

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

2021
TRANSFORMING
FOOD SYSTEMS

Through youth education, engagement, innovation and entrepreneurial solutions, this year's International Youth Day aims to provide a platform for young people to continue the momentum from the EYF in the lead up to the high-level Food Systems Summit. This year, International Youth Day will be virtually convened by DESA in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Major Group for Children and Youth.

In 1999, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in August 1998, that August 12 be declared International Youth Day.

International Youth Day (IYD) gives an opportunity to celebrate and mainstream young peoples' voices, actions and initiatives, as well as their meaningful, universal and equitable engagement. The commemoration will take the form of a podcast-style discussion that is hosted by youth for youth, together with independently organized commemorations around the world that recognize the importance of youth participation in political, economic and social life and processes.

Youth Responses to COVID-19

COVID-19 affects all segments of the population, with young people playing a key role in the management of this outbreak and the recovery following the outbreak. Though much is still unknown on how the disease affects young people, governments are mandated in the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) to ensure their services meet the needs of young people. In these circumstances, it is important to ensure that youth are heard alongside other community and patient voices in the rollout of health and non-health interventions in response to COVID-19.

Building up the capacity of youth to be able to make their own decisions on health and to take responsibility for health is also a key element of WPAY. In this context, health education, public health promotion, and evidence-based information are critical in combating the spread and effects of COVID-19, especially to challenge the spread of disinformation online. The role of governments as well as youth organizations and community groups will be essential to ensure that trustworthy public health information is disseminated. Young people themselves are also utilizing online technologies to spread public health information in engaging ways such as videos to promote effective handwashing or explain how social distancing can save lives.

Young innovators are already responding to the virus through social impact innovation. Around the world, a number of initiatives are being developed to leverage young people's efforts to generate and deliver support to at-risk populations or populations affected by the pandemic. Whilst most of these initiatives are on a voluntary basis (e.g., young people offering to shop for and deliver food to elders or at-risk people), they can also take the



shape of social enterprises. Many youth-driven technology innovation hubs are supporting startups to develop effective solutions to address COVID-19. For example, CcHUB (an open living lab and pre-incubation space) in Nigeria is offering to provide financial, research and design support for projects related to COVID-19.

Global Issues: Youth

Youth can be a positive force for development when provided with the knowledge and opportunities they need to thrive. Today, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16 per cent of the global population. By 2030—the target date for the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) that make up the [2030 Agenda](#)—the number of youth is projected to have grown by 7 per cent, to nearly 1.3 billion.

Did you know?

- The economic impact of COVID-19 is set to make the job market more challenging for youth. The ILO reports that in the first quarter of 2020, about 5.4% of global working hours, that is equivalent to 155 million full-time jobs, were lost relative to the fourth quarter of 2019.
- Recent estimates suggest that 600 million jobs would have to be created over the next 15 years to meet youth employment needs.
- The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (the youth NEET rate) has remained stubbornly high over the past 15 years and now stands at 30% for young women and 13% for young men worldwide.

“Giving young people from all walks of life the opportunity to truly be active participants in the social and political life of their societies, as well as in the multilateral project, means ensuring that we are building a world that is truly for them.”

— **Audrey Azoulay, Director General, Message on the occasion of the International Youth Day**

