Youth Report 2025

SDG3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Current situation:

- **Exclusion of Marginalized Groups**: The lack of inclusivity and discrimination are still major barriers to attaining SDG 3 targets, especially affecting young people in marginalized groups. This lack of resources and accessibility to healthcare affects especially the needs of children and youth with visible and hidden disabilities, youth migrants, parents, young people facing issues of lower-and-middle-income, youth part of ethnic and religious minorities and other vulnerable populations
- **Prevention and primary healthcare:** There is a lack of preventative measures in terms of long-term effects on health of lifestyle diseases (due to sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy consumption et.), chemical (e.g. pesticide) effects, that need to be implemented at young age and have effects across the whole lifetime, and become increasingly pressing concerns with the ageing population. Furthermore, even though the need for Primary Health Care is increasing in the population of the region, there is a lack of such services, simultaneously due to a lack of funding and insufficient measures to retain health workforce in this sector. Consequently, the current focus on secondary and tertiary healthcare further reduces the financial sustainability of Health Systems, while prevention measures provide more cost-effective approaches aligned with better health outcomes.
- **Intertwinedness of digitalization and health:** Acknowledging that digitalization comes with opportunities, the increasing use of artificial intelligence and deep fakes, poses an emerging risk of disinformation and misinformation, impacting all fields of health, with a major impact on mental health.

Recommendations for governments:

- To strengthen the health systems and ensure universal health coverage, promoting accessible, equitable, and high-quality health care services for all groups of population based on well-funded studies, including the ones focusing on climate change as a health impacting factor.
- To co-create with diverse stakeholders: training opportunities, educational programmes and legal requirements for healthcare professionals and caretakers as well as the public, that will protect the common interest.
- To promote healthy lifestyles through the regulation and taxation of commercial drivers of disease, such as tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy foods;
- To better integrate mental health services into primary healthcare systems to ensure comprehensive well-being.
- To implement laws and adequate regulations that protect youth from the negative effects of digitalization, social media, fake news and artificial intelligence on their mental health and wellbeing.

- Promote and invest in addressing the health and well-being agenda through implementing "One Health" and "health in all policies" approaches and education, ensuring that wellbeing is considered cross-sectorally and -sectionally.

Recommendations for UN agencies:

- To develop policy recommendations that ensure affordable and equitable access to healthcare services.
- To strengthen global health partnerships by collaborating with international organizations, NGOs, and governments to share best practices and resources, supporting research and innovation in medicine — especially for nationally underrepresented diseases.
- To ensure sustainable financing for health programs, especially when it comes to those programs that target low-income and marginalized social groups.
- To encourage and develop longitudinal studies in the region on the impact of environmental and lifestyle factors on the development of young people.

Recommendations for civil society:

- To collaboratively promote awareness on well-being, e.g. mental, sexual and reproductive health.
- To hold governments accountable for protection of human rights of those who face stigma due to their health.
- To support opportunities for youth to engage in sports and physical exercise per personal capacities and will, as preventative measures to reduce the prevalence of lifestyle-diseases in the ageing population.

SDG5: Gender Equality:

Current situation:

- **Gender-Based Violence:** Different genders experience abuse and harassment, in ways that affect them in various manners many cases go unreported, e.g. due to lack of awareness and trust in authorities. There is a lack of shelters for victims of gender-based violence and safe spaces, where vulnerable individuals—especially women, girls, and marginalized genders—can find protection, resources, and freedom from discrimination, harassment, or violence.
- **Equal participation in society of all genders:** Gender stereotypes significantly influence educational choices and lifestyles, often steering young people towards conventionally understood gender roles, study fields and career paths that may not align with their personal values. This segregation contributes to persistent gender disparities in various sectors and general unhappiness, weighing down on quality of

life. Those who do not align with the gender roles also remain excluded from decision-making processes, not allowing them to improve their situation.

- **Sexual and reproductive health and rights**: There still is a lack or limited safe access to menstrual hygiene, caregiving facilities/institutions and sexual reproductive health care. Rural communities, migrant communities, LGBTQI+ youth, and young people with disabilities may be especially affected, leading their reproductive health and parental roles to remain unsupported.

