



KENYA'S YOUTH POLICY POSITION ON THE 2023 UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**POLICY POSITION PREPARED BY KENYA'S
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AFFAIRS IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE YOUTH-LED NON-STATE ACTORS**

**CALL FROM THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AND
THE OFFICE OF SECRETARY GENERAL'S ENVOY ON YOUTH**

**"Accelerating the COVID-19 recovery and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda with
and for youth"**

The 2023 Annual Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum, will take place over three days on 25-27 April 2023, guided by the theme of the 2023 HLPF on "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels". Youth will be given the opportunity to present their assessment, vision, and recommendations for member states' consideration ahead of the SDG Summit in September 2023.

The youth forum takes place amidst a world challenged by geopolitical tensions, a relentless climate crisis, rising poverty, and inequalities as well as a slow and uneven recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Against this backdrop, the Forum is an opportunity for young people to voice their views, and concerns and galvanize actions on how to transform the world into a fairer, greener, and more sustainable place guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ECOSOC Youth Forum has evolved into a key platform where young people, high-level Government representatives, and other stakeholders contribute to policy discussions through their ideas, solutions, and innovations to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. It will connect with key UN processes and events in 2023 especially the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC in July 2023, and the SDG Summit, in September 2023 at the level of Heads of State and Government. The SDG Summit will aim to identify the ambitious and transformative actions needed to regain the ground lost in achieving the SDGs due to COVID-19 and the current crises as well as strengthen commitment, energy, and enthusiasm for a more inclusive and effective multilateralism and solidarity.

KENYA'S RESPONSE AND POSITION

INTRODUCTION

As a geopolitically important member of the community of Nations, a strong contributor to the global economy, and the huge effort towards global sustainable growth and development agenda, Kenya recognizes and very much appreciated the extremity of the global challenges to be addressed in this year's youth forum.

Our Youth, with the support of the Kenyan Government, are therefore very proactive in the development of innovative solutions to the global challenges addressed by these years chosen Sustainable Development Goals.

PARTICIPATION FORMAT AND INVITATION

In recognition of how the hybrid format that the discussions will use at the United Nations Headquarters, the government of the Republic of Kenya has seen it best to involve as many youth-led non-state actors as possible and have their representatives participate in the forum, listening, and contributing to the exchange of ideas to accelerate the COVID-19 recovery and participate in the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda with and for youth for a better Kenya and a better planet. We send the best that choose to travel to the forum to make sure that Kenya's voice, policy position, and contribution is recognized and appreciated. We also recognize and appreciate the forum organizers' ingenuity that is giving many young leaders located in various parts of Kenya a chance to participate in the forum.

SDG 6: "ENSURE UNIVERSAL AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER AND HYGIENE FOR ALL"

Sustainable management of water resources and access to safe water and sanitation is essential for unlocking economic growth and productivity, and provide significant leverage for existing investments in health and education.

Current status and progress

The Kenyan government has taken various measures to ensure universal and equitable access to clean water and hygiene for all. Some of the initiatives include:

1. **National Water Master Plan:** The government developed the National Water Master Plan in 2030 to provide a framework for the development and management of water resources in the country. The plan aims to increase access to water supply and sanitation services, with a focus on marginalized areas and vulnerable populations.
2. **Community-Led Total Sanitation:** The government has adopted the Community-Led Total Sanitation approach to improve access to sanitation services in rural areas. The approach involves empowering communities to take ownership of their sanitation and hygiene practices, leading to sustained behavior change and improved health outcomes.

3. **Public-Private Partnerships:** The government has established partnerships with the private sector to improve access to clean water and sanitation services. For instance, it has partnered with the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation to support the expansion of water and sanitation services in rural areas.
4. **WASH in Schools:** The government has prioritized WASH in schools to improve the health and well-being of school children. It has developed the National School WASH Guidelines, which provide a framework for the provision of WASH services in schools.
5. **Institutional framework:** The government has established the Water Services Regulatory Board to regulate and oversee the water sector. Additionally, it has put in place policies and laws such as the Water Act, 2016 to improve the management of water resources and sanitation services.

