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Meaningful Youth and Student Engagement in Education Advocacy: A toolkit



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Foreword

The journey towards truly inclusive and effective educational systems is one that requires the active participation and leadership of young people. Throughout the Global Campaign for Education's work in youth engagement, we've seen the commendable efforts of policymakers and organizations to develop a youth agenda on a global scale.

This toolkit is a direct response to a call for action from young people themselves. Developed in collaboration with the Centre for Identities and Social Justice at Goldsmiths University of London, and under the guidance of Assistant Professor Chris Millora, this resource aims to provide practical recommendations for engaging young people at various stages of educational projects or campaigns.

We hope that this toolkit serves as a valuable starting point for developing strategies that genuinely involve and empower young people. It offers insights into the current approaches and realities of youth engagement, defines what meaningful engagement looks like from the perspective of young people themselves, and provides practical tips and advice on how to achieve this.

This toolkit is intended for organizations and groups that involve youth and students in their educational campaigns, including state bodies, NGOs, volunteer groups, committees, and advocacy groups. It is also beneficial for youth-led organizations and groups seeking to collaborate with other entities.

GCE recognizes the vital role of youth and students in shaping the future of education. Their perspectives, innovative thinking, and lived experiences are crucial in developing inclusive and effective educational systems. By engaging young people meaningfully, we not only enhance the quality of educational outcomes but also empower the next generation of leaders.

As you navigate through this toolkit, we hope you find inspiration, clarity, and confidence in your ability to drive progress and uplift those around you. Remember, change begins with each of us, and together, we can build a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your dedication and unwavering commitment to youth engagement

Warm regards,

Grant Kasowanjete
Global Coordinator (Johannesburg)



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This project builds on the long-term collaboration between the Global Campaign for Education and Goldsmiths University of London Department of Educational Studies through the Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship of Dr Chris Millora. Vicky Mogeni is the key collaboration partner from GCE.

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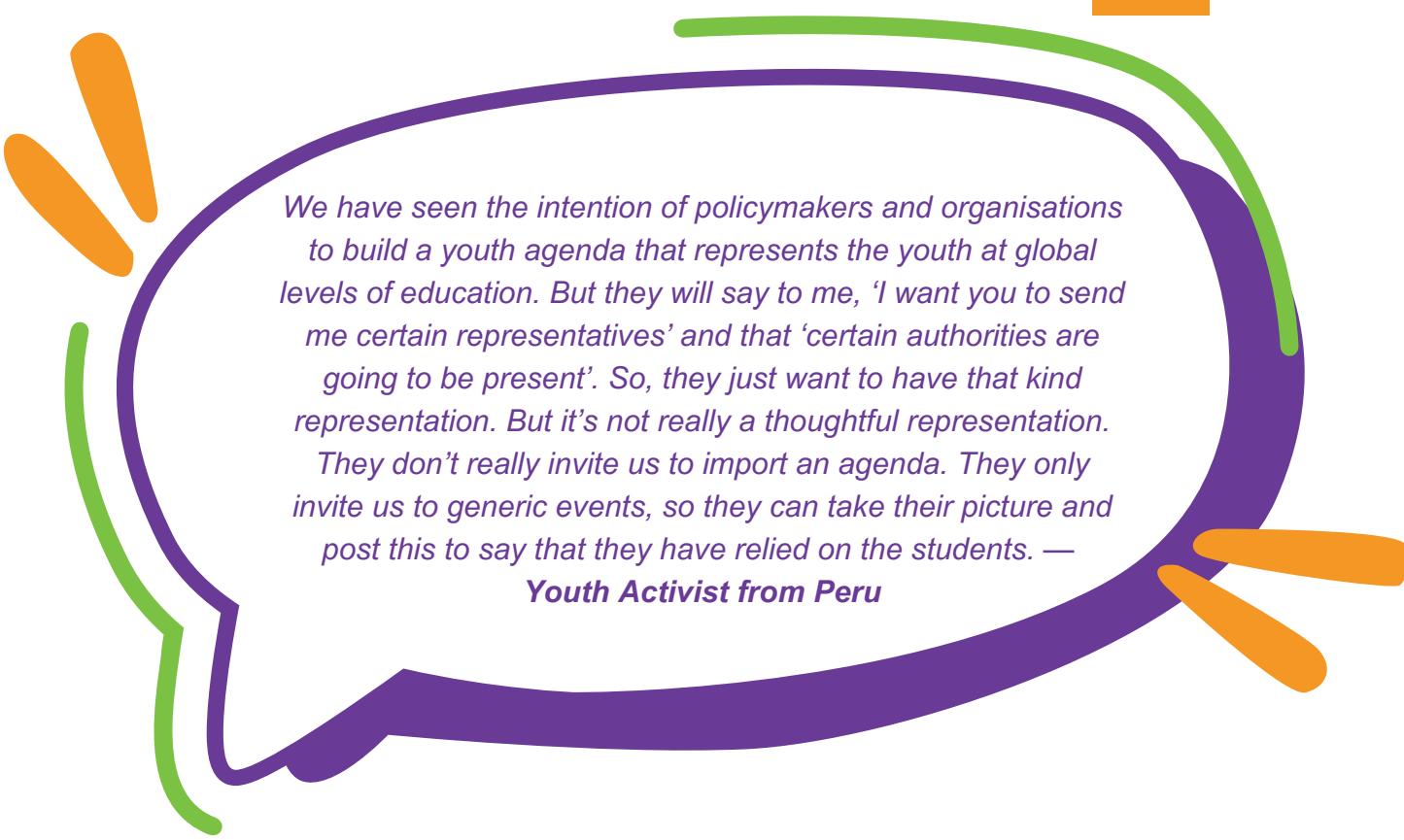
LEVERHULME
TRUST