Recommendations for governments:

- To legally protect and socially support different genders and non-conventional gender-related roles and choices, as well as civic space for children and youth, ensuring that young people can safely participate in public life, making and shaping decisions on their own gender and further choices.
- To encourage choices by expanding internet access in underserved areas, and providing digital literacy programs for especially young women and girls.
- To enable unrestricted and free or affordable access to sexual and reproductive health services, combined with age-appropriate sexuality education.
- To support unpaid care work by providing affordable childcare and parental leave policies that support individual choices on the upbringing, reducing influences by external/societal pressures and norms.
- To introduce quotas for political representation and decision making processes

Recommendations for UN agencies:

- Encourage governments to adopt successful gender equality practices from within their regions by facilitating knowledge exchange platforms, documentation of case studies, and providing adaptation frameworks that respect cultural nuances while advancing universal rights principles.
- Develop comprehensive regional monitoring frameworks that track also more than quantitative representation, measuring qualitative aspects of gender equality including safety feeling, psychological barriers, and lived experiences of different genders.
- Develop targeted interventions addressing the specific challenges faced by gender-diverse individuals, recognizing that frameworks focused solely on women may overlook unique barriers faced by non-binary, transgender, and gender non-conforming people.

Recommendations for Civil Society:

- Create spaces for different genders to actively participate in gender equality movements as allies, acknowledging their role in dismantling hegemonic structures.
- Establish community-based educational and experience-sharing initiatives that address challenges and needs related to gender.

- Develop mentorship programs connecting established professionals with young people across gender identities, with particular focus on fields where significant gender disparities persist.
- Implement accountability mechanisms for organizations receiving gender equality funding, emphasizing community feedback and measurable impact assessments beyond activity reporting.
- Collaborate across urban and rural divides to create culturally appropriate approaches to gender equality that acknowledge different starting points and challenges in various communities.

SDG8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:

Current situation:

- **Youth Unemployment:** Many young people enter the labour market without access to decent jobs, facing underemployment while oftentimes experiencing overeducation, informal work, or systemic barriers due to background, migration status, or socioeconomic conditions.

- **Discrimination***:* Immigrants and marginalised youth are disproportionately affected by exploitative practices, including unpaid overtime, unsafe working conditions, and denial of benefits like health insurance or contracts.

- **Changing of the Education Worth:** Traditional education systems often fail to prepare youth for the realities of the job market, lacking trust, rights-based guidance, and practical exposure to self-led career paths.

- **Learning Environments:** Yet, peer-led learning environments, hands-on economic training, and project-based skills development are proving effective in enabling young people to shape their own futures and contribute to local economies.

Recommendations for governments:

- Introduce career education and rights-based economic literacy at all stages of schooling, ensuring young people can rely on their workplace rights, responsibilities, and opportunities from an early age.

- Establish and fund networks that support young people, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, in navigating career decisions through practical guidance respecting personal values.

- Enact and enforce legislation that ensures equal pay and fair treatment, regardless of nationality, legal status, or socioeconomic background. That pay has to be adjusted

to real costs of living per region.

- Mandate public transparency in production and labour processes, requiring corporates and multinationals to adhere to laws that will protect the workers and civil society.

- Expand access to funding, training, and regulatory pathways for young people to create their own income-generating projects and enterprises, especially in regions with limited formal employment to boost an SDGs aligned business culture.

Recommendations for UN agencies:

- Prioritise international mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing labour protections in sectors and regions where vulnerable groups are at risk, especially within informal or transnational employment.
- Encourage standardised global indicators for skill-based employment metrics, promoting equal pay frameworks that focus on capability rather than citizenship or educational pedigree. Work on having voluntary work being seen as important as "real" work experience.
- Support initiatives that elevate practical, youth-driven approaches to employment and productivity within the broader UN development agenda and labour statistics.

- Facilitate open-access platforms where production records, labour compliance data, and workplace safety reports are made available to the public, encouraging accountability and informed consumer choices.

- Collaborate with local partners to integrate structured, rights-aware career preparation into UN-supported young people's own development and education programmes, particularly in fragile economies. Use synergies with different stakeholders to facilitate the process in the UN system.

Recommendations for civil society:

- Create and scale mentorship platforms that connect young people with other people across sectors, with a focus on helping immigrants and marginalised groups overcome systemic barriers.

- Lead awareness campaigns that educate workers and the broader public on employment rights, safe working conditions, and mechanisms for reporting abuse or discrimination.

- Demand transparency in economic systems by monitoring labour standards and publishing independent reports on workplace conditions, especially in regions where regulation is weak or unevenly enforced.

