Youth and Cities Report

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Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BIPOC	Black, Indigenous and People of Colour
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CYSU	Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanisation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PwC	Pricewaterhouse Coopers
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

Foreword

Young people under 30 make up 60% of the population of the Commonwealth, and in Commonwealth cities the percentage population is often even higher. It is this statistic, coupled with a genuine will at city level to improve both the way that they engage and reach young people, but also the quality and appropriateness of the services that they provide, which saw the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network (CSCN) choose to prioritise youth and youth engagement as one of their focal areas.

This think-piece and the CLGF youth survey are important first steps in helping to better understand the needs of young people from a city perspective, and also as a means of exploring ways of ensuring that young people are integrated more effectively into political processes and are better reflected in the planning and decision making of their cities.

The paper recalls the statistical imperative of the growing Commonwealth youth population and what that means for cities; it also highlights the main priorities that young people have, namely a call for better economic opportunities; a greater emphasis on climate change and managing the effects of climate change; and a greater focus on mental health. It also suggests that the recent COVID 19 Pandemic has had a particularly lasting impact on youth across the Commonwealth which city leadership must address in planning services.

The four key sections: *driving economic inclusion: the political economy of youth; accelerating social inclusion and belonging; the young and homeless; and restoring and reimagining local democracy through youth participation* provide a strategic overview and share case studies demonstrating how different parts of the Commonwealth are addressing key policy issues relating to youth and the needs of young people. The final section, *moving from policy to action* seeks to draw together key recommendations for policy makers and leaders in ensuring cities are more inclusive and representative.

The paper provides a valuable overview highlighting the different dimensions which policy makers need to consider in ensuring that they both respond to the needs of young people in service delivery, but also in enabling better representation of young people in decision making. There are some clear common threads emphasized including access to education and training; the prevalence of informality in many Commonwealth cities and the implications for young people in terms of employment and housing in particular; young women and girls are particularly marginalized in many cases; and young people are very unlikely to be politically active and able to step up into leadership roles if they are not economically empowered. The importance of data in helping to drive understanding of the challenges young people face; but also the potential for improving access and opportunity comes through extremely strongly; the way in which cities are already making a difference by actively promoting more youth engagement; as does the resilience of young people and some of the opportunities which come with greater digitalization.

The paper will accompany a series of webinars for CLGF members to further debate these issues and share their own experiences to inform the on-going work of the CLGF and CSCN. CLGF, working with its partners in the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Initiative have supported the establishment of an interdisciplinary youth network bringing together mayors, councillors, local government officers, planners, architects, engineers, surveyors and academics/researchers from across the Commonwealth. We are delighted that the Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanisation (CYSU) will also be participating in the webinars and bringing a youth voice to our discussions.

Introduction

Sixty per-cent of the Commonwealth's 2.5 billion people are under 30. The United Nations has predicted that over 68% of the projected increase in the global population will be living in urban areas by 2050. Over 50% of this growth is expected to take place in the Commonwealth and over 60% of that population is young people under the age of 30[1]. Many of the youth who in live in cities in the developing world experience poor living conditions, living in slums or otherwise marginalized urban areas. By 2025, young people (Millennials and Gen-Z) will make up 75% of the global workforce and by 2050, 60% of people living in Urban areas globally. More than half of the Commonwealth countries included in the Youth Development Index 2020 are still in the low or medium youth development categories. Disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have had disproportionate effects on the educational and employment opportunities of young people, especially young women, and global levels of under-employment and shares of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) have significantly increased.

Innovations and new technology are quickly adopted by young people so innovations such as mobile money and online work has increased opportunities, however youth are more often the "working poor"—they are more likely to be unskilled and have insecure jobs that they do in unsatisfactory conditions. Particularly in Africa, young people are also highly represented in the informal sector and live in slums or slum-like conditions. UN Habitat's report "cities of youth" included data for young people in African cities, where informal sector and slum dwelling intersect for young people as follows: 95% in Tanzania, 90% Mozambique, 86% Uganda, 84% Rwanda, 63% Zambia, 49% Cameroon, and 48% Ghana.

The 2020 Youth Development Index which measures progress of youth against six domains[2], revealed universally poor performance in "Political and Civic Participation", the only domain in which the average global score has deteriorated. **This calls for increased support and investment in youth participation**. Political and civic participation was already declining in young people prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and it is recognized that disenfranchisement can lead to anti-social behaviour, criminal and gang affiliation and radicalisation. While young people in some contexts are on their own initiative making innovative contributions and #TakingCharge of our common future, **strengthening the formal institutional environment, removing barriers to participation, and making connections to and investments in less formal youth initiatives at the local level will be essential**. Young men and women, while facing some of the same challenges, also face distinct issues in city environments. **Safety** is a major issue for young women in many cities in the Commonwealth, as is **the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on employment** as women are disproportionately employed in service and care professions (hit hardest by the pandemic). Further, given that they are poised to experience the most severe impacts of climate change, **youth involvement in climate action** and their **response to the Climate Crisis** also remains a key issue.

Strengthening youth advocacy in support of Sustainable Urbanisation is a key priority for CLGF and local government. In response to rapid urbanisation and climate change, CLGF, as part of the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Initiative[3], developed the Call to Action on Sustainable Urbanisation Across the Commonwealth which it is hoped, will guide Commonwealth policy and practice in ensuring sustainable communities across Commonwealth member states. Well managed human settlements are key drivers of

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1   https://population.un.org/wup/ and https://thecommonwealth.org/youth
2   Education; Employment and Opportunity; Political and Civicparticipation; Equality and Inclusion; Peace and Security; Health and Wellbeing
3   A partnership initiative bringing together a multidisciplinary network of key players with a key role in ensuring sustainable Urbanisation - the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Commonwealth Association of Planners and the Association of Commonwealth Universities

climate change solutions, economic development, innovation and entrepreneurship, and sources of employment underpinned by the activities of young people, who largely still lack a seat at the decision-making table. It is critical that the youth play a meaningful role in shaping cities and human settlements now and for the future.

This think piece addresses specific opportunities and challenges and emerging trends for young people and explores how cities can position themselves to be agents for change in enhancing youth development in the following areas: **economic and financial inclusion, social inclusion, democratic inclusion and housing inclusion.**

1.0 Driving Economic Inclusion - The Political Economy of Youth

Driving and innovating the economies of cities in the Commonwealth will be dependent on its growing young population. The youth are a key economic asset and should not be underestimated as they play a significant role in the rapid economic changes required for development, prosperity and sustainability. New debates on the political economy of the youth reveal that young people should not be 'wasted' but should be assimilated into the functioning's of the capitalist political economy.[4] This new trend of research puts emphasis on recognizing the qualitative and quantitative economic inputs by the youth in order to avoid economic waste. A report by the World Economic Forum[5], notes that there has been an increase in jobs originating from the 'gig' economy, unpaid or low paid internships and a high number of youths venturing into the informal sector. Alongside this are the effects of COVID-19 that has led to labour market distortions that have further narrowed employment opportunities for young people. In Belize, an interview with the Mayor of Belize City Council, revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the tourism industry, which was a major source of employment for young people. These trends have put many young people at risk of poverty.

In a youth survey conducted by CLGF in 2022, over half of the respondents (57%) identified economic opportunities and employment as the biggest concern for young people across Commonwealth cities. Young people are facing economic and financial exclusion at a time where global inflation, climate change, political upheavals and emerging viruses have put pressure on the global economic system. Alongside this, is growing concern of a 'skills crisis' where young people are not equipped with the requisite skills that are in demand in the job market. This statistic is reflective of the current unemployment situation in the City of Wum, in Cameroon, where young people do not have access to employment opportunities. The municipality, through the annual Wum Council Jobs programs, supports young people in getting short term employment during the school holidays.