Commonwealth Students' Association GAWE 2024

Introduction

How this toolkit came about



We have seen the intention of policymakers and organisations to build a youth agenda that represents the youth at global levels of education. But they will say to me, 'I want you to send me certain representatives' and that 'certain authorities are going to be present'. So, they just want to have that kind representation. But it's not really a thoughtful representation. They don't really invite us to import an agenda. They only invite us to generic events, so they can take their picture and post this to say that they have relied on the students. —

Youth Activist from Peru

In 2022, the Global Campaign for Education commissioned a global research exploring the ways youth and student activism have shifted at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the key findings from the report is that while there had been increased efforts in involving youth and student representatives in educational discussions and debates at that time, many interviewees felt that these spaces were tokenistic and not genuine. Therefore, youths and students have called for more meaningful engagement, demonstrated by the quote of a student activist in Peru above.

This toolkit responds to such a call by offering practical recommendations when engaging with young people at various stages of an educational project or campaign. While there are a few similar tools, this guidance might offer new perspectives as it was developed in consultation with youth and students through a global survey and online regional consultation workshops (Asia, Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Latin America) designed following participatory research approaches.

How to use this toolkit?

Consider this toolkit as a starting point when developing a youth engagement strategy or an initiative aimed at engaging youth and students. This toolkit provides insights into three key areas:

- 1 current approaches and realities regarding how young people are engaged,
- 2 how young people define meaningful youth and student engagement, and
- 3 practical tips and advice—from youth and students—on how they can be meaningfully engaged.

Throughout this toolkit, you will find a number of critical questions to consider as you reflect on a finding, insight, or theme. Discuss these questions with your colleagues, and even with youth and student cohorts—discussion is where action takes shape! Toward the end of the toolkit, you will find an activity bank compiled from existing guidance, workbooks, and similar resources. Feel free to pick and mix these activities based on your specific context and goals.

How was this toolkit developed?

This Toolkit was co-designed in consultation with youth and student organisations who are part of the GCE youth and student network. This consultation was facilitated through a global survey and online, youth-led, regional workshops (Asia, Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean) designed following participatory research principles. For the survey, we began with a pilot survey with about 11 youths and students who were asked to fill out an open-ended questionnaire. From this, we identified themes and keywords to include as choices in the larger, multiple-choice surveys.

The survey gathered close to 50 responses coming from 17 countries: Albania, Argentina, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Palestine, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Togo. The majority of those who responded were aged 22-27 followed by 28-34-year-olds and 16-21-year-olds. In terms of gender, the majority were female (65%) while males made up 31% and non-binaries 4%. The youth-led workshops were participated by around 25 youth and students. To maximise participation and considering the global membership of GCE, the survey was made available in four languages: Arabic, English, French and Spanish. The working languages of the regional workshops were English, Spanish and Arabic. The survey and the workshops focused on young people's suggestions and recommendations for how they can be engaged more meaningfully. Findings from these engagements formed the basis of this toolkit.

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit will be useful for organisations and groups that involve youth and students in their organising and campaigning in education. This includes state bodies, non-government organisations, volunteer groups, committees and advocacy groups. This toolkit could also be beneficial to youth-led organisations and youth groups that are currently and/or are aiming to collaborate with other organisations.

Why engage youth and students in educational campaigning?

Many organisations recognise the need to engage youth and students in educational campaigning. These are the most popular reasons from our survey:

- Young people could help develop alternative education systems that are more inclusive and effective
- Youth and students can bring unique perspectives and innovative thinking to solving educational issues
- Youth and students have lived experiences that can bring valuable insights to improve educational systems
- Through engagement, young people also develop essential skills, including critical thinking, communication, advocacy and problem-solving
- Youth and students are the primary beneficiaries and the largest group of stakeholders in education. Their interests are vital.
- Young people are most affected by youth policies

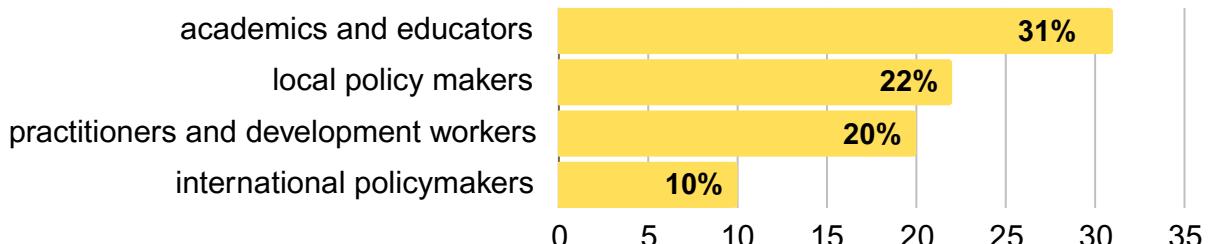


Youth Caucus Timor Leste 2024

How are young people engaged?