Challenges

1. **Inadequate infrastructure:** Many communities in Kenya lack access to safe water and sanitation facilities due to a lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas.
2. **Limited funding:** The government's budget for water and sanitation is limited, which makes it difficult to invest in necessary infrastructure and provide services to all citizens.
3. **Climate change:** The impact of climate change is felt in Kenya with recurrent droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall patterns, leading to water scarcity and contamination.
4. **Population growth:** Kenya's population continues to grow, increasing pressure on the limited water resources, which are further depleted by land degradation and deforestation.
5. **Poor sanitation practices:** Inadequate sanitation practices, particularly in urban areas, contribute to the spread of waterborne diseases like cholera and typhoid fever.

Recommendation

1. **Increase investment:** The government should increase its investment in the water and sanitation sector, particularly in rural areas. This investment should prioritize the provision of safe water and sanitation facilities to underserved communities.
2. **Strengthen institutional frameworks:** The government should strengthen the institutional frameworks that oversee water and sanitation provision, including regulatory bodies and water user associations. This will help to ensure accountability and transparency in the management of water resources.
3. **Promote community participation:** The government should promote community participation in the design, planning, and implementation of water and sanitation projects. This will ensure that projects meet the needs of local communities and are sustainable in the long term.

4. **Improve water resource management:** The government should prioritize the sustainable management of water resources, including protecting watersheds and promoting water conservation practices.
5. **Focus on hygiene promotion:** The government should focus on hygiene promotion programs, particularly in schools and health facilities, to reduce the incidence of waterborne diseases and improve overall health outcomes.
6. **Embrace innovation:** The government should embrace innovative solutions to improve access to clean water and sanitation facilities, including the use of renewable energy to power water treatment plants and the adoption of mobile technology to improve monitoring and maintenance of water infrastructure.

SDG 7: “ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE, AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL”

The achievement of SDG 7 for youth development in Kenya requires a coordinated global effort from all governments; our government and the governments of developed countries, the private sector, civil society organizations, and the young people themselves. In Kenya, several **key actions** have been taken to accelerate SDG 7 for youth development, which include:

1.0 Scaling up access to renewable energy: Kenya has made significant progress in scaling up access to renewable energy. According to the ministry of Energy, Kenya has increased access to electricity from below 30% in 2013 to over 75% in 2020. Kenya is on course to achieve its target of 100% use of clean energy by 2030 and to achieve 100% access to clean cooking energy by 2028. Renewable energy currently accounts for 73% of installed power generation and 90% of electricity in use is from green sources like geothermal, hydro, wind, and solar power. This has helped to increase access to electricity and reduce dependence on fossil fuels, providing young people with clean and reliable energy sources.

2.0 National programs supporting climate-smart innovations and education on energy-efficient technologies: The government has implemented several initiatives to support youth entrepreneurship and innovation in the energy sector, like the Kenya Climate Innovation Center (KCIC), which provides funding and mentorship to young entrepreneurs developing innovative clean energy solutions.

For the past year, there have been ongoing Public-Private Partnerships talks between the Government, United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on how best to ensure young people are involved in efforts to empower creativity in Renewable energy. The results of the conversations have been the Climate Resilience and Environment Conservation Program (CRECP) and the National Green Fiscal Incentives Policy Framework (NGFIOF), which have been drafted with all the legal

stipulations in place, to guide the distribution of innovation-empowering resources and relevant training for many of the young people in Kenya. Areas supported include:

- Geothermal, Solar, and Wind Energy
- Domestic Cooking Innovation
- Electric Vehicle Innovation, Import, and Charging Network
- Resilient Agritech

3.0 Promoting policy, regulatory and legislative frameworks: The government has put in place policy and regulatory frameworks to incentivize investment in renewable energy and promote energy efficiency. This includes approving the establishment of the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) and the Kenya Renewable Energy Association (KEREA), which oversee the implementation of renewable energy and energy efficiency policies.

