



International
Labour
Organization

► Meaningful youth engagement for decent work

A training package on engaging young
people in employment programmes





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Karen Emmons edited the final version of the training package, and Jaime Flores designed the publication.

Introduction

What is the objective of this training package and who is it for?

The training package is designed to be a practical, hands-on resource to help staff of the International Labour Organization (ILO), including youth employment technical specialists and project managers, as well as youth employment practitioners more broadly, to enhance youth engagement in employment programmes, projects and initiatives. It also provides materials to support facilitators as they roll out the accompanying training.

This training package offers two resources – a **Guidance Manual**, complemented by an annex of templates, and a **Facilitator's Toolkit** – for those who want to roll out the training.

The training package builds on and adapts established frameworks on meaningful youth engagement (see the following list of resources) to support their application in the development and implementation of youth employment projects. It includes user-friendly tools, adaptable frameworks and guidance along with highlights of emerging good practices from youth employment interventions, all intended to help practitioners better engage young people in their work.

Established frameworks on meaningful youth engagement

- ▶ [*Meaningfully Engaging with Youth: Guidance and Training for UN Staff*](#), a tool from the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, 2019
- ▶ [*Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes*](#), UN Secretary-General Policy Brief, 2023
- ▶ [*Meaningful Youth Participation Practical Toolkit*](#): Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, 2022
- ▶ [*Engaged and Heard!: Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement*](#), UNICEF, 2020
- ▶ [*Because Youth Perspectives Matter: UNESCO Toolbox for Youth Policy and Programming*](#), 2023
- ▶ [*With Us and For Us: IASC Guidelines on Working With and For Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises*](#), UNICEF and Norwegian Refugee Committee, 2020
- ▶ [*The Young Humanitarian Handbook*](#), ActionAid, 2024
- ▶ [*Youth Voices in Youth Employment: A Roadmap for Promoting Meaningful Youth Engagement in Youth Employment Programs*](#), Plan International and Citi Foundation, 2021

Although the training package is relevant to engaging youth more generally, there is also emphasis on the specific considerations for refugee and forcibly displaced youth (see box 1).

Box 1

▶ Engaging youth in situations of forced displacement with employment programmes

Youth in situations of forced displacement experience unique challenges due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, climate change or events seriously disturbing public order.^a Consultations undertaken in 2016 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees^b brought visibility to the challenges that youth face in displacement contexts, especially young refugees. In those consultations, the participating youth particularly lamented two clusters of challenges:

1. **Few employment and livelihood opportunities:** The youth emphasized they would rather work than depend on humanitarian aid, and they expressed frustration at the limited employment and livelihood opportunities available to them.
2. **Lack of opportunities to participate, be engaged or access decision-makers:** The youth cited lack of empowerment and engagement opportunities as factors that limit their involvement in decision-making processes. They have few opportunities to analyse issues, devise solutions, share their ideas with decision-makers or to be heard.

This training package responds to these two critical challenges in parallel – providing tailored reflections and recommendations to engage with youth in contexts of forced displacement through employment programmes.

Source: ^a UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2023*, 2023; ^b UNHCR, *Youth Report 2020–2022: Working With and For Youth in Situations of Forced Displacement*, 2023.

How is the training package structured?

The **Guidance Manual** encompasses youth engagement frameworks, self-assessments, helpful tips, and case studies for youth employment practitioners. It is supplemented with an annex of templates and a compendium of activity suggestions.

The **Facilitator's Toolkit** provides detailed guidance on delivering this training, including conducting training activities for youth employment practitioners to improve how they engage with youth.

The Guidance Manual is structured into six sections, each offering insights, strategies and tools to move beyond tokenism and achieve meaningful youth engagement.

Section 1: Laying the foundation – Fundamentals of meaningful youth engagement

Understand how youth engagement has evolved and explore the five dimensions (voice, space, audience, influence, accountability) that make engagement effective.

Section 2: Understanding youth and their structures – Who they are and how to engage them

Define who youth are, identify youth groups relevant to your work and explore outreach strategies to connect with diverse youth communities.

Section 3: Recognizing the power of youth – The value and principles behind meaningful engagement

Learn why youth engagement matters, explore principles for inclusion and tackle common challenges with practical solutions.

Section 4: From consultation to leadership – Degrees of youth engagement in employment programmes

Discover the four degrees of youth engagement, from consultation to leadership, with tips and examples to ensure that young people have an active role in employment programmes.

Section 5: Unlocking opportunities – Mechanisms for youth engagement in a youth employment programme cycle

See where youth fit in at different programme stages, assess current engagement efforts and explore mechanisms to strengthen youth participation.

Section 6: Measuring success – Assess youth engagement activities

Explore adaptable youth and programme-level indicators for assessing and integrating youth engagement into your monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Annex

Three ready-to-use templates and a compendium of activities will support youth engagement in your programmes.

The **Facilitator's Toolkit** builds on the Guidance Manual to help with capacity-strengthening among practitioners working on youth employment programmes. It provides a structured approach to delivering a five-hour interactive training in an online setting, while remaining adaptable for in-person delivery.

The Toolkit includes a detailed training agenda with step-by-step instructions to facilitate the interactive and participatory training activities. The training introduces content from each section of the Guidance Manual and includes instructions on where to locate the reference content and materials. The Toolkit also includes useful templates, including a master slide deck, activity instructions and training evaluation, all of which can be adapted and used for delivering the training.

How do I navigate the training package?

- ▶ **Follow step by step or jump to what's relevant:** Work through each section for a comprehensive approach to meaningful youth engagement or, if you have specific needs, go straight to the section that applies to your programme priorities.
- ▶ **Use the tools and exercises:** Throughout the Guidance Manual, there are tools that include reflection exercises to help apply the content to your programme and context.
- ▶ **Leverage the Facilitator's Toolkit:** Use the Toolkit to organize your own training on meaningful youth engagement or include it as a module in other training offerings.

Section 1

► Laying the foundation – Fundamentals of meaningful youth engagement

In this section, you will:



1. Trace the shift in youth engagement practice across the United Nations system and the work of the International Labour Organization, from seeing youth as passive beneficiaries to empowering youth as active partners.
2. Discover a practical framework for engagement, learning how the five dimensions – voice, space, audience, influence and accountability – encourage programmes to move beyond tokenism and create meaningful engagement.
3. Assess youth engagement strategies within your programme to determine strengths, gaps and opportunities for improvement.



The evolution of meaningful youth engagement

There are 1.2 billion young people aged 15–24 years in the world, accounting for 16 per cent of the global population. By 2030, that number of youth is projected to grow by 7 per cent, reaching nearly 1.3 billion.¹ Yet, youth around the globe continue to face significant barriers to decent work. Approximately one in five young people were not employment, education or training (NEET) in 2023. This situation was even more critical for young women, who were twice as likely as young men to not be in employment, education or training.² Given these persistent challenges, it is imperative to engage young people directly in shaping the policies and programmes intended to improve their employment outcomes.

¹ United Nations, “*Global Issues: Youth*”, n.d.

² ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Decent Work, Brighter Futures*, 2024.

For too long, young people have been regarded as passive recipients of programmes, including youth employment programmes, rather than active contributors to solutions that can make a difference to their lives. But that is changing. Thanks to shifts in global priorities and the relentless advocacy of young leaders, there is now a stronger push for inclusive, rights-based approaches that empower youth to tackle the challenges they encounter, including those related to accessing decent work.

Meaningful youth engagement is increasingly recognized as essential for ensuring that young people's voices, perspectives and leadership shape programmes, strategies and initiatives so that they are responsive to youth's needs and priorities (see box 3). The United Nations has emphasized the importance of meaningful youth engagement as a critical component of sustainable development in a variety of instruments and processes, such as:

- ▶ **Youth2030 – United Nations Youth Strategy.** Launched in 2018 by the UN Secretary-General, Youth2030 is an umbrella framework to guide the entire United Nations as it steps up its work with and for young people in all contexts and across three pillars – peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. It seeks to significantly strengthen the United Nations' capacity to engage young people and benefit from their views, insights and ideas.³
- ▶ **Our Common Agenda.** This is the UN Secretary-General's vision to reinvigorate global cooperation for progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Within the Common Agenda, Commitment 11 calls on Members States to advance listening to and working with youth.⁴
- ▶ **United Nations Youth Office.** Following the directive of the UN Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* report, Member States unanimously established the United Nations Youth Office in 2023, marking a major step forward in strengthening their commitment to young people by institutionalizing youth affairs within the United Nations Secretariat.⁵
- ▶ **Pact for the Future.** During the Summit of the Future (in September 2024), an inter-governmentally negotiated, action-oriented Pact for the Future⁶ was adopted. This Pact emphasizes youth and future generations, aiming to secure their rights, enhance their participation and ensure long-term thinking in global decision-making. The Pact is reinforced with a Secretary-General's Policy Brief on Meaningful Youth Engagement.⁷

Global, regional and national frameworks and strategies that focus on youth inclusion

This shift towards meaningful youth participation is backed by the following international frameworks:

- ▶ [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- ▶ [Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- ▶ [Global Compact on Refugees](#), especially for persons in situations of forced displacement

That shift is reinforced through regional and national strategies, such as:

- ▶ Government of the Netherlands' [Youth at Heart: Young People at the Heart of Dutch Development Cooperation](#)
- ▶ [African Youth Charter](#)

³ United Nations, [Youth2030: Working With and For Young People](#), n.d.

⁴ United Nations, "[Our Common Agenda](#)".

⁵ United Nations Youth Affairs, "[The United Nations Youth Office](#)".

⁶ United Nations, [Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations](#), 2024.

⁷ United Nations Executive Office of the Secretary-General, [Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes](#), 2023.

The ILO's commitment to advancing meaningful youth engagement for decent work

The ILO is dedicated to ensuring that young people have real input in shaping the policies, programmes and decisions that affect their futures. In the world of work, social dialogue is an instrument that fosters the voice and representation of key stakeholders and facilitates participation in decision-making processes. Youth-inclusive social dialogue⁸ is an important mechanism to build consensus, influence policies and co-create solutions with young people as constituents in those processes. Meaningful youth engagement in the development of youth employment policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives boosts and complements youth-inclusive social dialogue, particularly among unemployed youth, youth detached from the labour market or those experiencing discrimination and disadvantage. By amplifying young people's voices and fostering their participation, we can create more inclusive and effective employment solutions that reflect their needs and aspirations.

The ILO's commitment to meaningful youth engagement is reflected in its institutional frameworks as well as initiatives, partnerships and strategies that it contributes to (see the following highlight).

The International Labour Organization and meaningful youth engagement

- ▶ **ILO's Youth Employment Action Plan, 2020–2030:** The ILO's work on youth employment is anchored in this action plan, which recognizes the importance of fostering the meaningful involvement of young people, particularly regarding youth employment partnerships and advocacy.^a
- ▶ **United Nations Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth:** This ILO-led initiative^b pursues active engagement and partnerships with youth-led organizations in promoting more and better jobs for young people.
- ▶ **United Nations' Youth2030 Strategy:**^c The ILO-led Decent Jobs for Youth is the implementing arm of the Youth2030: United Nations Youth Strategy's priority on economic empowerment through decent work.
- ▶ **United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development:** The ILO has been a member of this network, which is an inter-agency mechanism on youth matters, since 2010. The network revolves around advancing and increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations' work on youth development and policy by strengthening collaboration, creating coherence and enabling exchange among all relevant UN entities.^d

Source: ^a ILO, [Renewing Commitment to Youth Employment by Endorsing a Follow-up Plan of Action on Youth Employment for the Period 2020–30](#), 2020; ^b Launched in 2016, the [UN Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#) is a multi-stakeholder partnership between the United Nations entities, governments, social partners, businesses, youth-led organizations, foundations, academic institutions and the private sector, among others, to scale up action and impact on youth employment; ^c United Nations, [Youth2030: Working With and For Young People](#), n.d.; ^d United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, "[UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development](#)".

⁸ ILO, [Social Dialogue With and For Youth: Challenges and Opportunities in the Evolving World of Work](#), 2023.

Building on its long-standing commitment to promoting decent work for youth, the ILO is deepening its efforts to integrate meaningful youth engagement in interventions and initiatives that seek to improve the employment prospects of young people. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of the youth employment challenge,⁹ there is broad acknowledgement that youth employment solutions must be built with young people – not just for them. To be truly effective and sustainable, the solutions must be informed by youth's insights, lived experiences and leadership-ensuring they remain relevant and rooted in the realities of the people they aim to serve.

This training package centres on how to meaningfully engage young people in youth employment programmes, including active labour market programmes and other youth employment initiatives, projects and strategies that seek to support young people's access to decent work. Active labour market programmes refer to the interventions that aim to improve the employment prospects of young people by addressing both the demand and supply sides of the labour market, as well as improving the matching between them. They are distinguished by the different objectives they fulfil: (i) incentives for retaining or creating employment (demand side); (ii) incentives for keeping or seeking employment or enhancing employability (supply side); and (iii) measures to improve the matching of labour supply with demand.

Active labour market programmes include the following five principle types of interventions:

- ▶ **Skills training** for both technical and non-technical or soft skills;
- ▶ **Employment services** offering job counselling, job search assistance and job placement support;
- ▶ **Subsidized employment**, such as wage or hiring subsidies;
- ▶ **Public employment programmes**; and
- ▶ **Entrepreneurship support** that facilitates access to capital and/or entrepreneurship skills.

These interventions have a critical role in supporting young people's transition to employment by enhancing youth employability, providing labour market intermediation, incentivizing the hiring of young talent, expanding job creation and promoting business creation, with significant positive impact on the employment outcomes.

Although the training package does not directly touch upon youth engagement in policymaking processes, much of the guidance covered is applicable to the policy space.



⁹ See [Global Employment Trends for Youth](#) for more information.

What is meaningful youth engagement?

Meaningful youth engagement in the context of youth employment programming is about creating a genuine, ongoing dialogue with youth so that they have a real say in how these types of interventions come together. During the development of this training package, which involved consultations with representatives of youth-led and refugee youth-led organizations as well as ILO staff¹⁰ and the PROSPECTS Programme partners,¹¹ an important message was echoed: Youth engagement works best when it is a continuous partnership process – not a one-time event.

Meaningful youth engagement in youth employment programmes can therefore be understood as:



A participatory process that actively involves young people as stakeholders, contributors, partners and leaders throughout the entire life cycle of an employment programme. This engagement spans all programming phases – from governance, design and planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation – and must be reinforced by capacity-building and the creation of an enabling environment that supports their meaningful participation.

While participation is a fundamental right, youth engagement goes beyond just having a seat at the table: It creates a space in which young people can inform, influence, co-create and even lead the initiatives that impact their lives.¹² By fostering genuine inclusion, we move towards programming through which youth are not just supported to accessing decent job opportunities but are empowered to drive change.



Meaningful youth engagement goes beyond inviting young people to sit quietly in dialogue while older leaders make the decisions. It means giving us a seat at the table, listening to our lived experiences, and trusting us to help shape the decisions that will define our future. We know what is happening at the grassroots. We need the wisdom of older generations just as much as they need our creativity and 21st-century ideas. We are not just beneficiaries of policies and programmes - we are partners, innovators, and problem-solvers. When youth are actively involved, solutions become more inclusive, practical, and sustainable. My call is simple: don't talk about us without us.



Oluwagbemiga Opeyemi Gracious, 28

Co-founder, Young Minds Empowerment Initiative
Nigeria

¹⁰ This included staff from the ILO headquarters, the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the ILO Regional Office for Africa, and the ILO country offices in Iraq, Lebanon, and Uganda.

¹¹ The Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities, or PROSPECTS, is a global partnership to improve the access of forcibly displaced young people and youth in host communities to education, social protection and decent work. Partners here refers specifically to the UNHCR country offices in Kenya and Somalia and the UNICEF headquarters in New York that contributed to the consultations. For more information, see www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/partnership-improving-prospects-forcibly-displaced-persons-and-host#ofprospects.

¹² The right of youth to participation is emphasized by multiple human rights conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

A framework for meaningful youth engagement

Now that you have the basics, the next step is to explore a conceptual framework that can guide your efforts. One of the most influential conceptual models is Lundy's **Framework for Participation**.¹³ Although originally conceptualized as a model for child participation, the framework has been widely adapted and adopted to support the meaningful engagement of young people (see the following table with the ILO's adaptations), especially those in forced displacement contexts (see box 2).

Five dimensions of youth engagement				
Voice	Space	Audience	Influence	Accountability*
Young people have the right to express their views on issues that matter to them. However, simply allowing them to speak isn't enough. Young people must be informed, capacitated and supported to help them share informed ideas and inputs.	Young people need safe, inclusive and enabling spaces where they can express themselves freely, without fear of consequences.	Engaging youth isn't just about facilitating opportunities for them to speak. It's also about ensuring that the right people are listening. Decision-makers and stakeholders must not only hear youth voices but commit to listening to and engaging with them.	The fourth dimension is where real impact happens! Youth voices should not just be heard but be acted upon, meaning their ideas and inputs should be integrated into programming to the extent possible. Decision-makers must commit to giving due consideration and implementing contributions from young people.	Young people should receive timely feedback on how their contributions have been considered and integrated into programmes. Programme teams must be transparent, responsive and committed to acknowledging and acting upon youth's input. Being accountable to youth demonstrates that their participation is valued.

Note: * Just because young people are heard does not always mean they are informed about how their contributions have been considered. This is why **accountability** was included as the fifth dimension of meaningful engagement during the consultations that informed the development of this training package. It's inclusion reinforces the idea that youth participation must be transparent and involve continuous feedback loops in communication to build trust.

¹³ Laura Lundy, a professor of international children's rights at the School of Education at the Queen's University of Belfast, developed a model to conceptualize children's participation. Although Lundy's model was originally developed for child participation, it is also applicable to youth engagement.

Box 2

► Why each dimension matters for youth in situations of forced displacement

- **Dimension 1: Voice** – Enabling displaced youth to express their views and contribute to discussions about employment allows their unique needs and experiences to be part of the dialogue and solutions.
- **Dimension 2: Space** – Displaced youth may struggle to engage due to fear, discrimination or exclusion. Providing structured, culturally sensitive and safe spaces fosters trust and confidence.
- **Dimension 3: Audience** – Many displaced youth feel unheard. Ensuring that the “right” stakeholders are in the room and that they actively listen and respond to young people’s contributions strengthens young people’s agency.
- **Dimension 4: Influence** – Displaced youth may participate in discussions but rarely see their ideas being implemented. Moving beyond consultation to ensure that their inputs influence programmes and employment strategies empowers them as active contributors to the solutions that affect their lives.
- **Dimension 5: Accountability** – Trust is critical in displacement contexts, in which youth typically experience systemic neglect. Transparent feedback loops that show how their contributions are used reinforce trust.

True participation means seeing the influence of your perspectives in a final version of what you have been consulted on. As one young person involved in the development of this training package pointed out:



It is not just about including refugee youth, but ensuring they have a real voice in reflecting their experiences and shaping solutions that work for them. Refugee youth bring first-hand knowledge of the barriers they face, and their leadership turns programmes from assumptions into real opportunities. Through co-creation, we not only design better programmes and address barriers, but also build futures that are truly accessible and sustainable.



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How are you engaging youth?

A quick self-check

The following checklist can help you assess whether your youth employment programme is hitting the mark across each of the five dimensions of meaningful youth engagement. It also can be used as a planning tool to help you explore and choose effective strategies for engaging youth throughout your youth employment programme.

The checklist comprises 16 reflective questions corresponding to the five dimensions of voice, space, audience, influence and accountability. Each question provides examples of how the dimension could be activated.

To use the checklist:

- ▶ Take a moment to reflect on each question and see if it aligns with your programme or has been considered in your planning.
 - Tick **"Yes"** if your programme already includes this practice or if you plan to implement it.
 - Tick **"No"** if the practice hasn't been implemented yet.
 - Tick **"N/A"** if the practice doesn't apply to your programme.
- ▶ List the methods that are used or could be adopted in your programme.

This simple exercise will help you determine the strengths, gaps and new ways of working in your approach to meaningful youth engagement.



A quick self-check on engaging youth

Dimension	Questions to consider	Yes	No	N/A	What methods are used or could be adopted in the programme?
Voice: Youth are supported to express their perspectives within the programme.	Does the programme provide regular opportunities for youth to share their opinions, ideas and feedback on the programme's activities or decisions? <i>Examples: Organizing regular consultative meetings, youth advisory meetings, feedback sessions, digital feedback surveys or town halls in which young participants can discuss their experiences and propose suggestions.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Does the programme provide youth with all the necessary information to form their views? <i>Examples: Organizing briefing sessions or developing youth-friendly handbooks, explainer videos or infographics on the programme's objectives and purpose of engagement. Using clear, concise messaging in relevant languages, avoiding technical terms and ensuring all materials are accessible and culturally relevant.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Does the programme provide youth with multiple engagement modalities and avenues or platforms to express their views? <i>Examples: Offering in-person forums as well as online platforms, such as WhatsApp groups, social media polls and anonymous online suggestion boxes, to ensure that youth can participate in ways that work for them.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Does the programme support youth to develop their communication and leadership skills to express their perspectives effectively? <i>Examples: Providing training in public speaking, advocacy and negotiation skills. Pairing youth with mentors or peer coaches to help them articulate their ideas confidently.</i>	☐	☐	☐	

A quick self-check on engaging youth (cont.)

Dimension	Questions to consider	Yes	No	N/A	What methods are used or could be adopted in the programme?
Space: Youth are provided safe and inclusive spaces to express their perspectives in the programme.	Does the programme create an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality in which youth feel comfortable expressing their views? <i>Examples: Using youth facilitators or persons trained in working with young people. Setting clear guidelines on confidentiality to ensure that youth feel safe when sharing their perspectives.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Does the programme consult youth about the logistics of their engagement? <i>Examples: Determining convenient times and locations (such as for consultations). Developing flexible participation criteria to ensure that young people's needs and constraints are considered.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Does the programme provide accessibility accommodations to remove potential engagement barriers? <i>Examples: Offering transportation stipends, providing remote participation options (such as virtual meetings), ensuring venues are accessible with ramps and sign language interpretation, creating gender-inclusive spaces and translating materials into multiple languages.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Are there mechanisms in place to promptly and effectively address any safety or protection concerns of young people? <i>Examples: Conducting a risk assessment. Implementing a safeguarding policy with clear reporting mechanisms. Training programme staff on anti-harassment and child protection principles, especially when working with youth who have reached the minimum age of employment.</i>	☐	☐	☐	

A quick self-check on engaging youth (cont.)

Dimension	Questions to consider	Yes	No	N/A	What methods are used or could be adopted in the programme?
Audience: Programme staff and stakeholders listen to youth's perspectives and integrate their inputs into the programme.	Is there a focal point or dedicated person on the team responsible for youth? <i>Examples: Assigning a dedicated youth engagement officer or ensuring dedicated time from a project team member to advance youth engagement. Establishing clear communication channels for youth to share their inputs.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Does the programme staff verify youth's inputs to understand them accurately? <i>Examples: Using participatory validation methods, such as dialogue, peer review or a feedback loop, whereby youth validate developed recommendations, insights or updates.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Does the programme facilitate dialogue between youth, relevant stakeholders and decision-makers? <i>Examples: Organizing roundtable discussions in which youth engage directly with policymakers and other programme stakeholders and facilitating opportunities for young people to present their recommendations at programme review meetings.</i>	☐	☐	☐	

A quick self-check on engaging youth (cont.)

Dimension	Questions to consider	Yes	No	N/A	What methods are used or could be adopted in the programme?
Influence: Youth's perspectives and ideas are acted upon and integrated into programming as well as relevant external agendas.	Do programme staff actively listen to youth's voices and incorporate their feedback and inputs? <i>Examples: Adjusting programme design and implementation based on youth feedback. Making real-time changes to programme implementation to reflect the insights and challenges shared.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Do programme staff identify and create opportunities for youth to influence external agendas and decision-making spaces? <i>Examples: Facilitating youth participation in policy consultations, stakeholder meetings or advocacy campaigns. Supporting youth-led activities that aim to influence public discourse or government decisions. Connecting youth with external platforms (e.g., international forums) in which their voices can influence broader agendas beyond the programme.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
Accountability: Youth receive feedback on their inputs and how their perspectives or ideas were considered.	Are programme staff committed to answering youth's questions? <i>Examples: Establishing dedicated communication channels (WhatsApp groups, email hotlines, office hours) where youth can ask questions and receive timely responses from programme staff.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Are youth informed of how their voices have influenced decisions or actions within the programme? <i>Examples: Providing feedback reports, newsletters or updates that explicitly outline how youth's contributions shaped programme adjustments or new initiatives.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
	Are youth informed in a timely manner about the decision-making process within the programme and next steps? <i>Examples: Clearly communicating timelines for decision-making and adhering to them. Regularly updating youth through meetings, emails or digital platforms on progress, changes and upcoming opportunities.</i>	☐	☐	☐	

Section 2

► Understanding youth and their structures – Who they are and how to engage them

In this section, you will:



1. Discover the core components to understand “who are youth”, including age, demographics, lived experiences and displacement realities.
2. Use an inclusivity checklist to critically evaluate whether your employment programme is adequately engaging the relevant group of youth, including youth in forced displacement contexts.
3. Understand youth structures and networks and explore outreach strategies.
4. Map out stakeholders and engagement platforms to develop a context-specific outreach strategy.



Rethinking youth: Beyond just an age group

What does it really mean to be a “youth”? While there’s no single definition, organizations often use age-based categories for monitoring and reporting. The ILO and the United Nations definition of youth covers the 15–24 age group, while the African Union uses the broader range of 15–35 years to include a larger segment of young people. But defining youth by age alone misses the bigger picture: Being young isn’t just about age, it’s about life experiences. Individual demographics shape both lived experiences and the opportunities available for youth to transition into adulthood.¹⁴

¹⁴ UNESCO, *Meaningfully Engaging Youth Guidance Training UN Staff*, 2019.

This matters because if we only define youth by age, we overlook the complex realities that shape their lives, such as:

- ▶ **Individual demographics:** No two young people are the same – gender, economic status, education, geography, disability, ethnicity, legal status and cultural identity all influence their access to opportunities and can create barriers to engagement. A one-size-fits-all approach to youth engagement doesn't work. Instead, youth engagement must recognize these demographic differences and design inclusive, targeted solutions that tackle the different vulnerabilities that youth experience, especially for those facing intersectional discrimination.
- ▶ **Experience of “being a youth”:** Every generation of young people faces unique challenges and opportunities. Even within the same generation, factors like where young people live, their culture and their socio-economic background affect experiences differently. That's why youth employment practitioners need to engage with young people – to listen, learn and understand their unique journeys and design tailored solutions accordingly.
- ▶ **Navigating the transition to adulthood:** Becoming an adult isn't a straightforward journey – it involves navigating life transitions, including starting to work. As the world of work changes, the journey from school to work is becoming increasingly less straightforward or predictable. Instead of moving directly from education to stable, long-term jobs, many youth cycle through short-term and temporary contracts, periods of unemployment and further training. These transitions can be complex and uncertain.

A truly youth-centred approach means listening to young people's stories, recognizing their diversity and designing employment solutions that meet their needs. For this to be successful, we must actively address the layers of exclusion that many young people experience, especially those most vulnerable, such as youth in forced displacement contexts (see box 3). Only by building on a detailed profile of the youth groups we want to engage with can we create targeted and inclusive engagement strategies that work to help all youth – regardless of their background – access decent work and ultimately improve their futures.

Box 3

▶ Youth in situations of forced displacement

Forcibly displaced young people exemplify why age alone cannot define youth: Their experience of displacement has massive impact on their transition to adulthood. Forcibly displaced youth refers to young people who have been forced to leave their home due to conflict, violence, persecution, natural disaster or human rights violation.^a This includes **refugee and internally displaced youth**.

- **Refugees** are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border and been granted official refugee status in another country.^b
- **Internally displaced persons** are those who are forcibly displaced within the borders of their home country or country of nationality.^c

These youth may live in a refugee camp, informal settlement, urban area or transit location, often in close proximity with a host community. Recognizing their diverse backgrounds, whether they are fleeing across a border or displaced within their own country, and understanding how their legal status influences their experience of the youth phase of life is crucial for developing inclusive and context-specific employment programmes.