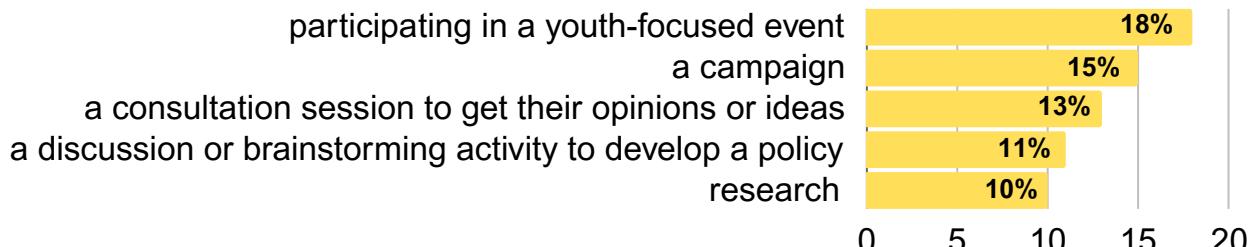
Almost all of those surveyed (97%) expressed that they have been involved or invited as a youth or student representative in an education-related event, activity or discussion in the past 6 months. Almost half (47%) of those surveyed noted that they are invited to these events, activities and discussions once a month while others are invited in varying frequency: a few times a month (21%) or once every six months.

The top 5 stakeholders they engage with the most are:



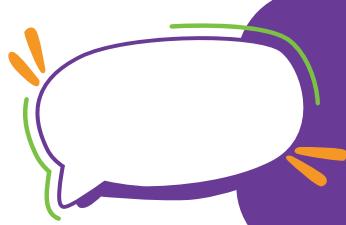
The stakeholders youths and students most often engage with reflects their strong focus on partnering with local and community-based organisations and campaigns in education.

The types of activities also varied, the five most popular were:



Only 6% of those surveyed expressed that they were invited to a meeting to support their own work or project. Similarly, another 6% expressed that they were involved in evaluating a programme. During the youth-led listening session in Latin America, a participant expressed:

“many times, only initial consultations are participated in but actions in which young people are involved throughout the process – from policy planning to implementation – are not specified”. This highlights that youths and students seem to not be consistently involved across the programming process



Critical Questions to Consider

- How often are we engaging young people in our activities, events or discussions?
- What sorts of activities can they participate in? Do we offer young people enough options and opportunities to support?
- Who decides the terms of participation? What opportunities are there for young people to bring their own agenda when engaging with our organisations?
- What resources do young people need to participate meaningfully?

The majority of young people surveyed agreed that their engagement was meaningful, with many expressing strong agreement. Many also felt that they were given enough resources and information to participate meaningfully in these events. This includes information about the event and financial support to attend in person meetings. Half noted that they were always being made aware of the results and outcomes of the discussions they participate in.

Youth engagement comes with several challenges. The most significant challenge identified were the financial constraints that hindered meetings and activities (36%). Young people also highlighted that global campaigns and approaches do not always capture their attention and interests (25%). Some pointed to the digital divide as a major obstacle. In certain contexts, young people have limited to no access to the internet, devices, or digital skills needed for full participation (19%). Others found that language could be a barrier especially in global convenings (17%). A few youth activists also identified the failure to include youth as a key member of policy-making as a challenge, adding that “often, young people are not taken seriously because they have not had their 18th birthday”.

Young people offer suggestions and tips on how youth-involving organisations and groups might address these challenges. But before that, let us briefly explore how young people define meaningful youth engagement in the first place.

How do youths and students define meaningful engagement

To understand what meaningful youth engagement means to young people, we asked them to identify key descriptive words. This was done through a pilot survey, where 10 youth leaders responded to open-ended questions. We analysed their responses to identify common themes, which were then distilled into a shortlist of keywords used as options in the main survey.

Here are six keywords ranked according to how they best describe meaningful youth engagement are as follows:

Action-oriented

Meaningful youth engagement is to translate ideas into action. Young people need to be involved not only in ideation but also in the implementation and decision-making

Clear aims and goals

Youth engagement is meaningful when there is a clear understanding on the goals of the engagement (eg what are the objectives of the collaboration?)

Shared ownership

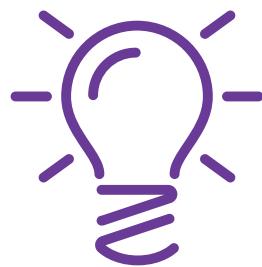
Meaningful youth engagement is young people feeling that their contributions are valued and have tangible impact

Spelt out roles of various stakeholders

Collaboration is important and outlining who does what and when is key

(Inter)generational dialogue and exchange

Meaningful youth engagement is about ethical collaborations with adult counterparts and with fellow young people



Insight!

Action is key to meaningful engagement. Therefore, meaningful youth engagement is not (only) a concept but, more importantly, a way of working. Youth and students are clear that such engagement needs to be done in ethical and equitable ways, and the 'terms' of engagement have to be clear at the beginning.