In addition to this, the municipality has invested in supporting youth entrepreneurs, providing assets such as motorbikes to lessen the burden of start-up costs for young people. In the town of Adenta, in the Greater Accra Metropolitan region of Ghana the municipal assembly in partnership with the Ghana Enterprises Agency has set up business advisory centres to provide business management and financial skills training to young people. Coupled with the training, is the provision of equipment and assets to support the business operations of young people engaged in the local economy.

A study by UNICEF, PwC and Generation Limited[6] in 2021 noted that the 'global skills' shortage, in tandem with economic decline and a labour market that is in need of more complex and diverse skills has contributed to an increase in youth unemployment. UNICEF has called on governments and businesses to come together to ensure training is affordable and accessible and that career progression is made possible for young people to broaden and upskill existing skills and trades. In Chipata, an intermediary city in Zambia, the Mayor argues that cities must position themselves to establish innovative partnerships with stakeholders to support youth in accessing decent employment in order to have a thriving urban economy.

Case Study 1: Youth underemployment and unemployment in Canada

CERIC (Advancing Career Development in Canada) finds that underemployment rarely discussed in the developed world is a major concern amongst young people. Despite being extremely well educated, Canadian youth have the second highest underemployment rates in the OECD affecting both individuals and the

4   Pais, A. (2022). Making the Waste Count: A Contribution to the Political Economy of Youth. Youth and Globalization, 3(2), 403-421.
5   Pandemials: Youth in an Age of Lost Opportunity (2021) World Economic Forum
6   Reaching YES: Addressing the youth employment and skilling challenge (2021) UNICEF, PWC, Generation Limited

economy. On the other hand, Statistics Canada reports that the youth unemployment rate in Canada averaged 13.97% from 1976 until 2022, reaching an all-time high of 28.80% in May of 2020 and a record low of 9.80% in March of 2022.

This research also reveals a strong link between youth unemployment, well-being and mental health. Despite positive pandemic recovery, the demographic features of Canada's youth unemployment, reflect gender disparities and significantly lower numbers for visible minorities. Statistics Canada reports that Black Canadian youth with a university degree have higher unemployment rates than their non – visible minority counterparts.

Through Employment and Social Development Canada, the Federal government in partnership with Provincial governments and cities are launching a **Canada Summer Jobs program 2022**, to support the absorption of youth in the post pandemic economic recovery. This program aims to deal with the issues of unemployment and underemployment amongst Canadian youth with a particular focus on BIPOC and indigenous youth.

For more information https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/youth

Case Study 2: Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ) – Local Government New Zealand

The Mayors Taskforce For Jobs (MTFJ) is a nationwide network of New Zealand's Mayors, working together towards the vision of all young people under 25 being engaged in appropriate education, training, work or other positive activity in their communities. MTFJ runs advocacy projects and aims to partner with best-practice organisations to promote the economic well-being of young people.The MTFJ is governed by the Core Group which includes 17 Mayors from throughout the country, and is chaired by Mayor Max Baxter of Otorohanga Council.

Key MTFJ Initiatives:

Work Exposure Fund: This fund supports provincial and metropolitan councils to run events that enable employers to engage young people in the world of work and to build positive relationships with one another.

Youth Employment Dashboard: The taskforce has partnered with leading data analysts Dot Loves data to provide territorial authorities with relevant and timely data on how their local economies are progressing in regard to tackling youth unemployment. This ensures that councils throughout the country and those working on the ground with young people have timely and accurate data at their disposal about their economy. This is critical, especially as councils across the country are well underway with their own local economic COVID-19 recovery plans.

The dashboard displays the data in an easy and digestible way, provides comparisons to the national averages on some data sets and can monitor and track the improvements of other territorial authorities over time.

For more information https://www.mtfj.co.nz/

1.1 Empowering Youth Through Financial Inclusion

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)[7] reports that young people face significant economic and financial challenges as they transition to adulthood. With specific reference to developing countries who are host to 87% of the global youth population, unemployment is a grave concern with girls and young women affected the most. The City of Kochi recognised the specific financial inclusion issues being faced by women in terms of accessing markets, finance and credit. As such the municipal corporation has been working in partnership with the Kerala State Government, civil society and financial institutions to remove barriers and support women in accessing financial support for their businesses, building their capacity in book keeping and managing business finance.

Data from the International Labour Organization (2022)[8] shows that informality and vulnerable unemployment are negatively affecting youth development, particularly in developing

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7   UNCDF Youth Start Program https://www.uncdf.org/download/file/127/3452/youth-start-brochurepdf
8   World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2022 (2022) International Labour Organization

Figure 1: Share of Youth NEET around the world

Share of youth aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2022

The boundaries shown on this map do not imply endorsement or acceptance by the ILO.

Source: ILO Modelled Estimates and Projections (ILOEST) Database, Nov. 2022 edition, ILOSTAT
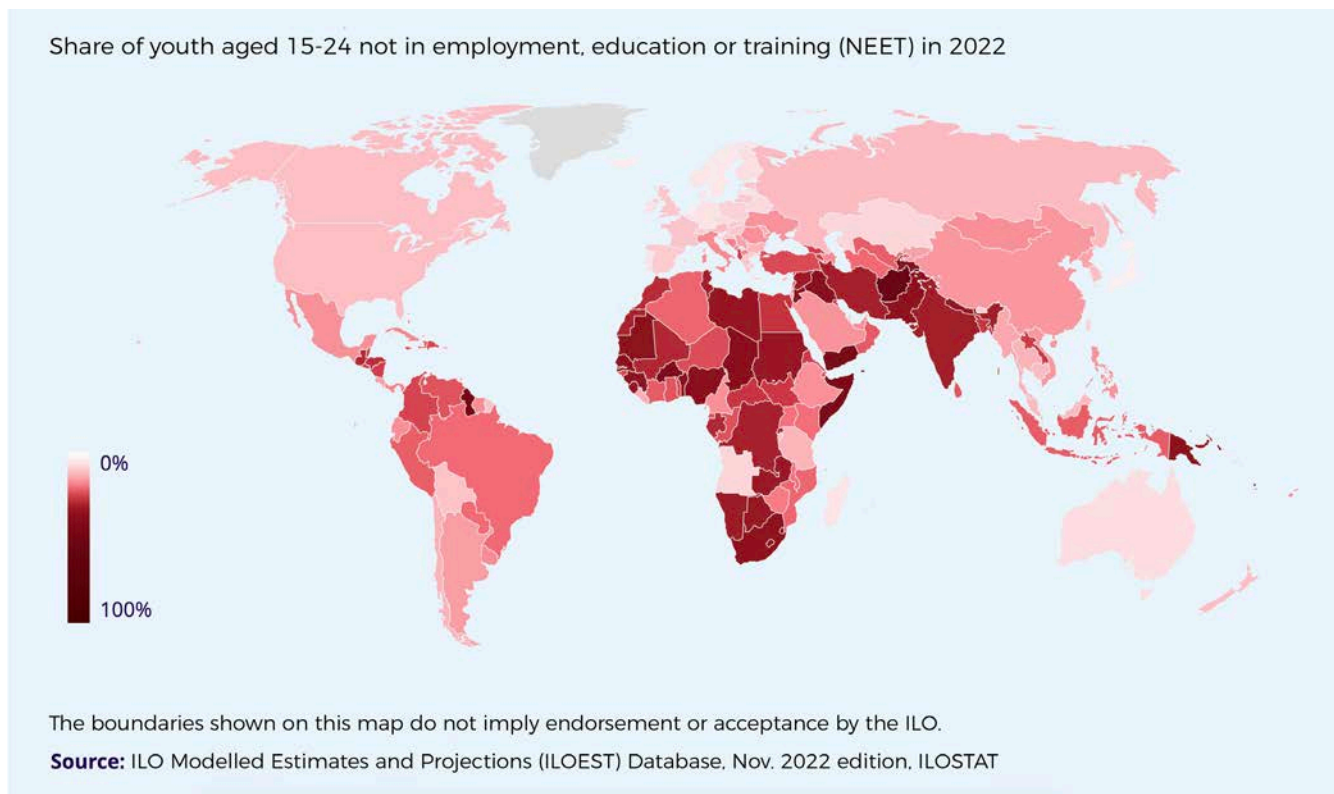
economies. This contributes to high NEET (not in employment, education and training) rates. The ILO data emphasizes specific concerns around transition from school to work. There is need for detailed comparative labour statistics across Commonwealth countries to support national and local governments, private sector and civil society to better design and implement policies and actions to promote better youth employment outcomes and financial inclusion. Urban level data is also required to ensure that cities are equipped with the requisite information to develop relevant economic and financial inclusion programs for young people. The diagram below displays the NEET landscape of young people across the globe, with Africa, South East Asia and Latin America showing higher numbers than Europe and North America.

