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**REPORT**

# Youth participation in the development and implementation of France's development and international solidarity policy: challenges, outlooks and methods

National Council for Development  
and International Solidarity (CNDSI)

With the support of the secretariat of the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI) and the Local Government and Civil Society Department of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs: Anne-Charlotte Dommartin, Alexis Lefèvre, Frédéric Cholé, Sarah De Figueiredo and Chloë Daniel.

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# Report of the “youth” working group

**Youth participation in the development  
and implementation of France’s  
development and international solidarity  
policy: challenges, outlooks and methods**

**National Council for Development  
and International Solidarity (CNDSI)**

**Co-chaired by:**

**Henri Arévalo (Occitanie Coopération / CIRMA)**

**Tanguy Guibert (FAGE)**

**Michelle Perrot (Plan International France)**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP

The cross-cutting integration of young people's participation in the development and implementation of France's development and international solidarity policy is part of the drive to renew development policy under the French Programming Act of 4 August 2021 on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities. This Act reinforces the partnership-based dimension of France's action, reasserts the human rights-based approach as a guiding principle (of which participation is a pillar), and affirms the importance of involving representatives of civil society, including young people, in public policies and programmes, in France and its partner countries.

To support the operationalization of this ambition, a working group on youth participation was formed within the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI), with the support of the Civil Society, Civic Engagement and Youth Department of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. It was co-chaired by Henri Arévalo (Occitanie Coopération/CIRRMA), Tanguy Guibert (FAGE) et Michelle Perrot (Plan International France). Its work culminated in a series of key recommendations, supported by inspiring examples of successful experiences, with the aim of improving the practices of all stakeholders.

This report presents these recommendations grouped around four focus areas:

1. The different forms of youth participation and the need to build a more conducive environment
2. Building the capacities of young people and youth-led organizations
3. Young people's participation in formal and informal spaces for decision-making and consultation on France's international solidarity policy, in France and in France's partner countries
4. Mainstreaming a human rights-based approach applied to young people in France's international solidarity policy

The primary goal of this report is to encourage the adoption, by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, of a strategy promoting youth participation in public programmes and policies, both in France and in the partner countries with which it engages in cooperation. To meet the challenges involved, this strategy must receive strong political support and be accompanied by multi-year objectives, an accountability framework, and specific human and financial resources dedicated to its implementation.

## To make the social and political-legal environment more conducive to young people's participation

1. **Ensure that youth engagement is fully recognized** as being in the public interest, in accordance with the provisions of the Framework and Programming Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities (LOP-DSLIM):
  - Undertake specific study of youth-led organizations and adopt appropriate procedures to assist them based on a confidence pact and sustained support.
2. **Help change the social norms and stereotypes** affecting young people and particularly young women:
  - Conduct efforts to raise awareness among all stakeholders (decision-makers, community and religious leaders, the media, young men, schools, etc.).
3. **Make the political-legal environment more conducive** to young people's participation, and in particular:
  - Better inform young people about opportunities to get involved.
  - Undertake specific study of youth-led organizations and adopt appropriate procedures to assist them based on a confidence pact and sustained support.
  - Promote the building of young people's and youth-led organizations' capacities through dialogue with partner states in France's cooperation.
  - Make funding available to support young people with less access to opportunities for collective engagement.
  - Foster and facilitate, both in France and its partner countries, at all territorial levels from local to national, the creation of specific spaces for young people's initiatives for international solidarity and cooperation.
  - Build the capacities of organizations working with and for young people, in France and its partner countries, so that they embrace a human rights-based approach to young people and are able to operationalize it in their projects.

**4. Ensure that France's public and private international solidarity agencies are informed about the human rights-based approach** to young people, and that they provide financial support to operationalize it in projects.

### To build the capacities of young people and youth-led organizations

**5. Promote Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity (ECIS) as a national education priority**, as part of global citizenship and sustainable development education.

- Continue and step up the application of the five recommendations of the evaluation report on the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and Agence Française de Développement (AFD) for ECIS.
- Increase interministerial dialogue around ECIS.
- Encourage multi-stakeholder approaches by prioritizing support for cooperation and networking and continue and expand the multi-stakeholder work on ECIS carried out by the advisory group led by the AFD.

**6. Affirm the commitment to scale up ECIS** both qualitatively and quantitatively.

- Organize a broad consultation with all stakeholders to identify how to more efficiently structure the field of ECIS and engagement.
- Set up an ECIS and engagement observatory.