Youth should feel a sense of shared ownership, knowing their contributions are valued and have a real impact. Effective engagement also depends on well-defined roles for all stakeholders, fostering productive, ethical intergenerational dialogue and collaboration.

Making meaningful youth and student engagement a reality: insights from youth and students

Engaging young people meaningfully in decision-making is essential for creating impactful, relevant programs. This involves not only inviting youth to advisory councils, surveys, and focus groups but also embedding them at every project stage—from ideation to evaluation. Youth have emphasised the need for real inclusion, wanting to be active participants rather than afterthoughts.

Investing in capacity-building programmes, providing creative outlets, and tailoring outreach to diverse youth groups all help amplify their voices. Recognising youth leadership by offering them roles in steering committees or national consultations further empowers them and strengthens the projects they help shape. Key guidance from young people and students are:

Create opportunities for young people to genuinely contribute to decision-making processes

This can be facilitated by creating youth advisory councils, surveys and focused groups that could help in understanding youth priorities. Young people have also emphasised on the importance of involving them in various ways and at all stages of the project process – ideation, implementation and evaluation. A young person from Argentina expressed, “youth are often talked about but rarely heard... we do not know how these projects are created; we want to be involved from the creation stage and be represented”.

Critical Questions to Consider

- What opportunities are available in our organisation for young people to contribute?
- What decisions need young people's input? What mechanisms can we put in place to gather such input meaningfully and timely?
- Are young people engaged from the initial ideation and planning stages, through to implementation and evaluation?
- How do we ensure their insights directly impact the outcomes of each project phase?

Invest in capacity building and feedback loops

Youth and students surveyed highlighted the importance of capacity building, training and support as well as opportunities for clearer feedback mechanisms. Relevant training, mentorship programmes, issue-responsive workshops are all important especially if they cater to the needs of young people and students.

Critical Questions to Consider

- What indicators or feedback loops do we use to evaluate whether youth feel genuinely involved?
- How often do we reassess our approaches to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness in youth engagement?
- Are there mentorship or support systems that help youth and students feel empowered to participate actively?
- What sorts of training and support do we provide youth and students so they can participate creatively?



Provide opportunities for young people to express themselves creatively

It is important to recognise that youths and students have changing interests and passions. Think of ways to engage them creatively, for example, through arts, music, theatre, dance or poetry.

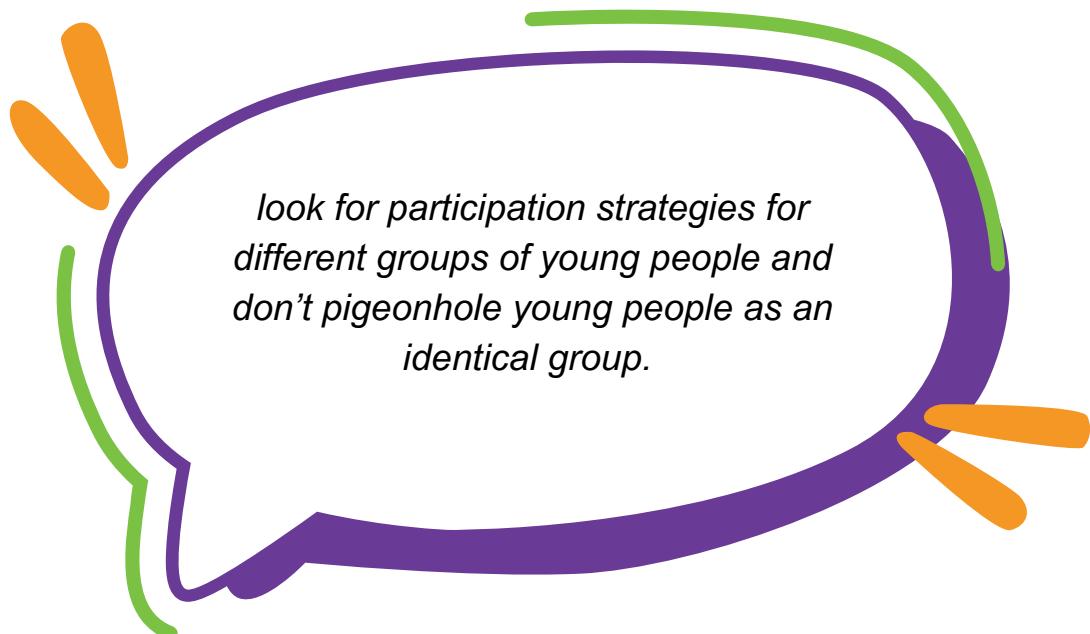
Critical Questions to Consider

- Do we provide a safe space for open dialogue where youth can freely voice their ideas and concerns?
- In what ways can our organisation adapt to changing interests and ways of working of youth and students?



Tailor engagement strategies to reach diverse youth populations

A workshop participant expressed:



Youth and students have varying needs, challenges, skills and talents even if coming from the same age group or location. When developing a youth engagement strategy, you can consider, for instance, creating materials in various languages, utilising various communication channels – e.g. through WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, in-person, etc. These may help reach diverse youth populations.

Critical Questions to Consider

- Are we engaging a broad spectrum of young people (e.g., different socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, abilities)?
- What steps are we taking to ensure we're not reinforcing a single "youth perspective" but embracing diverse viewpoints?