For these young people, transitions are typically delayed or disrupted. Interrupted education, legal and economic barriers and limited access to decent jobs make it difficult to secure income and achieve independence. As a result, many displaced youth find themselves in a state of “waithood” – a prolonged period in which they are no longer children but are not yet seen as adults.^d

Source: ^a UNHCR, *Mid-Year Trends Report 2024*, 2024; ^b UNHCR, “*What Is a Refugee?*”, 2023; ^c OHCHR, “*About Internally Displaced Persons*”, 2023; ^d UNICEF and Norwegian Refugee Committee, *With Us and For Us: IASC Guidelines on Working With and For Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises, Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action*, 2020.

Addressing the intersectional barriers to engagement

Young people often encounter multiple and overlapping barriers that limit their employment outcomes. These barriers can include a lack of relevant skills or experience, limited access to training or inadequate job search assistance. These barriers may be further compounded by systemic challenges, such as discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and a stagnant job market that limits opportunities. Ensuring that all young people have equal opportunity to shape programming requires breaking down various intersecting barriers:

- ▶ **Gender disparities:** Women are often paid less than men and experience workplace bias. Cultural norms and caregiving responsibilities further limit their access to jobs and training. Gender-diverse youth also experience discrimination in employment.
- ▶ **Socio-economic and employment-related barriers:** Low-income youth struggle to access education, training and job opportunities. Limited social capital also can restrict access to job openings, social networks, mentors or professional connections. Youth not in employment, education or training often experience challenges related to unemployment, wasted potential and even complete disengagement from the labour market.
- ▶ **Disability and accessibility:** Young people with disabilities face exclusion due to discriminatory hiring and inaccessible workplaces, which can prevent their full participation in the labour market.
- ▶ **Identity-based discrimination:** Workplace discrimination leads to low wages, job insecurity and limited career growth.

In displacement contexts, youth may experience additional unique barriers that compound with other factors hindering their economic integration,¹⁵ including:

- ▶ **Legal barriers:** Many displaced youth lack identification documents and work permits. The prolonged processing of work permits results in extended unemployment, inactivity or pushes displaced youth into informal, low-paying and unprotected jobs.
- ▶ **Restrictions on the freedom of movement:** An estimated 60 per cent of countries impose some restrictions on freedom of movement for refugees and asylum-seekers within their borders.¹⁶ These restrictions limit physical access to workplaces. Living in refugee camps and marginalized urban areas can be challenging to access safe and affordable transport to workplaces.
- ▶ **Limited access to education and skills:** Young people experiencing displacement often miss out on formal education or vocational training due to their circumstances, such as lack of documentation or financial constraints. Qualifications from home countries may not be recognized in host communities, and work experience may be difficult to prove due to lost documents or accreditation differences.
- ▶ **Limited access to financial services:** Many displaced youth encounter difficulties accessing banking services due to a lack of required identification, legal status or proof of residence. This limits their ability to open a bank account, save securely, receive wages digitally or access credit, thus hindering their financial independence and opportunity for economic inclusion.
- ▶ **Language barriers:** Lack of fluency in or a working grasp of a certain language may restrict access to training, employment opportunities and workplace communication.
- ▶ **Identity-based discrimination:** Displaced youth may come up against barriers to employment due to stereotypes and xenophobia in a host country. Additionally, some employers may be unaware of refugees' legal rights to work, further limiting their access to opportunities.

¹⁵ UNHCR, *Youth Report 2020–2022: Working With and For Youth in Situations of Forced Displacement*, 2023.

¹⁶ Ginn, Thomas, et al., *Global Refugee Work Rights Report, Centre for Global Development*, 2022.

Refugee youth with disabilities, for example, are among those for whom the barriers typically overlap.



“When youth with disabilities are included in shaping programmes and decisions, it builds confidence, strengthens their sense of belonging, and shows them that their voices matter.”

Ruvubika Pierre, 35

Programme Manager,
Umoja People with Disabilities
Young refugee advocate from
Democratic Republic of the Congo living in Malawi

Reflection

Am I reaching the right group of youth?

Inclusivity checklist

As we have discussed, young people face diverse and overlapping vulnerabilities that affect their experiences and access to opportunities. To ensure inclusive and equitable youth engagement, it's essential to identify and redress the unique challenges confronting different groups. The following checklist, adapted from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines for working with youth,¹⁷ is a practical tool to ensure that your youth engagement initiatives leave no one behind. The sub-groups of youth cited here are not exhaustive but instead serve as starting point to determine the specific groups of youth experiencing vulnerabilities that are relevant to your context and programme.

1. **Assess relevance.** Review each youth group and determine if it applies to your context and programme.
2. **Identify missing groups.** Include any additional missing groups of vulnerable youth relevant to your context and programme.
3. **Evaluate inclusivity.** For each of the relevant youth groups, reflect on whether your programme actively engages them.

Remember that displacement creates additional layers of vulnerability. A young person may belong to several “at-risk” categories at the same time, with each of these factors compounding their challenges and requiring tailored strategies to be engaged.

¹⁷ UNICEF and Norwegian Refugee Committee, *With Us and For Us: IASC Guidelines on Working With and For Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises, Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action*, 2020. IASC is an inter-agency forum of United Nations and other humanitarian partners founded in 1991 to strengthen humanitarian assistance.

Inclusivity checklist				
	Is it relevant to your context or programme? (If yes, answer the second question)		Is your programme already inclusive of this vulnerable group of youth?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Youth not in employment, education or training				
Young women				
Youth with disabilities				
Young workers in the informal economy				
Young people in hazardous occupations				
Young people engaged in (the worst forms of) child labour or forced labour				
Youth in the rural economy				
Young people from minority linguistic, religious or ethnic groups				
Indigenous young people				
Young refugees				
Youth who are internally displaced				
Youth from host communities				
Young asylum-seekers				
Young returnees				
Undocumented young people				
Youth who are stateless				
[Additional groups] • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____				

Engaging youth: Effective outreach strategies

Given the diversity of challenges confronting young people, outreach efforts must be targeted and youth-centred. One avenue for engagement is through youth structures. These can serve as vital bridges between programmes and young people, offering trusted networks and platforms for dialogue and collaboration. Youth structures include formal organizations, councils, clubs and informal groups that work on youth-related issues.

Youth structures may be youth-focused or youth-led and can include:

- ▶ **Youth representing employers' and workers' organizations**, such as a youth committee within a trade union or youth delegates in employers' federations.
- ▶ **Youth representing governments**, such as youth delegates and young parliamentarians.
- ▶ **Youth-led organizations**, such as formal and registered entities led by young people, that work on social, economic or environmental issues.
- ▶ **Refugee youth-led organizations and networks**, such as community-based groups led by displaced youth, often advocating rights and inclusion.
- ▶ **Youth councils and advisory boards**, such as national, local or institutional bodies that represent youth's interests and advise decision-makers.
- ▶ **Student unions and youth associations**, such as those based in schools, universities or communities to represent and mobilize young people.
- ▶ **Young researchers and academic networks**, such as youth-led or youth-focused academic collectives generating data, analysis and policy recommendations.
- ▶ **Informal youth groups and grass-roots movements**, such as unregistered or community-based groups engaging in advocacy, peer support or local development initiatives.
- ▶ **Clubs and volunteer groups**, such as youth-led clubs around interests (sports, arts, STEM subjects, environmental activism or civic engagement).

The following are effective strategies to recruit and engage youth. See box 4 for specific strategies to engage forcibly displaced youth.

1. **Engage governments and employers' and workers' organizations.** It is critical to engage ILO constituents (government, employers and workers) to ensure that young people representing these organisations can inform and shape youth employment programmes and initiatives. This may include young people representing trade unions and employers' organizations or members of youth parliaments and councils representing national and local governments, among others.
2. **Use peer-led outreach.** Young people trust their peers, which makes young programme participants some of the most effective ambassadors for engagement. Encourage current and former programme beneficiaries to refer community peers who could support the programme as well as benefit from it. Establish an alumni network in which past participants share their experiences, mentor new participants and advocate for greater youth engagement. Create youth-led referral initiatives, wherein engaged youth help spread awareness through word-of-mouth referral, social media and community events.
3. **Leverage digital and mobile phone media engagement.** Youth typically rely on digital tools for communication, learning and networking. Use social media platforms, messaging apps (WhatsApp, Telegram) and online forums to share information. Leverage online platforms and offer online sessions in which youth can ask questions, express interest and apply to participate.

4. **Leverage community-based engagement.** For effective outreach, it's essential to work with organizations embedded in the communities where youth live. Work with local networks and community groups, including faith-based organizations, to connect with young people. Connect with youth centres to make participation accessible and inclusive.
5. **Partner with youth-led structures.** Youth-led structures are essential for ensuring that diverse voices are represented. Prioritize partnerships with youth-led organizations that reflect the specific groups of young people the programme aims to target. Check that these organizations have the capacity and resources to meaningfully support outreach and engagement, or consider strengthening their capacities to do the same. Refugee youth-led organizations must be partners in outreach and engagement efforts to youth in contexts of displacement.
6. **Collaborate with diverse partners.** Partner with United Nations entities, civil society organizations, development partners and private sector entities that have experience working with young people because this will enhance your outreach efforts by leveraging the expertise, networks and resources of diverse stakeholders.



Box 4

► Outreach strategies for engaging youth in a displacement context

Leverage government refugee services. Government agencies responsible for refugee affairs are an important entry point to connect with and reach refugee youth living in camps, settlements and urban areas. Use their information systems, data and networks to strengthen your outreach efforts.

Partner with organizations experienced in displacement contexts. Engage organizations that have experience working with displaced and marginalized youth, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and local community-based organizations. Their established community relationships can facilitate outreach efforts in hard-to-reach areas.

Partner with refugee-led organizations. When targeting refugee youth, partnering with refugee-led organizations ensures deeper engagement and credibility. These organizations have first-hand knowledge of the challenges young people face and can help bridge gaps in communication and trust.

Addressing access barriers

Across all outreach approaches, it is important to address the barriers that might prevent youth from engaging in the design and implementation of youth employment programmes. Incentives and support services can have a crucial role in ensuring meaningful engagement.

- ▶ Offering stipends, transportation support and digital access can work to remove economic barriers that might prevent youth from participating.
- ▶ Flexible participation options, such as virtual meetings, can help young people with caregiving responsibilities or other commitments to engage.
- ▶ Providing capacity-building training and certification or facilitating access to events in which young people can present their work and perspectives can help youth develop professionally while contributing their perspectives to a programme.
- ▶ Developing multilingual materials and providing interpretation services will also support inclusive engagement.

Removing barriers to the engagement of young people in your youth employment programme or to their contributing to the solutions that will affect their lives can result in surprising new directions.



When young people are provided with enabling conditions through empowerment, trust and funding, groundbreaking innovations that positively impact our world are achievable.



Amani Joel Mafigi, 28

Co-founder, Unleashed - Potentials in Motion

Young refugee advocate from

Democratic Republic of the Congo living in Uganda



Reflection

How can I reach out to youth in my context?

A quick context analysis

These reflection questions are designed to help programme teams analyse their local context and identify outreach partners and engagement opportunities. By exploring existing youth structures, networks and community organizations, these questions will guide efforts to engage with youth, including displaced youth, in your employment initiatives.

Use these questions to:

- ▶ **Map the landscape.** Understand the presence and role of youth-led organizations, councils and grass-roots networks in your context.
- ▶ **Identify outreach partners.** Determine which organizations, including refugee-led and community-based groups, can help your programme connect with youth.
- ▶ **Explore engagement strategies.** Assess all opportunities to leverage these structures in the context of your employment programme.

Reflection questions to analyse the local context

Local analysis reflection questions	Identify which youth structures or youth-serving structures can help connect with youth	Identify which outreach strategies can support your programme
1. Youth representing workers' and employers' organizations Are there young people representing the ILO constituents in your context that can be engaged? • What formal or informal roles do young people have within trade unions, employers' organizations or other representative bodies? • Are there specific youth wings, committees or focal points within these organizations?		
2. Representative youth bodies Are there local or national youth councils or representative bodies that represent youth in your context? • Do these representative structures advocate the interests and challenges of youth facing additional marginalization (such as young women, youth with disabilities or indigenous youth)? • Do these bodies represent displaced youth? If not, are displaced youth adequately represented in other local or national youth councils?		

Reflection questions to analyse the local context (cont.)

Local analysis reflection questions	Identify which youth structures or youth-serving structures can help connect with youth	Identify which outreach strategies can support your programme
3. Youth-led organizations Are there youth-led organizations that support and represent youth in your context? - To what extent do these youth-led organizations have the willingness, resources and capacity to support your outreach efforts, especially those in remote or marginalized settings? - Are there refugee youth-led organizations that support and represent displaced youth in your context? What resources and support might they need to engage?		
4. Youth-serving organizations and structures What other structures, such as civil society organizations, academic networks or grass-roots groups, are working with youth? - What opportunities exist for partnership and collaboration? - Are there youth-serving structures that work with youth in a displacement context? What partnership and collaboration opportunities could be activated to target your outreach efforts?		
5. Youth networks What additional formal or informal youth networks exist that could help amplify your outreach and engagement efforts? - Are there digital or in-person networks that can connect youth to opportunities and support their meaningful participation in programming? - Are there such networks for displaced youth?		
6. Other partners Are there other diverse partners, such as United Nations entities, civil society organizations and private sector entities that work with youth in your context? To what extent can these partners help reach out within their network of youth?		

Section 3

► Recognizing the power of youth – The value and principles behind meaningful engagement

In this section, you will:



1. Learn to articulate why engaging young people as active stakeholders is beneficial both for them and for the effectiveness and sustainability of your programme.
2. Discover the principles that ensure youth participation is inclusive, impactful and sustained.
3. Explore common challenges that hinder effective youth participation and gain insights into practical solutions and strategies to overcome these barriers.



Why meaningful youth engagement matters

As youth employment practitioners, we need to articulate why meaningful youth engagement is essential to our work, especially in employment programmes operating in fragile contexts. Meaningfully engaging young people not only gives them an active voice and role in programmes that impact them but also ensures that the programmes are responsive to real rather than perceived needs. At the same time, when young people are engaged, they gain skills that may contribute to their employment prospects.



“Meaningful youth engagement catalyzes self-reliance for young refugees and their communities by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. When young people actively participate in decision-making processes and are equipped with relevant skills and opportunities, they become more self-reliant, resilient, and better able to contribute positively to their own well-being and that of their communities.”

Rose Nafisa Mashimbo, 28

Youth trainer, Stand for Change and Unity

Young refugee advocate from

Democratic Republic of the Congo living in Uganda

The following **triple value of youth engagement** developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization¹⁸ was adapted to explore and address “the why” of youth engagement in the context of employment.

The triple value of youth engagement	
For young people	Fulfilling youth’s fundamental right to participation. Participation is a fundamental human right. Meaningfully engaging youth ensures that they are not just passive recipients in programmes but active contributors to solutions that will make a difference to their futures. Developing youth’s core skills and technical knowledge. Engagement enables youth to develop core skills^a in communication, critical thinking, teamwork and problem-solving.^b These skills in turn can have an important role in equipping young people with the competencies needed to access employment opportunities and succeed in the world of work. Additionally, participation provides opportunities for youth to build up their technical knowledge on youth employment. Providing practical experiences and building networks. Active engagement also offers young people an opportunity to connect with relevant youth employment stakeholders, policy discussions and real-world interventions that will enhance their understanding of the youth employment challenge and solutions. It can help them build networks with mentors and peers that can open doors to future opportunities for collaboration and partnership.
For employment programmes	Increasing relevance and responsiveness. Involving youth from the start ensures that a programme aligns with youth’s needs and aspirations, making it more inclusive, impactful and financially efficient.^c Strengthening accountability and ownership. When young people are engaged, they also can hold duty-bearers accountable, thus pressing upon programmes to address their lived realities. Moreover, engaging youth can ensure they have ownership towards the programme and its outcomes.^d Driving innovation and creativity. Young people have first-hand knowledge of the challenges they face in securing decent jobs and thus can help develop innovative solutions, making employment programmes more responsive and future-ready.

¹⁸ UNESCO, *Because Youth Perspectives Matter: UNESCO Toolbox for Youth Policy and Programming*, 2023.

The triple value of youth engagement (cont.)

For communities and societies	1. Enhancing youth agency and young people's ability to advocate for decent work. Engagement equips youth with civic skills and knowledge of employment issues, enabling them to advocate with decision-makers for decent work and the protection of their rights, including fair wages, protection from exploitation and access to safe working environments. This is particularly critical for young women, who face additional barriers to enjoying their rights to and at work due to such factors as gender norms and workplace discrimination.^e 2. Strengthening youth engagement in communities. When youth actively participate in employment programmes, their impact extends beyond personal benefits – they become socially aware and engaged leaders who drive positive change in their community.^f 3. Advancing progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth. Youth engagement helps put SDG 8 into action, empowering young people as mobilizers and advocates for decent jobs.
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Source: ^a ILO, *Global Framework on Core Skills for Life and Work in the 21st Century*, 2021; ^b Plan International, *Youth Voices in Youth Employment: A Roadmap for Promoting Meaningful Youth Engagement in Youth Employment Programs*, Youth Employment Funders Group, 2021; ^c DFID and CSO Youth Working Group, *Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agency and Policy Makers*, 2010; ^d UNICEF, *Engaged and Heard! Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement*, 2020; ^e Oosterom, Marjoke and Thomas Yeboah, *Promoting Youth Engagement for Decent Employment: Addressing the Disconnects*, Institute of Development Studies, 2022; ^f UNESCO, *Meaningfully Engaging Youth: Guidance Training UN Staff*, 2019.

Making youth engagement meaningful: Principles for practice

We know that youth engagement doesn't just happen on its own, especially when young people are confronted with multiple barriers to participation and programmes operate in complex environments. That's why this guidance manual adopts eight principles that should inform our work when we engage young people.

These principles work together to establish an environment in which young people aren't just beneficiaries but are actively influencing decisions and driving programming. They can be applied across all types of youth engagement initiatives, whether in advisory groups, peer mentoring, programme design or leadership roles.



The eight principles of meaningful youth engagement:

- 1. Inclusive and representative engagement:** Ensuring that all youth, especially those experiencing marginalization, have a voice.
- 2. Relevant and context-specific engagement:** Tailoring engagement approaches to fit the realities of young people's lives and complex operating environments.
- 3. Transparent and informed engagement:** Making sure youth have a clear overview of the initiative they are engaging with and understand their role, contribution and decision-making impact.
- 4. Voluntary engagement:** Respecting young people's right to choose how and when to engage.
- 5. Safe and risk-sensitive engagement:** Creating secure spaces in which young people can participate without fear or harm.

6. **Respected and valued engagement:** Recognizing young people's expertise, lived experiences and contributions.
7. **Resourced and supported engagement:** Providing the necessary training, mentorship and funding to enable meaningful participation.
8. **Accountable engagement:** Ensuring that youth voices lead to real change by holding programme teams and decision-makers accountable.

To help put these principles into action, the following table outlines the practical steps for implementation and common pitfalls to avoid.

 Principle 1: Inclusive and representative engagement	
Youth engagement must be inclusive and must seek diverse representation of youth from different contexts. Programmes must proactively engage groups to ensure that marginalized voices are heard and valued in the process.	
What to do	What to avoid
• Provide equal access to programme engagement opportunities regardless of age, gender, education level, income, legal status, disability or geographic location. • Use tailored approaches to actively engage marginalized youth who experience multiple forms of exclusion, including young women, youth with disabilities and displaced youth, including those in remote or informal settlements. • Collaborate with youth networks and grass-roots organizations that can reach and represent diverse youth voices and support their ongoing engagement. • Involve youth in identifying barriers to participation and co-creating solutions.	• Avoid relying on the same “easily accessible” youth while excluding those dealing with greater structural barriers. • Avoid hosting activities in locations that are hard to reach, unsafe or inaccessible for specific groups of youth, such as young people with mobility restrictions. • Don't ignore systemic discrimination or exclusion that displaced youth experience.



Principle 2: Relevant and context-specific engagement

Youth engagement must be rooted in young participants' lived experiences. Programmes should not assume a one-size-fits-all approach but instead analyse the specific barriers young people face, such as legal restrictions, discrimination, limited access to opportunities and social exclusion, and engage them in the development of solutions.

What to do	What to avoid
• Ensure engagement activities are directly relevant to the aspirations, skills and challenges of youth. • Support youth in analysing systemic and contextual barriers, such as legal work restrictions, discrimination or lack of recognition of qualifications, that limit their access to employment opportunities. • Create spaces in which youth can co-develop strategies to overcome participation barriers in employment programmes.	• Avoid designing engagement activities without considering young people's lived experiences. • Don't blindly adopt approaches from regions with different social, economic and cultural realities without first tailoring them to the specific context as they may be ineffective or irrelevant. • Avoid conducting engagement activities in languages inaccessible to youth. In the case of displaced youth, for instance, many may not be fluent in the dominant language of their host community.



Principle 3: Transparent and informed engagement

Youth must be fully informed about the initiative (its purpose, approach, etc.) and their role, responsibilities and scope of participation. Transparency is key – youth should understand how their voices influence decision-making and how their contributions shape programme outcomes. When youth feel well-informed and respected, they are more motivated to engage actively, and trust is built between them and the programme implementers.

What to do	What to avoid
• Provide youth with detailed, honest and realistic information on what their participation involves, including the level of commitment required. • Provide clear, non-technical and youth-friendly explanations of the youth employment programme or initiative. • Make sure that information is available in multiple languages so youth can fully understand and access the available opportunities.	• Avoid unclear expectations and ensure that youth know exactly what is expected of them and what support they will receive. • Avoid inviting youth to participate without explaining how their engagement will influence programming.



Principle 4: Voluntary engagement

Youth should be supported to engage on their own terms. Engagement should always be voluntary, ensuring that youth are not pressured into activities that do not align with their interests or aspirations.

What to do	What to avoid
• Refer to topics that are relevant to young people. • Provide clear information on engagement opportunities, the available roles and expected commitments and leave time for decision-making so youth can make informed decisions. • Respect youth's choices and decisions. If youth decide to participate, their engagement should be self-directed and flexible. If they opt out at any point, their decision must be respected.	• Avoid engaging youth in topics that do not align with their expertise or are not relevant to them. • Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Youth should be given multiple opportunities to choose how they engage, rather than being pushed into a rigid or predetermined role. • Don't dictate how youth will be engaged without actively involving them in decision-making discussions.



Principle 5: Safe and risk-sensitive engagement

Youth, especially those experiencing displacement, typically face unique vulnerabilities due to their lived experiences, making safety and risk sensitivity a top priority in their engagement. Adopting a "do no harm" approach means taking proactive measures to protect their physical, emotional and psychological well-being and making sure that their participation does not expose them to further harm or reinforce existing inequalities.

What to do	What to avoid
• Before engaging youth, especially displaced youth, identify potential risks, including conflict dynamics, protection concerns and exposure to unsafe environments. Develop mitigation strategies to minimize harm. • Create safe spaces for youth to ask questions, share concerns, and propose ideas without fear of backlash or negative consequences. • Set ground rules for safe and respectful collaboration and ensure that youth understand and commit to principles of mutual respect, non-discrimination and ethical communication. • Establish clear feedback and reporting mechanisms for youth to report risks, violations or unsafe situations anonymously, and ensure swift response from programme staff.	• Avoid sharing personal information, photos or videos of youth without their consent. This is particularly important for displaced youth because public exposure can put them at risk, especially in a sensitive displacement context. • Don't assume all youth feel equally safe to express themselves. Some youth may fear retaliation, discrimination or exclusion if they openly share their thoughts. Encourage alternative ways for them to contribute, such as anonymous feedback channels.



Principle 6: Respected and valued engagement

Youth bring unique strengths, perspectives and lived experiences that can positively contribute to youth employment solutions. Recognizing and valuing their voices, contributions and capabilities is essential to creating inclusive and empowering spaces in which they are seen as leaders, innovators and problem-solvers rather than as passive recipients of employment programmes.

What to do	What to avoid
• Address social and cultural norms that view youth as passive beneficiaries or burdens rather than as active contributors to their community. • Recognize that they have valuable insights, skills and knowledge that can enrich programme design and implementation. • Foster an environment in which youth respect and support each other's ideas and build strong, respectful relationships with programme staff.	• Don't assume youth lack knowledge or experience. They have skills, perspectives and lived realities that can greatly inform employment programmes. • Avoid controlling discussions or imposing predefined solutions. Forcing predefined solutions without youth's input makes a programme less relevant and effective. • Avoid assuming what youth want or need without directly consulting them. Every youth's experience is different, and their input must shape priorities.



Principle 7: Resourced and supported engagement

Youth engagement requires that young people receive support that enables their participation. Programmes should adequately budget and resource engagement opportunities to help with relevant capacity-strengthening and related activities, cover engagement costs and, where appropriate, compensate young people for their contribution.

What to do	What to avoid
• Provide comprehensive training and skill development relevant to the specific roles that youth are undertaking through their engagement. • Allocate budgets to address barriers, such as safe transportation, accessible venues, translation services and support, to open the pathways to participation. • Compensate youth contributions with financial or non-financial incentives, such as a stipend, certificate, training or networking opportunity, to show appreciation for and to reward their time and effort.	• Don't assume youth engagement can be done meaningfully without allocation of necessary financial and human resources. • Avoid requesting youth to take part in activities for which they may need to cover expenses for their participation, including travelling to a distant location.



Principle 8: Accountable engagement

For youth to have a meaningful experience, engagement requires making sure that their voices lead to real action. Programmes must advocate their meaningful participation and be held accountable for integrating their inputs. Programme staff must provide clear and timely information on how youth's contributions have informed and shaped a programme.

What to do	What to avoid
• If youth provide feedback or ideas, they should be informed on how their inputs were used, including if and how they were incorporated into programme implementation. • Create clear and accessible communication channels for feedback and response. • Facilitate respectful dialogue between youth and other programme stakeholders. Provide safe spaces for discussion in which youth can voice concerns, propose solutions and challenge approaches undertaken by the programme. • Equip youth with advocacy skills and platforms to engage policymakers and youth employment stakeholders on promoting decent work for young people.	• Don't assume that youth and decision-makers have equal power. Youth often face systemic barriers to influence decisions; programmes must actively bridge these power gaps. • Don't ignore youth's feedback. Youth should see the impact of their contributions. Failing to acknowledge or respond to their input leads to disillusionment and disengagement.



Reflection

How can I overcome barriers that hinder youth engagement in the programme?

Successfully involving youth in employment programmes require intentional action. However, common barriers – whether due to operational constraints or individual and social factors – often hinder engagement.

What are the top three challenges you face in implementing youth engagement initiatives in your context? Identifying these roadblocks is the first step towards finding practical solutions.

My top challenges

1. ?

2. ?

3. ?

No matter where you're working, youth engagement often encounters similar roadblocks – from lack of resources to rigid programme structures. This section offers practical solutions to common challenges experienced by programme teams when implementing youth employment initiatives that are keen to engage youth.

How to use this challenges section:

- ▶ **Explore the challenges.** Review challenges that you or other programme persons might encounter.
- ▶ **Identify actionable solutions.** Are there strategies or ideas you can implement right away to tackle the barriers you face?
- ▶ **Seek additional support.** Consider what other resources, networks or expertise you can tap into for up-to-date guidance and long-term solutions.

Remember, these suggestions aren't one-size-fits-all. Instead, they provide a starting point with ideas that can be adapted and tailored to fit a specific context.

Let's take a look at the potential challenges that programme implementing persons may encounter.

1. I find it challenging to prioritize youth engagement because my organization lacks clear commitment and dedicated strategies for involving young people.

Gaining leadership support is often the first step for integrating youth engagement in an organization's programming. By showcasing the strategic significance of engaging young people for the organization and beyond (including value for the government, donors, the United Nations system and other youth employment stakeholders), higher management is more likely to embrace youth engagement. Useful approaches to gain leadership buy-in include:

- Highlighting how youth participation aligns with international and national commitments and frameworks.
- Highlighting how youth engagement can help advance broader organizational goals, and demonstrating its potential positive effects through data and compelling case studies.
- Highlighting how youth engagement supports programmatic goals and enhances relevancy and effectiveness.
- Presenting clear plans with specified objectives, roles and accountability measures.

2. I struggle to incorporate youth input because our programme structures are rigid and do not allow for flexibility in design and implementation.

