



FIVE REASONS THE SUCCESS OF THE SDGS DEPENDS ON YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

BLOGGER



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 GLOBAL  GLOBAL GOALS  YOUTH ACTIVISM

Children will be critical agents of change in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, blogs Plan International's Maribel Ullmann.

📷 Children are 'critical agents of change' in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Last week, amidst worldwide celebrations to commemorate International Youth Day, the President of the UN General Assembly released the [final text](#)* of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), [agreed by consensus](#) among governments earlier this month.

“CHILDREN AND YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN ARE CRITICAL AGENTS OF CHANGE”

Although the concurrence of these two events may not have been planned, it highlights the significance of this year as a historic opportunity for young people, and for the governments that serve them. The post-2015 outcome document recognises that “children and young women and men are critical agents of change.”

AGENTS OF CHANGE

[Plan International has been calling](#) for governments to actively seek out and support the

The SDGs have been widely accepted by heads of state at the 2015 summit, marking a historic moment that will set the world's development agenda for the next 15 years. However, the SDGs are not legally binding. Each government will decide how to implement the ambitious goals based on their own national contexts.

Furthermore, review of a country's progress toward the Goals will be strictly voluntary. This means the implementation of the SDGs will to a great degree rely on citizens who will have to hold their leaders and governments to account and remind them of their commitments.

CRITICAL ROLE

This is where young people have a critical role to play. If countries are to succeed in achieving the SDGs, leaving no one behind along the way, governments must seek out an active and substantive engagement of young women and men from diverse backgrounds in national-level planning, implementation, and monitoring. The overall success of the SDGs depends on youth engagement because young people are:

1. **Critical thinkers:** Part of being young involves making sense of personal experiences and asking questions about the world around you. Youth have the capacity to identify and challenge existing power structures and barriers to change, and to expose contradictions and biases
2. **Change-makers:** Young people also have the power to act and mobilise others. Youth activism is on the rise the world over, bolstered by broader connectivity and access to social media.
3. **Innovators:** In addition to bringing fresh perspectives, young people often have direct knowledge of and insights into issues that are not accessible to adults. Youth best understand the problems they face and can offer new ideas and alternative solutions. In Uganda, Plan International worked with student councils to monitor education services at their schools using mobile phone reporting.
4. **Communicators:** Outside the international development sector, too few people are aware that world leaders have come to a historic, far-reaching agreement to eradicate poverty by 2030. Young people can be partners in communicating the agenda to their peers and communities at the local level, as well as across countries and regions. For instance, based on their own experience living through Typhoon Haiyan, participants in Plan International's "Youth Reporters Project" in the Philippines [created a video message](#)* with advice and encouragement to children who survived the earthquake in Nepal.
5. **Leaders:** When young people are empowered with the knowledge of their rights and supported to develop leadership skills, they can drive change in their communities and countries. Youth-led organizations and networks in particular should be supported and

The SDGs are a universal agenda for transforming our world. To achieve this transformation, we must rethink the approaches of the MDG era that left youth out of the process. Governments that recognise the value of collaborating with young people as partners and establish clear and explicit pathways for their meaningful participation from the outset will be much better positioned to achieve the 17 SDGs and related targets.

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated during his [Youth Day message](#)* this year: “No one knows better than them the issues at stake or the best way to respond. That is why I am calling on young people to speak out – and I am urging leaders to listen.”

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