A key concern around financial inclusion of youth is the lack of a standard method by which it can be measured across economies[9]. In the study by Omar et al (2021), they address issues such as financial literacy as being critical to effective financial inclusion so as to achieve positive and sustainable results. In partnership with Restless Development, MasterCard Foundation (2018)[10] conducted a

study to find out what kind of support is needed to support young small-scale entrepreneurs and expand economic and financial inclusion. The key findings reveal that young people need access to tailored skill building opportunities, financial resources such as start-up capital and mentoring to better understand their markets before seeking business opportunities.

Case Study 3: Financial Inclusion of Youth in Ugandan Cities

The Youth Empowerment Through Agriculture (YETA) is a Mastercard Foundation funded program in Uganda. Through partnerships with civil society and four local governments, one of the objectives of the program was to increase access to financial services by youth associations in the districts of Dokole, Kole, Masinde and Kiryandogo.

9 Omar, M.A., Inaba, K. (2021) Does financial inclusion reduce poverty and income inequality in developing countries? A panel data analysis. Economic Structures Vol. 9, 37
10 Building Inclusive Agricultural Technologies for Young People (2018) Mastercard Foundation and Restless Development

Through the operationalisation of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), over 27,130 youth were able to:

· Learn skills in financial literacy, agriculture and entrepreneurship

· Link VSLAs to banks in the locality to increase access to group financial products.

· Through the introduction to mobile phone banking, youth overcame the challenges of long travel distances to banks, associated travel costs and long queues at bank branches.

· VSLA's encourage youth to learn about savings and investments.

A positive externality of the project was that there was a strong correlation between youth who were active in VSLA and involvement in leadership positions in local governments.

For more information https://ncbaclusa.coop/content/uploads/2021/02/YETA-Updated-Profile-.pdf

Case Study 4: Youth Employment – Waste Cooperatives in Sierra Leone

The Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone (LOCASL) and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) collaborated on a pilot project focus on local economic development and SME support from 2019 to 2021. As part of this work, supported by the European Union, pilot project in Bo City and Koidu City worked to specifically target youth and support youth entrepreneurship.

The councils identified unemployment among the youth in their respective cities as a major focus. Waste management was identified as one of the critical sectors with the potential to contribute substantially to the generation of jobs within the green economy and also support the council in its waste removal role. Significant amounts of plastic wastes in the form of sachets and containers are disposed of everyday, which can be collected and sold to plastic waste processing companies for recycling, both reducing pressure on the waste disposal service and generating employment.

300 young people in the two communities were provided with training and were supported

in the organisation of youth groups which were provided with tools and equipment (including boots, gloves, wheelbarrows, shovels and tricycles) for effective waste collection. They were provided with support for business registration and the opening of bank accounts, as well as the formation of cooperatives, to support reinvestment of some profits into further expansion of the businesses.

For more information: https://www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/clgf-publications/research-reports/

1.2 Digital Economies: Preparing Youth for The Future of Work

Digital technologies are increasingly shaping young people's lives in a profound way. Despite significant digital divides across the Commonwealth, an increasing number of young people are able to participate in and contribute to the digitally networked environment in many forms, ranging from creative expression on social media to interactive gaming and collaboration, which opens up diverse and unique economic opportunities. The COVID -19 pandemic fast forwarded the demand for digital skills and set the stage for ushering new ways of working that will be anchored on technology. McKinsey and Company (2021)[11] reports the global labour market is becoming automated, digital and dynamic and this will require workers to have digital foundational skills to add value, operate in a digital environment and to continually adapt to new ways of working.

The digital economy can unlock new pathways for economic inclusion of youth, innovation, decent job creation and poverty reduction across the Commonwealth. In sub- Saharan Africa, the ubiquity of digital finance (Fintech) has had a significant impact on youth entrepreneurship and self-employment in a region historically plagued by underemployment and high rates of youth employment in the informal sector. Furthermore, the mobile ecosystem in sub-Saharan Africa has led to the formal and informal employment of youth especially in the sale and distribution

9   Defining the skills citizens will need in the future world of work (2021), By Marco Dondi, Julia Klier, Frédéric Panier, and Jorg Schubert

of mobile services and devices leading to a contribution of 3.5% GDP across the region (ILO 2020[12]). Hampering these efforts are disparities in communication infrastructure, skills and necessary regulations.

COVID-19 deepened existing barriers to accessing decent jobs for many youths, especially in developing nations. As cities continue to be the epicentre of economic activity and innovation, the need and demand for decent jobs a key priority for economic inclusion and advancing social justice. Promoting digital skills and the use of ICTs for social and economic empowerment of people presents an opportune moment for cities to address employment challenges faced by young people. Alongside this is the need to support the matching of skills to the demands of the labour market. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU)[13] reports that despite the assumption that young people are considered 'digital natives', majority of them may not possess sufficient job relevant digital skills to fill vacancies. Hence the need for training programs and upskilling opportunities.

Case Study 5: Cities of Learning 'Digital Generation Youth'

A strategic long-term partnership between several cities and regions of learning.

Launched in 2020, the project titled 'Digital Generation Youth' will connect cities in South Africa, Nigeria, The Netherlands and Lithuania to promote best practices in digital literacy education and skills training and provide solutions for recognition of non- formal skills.

The project partners will research, design and pilot new technologies for digital skills development and rethink how digital transformation could drive up skilling of young people who don't have access to opportunities.

The project is critical because it focuses on cities at the core of leading and supporting young people in their jurisdictions, to ensure sustainable economic inclusion in the rapidly changing world of work.

For more information https://www.citiesoflearning.net/

Emerging opportunities and challenges for the economic and financial inclusion of young people

1. **Digitization:** The digital economy presents a tangible opportunity to deepen and broaden the financial and economic inclusion of young people. Harnessing the ubiquity of mobile phones and growing fintech options for accessing credit, savings, insurance and investing is pivotal for youth economic development.

2. **Financial literacy:** There is need for a concerted effort amongst key stakeholders in the financial sector, cities and youth development spaces to enable the access to free or affordable financial literacy resources. This strengthens young people's ability to effectively manage financial resources, ultimately empowering them to fully participate in their economies.

3. **Supporting youth entrepreneurship:** In the context of the post-pandemic economic recovery, formal employment activities are scarce in some Commonwealth cities. Cities need to be able facilitate incubation capabilities in order to support the ideas of young people through grant making, investing and other advisory services that enable access to capital and the market.