Recognise young people's leadership by facilitating leadership positions and roles

Respect and nurture youth and student's capacity to lead. Consider, where appropriate, to facilitate leadership roles for youths and students within an organisation or a project, for example, as a representative in a steering committee or a seat at the table in national consultations.

Critical Questions to Consider

- Are there opportunities for youth to maintain roles and responsibilities over time, potentially building toward leadership positions?
- What incentives or supports can we offer to sustain their interest and participation?



Insight!

We asked the survey participants: "What practical tips and advice would you give to organisations who would like to mobilise youth and students including through research, advocacy and campaigns?" Here are their answers ranked according to most popular in the survey.

- 1 Draw on young people's experiences and skills
- 2 Create flexible spaces (eg offline/online) for critical dialogue and discussions between young people and other educational stakeholders
- 3 Identify their interests and strategize how your organisation's mission and vision can resonate with these interests
- 4 Facilitate collaboration between youth organisations and organisations that can support them
- 5 Promote diversity and inclusion
- 6 Ensure that young people are informed of the results or outcome of the engagement
- 7 Set out clear goals and evaluation
- 8 Ensure that communication channels are clear
- 9 Facilitate intercultural dialogue and learning through exchange programmes and convenings
- 10 Partner with and/or support the work of grassroots, community-based
- 11 Make clearer connections between global issues and how they manifest locally
- 12 Where possible, leverage on technology to bridge geographical divide
- 13 Formal mechanisms for feedback to national policy-making are vital (eg youth parliaments and councils)

Activity Bank

We have curated a number of activities that you can use when designing/conducting youth and student engagement activities. These were drawn from other toolkits and other resources available online – each resource is provided in each of the activities. Feel free to pick and mix depending on what is appropriate in your own context and situation, including possibilities of conducting these activities virtually

A1. Social Media Takeover

Youth and students are given control of an organisation's social media accounts for a set period to create and share content that reflects their perspectives and experiences on issues that matter to them.



When to use this tool?

Use this activity when you want to:

- Amplify youth voices and perspectives on important issues
- Provide hands-on experience for youth in using social media for advocacy
- Increase youth engagement and reach of an organization's social media channels



How much time do I need?

- Preparation: 2-3 weeks
- Takeover activity: 1 day (typically 24 hours)
- Debrief and evaluation: 1 week



What materials do I need?

- Access to the organisation's social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- Computers, smartphones, or tablets for youth to create and share content
- Educational materials on social media best practices and content creation
- Promotional materials to announce and market the social media takeover



What are the steps?



Guide questions:

- 1. Preparation (2-3 weeks):**
 - Identify the social media platforms and accounts to be used for the takeover
 - Develop guidelines and training materials for youth participants
 - Recruit a diverse group of youth representatives to lead the takeover
 - Collaborate with youth to plan the takeover themes, content calendar, and promotion strategies
- 2. Youth Training and Mentoring:**
 - Provide training on effective social media content creation and platform management
 - Offer guidance and support to youth participants as they prepare their takeover content
- 3. Takeover Day (24 hours):**
 - Give youth participants access to the organisation's social media accounts
 - Support youth as they create and share content throughout the day
 - Monitor the takeover and provide any necessary assistance
- 4. Debrief and Evaluation (1 week):**
 - Gather feedback and insights from the youth participants
 - Evaluate the impact of the takeover, including reach, engagement, and outcomes
 - Identify lessons learned and opportunities for improvement in future takeovers

1. What issues and perspectives do youth want to highlight through the social media takeover?
2. How can the takeover be designed to maximise youth creativity and advocacy impact?
3. What training and support do youth need to effectively manage the social media accounts during the takeover?
4. How will the takeover be promoted to reach key audiences and amplify youth voices?
5. What metrics will be used to assess the success and impact of the social media takeover?



Source: <https://influencity.com/blog/en/the-power-of-social-media-takeovers-examples-and-benefits>

A2. Community Mapping

Youth and students identify and assess community assets, challenges, and opportunities through participatory mapping techniques, generating data and insights to inform community decision-making and planning.



When to use this tool?

Use this activity for when you want to:

- Engage youth in identifying and assessing community assets, challenges, and opportunities
- Foster a sense of community ownership and empowerment among youth
- Generate youth-led data and insights to inform community decision-making and planning



How much time do I need?

- Preparation: 2-3 weeks
- Mapping activity: 1-2 days
- Data analysis and action planning: 1-2 weeks



What materials do I need?

- Maps of the community (printed or digital)
- Mapping tools (e.g., colored markers, stickers, pins)
- Cameras or smartphones for documentation
- Notebooks and pens for field notes
- Computer and software for data analysis and visualization



Youth Representative ZINASU World Assembly 2022



What are the steps?

- Define the purpose and scope of the community mapping exercise
- Recruit and train youth mappers, ensuring diverse representation
- Develop a mapping plan and tools, including data collection methods and categories
- Divide youth into teams and assign specific areas or themes for mapping
- Conduct the mapping activity, with youth collecting data through observation, interviews, and photography
- Regroup and have youth teams share and analyze their findings
- Facilitate youth-led discussions to identify key insights, priorities, and action ideas
- Support youth in creating visual outputs (e.g., maps, reports, presentations) to share their findings with the community and decision-makers
- Work with youth to develop an action plan based on the mapping results, and support them in implementing their ideas



What questions can I ask to facilitate discussion?