**7. Consider and affirm that young people's volunteer work for international solidarity and cooperation is a highly advanced form of youth participation**, and make a volunteer experience accessible to all young people, regardless of their social situation or their initial education and vocational training.

**8. Increase recognition, through the LOP-DSLIM Programming Act upon its potential revision, of the essential role of youth organizations** and organizations for international solidarity and non-formal education, and the necessary involvement of local government bodies in France and partner countries to expand youth participation.

**9. Acknowledge the French government's commitment to supporting the mobilization of all these stakeholders** and to working with them to find ways to structure the sector with respect for their history, specific characteristics and skills.

- Increase financial support for international solidarity and non-formal education organizations working with and for young people.
- Raise non-formal education organizations' awareness about international solidarity issues.
- Raise awareness of a human rights-based approach among the members, governance and management of international solidarity and non-formal education organizations, and encourage them to mainstream it in their projects.

### To enable young people's inclusive, effective and meaningful participation in formal and informal spaces for decision-making and consultation regarding France's international solidarity policy, in France and its partner countries

**10. Inscribe and define the concept of meaningful participation in a future youth strategy developed by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs**, to avoid "youthwashing", and apply measures that promote young people's meaningful participation in national and international decision-making spaces.

**11. Develop participation within the framework of regular dialogue between young people and decision-makers at all levels**, in which young people are considered legitimate partners, their voices are listened to and their recommendations are taken into account:<sup>1</sup>

- Ensure the cross-cutting integration of young people within the CNDSI to guarantee their fair representation.
- Improve the representation of young people within national delegations participating in international events and within international organizations, with a commitment to their inclusion in formal spaces.
- Make sure that French and partner countries' local government bodies ensure the representation of young people in monitoring bodies.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the experience of the BMZ Youth Advisory Council presented in this report and that of the dialogue in October 2022 for the International Day of the Girl, the recommendations from which are also included in this report.

**12. Provide for young people’s basic needs** before asking them for real participation.

**13. Duly recognize young people’s engagement** in international solidarity work, for example through the European Youthpass instrument.<sup>2</sup>

**14. Adopt intersectional and inclusive approaches in formulating public policies**, in particular supporting the participation of girls, young women and gender minorities.

**15. Recognize the diversification of informal spaces for participation** and give greater consideration to the proposals arising from them in developing and structuring public policies.

### **To comprehensively integrate a human rights-based approach to young people into France’s international solidarity policy<sup>3</sup>**

**16. Work to ensure, along with the other Member States of the European Union (EU), the operationalization, financing and accountability of the Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action.**

**17. Make the respect and promotion of the rights of young people a cross-cutting priority in France’s international solidarity and cooperation policy** (in France and its partner countries) and, to this end, formalize its commitment through the adoption at the highest level of a policy and strategy framework accompanied by multi-year objectives, specific human and financial resources, and an accountability mechanism.

**18. To promote multi-stakeholder uptake and operationalization of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs’ future youth strategy:** organize the dialogue around and monitoring of the strategy with all stakeholders, including organizations for and led by young people, in France and in partner countries, ensuring spaces and mechanisms to guarantee accountability for the commitments made.

<sup>2</sup> Youthpass is a European instrument that allows young people participating in Erasmus+ programmes to identify, document and receive recognition for the learning outcomes acquired under these programmes. [youthpass.eu](https://youthpass.eu)

<sup>3</sup> Recommendations addressed to the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

### **To set out a policy and strategy frameworks for young people in France’s international solidarity policy**

In connection with the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs’ “Human Rights and Development” strategy (2019-2023) developed in consultation with civil society organizations (CSOs), this strategy could comprise the following approaches and objectives:

- Improve and structure the uptake and effective integration of the human rights-based approach to young people within the Ministry and its agencies;
- Develop France’s bilateral and multilateral diplomacy in support of the rights of young people;
- Increase and improve the consideration given to the human rights-based approach to young people in all instruments for financing development and humanitarian action, both bilateral and multilateral;
- Invest in building the capacities of young people in all their diversity, especially girls and young women, in partner countries;
- Offer dedicated additional funding for youth-led organizations that is accessible and adapted to their needs and expectations;
- Build the capacities of and support for organizations for and led by young people;
- Develop the exchange of practices, the capitalization of successful practices, and research;
- Identify the primary French CSOs with proven expertise in the “jeunesses actrices” (“young people as active participants”) approach, and include them in the development, monitoring and evaluation of France’s international youth strategy;
- Set up an advisory panel of youth-led organizations from the main partner countries.



