

# YGLOBAL YOUTH POLICY

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set the standard for working with youth in YGlobal and in YGlobal funded programs. YGlobal's partners are encouraged to adapt and or develop their own youth policy in line with this policy and their local contexts. It is our aim that participation in YGlobal funded programs will be in line with this policy.

## Introduction

The world today is home to around 1.2 billion young people between the ages of 15-24, the highest number in history. About 90% of the world's young people live in developing countries where they constitute a large proportion of the population<sup>1</sup>. Around the world, young people are engaged in building resilience of their communities, and confronting injustices<sup>2</sup>. Connected to one other like never before, they are driving social progress, renewing environmental activism, and inspiring political change<sup>3</sup>. Young people's engagement as leaders, volunteers, and survivors of various injustices contributes towards the achievement of YGlobal's vision, together building global peace and justice.

Besides efforts from young people, they continue to face several challenges emanating from globalization, violence, inequalities, new technologies, forced displacement, shrinking civic space, changing labour markets, and climate change<sup>4</sup>. Though governments, development- and humanitarian actors are engaged in various interventions, to address issues affecting young people, many young people are excluded from platforms where decisions affecting their communities are made. This means that the specific needs, rights, and potential of young people are overlooked. This has led to frustrations among young people who feel that the governments and other actors treat them as a problem to be solved instead of rightholders to be included in democratic processes<sup>5</sup>.

YGlobal recognizes meaningful engagement of young people as a key strategy to transforming institutional cultures. Young people can be a positive force for development when provided with knowledge and opportunities. Thus, investment in meaningful youth engagement is required to transfer and share experiences in order to secure intergenerational leadership. Our aim is for youth to have their fair democratic influence on decisions taken at any level in society, be it in the family, in the community, in the nation they live or in the global community.

## Definition

For YGlobal, the term youth refer to all persons in the age range of 13 to 30 years. Youth is a heterogenous group with diverse backgrounds, capacities, experiences, and needs. YGlobal and partners should have in place strategies for engaging with youth depending on these diverse backgrounds.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/055/28/PDF/N2005528.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>4</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/055/28/PDF/N2005528.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>5</sup> [https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-03/Progress%20Study%20on%20Youth%2C%20Peace%20%26%20Security\\_A-72-761\\_S-2018-86\\_ENGLISH\\_0.pdf](https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-03/Progress%20Study%20on%20Youth%2C%20Peace%20%26%20Security_A-72-761_S-2018-86_ENGLISH_0.pdf)

“Youth Engagement” refers to youth lead initiatives. These are actions taken by youth to create positive change in their communities in relation to YGlobal’s pillars of community wellbeing, meaningful work, sustainable planet, and just world. It refers to meaningful participation of youth in management and governance levels based on a strong intergenerational approach. Finally, it recognizes three interlinked pathways of engagement: youth as leaders, youth as volunteers, and youth as participants.

### **Youth as Volunteers**

These are the youth who give their time and skills to contribute to change in their community but, are not in any other manner motivated by financial gain. Youth volunteer functions revolve around planning, designing, delivering, and reviewing of YGlobal and partners programs and services. In partner countries and Norway, volunteers will be members of peacemaker groups, other youth-led groups and various policy advocacy units.

YGlobal stakeholders are encouraged to develop their own policies and procedures for engaging volunteers. Such policies and procedure should also address security and safety including physical and mental wellbeing of the volunteers while at work. In recruiting volunteers, YGlobal and partners will recruit and retain volunteers to reflect demographical diversity including youth with disabilities, and youth from marginalised communities.

### **Youth as leaders**

Youth taking leadership responsibilities to change their communities in different capacities and duration are considered youth leaders. This could be as staff, elected leaders and informal leaders. In this sense, youth leadership is not limited to the title or position they hold. To secure positive contribution of youth, YGlobal and partners must create empowering environments that enable meaningful youth participation at governance, management, and service delivery levels.

Youth participating in YGlobal programs should be facilitated to self-organize through youth-led structures in peacemaker groups. This will foster leadership development and enable youth to lead and create change in their communities and hold leaders accountable.

YGlobal and partners should invest in systematic and evidence-based youth leadership learning initiatives. These should empower youth participating in YGlobal and partners programs to take the lead and create change at micro (individual level), meso (community level), and macro (national and global level).

Composition of YGlobal’s and partners’ boards must meet the minimum requirement of 30%. All YGlobal partners are encouraged to take steps to ensuring that youth representation in their boards exceeds the 30% minimum requirement.

To secure meaningful youth participation in the organisation, and secure that the programs developed address the current needs which the youth are facing, it is highly encouraged to have youth as paid staff members.

### **Youth as participants**

Youth who participate and benefit from YGlobal programs and services, both in Norway and in partner countries, are not passive recipients of humanitarian/development aid. Instead, they are involved in designing, planning, and reviewing programs and services reaching them. Programs and services reaching the youth should provide them with knowledge and tools for building coping skills, contributing to change in their communities, and influencing national policies. YGlobal partners are to

ensure that programs and services reach and focus on marginalized youth, including youth living with disabilities, and those in marginalized areas.

### **Intergenerational leadership**

We know that an inclusive and intergenerational approach that focuses young people's leadership is vital to sustaining a bold and dynamic youth movement. While the future of our youth movement depends on the development of young leaders, it also requires the engagement, knowhow, and participation of youth-focused leaders from all generations. Fostering connections, shared learning, and mutual exchange between leaders of all ages and backgrounds creates better and more impactful leadership models, and hence with strengthen our movement. In our work to amplify young people's voices and center their leadership and advocacy, we are intentionally intergenerational in our ways of working. YGlobal will work with World YWCA and YMCA to create tools that will help to share intergenerational learnings and approaches. At the grassroots level we encourage our implementing partners to find intergenerational leadership models that secure youth-led change, with mentorships and capacity building efforts given by people also above the age of 30.

### **Measuring impact**

Success of this policy will be measured by capturing institutional change across YGlobal and partners, by tracking:

- # Partners with their own youth policy.
- # Partners with youth engagement plans including paid staff to facilitate volunteers.
- # Partners whose governance board assemblies comprise at least 30% of youth.
- # Leadership trainings organized for and by the youth in our programmes.
- # Youth with disabilities engaging as participants, volunteers, staff, or leaders.