



ADVANCING YOUTH CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

WITH YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

ADVANCING YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS WITH YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN

"YOUTH ARE MORE THAN A DEMOGRAPHIC FORCE;
THEY ARE A FORCE FOR PROGRESS"

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN-KI MOON

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PREFACE



As the UN Secretary General recently said, the world is experiencing an unprecedented demographic phenomenon. There are more people under the age of 25 today than ever, totaling nearly 3 billion of which 1.3 billion of that total are between the age of 12 and 24. These youth live, by and large, in cities and towns; the cities of the developing world account for over 90% of the world's urban growth and youth account for a large percentage of those inhabitants.

Urban youth face challenges that need to urgently be addressed. The global youth unemployment rate, which is estimated at 12.6 per cent in 2013, is creating an environment in which young people are unable to satisfy their basic needs. As demonstrated by the mass protests in many cities globally, young people believe that their voices are not being heard and their needs are not being addressed. For example in Africa, the median age of African leaders is 3 times that of the African population. There is a growing concern about the state of democracy in Africa amongst youth, with less than a 1/4 of African youth surveyed by Gallup thinking their country is a full democracy, and less than 1/2 satisfied with their democracy.

These are some of the reasons for which Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has made it a priority for the UN system to find ways to address the social, political and economic marginalization of youth. "We are addressing youth today," the Secretary-General has said, "because youth have placed themselves on the top of the agenda."

The Secretary-General has appointed a Special Envoy on Youth, and has instructed the Inter-Agency network on Youth Development, a network consisting of UN entities whose work is relevant to youth, to deepen the work of the UN with youth on issues such as employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, citizenship and protection of rights, and education.

UN-Habitat is working closely with the Secretary-General through his Special Envoy on Youth. UN-Habitat has placed youth at the centre of its agenda. From Nairobi to Rio de Janeiro, UN-Habitat is partnering with youth to carry forward new ideas and solutions in areas such as good governance, decent livelihoods, adequate shelter and secure tenure. We are doing this through our longstanding youth programmes such as the One Stop Youth Resource Centres, the Urban Youth Fund and the Youth 21 initiative.

All these issues are exacerbated by the lack of engagement of youth in governance at all levels which in turn undermines their rights as citizens. As this report demonstrates, youth citizenship and engagement in governance is about more than political engagement. It is as much about dealing with limited access to economic resources and socio-political assets. This begins with engaging youth as equal partners, recognizing their rights to participate in decision-making processes and to productively use their knowledge, perspectives, and experience.

UN-Habitat believes that youth are not only leaders of tomorrow, but leaders of today. This report seeks to outline how youth are taking these leadership roles, and to explore how we can support youth to become active and responsible citizens now and in the future.



Joan Clos

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