- Support youth-led initiatives that offer alternative pathways to employment. Engage in community entrepreneurship, volunteer-driven service models, and informal

business formalisation efforts. Pass legal reform to formalise such processes and entrepreneurship models.

- Grassroot Partnerships: Build partnerships across grassroots organisations, educational institutions, and policy actors alongside the triple helix system to ensure that inclusive, future-proof employment strategies are developed together with young people.

SDG14: Life under waters

Current situation:

- **Infrastructure vs. Ecosystem Balance**: Water electricity generating plants affect fish migration, highlighting tensions between renewable energy production and ecosystem protection. Overexploitation, illegal fishing, unsustainable recreational practices, and other destructive activities further damage water ecosystems-reliant populations and overall biodiversity.
- **Urban Development Challenges**: Coastal cities face challenges balancing urban growth with ecosystem restoration, particularly with climate change intensifying desertification.
- **Cultural and Economic Dependencies**: In developing nations, strict fishing regulations could disrupt livelihoods, while developed nations struggle with overconsumption.
- **Geographical Disconnection**: In regions where most people don't live near water bodies, there's a disconnect from marine ecosystem issues, highlighting the need for targeted education.
- **Regional Variations**: Issues like historical and war-related water pollution further endanger local communities and species.

Recommendations for Governments:

- Incorporate marine education into school and university curriculums from an early age, particularly in regions disconnected from coastal areas.
- Implement balanced regulations that consider both environmental protection and economic dependencies on marine resources and renewable energy sources.
- Fund and support civil society initiatives regarding marine ecosystem conservation, especially in areas where local funding may be limited.
- Address the multiple forms of water pollution (noise, oil, chemical, plastic) that jeopardize marine ecosystem health, recognizing the interconnected nature of water bodies.

Recommendations for UN agencies:

- Address the multiple forms of water pollution (noise, oil, chemical, plastic) that jeopardize marine ecosystem health, recognizing the interconnected nature of water bodies.
- Continue supporting youth voices in marine conservation dialogues and promote intergenerational exchange on environmental protection.
- Support community-driven, sustainable water practices, avoiding ironically contributing to pollution through plastic distribution.

Recommendations for civil society:

- Increase engagement through direct actions like repurposing waste, creating opportunities for people to directly experience and connect with water ecosystems to foster personal investment in their protection.
- Develop programs specifically for communities dependent on fishing, teaching sustainable practices.
- Address the tension in tourism and hospitality sectors where economic needs may conflict with environmental values.
- Support local organizations working on region-specific issues, such as invasive species management or historical pollution cleanup.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Current Situation

- **Unsustainable Knowledge:** There is insufficient awareness of the SDGs themselves among the general population, partially due to misalignment with education, which contributes to insufficient action and engagement with sustainable development objectives across different sectors of society.
- **Youth Exclusion:** Youth involvement in meetings related to the SDGs and participating in decision-making processes remains limited, despite young people being critical stakeholders in creating sustainable futures and having innovative perspectives that could accelerate progress.
- **Lack of Resources:** Deficiencies in administrative support, information sharing, skills development, and knowledge transfer, hinder coordination between stakeholders and prevent the scaling of successful interventions.

Recommendations for Governments

- Create SDG programs intertwining experiences of civil society into the discussions on the matters of sustainable lifestyle and future.

- Make the inclusion of SDGs in core curriculums essential, ensuring that all can develop a foundational understanding of sustainable development principles and their relevance to diverse subjects and career paths.
- Include more youth in decision-making processes at conferences and implementing youth advisory groups to executive and legislative powers, institutionalizing youth participation rather than treating it as optional or supplementary.

Recommendations for UN Agencies:

- Increase engagement on the SDGs and the work of UN agencies, encouraging talks about sustainable development priorities and opportunities for involvement. Develop and support advocacy, training programs and leadership opportunities, enabling young people to effectively communicate about and implement sustainable development projects in their communities and beyond.
- Enhance visibility and develop deeper partnerships with civil society organizations, creating sustained collaboration without tokenization.
- Help young people measure the impact of their activism and initiatives, providing tools and frameworks that connect local actions to global indicators and demonstrate the collective significance of individual contributions.

Recommendations for Civil Society

- Seek to educate on the SDGs and existing initiatives, recognizing that broad-based public engagement is essential for achieving the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond.
- Acknowledge young people's competencies in the field work of SDGs,
- Integrate sustainable practices across professional sectors and civil society perceptions to create comprehensive societal change altogether.