12 Global Youth Employment Trends 2020 . Technology and the Future of Jobs International Labour Organization
13 Digital Inclusion of Youth https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/digital-inclusion-of-youth.aspx

2.0 Accelerating Social Inclusion and Belonging

Social inclusion is a continual struggle, yet its definition and operationalisation remain elusive within the context of youth development. Dauite et al (2021)[14] find that social inclusion lacks the perspectives of youth at its centre. The CLGF youth survey revealed that 33% of young people identify social inclusion and belonging as a major concern in their cities. Cities are the new frontier for social protection. As urban populations grow, challenges such as poverty, crime, and climate change will lead to the demand for effective public policies that address the social costs of density and improve social inclusion. Cities should be responsive and dynamic in order to reinforce upward mobility of young people through increased access to basic services that are tailored to urban conditions.

The social safety net of cities varies across the Commonwealth, with social protection services targeting youth inconsistently in place in both developed and developing countries. Devereux and Costa (2021)[15] find that experience with urban social protection programmes is limited in developing cities. Typically, there has been the extension of rural social assistance programs that do not encompass urban needs and more so those of urban youth. Most notable is the lack of a specific focus on urban social protection in general and as it relates to young people in the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. The COVID 19 pandemic has exposed this gap, taking into account the disproportionate impact of lockdowns on the livelihoods of the urban poor, with additional intersectional challenges faced by young people and women.. Cities now have the opportunity to revisit and assess policy decisions so as to better connect social safety nets to spatial, economic and service agendas and to better incorporate the unique and dynamic needs of young people.

In some cities particularly in developing economies, access to basic services such as water, sanitation and hygiene, education and health facilities remain an acute challenge. Urban policy makers grapple with regulations on the access to basic services and fail to adequately address the unique needs of

young people particularly vulnerable groups such as women, migrants, LGBQTI persons, disabled and racialised people. A recent report by IIED[16] finds that for young people especially those living in informal settlements, the COVID -19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing structural inequalities around access to services and infrastructure. The report notes the loss of informal and formal employment opportunities, loss of educational opportunities, loss of mobility leading to social isolation and poor mental health, as well as exclusion from subsidies, loans, cash support provided to mitigate against covid impacts, and governance structures at all levels.

With particular reference to women and girls, empirical evidence shows that cities fail to offer the same level of benefits and opportunities that men enjoy. Based on data from 59 low- and middle-income countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Central and Southern Asia and sub-Sahara Africa, UNWOMEN (2020)[17] reports that in 80% of the sampled countries, women are overrepresented in urban slums. At the root of this phenomenon are gender-based inequalities that limit women's access to education, safe housing, water and sanitation and food, as well as systemic undervaluing of roles traditionally performed by women both in formal and informal work, as well as in the family. A large majority of women in urban slums are young, and many of whom are also mothers. Lack of access to affordable childcare for women across urban areas, but especially for poor women, resulting in additional limited livelihood opportunities and

14 Daiute, C., Sullu, B., & Kovács-Cerović, T. (2021). What Is Social Inclusion? Insights From Interventions With Youth Across Migration Systems. Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 8(2), 143–151.

15 Devereux, S. (2021). Social protection responses to COVID-19 in Africa. Global Social Policy, 21(3), 421–447.

16 A just recovery from COVID-19: young people from eight African cities speak out (May 2022) by Arabella Fraiser https://www.iied.org/just-recovery-covid-19-young-people-eight-african-cities-speak-out

17 Spotlight on SDG11: Harsh realities: Marginalized women in cities of the developing world (2020) Ginette Azcona, Antra Bhatt, Sara Duerto, and Tanu Priya Uteng, UNWOMEN, Spotlight on SDG Series

ensures further social and political marginalisation. Ensuring a shared sense of commitment to specific social inclusion policies will be key in maintaining political buy-in ensuring equal conditions for young men and women. There are also interesting examples to be drawn on of cities using innovative financing tools to enhance social inclusion particularly for marginalized groups such as the social impact bonds in the following case study.

Case Study 6: Improving Access to Services through Social Impact Bonds, Toronto, Canada

In 2020, the City of Toronto released the "Social Debenture Framework" , a Social Bond program providing sustainable finance and promoting positive socioeconomic outcomes. The City, which successfully issued its first $100 million social bonds, was awarded "Social Bond of the Year – Local Authority/Municipality" at the 2021 Environmental Finance Bond Awards in Canada.

The Social Bond Program demonstrates the City's commitment to advancing positive social inclusion and sustainability for all people in Toronto. Eligible projects are capital projects for various social initiatives, including: social and affordable housing, affordable basic infrastructure, access to essential services, and socioeconomic advancement and empowerment.

For more information https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/902f-SocialBondNewsletterJune2021-final.pdf

2.1 Green public spaces, Sports and Placemaking

Urban space has long been the site for tension and social exclusion of youth as cities grapple with changing land use patterns alongside meeting the public and private needs of the market and society at large. The design, provision and availability of public space to suit the unique and fundamental needs of young people is a key element in strengthening social inclusion. As cities grapple with the intersectional impacts of climate change, economic downturn, political unrest and migration amongst other global and local challenges, providing public spaces and infrastructural support for youth activities and engagement is part and parcel of

ensuring social inclusion that will produce positive externalities. Young people must have spaces where they feel welcome and where they can use the space as they want. An illustration of this is by a recent study by Putra et al (2020)[18] who noted an empirical link between proximity to green spaces and prosocial behaviour in youth and adolescents.

Through effective policies and design approaches, some cities engage in youth-inclusive design to increase the access of public spaces by youth. Youth need to enjoy public spaces at liberty and develop a sense of belonging and attachment to their environment. This is critical for physical, social, cognitive and emotional development. Young people are an important group with legitimate rights to occupy and shape their public environments. Cities have the opportunity to enhance meaningful engagement through collaborative design and planning for public spaces and parks. It is in this exercise that cities begin to shape new forms of social inclusion that meet the needs of young people and strengthens the social fabric of urban areas. Multi-functional spaces that can be used by multiple actors and/or groups, that allow young people space both in structured and unstructured activities are important provision which city administration can either make available or inaccessible through different policy decisions.

Considerations which are well-planned and implemented in infrastructure, can provide access to a host of socio-economic benefits which encourage inclusion. Infrastructural improvements such as bike lanes, trails, parks and playgrounds are some of the investments cities can make to promote physical activity, and this can be prioritised in underserved communities and for target groups such as young girls, low-income and racialised groups. In order to ensure cost-effectiveness, cities have the opportunity to establish innovative partnerships that can provide low-cost and effective equipment, design and facilities to enhance the physical activity of young people in their cities.

18 Putra, I. G. N. E., Astell-Burt, T., Cliff, D. P., Vella, S. A., John, E. E., & Feng, X. (2020). The relationship between green space and prosocial behaviour among children and adolescents: a systematic review. Frontiers in Psychology, 11, 859.
19 Watson, A., & Koontz, J. S. (2021). Youth sports in the wake of COVID-19: a call for change. British Journal of Sports Medicine, 55(14), 764-764.

Watson and Koontz (2021)[19] note that prior to the pandemic, youth sports faced grave problems such as high costs, decreased participation and barriers to access and professionalism. The COVID-19 pandemic had an effect on youth gatherings, group sports and activities. The cancellation of school and associated sporting programs led to a decrease in physical activity and significant mental health concerns for many young people.