- What are the key assets and strengths of our community that we want to build on?
- What are the main challenges and issues facing our community, particularly from a youth perspective?
- How can we collect and represent diverse community voices and experiences through mapping?
- What new insights or solutions emerge when we combine our different mapping data and perspectives?
- How can we use our mapping results to drive community action and positive change?



Source: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadz225.pdf

A3. Hopes and Fears

Youth express their aspirations and concerns about a particular issue or decision through a structured activity that creates a safe space for sharing diverse perspectives and feelings.



When to use this tool?

Use this activity for when you want to:

- Encourage youth to express their aspirations and concerns about a particular issue or decision
- Create a safe space for youth to share their perspectives and feelings openly
- Help decision-makers understand and address youth's hopes and fears in their planning and actions



How much time do I need?

- Preparation: 1 week
- Activity: 1-2 hours
- Analysis and integration: 1-2 weeks



What materials do I need?

- Sticky notes or small cards in two different colors (one for hopes, one for fears)
- Pens or markers
- Large sheets of paper or a wall for clustering the hopes and fears
- Camera or smartphone for documentation



GCE Youth representatives World Assembly 2022



What are the steps?

1. Define the purpose and scope of the hopes and fears mapping exercise, focusing on a specific issue or decision.
2. Recruit and train a diverse group of youth participants.
3. Develop a mapping plan and tools, including the data collection methods and categories for hopes and fears.
4. Distribute the colored sticky notes or cards to the youth participants.
5. Ask participants to write down their hopes and fears related to the issue or decision, one idea per card.
6. Invite participants to share their hopes and fears verbally if they feel comfortable, and have them stick their cards on the wall or sheet.
7. Facilitate youth-led discussions to cluster similar hopes and fears, and identify any patterns or themes that emerge.
8. Guide a discussion on how to build on the shared hopes and address the common fears in future planning and actions.
9. Document the results of the activity, including photos of the clustered hopes and fears and notes from the discussion.
10. Analyze the hopes and fears data and integrate key insights into decision-making and communication processes.
11. Follow up with participants to share how their inputs were used and what actions were taken as a result.



What questions can I ask to facilitate discussion?

- What are your biggest hopes for the future regarding this issue or decision?
- What are your main fears or concerns about potential negative outcomes?
- What similarities or differences do you notice in our hopes and fears?
- How can we build on our shared hopes and address our common fears moving forward?
- What specific actions or decisions would help realize our hopes and mitigate our fears?



Source: <https://easyretro.io/templates/hopes-and-fears-inception/>
<https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/ii-assets/ii-documents/East%20Asia%20NRC%20Workshop--2021--Hopes%20and%20Fears%20Activity.pdf>

A4. World Cafe

A cafe-style format for fostering meaningful dialogue and knowledge sharing among youth on a specific topic, encouraging active participation, collaboration, and the emergence of collective wisdom.



When to use this tool?

Use this activity when you want to:

- Engage youth in an interactive and discussion-based format
- Facilitate the exchange of ideas and insights on a particular issue or topic
- Encourage youth collaboration and the co-creation of solutions



How much time do I need?

- Preparation: 2-3 weeks
- Activity: 2-3 hours
- Synthesis and action planning: 1-2 weeks



What materials do I need?

- Tables and chairs arranged in a cafe-style layout
- Tablecloths and decorations to create a welcoming atmosphere
- Flip chart paper or large sheets of paper for each table
- Markers, pens, and sticky notes
- Bell or chime to signal round changes
- Camera or smartphone for documentation



GCE Youth representatives World Assembly 2022



What are the steps?

1. Identify the key question or topic for discussion, and craft a few sub-questions to guide the conversations.
2. Set up the room with cafe-style tables and decorations, with flip chart paper and markers at each table.
3. Welcome participants and explain the World Cafe process and guidelines for participation.
4. Divide participants into groups of 4-5 per table, and assign a "table host" to each group.
5. Begin the first round of conversation, with each group discussing the main question and recording key ideas on the flip chart.
6. After 20-30 minutes, signal for participants to rotate to a new table (except for the table host, who stays to share insights from the previous round).
7. Continue the rounds of conversation, with participants building on the ideas from previous groups and adding new perspectives.
8. After several rounds, bring everyone back together for a whole-group discussion to share key insights and themes.
9. Facilitate a synthesis of the collective wisdom and ideas generated, and identify potential action steps or recommendations.
10. Document the results of the World Cafe, including photos of the table notes and the final synthesis, and share with participants for further reflection and action.



What questions can I ask to facilitate discussion?

- What key ideas or insights emerged from our conversations?
- What patterns or themes did we notice across the different tables and rounds?
- What new perspectives or questions arose that we hadn't considered before?
- What actions or next steps could we take based on our collective wisdom and ideas?
- How can we continue to engage youth in meaningful dialogue and action on this topic?



Source: https://www.fsg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/World-Cafe-Method_0.pdf
<http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>

A5. Systems Thinking Games

Interactive games and simulations that introduce youth to systems thinking concepts and tools, helping them understand the interconnections and dynamics of complex social, economic, and environmental systems.



When to use this tool?

