



Session 1 – Youth Empowerment

PRE-Dialogue Pedagogical Resource

Please note that this document is written for teachers, school leaders, or educational facilitators participating in the program in both the formal and informal contexts

INTRODUCTION

The UN at Your Doorstep initiative provides a unique opportunity for learners to directly engage with world leaders, UN officials and young changemakers. Moderated by Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, as well as select guest and student moderators, the discussions will focus on how to solve the biggest challenges of our time, from peace and security to climate change, poverty, inequalities, environmental sustainability, and artificial intelligence, and how young people can actively engage in shaping the future.

This series of pedagogical resources is designed for teachers and educators to facilitate a dialogue and action with young people pre- and post- the UN at Your Doorstep live sessions and to bring global issues and leadership directly into classrooms and communities. The resources can also be used after the dialogues took place and in combination with the [live session recording](#).

The pre-dialogue pedagogical resource takes a three-step approach, designed to be flexible and to fit into various learning environments. Whether you're integrating this resource into a classroom lesson, a school assembly, or a community event, the materials will help foster active engagement and understanding of global challenges:

- ☐ Step 1 – “Background” provides essential background knowledge on the global challenge under discussion, related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the guest speakers and their organization to support learners to explore the topic and formulate questions for the world leaders
- ☐ Step 2 – “Suggested Learning Activities” provides three interactive learning activities to choose from, including research questions to encourage learners to investigate and think critically about the challenge.
- ☐ Step 3, “Formulating Questions for the World Leaders,” provides a concrete framework for learners to consider what questions they want to ask the world leaders.



- ☐ In the Bonus Section we provide “Additional Resources”, including toolkits and other additional materials to further enhance the learning experience.

For further guidance, the UN at Your Doorstep Practical Guide provides step-by-step instructions for integrating these activities into your educational setting.

We hope this resource helps inspire and engage your learners to connect global dialogues to local action and in shaping our common futures. For any questions or feedback, please contact unatyyourdoorstep@unsdsn.org.

STEP 1 – BACKGROUND

Review the background information and choose the most relevant ones to share with your learners to support them to explore the topic and formulate questions for the world leaders.

STATE OF YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

Youth Population

Young people aged 15 to 24 represent approximately 16% of the global population, amounting to around 1.2 billion individuals ([UN, 2022](#)). This demographic is projected to grow, with the global youth population expected to reach nearly 1.4 billion by 2050 ([UN World Population Prospects, 2019](#)). This demographic surge will be particularly notable in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, where the youth population is expected to more than double. On the other hand, regions such as East Asia and Europe are expected to experience a decline in youth numbers due to aging populations and lower birth rates ([UN Youth Report](#)). Young people are a dynamic and diverse group, playing a crucial role in shaping the future. However, they face significant challenges that impact their development, education, and ability to fully participate in society depending on where they live, their access to resources, and their social and political environments ([UN Youth Strategy 2030](#)).

Education & Employment

One of the most pressing issues facing young people globally is education. Despite significant progress, as of 2024, approximately 250 million children, adolescents, and youth worldwide are out of school, with young people aged 15-24 facing the most barriers to education access due to conflict, poverty, and systemic inequalities, such as gender-based discrimination ([UNESCO](#)). Additionally, the quality of education remains unequal, with many students lacking access to technology, trained teachers, and basic learning materials. Youth unemployment is another significant challenge; according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the global youth



unemployment rate was 13.6% in 2020 ([ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2020](#)), with young people in some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, facing even higher rates of joblessness.

Digital Divide & Civic Engagement

While technology has created new opportunities, the digital divide continues to exacerbate inequalities. Roughly two-thirds of the world's school-age children – or 1.3 billion children aged 3 to 17 years old – do not have internet access ([UNICEF, 2020](#)), especially with lower-income regions lacking reliable connectivity, limiting their access to education, job opportunities, and civic participation. Furthermore, young people often face barriers to meaningful political and civic engagement. Despite representing a significant portion of the population, youth are frequently underrepresented in policymaking processes and leadership roles ([UN World Youth Report, 2021](#)).

Opportunities & Challenges

Despite these challenges, young people are at the forefront of global movements addressing climate change, inequality, and social justice. Movements such as Fridays for Future and youth-led organizations advocating for sustainable development highlight the potential of youth to drive meaningful change ([Fridays for Future, 2021](#)). As governments and international organizations, including the United Nations, work to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the inclusion and empowerment of young people are critical to achieving lasting solutions to the world's most pressing challenges ([UN SDG Youth Strategy, 2021](#)).