The principles of advocacy planning and placemaking are tools that cities can employ to engage youth to enhance social inclusion. Placemaking takes a proactive stance on the need to democratize public engagement and more so with young people, whose needs are dynamic and unique. Throughout the last decade, placemaking initiatives have been used to enhance social inclusion. However, lacking in these initiatives is the sustained engagement of various groups and active follow through which to ensure a sustainable and scalable engagment.

Case Study 7: Colaba – The Art Capital of Mumbai

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation in the city of Mumbai, India, has been encouraging and supporting young people engaged in street art and graffiti. The objective of this initiative is to reclaim public space increasing social inclusion, belonging and safety in these spaces.

Street art and graffiti are used as avenues to showcase issues such as gender inequality, sanitation and climate change in a bid to enhance inclusion and belonging of residents.

Street artists, mainly young people, are paid for their work through municipal corporation partnerships with community centres.

For more information https://thedraftcolaba.blogspot.com/2021/03/we-will-make-colaba-art-capital-of.html

2.2 Surviving COVID-19 - Anti-Social Behaviour and Mental Health

Experts note that the COVID -19 pandemic has worsened the already deteriorating mental health of young people. After employment opportunities and climate change, the CLGF youth survey identified that mental illness ranked in the top three concerns for young people. Numerous studies have observed sharp increases in the rate of depression, anxiety, loneliness and suicide attempts. A report by Nature Africa (2021)[20] notes that young people in Africa are particularly at risk of mental disorders and healthcare systems are not well equipped to deal with them. In the city of Chipata, Zambia, the economic impact of the COVID -19 lockdown led to an increase in suicide rates amongst young people due to unpaid debts. Social unrest due to anti-social behaviour is also a growing concern for many cities. Substance abuse and alcoholism amongst young people due to economic hardship is increasing across developing and developed cities. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the city of Kochi in India to be innovative in terms of offering free counselling and support services to residents. The city set up a temporary call centre hosted by the Office of the Mayor and recruited unemployed graduates with backgrounds in sociology and psychology, to provide counselling services free of charge.

Estimates from the World Health Organization report that 10-20% of young children and adolescents worldwide experience mental health problems. A systematic review on sub-Saharan Africa reported that 1 in 7 young people experience significant psychological challenges and 10% of those studied qualify for psychiatric diagnosis. The World Health Organization[21] reports that the lack of access to basic social, health and education services combined with structural inequalities, aggravate risks for mental health. More so, the WHO notes that investment in mental health remains extremely low, particularly in Africa, with government expenditure at less than 1 US dollar per capita. Robust data on city intervention in curbing the effects of mental health on young people is minimal, especially in developing countries. On the other hand, developed cities such as London, Auckland and Toronto, have long

20 High mental health burden for Africa's youth (2021) Elsabe Brits, Nature Africa
21 Access to mental health and psychosocial support services remains unequal for children and adolescents in Africa (2021) World Health Organisation Africa (2021) https://www.afro.who.int/news/access-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-services-remains-unequal-children-and

standing programs and initiatives to support young people struggling with mental health illnesses and anti- social behaviour.

Case Study 8: The Hamwe Festival- Using Arts to Address Mental Health in Young People

Bringing together community organisers, health professionals, national and local government, the Hamwe Festival convened by the University of Global Health Equity in Kigali, Rwanda, aimed to reflect on the impact of creativity and art on young people's mental health.

The COVID -19 pandemic saw an increase in loneliness, isolation, depression anxiety and social injustices exacerbated by poverty. The festival brought together, singers, artists, poets and dancers to begin concrete discussions of how the arts can be used as a tool to address mental health challenges and anti-social behaviour amongst the youth in Kigali and other cities in Rwanda.

For more information https://www.university worldnews.com/ post.php?story=20211116095903766

Emerging opportunities and challenges for the social inclusion of young people:

1. Strengthening Social Infrastructure: Most developing cities in the Commonwealth lack robust and efficient social infrastructure services for residents and more so for young people. In order to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion, young people need access to a host of social services and infrastructure such as community centres, sports and cultural facilities in order to access much needed services.

2. Public Space: Ensuring youth priorities are taken into account in the planning and policing of public space can have a significant impact on inclusion and belonging. Making young people feel welcome in public spaces and allowing them to further shape these spaces through use and infrastructure can build investment in the local environment as well as foster inter-generational exchange and support.

3. Social Innovation and Technology: Youth led social innovation is largely under exploited. Youth led innovations are inspired by local problems and typically receive little to no funding, yet they hold the key to unlocking sustainable social inclusion. The ability to make use of existing technology to engage in meaningful social practices is critical for the equitable inclusion of young people from diverse backgrounds.

4. Mental Health, Stigma and Access to Support: Stigma associated with mental health can lead to discrimination and abuse of young people whereby they are treated differently or poorly based on their conditions. Young people struggling with mental health issues often tend to have fewer opportunities for employment, education and social activities with their peers. The provision, availability and affordability of clinical and non-clinical services should be a top priority for cities as they plan, design and implement social infrastructure programs.

3.0 The Young and Homeless

As cities grapple with a number of diverse challenges, the provision of affordable, adequate and safe housing remains a significant concern across the Commonwealth. With an increase in living costs, rising inflation and housing deficits, young people are the hardest hit due to their financial status. The rapid proliferation of informal housing and high land values affect young people's ability to housing access, options and inclusivity, leading to high rates of homelessness. Homelessness, is defined as both primary homelessness, where an individual is living in the street as well as secondary homelessness were a person is having to move from one temporary shelter to another, be this with friends and/or family or in shelters or other spaces.

In the global north, Grattan et al (2021)[22] note that risk factors for youth homelessness include family difficulties, mental health or substance use problems, history of problem behaviours, a history of foster care, child homelessness and running away. In the global south, the risk factors are different, with poverty being a major contributor tied to street living and working, commercial interests in land and land grabbing that displaces families, (Embelton et al 2017)[23]. Despite the varying causal factors, Gibbs et al (2021)[24] note that the universal conditions of homelessness are similar regardless of culture, politics and economics. From an economic point of view, income disparities and distribution, inequalities, lack of rental support strategies and a shrinking affordable housing market lead to an increase in homelessness. On the other hand, a social analysis argues that, weak service delivery systems responsible for child welfare, mental health and domestic violence prevention, contribute to homelessness.

3.1 Getting at the Heart of Homelessness Data

The COVID-19 pandemic magnified issues of housing affordability and homelessness particularly amongst young people experiencing varying forms of violence and stigma. Perri and Sohn (2022)[25] note that pandemic related financial insecurities, exacerbated homelessness amongst at risk youth in major cities across the globe. Their study reveals that at-risk youth are likely to continue living in conditions of homelessness. Of further concern is the lack of political attention toward youth homelessness across the globe. A recent report by the SHIFT, an organization that aims to elevate homelessness as a violation of human rights, notes that there are about 150 million homeless people in the world. The report further notes that since the pandemic began, the number of people living in homelessness and inadequate housing has risen. In 2020, the United Nations tabled its first ever resolution on homelessness and notes that 1.6 billion people live in precarious housing conditions.

Youth focused data is difficult to obtain at a global level due to a number of factors such as varying definitions from country to country and the fact that census data is typically collected at household level, which means that the homeless are not accounted for. The "hidden homeless" consists of people who may be living in informal settlements, squatting structures or couch surfing, many of whom are usually young people. Furthermore, the lack of city level data, particularly in developing countries, hampers efforts to adequately address homelessness amongst young people.

Case Study 9: Data and Policy: Addressing youth homelessness in Australia

In 2019-20, cities across Australia reported that family and domestic violence and inadequate housing conditions, were the main reasons that

22 Grattan, R. E., Tryon, V. L., Lara, N., Gabrielian, S. E., Melnikow, J., & Niendam, T. A. (2022). Risk and Resilience Factors for Youth Homelessness in Western Countries: A Systematic Review. Psychiatric Services, 73(4), 425-438.

