



Terms of Reference

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Youth Advocates

1. Background

Engaging youth actively in the design and development of interventions, programs, and policies not only enhances their effectiveness but also fosters the growth of their knowledge, skills, and leadership abilities. This approach further strengthens the capacity of organizations and entities to advocate for and advance youth development. The United Nations (UN) serves as a crucial source of protection and support for young people, providing a platform through which their needs can be addressed, their voices amplified, and their engagement advanced.

Youth development and engagement are integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other internationally agreed frameworks, and represent a central aspect of Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018). These resolutions recognize the significant and positive role young people play in realizing sustainable development goals.

Nationally, the prioritization of young people is evident in President Cyril Ramaphosa's 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA), aligning with the National Development Plan goals and the African Union (AU), Africa Youth Charter. The South African National Youth Policy underscores a commitment to addressing the needs of young people in areas such as education, health and well-being, economic participation, and social cohesion.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) serves as the overarching framework for the UN system, with youth development identified as a key results area. The UN inter-agency on youth is dedicated to supporting government and stakeholder initiatives that promote youth inclusion and participation, from policy development to implementation, focusing on areas where their efforts can have the most significant impact on sustainable youth empowerment and development.

In light of these commitments, the UN Theme Group on Youth is launching the "SDG Youth Advocates" initiative. This initiative, comprising a diverse group of youth formations, interest groups, and networks active in their communities, aligns with the SDGs and youth agenda, particularly the recently launched National Youth Policy. The SDG Youth Advocates will contribute meaningfully to coordinating efforts across all levels of the UN in South Africa, shaping joint missions, priorities, and results that support the SDGs and youth development. Establishing this mechanism underscores partners' commitment to empowering young people and realizing

their rights, including the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and express their views and opinions.

2. Objectives of the SDG Youth Advocates initiative include the following:

The collaboration seeks to establish a mechanism for open dialogue and exchange between government, UN Agencies and youth groups and youth-serving groups. It also seeks to advise the UN inter-agency group on youth on strategic opportunities and actions to address adolescent and youth development issues in South Africa.

In line with the United Nations Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, the youth advocates will actively support the following **objectives**:

- *Advocate* – Advocate for the SDGs in ways most accessible and relevant to young people across different contexts.
- *Engage* – Promote innovative ways of engaging their audiences and peers in the advocacy and realization of the SDGs.
- *Build* – Contribute to a brain trust of young leaders supporting the UN and partners for key moments and initiatives related to the SDGs.

Additionally, in the South African chapter, the SDG Youth Advocates will support the following the **objectives** are to:

- Facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge-sharing regarding best practices and lessons learned from youth policies and programs. Additionally, highlight major opportunities and challenges to propel the youth development agenda forward.
- Contribute to advocacy and strategic communications to advance the goals and objectives of both the UN and the Government of South Africa.
- Represent the voices of youth, advocating for and facilitating the meaningful engagement of young people in policy and program development forums involving various youth development stakeholders.
- Advise and actively participate in strategic events and engagements organized by the government and UN Theme Group on Youth. This includes contributing to the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Youth Policy and UNSDCF programs and activities.
- Convey information and messages on critical youth issues to constituencies and communities, particularly reaching out to the most vulnerable groups.
- Engage in outreach efforts to connect with other youth advocates and youth networks. Support the UN Theme Group on Youth in building its youth network and fostering dialogue with other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

3. Selection Criteria

A Call for Nominations from UN Agency, government department and/or Implementing Partners, noting gender and geographically balanced representation with the following criteria will apply:

- Aged between 15- 24 years of age.
- Experience in youth advocacy and engagement in local/national/regional/global contexts.
- Experience advocating on global development issues.
- Be affiliated to one or more youth organisations/networks, i.e. representing a constituency of some kind (faith-based, disability, business, health, education, skills

development, gender, leadership, living with HIV, sports, rural development, refugees, etc.).

- Ability to commit two days a month to participate in bi-monthly calls, communications, one face-to-face meeting a year, and available to participate in advocacy events.
- Excellent Communications and public speaking experience.

Further to this, in line with the United Nations Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, the SDG Youth Advocates should have the following competencies:

- *Leadership* – Ability to influence and motivate others
- *Innovation* – Uniqueness and ingenuity
- *Scalability* – Potential to benefit others beyond their current scope of impact
- *Impact* – Measurable outcomes directly linked to their work
- *Presentation* – Inspire and motivate others through storytelling

4. Period of membership

Advocates will serve for a period of 2 years.

5. Remuneration

Membership of the programme is purely voluntary and there is no remuneration. The UN inter-agency group on Youth will cover the costs of travel and accommodation for advocates to attend approved meetings and engagements of the programme.

6. Management Arrangements

The initiative will be managed and coordinated through the UN inter-agency group on Youth.

7. Instructions for Submitting a Nomination

Submissions will be made online via the google form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1rXbWOyzni50LCFpsiPIH_S1L1TM82qJMUvVE5cv1qs/g/edit?ts=65f94f59&pli=1. Deadline for Submissions is **1 June 2024**.