You can find an overview of the SDGs and how they relate to young people by visiting [Youth and the SDGs](#).

THE UNITED NATIONS YOUTH OFFICE

The [United Nations \(UN\) Youth Office](#) was established by General Assembly resolution 76/306 as a dedicated office for youth affairs in the UN Secretariat. It is tasked with leading engagement and advocacy for the advancement of youth issues across the UN in the areas of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, as well as promoting greater UN system-wide collaboration, coordination and accountability on advancing youth issues, including through Youth2030 - the UN system-wide Youth Strategy. Strengthening meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes at the UN and beyond is at the heart of the UN Youth Office's work. The UN Youth Office aims to work towards a world in which the human rights of every young person are realized, that ensures every young person is empowered to achieve their full potential, and that recognizes young people's agency, resilience and their positive contributions as agents of change.



MEET THE SPEAKERS



FELIPE PAULLIER

Dr. Felipe Paullier of Uruguay assumed his mandate as the first-ever Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs in December 2023 at the age of 32. He is the youngest senior appointment in the history of the United Nations, and the youngest serving member of the Secretary-General's senior management group. As head of the UN Youth Office, Mr. Paullier leads system wide collaboration, coordination and accountability on youth affairs, overseeing the UN's efforts to strengthen meaningful youth engagement in the areas of sustainable development, human rights, and peace and security. Prior to taking up his post, Mr. Paullier was the Director General of the National Youth Institute of Uruguay beginning in 2020, where he led efforts to engage young people in policy-making processes at national level. He previously served in various political management positions at the national level. Throughout his career, he has been a foremost advocate for young people's rights and the inclusion of young people in decision-making spaces. Mr. Paullier is a Medical Doctor by training, specialized in pediatrics. He holds a Medical Doctor degree from the Universidad de la Republica Oriental de Uruguay and a Master in Business Administration (MBA) from Universidad Católica de Uruguay.



RICHA GUPTA

Richa is the co-founder and CEO of Labhya and a teacher-turned entrepreneur. [Labhya](#) is an India-based education non-profit that partners with governments to impact the emotional well-being of 2.4 million vulnerable children across 22,000 public schools. Richa has worked with education non-profits like Teach For India and Teach For All. She is a DRK Entrepreneur, a Mulago Rainer Fellow, and was featured in the Forbes Asia 30 Under 30 list. She is also a [young leader for the Sustainable Development Goals convened by the UN Envoy on Youth](#). Richa has a Master's in Education Policy from Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she also served as an Equity & Inclusion Fellow, Harvard Ministerial Leadership Fellow and Education Entrepreneurship fellow.

SUBMIT QUESTIONS TO FELIPE & RICHA

Ahead of the session, invite your learners to submit and upvote questions to Felipe and Richa to answer during the live session.

Young people can submit questions individually or in groups via [SLIDO](#), directing questions to both or a specific speaker, e.g., "Felipe: [question]." Participants have the option to also include their name(s) and country before submitting. No account needs to be created to submit a question. All questions must be submitted at least 3 days before the session, and the most relevant and upvoted questions will be shared with the world leaders during the session for them to answer. Look at Step 3 to support your learners to formulate meaningful questions with the Sustainability Compass.



PACT FOR THE FUTURE & DECLARATION ON FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations were adopted by countries during the UN Summit of the Future (22-23 September 2024). They are important for young people today, as they directly address the challenges and opportunities that will shape their lives and the world they will inherit. Understanding this inter-governmentally negotiated Pact and the annexed Declaration can equip young people with the knowledge to actively engage in advocacy, hold leaders accountable, and contribute to shaping a future that aligns with their values and aspirations.

The Pact for the Future is an intergovernmental document, adopted by UN Member States. It aims to reinvigorate global solidarity and cooperation, focusing on shared challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and inequality, and it emphasizes the importance of multilateralism to secure a sustainable future for all. It seeks to align global commitments with the needs and rights of future generations, ensuring that today's decisions do not compromise the ability of future generations to thrive.	The UN Declaration on Future Generations is a key component of the Pact for the Future, designed to protect the interests of future generations by promoting long-term thinking in policymaking and governance. This declaration advocates for mechanisms that ensure the voices of future generations are represented in decision-making processes, thereby fostering intergenerational equity and sustainability. It calls for the establishment of a dedicated UN Special Envoy for Future Generations to champion these efforts at the highest levels.
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OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO ENGAGE WITH THE UN

This section highlights 3 platforms for youth engagement with the UN, enabling young people to collaborate at a global level on driving change. Additionally, UNESCO offers various opportunities for active participation, including forums, volunteer programs, and educational initiatives. Learn more at [Youth / UNESCO](#).