23 Embleton L, Lee H, Gunn J, Ayuku D, Braitstein P. (2017) Causes of Child and Youth Homelessness in Developed and Developing Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. JAMA Pediatr. Vol.170(5):435–444.

24 Gibbs.L Bainbridge. J, Rosenblatt. M and Mammo.T (2021) How Ten Global Cities Take on Homelessness: Innovations that Work. University of California Press

25 Perri, M., & Sohn, J. (2022). Preventing Youth Homelessness in the Context of Covid-19: Complexities and Ways Forward. International Journal on Homelessness, 2(1), 152–159.

young people ages 15-24 sought assistance from specialist homelessness services.

The latest data from the Australia Bureau of Statistics records that in 2019-20, 58,200 persons aged between 15-24 (1.8% of young people), received assistance through homelessness services, with women being at a higher risk.

They further note that overcrowding of young people is a particular concern in the lower socio-economic areas of major cities such as Sydney and Melbourne. Furthermore, the Australia government noted a link between the impact of COVID-19 and the ability to secure adequate housing particularly for at risk young people.

Melbourne, Australia: Front Yard Youth Services

This is a specialised service offered by the state of Victoria, to provide support for young people aged 16-24 to access Homelessness services. The major accommodation services include:

- 18 bed crisis accommodation service in the Melbourne city centre for youth with sleep disorders

- Short-term accommodation shelters across the city to cater for up to 600 young people annually

- Fully furnished medium term accommodation for young people for up to two years

- Early Intervention programs to support over 500 youth to remain connected to family, school, housing and their communities each year.

For more information https://www.mcm.org.au/ homelessness/frontyard

Case Study 10: Culemborg Safe Space – Cape Town, South Africa

In 2018, the city of Capetown conducted a study on the number of people living on the streets. They recorded a total of 6715 persons. A recent study by Gittings et al (2021)[26] notes that most of the young people living in the streets of Eastern and Western Cape provinces are of adolescent age.

In 2013, the City of Capetown adopted a Street People Policy as a way to tackle the effects of

homelessness on this group of people. The Culemborg Safe Space, a first for the province and the country, is a voluntary overnight transitional shelter facility that accommodates up to 230 people a night, with access to ablution and storage facilities.

The facility further provides a sleeping pallet, sleeping bag, blanket and a wellness pack containing hygiene essentials. The site has a dedicated law enforcement team to provide 24-hour security.

The Culemborg Safe space also provides additional services such as medical services, access to identification documents and specialist social services amongst others.

Further Case Study Information: https://www.iol.co.za/ capeargus/news/culemborg-safe-space-helping-uplift-city-homeless-17620283

3.2 Housing the Youth: Where, What and How

Policy responses to housing challenges vary across the global north and global south. Czischke and Ayala (2021)[27] find that housing polices in the colonised countries of Africa and Asia were targeted for specific groups such as government employees, war veterans and the military. Whereas in the global north, contemporary housing policies focus on low income populations, increasing supply of affordable housing, and gentrification issues, through these have varying success. In both cases, youth housing needs are not explicitly addressed. With a growing young population particularly in the global south, housing policies must reflect the needs of young people. In the City of Chipata, Zambia, the Mayor notes that incentivising youth to own land is critical to accessing housing. The city, through partnerships, is working to reduce the cost of owning land for young people and working with developers to deliver public hostels and low-cost housing that is affordable. In the city of Kochi in Southern India,

26 Gittings, L., Toska, E., Medley, S., Cluver, L., Logie, C. H., Ralayo, N., ... & Mbithi-Dikgole, J. (2021). 'Now my life is stuck!': Experiences of adolescents and young people during COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa. Global public health, 16(6), 947-963.

27 Czischke, D., & Ayala, A. (2021). Housing in the Global North and the Global South. Companion to Urban and Regional Studies, 579-604.

the municipal corporation under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Housing Program, offers young people cash support to subsidize the cost of accessing decent housing. In Kochi the effects of water logging and flooding has had a major impact on the existing housing stock, destroying housing which also increases the pressure on low income young people. In response to this, the city of Kochi in partnership with key stakeholders is in the process of developing multi-dwelling housing units that will house 400 families.

A recent study by the Youth Café[28], a non-profit Kenyan youth organisation, finds that approximately 70-80% of African youth work in the informal sector, which denies them access to formal financing, which would give them the opportunity to rent, buy and build decent homes. This reduces their housing options and forces many young people to stay in slums or find other precarious housing options. Recent initiatives by cities, development agencies and civil society are working in partnership youth to address the housing challenge. Harris (2018)[29] notes that the young bulge in developing cities presents significant planning challenges and necessitates new participatory tools for planning more inclusive cities. This would give room to address housing challenges amongst young people and give them an opportunity to be part of the solution.

Some of the key issues affecting access to housing amongst young people include:

1. **Housing Market and Affordability** – Rising housing costs coupled with a challenging post pandemic economic climate has made renting and buying of property for young people difficult. Due to economic and financial circumstances, most young people remain in their family homes for a longer period of time. Others live in shared spaces, which may not be appropriate.

2. **Cost of living** – young people are more likely to feel the impact of rising costs of energy and food. This directly impacts their financial capacity to meet multiple needs, affecting their decisions on where to live.

3. **Safety** – young people are concerned about their personal and physical safety when thinking of housing options. Night-time safety is of particular concern due to the fact that young people may spend time out of their dwellings for work, school or entertainment purposes.

4. **Discrimination** – Intersectionality of discrimination is a major issue in housing access. Certain young people face significant challenges in accessing housing due to their race, gender, religion, health status and / or sexuality. Rights to fair housing is challenged by the systemic and structural prejudices, as these young people may endure traumatic experiences such as harassment, heightened scrutiny, stigmatization etc which may affect their ability to secure suitable housing.

28 Youth Café (2022) The Youth Informal Housing Challenge
29 Harris JC (2018) Vulnerable Youth's Perspectives and Priorities for Informal Settlements: Photovoice Evidence from Lusaka, Zambia. Journal of Planning Education and Research. Vol 38(4): pp.398-412.

4.0 Restoring and Reimagining Local Democracy Through Youth Participation

Cities are increasingly becoming the epicentre of decision making. With urbanisation set to become a defining feature of global society, responding to modern, complex and unique challenges will require the engagement of young people. In order for this to take place, the mutual trust between young people, democratic institutions and processes need to be restored. The political and democratic engagement by youth in cities should be understood through the following lens[30] in order to fully develop meaningful and sustainable avenues for decision making:

i. Participation as a rights-based practice

ii. Participation as a mechanism of empowerment of young people

iii. Participation as a guarantee of efficiency in policy, practice and services

iv. Participation as an instrument of young people's development.

A recent study in Nigeria[31] found a positive correlation between youth participation in local politics, good governance and social inclusion. With a large proportion of the youth unemployed, the study reveals that youth involvement in local politics provides opportunity and space to share grievances and not resort to social unrest. The study further reveals an important link between democracy and social inclusion. The two need to be satisfied to realise sustainable development that is anchored on the needs of the youth. However, it is also key to ensure that young people are equipped with the necessary skills and tools to effectively engage with local government structures.

Case Study 11: Caribbean Youth Democracy Lab

The International Republican Institute (IRI) Launched in 2021, the Caribbean Youth Democracy Lab was set up to bolster the engagement of young leaders from Belize, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago in political process. The objectives include training and preparing youth leaders with skills to develop policy solutions that address their community needs. The youth leaders will also be equipped with tools to develop, communicate and advocate for policy solutions.