# INTRODUCTION

Our societies are faced with the acceleration of climate change and its numerous impacts. Against a backdrop of social and economic crises, new international tensions are emerging around the world. The organizational model of our societies requires profound changes to ensure the viability and liveability of our territories.

## Who are “young people”?

The United Nations (UN) defines “youth” or “young people” as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. It nevertheless qualifies and expands on this definition by emphasizing that “youth is a period of transition from dependence to independence and autonomy” and that young people “face discrimination and obstacles to the enjoyment of their rights by virtue of their age, limiting their potential. The human rights of youth therefore refers to the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms by young people. Promoting these rights entails addressing the specific challenges and barriers faced.”<sup>4</sup>

This definition reflects a human rights-based approach (HRBA) that the civil society organizations (CSOs) that are members of Coordination SUD<sup>5</sup> also refer to as “jeunesses actrices” (“young people as active participants”), taking into account the diversity of young people.

Young people have a strong and legitimate desire to exercise active citizenship, at a time when their future is marked by great uncertainty. The involvement of young people in all their diversity is an issue of pressing importance.

Although young people’s participation in the development and implementation of public policies is a right, it does not simply occur spontaneously.

Rather, it arises through individual and collective paths of development within conducive environments. It is the result of socialization and education processes that build social consciousness, the motivation to act, and the progressive development of skills, such as the ability to interpret a context, analyse and comprehend the issues at stake, and assimilate the codes of communication and action.

The issue of youth participation is made more complex due to this group’s unique position in the social structure. Young people today are the subject of many common preconceptions. In response, young people across a diverse spectrum are critical of the political and institutional spheres.<sup>6</sup>

In 2023, the UN counted 1.2 billion<sup>7</sup> young people aged 15 to 24. While young people represent great potential for the future, the challenges that they must help to address are huge: the environmental and climate crisis, growing inequalities, protracted international crises, and, in many countries, systemic human rights violations and the erosion of the rule of law and democracy. In this context, innovative intergenerational solutions and young people’s participation in political, social, environmental and economic life are an absolute necessity to achieve progress towards inclusive and sustainable development.<sup>8</sup> In a noteworthy illustration, however, in 2023 only 2.6% of the world’s members of parliament were under the age of 30.<sup>9</sup>

In light of these issues, the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI) decided to launch a working group on youth participation in the development and implementation of France’s development and international solidarity policy.

This report presents the findings of the working group co-chaired by Tanguy Guibert, Henri Arévalo and Michelle Perrot. The working group provided the opportunity for 31 people to share their experiences and recommendations, who came from different stakeholder backgrounds, in France and abroad.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> OHCHR. (n.d.). [About the human rights of youth](#). ohchr.org

<sup>5</sup> Youth and International Solidarity Commission (Commission Jeunesses et Solidarité Internationale – CJSI) (2023). [Droits des jeunesses : Une priorité transversale à inscrire dans la politique de solidarité internationale de la France](#) (Rights of young people : a cross-cutting priority to include in France’s international solidarity policy), Coordination Sud. Available (in French) at: [coordinationsud.org](#)

<sup>6</sup> In the digital “Young People for Global Solidarity” consultation, 16% of respondents highlighted young people’s distrust of politicians and institutions. This observation, linked to young people’s lack of representation in spaces for the development of public policy, could explain why, in a consultation conducted by Plan International involving 29,000 girls and young women, only 11% “reported that they were generally happy with their leaders’ decisions on issues they care about”.

<sup>7</sup> Plan International. (2022). [The State of the World’s Girls – Equal Power Now: Girls, Young Women and Political Participation](#). At [planinternational.fr](#)

<sup>8</sup> United Nations. (n.d.). [Youth | United Nations](#). At: [un.org](#)

<sup>9</sup> AFD - Agence Française de Développement (2022) [Human Rights and Development: The rights of youth](#). Available at: [afd.fr](#)

<sup>10</sup> United Nations. (n.d.-b). [International Day of Parliamentarism | United Nations](#). At: [un.org](#)

<sup>10</sup> Between September 2022 and March 2023, the CNDSI working group heard from 31 individuals representing 11 categories of international solidarity stakeholders, from France and abroad. Among these speakers, 16 were young people. This report, written by the three co-chairs, summarizes this work and offers its own analysis and recommendations..



These interviews were complemented by a digital consultation sponsored by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and CNDSI, involving 2,296 young people from 89 countries.