THE MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) is the official platform for youth engagement in sustainable development processes at the United Nations. MGCY empowers young people to actively participate in global policy-making, providing a space for youth voices to influence decisions on key issues like climate action, sustainable development, and human rights. Through this platform, young people can contribute to dialogues, submit policy briefs, and participate in UN conferences, ensuring that their perspectives are considered in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. For more information, visit the [Major Group for Children and Youth](#).



THE UNITED NATIONS NATIONAL YOUTH DELEGATE PROGRAM

The United Nations National Youth Delegate Program empowers young people by providing them the opportunity to represent their countries at the UN General Assembly and other high-level meetings. This program allows youth delegates to participate in discussions on global issues, present their perspectives, and advocate for youth-related concerns on an international stage. It aims to enhance youth participation in decision-making processes and ensures that young voices are heard at the highest levels of global governance. For more information, visit the [United Nations National Youth Delegate Program](#).

YOUNG LEADERS FOR THE SDGs

Every two years, 17 young change-makers from diverse backgrounds are recognized as Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for their leadership in promoting a more sustainable world. Launched in 2016 by the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, this program highlights individuals whose work supports the SDGs through advocacy, innovative engagement, and collaboration with the UN across areas such as sustainable development, human rights, and peace. Young people can find out more [here](#) and sign up to the Youth2030 Pulse Newsletter, which shares opportunities and news about the work with and for youth at the UN [here](#).

KEY CONCEPTS & DEFINITIONS

In this section, you'll find key concepts and definitions related to Youth Empowerment. You can use them as a base for discussion or activities, e.g. vocabulary flashcards.

Advocacy: is the process of influencing decision-makers to adopt, change, or enforce policies that address specific issues or needs. It involves raising awareness, building alliances, and mobilizing communities to drive positive change, especially in areas like climate action, where young people can play a critical role in shaping the agenda and outcomes ([UNICEF Toolkit for Young Climate Activists](#)).

Civic Engagement: means the active involvement of people in the life of their communities and societies, aiming to address issues of public concern and promote the common good. For young people, this engagement can take many forms, including volunteering, participating in decision-making processes, advocacy, and joining youth-led initiatives that contribute to sustainable development and social cohesion ([UNESCO Youth](#)).

Equity: involves fairness and justice in treatment, opportunities, and outcomes for all individuals. It emphasizes the need to address inequalities and ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, has access to resources and opportunities ([UN SDG Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities](#)).



Entrepreneurship: is the process of designing, launching, and managing new ventures, often marked by innovation and risk-taking. It plays a key role in economic development and job creation. For a sustainable future, entrepreneurship should incorporate sustainable practices, address social and environmental challenges, and promote inclusive growth to benefit current and future generations ([UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework](#)).

Future Generations: The concept of future generations emphasizes the need to make decisions today that do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs, underscoring the importance of sustainability and intergenerational equity ([UN Policy Brief on Future Generations](#)).

Global Citizenship: refers to the sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of global issues and the responsibility of individuals to act with a global perspective and contribute to a sustainable world ([UNESCO Global Citizenship Education](#)).

Human Rights: are universal rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, sex, ethnicity, religion, language, or any other status. They include civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights ([UN Human Rights](#)).

Intergenerational: refers to the interactions, relationships, and exchanges between different generations, aiming to foster mutual understanding, respect, and learning across age groups ([UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs on Intergenerational Relations](#)).

Leadership: is the act of guiding or directing a group towards achieving a common goal. In the UN context, leadership often involves promoting values such as integrity, accountability, and inclusiveness ([UN Leadership Framework](#)).

Policymaking: Policymaking is the process of creating laws, regulations, and guidelines that govern a community, organization, or country. It involves identifying problems, formulating solutions, and implementing strategies that address the needs of the population ([UN Policy-Making for Sustainable Development](#)).