Adopt adaptive programming early in the programme by embedding flexible engagement mechanisms. Account for these activities early in the programme – they may include consultations, co-design workshops, participatory evaluations and iterative feedback loops. Start small: Pilot a youth-led initiative, and then showcase its impact to demonstrate feasibility and value.

3. I am limited in meaningfully engaging youth due to financial constraints that restrict funding for outreach, training and incentives.

Although youth engagement does need to be budgeted for, it is possible to test small-scale engagement activities that don't require large budgets – start small and build out the concept. Consider including youth in pre-planned stakeholder consultations or programmes, as opposed to stand-alone ones. Explore opportunities to reduce costs, such as hosting virtual engagements. Leverage existing networks and partnerships for low-cost outreach, and consider non-financial incentives, like certificate and networking opportunities, to compensate youth and partners for their engagement. In addition, it is also possible to seek alternative funding sources, such as partnerships with private sector actors, government agencies and donor institutions, to resource youth engagement activities.

4. I am concerned that our programmes are not fully inclusive because vulnerable and marginalized youth are often left out.

Adopt targeted outreach strategies by working with youth-led and grass-roots organizations that serve your target youth populations. Ensure accessible engagement by providing language interpretation, transportation stipends and diverse meeting formats (online and offline). Use the “inclusivity checklist” to identify the groups of youth you would like to engage and the “context analysis” to map outreach opportunities. These tools are in Section 2 of the manual.

5. I see youth disengage due to frustration and uncertainty about their contributions.

Youth is a period of life that, by nature, is more transient than other life phases as young people transition between learning and work, move locations and seek new opportunities. As a result, the retention of youth in engagement opportunities may be impacted. It is always a good idea to acknowledge and anticipate possible disengagement. For example, if you are establishing a youth advisory board and you would like eight young people to participate over a long-term period, consider initially recruiting 12 persons to allow for drop-outs without the activity being hindered.

Beyond circumstantial reasons, one of the commonly cited reasons shared by young people on why they disengage is a lack of understanding on the objective of a programme and how their involvement is informing change. Strengthen transparent communication by providing information on the programme, setting clear expectations and demonstrating how youth contributions are used. Regularly update youth on programme progress and the decisions influenced by their input.

It is also essential to consider how participation adds value to the young people engaged. Development opportunities, such as providing ongoing training, mentorship and capacity-building programmes, can equip youth with valuable tools they can use in their personal and professional lives. Connecting young people through alumni groups, peer support systems or collaborative initiatives can foster a strong community and network, and help to create a sense of belonging. Recognizing and celebrating youth’s contributions through an award, certification or public acknowledgment reinforces motivation and validates their efforts, making them more likely to remain active beyond a one-time engagement.

6. I feel unprepared to effectively engage youth because our team lacks staff members with the necessary training and skills in youth engagement strategies.

Sensitizing non-youth stakeholders is essential to support meaningful youth engagement. Programmes often prioritize capacity-building for youth without considering the need to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the non-youth actors who are involved. Invest in youth engagement training for staff, focusing on facilitation, co-design methodologies and inclusive communication. Pair staff with youth mentors to build mutual understanding and exchange. Use the Facilitator’s Toolkit at the end of this training package to roll out the training for non-youth actors.

7. I find it difficult to ensure equal participation because gender biases create mobility restrictions, safety concerns and social barriers that limit young women’s engagement.

Ensure that local gender norms are considered, and develop gender-sensitive approaches, such as safe spaces for young women and family or community sensitization. If in scope and in budget, explore options to adapt engagement formats (such as online options and providing childcare support) to reduce participation barriers.

8. *How do we keep youth engaged beyond one-time engagements or sustainable beyond the life of the project?*

To facilitate the participation of youth beyond one-time activities and to sustain their involvement beyond the life of a project, youth engagement should be integrated into your organization's core areas of work. Integrating youth engagement in ongoing programmes, structures and decision-making processes creates sustained and meaningful opportunities for young people to participate over the long term.

9. *How do I measure the impact of youth engagement?*

Measuring the impact of youth engagement requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to assess participation, outcomes and long-term impact. Use the indicators in Section 6 of this manual to identify, select and track metrics that assess your engagement activities.



Section 4

► From consultation to leadership – Degrees of youth engagement in employment programmes

In this section, you will:



1. Discover the four degrees of youth engagement and how each defines the depth of youth involvement in a programme.
2. Explore practical strategies to meaningfully engage youth at the different levels, with guiding steps, tips and examples.



4.1 Four degrees of youth engagement

As the previous sections emphasized, youth employment programmes aim to build skills, facilitate the transition to employment, boost job creation and promote entrepreneurship. But the way youth are engaged can differ widely, depending on a programme's goals, structure and context.

At its core, meaningful youth engagement centres on engaging young people – not just as beneficiaries of an employment programme but as active stakeholders in shaping and implementing that programme. Whilst youth engagement can take different forms – the following framework developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization¹⁹ and adapted for the purpose of this training package can be used to explore the different degrees of engagement that can be enabled:



Youth consulted: Young people share their thoughts and feedback on the programme or a particular aspect of it.



Youth contributing: Youth take on an active role by providing ideas and insights that help shape the programme or contribute directly to specific elements of programme delivery.



Youth as partners: Power is shared, and youth work alongside the programme team in decision-making.



Youth as leaders: Young people take the lead, driving initiatives and creating their own solutions.

Each of these levels can be differentiated in terms of *who* initiates the engagement and *how* the engagement unfolds, as well as *who holds decision-making power*. The following table breaks down these differences to help you determine how your programme team can build on consultations to move towards enhanced collaboration and partnership with young people and even support youth-led initiatives.

Degrees of meaningful youth engagement				
	 Youth consulted	 Youth contributing	 Youth as partners	 Youth as leaders
Initiation	Initiated and managed by the programme.	Initiated and managed by the programme.	Initiated by the programme team, by youth or together.	Youth initiate action.
Process	Youth are consulted for their ideas and perspectives in relation to a programme or a specific dimension within it.	Youth contribute in a limited role to a programme, notably in the planning of, implementation of or the follow-up to a specific task or a dimension within it.	Youth are engaged in an active partnership and an open dialogue with the programme team in one or all stages of the programme cycle – planning, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating.	Youth are responsible for leading a specific part or all phases of a programme: from initiation through planning and to implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation.
Power	The above enables youth to influence the process and outcome without having direct control.	The above enables youth to influence process and outcome, without having direct control.	Partnerships enable youth to influence, challenge and engage with both the process and the outcome.	Youth identify the issues of concern and control the process and outcome.

Source: Adapted from UNESCO, *Because Youth Perspectives Matter: UNESCO Toolbox for Youth Policy and Programming*, 2023.

¹⁹ UNESCO, *Because Youth Perspectives Matter: UNESCO Toolbox for Youth Policy and Programming*, 2023.

The four degrees of youth engagement – consultation, contribution, partnership and leadership – are not rigid categories but intersecting and evolving forms of participation. For instance, a youth consultation can be seen as a type of youth contribution, but contribution goes beyond simply gathering input. It involves assigning specific roles to young people and allowing them to actively shape, implement and evaluate different aspects of a programme.²⁰ The degrees of engagement can also serve as an evaluation framework to assess how much input and influence young people have had during a programme.²¹

A sincere assessment of how well your programme meaningfully connected with young people is essential to make a difference in their lives and to avoid squandering previous financial resources.



It's time to reshape the narrative of refugee youth as dynamic and important change-makers and ensure their voices are heard and supported in shaping youth employment programmes.



Laura Valencia, 27

Strategic Operations and Communications Lead,
Global Refugee Youth Network
From Colombia living in Ecuador

When deciding how best to engage youth, several factors should be considered:

- ▶ **Purpose:** If the goal is to gather insights and feedback on programme design and delivery, a consultative approach may be appropriate. However, if the aim is to co-design programme activities, youth could be engaged as partners in a co-design workshop.
- ▶ **Scale and number of participants:** Consultative engagement often involves large, diverse groups of young people, whereas engaging youth as partners or leaders typically involves smaller groups with greater decision-making power.
- ▶ **Stage of the programme cycle:** Youth engagement can take different forms at different stages of a programme. For example, youth may be consulted in the early planning phase, contribute to co-designing and later become partners in implementation, particularly through a youth-led organization.

Let's take a look at each degree of engagement in more detail to see how different degrees of engagement can be leveraged across the same programme.



4.2 Youth consulted in action: What does a youth consultation look like?

Youth consultations provide a structured approach to gathering insights from young people on their needs, aspirations and experiences in accessing decent work opportunities. Consultations go beyond identifying the challenges that youth experience in the labour market; they also help understand the changes young people want to see and get their perspectives on solutions to improve their employment outcomes. Young people's aspirations in the labour market can vary and are typically shaped by personal interests, local economic conditions, social expectations and the opportunities they perceive around them (see box 5). By engaging young people through well-thought-out consultations, a programme team can develop more relevant and responsive initiatives.

²⁰ UNESCO, *Because Youth Perspectives Matter: UNESCO Toolbox for Youth Policy and Programming*, 2023.

²¹ UNICEF and Norwegian Refugee Committee, *With Us and For Us: IASC Guidelines on Working With and For Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises, Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action*, 2020.

To inform programmes that improve young people’s access to decent work, consultations can explore youth perspectives on labour market challenges and solutions. Areas of focus may include but are not limited to the following.

Leveraging youth consultations	
Youth employment challenges	How a consultation could add value
Skills gap: Skills gaps and mismatches occur when young jobseekers do not have the skills demanded by employers, or if there are no available jobs in the local area matching their particular skills, making it harder for them to secure employment.	Consultations with youth can help identify the skills they feel they need or want to acquire and gather their experiences with apprenticeships, first-job schemes and other training opportunities. This will allow programmes to better align with both youth interests and the skills in demand.
Lack of information: Information asymmetry between jobseekers and employers can hamper youth’s search for employment. These challenges may arise due to limited or inadequate information on job opportunities and lack of guidance and counselling.	Consultations with youth can provide insights about their specific barriers while navigating the job search process, including the types of assistance and resources they find most useful. By gathering their input, programmes can be better tailored to strengthen employment services, improve access to job information and enhance career guidance for young people.
Inadequate job opportunities: The absence of secure, decent job opportunities, especially in low-income countries, is another challenge confronting young people in the labour market. ^a	Consultations allow youth to share their perspectives on the types of sectors they want to work in and the support they need to pivot and adapt to the labour market conditions.
Limited entrepreneurship support: Limited entrepreneurship skills and access to financing and the lack of an enabling environment can make it difficult for young people to start and sustain entrepreneurial initiatives. ^b	Consultations with youth can provide valuable insights on specific challenges and the types of support they need to successfully manage and sustain their entrepreneurial ventures.

Source: ^a *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Decent Work, Brighter Futures*, ILO, 2024. ^b *Youth Entrepreneurship & Self-employment: Unleashing the Potential of Youth to Succeed in Business and to Access Decent Work*, 2024.

Box 5

► Gathering insights from youth in displacement contexts

Conducting consultations with young people in situations of forced displacement can provide direct insights to the specific challenges they experience, such as:

- The lack of recognition of prior learning and education certificates.
- Legal barriers in accessing formal employment.
- Barriers to workplace inclusion and discrimination.
- Movement restrictions and/or distance from job opportunities.
- Language barriers.
- Psychological impact of forced displacement on refugees, including post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health-related issues.

By engaging displaced youth in discussions, a programme team can better understand their specific needs, aspirations and the systemic obstacles they encounter.

Case study 1

► Global Refugee Youth Consultations

The Global Refugee Youth Consultations was a joint initiative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Women's Refugee Commission. The consultations were organized to provide a platform for refugee youth to voice their opinions and discuss issues affecting them with relevant stakeholders and resulted in recommendations to improve their lives and livelihoods.

The consultations took place at local and national levels in Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, culminating in a global meeting in Geneva. Over eight months, the consultations engaged approximately 1,500 young individuals from 34 countries of origin who took part in a session in 23 countries. A [toolkit](#) for organizing consultations with refugee youth was developed to meaningfully engage with young people and facilitate adequate and participatory dialogue. The toolkit provides guidance and practical exercises conducive to a collaborative and context-informed approach to arrive at a better understanding of how to improve work with and for young refugees.

With the consultations as a channel to amplify their voices, young people identified [ten challenges for refugee youths](#) and [seven Core Actions for Refugee Youth](#), summarized in the consultations' final report, *We Believe in Youth*. This report serves as a framework to facilitate the development of more effective initiatives that come from a point of understanding of the challenges young refugees face and their particular needs, including psychosocial requirements and their recommendations to address them.

Case study 2

► Youth engagement in the development of the [*Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan \(2021-2024\)*](#)

To address the challenge of youth employment in Nigeria, the ILO worked with the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development in launching a revised [*Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan*](#) for 2021 to 2024. The purpose of the action plan was to contribute to the achievement of decent, productive and freely chosen employment for young people by complementing and reinforcing existing policy commitments and national development priorities and related efforts.

To gather young people's aspirations and perspectives on the world of work, the Nigeria Youth SDGs Network conducted a nationwide survey among young women and men in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the ILO and Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development. The data collection was part of a broader outreach campaign that aimed to further strengthen youth engagement and enable young women and men to provide inputs and insights to the action plan.

Youth (aged 15–29) across all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory were surveyed online and offline. More than 100,000 young women and men completed the questionnaire on their aspirations and their opinions about their place in the labour market. The results from the survey were analysed and reflected in the action plan, and youth voices and aspirations were included in a government policy framework. The survey also provided a basis for further in-depth consultations with youth during six youth labs organized across Nigeria in December 2020, with the participation of around 800 young people, representatives of the State Ministries of Youth and Sports and representatives of the National Youth Parliament and National Youth Service Corps. Participants discussed the four strategic lines of action of the Action Plan and provided recommendations on how to engage with youth and how to better address their needs. This allowed state representatives the opportunity to consider youth voices and aspirations for the implementation of the action plan.

The survey, media campaign and youth labs enhanced the consideration, inclusion and discussion of youth's priorities and aspirations within the framework of the Youth Employment Action Plan.



Selecting the right consultation approach

Different consultation modalities have their unique strengths and limitations, as the following table explains.

Youth consultation approaches		
Approaches	Pros	Cons
Offline (in-person) consultation	• More engaging: In-person interactions tend to captivate youth more effectively. • Nonverbal communication: In-person settings allow for the observation of body language and other non-verbal expressions. • Building relationships: In-person engagements are instrumental in fostering and strengthening relationships with youth.	• Financial implications: In-person consultations require budget allocations to cover the cost of venues, refreshments and transportation for participants (if needed). • Time constraints and mobility limitations: In-person engagements can be time consuming, particularly for youth who must travel a long distance to take part. They could also be inaccessible for some youth. • Limited outreach capacity: Compared with online consultations, in-person sessions have a narrower outreach capacity.
Online (virtual) consultation	• Anonymity: Youth might feel more comfortable taking part in consultations behind screens, especially when addressing sensitive issues. • Cost-effectiveness: Online platforms offer wide coverage and reach a large number of youth in a cost-effective way. • Leveraging social networks: Using social media platforms for polls and discussions can increase the participation rate. • Convenience: Virtual consultations facilitate outreach to youth from different locations or communities.	• Digital divide: Virtual consultations may exclude youth who do not have reliable internet connectivity or are digitally illiterate, thus exacerbating the digital divide. • Digital fatigue: Previous experiences with similar online consultations may lessen youth's interest in participating in other virtual consultations. • Privacy and security concerns: Using online platforms and tools in consultations poses additional risks to privacy and data security, necessitating careful consideration and safeguarding measures.

Different consultation methods will also have their own strengths and limitations, as the following table elaborates.

Youth consultation methods		
Method	Pros	Cons
Survey or questionnaire	• Anonymity of participants: A survey or questionnaire is particularly suitable for addressing sensitive issues that youth might not feel comfortable sharing in a group setting. • Accessibility: This method facilitates broad outreach and the engagement of a large number of participants. • Quantitative data: Closed-ended questions or rating scales yield quantitative evidence, thus enhancing the analytical rigour of the consultation process.	• Literacy barriers: A survey or questionnaire requires reading and writing skills, which may exclude individuals who lack proficiency in these areas. • Financial implications: A survey or questionnaire requires distribution and data collection costs, potentially requiring the hiring of enumerators. • Low turnout rate: This method may yield a low turnout if there is no incentive to respond, thus highlighting the importance of incentivizing participation.
Individual interview	• Developing trust: Direct individual interactions foster trust and encourage youth to share their perspectives openly. • Qualitative evidence: Rich qualitative data are generated to understand youth's perspectives and experiences.	• Engagement preference: Not all youth will be comfortable with this type of interaction and may prefer a group setting. • Increased expenses: Employing trained data collectors or researchers increases the cost of the consultation process. • Allocated time and venue required: Respondents need to be available at a specific time. If in-person, appropriate venues need to be secured for facilitating comfortable and uninterrupted sharing of inputs during interviews.
Group discussion	• Enhanced engagement: Group interactions foster a collaborative atmosphere, thus encouraging youth to share their inputs in a less intimidating environment than an individual interview. • Mutual validation: Enabling dialogue among participants allows for the acknowledgement and validation of shared experiences, as well as the exploration of differences among them. • Qualitative evidence: Group interactions produce rich qualitative data, offering a comprehensive understanding of youth perspectives and experiences.	• Representation limitation: A group discussion might not be representative of all diverse groups of youth. • Group format: Young people might prefer not to share their ideas in front of others. • Negative emotions: A group discussion might remind some participants of negative experiences and traumas, thus posing emotional risks.

Youth consultation methods (cont.)		
Method	Pros	Cons
Participatory workshop	• Enhanced engagement: Using interactive activities encourages youth to share their perspectives in more creative formats. • Different forms of input: Using activities generates different forms of inputs from youth, such as visual expressions through drawings and pictures.	• Designing effort: A workshop requires additional preparatory efforts to develop a detailed design and interactive activities. • Additional costs: A workshop includes the cost for a venue, materials, a facilitator, transportation and accommodation (if needed).

Five easy steps to conducting a meaningful youth consultation

Step 1: Define the objectives and focus

- ▶ Identify topics or focus for the consultation (see Template C in the Annex for a consultation agenda).
- ▶ Set clear goals for the consultation by outlining the specific insights you aim to collect.
- ▶ Choose the most suitable consultation approach – whether online or in-person – and modality (such as those described in the previous table), based on accessibility needs and available resources (see the annex for a compendium of 20 facilitation activities for a youth consultation or co-creation workshop).

Step 2: Identify and recruit youth

- ▶ Determine the target youth groups based on the consultation's purpose and goals.
- ▶ Use effective outreach strategies (refer to Section 2) to engage diverse youth participants to ensure broad and inclusive representation.
- ▶ Ahead of the consultation, share any information with the selected young people that they may need, such as programme documents, objective of the consultation and what is planned to be done with their inputs.

Step 3: Conduct the consultation

- ▶ Select and train the facilitator or select someone with proven experience working with youth to lead the discussions.
- ▶ Provide clear explanations about the purpose of the consultation and data privacy measures.
- ▶ Foster a safe and inclusive space for youth participation, ensuring that interpretation services are available for multilingual groups.

Step 4: Analyse and validate the findings

- ▶ Disaggregate the collected data on gender, age, disability, displacement status, etc. to understand the different youth perspectives.
- ▶ Share the preliminary findings with the youth participants to validate the accuracy and to ensure that their insights are correctly represented.
- ▶ Develop a short outcome document of the final consultation outputs to share with the youth participants for accountability.

Step 5: Implement changes and evaluate the performance

- ▶ Use the consultation findings to inform decision-making and make real adjustments to your programme plans and implementation.
- ▶ Keep young people updated on how their insights have influenced programming, thus reinforcing their role in shaping meaningful change.
- ▶ Evaluate young people's experience of the consultation and the extent to which they felt their perspectives were integrated into the programme.

Case study 3

▶ **Youth consultations to inform the 2024 *Labour Overview of Latin America and the Caribbean***

As part of the response to youth unemployment and high levels of labour informality in Latin America and the Caribbean, the ILO took steps to engage young people in consultations to gather their perspectives on the challenges of accessing decent work in the region, the role of public policies and their employment aspirations. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with youth aged 18–25 in seven countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama and Peru.

A total of 38 individual interviews were conducted virtually. To ensure the diversity of the sample, additional selection criteria were applied, including gender (male, female), educational attainment (with or without a professional degree), socio-economic status (high, middle, low) and employment status (unemployed, informal, formal). These categories were distributed across the seven countries to achieve a sample that was as heterogeneous as possible. In addition, ten focus groups were conducted. Each group consisted of six participants, selected using the same criteria applied in the interviews to ensure diversity in representation.

The report emphasizes the importance of involving young people in the co-creation of solutions and public policies. The insights gathered through the interviews and focus groups point to a clear need for participatory spaces – such as youth advisory councils – wherein young people can express their views and contribute ideas for inclusive and effective employment initiatives. These spaces can help build trust between youth and labour market institutions. The report highlights the role of employers' and workers' organizations, not only in promoting training and employment opportunities and advocating for the value of collective action from both union and business perspectives but also in actively engaging young people in these organizations and supporting their participation in meaningful and representative roles.



Useful tips for effective consultation

Engage experienced or trained facilitators

Consultations should be led by facilitators who are experienced in working with young people or trained in effectively engaging youth. Consider additional approaches to ensure that the youth being consulted are comfortable in sharing their views. For instance, young female facilitators for young women and facilitators from refugee communities for displaced youth can enhance trust. When young people take on the role of a facilitator, it is an example of youth contributing; see the next section.

Assign a dedicated note-taker

Ensure there is a dedicated note-taker to capture and record all insights that are shared.

Allocate sufficient budget and resources

Funding is needed for a venue, transportation, refreshments and accessibility measures to ensure full participation for in-person methods.

Collect informed consent

Ensure that participants understand their role in the consultation process and how their insights and inputs will be used.

Ensure privacy and data protection

Store, secure and protect young people's personal data to ensure their safety.

Additional resources

- ▶ [*Global Refugee Youth Consultations: Toolkit for Consulting with Youth*](#), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- ▶ [*So You Want to Consult with Children? A Toolkit of Good Practice*](#), Save the Children.





4.3 Youth contributing in action: What does youth contribution look like?

Engaging youth in specific and limited roles within an employment programme allows them to make meaningful contributions while developing skills, confidence and professional experience. This approach involves youth in planning, implementing or following up on specific tasks. This could include but is not limited to:

- ▶ **Data collection.** Conducting surveys, interviews or field research on youth employment challenges as part of a programme design or evaluation (see detailed guidance in Section 5 on engaging youth as enumerators).
- ▶ **Advocacy.** Producing blogs, videos or social media content to enhance programme outreach to youth or raise awareness about employment programme (see detailed guidance in Section 5 on engaging youth in communication and advocacy).
- ▶ **Training and peer mentorship.** Serving as youth trainers, facilitators or peer mentors to guide others (see detailed guidance in Section 5 on enabling youth-to-youth training and mentorship).



Case study 4

► Global Youth Employment Forum: Leveraging youth consultations and contributions to shape policies and programmes

The [Global Youth Employment Forum 2019, which the ILO organized in Abuja with the theme of Today and Tomorrow with Decent Jobs for Youth](#), brought together more than 200 young leaders from 65 countries to discuss youth employment challenges and solutions. The intent was to advance the youth employment agenda and renew the ILO's [Call for Action on Youth Employment](#). Young people were consulted on youth employment policies and programmes, and their input and recommendations continue to inform the ILO's programming in this area. In the framework of the ILO's tripartite structure, the forum engaged young people representing governments, workers' and employers' organizations, civil society and United Nations-affiliated youth-led groups as well as youth employment experts in an intergenerational dialogue.

Beyond consultation: Youth-led facilitation

The Forum showcased meaningful youth engagement in action, with young people not only consulted but also contributing as moderators, facilitators and co-designers of the event. Over the three-day gathering, youth were consulted through plenary and breakout sessions that were co-designed and led by young people, thus ensuring that their voices shaped both the discussions and the outcomes of the event. The consultations provided a venue for youth to provide input to guide future ILO action on youth employment by reflecting on: (i) global drivers affecting the world of work and emerging challenges for youth labour market transitions; (ii) solutions and recommendations on how to address the youth employment challenge; (iii) promising sectors, such as digital, green, lavender (care), blue and orange (creative) economies that could provide decent job opportunities for youth.

Innovative features to broaden engagement

To broaden the engagement of youth beyond those attending, a social media campaign, video contest and youth-moderated virtual discussions were organized in preparation for the forum. Discussions revolved around what has or has not worked in youth employment and what are emerging issues in youth labour market transitions. The forum also served as a networking opportunity that resulted in the creation of a Facebook group for further exchanges.

Throughout the forum, youth were also engaged through innovative features, such as:

- **E-moderation** in social media, using the hashtag **#yef2019**, amplified discussions and enabled broader consultations beyond the in-person event.
- **Share Fair**, a marketplace-style exhibit, showcased innovative practices and solutions to boost employment for youth.

The engagement of young people through the forum led to useful recommendations as well as [valuable insights and suggestions](#) to guide ILO's efforts on youth employment. A tripartite drafting committee of young representatives developed the Abuja Youth Statement as a youth contribution to advance the [ILO's Call for Action on Youth Employment 2020–2030](#). The statement emphasized the need for greater collaboration between the ILO and youth in developing countries, highlighting how existing youth engagement mechanisms can strengthen the tripartite framework for advancing more inclusive access to decent work for young men and women.

By consulting and engaging youth as active stakeholders, the forum empowered them to influence the employment solutions that affect them, thus contributing to lasting impact on youth employment efforts while informing ILO's work on youth employment.

Case study 5

► Youth-led organizations contribute to the *Global Report on Youth and COVID-19*

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the ILO and partners of the [Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#) conducted a [survey to assess the impact of the pandemic on young people's education, employment, rights and mental well-being](#). The survey was translated into 23 languages and received 12,605 responses from young people aged 18–34 years in 112 countries.

As youth-led partners of Decent Jobs for Youth, the UN Major Group on Children and Youth, the European Youth Forum and AIESEC had important roles in providing inputs to the questionnaire, disseminating the survey among young people and providing comments to the resulting report. Think Young, another youth-led partner of Decent Jobs for Youth, developed infographics and communications materials to strengthen the dissemination of the survey results. The survey's findings broadened the ILO's understanding of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people and informed the development of strategies to help youth navigate the labour market as countries started recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Selecting the right roles for youth contributors

Different roles suit different skills, availability and interests. Here are some ideas on how to identify the right opportunities for cultivating youth's contributions.

- 1. What are the core objectives of this programme and which tasks or activities would benefit from youth involvement?**
Answering this question helps identify specific roles (such as data collection, content creation, mentoring) and ensures that youth contributions align with a project's needs.
- 2. What skills and experience are necessary for the chosen roles?**
Answering this question determines whether roles need specific skills (such as research, facilitation, digital media, communication, leadership and creativity).
- 3. What level of commitment and availability is required for the role?**
Answering this question helps define short-term versus long-term roles and whether youth engagement should be flexible (virtual or part-time) or structured (fixed schedule or intensive involvement).
- 4. What support, training and incentives are needed for youth to succeed in this role?**
Answering this question determines whether mentorship, financial stipends, transportation support or digital tools are needed to remove barriers to engagement.

Five easy steps for engaging youth in programme roles

Step 1: Define the roles and purpose

- ▶ Identify which tasks within the programme would benefit from youth involvement – whether it's a single task or a broader set of activities.
- ▶ Establish clear goals, outlining how youth contributions will inform and enhance programme delivery.

Step 2: Recruit and prepare youth contributors

- ▶ Use effective outreach strategies (refer to Section 2) to connect with youth who are best suited for the chosen roles.
- ▶ Share clear information on the employment programme, purpose of each position, what the role entails, the time commitment required and how youth will be compensated so that any interested young person has transparent and complete information before agreeing to be involved.

Step 3: Assign clear tasks and provide support

- ▶ Define specific tasks, deadlines and deliverables to ensure that youth engagement remains structured and goal-oriented.
- ▶ Assign a mentor or a programme team member to provide ongoing support, guidance and feedback, helping youth feel confident and valued in their role.

Step 4: Upskill and strengthen capacities

- ▶ Offer training and skill-building opportunities, ensuring that participants have the knowledge and tools needed to succeed in their assigned task.

Step 5: Recognize and evaluate the contributions

- ▶ Acknowledge youth's contributions by offering a certificate, organizing networking events or providing career-building opportunities.
- ▶ Conduct a post-engagement evaluation to assess young people's experience and improve future youth roles in the programme.

