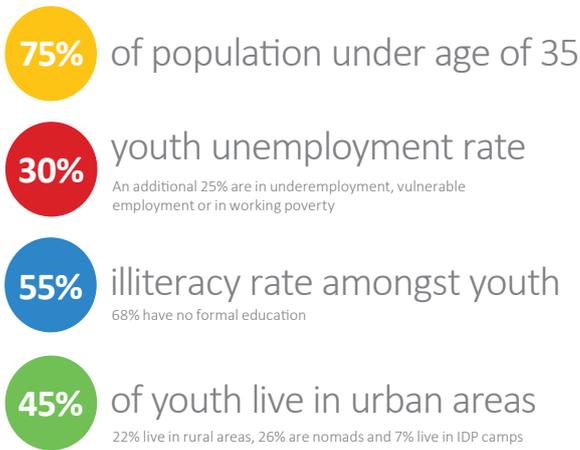




YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & EMPOWERMENT

YOUTH AT A GLANCE



Somalia is one of the youngest countries in the world, with 75 per cent of its population under 30 years old. While young people represent the majority in Somali society, continuing unrest, conflict, socio-economic and political exclusion have left them with psychological wounds and multiple roadblocks to adulthood.

Available data suggests that Somalia has one of the highest rates of youth joblessness in the world, and windows of opportunity to engage politically, economically and socially remain weak or non-existent. Participation of young people in decision-making has been challenging due to clan-based and cultural alliances, age, lack of education opportunities and poverty, and the prominence of elders in the political system. Space and opportunities for engagement are even more challenging for young women.

Exclusion has frustrated and demoralised many young Somalis, leading many to embark on an often dangerous journey across borders in a search for better lives. Those who stay behind are often vulnerable to crime, drugs, piracy, radicalism and armed groups. The involvement of young people — increasingly young women — in extremist groups has fed into the widespread portrayal of youth as a threat to peace and security.

Historically, the contribution and inclusion of young people to peacebuilding efforts has received little support, but there is a growing recognition among the international community that youth leadership is essential to achieving sustainable peace.

FRAMEWORKS & INTEGRATED RESPONSE

Engaging and empowering young people is a prerequisite for the UN to deliver on its mandate in support of the Somali people. As a result, a number of global and national frameworks shape the UN's integrated response in support of Somali youth.

Since 2015, consecutive Security Council Resolutions (SCRs) on UNSOM's mandate have emphasized youth, including the current resolution 2461 (2019) which "Reaffirms the importance of the full, equal and effective participation of all Somalis, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, IDPs and refugees in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and elections, urges the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States to increase representation and participation of women and youth at all decision-making levels and requests UNSOM to continue to provide technical advice and capacity in this regard."

In addition, SCR 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security recognize that "young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security." And calls for increasing the role of youth in negotiating and implementing peace agreements.

In 2017, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) unanimously adopted the National Youth Policy, an important step to enable a comprehensive, multi-sector response to the different needs and aspirations of young women and men. The policy will guide interventions that will help youth to play their role in bringing peace and stability to Somalia.

The National Youth Policy focuses on eight priority areas:

- Strengthening education and skills training

- Employment creation,
- Economic participation and poverty reduction
- Security and peace
- Healthy and quality lifestyle
- Promotion of youth participation and citizenship
- Protection and guidance for youth
- Justice and law for youth in conflict

UN SOMALIA YOUTH STRATEGY

Recognising the role that young Somalis play in their country's peacebuilding and state-building processes, the UN has developed the UN Youth Strategy for Somalia (2016-2020), integrated as part of the UN Strategic Framework (2017-2020). The UN Youth Strategy aims to unify efforts in a sustainable and impact-maximising manner, and to create space and equip youth with the necessary tools to participate meaningfully in bringing peace, stability, and social and economic prosperity to Somalia.

The UN Youth Strategy is structured into six core areas of work:

1. Programming: The UN is working to strengthen its youth response by developing new and scaling up existing programmes in the six thematic priority areas: 1. Employment & entrepreneurship; 2. Protection of rights & civic engagement; 3. Political inclusion; 4. Education; 5. Health; and 6. Peacebuilding. Currently, the UN Youth Portfolio represents over US\$ 54 million in investments.

2. Participation: The UN is working to enhance the representation and engagement of young people in decision-making at all levels by creating and supporting mechanisms for youth participation, such as the National Youth Council, the National Youth Conference and the recently established UN Youth Advisory Board.

3. Government Capacity: The UN is working to develop the capacity of the Federal Government and the state authorities to respond to the needs of youth by supporting institutional development and the development of youth-friendly policy frameworks, including the National Youth Policy and the National Development Plan.

4. Communications: The UN is developing youth-specific communications that will highlight the positive contributions made by Somali youth to peace and stability, including the creation of preventing and countering violent extremism campaigns and the Somali Youth Awards. The youth communications track also aims to raise awareness on the need to scale up investments for Somali youth.

5. Coordination and Data Management: The UN is supporting the FGS and Federal Member States (FMSs) joint coordination meetings on youth, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Youth Affairs and the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth, and is working to create an effective multi-stakeholder coordination platform to

include donors and civil society organisation (CSOs). The UN is also working to strengthen the generation and use of age-disaggregated data and statistics in analysis, planning and programming.

6. Somali Youth Fund: Embedded in the UN MPTF, the Fund will provide financing to Somali youth-led projects, providing both support to youth-led innovation as well as strengthening the young CSOs in Somalia.

Building on the recommendations in UN SCR 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security, the strategy recognises the role of youth as equal partners and leaders in Somalia's recovery, rather than being either part of the problem or passive beneficiaries. The UN Youth Strategy therefore places a multidimensional concept of empowerment at its core: social, economic and political.

LOOKING AHEAD

The UN is working to mobilise resources for the full implementation of the UN Youth Strategy to scale-up youth programming in Somalia.

To improve and increase coordination within the FGS, FMSs, UN entities, donors and youth organisations, the UN is supporting the periodic joint Youth Coordination Meetings (YCM) that bring together all relevant stakeholders to identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration.

The YCMs will be used as a platform to monitor the implementation of the youth aspects of the National Development Plan and the National Youth Policy. By fostering collaboration between Federal Member States and the Federal Government of Somalia, the YCM also contributes to federalisation.

The UN will continue to support the Somali National Youth Council (SNYC) with youth representatives from all FMS. The SNYC is a participation mechanism that will help strengthen the engagement and trust among FGS/FMS authorities and their youth constituencies. The SNYC will also increase the level and quality of youth participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes, and support the mainstreaming of youth issues in the implementation of the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals agenda in Somalia.



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