Resilience: Resilience is the ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity or challenges, such as natural disasters, economic downturns, or social disruptions ([UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction](#)).

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to achieve specific goals or complete tasks successfully. It is a critical factor in personal development, motivation, and the pursuit of education and employment opportunities ([Berkeley Well Being Institute](#)).



Social Capital: Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and norms that enable collective action within a community. It is associated with increased trust, cooperation, and participation in social and economic activities ([Britannica](#)).

Youth Empowerment: Youth empowerment is the process of equipping young people with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to participate fully in society and make positive contributions to their communities. It involves creating an enabling environment where youth can develop their potential and exercise their rights ([UNESCO Youth Empowerment](#)).

STEP 2 – SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Select between 3 different learning activities to get your learners actively investigating the topic.

ACTIVITY 1 – LEARNER RESEARCH

Learners are encouraged to partake in guided research and activities to explore the topic. Research can be completed independently in a computer lab, as a homework assignment, by talking to community members, visiting a library, or as a classroom, club or community activity.

Learner Research Worksheet	
Name:	
Country:	
Local Community:	
Research Questions:	
What percentage of the world's population is youth? (defined by the United Nations as young people aged 15-24)	
In what world region is the youth population expected to increase by 2050?	
In what world region is the youth population expected to decrease by 2050?	

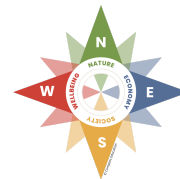


What percentage of the youth population is out of school?	
What percentage of youth globally have access to the internet?	
Does your country have a reference to youth or future generations in your national constitution? Or in national institutions?	
Does your country have a youth parliament?	
What is the total youth population in your country? (defined by the United Nations as young people aged 15-24)	
What is the youth unemployment rate in your country?	
According to your research, what are the challenges facing youth today?	

ACTIVITY 2 – SCHOOL/COMMUNITY INVESTIGATION

This is another activity for learners to undertake guided research to explore the topic. Please adjust the worksheet to either focus on your school, community or educational institution you're engaging learners through.

School/Community Investigation Worksheet		
Investigate	Yes, No, Unsure	Notes and Observations
Does your school/community have opportunities for student or youth leadership?		



Does your school/community have a youth or student council?		
If so, what decisions have the student council or youth council been involved in?		
Does your school/community have town halls or assemblies for all of the youth in the school to hear updates and share with their peers?		
What types of decisions do you think your teachers and school directors/ community leaders need to make every day? Feel free to ask them as part of your research.		
How do you think young people could be more involved in the decision making processes at school/community? Give a few ideas.		

ACTIVITY 3 – RESEARCH A YOUTH MOVEMENT

In this activity, learners can explore how young people have become a driving force for societal change through social mobilization, pushing for action on SDGs around the world. There are many examples of young people influencing national policies and change within their local communities. Take a look at these examples, add young people's movements from your own local context to the list, and let your learners choose one for their investigation.

- ☐ Fridays for Future
- ☐ Bye Bye Plastic Bags
- ☐ Green Generation Initiative
- ☐ Global Youth Biodiversity Network
- ☐ <add a local youth movement you want your learners to find out about>

Ask your learners to research responses on the following questions:

1. What is the name of this youth movement?
2. What is the mission of the movement, organization, or initiative?
3. How do they communicate their mission?
4. What SDGs is this movement, organization, or initiative related to?