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*“We not only need young people to participate, but also for their voices to be heard by policy makers”.*

Young woman, Asia – Young People for Global Solidarity Consultation

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This work culminated in a series of key recommendations, set out in the summary, that are supported by inspiring examples of successful experiences and aimed at improving the practices of all stakeholders. The primary objective of this working group is to encourage the adoption, by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, of a strategy promoting youth participation in public programmes and policies, both in France and in its partner countries. To meet the challenges involved, this strategy must receive strong political support and be accompanied by multi-year objectives, an accountability framework, and specific human and financial resources dedicated to its implementation.

Three obstacles to young people’s participation in the development and monitoring of public policy were identified:

- **Restrictive and stereotyped social norms:** young people are still viewed as beneficiaries of programmes and policies. Their legitimacy and right to participate are often denied because they are seen as lacking experience and expertise. The issues with which young people are associated are often limited to education, training and employability, or the risks of radicalization,<sup>11</sup> without considering that young people have a rightful place in all areas of public policy.

- **Insufficient dialogue with policy makers:** there are few fora for dialogue, consultation and decision-making that are open to young people and allow them to take part in dialogue as equals. Initiatives for youth participation are too often limited to consultations or the formation of groups of young people designed solely for discussion among themselves, with no link to policy and strategy decision-making bodies.
- **The lack of strategic framework at the level of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs:** the Ministry’s recent civil society strategy for the 2023-2027 period recognizes “the importance of promoting the full participation of young people in creating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating public policies”. However, this strategy includes little mention of young people and how to strengthen their action. While there are also various initiatives such as the schemes supporting French young people’s engagement in international solidarity and the instruments developed by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and civil society stakeholders to improve youth participation in the programmes of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), these remain uncoordinated initiatives carried out by small number of stakeholders with very limited resources.

At a time when the conclusions of the 2023 Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID) have set out youth and human rights as priorities, adopting a strategic framework for young people in France’s international action is essential. It is time to consider the issue of young people through the lens of human rights, and promote their increased participation in the development, monitoring and implementation of public programmes and policies in their countries.

<sup>11</sup> Excerpt from the definition provided by the Office of the Secretary-General of the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Crime and Radicalization: “Radicalization is a process of social, moral and cultural disconnection that leads an individual to adopt a new view of society, new habitus and new behaviours, calling into question the fundamental principles of the social contract and justifying the use of violence.” Office of the Secretary-General of the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Crime and Radicalization (n.d.).

[Prévenir la radicalisation: Qu’entend-on par « radicalisation » ?](#) (Preventing radicalization: What is radicalization?) At: [cipdr.gouv.fr](http://cipdr.gouv.fr)

# The different forms of youth participation and the need to build a more conducive environment

Young people are concerned about numerous issues and get involved in many ways. However, their effective and meaningful participation in decision-making spaces, whether through programmes, organizations or the development of public policies, requires a conducive social and institutional environment as well as capacity building.

## Terminology: participation and/or engagement?

The concept of participation is not used interchangeably with that of engagement. The scope of this report covers participation, which can encompass programmes for engagement, such as volunteering.

The concept of participation relates to the legal framework of human rights, while engagement is used to refer to individual or collective volunteer work. This form of engagement constitutes one of the foundations of the voluntary sector.

“Participation is a fundamental right. It is one of the guiding principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that has been reiterated in many other Conventions and Declarations. Through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life-skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship and to promote positive civic action. To participate effectively, young people must be given the proper tools, such as information, education about and access to their civil rights.”<sup>12</sup>

## 1. The different forms of youth engagement: a proposed typology

Organized by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in June 2023, the “Young People for Global Solidarity” consultation on young people’s view of international solidarity highlighted their concern about many issues: climate change first and foremost, along with increasing socio-economic inequality, humanitarian emergencies, and political phenomena such as the rise of extremism and discrimination, particularly based on gender.

In response to these issues, young people’s participation takes many forms, as researcher Valérie Becquet and Arame Gueye Sène of the Senegalese NGO Social Change Factory emphasized before the working group: it is part of the path young people follow linked to their educational and career choices. Valérie Becquet proposes a typology of “young people’s engagement careers” that lead them to get involved in sectors such as justice, civic education, the social sector and international solidarity. According to her, young people are seeking to experiment with new approaches to create change (testing new formats for engagement, wanting to take action/make an impact in a different way, a highly critical attitude toward the system, seeking alternative forms of getting involved).