Case study 6

► Youth engagement in the ILO's Strategic Foresight Study on Occupational Safety and Health

The ILO's Strategic Foresight Study on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), looking toward 2050, ensures that youth perspectives are meaningfully integrated throughout the study's development. Following a global open call, five Youth Fellows - one per ILO region - and twelve Youth Navigators were selected to represent young voices in shaping the foresight journey. During the scenario-building phase, conducted in virtual reality, the Youth Fellows directly took part in the foresight process alongside other stakeholders - employers, workers, governments, and experts from research and academia - and reflected on the opportunities and challenges that each scenario could generate for workers, systems, and societies. Their contributions helped illuminate priorities, values, and concerns that are essential to understanding how OSH may evolve toward 2050.

In parallel, the [NEXTWAVE digital platform](#) was co-created with youth to engage a wider community through five open Foresight Challenges.

Each Challenge represents a different stage of the youth foresight journey and is coordinated by teams of Youth Fellows and Navigators:

- **Challenge 1** – Global Trend Scouts Observatory: youth observe and share weak signals and emerging micro-changes from their local contexts.
- **Challenge 2** – Scenario Sparks: participants create short stories, sketches or videos imagining what safe and healthy work could look like in 2050.
- **Challenge 3** – VR Futures: young contributors design ideas for future workplaces that may inspire immersive VR foresight environments.
- **Challenge 4** – Policy Pitch: youth transform foresight reflections into actionable policy recommendations for the future of OSH.
- **Challenge 5** – Dialogue Starter: participants formulate bold, intergenerational questions to provoke reflection and stimulate discussion on the future of work and OSH.

Beyond the Challenges, Youth Navigators and Fellows also hold broader functional roles within the platform, contributing as editors and moderators, and acting as focal points for areas such as platform UX and accessibility, foresight data & analytics, storytelling and communication, community engagement, policy and governance insights, and inclusion and diversity. Their work ensures that the platform remains inclusive, participatory, and aligned with the broader OSH Foresight 2050 journey.

Through this inclusive, participatory approach, youth insights collected via the platform are feeding into the ongoing foresight discussions, ensuring that young people's visions and priorities are meaningfully represented in shaping future OSH policies and frameworks.



Refugee youth are doing amazing work in their communities. Support them to design and run their projects. Invest in them and give them room to grow as leaders.



Barthelemy Mwanza, 31

Refugee youth-led organisations' Coordinator,
Global Refugee Youth Network

Young refugee advocate from the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Useful tips for effectively engaging youth as contributors

Define roles and responsibilities

Clearly communicate expectations, deliverables and timelines to avoid confusion. Provide structured check-ins and feedback throughout the engagement period..

Train and support youth contributors

Youth need clear guidance to carry out their role effectively. Provide training based on the assigned task and consider assigning a mentor to provide ongoing support.

Balance structure and creativity

Allow youth autonomy within their role while providing clear objectives and goals.



4.4 Youth as partners in action: What does partnering and sharing power with youth look like?

Partnering and sharing power with youth involves engaging them as equal stakeholders in a programme's decision-making, design and implementation. This approach ensures that young people have a meaningful voice to influence the employment programme that they participate in. Programmes that adopt this model often establish a joint governance structure and participatory decision-making space to ensure that young people guide strategic decisions. They also adopt co-led implementation modalities to ensure that youth are engaged in operational and programme delivery processes and activities.

Case study 7

► i-UPSHIFT and the Youth-to-Youth Fund: Refugee youth-led organizations as implementing partners

Under the PROSPECTS Partnership Programme initiative, [Advancing Young People's Engagement and Meaningful Participation](#), the ILO implemented the Integrated UPSHIFT (i-UPSHIFT) and the Youth-to-Youth Fund (Y2Yf) model in Uganda from 2023 to 2024. It is an intervention that combines a UNICEF social innovation and entrepreneurship programme for young people with ILO's business development training packages, such as Generate Your Business Idea and Start and Improve Your Business. This model is designed to equip young people with entrepreneurship as well as transferable skills, such as problem-solving, creativity and collaboration, that will help them assess the challenges in their communities and consequently design solutions to address those challenges. In addition to boosting youth employability and entrepreneurship, the i-UPSHIFT approach positively impacts the wider community through the benefits of the innovative products and services that young people develop while also shifting perceptions, thus positioning young people as positive agents of change rather than problems to be managed.

As part of the implementation of i-UPSHIFT and the Youth-to-Youth Fund model in Uganda, five partners were engaged to deliver the programme in different regions of the country. In the Nakivale refugee settlement, two refugee youth-led organizations were selected as implementing partners. These organizations had the vital role of tailoring the intervention to the needs of refugee youth while also enhancing outreach to promote and raise awareness of i-UPSHIFT among young people.

The two refugee youth-led organizations were already providing services to youth in their community. As implementing partners of this programme, they had a pivotal role in supporting the initiative by:

- Delivering bootcamps in which youth advance from problem-identification to solution-development to idea-pitching to a panel of judges;
- Managing seed funding to selected solutions;
- Facilitating young people's participation in a youth summit;
- Mentoring youth as they develop their solutions; and
- Capturing the lessons learned.

The Uganda programme ended in a National Youth Summit, during which 50 youth innovators were each recognized and awarded US\$5,000 to further develop their prototype into a social entrepreneurship venture.

Common concerns and counter-responses	
Resisting arguments	Counter-responses
<i>"Youth lack the experience for decision-making."</i>	Experience grows with opportunity. Providing training, exposure and mentorship equips youth with the necessary skills and technical knowledge they need to meaningfully contribute.
<i>"Young people don't stay engaged long enough."</i>	Youth engagement can be sustained with flexible engagement models that accommodate youth's changing priorities, clear incentives and pathways for long-term involvement. Programmes that value and act on youth's input tend to retain young people longer.
<i>"Youth don't understand technical programme aspects."</i>	Youth bring lived experiences and fresh perspectives that enhance programmes. Involving youth right from the outset allows them to build up their knowledge on the technical aspects of a programme.

Five easy steps for partnering and sharing power with youth

Step 1: Define the scope of partnering with youth

- ▶ Determine how deeply youth will be involved: Will they co-lead the entire programme or specific activities within?
- ▶ If their role is focused on certain areas, identify whether they will co-design and/or co-implement the programme or take equal ownership in monitoring and evaluation

Step 2: Recruit youth representatives

- ▶ Use effective outreach strategies (refer to Section 2) to engage diverse youth groups.
- ▶ Ensure the recruitment process is clear and accessible, outlining the roles, responsibilities and expectations to set youth up for meaningful participation.

Step 3: Co-develop partnership modalities and activities with youth

- ▶ Co-develop structured mechanisms for youth involvement, such as a steering committee or a youth advisory council in governance structures (refer to Section 5 on establishing a youth advisory group), a co-design workshop (refer to Section 5 on conducting a co-design workshop with youth) or partnering with a youth-led organization to deliver a component of a programme.
- ▶ Co-create decision-making processes that equally involve youth, programme staff and stakeholders, ensuring power-sharing and collaboration. Consider whether youth will have influence over budget allocations.

Step 4: Provide training and ongoing support

- ▶ Equip youth with training tailored to their role, whether in programme management, facilitation, advocacy or decision-making.
- ▶ Pair each youth with a mentor or technical expert for continued support.

Step 5: Monitor, evaluate and improve the model

- ▶ Collect regular feedback from youth on the partnership and their level of influence and decision-making power.
- ▶ Use this feedback to improve collaboration and strengthen youth partnership and power-sharing for long-term impact.

Case study 8

▶ ProAgro YOUTH: Partnering with a youth organization to improve job placements

The ProAgro YOUTH programme aimed to increase decent self-employment and wage employment for rural youth through integrated agribusiness hubs. Implemented in Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and Malawi, the programme focused on developing sustainable agricultural capacities of young people by providing technical, vocational and business training, coaching, business development support and job placement opportunities. It also emphasized evidence-based knowledge management, strategic communication and policy dialogue to enhance the capacity of local partners and promote decent employment opportunities for rural youth in the agrifood sector.

During the programme's scoping mission in Madagascar, consultations were conducted with various youth organizations, including one associated with the Ministry of Youth, Observatoire de la Jeunesse. Initially intended as a forum for consulting youth, the idea evolved when it became evident that this organization had significant potential to assist in achieving the programme goals due to its extensive network, especially in rural and remote areas. Despite not being initially identified as a potential partner, an implementation agreement was signed with Observatoire de la Jeunesse.

Their involvement proved crucial for the programme's success due to the links they provided and their capacity for matching labour demand and supply for rural youth. In addition, they offered peer-to-peer soft skills training, such as how to write a CV and prepare for job interviews, which enhanced the employability of the young participants and complemented the programme's technical training efforts. They used their networks on platforms like Facebook and communication tools to facilitate programme efficiency and the ultimate placement of trained youth in wage employment in the agrifood value chain.

Note: For more information, see "[Elevating the Potential of Rural Youth: Paths to Decent Jobs and Sustainable Futures](#)", ILO Policy Brief, May 2024.



Useful tips for effectively engaging youth as partners

Secure organizational buy-in and commitment

Programmes must commit to youth partnership and influence at all levels. Leadership and staff should receive training to be sensitized to youth engagement principles to challenge biases and to recognize the value of youth expertise.

Ensure inclusive engagement

Ensure that marginalized youth (women, rural youth, refugees, forcibly displaced youth, youth with disabilities, etc.) have access to these roles. Address barriers by offering a stipend, transportation support and a flexible working arrangement.

Develop clear guidelines and decision-making process

Develop a transparent structure that outlines roles, responsibilities and decision-making mechanisms and includes youth-friendly policies, a budget and safeguarding measures.

Provide training and capacity-building

Provide mentorship and resources to support youth partners. Offer capacity-building sessions on technical skills and knowledge relevant to the programme.



4.5 Youth as leaders in action: What does supporting youth-led initiatives look like?

Engaging youth as leaders can either involve a young person or a youth-led organization leading one or more components of a youth employment programme that is initiated by the organization. Or it can involve facilitating and supporting young people to lead their own projects, activities and initiatives. Supporting youth-led initiatives and projects can be a highly impactful modality for meaningfully engaging youth. This type of engagement goes beyond seeking youth's input through consultations or co-implementing with them as partners within an employment programme. It empowers young people to create, implement and lead their own initiatives, thus directly addressing their needs and aspirations while tackling the barriers hindering access to decent job opportunities.



Case study 9

► Youth-to-Youth Fund: Youth as promoters and creators of employment opportunities

A competitive grant scheme programme, the ILO's [Youth-to-Youth Fund](#) assists youth-led organizations in implementing innovative small-scale projects of youth entrepreneurship to foster employment opportunities for young men and women.

Implemented in Ethiopia as part of the PROSPECTS initiative, [Advancing Young People's Engagement and Meaningful Participation](#), the Youth-to-Youth Fund promotes decent work and economic inclusion of forcibly displaced young people. Committed to boosting the meaningful engagement of young people, the programme has capacitated ten youth-led organizations to be active participants in creating employment opportunities for other youth. It includes the following components:

- **Youth-led projects** allow young people to take ownership of initiatives.
- **Capacity-building** provides technical support, coaching and training in project management, financial management, communication and marketing to help youth-led organizations enhance their skills and capabilities.
- **Financial assistance** offers grants to support project implementation.
- **Networking opportunities** help youth-led organizations and their young beneficiaries expand their networks, collaborate on joint projects and access resources to scale up their initiatives.
- **Regular monitoring** to ensure that the youth-led organizations are accountable and follow through on implementation.

Through this integrated approach, the Youth-to-Youth Fund identifies and tests innovative entrepreneurship solutions to the youth employment challenge while helping youth become effective partners and lead change in their communities.

Providing side-by-side support to youth-led projects

Supporting young people to lead initiatives and drive change requires both technical and financial support. These two pillars provide youth with the necessary tools, skills and resources to develop, implement and sustain impactful projects that address the youth employment challenge and promote decent work opportunities.

Technical support. Providing youth with guidance and technical support is essential for their success. Areas of technical support can include:

- **Capacity-building and training:** Equipping youth with project design, management and financial management skills to launch and sustain a youth-led initiative. This can include assisting youth in developing a funding proposal to access resources and investment for their initiative.
- **Mentorship and coaching:** Offering tailored mentorship and leadership training focused on communication, networking and strategic planning to enhance the reach and visibility of youth-led initiatives.
- **Networking and building connections:** Creating platforms for youth to connect with potential partners, funders and technical experts as well as with other youth through peer-to-peer networks. This can include facilitating access for youth to participate in conferences, policy discussions and networking events that can help them build connections and partnerships and strengthen their impact.

Financial support. Financial barriers often limit the ability of young people to bring their ideas to life. Facilitating access to finance or providing direct financial support through grants and funding mechanisms can help youth to incubate innovative ideas.

Financial support can include:

- ▶ **Facilitating access to finance:** Providing youth-led initiatives with training and support to access financial resources, such as microfinance, group lending models and crowdfunding grants, loans and other financial products, to help kick-start and maintain their initiatives, providing a foundation for scaling up innovative solutions.
- ▶ **Seed grants and awards:** Funding youth-driven solutions that tackle the youth employment challenge and promote decent jobs for youth, thus enabling them to transform their ideas into pilots and prototypes with potential for growth.
- ▶ **Project implementation funding:** Covering initial operational costs, such as materials, staffing and outreach activities, helps youth-led initiatives to effectively deliver.

Providing technical and financial assistance to youth-led initiatives recognizes their potential for bringing about change. However, once initial support or catalytic funding is provided, these initiatives will need further assistance to grow and become sustainable. Supporting youth-led initiatives requires considering how this assistance could be provided in the long term through alternative sources of funding and partnerships.

Five easy steps for supporting youth-led initiatives and projects

Step 1: Define the scope and objectives

- ▶ Begin by determining the scope and focus of the youth-led initiatives that the programme seeks to support, ensuring alignment with the programme's broader goals.
- ▶ Establish clear eligibility and selection criteria to guide the process of identifying and supporting youth-led projects.

Step 2: Identify and develop innovative ideas

- ▶ Decide how to source ideas – either through an open call from existing youth-led projects or by coaching youth in idea development.
- ▶ If using an open call, ensure that the application process is simple and accessible. If coaching youth, consider design thinking workshops to help youth groups generate solutions that address the youth employment challenge.

Step 3: Select youth-led projects to support

- ▶ Use transparent selection criteria and consider involving youth representatives in the selection process (refer to Section 2). This ensures inclusivity and allows youth to have a say in which initiatives receive support.
- ▶ Selection should prioritize projects that align with your programme's goals and demonstrate relevance, feasibility, sustainability and potential for impact.

Step 4: Provide tailored support and mentorship

- ▶ Offer both technical and financial support, based on the needs of the selected youth-led initiatives.
- ▶ Provide mentorship, capacity-building training and finance or facilitate access to funding opportunities to help youth refine, implement and sustain their projects. Recruiting experienced mentors can ensure ongoing guidance and skill development.

Step 5: Monitor, reflect and scale up

- ▶ Define indicators and establish a monitoring system to track the progress and impact of the youth-led initiatives to assess their effectiveness.
- ▶ Organize peer learning exchanges in which youth share their experiences and good practices.
- ▶ Document successful initiatives and, where possible, provide additional support for scaling up the most impactful projects to maximize their reach and impact.



Useful tips for effectively engaging youth as leaders

Partner with established youth-led organizations	To the extent possible and relevant, employment programmes should prioritize collaboration with recognized youth-led organizations and networks rather than individual youth. These organizations and networks offer collective representation, strong community ties and youth-driven solutions. Partnering with such an organization provides an institutional anchor, thus ensuring continuity in the engagement with youth even as individual youth representatives transition out of their roles. When working with refugee youth-led organizations, it is crucial to have flexible criteria and eligibility requirements, given the institutional and operational constraints they face.
Create an accessible and equitable selection process	To engage youth-led organizations effectively, the selection process should be transparent, inclusive and youth-friendly. Eligibility criteria should be clear and practical, ensuring accessibility for organizations with limited resources, including refugee youth-led organizations. Hosting information sessions and providing a frequently asked questions guide can help potential applicants understand the requirements.
Provide capacity-building	Youth-led organizations may have limited experience in proposal writing, project management and budgeting. Initiatives should invest in ongoing training and mentorship to equip youth-led organizations with the necessary skills, including in financial management, leadership and proposal writing.
Build a community of practice	Fostering collaboration and peer learning among youth-led organizations can amplify their impact. Establish a network or learning hub through which organizations can share their experiences, develop partnerships and co-create initiatives. Encourage organizations to exchange good practices and learn from each other.
Allocate adequate human and financial resources	Supporting youth-led initiatives requires dedicated investment of both human and financial resources. Programmes should assign skilled staff who can engage with youth organizations and youth leaders effectively and allocate resources for covering grants and operational costs.
Engage implementing partners	When working with implementing partners to support youth-led initiatives, ensure that they are experienced in working with youth. If they are not, consider training them on meaningful youth engagement practices.

Section 5

► Unlocking opportunities – Mechanisms for youth engagement in a youth employment programme cycle

In this section, you will:



1. Discover where and how youth can be engaged at different phases of a programme cycle.
2. Assess and visualize how youth engagement is happening within the different phases of your programme.
3. Explore mechanisms and approaches that can be activated to enhance youth engagement at each phase of the programme, with guiding steps, tips and examples.



5.1 Understanding the programme cycle and where youth fit in

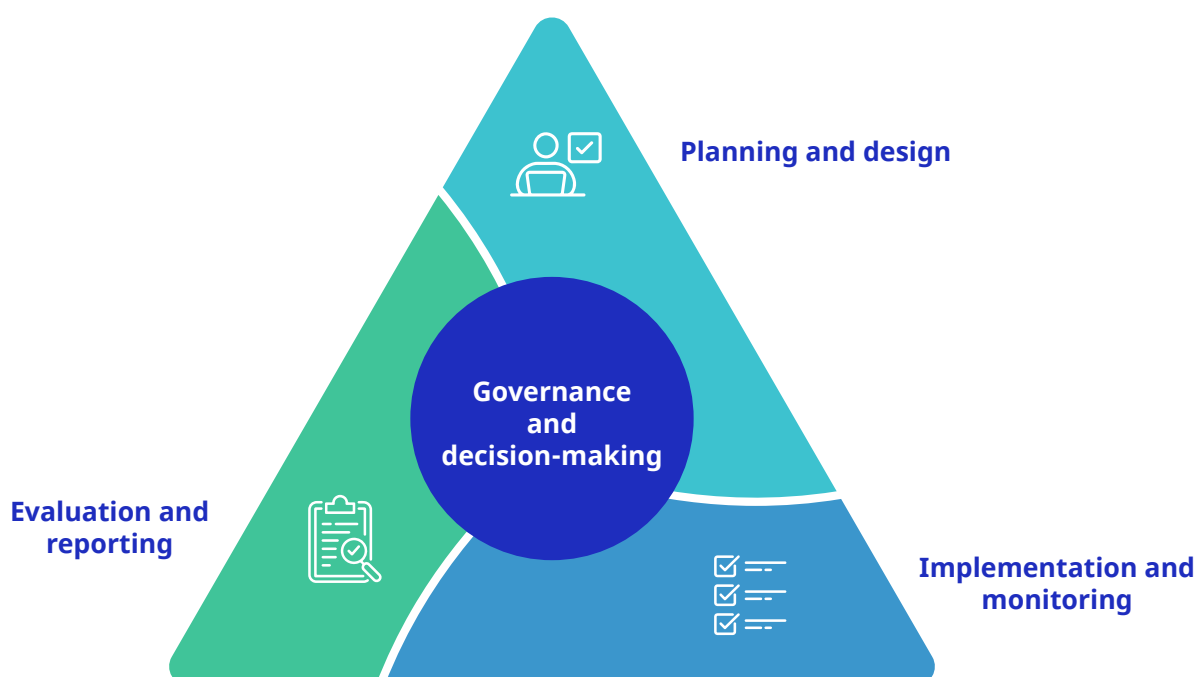
Every organization follows a cycle when delivering new projects or programmes. The ILO's *Development Cooperation Internal Governance Manual*²² breaks this down into five interconnected phases:

1. **Design.** This is where it all begins – identifying a problem, brainstorming solutions and mapping out a project plan.
2. **Appraisal.** An initial draft of the project undergoes internal review to refine ideas before being shared with potential funding partners.
3. **Approval.** Once the proposal is reviewed and funding is secured, the ILO officially gives the green light for implementation.
4. **Implementation, monitoring and reporting.** With funding and a plan in place, teams roll out activities, track progress and ensure that reporting requirements are met.
5. **Evaluation.** Finally, the project is assessed to see what worked, what didn't work and how future initiatives could be improved.

To make this process more youth-focused, this Guidance Manual simplifies the programme cycle into four phases:

- ▶ **Governance and decision-making.** Ensuring that inclusive leadership and accountability mechanisms are embedded across all phases.
- ▶ **Planning and design.** Setting the programme's vision, strategy and indicators with youth.
- ▶ **Implementation and monitoring.** Bringing ideas to life while tracking progress and impact.
- ▶ **Evaluation and reporting.** Assessing outcomes and gathering insights to improve future initiatives as well as communicating results and advocating for youth-driven change.

Before jumping into the details, take time to fill out the **Youth Engagement Assessment Tool** to evaluate how your programme involves young people at each stage of the programme cycle.



²² For more information about the ILO's programme cycle, refer to ILO, *Development Cooperation Internal Governance Manual*, 2021.

Reflection

Where can we enable youth engagement in our employment programme?

An easy-to-use framework to map opportunities

The following matrix tool is designed to help you assess, visualize and enhance youth engagement across different phases of your programme cycle. Follow these two steps to make the most of it.

Step 1: Identify the programme phase

Decide which phase or phases of the programme cycle you want to assess – this could be governance and decision-making, planning and design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation or reporting. Use the matrix to guide your assessment.

Step 2: Reflect on your programme's progress

Go through each element of the matrix and honestly evaluate where your programme currently stands. Consider which degree of youth engagement is applied in the programme and how the programme could advance engagement activities to apply different degrees. Capture and record your ideas as you review.

A framework for mapping opportunities

Degree of youth engagement

Activities by programme phase		No engagement	Youth consulted	Youth contributing	Youth as partners	Youth as leaders	Add your notes and reflections
1. Governance and decision-making	Programme steering committee or board or equivalent	Youth are not engaged in any of the programme governance structures.	Youth are consulted and their insights are shared with the programme governance structure.	Youth contribute to governance through a youth advisory board.	Youth have a reserved seat and equal role in the established programme governance structure.	Youth are supported to lead governance and decision-making in all aspects of their youth-led projects. ^a	
2. Planning and design	Needs assessment (or situation analysis) ^b	Youth are not engaged in any form during the needs assessment.	Youth are consulted regarding their needs and they are informed about how their inputs were integrated into the programme planning and design.	Youth contribute by taking on assigned roles, such as facilitators and data collectors, during the needs assessment.	Youth share the power of decision-making regarding the design, data collection and analysis of the needs assessment.	Youth are supported to conduct youth participatory action research ^c to inform the programme about their peers' and communities' needs.	

A framework for mapping opportunities (cont.)

Degree of youth engagement							
Activities by programme phase		No engagement	Youth consulted	Youth contributing	Youth as partners	Youth as leaders	Add your notes and reflections
	Development of a theory of change and setting project indicators	Youth do not make any contribution to developing the programme's theory of change or establishing project indicators and its monitoring framework.	Youth are consulted about the programme's theory of change, project indicators and monitoring framework, and they are provided with feedback on how their inputs have been used.	Youth contribute in specific roles to develop the programme's theory of change, project indicators and the monitoring framework, such as co-facilitating a workshop to shape the programme's theory of change.	Youth share the power of decision-making regarding the programme's theory of change, project indicators and monitoring framework through a co-designing workshop.	Youth are supported to develop a theory of change, project indicators and monitoring framework for their youth-led projects.	
	Designing activities	Youth do not contribute to the design of the programme activities.	Youth are consulted about the nature and type of programme activities, and they are provided with feedback on how their inputs have been used.	Youth contribute in specific roles to designing components of the programme (for example, deciding some of the thematic or sectoral priorities of the programme).	Youth share the power of decision-making regarding the design of programme activities.	Youth are supported to design and lead their own pilot activities that can be integrated into the programme.	
3. Implementation and monitoring	Implementing activities	Youth do not contribute to the implementation of the programme activities.	Youth are consulted about the programme activities' features, such as time, location, selection criteria, methods, content and post-activity support.	Youth contribute through assigned roles during programme implementation, such as trainers and facilitators.	Youth partner with project stakeholders in the implementation of programme activities.	Youth are supported to implement their own initiatives that can be integrated into the programme.	
	Developing partnerships	Youth do not contribute to the development of programme partnerships.	Youth are consulted about potential partners for the programme and are provided with feedback.	Youth contribute to mapping the potential partners for the programme.	Youth partner with project stakeholders in identifying and engaging programme partners.	Youth are supported to lead partnerships that aid the implementation of their initiatives.	

A framework for mapping opportunities (cont.)

Degree of youth engagement							
Activities by programme phase		No engagement	Youth consulted	Youth contributing	Youth as partners	Youth as leaders	Add your notes and reflections
	Monitoring and collecting feedback	Youth do not make any contribution to monitoring programme activities or collecting feedback.	Youth are consulted about monitoring and feedback mechanisms for the programme.	Youth contribute through assigned roles, such as facilitators and data collectors to monitor programme activities and collect feedback.	Youth partner with project stakeholders to monitor projects and collect feedback on the programme.	Youth are supported to develop the monitoring and feedback mechanisms for their own initiative.	
4. Evaluation and reporting	Evaluation and learning	Youth do not have any contribution to the evaluation of the programme.	Youth are consulted about their inputs in the evaluation of the programme.	Youth contribute through assigned roles, such as facilitators and data collectors, in the evaluation of the programme.	Youth partner with project stakeholders to evaluate the project and support programme learning.	Youth are supported to conduct a youth-led evaluation of their initiatives.	
	Documenting and reporting	Youth do not make any contribution to reporting and documenting the programme's impact.	Youth are consulted on what and how to report and document the programme's impact.	Youth contribute through assigned roles in reporting and documenting the programme implementation, such as taking notes or photos, posting on social networks and making videos.	Youth partner with project stakeholders to report and document the programme's impact.	Youth are supported to develop reports on their youth-led initiatives.	
	Showcasing and advocacy	Youth do not have any role in showcasing the programme's impact or advocacy efforts.	Youth are consulted about how they would like the programme's impact to be showcased.	Youth contribute through assigned roles, such as developing case studies and acting as programme champions.	Youth partner with project stakeholders across impact and advocacy activities.	Youth are supported to lead advocacy efforts on programme-relevant topics and showcase their youth-led initiatives.	

Note: ^a It is difficult for youth to be leaders in governance when programmes are initiated by the ILO and other development partners. However, youth can be supported to lead in the decision-making of their own projects. ^b A needs or situation analysis is a process used to assess the current conditions and challenges faced by a specific group or context. It identifies gaps, priorities and opportunities to inform effective planning and decision-making. ^c Youth participatory action research and evaluation is an innovative approach for promoting positive community change and youth development. It goes beyond engaging young people as passive subjects in research and evaluation and involves them to take on an active role as co-researcher, influencing every stage of a research and evaluation process.

The following sections highlight possible entry points and mechanisms to activate meaningful youth engagement across each phase, showing how young people can influence and shape programmes at various levels of involvement.

5.2 Youth engagement in programme governance and decision-making

Strong programme governance ensures that youth employment interventions are effective and accountable. Involving youth in a governance structure, such as a steering committee, the advisory board or a co-management team, ensures that their voices influence decisions.

There are different mechanisms that can be adopted that support varying degrees of youth engagement in programme governance and decision-making, as the following explains.

Degrees of youth engagement in programme governance and decision-making			
 Youth consulted	 Youth contributing	 Youth as partners	 Youth as leaders
Youth participate in a focus group or survey to share their perspectives, which inform strategic decisions. <i>Example:</i> A periodic feedback survey is shared with young beneficiaries to gather insights on programme decisions.	Youth are invited to contribute ideas or recommendations, influencing some aspects of governance. <i>Example:</i> A youth advisory group provides input on programme delivery, but final decisions rest with the programme team.	Youth take on a formal role within a governance structure, sharing power with non-youth decision-makers. <i>Example:</i> A youth representative has a seat in the programme steering committee, thus sharing decision-making power with the governance group.	Youth take the lead in governance, setting strategic priorities and making decisions on their youth-led projects. <i>Example:</i> A youth-led board oversees programme direction of their youth-led initiative, with non-youth allies in supporting roles.

