



Advancing SDG 17: Youth-led partnerships and innovations for sustainable development

Lead for Youth-Led Policy White Papers: Doris Mwikali, BIBO Academy Policy Consultant, UNESCO IESALC

Supporters and Editors: Giulia Ribeiro Barão, Project Officer, Partnership and UN Liaison Unit, UNESCO IESALC; Bosen Lily Liu, Head of Partnership and UN Liaison Unit, UNESCO IESALC.

Collaborators: Adriana Miranda, Anna Weinrich, Binte Sohail, Damilare Oyedele, Diego Mendoza, Doris Mwikali, Dunja Trifunovic, Emmanuel Ganse, Greta Kohan, James Odhiambo, Maimoona Sohail, Michael Nabieu, Nancy Chacón, Olumide Ojelabi, Rafat, Samapika Sahu, Samuel Mue, Sara Gawhary, Saramma Chandy – outstanding young people affiliated to BIBO Network and other youth organizations.

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This policy paper presents insights and recommendations collected through consultations with the Better Learning Better Innovation (BIBO) Network, led by youth innovators and supported by UNESCO IESALC, to contribute to the 2024 United Nations Summit of the Future. Held on June 3, June 17, and July 15, these consultations gathered youth from all five UNESCO regions –Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean- ensuring a diverse and inclusive process.

The paper highlights the role of youth in achieving SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) by harnessing their energy, innovation, and leadership for transformative action. Empowering young people to drive efforts toward a sustainable and resilient future aligns with the Summit's goal of shaping a more inclusive and forward-looking global agenda.

As part of a broader initiative by the BIBO Young Innovators Network, this paper also connects with reviews of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 1 (No Poverty), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Together, these papers present a comprehensive youth-led vision to inform and support the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, advancing progress across the Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 interconnected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets, provides a comprehensive blueprint for a sustainable and equitable future. Achieving these ambitious goals necessitates collaboration across sectors and stakeholders,

underscoring the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17), which aims to "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development." This goal recognises that innovative and cross-sectoral partnerships are pivotal in mobilising the financial resources, knowledge, expertise, and technologies required to meet the SDGs, particularly in developing countries (Business and Sustainable Development Commission, 2017).

As envisaged under SDG 17, partnerships for sustainable development are voluntary and multi-stakeholder initiatives involving governments, intergovernmental organisations, civil society, young people and other key actors (Bäckstrand et al., 2012). These partnerships play a critical role in translating intergovernmental commitments into actionable strategies, contributing to the implementation of global development frameworks such as Agenda 21, the Millennium Declaration, and the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) (ECOSOC, 2016). In this new era of development, the success of the SDGs hinges on the ability to foster effective public, public-private, and civil society collaborations that leverage diverse resources and expertise, making each stakeholder feel valued and integral to the process to drive transformative change (Fjeldstad, 2014; Sachs, 2012).

Background

The SDGs' interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature underscores the crucial role of SDG 17 in enabling and accelerating progress across all goals. It calls for enhanced collaboration between governments, the private sector, civil society, young people and other stakeholders to mobilise resources, share knowledge, and foster innovation (Gyorffy, 2012). These partnerships are essential to overcoming challenges that no single entity can tackle alone (O'Connor et al., 2016).

The SDGs' complexity and scale demand strong, inclusive, and equitable partnerships beyond national borders and sectors. Addressing global challenges like poverty, inequality, climate change, and health crises requires a collective effort, especially from those in the developing world who may lack the necessary resources and capacities (International Monetary Fund, 2018). Support in the form of financial assistance, technology transfer, and policy guidance is critical for these countries to build their capabilities and advance sustainable development.

Young people are not just vital stakeholders but also the future of the achievement of the SDGs and the success of SDG 17. As the largest generation in history, youth bring unique perspectives, energy, and innovative solutions to global challenges. Their active involvement in partnerships is not only beneficial but essential. Young people are at the forefront of driving change, advocating for policy coherence, and mobilising communities around the SDGs. By engaging youth in partnerships, we can harness their potential to accelerate progress, particularly in technology, education, and climate action (Koch, 2017).

While progress has been made in forming global partnerships, significant challenges persist. These include the need for improved coordination among stakeholders, the development of metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships, and the enhancement of policy coherence at both national and international levels. Research is critical in addressing these challenges, particularly in

understanding the dynamics of partnerships, the impact of technology transfer, and the effectiveness of policy frameworks. Identifying and addressing gaps in these areas will be essential for strengthening partnerships and ensuring the successful implementation of the SDGs (Milner & Tingley, 2013).

Recommendations and calls-to-action

1. Increase youth involvement in public administration to ensure effective engagement in improving the quality of government

To enhance SDG 17-focused partnerships, it is crucial to amplify the role of young people in public administration. By actively involving youth in efforts to improve the quality of government, we can foster more effective and inclusive governance structures. Young people bring a unique perspective essential in expanding research to encompass a broader spectrum of social, environmental, and economic outcomes across all 17 SDGs. Their participation is pivotal in ensuring a comprehensive understanding of potential trade-offs between enhancing government quality and achieving environmentally focused SDG targets (Prichard, 2016). The innovative ideas and fresh perspectives that youth contribute are indispensable in identifying and addressing these trade-offs, ensuring that progress in one area supports, rather than hinders, advancements in others.

2. To effectively leverage SDG 17 for facilitating technology transfer and accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), governments should focus on the following key actions:

- 2.1. Strengthen partnerships for technology transfer: Governments play a crucial role in establishing and enhancing international partnerships, particularly with developed countries, multilateral organisations, and the private sector. These partnerships are essential in creating robust frameworks for technology transfer, facilitating sharing of knowledge, expertise, and resources, and ensuring that developing and least-developed countries (LDCs) receive the appropriate technologies tailored to their specific needs.
- 2.2. Align technology transfer with local development goals: Governments must ensure that technology transfer initiatives are closely aligned with the local development goals of recipient countries. By integrating technology transfer with national strategies, governments can foster innovation ecosystems that address regional challenges, enhance productivity, and contribute significantly to sustainable development.
- 2.3. Create policy and financial incentives: To encourage the adoption and diffusion of transferred technologies, governments should design and implement policy and financial incentives that lower barriers to technology uptake. These include creating favourable regulatory environments, offering tax breaks, and providing access to financing mechanisms that support technology

adoption in sectors critical to achieving the SDGs. By focusing on these strategic areas, governments can harness the potential of SDG 17 to drive technology transfer, thereby accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

- 3. Facilitate access to international financial markets and foster inclusive partnerships:** Developed countries should enhance developing nations' access to international financial markets by supporting credit enhancement mechanisms like guarantees and insurance products. These tools can lower the risk profile of investments, making it easier to mobilise capital for SDG-related projects in regions facing significant financing challenges. Additionally, developed countries should foster inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships that bring together governments, the private sector, civil society, and international organisations. These partnerships should co-create and co-finance initiatives, ensuring alignment with the specific needs of developing countries and actively involving local communities and marginalised groups in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development hinges on the strength and inclusivity of global partnerships, as outlined in SDG 17. This policy paper highlights the critical role of young people as key stakeholders in driving transformative action through innovative and cross-sectoral collaborations. We can accelerate SDG progress by fostering effective partnerships prioritising technology transfer, policy coherence, and inclusive governance, particularly in developing countries. The active engagement of youth, alongside other stakeholders, is essential in overcoming the complex challenges of sustainable development, ensuring no one is left behind, and achieving a sustainable and resilient future for all.

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