However, despite the progress, more still needs to be done to ensure that all young people have access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy. Below are **key recommendations** for accelerating the achievement of SDG 7 for the Youth Agenda 2030 post-COVID-19 in Kenya.

- a) **Financial support:** Access to financing is a significant barrier to energy access for young people in developing countries like Kenya. Governments, in collaboration with financial institutions, should provide more affordable and accessible financing options for young people to invest in renewable energy projects. The Kenyan government on its own may not have the financial resources to invest in large-scale renewable energy projects, however, with the assistance of developed countries, financial support can be provided in form of **grants, loans, and other friendly financing mechanisms** that will help the country invest in renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies.
- b) **Technology transfer and promotion of innovation:** Developed countries are more advanced in technology and expertise in renewable energy and energy efficiency. They can provide technology transfer and technical assistance to Kenya to help develop its own renewable energy sector and build capacity in energy efficiency. Development partners and the private sector can invest in **research and development** to drive innovation in the energy sector, especially in renewable energy and energy efficiency in Kenya.
- c) **Capacity building, advocacy, and awareness-raising programs:** There is a need to raise awareness about the importance of renewable energy and energy efficiency among young people in developing countries like Kenya. Educational programs, workshops, and awareness campaigns can be organized to create awareness and encourage young people to take action. Developing the skills and knowledge of young people in Kenya is critical for achieving SDG 7. Developed countries can support capacity-building efforts through **training programs, scholarships, benchmarking programs, exchange programs, and other diplomatic efforts** to encourage international cooperation in achieving SDG 7.

- d) **Policy and regulatory framework support:** Developed countries can provide policy and regulatory support to help Kenya create a more conducive environment for renewable energy development and help accelerate progress towards SDG 7. This could include **technical assistance and advisory** in developing more policies and regulations that incentivize renewable energy investment and promote energy efficiency in Kenya.

Overall, support of our government from developed countries can help accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 7 for youth development in Kenya post-COVID-19. International cooperation can help to mobilize resources, share knowledge, and coordinate efforts to increase access to clean, reliable, and affordable energy, which is critical for youth development and for the achievement of sustainable development goals.

SDG 9: “BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND FOSTER INNOVATION”

Kenya's efforts towards achieving SDG 9 have been significant, with a number of initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, promoting industrialization, and fostering innovation. This has been made possible through investment in infrastructure development, encouraging private sector investment, promoting technological innovation, improving access to finance, and fostering public-private partnerships.

Progress

To build resilient infrastructure, Kenya has invested heavily in transportation infrastructure, including the construction of the **Standard Gauge Railway (SGR)**, which connects Nairobi to the coastal city of Mombasa, and **the Nairobi Expressway**. This has improved the efficiency of transportation of goods and people and also reduced the vulnerability of the country's transportation system to extreme weather events. **Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor** that aims to connect Kenya with South Sudan and Ethiopia through a multi-modal transport corridor; and **Konza Technopolis**, a flagship innovation project aimed at creating a world-class technology hub in Kenya. The government has also invested in **expanding energy infrastructure to increase access to electricity and reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels**.

To increase internet connectivity, Kenya has invested in key strategies and efforts such as the **National Broadband Strategy** to increase access to high-speed internet services across the country, **Fiber Optic Connectivity**, which has led to a significant increase in internet connectivity across the country, and **the Digital Literacy Program** to provide primary school students with access to digital devices and internet connectivity.