Let's look at one of these mechanisms in more detail.

Establishing a youth advisory group

A youth advisory group consisting of young people provides a structured mechanism for their voices to be heard in a youth employment programme. Unlike one-time consultations, these groups offer continuous engagement and ensure that youth's perspectives directly inform programme design, implementation and evaluation.

Youth advisory groups can support employment programmes by, for instance:

- ▶ Advising on outreach strategies to reach targeted groups of youth.
- ▶ Identifying barriers to employment.
- ▶ Providing inputs and feedback on programme components, such as the attractiveness of a skills training methodology, the accessibility of a career guidance initiative or the design of entrepreneurship support.
- ▶ Advancing peer-led mentorship and advocacy efforts, such as increasing awareness of rights at work and employment opportunities.

When setting up a youth advisory group, it's important to build on what exists rather than duplicating efforts. Many youth advisory groups and networks are already active and can be strengthened instead of starting from scratch. Equally important is to ensure their sustainability beyond the life of a programme – what happens to these groups once an initiative ends? Embedding a youth advisory group into the institutional structure and integrating its inputs into broader decision-making mechanisms can help maintain its impact long after a programme concludes (see box 6 for advice on setting up youth advisory groups in forced displacement contexts).

Box 6

▶ Youth advisory groups in a displacement context

When working in a forced displacement context, programme teams must consider designing a youth advisory group that includes youth from the refugee and internally displaced populations as well as those representing the host community. This is not only critical in providing a more holistic understanding of the context and supporting a programme that is responsive to both groups but also fosters social cohesion, mutual understanding and trust between the two groups.

Case study 10

▶ Youth advisory groups as mechanisms for youth engagement and accountability

The formation of a youth advisory group to be involved throughout a programme's life cycle can prove to be a useful tool to institutionalize channels for accountability and young people's engagement in programming. The youth advisory group should involve a diverse and representative group of young people who receive the necessary support and resources to engage and contribute ideas and input to the programme, as the following examples illustrate.

- **PROSPECTS Partnership Programme's Youth Network Committee.** Under the PROSPECTS initiative, [Advancing Young People's Engagement and Meaningful Participation](#), the ILO, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund collaborated to establish a [Youth Network Committee in Ethiopia](#) as a formal structure to further the engagement of young people. The Youth Network Committee provides strategic direction on the implementation of the initiative and represents the voices of young refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities, thus ensuring that their insights and aspirations are reflected in programme delivery. The Youth Network Committee's detailed terms of reference encompasses background details, objectives and the composition and governance structure of the Committee. It also clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Committee, along with details regarding members' term duration, remuneration and recruitment process. Organized under a youth-led governance structure, the Committee meets quarterly to reflect on progress and provide input on youth employment programming within PROSPECTS.

To develop Committee members' leadership capacity, a four-day [Youth Leadership Academy](#) was organized to pass on the relevant skills and knowledge needed to effectively fulfil their advisory role. The Academy also served as a forum for Committee members to share their leadership journeys and reflect on challenges and opportunities. By strengthening the skills and abilities of young people, the Youth Leadership Academy honed the leadership capacity of youth to become organizers, advocates and leaders in their communities.

- **Youth advisory group linked to the MENA Regional High-Level Meeting on Young People's Learning, Skilling and Transition to Decent Work.** To facilitate a consistent and coherent engagement of young people in the lead up and during the MENA Regional High-Level Meeting on Young People's Learning, Skilling and Transition to Decent Work, the United Nations organizing agencies (ILO, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund) helped establish a [MENA Youth Advisory Group](#) with 18 young people from across the

region. The group members engaged with the preparation and design of the meeting and also took on visible roles during the meeting as moderators, discussants and panellists. The MENA Youth Advisory Group served as a valuable mechanism to enable youth to voice their ideas and concerns and to propose recommendations that address the bottlenecks in the transition from education to employment in the region. It also was a platform for youth to showcase and further develop their skills and enhance their agency.

- **Displaced Youth Initiative.** With a view to increasing the effectiveness of skills-building and employment programmes targeting out-of-school displaced youth in a conflict context, the Women's Refugee Commission's [Displaced Youth Initiative](#) undertook a multicounty advocacy research project. Recognizing the importance of empowering youth to take an active role in shaping the programmes designed to enhance their employment prospects, the initiative formed a youth advisory group consisting of 15 members from conflict-affected countries. The youth advisory group provided inputs to the initiative by, for example, reviewing terms of reference and research questions for field assessments, providing feedback on advocacy briefs and engaging in technical discussions with programme staff to inform the initiative's findings and recommendations.
- **Green Jobs for Youth Pact.** The Green Jobs for Youth Pact, a pivotal Stockholm+50 legacy initiative, has been instrumental in harnessing the collective expertise of the ILO, UNICEF and the United Nations Environment Programme. This collaboration fosters green job creation while bridging the skills gap for youth in developing countries, particularly in climate-vulnerable sectors, thus fostering a just transition to a low-carbon and circular economy. Since its inception in 2022 at the COP27, the Pact's objectives have been ambitious: the creation of one million green jobs, the greening of one million existing jobs and the support of 10,000 green young entrepreneurs. The Pact's initiatives are co-designed and have been implemented in partnership with youth through a youth advisory group consisting of young experts from diverse sectors, including employers' and workers' organizations representatives.

The youth advisory group has had a critical role in shaping the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, ensuring that young voices actively contribute to initiatives that accelerate green job creation for youth and are in service to the needs and interests of youth. The youth advisory group's roles and responsibilities, which were finalized with input from group members who were nominated by expert constituencies and selected via democratic processes, focused on:

- **Strategic advice:** Providing guidance for the overall direction of the initiatives.
- **Programme development:** Supporting the design, implementation, monitoring and inclusivity of the Pact's initiatives while aligning with complementary global initiatives.
- **Youth pledges and commitments:** Identifying youth partners and strategies to mobilize young people in supporting the Pact's objectives.
- **Communication and advocacy:** Supporting the development and execution of the Pact's communication and advocacy strategies.
- **Technology:** Promoting the use of innovative technologies to tackle climate change and enhance green job opportunities.
- **Mobilization and regional representation:** Engaging with youth and other stakeholders in various regions and developing a unified call to action that includes diverse youth groups.
- **Work streams:** Leading specialized sub-workstreams based on expertise, such as policy, education, government and entrepreneurship.

The youth advisory group's work throughout the Pact's life cycle has ensured that young people are not just recipients but active co-creators in shaping a sustainable and inclusive green job future.

Six guiding steps for implementing a youth advisory group

Step 1: Define the scope and objectives

- ▶ Clearly outline the purpose and expected contributions of the youth advisory group within your youth employment programme. Determine if the youth advisory group will focus on providing feedback, co-designing initiatives, advocating for youth or a combination of these roles.
- ▶ Develop clear terms of reference (TORs) that define the youth advisory group's roles, decision-making processes, meeting frequency and how young people will be compensated for their participation, thus setting clear expectations on engagement.
- ▶ Establish selection criteria to ensure representation of young people from diverse backgrounds.

Step 2: Identify and recruit youth members

- ▶ Ensure that recruitment is transparent and accessible, prioritizing motivation and willingness to contribute over formal qualifications (refer to Section 2).
- ▶ Consider peer nominations or open applications to attract a varied pool of candidates.

Step 3: Provide orientation and capacity-building

- ▶ Host an orientation session to introduce the youth advisory group's objectives, expectations and operational structure.
- ▶ Provide training in leadership, advocacy and communication to strengthen members' contributions.
- ▶ Pair new youth members with mentors or experienced youth advisory group members to support their engagement and help them navigate their engagement.

Step 4: Establish operational guidelines

- ▶ Review the TORs with the selected group to ensure that they are clear and happy with the role, decision-making processes and meeting frequency.
- ▶ Co-develop guidelines with youth to ensure that they feel ownership over the structure and processes.
- ▶ Ensure that the operational structures are flexible and accessible, addressing potential barriers, such as mobility restrictions, digital access and language differences.

Step 5: Facilitate ongoing engagement

- ▶ Integrate the youth advisory group into decision-making, planning and evaluation processes of your youth employment programme.
- ▶ Organize regular consultations, co-design workshops and stakeholder meetings in which youth can share their insights.
- ▶ Create additional spaces that allow youth to engage and advocate with policymakers, programme managers and other stakeholders to influence decisions effectively.

Step 6: Sustain, monitor and evaluate

- ▶ Continuously assess the impact and effectiveness of the youth advisory group through feedback mechanisms, impact tracking and youth-led reflections.

- ▶ Recognize members' contributions with a certificate, networking opportunities and professional development incentives.
- ▶ Adapt strategies based on lessons learned to improve and sustain the youth advisory group as a long-term engagement structure, such as embedding the group into the institutional structure.



Useful tips for implementing a youth advisory group

Recognize the expertise of youth	Youth have first-hand experience with barriers to employment. Their insights must be valued and acted upon. Programme staff should be trained to engage youth as experts, not just as beneficiaries. Clear feedback loops should be established to show how their input shaped programme decisions.
Ensure inclusive representation	The youth advisory group should include youth from diverse backgrounds, as relevant to your youth employment programme. Special efforts should be made to include young women, youth with disabilities, LGBTQ+ youth, youth in situations of forced displacement and host community youth.
Address barriers to participation	Providing transportation stipends and digital access can widen access and participation. Meetings should be conducted in safe, accessible locations, such as community centres, youth centres or online platforms. The youth advisory group members should be compensated for their time, either through a stipend, capacity-building or professional development opportunities.
Develop a clear structure and terms of reference	The youth advisory group's roles, responsibilities and decision-making power should be clearly defined. The TOR should specify membership duration, meeting frequency and decision-making influence. Rotation mechanisms should allow for new youth to join over time, thus ensuring ongoing representation.
Support youth as partners	Consider creating a formal seat in the programme steering committee or board for a member of the youth advisory group to ensure that the group has a direct voice in the formal governance structure of your programme. By participating alongside decision-makers, the youth advisory group representative can feed-up requests and insights from the advisory group. This serves to support a "youth as partners" approach to governance and decision-making within your programme.
Demonstrate impact	Show how youth's recommendations lead to tangible programme improvements to maintain engagement and motivation.

Additional resources

- ▶ [Co-Management: A Practical Guide](#), Peace Child International
- ▶ [Youth on Boards and Committees: A Handbook for Organisations Working with Youth](#), Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
- ▶ [Youth Governance Tip Sheet](#), Restless Development
- ▶ [Guidelines for Setting Up and Managing Youth Advisory Structures in EU Delegations](#), European Commission
- ▶ [Establishing a Youth Advisory Council](#), GenerationOn.

5.3 Youth engagement in programme planning and design

The planning and design phase sets the foundation for success. Youth engagement at this stage means young people can shape programme goals, strategies and interventions, whether through youth consultations, participatory workshops or co-designing initiatives.

There are multiple mechanisms that can be activated to support the different degrees of youth engagement in programme planning and design, as the following describes.

Degrees of youth engagement in programme planning and design			
 Youth consulted	 Youth contributing	 Youth as partners	 Youth as leaders
Youth participate in a focus group, survey or interview to share their perspectives on programme design but do not have direct decision-making power. <i>Example:</i> A programme conducts participatory consultations with youth to gather insights on employment challenges and barriers to accessing their rights at work.	Youth are invited to contribute ideas, recommendations or support in undertaking specific tasks, thus influencing programme planning and design. <i>Example:</i> A young person co-facilitates a participatory mapping exercise for identifying local employment opportunities, barriers and accessible resources.	Youth hold formal roles within a programme's design structure, collaborating with programme staff and sharing power in decision-making. <i>Example:</i> Youth partner through co-design workshops alongside programme staff to develop the components. They participate in finalizing programme priorities, thus ensuring that decisions reflect youth's needs.	Youth take the lead in programme planning, setting priorities and making design decisions on their youth-led projects. <i>Example:</i> A youth-led task force oversees thematic working groups while programme staff act as advisors rather than decision-makers.



► Challenge Fund for Youth Employment and Orange Corners: Engaging youth as partners

In recent years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands has made youth engagement a central focus of its programmes and policies. Meaningful youth participation has been essential for ensuring that the Ministry's policies align with the realities that young people experience in diverse contexts. To strengthen this approach internally, the Ministry developed a [Meaningful Youth Participation Toolkit](#) (2023), designed to enhance the involvement of youth in advancing international development goals. The Netherlands' new policy letter on International Development Cooperation (February 2025) underscores the importance of a well-trained young workforce in driving growth markets in African countries, which is also relevant to Dutch trade relations.

For example, young people have been engaged as partners in:

- The [Challenge Fund for Youth Employment](#), which is a seven-year programme (2019–26) that seeks to improve job prospects for young women and men by investing in innovative solutions that provide youth with access to new and better wage and self-employment opportunities. The Challenge Fund has been active in 12 countries across the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel and West Africa and the Horn of Africa, where youth have contributed to co-designing the programme: [The Challenge Fund has actively engaged young people in shaping the initiatives](#) that affect their employment opportunities. This involvement aligns with broader models of youth participation, such as Hart's Ladder of Participation, which emphasizes youth–adult partnerships and youth-led initiatives. The Challenge Fund's youth-led approach includes national "youth champions" who conduct research and help design the Challenge Fund activities. Building on a successful pilot, the initiative was expanded to include additional youth champions as well as "youth experts", ensuring that youth's voices remain central to the programme's design while also supporting their personal and professional growth. The Challenge Fund provides the selected solutions with co-investment, technical assistance or a combination of both. The proposals for youth employment solutions must clearly show how young people contributed to developing the proposed solutions while outlining how the approach helps fulfil the needs and aspirations of youth, who will ultimately gain employment through implementation. The programme targets 50 per cent participation of young women and, in partnership with the private sector and national partners, strives to support market-based solutions that take an integrated approach to matching labour supply and demand for youth.
- The implementation and continuous improvement of the [Orange Corners](#) initiative provides young entrepreneurs (aged 18–35) across Africa, Asia and the Middle East with training, mentorship, networking, funding and facilities to start and grow a business through incubation and acceleration programmes. The programme is shaped as a public–private partnership, with Dutch embassies, the Orange Corners headquarters in the Netherlands, private sector partners and local implementing partners each having a certain stake. [Youth are continuously engaged to design and adapt the initiative in each country](#) through the Youth Advisory Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the youth advisory committee of the embassy in each country. Alumni ambassadors are selected within each location to shape future activities. This is matched with a monitoring, evaluation and learning system that includes pre-training, mid-term and post-training surveys and conversations to ensure that the programme keeps integrating feedback from the young participants.

Let's now explore how participatory mapping and co-design workshops can be delivered in practice.

Undertaking a participatory mapping exercise

Imagine being able to visualize a community through the eyes of its youth – its strengths, challenges and opportunities all mapped out in a way that makes decision-making more informed and inclusive. That's exactly what participatory mapping does! Whether on paper or through digital tools, this method helps young people create community asset maps, service provider directories and employment opportunity maps, giving a real-time snapshot of the environments they navigate daily.

Participatory mapping is about understanding youth's experiences in their community. Mobility maps, for instance, capture the daily routes young people take, highlighting safe and unsafe areas, transport costs and common gathering spots. In the context of youth employment, mapping can help identify youth employment stakeholders, such as employers, vocational training centres or public employment services. The data generated contribute to programme planning and design, ensuring that initiatives are based on youth's realities rather than assumptions.

In fast-changing labour markets, participatory mapping offers unique insights that can inform a youth employment programme. It provides current, localized information relevant to the programme while creating a sense of ownership and connection among young people. Plus, the process is a learning experience. Many mapping activities come with training sessions, supporting youth to develop data literacy, analytical thinking and digital skills – all of which can boost their employability.

Mapping can be especially relevant for engaging youth in a displacement context. Due to the limited availability of accessible platforms to obtain reliable information, participatory mapping can support these young people to overcome barriers in accessing up-to-date and localized resources.

Case study 12

► Haitian Out-of-School Livelihood Initiative: Youth mapping to guide programme design

Youth mapping strategies were integrated as part of an American Government-funded [Haitian Out-of-School Livelihood Initiative](#) to inform the design of activities and identify employment opportunities in three regions of Haiti. The programme aimed to support out-of-school young people aged 15–20 with skills development, ultimately contributing to their social and economic integration. The initiative provided youth with intensive training in non-formal basic education, life skills and technical or vocational training and later expanded its focus to include job readiness components (such as counselling and help in accessing internships) by providing support to youth as they navigate the challenges of entering the labour market or pursuing additional educational opportunities.

With its emphasis on understanding local contexts and gaining insights on the specific needs of out-of-school youth to design appropriate activities, youth mapping was used to gather data on the socio-economic conditions and the existing opportunities and resources available to this target group. Young people from the programme's three focus regions were selected based on recommendations from local organizations and various criteria related to age, gender, education level and community involvement, among others. The selected youth then received a one-week training on mapping and communication. They also contributed to the development of the survey tools used in the mapping exercise, which included:

1. **A checklist** to ensure that all the existing structures offering services to youth were mapped.
2. **A questionnaire for community leaders** to gather information on the services offered to out-of-school youth; leaders' perceptions of and willingness to work with out-of-school youth; and recommendations for supporting young people.

3. **A questionnaire for out-of-school youth** to gather information on their socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics; their challenges regarding education and employment; their perspectives on their current situation and the future; their understanding of opportunities in their community; and what they need to improve their livelihoods.
4. **A guide for youth focus groups** to identify young people's needs and their perceptions of their lives and of the economic opportunities available to them.

Insights from the youth mapping exercise by IDEJEN, a non-government organization in Haiti, underscored the importance of:

- **Adapting strategies to address various obstacles across different settings.** Youth mappers encountered difficulties in connecting with young people in rural areas and came up against safety and transportation issues in urban settings.
- **Providing capacity-building for youth carrying out the mapping.** Training youth mappers not only enabled them to develop their abilities to fulfil their tasks but equipped them with soft and technical skills that enhanced their employability because they can use the new skills in similar survey work and future job opportunities.
- **Creating collaboration opportunities for youth from different backgrounds.** The inclusion of students and out-of-school youth to carry out the mapping allowed them to better understand the situation of young people with different circumstances and to build positive connections among peers.

Following the mapping and analysis of the collected data, youth were offered small grants to start and manage their own business, which included a cybercafe, a community restaurant and a youth performance centre. This was not a component originally envisioned for the programme, but a direct result of the gaps identified in the mapping process. This revision of the programme design illustrates how the use of youth mapping in the early stages of a programme can engage young people to effectively identify the needs of the target group and achieve relevant solutions to address them.



Methods of participatory mapping

You can use both online and in-person methods in participatory mapping exercises. Both have their advantages and drawbacks, as the following outlines.

Advantages and disadvantages of participatory mapping		
Approach	Pros	Cons
Offline (paper-based) mapping	• Accessibility: Paper-based mapping is often more accessible for communities with limited access to technology or digital infrastructure. • Easy to use: Paper-based mapping can be intuitive for participants to engage with, especially for those who may not be familiar with digital tools. • Low cost: Implementing paper-based mapping exercises is generally more cost-effective than digital alternatives.	• Limited capacity: Paper-based mapping has limited capacity to collect and manage a large volume of data. Converting paper maps to digital formats can be labour-intensive and time-consuming. • Data processing required: Transferring data from paper maps to digital formats for analysis and visualization can introduce errors and require additional time and resources.
Digital (GPS-enabled) mapping	• Efficiency: Digital mapping platforms can streamline data collection, storage and analysis processes, thus reducing the time and effort required when compared with paper-based methods. • Data accuracy: Digital mapping tools often include GPS integration and data validation, which can enhance the accuracy and reliability of collected data. • Visualization: Digital maps enable dynamic visualization of data, allowing stakeholders to explore spatial relationships and patterns more effectively.	• Digital divide: Digital mapping tools require access to technology and internet connectivity, which may exclude marginalized communities or areas with limited resources. • Technical skills required: Additional training will be required on using digital mapping platforms effectively, which can be a barrier for some individuals, particularly in low-literacy settings. • Additional cost: Implementing digital mapping projects may involve higher upfront costs for hardware, software licences and technical support than paper-based approaches.

Seven guiding steps for implementing a participatory mapping exercise

Step 1: Define the mapping focus and objectives

- ▶ Begin by clarifying the goals of the mapping exercise – whether it is youth-focused, community-focused or both.
- ▶ Identify the components to map, such as information centres, vocational training centres and employment services.
- ▶ Define the geographical boundaries where the mapping will take place to ensure a targeted approach.

Step 2: Select the appropriate mapping approach

- ▶ Choose between offline (paper-based) or digital (GPS-enabled) mapping, depending on the objectives. Digital mapping may be more effective when tracking employment services or training centres, for example, because it ensures location accuracy and accessibility.

Step 3: Form and train the youth mapping team

- ▶ Develop selection criteria and recruit youth participants (refer to Section 2).
- ▶ Provide the youth mappers with orientation on the mapping objectives, and introduce them to the chosen approach.
- ▶ Train youth in the needed skills to collect and analyse information effectively. Consider engaging youth who have been trained in the modality to provide peer-to-peer learning and support.

Step 4: Design and test the mapping process with youth

- ▶ Engage the youth mapping team in co-designing mapping questions and data collection methods. Define clear roles for the youth in the mapping process, and provide the necessary guidance and support. A test run can help refine the methods before full implementation.

Step 5: Conduct the mapping

- ▶ Introduce the youth mapping team to partners who can support with information collection, including workers' and employers' organizations.
- ▶ If needed, break the team into smaller groups to cover different geographical areas.
- ▶ Follow strict data management protocols to ensure privacy and confidentiality when collecting information.

Step 6: Analyse mapping data

- ▶ Work with the youth mapping team to review the collected data, discuss the insights and ensure that the information aligns with the initial mapping objectives.
- ▶ Consider bringing in a data analyst or expert to support the youth mappers in processing and visualizing the findings effectively.

Step 7: Report and apply the findings

- ▶ Develop a report summarizing the findings, the analysis and the recommendations. Consider different ways to present the findings, and engage the youth in discussions on how the findings can be used to shape programme planning and design for greater impact.



Useful tips for implementing a participatory mapping exercise

Equip youth with the right skills	Mapping is more than just marking locations – it requires technical and soft skills. Youth may need training in map creation, data collection and digital tools if applicable, along with skills in community engagement, analysis and confidently presenting their findings. A well-trained youth mapper not only produces useful maps but also gains valuable competencies that can enhance their employability.
Choose the right mapping approach	Participatory mapping can be done offline (paper-based) or digitally (GPS-enabled). Selecting the right approach depends on the resources available, youth's digital skills and a programme's needs. Sometimes, a hybrid approach works best – starting with paper-based mapping and later digitizing the data for broader impact.
Budget for success	Participatory mapping requires proper budgeting to cover expenses, such as youth training on mapping techniques, digital tools (tablets, GPS devices or software if using digital mapping), transportation for fieldwork and compensation for youth to recognize their time and contribution. Investing in this approach can generate unique insights that help shape an employment programme and that help youth feel valued and supported, making the programme more effective and sustainable.
Build strong community partnerships	Engaging governments, workers' and employers' organizations as well as local community-based and grass-roots organizations in addition to young people can be the key to success. These partners can facilitate youth's access to stakeholders (such as education and training institutions and employment services) as well as mapping locations and in-field support. Their engagement also can ensure sustainability so that the mapping insights are used beyond the individual project.

Conducting a co-design workshop with youth

Co-design workshops – sometimes called co-creation workshops – are collaborative spaces in which youth, programme teams, employer's and workers' organization representatives, youth employment experts and other stakeholders can come together to design a youth employment programme or initiative. These workshops aren't just about gathering input, they're about sharing decision-making power and ensuring that youth have an equal voice in planning and designing solutions.

A co-design workshop is a powerful approach to partnering with youth because it blends lived experiences with technical expertise, creating a space in which youth's insights drive innovation alongside practitioners, who bring programme knowledge and resources. These sessions allow participants to explore issues, uncover challenges and brainstorm creative solutions through structured idea generation, prototyping and problem-solving activities. Features of a co-design workshop include:

- ▶ **Equal value for all perspectives.** Youth's lived experiences matter just as much as the expertise of programme staff and technical experts.
- ▶ **Shared decision-making power.** True co-design means youth aren't just consulted – they shape decisions alongside the programme team and non-youth experts.
- ▶ **Interactive and creative facilitation methods.** Innovative and dynamic facilitation methods help youth express their perspectives, aspirations and challenges in creative ways.

A co-design workshop is especially impactful in the planning and design phases of a youth employment programme. It is useful in identifying issues, defining programme objectives, co-developing a theory of change, defining project indicators and planning operational details. When done well, these workshops empower youth as co-creators.

► Youth Employment Strategy for Africa: Co-creating with youth

The African Union and the ILO partnered to develop the [Youth Employment Strategy for Africa, or YES-Africa](#), which has become a guiding framework to shape the world of work for African youth. The strategy was developed between 2022 and 2024 and has the creation of productive employment and decent jobs for the continent's young men and women as a starting point for all policies and interventions. The formulation of YES-Africa was guided by three principles: (i) alignment with African Union and ILO guiding documents and frameworks; (ii) building on existing youth employment action of the African Union and the ILO in Africa; and (iii) engagement of youth representatives and youth-led organizations.

YES-Africa is the result of a collaborative effort between governments, social partners, youth representatives, the African Union Commission and the ILO. With the meaningful engagement of young people in youth employment efforts as a priority of both the Africa Union and the ILO, more than 100 youth representatives contributed to the formulation of YES-Africa through various engagement mechanisms.

- Over three days at the African Union Commission headquarters in Addis Ababa, more than 150 youth representatives from across Africa convened for the initial [consultations](#). The youth participants highlighted employment priorities and challenges faced by young people on the continent and suggested innovative solutions and good practices for promoting decent work for youth, including youth-led initiatives to reinforce governments' and stakeholders' efforts in advancing action on youth employment. Young people provided initial inputs for the YES-Africa strategy as well as feedback on their continued involvement in its development and implementation. The outcomes of the consultations were tabled to the experts and relevant ministers in charge of youth issues during the Fourth Specialized Technical Committee in Youth, Culture and Sports and were adopted unanimously.
- With a view to promoting a wide engagement of young people, an **online survey** gathered youth's inputs on barriers to securing decent employment, the necessary skills for succeeding and needed support. The survey was disseminated by the African Union and the ILO through the use of various social media platforms and through youth leaders and networks. The survey findings were used to identify issues to be addressed by YES-Africa.
- A four-day **co-creation workshop** brought together youth from African Union member States and served as a platform through which they could share their ideas and experiences on youth employment across Africa and provide input to further develop and refine the draft YES-Africa strategy. In addition to validating the vision and principles for YES-Africa, participants validated priority action areas to be addressed by the strategy and discussed meaningful engagement of youth during YES-Africa implementation as well as the development of an outreach strategy to target policymakers and advocate decent jobs for youth. The workshop yielded not only a refined YES-Africa strategy that incorporated the contributions from youth but also increased ownership and awareness of youth's role to support the strategy's implementation at the country level.
- Young people, government agencies and workers' and employers' organizations validated the YES-Africa strategy in a two-day [validation meeting](#), which brought together more than 100 participants in person and virtually.

The meaningful engagement of young people throughout the entire development process of the YES-Africa strategy proved to be critical to ensure that the strategy adequately addressed the youth employment challenge in Africa. And the insights of youth organizations, together with those from African Union member State representatives and workers' and employers' organizations, resulted in a strong guiding framework to shape the world of work for the continent's youth.

Approaches and methods to support co-design

Effective co-design can follow a structured design thinking approach rather than being a single brainstorming session. The Stanford d.School design thinking guidance²³ can help with this process, as the following outlines.

Design thinking approach – Adapted for youth employment programmes	
Empathize	In this stage, youth groups share their lived experiences, reflecting on the challenges that a programme aims to address. This is about understanding the needs, emotions and realities of youth, especially the most vulnerable youth, including young women, youth with disabilities and displaced youth, who have first-hand experience of employment challenges.
Define	Youth and stakeholders narrow down the insights from the empathizing stage and turn them into a clear problem statement or challenge that the co-design process will tackle.
Ideate	Participants generate creative ideas and explore possible solutions using design thinking methods. This stage is all about brainstorming, innovating and thinking “outside the box”.