Use this activity for when you want to:

- Introduce youth to systems thinking concepts and tools in an interactive and engaging way
- Help youth understand the interconnections and dynamics of complex social, economic, and environmental systems
- Encourage youth to think critically about the root causes and potential solutions to systemic challenges



How much time do I need?

- Preparation: 1-2 weeks
- Activity: 1-2 hours per game
- Debrief and application: 30 minutes to 1 hour per game



What materials do I need?

- Game-specific materials (e.g., cards, boards, tokens, etc.)
- Flipcharts, markers, and sticky notes for debriefing
- Handouts or slides with systems thinking concepts and tools
- Camera or smartphone for documentation



GCE Youth Representatives World Assembly 2022



What are the steps?

1. Select one or more systems thinking games based on the group size, time available, and learning objectives.
2. Familiarize yourself with the game rules, materials, and debriefing questions.
3. Set up the game materials and space, and welcome participants.
4. Introduce the game and its purpose, and explain the rules and guidelines for play.
5. Facilitate the game, observing participant interactions and dynamics.
6. After the game, lead a debriefing discussion using prepared questions to help participants reflect on their experiences and insights.
7. Introduce relevant systems thinking concepts and tools, such as causal loop diagrams or stock and flow maps, to reinforce learning.
8. Encourage participants to apply systems thinking to real-world challenges and brainstorm potential interventions or solutions.
9. Document the game process and outcomes, including photos, participant quotes, and key insights, to share with others and inform future activities.



What questions can I ask to facilitate discussion?

- What did you notice about the system dynamics and interactions during the game?
- What leverage points or intervention opportunities did you identify to influence the system outcomes?
- How might the lessons from the game apply to real-world systems and challenges?
- What systems thinking tools or approaches could help us better understand and address complex problems?
- How can we continue to practice and apply systems thinking in our work and decision-making?



Source: <https://www.worldobesity.org/healthy-voices/advocate/co-creates-youth-advocacy-toolkit>
<https://www.6sigma.us/systems-thinking/what-is-systems-thinking/>

A6. Letter Writing

Youth express their views and experiences on a particular issue through personal letters to decision-makers, providing a creative and persuasive way to advocate for their perspectives and recommendations.



When to use this tool?

Use this activity for when you want to:

- Provide youth with a creative and personal way to express their views and experiences on a particular issue or decision
- Encourage youth to reflect on their own perspectives and how they relate to the larger context
- Help decision-makers understand youth's individual stories, concerns, and recommendations



How much time do I need?

- Preparation: 1-2 weeks
- Activity: 1-2 hours
- Analysis and integration: 1-2 weeks



What materials do I need?

- Paper and envelopes for letters
- Pens, pencils, and other writing materials
- Examples or templates of effective advocacy letters
- Camera or smartphone for documentation



GCE Youth Action Group members 2022



What are the steps?

1. Introduce the letter-writing activity and its purpose, and provide examples or templates of effective advocacy letters.
2. Identify the key decision-maker(s) or audience(s) for the letters, and clarify any guidelines or expectations for content and format.
3. Give participants time to reflect on their personal experiences, perspectives, and recommendations related to the issue or decision.
4. Provide writing materials and support as needed, encouraging participants to express themselves freely and authentically.
5. Collect the completed letters and review them for any sensitive or inappropriate content.
6. Analyze the letters for common themes, concerns, and suggestions, and summarize the key findings.
7. Share the letters (with permission) and summary with the intended audience(s), along with any contextual information or recommendations.
8. Follow up with participants to let them know how their letters were received and what actions or responses resulted.
9. Consider additional ways to amplify youth's voices and stories, such as through media outreach, public exhibitions, or advocacy campaigns.



What questions can I ask to facilitate discussion?

- What personal experiences or perspectives do you want to share related to this issue/decision?
- What key messages or recommendations do you want to convey to the decision-maker(s)?
- How can you express yourself clearly and persuasively in your letter?
- What do you hope will happen as a result of your letter and others'?
- How can you continue to advocate for your views and make your voice heard?



Source: <https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Youth-Activist-Toolkit.pdf>

A7. Impact Visualization

A participatory process for mapping and analyzing the potential direct and indirect impacts of a decision or intervention, encouraging systems thinking, anticipation of unintended consequences, and informed decision-making.



	<p>When to use this tool?</p> <p>Use this activity for when you want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help youth understand and visualize the potential impacts and outcomes of a particular decision or intervention• Encourage systems thinking and anticipation of unintended consequences• Facilitate dialogue and decision-making based on a shared understanding of potential impacts
	<p>How much time do I need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation: 1-2 weeks• Activity: 2-3 hours• Analysis and integration: 1-2 weeks
	<p>What materials do I need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large sheets of paper or a whiteboard for impact mapping• Markers, pens, and sticky notes in different colors• Camera or smartphone for documentation



Youth Caucus Albanian Coalition for Education



What are the steps?