Source: https://www.iri.org/iri-around-the-world/latin-america-and-caribbean/caribbean/

Case Study 12 : CALGA Youth Councils

The Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities (CALGA) and CLGF worked with young people in Bahamas, Guyana, St.Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago to help them constructively engage with local government in the period 2014-2017 through the project "Fostering a Democratic Culture in Schools and Local Communities" funded by the Commonwealth Foundation.

The project worked with student councils in secondary schools, to send representatives to specially created Junior Councils that provided a structured interface between young people and their local government.

The young people on these Junior Councils were trained in the local government system, participatory governance and advocacy and lobbying techniques, giving them the capabilities and confidence needed to effectively engage with authorities. The project also worked with local government representatives to integrate the young people's voices into local government decision making processes. The end goal of the project was to embed Junior Councils into the local government system building a sustainable system of inclusion that would extend beyond the life of the project grant.

30 Farthing, R. (2012). Why youth participation? Some justifications and critiques of youth participation using New Labour's youth policies as a case study. Youth & policy, 109(109), 71-97.

31 Akinyetun, T. S. (2021). Youth political participation, good governance and social inclusion in Nigeria: Evidence from Nairaland. Canadian Journal of Family and Youth/Le Journal Canadien de Famille et de la Jeunesse, 13(2), 1-13.

431 students and 19 local governments, participated in the programme over the three-year period. The programme successfully encouraged the formation of student councils in participating schools. It provided the students with communication skills and trained in the principles of democracy and local governance. The project included school debates which proved to be a popular part of the student council activities. It gave the students a chance to reflect on topical and relevant issues, as well as to interact with other schools and their Local Government representatives. Model Local Government Council debates were used as a tool for empowering the youth voice whilst simultaneously giving Student Councils, youth issues, and local government national media prominence.

The work attracted a mix of trainers and project coordinators in the four countries, from the education and local government sectors. Councillor Examin Philbert from St Lucia – a Project Coordinator and school principal – explained: "The project is timely and will afford students the opportunity to actively participate in democratic processes. It will enable Student Councils to develop leadership skills, forge partnerships with the school administration, as well as, lobby and advocate on behalf of the student body. The Junior Councils will catapult our youngsters into meaningful participation in community and Local Government engagement". A tracking survey was conducted which indicated that at the end of the project 77% of the students had interactions with Local Government, and 71% could identify specific Local Government services compared to 52% in the first year of the project.

Source : https://commonwealthfoundation.com/project/ fostering-democratic-culture-schools-local-communities- caribbean/

4.1 Knowing What Ticks- Understanding the Needs of Young People

Cities need to expend their efforts in learning how to better engage youth and create spaces of mutual trust and respect. Studies show that for young people, civil and political engagement tends to be issue based, personal and informal. Therefore, horizontal forms of democratic participation and engagement, many of which are available online should be utilized. Self -expression is critical for young people and could serve as a motivation that cities could tap into to strengthen their involvement in decision making and local action Helping and supporting youth to position their concerns and issues is a way that cities could ensure long term commitment and engagement with young people.

Young people face discrimination in the form of ageism, where their opinions and contributions are not valued, which ultimately impacts their confidence and engagement in local politics. In the city of Chipata, Zambia, social media continues to be a powerful tool for youth engagement in politics. Twenty-eight (28) year old, Mayor George Mwanza, who was elected into office in 2021, mobilized most of his votes through social media. He argues that the youth should leverage on their ability to navigate technology and new media to position themselves as key contributors in local decision making. The CLGF Youth and Cities survey gives an insight into how young people would want to communicate with their local government. 88% of respondents indicated that they would like to hear from their local government by e-mail or SMS/texts. This shows that traditional ways of communicating may no longer be the most effective to ensure youth engagement.

Case Study 13: The Tuia Programme, New Zealand – Engaging Marginalised Youth in Local Government

The Tuia programme is an intentional, long term, intergenerational approach to develop the leadership capacity of young Maori in communities throughout New Zealand. This programme involves local Mayors selecting a young Maori from their district to mentor on a one-to-one basis, to encourage and enhance leadership skills. It is envisaged the rangatahi (young person) will be mentored on a monthly basis, involving both informal meetings and formal occasions that will assist the young person's development as a local leader. The relationship also provides both partners with the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into inter-generational issues, cultural values and experiences.

Selected rangatahi are expected to undertake and record a 100 hour community service project in their respective communities. This will provide the young person an opportunity to share their experiences, practice new strategies and demonstrate leadership.

Rangatahi will also have the opportunity to build peer networks with graduates of the Programme, obtain support and receive leadership training by attending four leadership development wānanga over the course of the year.

For more information https://www.mtfj.co.nz/our-work/ tuia-and-mtfj-rangatahi/

4.2 Youth Helping Youth and The Role of Digital Democracy

Over the last decade, there has been an increase in youth to youth networks, who self-organize to take charge of decision making in their localities. This trend is taking place against the backdrop of a decline in youth participation in formal politics both at the national and the local level. There has been growing concern at a global level and evidence to indicate that youth are no longer engaging in established forms of democratic participation such as voting and membership in political parties. The proliferation of self-organizing, informal movements and activities that are fluid social movements and that take place across borders and around issues of common concern are more appealing.

Even before the COVID -19 pandemic, the rise in the use of internet and new communication technologies created novel ways of communicating, sharing experiences and amplifying young people's voices. Viewed as a distinct feature of future democratic participation, successful strategies such as web-based participation usually target young people who are already politically engaged. Researchers in the field note that despite the advantages of digital tools, they can widen gaps between different social classes. This is particularly the case for the young urban poor, who do not have access to internet or digital equipment such as laptops or mobile phones. On the other hand, technology for local democracy can provide a space for young people to exchange, connect and spark ideas for inclusive societies in their various cities. However, cities together with their national counterparts, need to put in place

the right governance and regulatory structures to deal with issues of code of conduct, misinformation, harassment, racism and other forms of online violence.

Case Study 14: Youth Vipi, Kenya

In partnership with WeSolve a technology application, Youth Vipi is a youth voter outreach program initiated by the youth for the youth. The initiative aimed to educate, involve and inspire the Kenyan youth population to exercise their civic duty ahead of the 2022 General elections. Local and national elections present an opportune moment to incentivize and encourage voter apathy among the eligible youth voter population in Kenya.

The aim of this project is to raise voter awareness and increase political efficacy amongst the youth to participate in the electoral process and decide the outcome for their future. Youth Vipi sets out to encourage the youth of Kenya to take charge of their own destiny by being involved in an integral process that will affect their future.

The Youth Vipi Voting Programme will be implemented in all 47 counties of Kenya. The beneficiaries of this project are youth aged between 18 - 35 years. Youth Vipi aims to:

· Increase the youth voter turnout

· Increase political literacy and efficacy.

· Develop policies that will create an environment where the youth can exploit their potential through value adding initiatives.

· Be a catalyst for youth empowerment and participation.

· Collaborate with other stakeholders to research and come up with policies that would assist youth in the county to overcome the challenges they face.

· Take advantage of benefits associated with ICT to foster youth development

· Help the youth to be able to work towards the realization of their life goals that were hindered before by the under-performing elected individuals.

· Provide employment opportunities to the youths

For more information https://youthvipi.com/

4.3 Youth and Mayor Forums: Issue Based Engagement

Youth and Mayor forums have become one of the ways for young people to collaborate and engage with the highest political offices in cities. Different cities and regions have different formats, structures and ways of engaging. Such forums can be sites for youth empowerment, encouraging involvement and long-term commitment in local politics and issues.