Applying different methods to the co-design process helps ensure that it becomes a shared journey, wherein youth and stakeholders work together as equal partners to develop impactful solutions (see the annex for a compendium of 20 facilitation activities for youth consultations or co-creation workshops).

Five guiding steps for conducting a co-design workshop

Step 1: Define the broad focus and identify participants

- ▶ Start by identifying a broad challenge or problem that the programme aims to address, drawing from previous youth consultations.
- ▶ Refine the broad challenge into a more specific, actionable focus that can be addressed through a co-design workshop. For example, instead of broadly tackling the challenges that young people experience in transitioning from education to employment, narrow the focus to a few concrete issues, such as bridging the skills gap.

Step 2: Form the co-design team

- ▶ Compile a list of youth participants, relevant programme staff, representatives from workers' and employers' organizations, youth employment experts and stakeholders who should be part of the co-design process.
- ▶ Conduct orientation meetings to introduce all participants to the workshop structure and their roles.

²³ Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, [An Introduction to Design Thinking: Process Guide](#), 2010.

Step 3: Work with a skilled facilitator to structure the co-design process

- ▶ Engage a skilled facilitator and work with them to select co-design approaches and interactive methods that encourage collaboration and creativity to make the process engaging and accessible for youth (see the annex for a compendium of 20 facilitation activities for a youth consultation or co-creation workshop).

Step 4: Conduct the co-design workshop

- ▶ Facilitate the co-design workshop using selected methods aligned with the focus and objectives defined.
- ▶ Ensure that youth and other participants engage in dynamic discussions, creative problem-solving and solution development.
- ▶ Provide youth-friendly materials and background information beforehand to help the youth prepare. To maintain energy levels and engagement, integrate breaks and energizers throughout the sessions.

Step 5: Implement, gather feedback and refine

- ▶ Review and test the proposed solutions with relevant individuals and groups, especially youth, to gather their insights and reactions.
- ▶ Collect feedback on what works, what needs improvement and how the solutions align with the real needs of young people.
- ▶ Use this feedback to refine, modify or even reimagine solutions, ensuring that youth are engaged at each stage of the process.



Useful tips for conducting a co-design workshop

Treat co-design as a process, not just a workshop

Co-design workshops should be part of a bigger, ongoing process that requires careful planning and a commitment to sharing power with youth. During a workshop, it is possible to undertake consultations and then move towards co-designing solutions.

Engage a skilled facilitator

A co-design workshop needs an experienced facilitator who understands design thinking methods and knows how to create youth-friendly spaces. Ideally, a young person co-facilitates alongside an experienced professional to have a balance of expertise and fresh perspective.

Use clear, inclusive communication

A co-design workshop must use clear, jargon-free language so that youth can fully engage in discussions. Providing translation, interpretation and accessible materials ensures that all youth – regardless of language or ability – can participate equally.

Prepare and support youth

Many young people may not be familiar with the co-design methods, so preparatory sessions can help build their confidence and strengthen their communication and critical thinking skills. The pre-workshop helps ensure that youth feel ready and empowered to contribute.

Budget for inclusion and accessibility

A co-design workshop should be fully accessible, covering the cost for the venue, transport, refreshments and any special accommodations needed.

Additional resources

- ▶ [Implementing and Evaluating Co-design: A Step-by-Step Toolkit](#), New Philanthropy Capital
- ▶ [The Design Thinking Bootleg](#), Stanford d.School
- ▶ [“Empathy Interviews”](#), Kari Nelsestuen and Julie Smith

5.4 Youth engagement in programme implementation and monitoring

Implementation is where plans turn into action. Youth can take on active roles in a variety of roles within the project, such as peer educator and mentor or advocate and ambassador. Involving youth in monitoring activities, such as in data collection, helps ensure that programmes stay responsive and accountable to youth’s needs and priorities.

Here are some examples of different mechanisms that can support varying degrees of youth engagement in programme implementation and monitoring.

Degrees of youth engagement in programme implementation and monitoring			
 Youth consulted	 Youth contributing	 Youth as partners	 Youth as leaders
Youth provide feedback through a survey, interview or consultation but do not have direct influence over implementation or monitoring decisions. <i>Example:</i> A programme conducts focus groups with young participants to assess the effectiveness of job search support, for instance, but programme staff make final adjustments.	Youth take on active roles in programme implementation and monitoring, but they do not have decision-making authority. <i>Example:</i> Youth serve as peer mentors providing guidance to their peers on CV writing and succeeding in job interviews or as enumerators for programme monitoring and feedback efforts.	Youth are embedded in the programme implementation and monitoring structures, co-designing activities and having shared responsibility with programme staff. <i>Example:</i> A youth-led organization is engaged as an active partner to deliver an entrepreneurship training workshop.	Youth take full ownership of implementation and monitoring processes of their youth-led projects. <i>Example:</i> A youth-led organization takes charge of implementing a youth employment programme or initiative.

Let’s look in more detail at approaches for youth to contribute as peer mentors and trainers or as enumerators.

Engaging youth-to-youth trainers and mentors

A common way for youth to contribute in specific roles within an employment programme is by engaging them as a peer trainer and mentor for other programme participants. When young people guide their peers through training and mentorship, knowledge and guidance are shared in a way that feels relatable and accessible. This approach draws inspiration from peer education, which is a widely used strategy in health education that recognizes the natural tendency of young people to seek guidance from their peers.²⁴

Youth who share similar backgrounds and experiences can better connect, motivate and influence one another, thus making an engagement process more effective. In youth employment programmes, this approach can be put into practice, for instance, by training young facilitators and mentors to help their peers develop the critical skills needed to navigate the complex job market. Programme alumni, older youth or representatives from youth-led organizations can take on the role of peer trainers and mentors. Their relatability often makes them suitable for engaging other young people, especially groups who may experience multiple forms of marginalization, such as young women in societies with entrenched gender norms or youth refugees with movement restrictions.

Case study 14

► Job Search Clubs: Peer-to-peer support and coaching

Job Search Clubs offer structured, concerted support to help youth in their transition to the labour market. They are designed to help young people transform their job search efforts into successful employment outcomes by equipping them with practical skills while fostering peer-to-peer learning.

The ILO has rolled out Job Search Clubs in several countries over the years. Under the PROSPECTS Partnership Programme, Job Search Clubs were adopted in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya and Uganda, with each country aligning the approach to its national youth strategy or career guidance framework and partnering with relevant ministries and institutions to ensure inclusive support that addresses unemployment among refugee and host community youth.

Job Search Clubs follow an EMIPF (explain, model, imitate, practise and feedback) structure and consist of two distinct phases.

- **Group phase:** An intensive two-to-three week group session through which young participants work alongside two trained facilitators. This phase is intended as a supportive space – using activation measures, peer support and behavioural techniques – in which youth build up essential job search skills, from crafting their CV and application letter to mastering interviews and handling work-related stress.
- **Peer phase:** Ongoing peer-to-peer support and coaching, with facilitators maintaining engagement through regular in-person meetings and digital exchanges and a network of youth sharing challenges and successes.

By engaging youth through peer-to-peer support, the initiative harnesses the power of collective problem-solving: It enables youth to navigate the job search process together and provides mutual support while enhancing their job search skills. At the same time, the peer-to-peer element helps strengthen social cohesion among youth from refugee and host communities as they work collectively around shared challenges.

The dedication of the facilitators has contributed to the job search club's success, fostering group cohesion and improving participants' ability to secure employment. By training job search club alumni as facilitators, for example, in Jordan, the programme empowered young people to further share their first-hand experiences with new club participants, making the support more relevant and effective.

Note: For details, see Chapter 3 of [Responding to Forced Displacement: Lessons From the International Labour Organization's Engagement in the PROSPECTS Programme](#), 2025.

²⁴ FHI, [Evidence-Based Guidelines for Youth Peer Education](#), 2010.

Seven guiding steps for engaging youth as peer mentors and trainers

Step 1: Define the focus and objectives

- ▶ Clearly define the focus and objectives of the peer-led training and mentorship initiative.
- ▶ Consult with youth to determine the capacity-building needs related to employment and engage programme staff, employers' and workers' organizations and other stakeholders to ensure that the peer mentorship and training aligns with programmatic priorities.

Step 2: Identify training and mentorship materials

- ▶ Determine whether to use existing manuals or develop new materials. If using an existing manual, adapt it to the local context with input from youth. If developing a new manual, collaborate with youth, including through youth-led organizations, social partners and technical experts, to ensure it meets programme goals and youth's needs.

Step 3: Recruit youth trainers and mentors

- ▶ Define the number of trainers needed based on your programme's reach and expected outputs.
- ▶ Establish selection criteria, such as age, gender, institutional affiliation and prior experience (refer to Section 2).

Step 4: Train and certify youth trainers and mentors

- ▶ Organize a training of trainers to strengthen facilitation skills and mentoring techniques and to develop technical knowledge related to youth employment.
- ▶ Where appropriate, provide youth trainers with relevant certifications on their skills acquisition.
- ▶ If recruiting previously trained youth trainers, consider refresher training.

Step 5: Identify community-based partners

- ▶ Engage grass-roots organizations to provide safe spaces for the training and mentorship activities to take place.
- ▶ Provide partners with orientation on the programme to ensure their readiness to host activities. These partners can also have an important role in supporting youth trainers and mentors.

Step 6: Provide ongoing support and learning opportunities

- ▶ Offer periodic refresher training based on evolving needs and feedback from youth trainers and mentors.
- ▶ Organize peer learning exchanges wherein youth trainers and mentors share experiences, challenges and good practices and create a support network.

Step 7: Evaluate and improve the programme

- ▶ Develop feedback mechanisms for youth trainees and mentees to assess the quality of their experience and for youth trainers and mentors to reflect on and assess their own experiences.
- ▶ Identify challenges and successes from the gathered insights to strengthen future youth-led training and mentorship initiatives.



Useful tips for engaging youth as peer mentors and trainers

Build up youth's capacities	Young trainers and mentors need comprehensive training to equip them with the skills to train and guide their peers effectively. Programmes should work with experienced facilitators to develop and deliver training content.
Co-design training content and methods	Engaging youth in the development and adaptation of training content ensures that materials are youth-friendly, relevant and inclusive. If existing content is used, youth trainers should be involved in reviewing and refining it.
Provide resources and support	Youth trainers require access to learning materials, facilitation guides and mentorship tools to help them carry out their roles successfully.
Ensure guidance and support	Youth trainers should receive ongoing mentorship and guidance from programme staff through regular check-ins and feedback sessions to maintain high-quality delivery.
Uphold a code of conduct	A clear code of conduct should be upheld to ensure a safe and respectful environment. This is particularly important in sensitive settings, such as in a forced displacement context, where building trust and strengthening social cohesion are essential.
Allocate time and resources	Adequate time, human resources and funding are required for the selection of youth and the training and mentorship activities, alongside the engagement of technical experts and coaches to support the youth trainers. A budget should cover training costs, venue rental, transportation, materials and stipends for the youth trainers.

Additional resources

- ▶ [*Job Search Club: Manual for Facilitators*](#), International Labour Organization
- ▶ [*Coaching Youth Initiatives: Guide for Supporting Youth Participation*](#), SALTO Youth Initiatives Resource Center
- ▶ [*Pathways to Partnering with Youth-led Groups and Organizations*](#), Plan International



Engaging youth as enumerators in data collection and feedback

Engaging youth as enumerators gives young people an active role in monitoring youth employment programmes. Youth enumerators can be engaged to support programme monitoring through the collection of programme data and participant feedback. Engaging youth enumerators also enables wider reach for collecting data and feedback because it benefits from a youth multiplier effect – where each enumerator can engage with and collect data and feedback from multiple others.

One powerful way to involve youth enumerators is to create a support role for them within a youth feedback loop method – a process that actively seeks youth's input about their experiences with an employment programme. Feedback loops create space for young people to share what's working, flag any challenges and offer suggestions for improvement. Whether feedback is positive or critical, it ensures that programmes stay responsive in real time. A youth feedback loop also enhances programme accountability because it provides a structured way for youth participants to share their experiences during programme implementation.

Young people managing data collection and feedback from their peers fosters trust and encourages honest responses, ultimately leading to more accurate and meaningful insights from programme participants and stakeholders. With this insight, a programme team can take on corrective action to ensure that youth employment initiatives remain safe, effective and aligned with young people's expectations and programme objectives.

Six guiding steps for engaging youth as enumerators

Step 1: Define the data collection focus and objectives

- ▶ Start by identifying what data need to be collected – whether it's for monitoring specific engagement activities or understanding youth's needs and experiences.
- ▶ Clearly outline the purpose to ensure that the focus of collection is relevant and actionable.

Step 2: Develop a youth-friendly data collection guide

- ▶ Create a clear, accessible guide that explains how to use different data collection tools, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups or participatory workshops. This guide should serve as a reference for youth enumerators to ensure consistency and accuracy in their data collection.

Step 3: Recruit a diverse team of youth enumerators

- ▶ Define the number of enumerators needed based on your programme's reach and expected outputs. Establish selection criteria, such as age, gender, institutional affiliation and prior experience (refer to Section 2).

Step 4: Train and support the youth enumerators

- ▶ Equip youth with the necessary skills through orientation sessions and training on data collection methods and ethical research standards.
- ▶ Provide coaching and hands-on experience to help them gain confidence and accuracy in their work. Emphasize the importance of respecting privacy and handling sensitive information responsibly.

Step 5: Implement the data collection process

- ▶ Develop a structured plan that outlines roles, responsibilities and timelines.
- ▶ Consider dividing youth enumerators into smaller teams, assigning them specific tasks or geographic areas.
- ▶ Provide ongoing support to troubleshoot challenges. Regularly review the collected data and give constructive feedback to improve the process and to ensure data quality.

Step 6: Reflect and evaluate the experience

- ▶ Organize group review sessions with youth enumerators to review the consolidated insights and collected data and identify ways the information can be used to adjust your youth employment programme.
- ▶ Assess young people's experiences as enumerators to refine the training, support systems and overall methodology to enhance future youth-supported monitoring and feedback initiatives.



Useful tips for engaging youth as enumerators

Provide clear guidance and training

Young enumerators need easy-to-follow, youth-friendly guides on how to collect and document data and feedback effectively. Training should cover how to use data collection tools as well as communication and analytical skills to ensure high-quality inputs. In addition, training on research practices, including confidentiality, informed consent and the “do no harm” principle, are essential to ensure that youth enumerators are well prepared for the role.

Allocate time, budget and resources

Good data collection takes time – youth have other commitments, so flexibility is key. Programmes should budget for training costs, transportation, digital tools (tablets, internet access) and fair compensation for the youth enumerators that recognizes their time and effort and respects their contributions.

Establish a transparent feedback system

Feedback should lead to action, not just sit in a report. A strong feedback loop means collecting, acknowledging, analysing and responding to what youth are sharing via the youth enumerators.

Put in place processes to handle sensitive feedback

Sometimes, youth's feedback reveals serious issues – violence and harassment, discrimination or abuse. Programmes must have clear safeguarding policies and response mechanisms in place to handle such cases swiftly and appropriately. A safe environment should always be a top priority to protect youth participants and youth enumerators.

Use youth enumerators to evaluate

This method of youth contribution can also be applied in your programme's evaluation phase. Youth enumerators can be engaged to collect data to evaluate the programme and assess if it has achieved its intended outcomes and impact.

5.5 Youth engagement in programme evaluation and reporting

Understanding what works – and what doesn't – is essential to improving any programme. Traditional evaluations rely on a survey, focus groups and interviews, with youth contributing their insights as beneficiaries. But it's possible to shift the approach to put young people at the centre of the process. Youth engagement in programme evaluation and reporting is about ensuring that young people have an active role in both assessing the programmes designed for them and communicating and advocating the lessons learned. Youth will of course be the feedback providers, but they can also have an active role as co-creators of an evaluation framework and application, helping to define indicators, shape evaluation questions, collect and analyse data and produce reports with the findings.

Young people are often more comfortable sharing honest feedback with their peers than with external evaluators. This means that when youth are involved in an evaluation process, responses tend to be more candid and reflective of real experiences, thus leading to stronger, more useful findings. When young people take part in discussing evaluation findings, they can also help ensure that the programme learning stays aligned with their needs. Being a part of an evaluation also gives young people hands-on experience in research, critical thinking and data analysis. These are valuable skills that not only improve programmes but also enhance young people's individual employability and employment prospects.

Beyond the evaluation process, young people can also drive advocacy efforts by sharing programme results through storytelling, social media campaigns, policy dialogues and wider community engagement. Their voices can amplify programme impact, helping insights reach decision-makers, stakeholders and their peers. In shifting to a youth-centred evaluation and reporting model, young people can shape programme narratives, influence decision-making and take leadership in driving programme impact.

Here are some examples of different mechanisms that can support varying degrees of youth engagement in programme evaluation and reporting.

Degrees of youth engagement in programme implementation and monitoring			
 Youth consulted	 Youth contributing	 Youth as partners	 Youth as leaders
Youth share their perspectives through a survey, interview or focus group, providing feedback on programme effectiveness. But they do not have direct influence over the evaluation. <i>Example:</i> A programme conducts an evaluation survey to gather qualitative feedback from young participants on their experiences of participation.	Youth take an active role in the evaluation and/or reporting efforts, such as collecting data or sharing programme experiences. But they do not have decision-making authority over the findings or messaging. <i>Example:</i> Youth gather stories from fellow participants on how the programme has impacted their employment prospects and create communication content, such as a blog, social media campaign and public report.	Youth have a formal role in designing and implementing evaluation and communication strategies, collaborating with programme staff to shape how findings are gathered, analysed and shared. <i>Example:</i> Youth are involved as co-researchers in the end-of-programme evaluation, helping design data collection tools, analysing trends and presenting the findings to stakeholders.	Youth take full ownership of evaluation and communication efforts of their youth-led projects. Non-youth staff provide logistical support but do not dictate the process. <i>Example:</i> A youth-led evaluation team conducts a full programme impact assessment of their youth-led initiative. They design and lead an advocacy campaign and share the findings through youth-driven storytelling and activities.

Let's now explore approaches to partnering with youth as co-researchers and engaging youth as advocates in more detail.

Enabling youth participatory action research and evaluation

Youth participatory action research and evaluation is an innovative approach for promoting positive community change and youth development. It goes beyond engaging young people as passive subjects in research and evaluation by involving them to take an active role as co-researcher, thus influencing every stage of a research and evaluation process. This means young people are involved in setting programme indicators, designing the data collection tools and methods, collecting data, analysing the findings and making recommendations for programme improvements. By engaging youth as equal partners, this approach ensures that their voices drive how programmes are assessed, making evaluations more relevant, insightful and reflective of their lived experiences.

Let's explore the differences between the conventional and the youth participatory approaches to research and evaluation, as the following table describes.²⁵

Differences between conventional and youth participatory approaches to research and evaluation		
	Conventional evaluation	Youth participatory evaluation
Planning and managing the evaluation process	Predetermined process by the programme staff and/or external experts.	Adaptive process by the programme staff and/or external experts in partnership with youth.
Focus of the evaluation	Measuring the predetermined programme indicators that define the success of the programme.	Revisiting any predetermined programme indicators and collaboratively identifying how the success of the programme should be monitored and evaluated.
Setting the evaluation indicators	Externally defined by the programme staff and/or external experts, usually relying on quantitative indicators.	Collaboratively and internally defined indicators with youth and including more qualitative indicators.
Designing the data collection methods	Uses questionnaires and surveys to collect quantitative data and interviews and focus group discussions to collect qualitative data.	Uses participatory methods (refer to the next table for commonly used participatory methods).
The role of youth in the evaluation	Only respondents provide inputs and data.	Design and adapt the evaluation methodology, collect and analyse data and develop findings and recommendations collaboratively with youth, the programme staff and/or external experts.
The quality of the evaluation	Defined by using rigorous procedures and ensuring objectivity of the evaluation process and led by external evaluators.	Defined by the degree of engaging youth in the process. The subjective voices of youth are brought into the process.

²⁵ Guijt, Irene, and John Gaventa, "[Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: Learning From Change](#)", IDS Policy Briefing. Brighton, 1998.

In addition to the common methods for data collection, such as a questionnaire, survey, in-depth interview and focus group discussion, youth participatory action research and evaluation relies on using more engaging and participatory methods. These methods have open structures that allow for youth's innovative and unique perspectives to emerge and are more age-appropriate for young people to lead. There is a variety of participatory methods that can be used, as the following table explains.

Methods for youth participatory action research and evaluation		
Method	Can be used for	Examples
Timeline and charts	Exploring sequences of critical events and how they are perceived by youth.	- Youth draw a timeline of critical events and turning points that happened to them during their involvement in the programme. A timeline can also be used to show how an event from the past is influencing their present status. In addition, youth can use a timeline to explore future events that they want to happen, to thus reflect their hopes and expectations. - Youth create a daily activity chart for a week of their life that can be used to compare the various daily activities of different groups of youth, such as the gendered differences in time spent on employment and household chores.
Participatory diagramming	Showing changes in relationships between individuals, groups and institutions.	- Youth use a Venn diagram that visualizes the relationships between different individuals, groups and institutions that affect their life and choices. - Youth use a spider web diagram to indicate the type and degree of changes that they and their community have experienced.
	Defining causes and consequences of a certain problem.	Youth use a "tree" or "fishbone" model to express their inputs about the root causes and consequences of a problem.
Sorting and ranking	Comparing youth's preferences for a set of options or outcomes.	Youth use cards to write down different programme activities that they took part in, and then they sort and rank these activities according to the usefulness for them. They discuss the results and rationale behind their ranking, which could provide useful data to monitor and evaluate these activities.

Methods for youth participatory action research and evaluation (cont.)

Method	Can be used for	Examples
Rubric	Measuring certain criteria and standards or desired changes.	Youth use a detailed rubric to evaluate their employment aspirations, expectations and barriers and to determine how well they align with available labour market opportunities or training programmes. A rubric is structured as a matrix with defined criteria and performance levels, each assigned a score or descriptive label (such as 1–5 or very poor to excellent).
Participatory map	Showing the location and types of changes in the area being monitored.	Youth draw a map of the different places where they access skills training opportunities or entrepreneurship support to boost their employment outcomes.
Diary and reflective writing	Reflecting on changes in youth's lives and their communities.	Youth can individually use reflective writing to explore what has changed in their life and how those changes have influenced their employment outcomes and trajectories.
Photovoice	Capturing youth's experiences and changes that happened to them and their communities through photographs and captions.	- Youth take photos to monitor changes in their daily life, such as new activities they started to do or new habits they have gained. The photos and captions can be indicative of the type and depth of the changes that resulted in their life. - Youth can use photovoice to capture visual responses to a particular question. Their photos can give insights into changes in their life and community.
Most significant change	Identifying how a programme has influenced youth's lives, especially providing evidence for intangible outcomes.	Youth collect individual stories of change, then collaboratively discuss and analyse each story to select the most significant ones that indicate desired changes.

These methods can be applied by young people to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of an employment programme.

- ▶ **Relevance** asks whether the programme is addressing the right priorities and adapting to changing needs.
- ▶ **Effectiveness** measures how well the programme achieved its intended outcomes, by considering different groups' experiences.
- ▶ **Efficiency** looks at how resources were used – whether the programme delivered results in a cost-effective and timely manner.
- ▶ **Impact** digs into the broader effects, both positive and negative, to understand a programme's long-term influence.
- ▶ **Sustainability** examines whether the benefits will last beyond the programme's lifespan.

Together, these factors provide a comprehensive picture of a programme's performance and value.²⁶

Case study 15

▶ Youth Empowerment Programme: Youth-led monitoring and evaluation

The engagement of youth in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) phase holds multifaceted value. On one hand, young people's inputs contribute to more realistic and practical tools to gather information to strengthen a programme. At the same time, their engagement in the M&E process enables young people to acquire valuable skills that they can apply throughout their lives.

As part of its support to enhance the employment and livelihood prospects of young men and women in Uganda, for instance, the [Youth Empowerment Programme](#) engaged youth in its M&E process to lead field-based activities. The programme equipped youth with the skills to carry out both quantitative and qualitative M&E activities, and young evaluators contributed to the development of indicators as well as to the drafting of the recommendations and reports. Using group-based learning, youth were trained in the principles of M&E for development before going to the field to put in practice the tools they helped design and test. The engagement of youth contributed to the refinement of the tools, including rephrasing questions for better comprehension, enhancing behaviour surveillance survey questions and guidelines and devising more user-friendly collection methods. These efforts in turn enabled the youth to track progress and gather data to feed back to the programme staff.

Note: For more information, see p. 77 of [Youth Participation in Development A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers](#), DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010.

²⁶ OECD, [Evaluation Criteria](#), 2019.

Six guiding steps for implementing youth participatory action research and evaluations

Step 1: Define the scope and objectives

- ▶ Begin by determining the focus of the evaluation – whether it will evaluate specific activities or assess your entire programme.
- ▶ Engage programme stakeholders to set clear objectives, such as measuring programme performance, youth's satisfaction or resource efficiency.

Step 2: Build the evaluation team and define roles

- ▶ Identify participants, including programme staff, participatory evaluators and diverse youth representatives.
- ▶ Establish clear roles for each member and, where needed, recruit participatory evaluators to guide the process.
- ▶ Develop selection criteria for youth involvement, and circulate a call for applications to ensure inclusive participation, especially from marginalized youth (refer to Section 2).

Step 3: Train and prepare youth

- ▶ Organize orientation sessions to introduce youth to the participatory action research and evaluation objectives and methods. Address their expectations and areas of interest.
- ▶ Conduct a training workshop that covers participatory data collection, analysis and ethical research standards to equip young evaluators with the necessary skills for effective engagement.

Step 4: Co-design the youth participatory action research and evaluation framework and methods

- ▶ Work with the youth participatory action research and evaluation team to review and refine the programme indicators, data sources and collection methods. Encourage participatory decision-making on which evaluation tools to use.
- ▶ Provide guidelines and templates in youth-friendly and accessible language and formats.

Step 5: Complete data collection and analysis

- ▶ Support the youth participatory action research and evaluation team in executing the data collection plan, ensuring that the youth receive ongoing coaching. Conduct regular check-ins to address challenges and provide guidance.
- ▶ Facilitate a data analysis workshop, offering training on data coding, pattern identification and thematic analysis. Guide the youth in developing the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Step 6: Apply findings to strengthen the programme

- ▶ Support the youth participatory action research and evaluation team to discuss the findings with programme staff and stakeholders, including other young people, to determine actionable steps.



Useful tips for implementing youth participatory action research and evaluations

Secure commitment and buy-in	Youth participatory action research and evaluations won't be meaningful if programme staff or stakeholders don't see the value in a youth-led evaluation. Commitment from leadership and partners is essential to ensure that youth voices are recognized and acted upon. Although young people's participation in monitoring and evaluation may require more time and resources, it ultimately leads to richer, more relevant data that capture youth perspectives and strengthen programme impact.
Engage a skilled participatory evaluator	Youth participatory action research and evaluations should be led by an experienced facilitator who believes in youth as equal partners in the evaluation process. The participatory evaluator should have expertise in qualitative research and participatory methods while also being skilled in mentoring and coaching young people. Their role is to co-design the evaluation framework, support data collection and analysis and ensure that the youth feel confident and valued throughout the process.
Use youth-friendly, participatory methods	Instead of relying solely on traditional data collection methods (such as a survey and interviews), youth participatory action research and evaluation encourages the use of more interactive and engaging techniques. Methods such as storytelling, community mapping, photovoice and participatory workshop allow young people to express their perspectives in creative ways that resonate with them. The more youth-centred and age-appropriate the approach, the richer are the insights gathered.
Allocate sufficient time	Youth engagement in an evaluation isn't something that can be rushed. It takes time to recruit youth, train them in research methods and help them develop the confidence to meaningfully participate. This is especially important for youth with little to no prior experience, who may need additional support in developing analytical skills and understanding data collection techniques.
Budget and resource effectively	A successful evaluation process requires proper financial and logistical support. Resources should cover the costs for building youth research and evaluation skills, meeting venues and materials to facilitate engagement, transportation and stipends to ensure inclusivity and accessibility as well as accommodations, such as materials in different languages. Without adequate budgeting, it can be difficult to ensure diverse youth participation.
Train and coach youth throughout the process	For youth to fully contribute, they need structured training and ongoing support. Training should cover how research and evaluation works and why it matters; different participatory research methods; how to collect, analyse and interpret data; and the ethical considerations and confidentiality in research. Beyond training, continuous coaching and feedback help youth apply their new skills and build confidence in their role as evaluators.