For the NGO Social Change Factory, young people in Africa get involved through many spaces: politics, religious events (such as distributing food during Ramadan), social and civic issues, sports, and in universities (demonstrations and strikes).

<sup>12</sup> UN-Habitat & the Focal Point on Youth, UN DESA. (2013). *Youth Participation*. Available at [un.org](http://un.org).

## Typology of “young people’s engagement careers”

Three categories of spaces can be identified:

- Social movements (democratic and environmental activism, age-specific causes): spaces for citizen mobilization of which young people can be the initiators; isolated instances that are nonetheless important for initially getting involved or pursuing engagement.
- Collective engagement (non-profits, NGOs, international solidarity organizations, undeclared projects): spaces offering activities targeting or initiated by young people. These spaces take diverse forms, and can be the scene of intergenerational conflicts, between young people with a desire to get involved but who don’t see themselves in old, long-established processes that don’t fit their type of engagement. These spaces have diversified the way they work to attract young people.
- Public policy: acceleration in the development of these spaces has been seen over recent years, along with the proliferation of participation schemes, in particular within European and international fora. These spaces often have an educational aim and focus on learning and the transmission of knowledge about engagement or career paths. They take a variety of forms, including youth participation in consultations (developed since the 1960s), youth support programmes to encourage young people to take action, and grants. Valérie Becquet points out the risk of instrumentalizing young people in this space.

These three spaces offer a broad view of the concept of engagement; young people can navigate from one space to another, or be involved in multiple spaces at once. This factor, combined with the wide variety of engagement practices, can make it difficult to quantify youth engagement.

## 2. The need to build a more conducive environment for young people in all their diversity

A conducive environment is necessary at all levels: social, economic, the governance of organizations implementing projects and in the political-legal framework.

### A. The weight of social norms, including gender stereotypes, on young people:

As underscored during the hearings held by the CNDSI working group, young people’s social position (in other words, the value and place accorded to them by society) remains an obstacle to their effective and meaningful participation in processes to create change, in all fields. Their right to participation is not fully recognized. Gender norms also affect the participation of young women, who face double discrimination linked to social norms.

In the “Young People for Global Solidarity” consultation, a young woman described the social norms burdening young people and hindering their engagement:

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*“If I had to list them, I would say that the obstacles are: the lack of space made for young people, social norms and the weight of society’s negative view of young people, [...] the impostor syndrome felt by young people and encouraged by society’s perception of them.”*

Young woman, France

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Young people are victims of discrimination not only due to their age, but also their gender. A consultation conducted by Plan International involving 29,000 girls and young women aged 15-24 from 29 countries, covering all regions, income levels and socio-political contexts, brought to light numerous obstacles that stand in the way of their political participation.<sup>13</sup> In addition to legal and economic barriers, societal gender norms emerge clearly, combined with norms related to the social role of young people. The young women and girls reported that they are frequently patronized, rarely listened to, and are subject to violence, abuse and harassment, especially when they want to speak out.

<sup>13</sup> Plan International. (2022). [The State of the World’s Girls – Equal Power Now: Girls, young women and political participation](#). Available at [plan-international.fr](#).

As a consequence: 1 out of 5 participants had personally been discouraged from getting involved or participating in politics, and 1 out of 10 participants had internalized these gender norms and thought that women were not qualified to be political leaders.

## B. The importance of taking young people's basic needs into account, a prerequisite to their participation:

As illustrated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, taking a person's basic needs into account is a prerequisite to their fulfilment and achieving their full potential.<sup>14</sup>

A young woman who spoke before the working group also mentioned a lack of time: *"Young people can get caught up in busy schedules between their studies, work activities and personal commitments, which limits the time they have to get involved in international solidarity initiatives"*. The "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation showed that over a third of respondents lacked the resources to get involved, while 23% also highlighted a lack of time.

During the hearings, the Committee for National and International Relations of Youth and Non-formal Education Associations (CNAJEP) and Social Change Factory particularly emphasized the fact that participation and engagement are not possible if young people are not first provided with suitable living conditions and their basic needs are met. Consideration must be given to the financial and overall safety conditions (healthcare, housing, food, etc.) offered to young people when they participate.

## C. The importance of an inclusive political-legal environment for young people in all their diversity:

Several criteria and focus points must be taken into account when setting up a project:

- The factors limiting and facilitating young people's participation in political, economic and social decision-making spaces in relation to the project must be considered;
- The influence that the project can have on the legal and political environment to make it more conducive to youth participation in all their diversity; the creation of institutionalized spaces for dialogue between young people and public authorities must be encouraged. For example: dialogue between decision-makers at a high-level conference, support for the

establishment of youth parliaments at local and national level, inclusion of young people in public policy monitoring bodies, etc.