An effective way of leveraging the potential of youth and mayor forums is to engage on thematic or specific issues such as crime, climate change, waste etc. The C40 Global Youth and Mayor Forum[32] is a one-of-a-kind platform that brings together youth climate leaders to work together in shaping the vision of the Global Green New Deal in cities across the world. The platform is an exemplary convenor that brings together political will and commitment to work in partnership with youth in advocating for climate justice and inclusive climate action in cities. In the CLGF Youth and Cities survey, climate change ranked second as a major concern for young people. As cities position themselves to be critical pillars in the transition to net-zero societies, engaging youth to participate in decisions, creating platforms for innovative ideas is essential. In Freetown the city initiative "Freetown the Treetown" is working to build engagement, notably among young people towards the goal of planning 1 million trees. Conducted as a community-based stewardship to plant, track, and grow trees, more than 550 green jobs were created with the majority of growers being young people and many of the community-based organisations coordinating the programme also lead by young people. Another example of high-levels of youth engagement is in Wum, Cameroon, where the municipality has leveraged on the climate change crisis to engage youth in local issues by recruiting them to plant trees as a greening initiative. According to the mayor, such activities build trust between young people and the city officials and allows them to gain insight into municipal affairs.

Some cities have relied on youth engagement frameworks that structure and guide their outreach to recruit youth in city affairs. Elements of such a framework should include the right physical and online spaces – informal and youth friendly mechanisms to enhance open engagement and

build trust. As mentioned above research finds that youth participation in politics is primarily issue based. Therefore, city leaders and technocrats need to support and provide platforms for youth to engage on pressing issues that youth themselves identify as important for them.

A second key element in a youth engagement framework is to ensure exposure, maximising the channels through which engaged youth, work with the city, making their engagement meaningful and sustainable. It is important for cities to avoid youth and mayor forums turning into sites of 'managed youth empowerment' where power differentials, sexism and ageism manifest. City leaders and mayors have to ensure that forums are spaces where trust and mutual respect prevails. Youth and Mayor forums can be used as innovative platforms to address social exclusion, attract talent, groom future leaders and reduce apathy towards formal democratic activities.

Case Study 15: Attracting New Talent: Youth Forums in Jamaica

Spearheaded by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, Youth Mayor Forums will be the foundation for the development of young people to be the next generation of administrative and political leadership of Jamaica's local government system.

The Youth Mayor Forums were inaugurated in 2018 and are designed to mirror the structure of municipal corporations. These are present in all 14 local authorities in Jamaica.

The forums provide a platform for youth who are resident in their respective local governments to elevate concerns in their urban areas and present solutions to the municipality and the Ministry. In 2021 many participants highlighted the need to address mental health in youth populations coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic and this was then further developed in partnership with the Social Development Commission (SDC).

The platforms not only give a voice to young people but establishes formal structures of youth engagement and participation on issues

32 https://www.c40.org/what-we-do/building-a-movement/global-youth-mayors-forum/

facing cities across Jamaica. Forum participants gain public speaking and policy development skills and get to understand the local government system.

Some key issues affecting the acceleration of democratic inclusion of young people include:

1. **Mutual distrust between duty bearers and young people:** young people tend to have a negative opinion of politicians and often believe that politicians act more for their personal interest than for society. On the other hand, politicians view young people as a dangerous asset, prone to violence and disorder rather than as partners with whom to collaborate. There needs to be concerted efforts to bridge the trust gap in order to realise joint collaboration and partnership in local decision making.

2. **Legislative landscape:** electoral laws may not have legislative accommodation for young people to fully and effectively participate in both local and national decision making. Legal reforms that could increase and enhance youth participation in politics include, the introduction of quotas into electoral laws, addressing context – specific legal or indirect barriers to participation, making campaign financing laws lenient, and/or reducing age thresholds

3. **Youth as an 'incomplete process':** the period of 'youthhood' is perceived as a passing stage that will eventually lead to adulthood, which builds a dichotomy between the two stages. Values such as unstable, irrational, idealistic and inexperienced are associated with young people. On the other hand, adults are associated with traits such as mature and stable which gives them a rite of passage to participate in the political sphere. Young people should be recognised as equal members of their current community with an equal right for their current issues and interests to be addressed.

4. **Lack of information:** young people may not have access to information on both institutional processes of decision making and the political issues of the day such as climate change, economic data, educational policies etc. Without such knowledge, young people may not be equipped with the necessary skills to argue their point, suggest ideas or engage effectively, which may result in their withdrawal from formal political processes.

5.0 Moving from Policy to Action: The Role of Cities in Empowering Youth for Sustainable Development

Young people are deeply concerned about their state of affairs particularly at a local scale and they are increasingly advocating for real and tangible change. Over the last decade, cities have established themselves as key agents for change and development. At the same time, the population of young people particularly in the global south is growing. This think piece discusses key areas of opportunity and challenges for cities to engage, innovate and empower youth action in the areas of economic, social, spatial and democratic inclusion.

The case studies through the report illustrate examples of how some cities are successfully engaging with youth in ways that positively impact their economic, social, political and mental wellbeing. The Youth and Cities survey conducted amongst the CYSU network, revealed that employment and economic opportunities are the topmost concern (57%) followed by climate change (40%), inclusion and belonging (33%) and mental health (33%). The COVID-19 pandemic crippled urban economies at a large scale and destabilised young people whose financial and economic status was already fragile. Social isolation and mental well-being of many young people was also compromised. As the COVID-19 pandemic wanes, cities have a real opportunity to work hand in hand with young people to put in place tangible strategies to support and include young people.

Throughout this think piece; we have underscored a number of reflection points that deserve further attention and consideration by cities as they develop policies and initiatives to ensure the holistic development and prosperity of young people. A selection of these are synthesised below to inform discussions and action by members of the CSCN:

1. What innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships can cities establish to create an enabling environment to attract investment and develop the entrepreneurship ecosystem to expand economic and employment opportunities for young people?

2. Given the increasing mental health epidemic amongst young people, in what ways are city policy makers and leaders advancing requisite provision and access to clinical and support services for young people?

3. Given the fact that the Commonwealth will be host to megacities in the next 5 years, what plans do cities have in place to ensure equitable access to essential/basic services particularly to marginalised groups such as women, refugees, LGBQTi amongst others?

4. How are cities leveraging diverse innovative financial models to meet funding gaps at the city level, in order to provide critical physical and social infrastructure such as shelters, sporting facilities and functional public spaces for young people?

5. Cities contribute to approx. 70% of global emissions and need to be adequately prepared to transition to net zero. What climate actions are cities putting in place to ensure that young people are hopeful for their future?

6. With young people increasingly concerned about their natural environment and climate change, how are cities engaging with their youth constituents to harness innovative ideas and solutions that will contribute to an equitable and inclusive energy transition?

7. How are cities responding and making use of new media and technology to engage and share information and collaborate with their youth constituents?

8. Adolescence has been noted as a critical period in the emergence of a civic identity. What initiatives and programs could cities design to harness the potential of this group to entrench civic responsibility and empowerment?

9. The CLGF Survey through the CYSU shows that one of the top 3 concerns for young people is inclusion and belonging. In what ways are cities promoting social and economic integration, particularly for at risk youth?

10. Studies show that common facilities such as community gardens, parks and playgrounds, cooking facilities, childcare facilities bring people together. In what ways could cities partner with developers to share information on issues such as the unique needs of specific vulnerable groups, common barriers faced by different groups such as the youth, the homeless and domestic violence victims, to ensure housing inclusivity?

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