1. Introduce the impact visualization activity and its purpose, and clarify the decision or intervention to be analyzed.
2. Brainstorm a list of potential direct and indirect impacts of the decision or intervention, both positive and negative, short-term and long-term.
3. Cluster similar impacts together and identify any causal relationships or feedback loops among them.
4. Create a visual map or diagram of the impacts, using different colors or symbols to distinguish positive and negative, direct and indirect, and short-term and long-term effects.
5. Discuss the implications of the impact map for decision-making, including any trade-offs, uncertainties, or unintended consequences to consider.
6. Identify any key indicators or metrics to monitor and evaluate the actual impacts over time.
7. Document the impact map and discussion, and share with relevant stakeholders for further input and refinement.
8. Use the impact visualization to inform decision-making and implementation, and revisit and update it regularly based on new information or changing circumstances.
9. Reflect on the learning and insights gained from the impact visualization process, and consider additional applications or extensions of the tool.



What questions can I ask to facilitate discussion?

- What are the potential direct and indirect impacts of this decision/intervention on different stakeholders and systems?
- How might these impacts interact or influence each other over time?
- What are the key uncertainties or assumptions underlying our impact predictions?
- How can we prioritize or balance different impacts in our decision-making?
- What indicators or metrics should we track to monitor and evaluate the actual impacts?



Source: <https://nandininair.medium.com/making-the-abstract-concrete-77043a9d48f6>

A8. Youth Data Walk

An interactive format for engaging youth in exploring and analyzing data related to a particular issue or community, developing their data literacy and critical thinking skills, and facilitating data-driven dialogue and action planning.



When to use this tool?

Use this activity for when you want to:

- Engage youth in exploring and analyzing data related to a particular issue or community
- Help youth develop data literacy and critical thinking skills
- Facilitate youth-led dialogue and action planning based on data-driven insights



How much time do I need?

- Preparation: 2-3 weeks
- Activity: 2-3 hours
- Analysis and action planning: 1-2 weeks



What materials do I need?

- Printed data sets, charts, and maps related to the issue or community
- Flip charts, markers, and sticky notes for recording observations and insights
- Handouts or slides with data analysis and visualization tips
- Camera or smartphone for documentation



Arab Campaign for Education youth and student representatives



What are the steps?

1. Identify relevant and accessible data sets related to the issue or community, and prepare them for presentation in a "data walk" format.
2. Recruit youth participants and provide an orientation to the data walk process and purpose.
3. Set up the data walk stations with the printed data sets, charts, and maps, along with guiding questions and materials for recording observations.
4. Divide participants into small groups and assign them to different data walk stations.
5. Facilitate the data walk, encouraging participants to observe, question, and analyze the data, and record their insights and questions.
6. Bring the groups back together to share and discuss their findings, and identify any common themes, surprises, or areas for further exploration.
7. Provide additional data analysis and visualization tools and tips, and support youth in conducting deeper dives into the data as needed.
8. Facilitate a youth-led action planning process based on the data insights, identifying priorities, strategies, and next steps for addressing the issue or improving the community.
9. Document the data walk process and outcomes, and share with relevant stakeholders for feedback and support.



What questions can I ask to facilitate discussion?

- What patterns, trends, or disparities do you notice in the data?
- What questions or hypotheses do the data raise for you?
- How do the data compare to your own experiences or perceptions of the issue/community?
- What additional data or information would help you better understand the issue/community?
- What implications do the data have for action or change?



Source: <https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Data-Walks-Report.pdf>

A9. Open Space Meetings

A participant-driven format for youth to self-organize around issues that matter to them, fostering creativity, collaboration, and action planning based on their collective interests and priorities.



When to use this tool?

Use this Open Space activity when you want to:

- Provide a participant-driven format for youth to explore and address issues that matter to them
- Foster self-organization, creativity, and collaboration among youth
- Generate action plans and commitments based on youth's collective interests and priorities



How much time do I need?

- Preparation: 2-3 weeks
- Activity: 1-2 days
- Follow-up and implementation: Ongoing



What materials do I need?

- Large open space for meeting, with breakout areas or rooms
- Flip charts, markers, and sticky notes for each breakout session
- Agenda wall or bulletin board for posting session topics and locations
- Bell or chime for signaling time transitions
- Camera or smartphone for documentation



Youth launch of Harnessing Edtech Report Nigeria



What are the steps?

1. Invite youth participants and provide an orientation to the Open Space process and principles
2. Set up the meeting space with a large circle of chairs, an agenda wall, and breakout areas or rooms
3. Open the meeting with a welcome and introduction to the theme or question for exploration
4. Invite participants to propose session topics related to the theme, and post them on the agenda wall
5. Facilitate the self-organization of participants into breakout sessions based on their interests and priorities
6. Encourage participants to move freely between sessions, following the "law of two feet" to go where they can learn or contribute the most
7. Provide support and materials for each breakout session, and encourage participants to document their discussions and action items
8. Reconvene the full group periodically to share highlights and insights from the breakout sessions
9. Close the meeting with a reflection on the collective learning and commitments, and identify next steps for follow-up and implementation
10. Document the Open Space proceedings and outcomes, and share with participants and relevant stakeholders



What questions can I ask to facilitate discussion?

- What issues or opportunities related to the theme do you want to explore further?
- What questions or ideas do you have that could benefit from others' input and collaboration?
- What actions or initiatives do you want to commit to based on your learning and discussions?
- How can you continue to support and hold each other accountable for your commitments?
- What did you appreciate most about the Open Space format and experience?



Source: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4924/open-space-method.pdf>



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