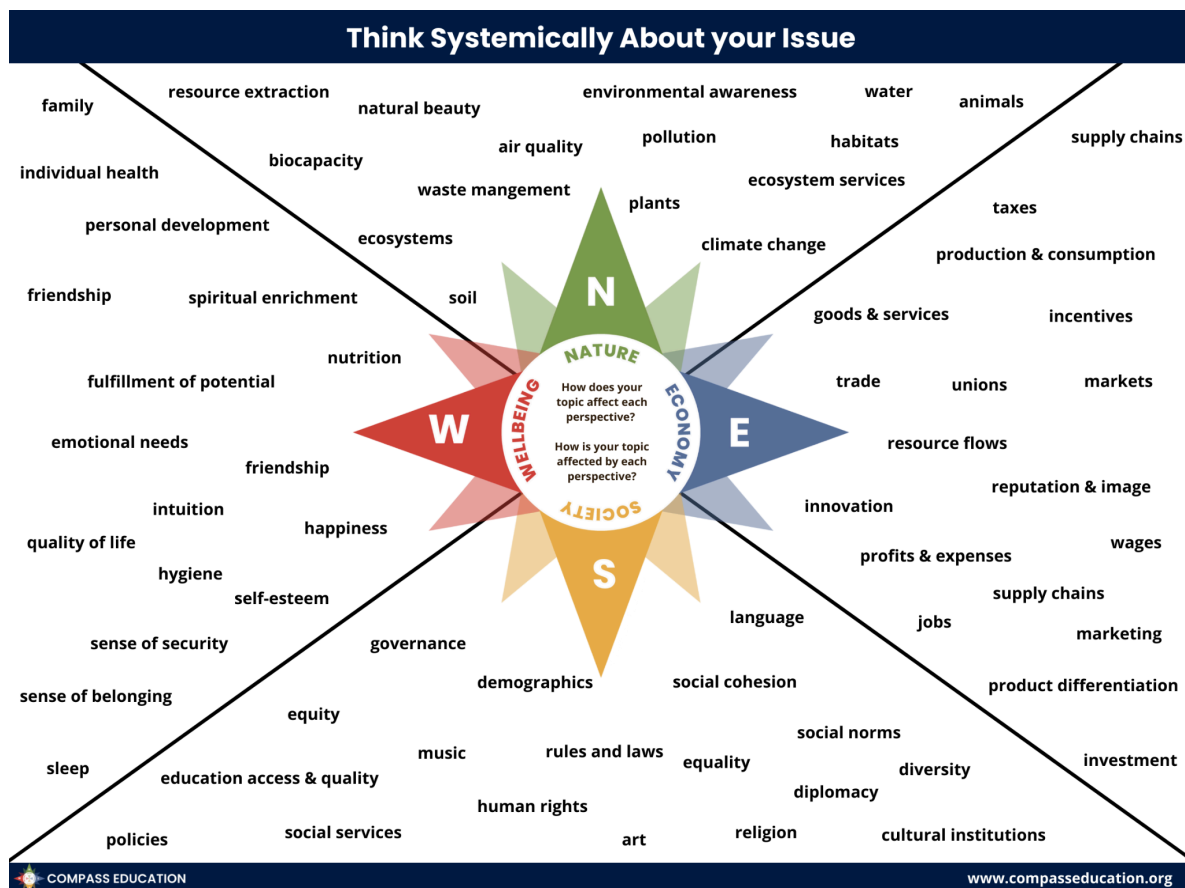
5. What kind of actions does this movement, organization, or initiative take?
6. Having learned about this movement, organization, or initiative, what actions would you like to take to make a difference for the SDGs in your environment?

STEP 3 – FORMULATING QUESTIONS FOR WORLD LEADERS

What questions will your students ask Felipe Paullier and Richa Gupta?

Prior to the live dialogue, all young people participating are invited to [submit and upvote questions](#) to help our youth moderators pick the top 4-5 youth-created questions to ask our speakers. Our moderators will pick questions that have been highly upvoted and that will help our global youth community think holistically and systemically about youth empowerment.

One way to encourage your students to create questions that consider the range of systemic factors impacting youth empowerment is to use The Sustainability Compass tool. This systems thinking tool, pictured below, considers how nature, economy, society, and individual wellbeing interact to shape our world. Challenge your students to come up with questions from each Compass Perspective or how the different perspectives are connected.



Download [a copy of this image here](#) and learn more about [The Sustainability Compass here](#).



BONUS – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Take a look at some additional resources to further enhance your learners' experience.

- [Compass Education | Sustainability and systems thinking toolkit for educators](#)
- [Generation Global | Dialogue skills toolkit for educators](#)
- [UN | The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World](#)
- [UNICEF | Toolkit for young climate activists](#)
- [United Nations | World Youth Report \(WYR\)](#)
- [United Nations | UN Youth Strategy and Resources](#)
- [Scouts/YMCA/IFRC | The Global Youth Mobilization](#)

Table 1 & 2: Youth in Decision Making

Excerpt from [Our Common Agenda: policy brief 3: meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes](#)

Table 1: Guiding core principles for meaningful youth engagement

Table 2: Examples of policies across the world that engage youth in decision making