In order to foster innovation, the government of Kenya has implemented various policies and initiatives. One of these is a **startup fund** that provides financing, as well as **tax incentives for**

private sector investment in innovation. Additionally, **several innovation hubs, including iHub, Nailab, and 88mph have been established** to offer valuable resources and support to startups and entrepreneurs. These hubs provide access to funding, mentorship, networking opportunities, and training. **The National Innovation Agency (NIA)** was established to promote and support innovation in the country, providing funding, mentorship, and incubation services to entrepreneurs and startups. Kenya has also prioritized **education and training in STEM fields**, launching initiatives like the Presidential Digital Talent Program to develop digital skills and talent.

Kenya has made a commitment to advancing its digital infrastructure and services through the Kenya National Digital Master Plan 2022/32. The plan includes the installation of high-speed fiber optic infrastructure spanning 100,000km, providing internet connectivity to schools, government offices, health facilities, rural businesses, homes, and public spaces. Additionally, 25,000 internet hotspots will be established to support innovators, youth, and entrepreneurs.

The plan also includes the establishment of 1,450 village digital hubs for citizen digital literacy training, film production, and public access to government services. A national physical addressing system will be developed to facilitate e-commerce initiatives, while a national spatial data infrastructure will provide trusted geospatial data for businesses and government.

A regional smart ICT hub will be set up to enable faster IP exchange and data storage for the African region. The Kenya e-Waste Programme will also be implemented to manage e-waste electronic products in the country. A digital one-stop shop for all government services will be established through the automation of all government core processes and digitization of manual records, interoperability, and unified communication platforms.

Capacity building for digital literacy will also be a priority, with 20 million citizens, 10,000 ICT professionals, 300,000 public servants, and 350,000 teachers receiving training to develop necessary IT proficiency for effectively delivering services and utilizing technology in their businesses, and accessing government e-services. The plan also includes a digital literacy program to accelerate technology integration in teaching and learning across all learning institutions, among other initiatives.

Challenges

1. **Limited access to financing:** The cost of implementing infrastructure projects in Kenya is high, and the government often lacks the necessary funds to undertake large-scale projects. As a result, progress toward achieving SDG 9 has been slow.
2. **Poor infrastructure maintenance:** Existing infrastructure in Kenya is often poorly maintained, leading to increased costs for repairs and maintenance. This, in turn, limits resources for new projects and slows progress toward SDG 9.

3. There is a shortage of skilled personnel in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in Kenya. This limits the country's ability to develop and implement innovative solutions to infrastructure and industrialization challenges.
4. Limited technology transfer: Kenya's ability to adopt and adapt new technologies from developed countries is limited. This hinders the country's ability to improve its infrastructure and achieve sustainable industrialization.

Recommendations

1. Increase investment in infrastructure: The government of Kenya should increase its investment in infrastructure development such as roads, railways, ports, and airports. This will improve connectivity, reduce transportation costs, and facilitate the movement of goods and services.
2. Promote innovation and technology transfer: Kenya should prioritize the development of a knowledge-based economy by investing in research and development, innovation, and technology transfer. This will enable the country to move up the value chain and increase its competitiveness in the global economy.
3. Enhance public-private partnerships: The government should foster partnerships with the private sector to accelerate the development of infrastructure and industrialization. This will increase the flow of private investment, knowledge, and technology into the country.
4. Improve access to finance: Kenya should create an enabling environment for access to finance by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the establishment of a credit guarantee scheme, reducing lending rates, and providing technical assistance to SMEs.
5. Develop human capital: The government should prioritize investment in education, vocational training, and skills development to create a pool of highly skilled human capital. This will enable the country to attract more investment and accelerate industrialization.
6. Address environmental challenges: The government should ensure that the development of infrastructure and industrialization is done sustainably and does not harm the environment. This can be achieved by implementing policies and regulations that promote sustainable development and reduce environmental pollution.
7. Enhance regional integration: Kenya should deepen its integration with its neighboring countries to create a larger market for goods and services. This will enable the country to leverage its strategic location and boost trade and investment.