Useful tips for implementing youth participatory action research and evaluations

Clearly define roles and responsibilities

To ensure smooth implementation, it's important to define who does what in the process. Here's an example.

Programme staff

- Manage logistics and coordination
- Ensure youth are included in decision-making
- Support youth's capacity-building
- Help youth review programme indicators and analyse findings
- Ensure that safety and protection policies are in place

Participatory evaluators

- Facilitate the entire process
- Train and mentor youth in participatory methods
- Support youth in co-designing the evaluation framework
- Guide data collection and analysis
- Help translate youth's findings into programme recommendations

Youth researchers

- Share insights on what should be evaluated
- Attend training and apply their learning
- Represent the voices of their peers
- Participate in designing evaluation methods
- Collect and analyse data
- Help shape final findings and recommendations

Additional resources

- ▶ [*Participatory Evaluation with Young People*](#), Institute of Development Studies
- ▶ [*Useful Tools for Engaging Young People in Participatory Evaluation*](#), United Nations Children's Fund
- ▶ [*A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research and Evaluation with Children, Young People and Adults*](#), Save the Children

Youth engagement in communication and advocacy

Youth engagement should extend to giving young people a platform to share their learnings and recommendations from a programme evaluation, alongside their own experiences, with a wider audience. One of the most effective ways to do this is by involving youth in project communication as content creators who document the programme results and learnings in formats that work for them and their peers. Young people can then also take on the role of advocates to share and disseminate the learning and messages.

By equipping youth with the tools and space to tell these stories, we can ensure that programme successes, challenges and lessons learned are shared in a way that resonates with other young people and decision-makers alike. This approach can increase the visibility of projects and create opportunities to showcase the impact on youth, highlighting the importance of youth employment interventions. Youth also can be engaged as advocacy champions during the implementation of a programme, sharing their experiences and impact in real time, thus helping to build momentum, accountability and ongoing visibility.

Young people can take on a variety of roles in communication and advocacy, depending on their interests, strengths and preferred methods of engagement. Here are some roles that youth can consider.

Roles for youth to consider in content creation and advocacy	
Youth storyteller and blogger	Writing blogs, articles or personal testimonies that capture their experiences, reflections on a programme's impact and learnings and insights on youth engagement.
Social media ambassador	Managing or contributing to programme-related social media accounts or institutional channels, creating posts, running campaigns and engaging with online communities to raise awareness about youth issues and programme impact.
Videographer and photographer	Documenting programme activities and personal stories through photos and short videos for social media, reports and advocacy materials.
Podcaster and interview host	Hosting or contributing to youth-led podcasts or interviews with fellow participants, programme staff and technical experts to discuss successful models of intervention that support youth's access to employment.
Youth reporter	Covering programme events, workshops and youth-led initiatives, and producing written or multimedia content to share the takeaways and insights.
Graphic designer and illustrator	Creating infographics, illustrations and visual content that simplify complex information and make programme learning more accessible and engaging.
Youth advocate	Attending conferences, webinars and events to share good practices and programme impact and to advocate more and better jobs for youth.

When young people take the lead in communication and advocacy, their voices bring authenticity and relatability, making programme messages more engaging and impactful for their peers. At the same time, the process builds valuable skills that can also enhance their own employability.

Human-centred stories are an effective way to showcase programme impact to donors and broader youth employment stakeholders. Youth-led storytelling can therefore boost a programme's visibility, potentially attracting more engagement from stakeholders and decision-makers. Most importantly, by positioning young people as contributors in the knowledge-sharing, the impact of programme learning extends beyond its formal duration to create a lasting and sustainable influence.

Case study 16

► ECOSOC Youth Forum and Summit of the Future: Youth as advocacy champions

The [ECOSOC Youth Forum](#) and [Summit of the Future](#) both provided global platforms for youth to engage in dialogue with government representatives, policymakers, civil society and the private sector to discuss and advance solutions on youth employment. Under the PROSPECTS Partnership Programme initiative, [Advancing Young People's Engagement and Meaningful Participation](#), youth in forced displacement contexts joined a series of events organized by the ILO, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, sharing their own experiences in the labour market, the impact of initiatives on their lives and how initiatives incorporated youth's feedback and input along the way.

By offering first-hand experiences and insights into what has been effective and what has not when engaging youth in programming, these youth ambassadors advocated further investment in youth employment and enhanced access to employment opportunities for young refugees and youth in host communities. Emphasizing the importance of youth engagement in employment programmes in forced displacement contexts, young leaders advocated refugee youth to be recognized as **change agents and involved at every stage of a programme** rather than one-off consultations to ensure efforts stay relevant to their needs, and that **inclusive policies** are promoted.

The engagement of youth advocacy champions at global events, such as the ECOSOC Youth Forums and the Summit of the Future, amplifies young people's voices while recognizing the value of their contribution to **drive programming changes that meet their needs and wants**. Young advocacy champions concluded the 2024 Summit of the Future with a powerful call to action urging decision-makers to incorporate youth's perspectives, invest in education and skills development, tackle barriers to economic inclusion and scale up youth-led initiatives to support displaced youth's transition to decent jobs.

Five guiding steps for engaging youth as advocates

Step 1: Identify and recruit youth advocates

- ▶ Start by reaching out to young people involved in your programme (beneficiaries, youth advisory group members, partners, etc.) who are passionate about storytelling, digital media or advocacy.
- ▶ Look for youth with diverse experiences and perspectives to ensure that the communication and advocacy efforts are inclusive and representative. Use open calls, social media and partner networks to recruit youth, and encourage those from marginalized groups to participate (refer to Section 2).

Step 2: Provide training and skills-building

- ▶ Young people are generally well-equipped to share stories in ways they find interesting and compelling. Programme staff may consider offering workshops on storytelling, social media strategies, video production, blog writing and advocacy messaging to build up and strengthen youth's capacities.
- ▶ Consider bringing in mentors or media professionals to guide youth through the process.

Step 3: Define audience, communication goals and themes

- ▶ Work collaboratively with youth to outline the messages and themes they want to highlight and which audiences they want to communicate it to. Whether it's success stories, programme impact, youth's challenges or advocacy efforts, make sure that the content aligns with their interests and with your programme's objectives.
- ▶ Encourage youth to use their authentic voices while maintaining alignment with ethical storytelling principles.

Step 4: Create and share content across platforms

- ▶ Support youth in developing different types of content, and provide access to the necessary tools and platforms to publish their work.
- ▶ Promote their content through programme channels, youth networks and partner organizations to amplify their voices and maximize the reach.

Step 5: Recognize, celebrate and sustain youth leadership

- ▶ Acknowledge and recognize the contributions of youth-led communications by showcasing their work in events, newsletters or stakeholder meetings.
- ▶ Encourage ongoing engagement by creating a youth-led media team or ambassadors programme and ensuring that their voices continue to shape and advocate decent jobs for youth beyond the lifetime of the programme.



Useful tips for engaging youth as advocates

Empower youth to share their authentic voice

Encourage young people to create content in their own style and tone. Avoid scripting or filtering their messages – authenticity resonates more with their peers and external audiences. Let them take ownership of their narratives while providing light-touch guidance to maintain clarity and impact.

Provide training and mentorship

Equip youth with the skills needed to create compelling content through training in storytelling, digital media, video production and social media management. Pair them with mentors or experienced content creators who can provide ongoing support and constructive feedback to strengthen their confidence.

Set clear guidelines and ethical standards

Establish a framework for ethical storytelling, including obtaining informed consent, protecting privacy and using inclusive language. Ensure that youth understand digital safety, fact-checking and responsible social media engagement to prevent misinformation and unintended harm.

Diversify content and platforms for maximum reach

Encourage youth content creators and advocates to explore different content formats – short videos, blogs, infographics, podcasts and photo essays – while tailoring content to the right platforms.

Recognize and celebrate youth's contributions

Acknowledge youth content creators through public recognition and leadership opportunities. Showcase their work in programme reports, conferences and advocacy campaigns.

Ensure sustainability by establishing a youth-led content team

Foster long-term engagement by creating a youth content network that continues beyond individual projects. Provide opportunities for youth to co-design future content strategies.



Section 6

► Measuring success – Assessing youth engagement activities

In this section, you will:



1. Discover a compendium of youth-level and programme-level indicators that can be adopted and adapted to assess youth engagement.
2. Select and embed relevant indicators into your programme monitoring and evaluation framework.



Indicators to track youth engagement

How do I know if youth engagement efforts have been successful? A compendium of indicators to track engagement.

You've designed and implemented a youth engagement initiative – but how do you know if it has been effective? Evaluating success can help in understanding the depth of youth involvement, the impact on young persons' development and how well the programme meaningfully engaged youth.

This section introduces two areas to assess:

- **Youth-level indicators.** These help you measure how many young people were engaged, their backgrounds and whether the programme has truly strengthened their skills, amplified their voices and created leadership opportunities.
- **Programme-level indicators.** These focus on how well the programme supports youth engagement, including its relevance, relationships between staff and youth, resource allocation, safeguarding measures and whether there was a concrete strategy for meaningful participation.

With the following tables as a flexible framework to measure and assess youth engagement efforts, begin the three-step process:

- 1. Review the indicators.** Go through the measurement statements and pick the ones that best fit your programme and context.
- 2. Integrate them into your M&E programme framework.** See if the selected indicators can be added to your programme's M&E framework.
- 3. Develop data collection tools.** Gather insights through a survey, interviews, focus groups and other engagement methods to track progress and make improvements.

These indicators are drawn from global good practices²⁷ and can be adapted to fit your specific context.

Youth-level indicators		
Measurement statements	Relevant indicators	Possible sources of data
Youth are actively engaged across the programme cycle.	Number and proportion (percentage) of youth participating in the programme's: • Governance • Planning and design • Implementation and monitoring • Evaluation and reporting	Programme monitoring data – records of the engaged youth across the programme cycle.
Diverse groups of youth are engaged across the programme cycle, particularly those most marginalized (such as young women, rural youth, youth with disabilities, youth not in education, employment or training and refugee and forcibly displaced youth).	Number and proportion (percentage) of youth from marginalized groups engaged in the programme's: • Governance • Planning and design • Implementation and monitoring • Evaluation and reporting	Programme monitoring data – records of the engaged youth across the programme cycle, disaggregated by age, gender, location, education level, employment status, disability and/or displacement (if applicable to the communities where the programme is implemented).
Youth are actively engaged at different levels and degrees of engagement.	Number and proportion (percentage) of youth participating in the programme: • Consulted • Contributing • As partners • As leaders	Programme monitoring data – records of the engaged youth across the programme cycle, disaggregated by type and nature of their engagement.

²⁷ YouthPower Learning Youth Engagement Community of Practice, [Measuring Youth Engagement](#), 2018.

Youth-level indicators (cont.)

Measurement statements	Relevant indicators	Possible sources of data
Youth strengthen their capacities, knowledge and skills (such as technical knowledge of youth employment, analytical thinking, research skills and designing youth-led initiatives).	Number and proportion (percentage) of youth who participate in capacity-building activities (training, coaching and mentorship) to support their engagement in the programme. Number and proportion (percentage) of youth who report gaining new knowledge and developing their skills as a result of their engagement in the programme.	Programme monitoring data – records of youth who participated in capacity-building activities. Programme evaluation data – survey results of the engaged youth in the programme.
Youth feel their voices are valued and their concerns are considered.	Number and proportion (percentage) of youth who report their voices are valued and their concerns are considered.	Programme evaluation data – survey results of the engaged youth in the programme.
Youth influence decision-making within the programme.	Number and proportion (percentage) of youth who participate in any advisory or governance structure within the programme (such as a youth advisory group, youth committee or youth members in governance board).	Programme monitoring data – records of youth members in any advisory or governance structure within the programme.



Programme-level indicators		
Measurement statements	Relevant indicators	Possible sources of data
The programme has a youth engagement plan or strategy.	A youth engagement plan or strategy is developed and implemented that includes an outreach and engagement plan or strategy that articulates which young people will be engaged and how. Number and proportion (percentage) of youth who participate in developing and implementing the youth engagement plan or strategy.	A document explaining the programme's youth engagement plan or strategy. Programme monitoring data – report on implementing the youth engagement plan or strategy. Programme monitoring data – records of youth who participate in developing and implementing the youth engagement plan or strategy.
The programme allocates budget and resources to support youth engagement.	Proportion (percentage) of budget the programme allocated for youth engagement in the programme.	Programme budget – calculating the proportion (percentage) of the allocated budget for youth engagement in the total budget.
The programme's stakeholders recognize the significance of youth engagement and actively engage youth.	Number and proportion (percentage) of youth participating who report being positively recognized and supported by the programme stakeholders. Stories of change regarding the programme stakeholders taking actions towards engaging youth.	Programme evaluation data – survey results of the engaged youth in the programme. Programme evaluation data – interviews with the programme stakeholders, particularly those who made concrete steps in engaging youth.

Templates and activity suggestions

Template A: Terms of reference for youth advisory group members

Here is an example TOR template for a youth advisory group. It can be tailored to fit your specific programme needs, context or adapted for other youth engagement opportunities.

This reference document should be shared with youth before they get involved so that they fully understand what they are signing up for. It also acts as a guiding point throughout their engagement, ensuring that youth and project teams are on the same page.

Some roles – like youth advisory groups – may require a more formal TORs while other types of participation – like a one-time consultation – might need something less formal. Either way, the core principle remains the same: Youth should always be informed about their role!

Sample youth advisory group terms of reference

Background: Young people are powerful change agents in their communities. Their lived experiences, insights and leadership are critical to designing and implementing effective programmes. This youth advisory group aims to ensure that young people have a meaningful role in shaping the [Programme Name].

The [Programme Name] aims to [Description].

About the role

The youth advisory group will serve as a consultative body, providing insights, recommendations and feedback on programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The group will co-create strategies, share lived experiences and support outreach and engagement efforts to ensure that the programme is youth-centred and responsive to the needs of young people.

Structure and membership

- ▶ Number of members: [specify number]
- ▶ Location: [specify location, if applicable]
- ▶ Duration of engagement: [specify duration, such as 6 months or 1 year]
- ▶ Commitment required: Approximately [specify hours or months] per [period]

Role and responsibilities of youth advisory group members

As a member of the youth advisory group you will: [select relevant or update based on needs]

- ▶ Participate in [specify frequency, such as monthly or quarterly] youth advisory group meetings to provide ongoing inputs to programme implementation.
- ▶ Provide ongoing input to programme activities, ensuring they are relevant to the needs of youth and the programme.

- ▶ Provide feedback and share recommendations through consultations and feedback loops to refine programme activities and improve impact.
- ▶ Support outreach efforts aimed at reaching other young people and youth networks, such as through social media and other means of youth-friendly communication.
- ▶ Serve as an ambassador and advocate for the programme by representing the youth advisory group at International Labour Organization-supported events and platforms, thus helping to amplify its messages and impact.
- ▶ Participate in mentorship and training opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills to support you in your advisory role.

Role and responsibilities of the International Labour Organization

The role and responsibilities of the ILO: [select relevant or update based on needs]

- ▶ Organize and attend the quarterly youth advisory group meetings;
- ▶ Provide the youth advisory group with relevant information and documentation to fulfil its responsibilities;
- ▶ Facilitate training and capacity-building to enable members to fully and effectively fulfil their responsibilities, as outlined above;
- ▶ Provide an enabling environment for the youth advisory group to liaise and collaborate with other programme stakeholders; and
- ▶ Link the youth advisory group with existing youth structures at the national, regional and international levels, including within the United Nations system.

Compensation

The programme will cover travel expenses incurred by the youth advisory group members in the fulfilment of their responsibilities. Although youth advisory group members will not be financially compensated for their time, they will benefit from training and capacity-building opportunities and will be invited to represent the youth advisory group at relevant forums and events.

Selection criteria

We are looking for young people who meet the following criteria:

- ▶ Aged between [specify age range, such as 18 and 25 years].
- ▶ Have a strong interest in [specify programme focus, such as youth employment].
- ▶ Active within a youth or youth-led organization with networks to support outreach.
- ▶ Are willing to commit time and actively contribute to the project [specify number of hours as applicable, such as two hours a week].

Candidates can apply as individuals or as a youth-led organization. Applications of youth networks and youth organizations are preferred. If selected, youth organizations will be admitted to the youth advisory group with the understanding that up to two persons representing the organization can participate in the group's activities.

Application process

Interested applicants should submit:

- ▶ A brief application form (provide link).
- ▶ A CV or short bio detailing relevant experience.
- ▶ A statement of interest (written or video format) explaining why you want to join the youth advisory group.

Selection timeline

- ▶ Application deadline: [specify date]
- ▶ Interview conducted: [specify date]
- ▶ Final selection and notification: [specify date]

Contact information: For any queries, please contact: [specify contact details]



Template B: Budget to ensure participation is meaningful

Effective youth engagement requires dedicated resources, especially when the goal is to create inclusive and participatory initiatives. Some costs can be minimized through creative approaches, but it is essential to allocate a budget that ensures that young people can fully participate without barriers.

The following table outlines budget considerations to support meaningful youth engagement. It covers essential costs, such as accessibility, capacity-building, compensation and logistical support. Proper budgeting ensures that youth engagement is not just an add-on but a well-integrated component of an employment programme.

To support this process, review each category carefully – identify the specific budget areas required for your engagement activities and estimate the potential costs for implementation. This approach will help ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and that youth's participation is fully supported.

Category	Description	Project allocation What will you need for your engagement activities?	Cost What is the estimated cost?
Youth participation stipends	Stipends, per diems, expenses or incentives for youth participants to compensate for their time and contributions.		
Training and capacity-building	Workshops, training sessions, skill-building activities and accreditations to support youth's capacity development.		
Travel and transportation	Reimbursements or coverage of transport costs for in-person engagements, including public transport, fuel or travel allowances.		
Meeting and workshop costs	Venue rental, catering, supplies and logistics for meetings, co-design workshops and consultations.		
Communication and outreach	Communication materials, social media campaigns and youth-friendly information dissemination. Costs for youth-based outreach campaigns, hosting community meetings and leveraging youth networks.		
Technology and digital access	Providing internet data packages, digital devices and software to ensure that youth can participate in online engagements.		

Category	Description	Project allocation What will you need for your engagement activities?	Cost What is the estimated cost?
Facilitation and support staff	Hiring or stipends for facilitators, mentors or youth engagement coordinators to support and guide youth's participation.		
Materials and resources	Printing, toolkits, stationery and other materials needed for youth engagement activities.		
Accessibility and inclusion	Translations and interpretation services, disability accommodations, such as sign language or accessible venues, and gender-sensitive accommodations, such childcare costs for young mothers.		
Youth-led initiatives and grants	Small grants or funding for youth-led projects, innovation challenges or community initiatives.		
Miscellaneous and contingency	Unforeseen expenses or emergency needs to ensure smooth implementation of youth engagement initiatives.		

Template C: Consultation agenda

Designing effective youth consultations requires thoughtful planning, interactive methods and an environment in which young people feel safe to share their experiences and ideas. A well-structured agenda helps ensure that sessions are purposeful, time-efficient and responsive to the needs and interests of the youth participants.

The following example agenda outlines a two-hour in-person consultation, combining individual reflection and group discussion using activities from the compendium of facilitation activities in the following page.

Duration: 2 hours

Format: In-person, interactive session

Purpose: To engage young people in identifying the challenges they face in accessing job opportunities in their context and to gather their inputs on what types of solutions can support them.

Target audience: Young people aged 18–30

Consultation agenda	
Time	Agenda item
0:00 – 0:10	Welcome and icebreaker - Brief introductions - Fun icebreaker (such as Employment bingo)
0:10 – 0:25	Setting the scene - Overview of the consultation's purpose - What will happen with the input gathered
0:25 – 0:50	Group activity: Map your experience as a young person in the labour market - Youth draw or discuss their past experiences in accessing jobs - Did they face challenges? What challenges?
0:50 – 1:10	Break and informal networking
1:10 – 1:35	Focused discussion: What solutions do youth want? - Small group discussions (World cafe) around questions: - What kind of support do youth need to succeed in the labour market? - Are existing programmes helping? How could they be better?
1:35 – 1:55	Solution co-design: Build your ideal programme Each group creates a mini-poster outlining what a perfect youth employment programme would look like for them (using the Build a programme activity)
1:55 – 2:00	Closing and next steps - Quick group reflection (using the One-word check-out activity) - Share how youth will be updated on outcomes or further opportunities

Compendium: Twenty facilitation activities to support participation during a meeting, consultation or co-creation workshop

Effective youth engagement requires intentional and participatory methods that centre on young people's voices and lived experiences. Co-creation and consultation workshops benefit from dynamic, well-facilitated activities that encourage openness, creativity and collective problem-solving.

The following compendium is a curated list of facilitation tools to help practitioners design inclusive and engaging youth sessions. The questions can be tailored based on the needs and priorities of your initiative.

1. **Bingo.** Prepare bingo cards with statements (such as "Has done a job interview" or "Has faced challenges in finding a job"). Participants mingle to find others who match each box, writing their names in the relevant spots. The goal is to get a full row of matches and shout "Bingo!" This gets people moving and opens up casual conversations on the topic under discussion.
2. **World café.** Set up 3–4 tables, each with a big question (such as "What support do young people need to help them access decent work?"). Participants rotate every 10–15 minutes, adding thoughts on paper or flipcharts. One host stays at each table to summarize previous discussions to newcomers. This builds collective knowledge in a relaxed, coffeehouse style.
3. **Journey map.** Give each participant paper to draw a timeline of when, where and how they experienced a certain situation (learned skills, sought career guidance, etc.). Encourage them to mark highs, lows and missed opportunities along the way. Afterwards, pair up or form small groups to share and compare experiences. This personal storytelling activity uncovers trends in lived experiences.
4. **Dot voting (prioritization).** After brainstorming ideas or needs, write each one on a large poster or sticky note. Give each participant 3–5 dot stickers (or markers) to "vote" on what they think is most important. Count the dots to see what themes resonate most. This quickly highlights youth's priorities and supports transparent decision-making.
5. **Dotmocracy.** This activity is similar to dot voting but used for ranking or refining many ideas. After a brainstorming session, post all ideas on a wall and give each participant coloured dots (or stamps) to vote on their favourite or most feasible options. You can use different colours for "most important" versus "most doable." This activity helps narrow the focus without cutting the discussion short.
6. **Build-a-programme.** In groups, youth co-design their ideal programme using a structured poster template (covering target beneficiaries, goals, methods and youth roles). Encourage them to name their programme and get creative with visuals. Each group presents their design to the whole room. This builds ownership and invites innovation from lived experience.
7. **Fishbowl discussion.** Set up a small circle of chairs in the centre (the "fishbowl") and place the other chairs around them. A few youth sit in the middle and discuss a topic (such as youth employment challenges and solutions) while others observe silently. Anyone from the outer circle can tap in to replace someone in the middle. This format encourages deep dialogue and active listening.
8. **Gallery walk.** Post different questions, scenarios or youth ideas on the walls. Small groups rotate around the room, writing their thoughts on sticky notes or flipcharts under each one. After the walk, everyone revisits the posters to review and discuss what's been shared. It's an energizing way to gather broad input across multiple topics.
9. **Real-time role play.** Youth act out short scenarios (such as a job interview or pitching a business idea) to explore barriers and solutions. Others observe and suggest alternative approaches or outcomes. Use this to uncover subtle dynamics and generate empathy. It can lead to surprising insights, especially when youth script the scenes themselves.
10. **Idea speed dating.** Set up chairs in pairs facing each other or set up a row of tables, each with 2 chairs facing each other. Participants get 2–3 minutes to share an idea or need before switching partners. Prompt them with a guiding question (such as "What's one solution to tackle the youth employment challenge?"). This activity keeps energy high and ensures every voice is heard.

- 11. Empathy interviews.** Pair participants and have them take turns interviewing each other about a real experience (such as trying to set-up a business or learning a new skill). Encourage deep listening with follow-up questions like “What would’ve helped?”. Each partner summarizes what they heard and shares with the larger group. This creates space for vulnerability and design rooted in real needs.
- 12. Problem tree.** Ask youth to identify a core issue (such as youth unemployment) and draw a tree where the “roots” are the causes and the “branches” are the effects. In groups, they discuss and write down contributing factors and consequences. Then, they brainstorm ways to address the root causes. This visual method helps break down complex problems into actionable parts.
- 13. Spectrum of agreement.** Place signs around the room with the words “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, “Neutral”, “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree.” Read out statements like “Internships should be paid” or “I lack the support and resources needed to find a job”. Youth move to the area that matches their opinion and then explain why. This activity sparks healthy debate and shows the diversity of youth’s experiences.
- 14. Vision wall.** Give each participant a blank card to write down or draw their vision for an ideal future (such as a world where youth’s rights at work are protected). Post all cards on a wall to create a collective “vision board”. Use it as inspiration for group discussion or programme design. This activity helps anchor co-creation in youth’s aspirations, not just challenges.
- 15. Challenge carousel.** Set up different stations, each with a challenge (such as “No internet access”, “Lack of mentors” and “Low confidence”). Youth rotate through the stations in small groups, adding ideas for how to address each challenge. After all groups rotate, review and vote on the top solutions. This activity is active, creative and leads to concrete ideas.
- 16. Role reversal.** Ask youth to imagine they are the decision-makers (such as a programme manager, employer, policymaker). In small groups, they design solutions or outreach strategies from that point of view. Then, they share their ideas and reflect on how it feels to hold power.
- 17. Youth personas.** Groups create fictional but realistic “youth personas” based on composite traits (such as a 17-year-old in rural area with limited job opportunities). They then answer: “What would this person need from an employment programme? What barriers might they face?” This activity humanizes programme design and builds empathy for different life realities.
- 18. What if...? scenarios.** Pose creative hypothetical questions, like “What if training programmes were designed by youth?” or “What if capital wasn’t an issue for aspiring entrepreneurs?” Let groups ideate freely, sketch or storyboard their answers. Then bring it back to reality: From these ideas, what is actually possible? This activity unleashes bold thinking while staying anchored.
- 19. Feedback carousel.** At the end of the workshop or a specific session, participants rotate around stations that summarize each group’s work (posters, diagrams, notes). At each stop, they add feedback or suggestions with sticky notes. Once all have rotated, each original group reviews and responds to the input. This activity turns reflection into a fun, constructive exchange.
- 20. One-word check-in and check-out.** Ask each participant to share one word that reflects how they’re feeling at the start (check-in) or what they’re taking away at the end (check-out). This activity is quick, powerful and inclusive. Write all the words on a flipchart or shout them out for collective energy. This helps set the emotional tone and wrap up meaningfully.

Facilitator's Toolkit

Background and purpose of the Facilitator's Toolkit

This **Facilitator's Toolkit** accompanies the **Guidance Manual** and is intended for facilitators and trainers leading capacity-building sessions to strengthen practitioners' ability to meaningfully engage young people in employment programmes. It offers tools and guidance to delivering interactive training sessions in an online setting, although the Toolkit's materials can be easily adapted for in-person trainings.

Overview of the training



Duration: 5 hours

- ▶ Session 1: 2.5 hours
- ▶ Session 2: 2.5 hours

Note: The training can be divided based on your preference – for example, two hours per day over three days.



Delivery method: Virtual training



Number of participants: 25 participants

(the training can be adapted to support more or fewer participants)

Training objectives

Through this training, participants will:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of the fundamentals of meaningful youth engagement – what it is, why it is essential and its different degrees.
2. Explore effective ways to engage youth across different phases of a programme cycle.
3. Learn about successful examples and good practices for engaging young people in advancing decent jobs for youth.

