

Beijing+25: Accelerating Progress for Women and Girls The Way Forward



2. Recognize and support youth leadership.

Young people – especially young women and girls – are leading the battle for equality in many areas and have enormous potential to inspire positive change. In many parts of the world, young people comprise the majority of their population – including in the world’s 48 least developed countries. From advocacy campaigns to new models for social movements, they are mobilizing unprecedented numbers of students and activists across the globe to demand action on climate and racial justice.

In March 2019, young activist Greta Thunberg inspired an estimated 1.6 million young people across 133 countries to participate in climate protests. Youth representatives from over 140 countries then came together at the 2019 UN Youth Climate Summit to demand that national leaders advance inclusive, science-based climate policies on the global stage.

Yet many young people are deprived of opportunities to work and to learn, and their energy and creativity remain underused. Bridging generational divides and actively engaging youth as partners are key to creating a broad base for advancing gender equality. COVID-19 presents an opportunity to connect younger generations with global leaders through virtual forums and digital technologies. The report suggests the following strategies:

Provide space for youth in decision-making at the highest levels. National and global actors can meaningfully engage youth through:

- The design, implementation, and monitoring of national programs
- Youth advisory groups
- Policy and lawmaking
- Local programs that enhance civic engagement

Examples of best practice include such multilateral initiatives as UNDP’s Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS) and UN Women’s Youth and Gender Equality Strategy and its LEAPs framework.

Prioritize investments in young people to accelerate long-needed change. Increasing youth-based programming—particularly in vulnerable and marginalized communities—ensures that the priorities, contributions, and aspirations of young people are reflected throughout all levels of decision-making. While today’s youth have unprecedented technological capacities, participation needs to be extended to rural and underserved areas to democratize digital access and enable broad participation. Ensuring that girls have equal access to digital resources is key to maximizing success. Young people living in frontline communities know the urgency of making their voices heard.