SDG 11: “MAKE CITIES INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT, AND SUSTAINABLE”

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to provide a framework for sustainable development, covering a broad range of areas from poverty reduction to climate action. SDG 11 specifically aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. As a developing country, Kenya recognizes the importance of SDG 11 in achieving sustainable development and has made significant progress toward realizing the targets of this goal.

Current Status and progress made

Kenya has made significant progress in advancing its cities toward becoming more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Here are some examples:

- 1.0 **Inclusive Cities:** Kenya has developed policies and programs aimed at promoting social inclusion and equity, such as the National Gender Policy, which seeks to promote gender equality in all sectors of society. Additionally, Kenya has launched programs aimed at ensuring persons with disabilities are included in urban planning and development.
- 2.0 **Safe Cities:** Kenya has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at improving the safety of its cities. For example, the government has invested in the expansion of CCTV surveillance systems, improved street lighting, and increased the number of police officers patrolling the streets.
- 3.0 **Resilient Cities:** Kenya has faced numerous challenges related to climate change, including droughts, floods, and other natural disasters. The government has taken steps to build resilience against these challenges by investing in sustainable infrastructure, such as water management systems, green spaces, and renewable energy.
- 4.0 **Sustainable Cities:** Kenya has made significant progress in promoting sustainable urban development. The government has prioritized the development of affordable housing, implemented mass transit systems, and encouraged the use of non-motorized transportation. Additionally, Kenya has embraced the use of renewable energy, including solar power, to meet the energy needs of its cities.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite these efforts, Kenya still faces several challenges in achieving the targets of SDG 11. For instance, there is a significant housing deficit, with an estimated 2 million households lacking adequate housing. Informal settlements such as Kibera and Mathare (in Nairobi) are characterized by poor sanitation, lack of basic services, and overcrowding. Additionally, urbanization has led to increased pressure on natural resources, including water and forests, leading to environmental degradation.

Recommendations

To accelerate progress toward SDG 11, Kenya should take the following actions:

1. **Increase investment in affordable housing:** The government and development partners should increase funding for affordable housing and explore innovative financing mechanisms to encourage private sector investment in this area.
2. **Enhance urban planning and management:** The government should strengthen urban planning and management by improving land-use planning, promoting mixed-use development, enhancing public participation in urban planning processes, and ensuring

the inclusion of the youth, young women, and marginalized groups in the planning process.

3. **Improve access to basic services:** The government should prioritize the provision of basic services such as water, sanitation, and healthcare in informal settlements to improve the living conditions of residents.
4. **Promote sustainable transportation:** The government should promote the use of non-motorized transport and invest in public transportation infrastructure such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. Invest in and promote Electric vehicles purchase incentives to encourage the use of electric vehicles as alternative means of transportation.
5. **Increase investment in climate adaptation and mitigation programs/initiatives by the youth.** Young people in Kenya have various innovative climate-smart agriculture and have established green social enterprises that promote renewable energy use. Investments should then be put in place by government and development partners to capacity strengthening of these young people and for upscaling their enterprise.

SDG 17, “REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

Kenya’s youth are some of the most active, innovative, and resilient persons you’ll ever meet. We respond to societal challenges with unique innovations. Be they documented or just practically made.

Kenya Government’s credible efforts

The Kenya government has made lots of efforts to try to bridge the innovation and startup funding gap by creating the Youth Enterprise Fund, Women Enterprise Fund, and the Hustler Fund. These Funds processes have been digitized to make them easily accessible, providing equal opportunities and taking out the middlemen and potential loopholes for corruption.

The Government is now making serious efforts in bringing in both profit and nonprofit entities to support these established digitized funding processes with Banks like Equity and Kenya Commercial and Telcos in Kenya joining the fray.

The Government of Kenya is now pursuing the entrenchment into the constitution, the Constituency Development Fund, Senate Oversight, and National Gender Affirmative Action Funds, which are instrumental in the informal distribution of national government resources to the local youth through the elected legislatures.