Training methodology

This training is designed to be interactive, practice-oriented and focused on real-world application. Participants are encouraged to engage actively through a variety of structured activities and participatory methods. Approaches include:

- ▶ **Short presentations.** Brief, focused presentations are used to introduce frameworks, tools and concepts. These are designed to provide foundational knowledge and set the stage for deeper exploration through discussion and practice.
- ▶ **Group discussions in breakout rooms.** Participants are assigned to small groups to discuss specific topics, share experiences and reflect on how the content applies to their context. This format fosters peer learning and allows for a diversity of perspectives.
- ▶ **Interactive feedback sharing in plenary.** Following group discussions, participants return to the main session to share highlights and insights. This ensures cross-learning among all participants and surfaces common themes or challenges.
- ▶ **Self-assessment via quiz or a poll.** Real-time polls are used to allow participants to assess their current practices.

Facilitator's profile

To ensure that the training is grounded in both expertise and lived experience, two types of trainers should co-facilitate the session:

- ▶ **Lead trainer:** A professional with experience in youth engagement, particularly in employment programming. Responsibilities include:
 - Delivering core content and facilitating group discussions.
 - Introducing frameworks, tools and approaches.
 - Guiding reflections on best practices and challenges.
- ▶ **Youth representative (co-facilitator):** A youth representative, particularly someone with lived experience in the types of issues you will address, such as a young refugee representative, who brings first-hand insights and real-world examples to enrich the learning. Responsibilities include:
 - Sharing personal experiences and practical examples.
 - Co-facilitating discussions to reflect youth's perspectives.

Note: Suggestions for when the youth co-facilitator can be involved are proposed in the session breakdowns, but adjustments can be made based on the context and needs.

Advanced preparation checklist

To ensure a smooth and effective training session, facilitators should complete the following preparatory tasks:

1. Adapt the Facilitator's Toolkit

- Review and update the training guide to reflect local context and specific audience needs.
- Tailor examples, case studies and terminology to ensure cultural and situational relevance.

2. Update the master slide deck

- Customize the template master deck²⁸ to align with the finalized training plan.
- Ensure all visuals, content and instructions reflect the updated agenda and session flow.

3. Identify and prepare a youth trainer

- Select a youth trainer with relevant experience.
- Brief them on the training content and their co-facilitation role.
- Support them in preparing real-world examples to share during the session.

4. Select and prepare the online platform

- Choose a platform that supports:
 - Screen sharing
 - Breakout rooms
 - Chat and polling features
- Test all functions in advance to troubleshoot potential technical issues.

5. Create the interactive assessment tool

- Input the short self-assessment quiz using platform features (such as a Zoom poll or Mentimeter)
- Use the quiz template at the end of the Toolkit and adapt as needed.

6. Prepare the training evaluation

- Customize the training evaluation using the evaluation template at the end of the Toolkit.

²⁸ The link to the Master deck is available under Materials for training in the Facilitator's Toolkit.

Training outline

This Facilitator's Toolkit includes two structured sessions designed to build participant knowledge and skills in a practical and interactive manner. Each session is broken into five sections. Each section combines theoretical insights and hands-on exercises to enable the participants to discover and implement effective youth engagement strategies in their work.

Time	Session 1 – Overview
 20 minutes	1. Introduction • Purpose and agenda • Online training logistics • Introductions • ILO's youth-related priorities
 50 minutes	2. Laying the foundation • Who are youth and why youth engagement matters • The evolution and definitions of meaningful youth engagement • The five dimensions that make engagement effective • Self-assessment quiz
 10 minutes	Break
 40 minutes	3. From consultation to leadership • The four degrees of youth engagement • The four degrees in action
 20 minutes	4. Unlocking opportunities across the programme cycle • Where youth can be engaged at different programme stages • Mechanisms to engage with youth
 10 minutes	5. Wrap up

Time	Session 2 – Overview
 10 minutes	6. Recap
 35 minutes	7. Understanding youth and their structures • Youth and their structures • Effective outreach strategies
 30 minutes	8. The youth engagement challenge • Strengthening youth engagement in your programme
 10 minutes	Break
 40 minutes	The youth engagement challenge continued • Strengthening youth engagement in your programme • Tackling common challenges with practical solutions • Measuring success
 20 minutes	9. Recognizing the principles of youth engagement • The principles
 5 minutes	10. Close

Overview of the Facilitator's Toolkit

Structure of the Toolkit

This Facilitator's Toolkit provides a structured overview of the training sessions, offering clear guidance for each section. It is designed to support trainers in delivering consistent, engaging and effective sessions. Each section of the Toolkit includes the following components.

- ▶ **Objectives:** A clearly defined objective that outlines what should be achieved by the end of the section.
- ▶ **Section flow:** A high-level breakdown of the training flow.
- ▶ **Time required:** The estimated duration for completing the section, thus helping facilitators manage session pacing and planning.
- ▶ **Materials:** A reference to slides from the master training deck relevant to the section, plus other reference materials used in the section.
- ▶ **Activity instructions:** A step-by-step breakdown of the training flow and exercises used, such as presentations, group discussions and breakout activities.
- ▶ **Session content:** A signpost to where detailed content and reference materials can be found in the preceding Guidance Manual (such as "see page X for full details").

Facilitation tips

Follow these tips to create inclusive, engaging and flexible training sessions that empower all participants to actively contribute.

- ▶ **Pace:** Adjust the pace of sessions based on participants' energy levels and abilities.
- ▶ **Flexibility:** Be ready to adapt exercises and approaches while keeping aligned with the session's objectives.
- ▶ **Inclusion:** Foster conversations that include all voices, regardless of background, seniority or expertise.

Section 1

► Facilitator's Toolkit

1. Introduction – 20 minutes

This **Facilitator's Toolkit** accompanies the **Guidance Manual** and is intended for facilitators and trainers leading capacity-building sessions to strengthen practitioners' ability to meaningfully engage young people in employment programmes. It offers tools and guidance to delivering interactive training sessions in an online setting, although the Toolkit's materials can be easily adapted for in-person trainings.



► Objective

To introduce participants to the session's purpose, agenda, online logistics and the International Labour Organization's youth-related priorities, ensuring a shared understanding and smooth start to the training.

► Flow

- Purpose and agenda
- Online training logistics
- Introductions
- ILO's youth-related priorities

► Materials

- Training deck: Slides 1–10

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1: Purpose and agenda (3 minutes)

Presentation

► Welcome and gratitude:

- Greet all participants and thank them for their time and participation in this important training.
- Acknowledge their roles and contributions to youth engagement.

► State the training purpose:

"This training aims to explore how meaningful youth engagement leads to stronger outcomes in employment programmes and how we can apply practical tools and strategies to support more effective youth engagement."

► Present the agenda:

- Provide a high-level overview of what participants can expect over the two sessions.

Session 1 focus:

- **Laying the foundation.** Define meaningful youth engagement and explore the five dimensions that contribute to effective participation.
- **From consultation to leadership.** Examine the four degrees of youth engagement and apply strategies to engage young people at every level.
- **Unlocking opportunities across the programme cycle.** Identify new opportunities and mechanisms to strengthen youth engagement across different phases of a programme cycle.

Session 2 focus:

- **Understanding youth and their structures.** Identify youth demographics, recognize marginalized groups and develop outreach strategies to ensure inclusive engagement.
- **The youth engagement challenge.** Develop a youth engagement initiative tailored to an employment programme and address challenges with practical solutions.
- **Recognizing the principles of youth engagement.** Discover the principles of youth engagement that ensure that participation is meaningful.

Step 2: Online training methodology and logistics (2 minutes)

Presentation

► Explain the methodology

- This training is interactive and practice-oriented. It includes:
 - Presentations of frameworks and tools
 - Group discussions and sharing of experiences
 - Collaborative exercises
- Encourage a respectful and open environment for all contributions.

► Review online collaboration tools

- Audio and video – to engage and participate in the online space
- Breakout rooms – for small group discussions
- Polls and quizzes – for quick assessments
- Chat box – for questions, sharing ideas and feedback

Step 3: Introductions (10 minutes)

Presentation and group feedback

► Introduce the training team:

- Lead trainer: Name, background in youth employment or training, role in the session.
- Youth trainer: Name, lived experience or expertise in youth engagement and their perspective.

► Participant introductions (round-robin or chat box):

- Invite each participant to briefly share: name, country or location, job role or organization.

Step 4: ILO's youth-related priorities overview (5 minutes)

Presentation

- ▶ Introduce the youth-relevant action areas of the ILO:
 - Introduce ILO's Youth Employment Action Plan (2020-2030)
 - Introduce the ILO-led UN Global initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth
 - Introduce ILO's contributions to youth-relevant United Nations processes and initiatives

Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 1 (see page 11 of the Guidance Manual).



2. Laying the foundation – 50 minutes



► Objective

Define meaningful youth engagement and explore the five dimensions that contribute to effective participation.

► Flow

- Who are youth and why youth engagement matters
- The definition of meaningful youth engagement
- The five dimensions that make engagement effective
- Self-assessment quiz

► Materials

- Training deck: Slides 11–18
- Self-assessment quiz

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1: Who are youth and why youth engagement matters (10 minutes)

Set-up

- Introduce the definition of a youth.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 2 under rethinking youth beyond just an age group (see page 21 of the Guidance Manual).
- Display the slide featuring a collage of images representing youth engagement (such as youth protesting, volunteering, studying, voting, collaborating).
- Invite participants to reflect and consider: “Which image represents why youth engagement matters to you?”

Group feedback

- Invite the youth trainer to share a personal story or reflection on why youth engagement is important to them.
- Invite 2–3 participants to unmute and briefly describe which image they connect with and why.
- Acknowledge the diversity of perspectives shared.

Presentation

- Introduce the triple value model of youth engagement.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 3 under why meaningful youth engagement matters (see page 32 of the Guidance Manual).

Step 2: Definition of youth engagement (5 minutes)

Presentation

- Share the definition of “meaningful youth engagement”.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 1 under what is meaningful youth engagement (see page 13 of the Guidance Manual).

- ▶ Emphasize the shift from tokenism to active participation and shared power in youth engagement approaches.
- ▶ Invite the youth trainer to share a personal story or reflection on what constitutes meaningful engagement.

Step 3: Five dimensions of youth engagement (30 minutes)

Set-up (5 minutes)

- ▶ Introduce the five dimensions that underpin meaningful engagement: voice, space, audience, influence and accountability.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 1 under a framework for meaningful youth engagement (see page 14 of the Guidance Manual).
- ▶ Introduce discussion questions and share in the chat.²⁹
 - What does this dimension look like in practice?
 - Why is this dimension important for meaningful youth engagement?
- ▶ Assign participants to breakout groups (one group per dimension) and ask each group to select a spokesperson who will report back.

Breakout group discussions (15 minutes)

- ▶ Participants discuss their assigned dimension and record the insights.
- ▶ Encourage collaboration and sharing of real-world examples.

Group feedback (10 minutes)

- ▶ Invite each group to present a 2-minute summary of their discussion.
- ▶ Invite the youth trainer to share a personal story or reflection on the five dimensions.

Step 4: Self-assessment quiz – Five dimensions of youth engagement (5 minutes)

Set-up (2 minutes)

- ▶ Introduce the quiz poll with five statements for each dimension of youth engagement.³⁰
- ▶ Explain that the quiz is anonymous and intended for group reflection.

Quiz completion (3 minutes)

- ▶ Participants respond to each question live.
- ▶ Display the results in real time and briefly discuss patterns in the responses:
 - Identify collective strengths.
 - Point out dimensions needing improvement or further discussion.

Break – 10 minutes

²⁹ Copy and paste the activity questions from the templates at the end of this Facilitator's Toolkit.

³⁰ Copy and paste the quiz questions from the templates at the end of this Facilitator's Toolkit.

3. From consultation to leadership – 40 minutes



► Objective

Examine the four degrees of youth engagement and apply strategies to engage young people at every level.

► Flow

- The four degrees of youth engagement
- The four degrees in action

► Materials

- Training deck: Slides 19–38

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1: The four degrees of youth engagement

Presentation (5 minutes)

- Introduce the four degrees of youth engagement with examples: youth consulted, youth contributing, youth as partners, youth as leaders.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in in Section 4 under the four degrees of youth engagement (see page 44 of the Guidance Manual).
- Invite the youth trainer to share a personal story or reflection on the four degrees of engagement.

Step 2: The four degrees of youth engagement in action

Setup (3 minutes)

- Assign participants to breakout groups (one group per degree of engagement).
- Introduce discussion questions and share in the chat.³¹
 - Identify an **example from your work or experience** that reflects your assigned degree and discuss and capture **lessons learned**:
 - *What works to support this degree of engagement?*
 - *What are the potential challenges in supporting this degree of engagement?*
- If no one has a direct youth engagement example, invite groups to think about a programme they are working on and ask: “How can they use the assigned degree of youth engagement and what challenges might they encounter?”

³¹ Copy and paste the activity questions from the templates at the end of this Facilitator’s Toolkit.

Breakout group discussion (15 minutes)

- ▶ Participants discuss their assigned degree and record the insights.
- ▶ Encourage collaboration and sharing of real-world examples.

Group feedback and trainer's presentations (22 minutes)

▶ **Group 1: Youth consulted**

- Invite group 1 to share the takeaways from their breakout room discussion.
- (Trainer) Present approaches on effective consultation.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 4 under youth consulted in action (see page 45 of the Guidance Manual).
- (Trainer) Share a case study on youth consulted.
Note: Example case studies can be found in Section 4 under case study 1 on the Global Refugee Youth Consultations (see page 47) and case study 2 on youth engagement in the development of the Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (2021-2024) (see page 48).

▶ **Group 2: Youth contributing**

- Invite group 2 to share the takeaways from their breakout room discussion.
- (Trainer) Present approaches on effective contribution.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 4 under youth contributing in action (see page 54).
- (Trainer) Share a case study on youth contributing.
Note: Examples case studies can be found in Section 4 under case study 5 on youth-led organizations contributing to the *Global Report on Youth and COVID-19* (see page 56).

▶ **Group 3: Youth as partners**

- Invite group 3 to share the takeaways from their breakout room discussion.
- (Trainer) Present approaches on sharing power with youth and their structures.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 4 under youth as partners in action (see page 60).
- (Trainer) Share a case study on sharing power with youth and their structures.
Note: Example case studies can be found in Section 4 under case study 8 on ProAgro YOUTH and partnering with a youth organization to improve job placements (see page 62).

▶ **Group 4: Youth as leaders**

- Invite group 4 to share the takeaways from their breakout room discussion.
- (Trainer) Present approaches on supporting youth-led action.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 4 under youth as leaders in action (see page 63).
- (Trainer) Share a case study on supporting youth-led action.
Note: Example case studies can be found in Section 4 under case study 9 on the Youth-to-Youth Fund and youth as promoters and creators of employment opportunities (see page 64).

4. Unlocking opportunities across the programme cycle – 20 minutes



► Objective

Identify new opportunities and mechanisms to strengthen youth engagement across different phases of a programme cycle.

► Flow

- Stages of a programme cycle in which youth can be engaged
- Mechanisms to engage with youth

► Materials

- Training deck: Slides 39-42

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1: Stages of a programme cycle in which youth can be engaged

Presentation (3 minutes)

- Introduce the stages of a programme cycle in which youth can and must be engaged: governance and decision-making, planning and design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation and reporting.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 5 under understanding the programme cycle and where youth fit in (see page 65 of the Guidance Manual).

Step 2: Mechanisms for engaging with youth

Presentation (7 minutes)

- Introduce seven mechanisms for engaging youth and share examples for each (presentations can be divided between the youth and the lead trainer).
 - Establishing a youth advisory group
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 5 under establishing a youth advisory group (see page 72).
 - Conducting a co-design workshop with youth
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 5 under conducting a co-design workshop with youth (see page 85).
 - Engaging youth-to-youth trainers and mentors
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 5 under engaging youth-to-youth trainers and mentors (see page 88).
 - Engaging youth in communication and advocacy
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 5 under engaging youth as content creators and advocates (see page 101).

- Undertaking a participatory mapping exercise
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 5 under undertaking a participatory mapping exercise (see page 79).
- Engaging youth as enumerators in data collection and feedback
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 5 under engaging youth as enumerators (see page 91).

Group discussion (10 minutes)

► Facilitate a discussion in plenary to explore:

- How each mechanism could be used to support youth engagement in practice.
- In which phase of programme cycle the mechanism could be applied.
- Which degree of youth engagement the mechanism presents.



5. Session 1 Wrap-up – 5 minutes



► Objective

Review learning highlights from Session 1 and introduce the agenda for the second session.

► Flow

- Summary and next steps

► Materials

- Training deck: Slides 43-44

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1: Summary and next steps

Presentation (5 minutes)

► Summarize highlights from Session 1.

- During the first session, we discussed:
 - **Laying the foundation:** We defined meaningful youth engagement and explored the five dimensions that contribute to effective participation.
 - **From consultation to leadership:** We examined the four degrees of youth engagement and applied strategies to engage young people at every level.
 - **Unlocking opportunities across the programme cycle:** We identified new opportunities and mechanisms to strengthen youth engagement across different phases of a programme cycle.

► Introduce the agenda for Session 2.

- During the second session, we will discuss:
 - **Understanding youth and their structures:** We will identify youth-related demographics and how to recognize marginalized groups and develop outreach strategies to ensure their inclusive engagement.
 - **The youth engagement challenge:** We will develop a youth engagement initiative tailored to an employment programme and address challenges with practical solutions.
 - **Recognizing the principles of youth engagement:** We will discover the principles of youth engagement that ensure that participation is meaningful.

Section 2

► Facilitator's Toolkit

6. Session 2 recap – 10 minutes



► Objective

Introduce the agenda for Session 2 and reflect on highlights from Session 1.

► Flow

- Session 2 agenda
- Session 1 recap and highlights

► Materials

- Training deck: Slides 45-46

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1: Session 2 agenda

Presentation (3 minutes)

► Introduce the agenda for Session 2:

- During the second session, we will discuss:
 - **Understanding youth and their structures:** We will identify youth demographics, recognize marginalized groups and develop outreach strategies to ensure inclusive engagement.
 - **The youth engagement challenge:** We will develop a youth engagement initiative tailored to an employment programme and address challenges with practical solutions.
 - **Recognizing the principles of youth engagement:** We will discover the principles of youth engagement that ensure participation is meaningful.

Step 2: Session 1 recap and highlights

Group discussion (7 minutes)

- Provide a short summary of what was covered during the first session:
 - **Laying the foundation:** We defined meaningful youth engagement and explored the five dimensions that contribute to effective participation.
 - **From consultation to leadership:** We examined the four degrees of youth engagement and applied strategies to engage young people at every level.
 - **Unlocking opportunities across the programme cycle:** We identified new opportunities and mechanisms to strengthen youth engagement across different phases of a programme cycle.
- Invite the group to share their take aways and learning highlights from the first session.

7. Understanding youth and their structures – 35 minutes



▶ Objective

Identify youth demographics, recognize marginalized groups and develop outreach strategies to ensure inclusive engagement.

▶ Flow

- Youth and their structures
- Effective outreach strategies

▶ Materials

- Training deck: Slides 47-52

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1: Youth and their structures

Presentation (3 minutes)

- ▶ The youth trainer presents a short summary explanation, and the lead trainer can complement if necessary, covering:
 - Youth diversity and intersectionality (recap)
 - Youth structures

Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in in Section 2 under rethinking youth and beyond just an age group and addressing intersectional barriers to engagement (see page 21 of the Guidance Manual).

Step 2: Effective outreach strategies

Presentation (5 minutes)

- ▶ Present a short summary explanation covering:

- Outreach and engagement strategies

Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 2 under engaging youth and effective outreach strategies (see page 26).

- ▶ Invite the youth trainer to share a personal story or reflection on effective and inclusive outreach strategies.

Set-up (2 minutes)

- ▶ Introduce the youth personas for the discussion that each group will take on:

Group 1 – A 23-year-old university grad struggling to find work.

Group 2 – A 28-year-old young refugee trying to access employment in her host country.

Group 3 – A 18-year-old young woman looking for career guidance.

Group 4 – A 25-year-old low-skilled worker looking for income-generating opportunities.

Group 5 – A 21-year-old rural youth looking to learn or upgrade his skills to access better-quality jobs.

- ▶ Introduce discussion questions and share in the chat.³²

- What opportunities exist to engage this young person?
- What outreach strategies can be used to engage them?

- ▶ Assign participants to breakout groups (one group per youth persona).

Breakout group discussion (15 minutes)

- ▶ Participants discuss their assigned youth persona and record the insights.
- ▶ Encourage collaboration and sharing of real-world examples.

Group feedback (10 minutes)

- ▶ Invite each group to select a spokesperson to present a two-minute summary of their discussion.

³² Copy and paste the activity questions from the templates at the end of this Facilitator's Toolkit.

8. The youth engagement challenge – 70 minutes



► Objective

Develop a youth engagement initiative tailored to an employment programme and address challenges with practical solutions.

► Flow

- The youth engagement challenge
- Tackling common challenges
- Measuring success



Materials

- Training deck: Slides 53-57

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1: The youth engagement challenge

Set-up (5 minutes)

- Assign participants to groups (4–6 participants per group).
- Invite each group to identify one youth employment project that a group member is working on that can be used for an example case study.
- For the selected project, invite each group to develop a youth engagement initiative that can be built into the project, considering:
 - The youth engagement activity or mechanism
 - The degree of engagement it represents
 - Which project phase the activity will take place in
 - Which youth and youth structures the activity will engage – ensuring representation of marginalized youth
 - 1–3 potential indicators to measure success
 - 1–3 potential operational or implementation challenges
- Share activity instructions in the chat.³³

Breakout group exercise (20 minutes)

- Participants develop their youth engagement initiative and record their ideas to report back later.

Break – 10 minutes

³³ Copy and paste the activity questions from the templates at the end of this Facilitator's Toolkit.

Group presentations (15 minutes)

- ▶ In turn, invite each group to present their youth engagement initiative (2–5 minutes, depending on the number of groups)
- ▶ Capture and note down the challenges each group shares to review in the group discussion in the following step.

Step 2: Tackling common challenges with practical solutions

Group discussion (20 minutes)

- ▶ Review each of the challenges surfaced by the group – grouping similar challenges under the themes.
- ▶ For each challenge shared, facilitate discussion. Invite the participants to share possible ideas and solutions that can be implemented.
 - For any challenges pertaining to a young person's experience, invite the youth trainer to share perspectives and suggestions.
 - In addition, share additional ideas and possible solutions with the group.

Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 3 under how to overcome barriers that hinder youth engagement in a programme (see page 39).

Step 3: Measuring success

Presentation (10 minutes)

- ▶ Present a short summary explanation of the indicators that can be integrated into a project's monitoring and evaluation to measure the success of youth engagement, covering:
 - Youth-level indicators
 - Programme-level indicators

Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 6 on measuring success by assessing youth engagement activities (see page 105).

9. Recognizing the principles of youth engagement – 20 minutes



▶ Objective

Discover the principles of youth engagement that ensure participation is meaningful.

▶ Flow

- The principles of youth engagement

▶ Materials

- Training deck: Slides 58-60

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step1 – The principles of youth engagement

Group discussion (15 minutes)

- ▶ Inform the group that regardless of the youth engagement initiative being implemented, there is a set of principles that should be followed to ensure that any youth engagement initiative is meaningful.
- ▶ Invite the youth trainer to reflect on an example of a principle that should underpin all youth engagement initiatives.
- ▶ Invite participants to reflect and each share:
 - 1 “booster” – things that make youth engagement meaningful
 - 1 “blocker” – things that make it tokenistic

Ideas can be shared through group discussion or through the chat box.

- ▶ Identify patterns across the group’s contributions, and categorize the boosters and blockers to create a list of principles for meaningful engagement.

Presentation (5 minutes)

- ▶ Present the 8 principles of meaningful youth engagement highlighting where the principles align with those that the groups have identified, as well as gaps in their analysis.
Note: Detailed content and reference materials can be found in Section 3 under making youth engagement meaningful and the principles for practice (see page 33).

10. Close – 10 minutes



▶ Objective

Review the learning highlights from Session 2 and evaluate the training experience.

▶ Flow

- Reflection and highlights
- Training evaluation

▶ Materials

- Training deck: Slides 61-63
- Evaluation survey link

Step-by-step delivery instructions

Step 1 – Reflection and highlights

Presentation (3 minutes)

- ▶ Summarize the highlights from Session 2.
 - During the second session, we discussed:
 - **Understanding youth and their structures:** We identified youth-related demographics and how to recognize marginalized groups and develop outreach strategies to ensure their inclusive engagement.
 - **The youth engagement challenge:** We developed a youth engagement initiative tailored to an employment programme and addressed challenges with practical solutions.
 - **Recognizing the principles of youth engagement:** We discovered the principles of youth engagement that ensure that participation is meaningful.
- ▶ Invite the youth trainer to share a personal takeaway from the second session and any recommendations for the participants moving forward.

Step 2 – Training evaluation

Evaluation (5 minutes)

- ▶ Share the link for participants to complete the evaluation survey.³⁴

Step 3 – Close

Final remarks (2 minutes)

- ▶ Thank the participants for their time and participation in the training.
- ▶ Acknowledge their role as advocates for youth engagement moving forward.
- ▶ Provide any next steps and additional support as relevant.

³⁴ Copy and paste the evaluation questions into the preferred survey tool from the templates at the end of this Facilitator's Toolkit.

Templates for training



Activity instructions

You can share these activity instructions in the chat in advance of breakout room activities.

Activity: The five dimensions that make engagement effective

Reflect on the assigned dimension and discuss:

- ▶ What does this dimension look like in practice?
- ▶ Why is it important for meaningful youth engagement?
- ▶ What are the barriers to achieving it? (optional, if time allows)

Group 1 – Voice
Group 2 – Space
Group 3 – Audience
Group 4 – Influence
Group 5 – Accountability

You have 15 minutes to discuss.
Please select one person to feedback the key points.

Activity: The four degrees of youth engagement

For the assigned degree of engagement, identify one example from practice and discuss:

- ▶ What works to support this degree of engagement?
- ▶ What are the potential challenges in supporting this degree of engagement?

Group 1 – Youth consulted
Group 2 – Youth contributing
Group 3 – Youth as partners
Group 4 – Youth as leaders

You have 15 minutes to discuss.
Please select one person to feedback the key points.

Activity: Youth and their structures

Reflect on the youth personas:

- ▶ What opportunities exist for them to engage?
- ▶ Which youth structures and outreach strategies can be used to engage them?

Group 1 – A 23-year-old university graduate struggling to find work.

Group 2 – A 28-year-old young refugee trying to access employment in her host country.

Group 3 – A 18-year-old young woman looking for career guidance.

Group 4 – A 25-year-old low-skilled worker looking for income-generating opportunities.

Group 5 – A 21-year-old rural youth looking to learn or upgrade his skills to access better-quality jobs.

You have 15 minutes to discuss.

Please select one person to feedback the key points.

Activity: The youth engagement challenge

Select a youth employment programme that a group member is working on that can be used for an example case study. For the selected project, develop a youth engagement initiative that can be built into the project, considering:

- ▶ The youth engagement activity or mechanism
- ▶ The degree of engagement it represents
- ▶ Which project phase the activity will take place in
- ▶ Which youth and youth structures the activity will engage – ensuring representation of marginalized youth
- ▶ Three potential indicators to measure success
- ▶ Three potential operational or implementation challenges

You have 20 minutes to discuss.

Please select one person to feedback the key points.

Self-assessment quiz: Five dimensions of youth engagement

You can use these questions to create an interactive quiz or poll.

- ▶ **VOICE** – The programme provides regular opportunities for youth to share their opinions, ideas and feedback on the programme’s activities or decisions?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure

- ▶ **SPACE** – Are there mechanisms in place to promptly and effectively address any safety or protection concerns of young people?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure

- ▶ **AUDIENCE** – Does the programme facilitate dialogue between youth, relevant stakeholders and decision-makers?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure

- ▶ **INFLUENCE** – Do programme staff actively listen to youth voices and incorporate their feedback and inputs?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure

- ▶ **ACCOUNTABILITY** – Are youth informed of how their voices have influenced decisions or actions within the programme?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure

Training evaluation

You can use these questions to create a post-training evaluation.

▶ **The training content was relevant to my work and my learning needs for engaging youth more meaningfully.**

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

▶ **The materials used during the training were appropriate.**

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

▶ **The training delivery (such as facilitation, pacing, engagement) was effective.**

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

▶ **I will apply what I have learned into my work and practice.**

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

▶ **What aspects of the training did you find most useful?** [Open box]

▶ **What aspects of the training did you find most useful?** [Open box]

Meaningful youth engagement for decent work
A training package on engaging young people
in employment programmes



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