countries surveyed. Some have formal ties to the national parliament, but most are coordinated by non-governmental organisations, government ministries, schools, or other local authorities. Modern technologies and online tools are helping citizens, including young people, to understand and monitor the work of parliaments. They are also boosting accessibility and transparency.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union



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Youths as instruments of community development

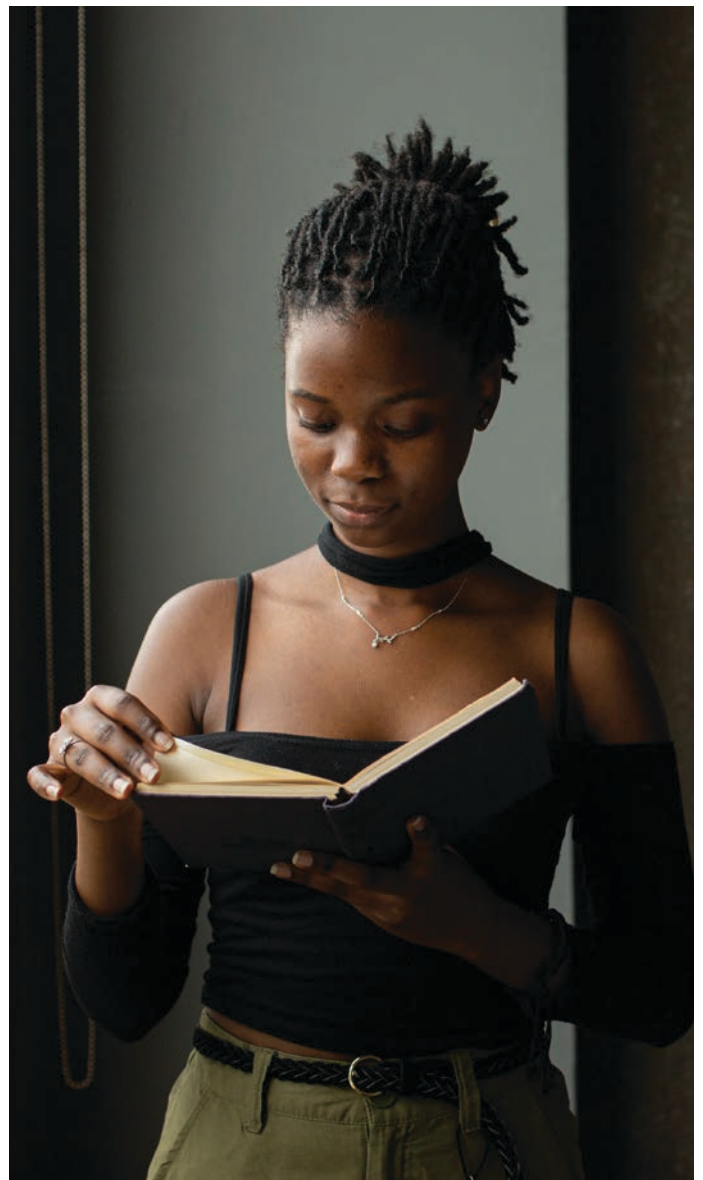
Community Development in the world is facilitated by the extent to which people mobilise their resources to address local needs. The role of the youth in fast-tracking Community Development Programmes has been largely recognised in local communities where they have played a pivotal role in education, health, environmental sanitation, mass mobilisation, and in religious activities. Through active participation and encouragement, youths can be effective instruments for community development programmes.

Youth participation refers to the involvement of young people in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunities for planning and decision-making which affects others, in an activity beyond the youth participants themselves. It is only through participation that young people develop skills, build competencies, form aspirations, gain confidence and attain valuable resources. This shows that youth participation contributes to sustainable human development.

Youth comprise nearly 30% of the world's population. These large numbers of young people are an opportunity and an investment to their communities. Youth participation in community development programmes:

- Strengthens young people's abilities to meet their subsistence needs.

- Prevents and reduces vulnerabilities to economic, political, and socially unstable environments.
- Promotes ownership and sustainability of change interventions and;
- Helps gain entry into target communities and build up trust and social capital.



The benefits of youth participation are substantial, however programmes can be diminished by a range of challenges and barriers, amongst others, such as:

- A lack of trust by young people in decision-making systems.
- Poor information about how to become involved in youth participation.
- Skills deficits, for example in literacy, verbal skills, and public speaking.
- Low socio-economic status, for example homeless young people.
- Minimal power given to young people to initiate organisational change.
- Negative social attitudes to, and stereotyping, of young people.

Young people are increasingly recognised as significant agents of change in both community and national development programmes. Young people are worldwide, spearheading positive social change, leading community initiatives, operating small businesses, and re-shaping political processes.

With more than one in five of the world's population between the ages of 12 and 24, and with 1.3 billion of these young people living in developing countries, it is imperative that the youth develop the skills they need to contribute to their families, their countries, and the global community. Youth participation is a mechanism that enables young people to gain skills while simultaneously changing their communities, as well as enabling sustainable development.

Written by the Southern African NGO Network (SANGONeT)



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