His Excellency President Dr. William Samoei Ruto, having discovered the tremendous role startups play in youth empowerment, officially announced tax exemptions to all startup companies as of July 1, 2023.

Kenya Youth's major concern

The United Nations is endowed with immense powers to make sure that resources are always available to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. *But there is a very huge disconnect between high-level resources negotiations and the grant resources that actually reach the ground to these young people to make sure that the sustainable development goals based on innovation get to be actualized.*

The United Nations, we note with fear, is one entity that has a lot of gatekeeping in grant approval processes. In Kenya for example, despite the heavy presence of United Nations agencies, after-action reports from these agencies indicate partnerships to support youth innovations, which are not reflected in practical situations as indicated. We feel disconnected from the United Nations because of this. The majority of young people at local levels don't even know what the United Nations does. Because thinking of all the influence they would need to successfully engage the United Nations in any innovative project or program makes most of us give up even before beginning.

It is honestly very hard to notice serious innovations in Kenya that have actually been funded by any United Nations agencies. Funding is given at the top level, but the funding disappears in constant Boardroom conversations which never involve the actual young innovators and social entrepreneurs. This needs to change and change quickly if we are to successfully implement Sustainable Development Goals.

Kenya Youth's Major Recommendation

In order to “Accelerate the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at levels”, it's time to get very practical and create a more accessible collaborative approach with various United Nations agencies. It's time for the Boardroom conversations that usually don't involve the actual youth doing things on the ground to seize. Let these grant processes be digitized with systems put in place to ensure objectivity and utmost professionalism in the choice of recipients and collaborators.

The Young people of Kenya, therefore, propose a solution to this problem. We have come with the United Nations Local Youth Empowerment Program (UNLYEP).

Just as the United Nations Volunteers Program (UNV) now determines the entry process of International Civil Servants into the United Nations Employment System, *UNLYEP should be created immediately as a youth innovation concepts management and grant awarding agency and placed under the Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, to specifically handle all the global youth innovation support and grant award process on behalf of all the agencies of the United Nations.*

UNLYEP will specifically handle the following on behalf of all the United Nations with grant funding for new innovations.

- I. ***SDG Impact Labs:*** To be available at Central Business Districts of all Capital Cities globally, used for all membership registrations, unscheduled talks, large group meetings, and concept pitching contests. This will make young people feel close to the United Nations.
- II. ***New Project Grants Selection Processes:*** Competitively consider and approve all new innovations from the youth that seek funding from the United Nations and then recommend the worthiest innovations to the relevant United Nations agencies.
- III. ***Curriculum Development:*** On UNSDGs that High Schools, Colleges, and Universities can use to train students.
- IV. ***Global Youth Database:*** Meant to keep a tracked record of all the youth between the ages of 18 and 35, with all their personal and empowerment records.
- V. ***Annual Youth Empowerment Reports:*** To monitor the Progress of the actual Impact of SDGs among the Youth
- VI. ***National Workshops:*** Implemented by the *SDG Impact Labs*, to train the leaders of local youth organizations and groups in the informal sectors on UNSDGs and inspire them to develop local solutions to tackle the global challenges discussed. One workshop, per country, every year, inviting all leaders of all youth groups in a particular country to train them on the knowledge of UNSDGs, distribute materials to them in their local language and have them train their youth groups upon return to their local environment.
- VII. ***Regional Conferences:*** Hold Regional Youth Conferences on UNSDGs to reach as many youth organizations and companies doing amazing things in their localities, with the major conference culminating in UN ECOSOC Youth Forum at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

UNLYEP Logo and concept are already available and under legal copyright protection if ever needed. We propose that UNLYEP should have its headquarters at the UNON complex in Nairobi Kenya, but support Impact Labs in the Capital City of every country on earth. Those Impact Labs can be accessed by any youth that chooses to be a member, like the United States of America Spaces supported by every American Embassy worldwide.