TABLE 1

GUIDING CORE PRINCIPLES FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

RIGHTS-BASED AND SAFE	Young people should be informed and educated about their rights ³ and empowered to hold duty bearers accountable for respecting, protecting, ⁴ and fulfilling those rights. Duty bearers must ensure that measures, including referral systems, to protect youth from threats and attacks are established and strengthened.
INSTITUTIONALLY MANDATED	Engaging youth in decision-making processes should be formally mandated to prevent an ad hoc approach and to ensure that youth perspectives are integrated throughout the full decision-making process.
DESIGNATED	Designated seats are to be made available for young people in various processes in order to prevent unequal power dynamics and competition between youth and non youth actors.
RESOURCED	Adequate and earmarked funding for the engagement of young people is critical to support their participation in decision-making processes.
TRANSPARENT	There should be a clear and mutual understanding of how young people's information, skills and knowledge will be shared, with whom, and for what purpose.
ACCESSIBLE	Decision-making processes should be made accessible to all groups of young people, particularly young people with disabilities. ⁵
VOLUNTARY	Young people must not be coerced into participating in actions or expressing views against their beliefs and wishes. They should have the right to cease involvement in any process at any stage.
INFORMATIVE	Throughout the engagement process, youth should be provided with timely, clear, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about issues under discussion as well as their role and their rights.
RECIPROCAL ACCOUNTABILITY	Duty bearers should make available transparent information on how young people's inputs have been used and interpreted to influence outcomes. Young people should consult with wider youth constituencies throughout the engagement period, as they feed into various decision-making processes.
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	Based on the principle of non-discrimination, all efforts should be made to ensure inclusiveness and diversity of voices, regardless of their race, sex, language, religion, age, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, disability, migrant or economic status and other characteristics. ⁶
YOUTH AS PARTNERS	Young people should be recognized as equal partners in decision-making processes and their engagement should be facilitated.



TABLE 2

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

EXAMPLE	HOW YOUTH CONTRIBUTE TO DECISION-MAKING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL
2030 NATIONAL YOUTH VISION IN IRAQ	The Government of Iraq has partnered with the United Nations and other partners to establish a youth advisory group to support the review of the 2030 National Youth Vision, which is a youth-oriented, human rights-based and multisectoral road map for empowering young people in Iraq and creating opportunities for them.
YOUTH CLIMATE COUNCIL IN GHANA	The Youth Climate Council in Ghana, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund, is working to strengthen the entrepreneurial skills and capacities of young people as a contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The collaboration with a locally led youth council is mobilizing youth voices in climate change advocacy at the national level by providing technical and financial support to new and existing youth-led advocacy initiatives.
CITY-LEVEL PACT FOR YOUTH IN RIO DE JANEIRO	The Rio de Janeiro City Hall, through the Special Secretariat for Youth, launched the Pact for Youth, an unprecedented public policy programme in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The programme is focused on citizenship training and capacity-building for young people living in situations of extreme social vulnerability.
YOUTH FOR PEACE IN SOLOMON ISLANDS	Through the "Empowering youth as agents for peace and social cohesion" project in Solomon Islands, support was provided to marginalized youth, particularly young women, to engage in decision-making and act as proactive social entrepreneurs to address local sources of grievance. ²⁵ As a result, youth have started to recognize their potential, importance and centrality within their respective communities, and there has also been a shift in public perceptions of youth.
YOUTH ADVOCATING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN THAILAND	The Child and Youth Council of Thailand provided recommendations to the national committee responsible for the implementation of the Prevention and Alleviation of Adolescent Pregnancy Act, supported by the United Nations Population Fund. This contributed to the Ministry of Public Health issuing an interministerial memorandum of understanding in 2020 on ensuring all pregnant adolescents and young people stay in the education system.
PRIME MINISTER'S YOUTH COUNCIL IN CANADA	In Canada, the Prime Minister's Youth Council, a group of young people aged 16 to 24 years, provides non-partisan advice to the Prime Minister and the Government on issues of importance, including employment, access to education, strengthening communities, climate change and clean growth.
YOUTH TACKLING GENDER BARRIERS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION	Youth Co:Lab helps to advance young people's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and policymaking processes by producing action-oriented research to contribute to system-level change and policy development. For example, in its report entitled <i>Addressing Gender Barriers to Entrepreneurship and Leadership among Girls and Young Women in South-East Asia</i> , Youth Co:Lab provided insight into structural barriers that young women face in South-East Asia, and provided recommendations for policymakers to address those challenges.