**One challenge is that of access to information, and inclusion more broadly.** The "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation highlighted the need of young people from all countries to receive better guidance to help them take action. The main barriers to young people's engagement and participation concerned a lack of information (indicated by 59% of respondents) more than a lack of resources or motivation: young people know little about the different forms of engagement, and the stakeholders with whom they can get involved. During the hearings, numerous young people also spoke about the importance of adapting communications to young people in all their diversity, better showcasing the impact of the programmes implemented thanks to their participation, and producing communications embodied by young people themselves, which they found more inspiring.

In addition to access to information, the WG hearings emphasized the socially selective nature of youth participation: young people's level of education, family circumstances and socio-economic background are determining factors. This phenomenon was also seen in a study conducted by Plan International on the activism of girls and young women aged 16-22 in West and Central Africa. The study showed that the most educated adolescent girls from the most affluent backgrounds and least geographically isolated areas were generally those who became activists.<sup>15</sup> This study also showed that "girls and young women from poorer backgrounds, minority groups, those who identify as LGBTQI+, and those with a disability are all less likely to be involved in activism".

Beyond the exclusionary factor of diplomas, the inadequacy of the notion of "young people with fewer opportunities" (YPFO) was highlighted. This concept masks the discrimination underlying a lack of participation and indirectly condones it, without seeking to combat the causes of the underlying inequalities. This point was notably emphasized by Jérémie Morfoisse of Solidarité Laïque, during his presentation of the "Jeunes des 2 Rives" programme (see box below):

<sup>14</sup> Basic needs refer to physiological needs (food, water, breathing, sleep, washing, clothes) and safety needs (shelter, a room, a safe environment, stable employment, etc.) in Maslow's hierarchy.

<sup>15</sup> Khadar, J., Atkinson, R., Marriage, T., & Plan International in West and Central Africa. (2020). [Girls' and Young Women's Activism and Organising in West and Central Africa.](#)



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*“Recognizing the existence of YPFOs means also recognizing the existence of young people with more opportunities who aren’t designated by an acronym, and recognizing the inequalities that pervade our society and those of France’s partner countries. [...] Using the term YPFO shows disregard for the causes of this lack of opportunities and the actions that need to be taken”.*

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#### D. A conducive environment for young people’s participation within organizations implementing international solidarity projects

Organizations implementing international solidarity projects are the best placed to facilitate young people’s participation in their own operations, in particular through their recruitment of new staff, as well as in the implementation of their projects.

Several conditions need to be met to create an environment conducive to young people’s participation both within organizations and in projects:<sup>16</sup>

- Awareness-raising within an organization’s governance and management about a human rights-based approach to young people, ensuring an understanding of the issues and encouraging the organization to include young people in its governance.
- Formal integration of the human rights-based approach to young people into the organization’s strategy.
- Knowledge and understanding on the part of the members of the organization and its partner organizations of the interest of applying a human rights-based approach (HRBA) in general and particularly to young people.

#### E. Facilitation of and support for spaces for young people’s initiatives

The participation of young people is contingent on the extent that society as a whole facilitates the creation and development of spaces in which young people can organize, carry out projects and initiatives, engage in debate and discussions, and join together to make their voices heard and bring forward new solutions.

Youth-led associations that are created and managed by young people are an ideal space to experience the implementation of collective

#### The example of Solidarité Laïque’s J2R programme as a means of combating inequality

The “Jeunes des 2 Rives” (“Young people from both shores”) or J2R programme, implemented in France, Morocco and Tunisia, mobilizes nearly 400 young people and close to 100 organizations. The beneficiaries are primarily young people from priority urban neighbourhoods or rural areas. Through the J2R programme, Solidarité Laïque focuses on three challenges:

1. Working to fight social, economic, cultural and regional discrimination and issues of racism and lack of opportunities, by listening to young people and informing them about the various opportunities for engagement. It is important to keep in mind the diversity of young people’s profiles: some live in regions affected by disparities and a lack of access to information or even education. There is a need for outreach to inform them of the opportunities and mechanisms available to them, such as International Solidarity Volunteering (VSI), international citizen service and reciprocal schemes. J2R is seeking to get involved with the primary local channels in Tunisia, Morocco and France for informing and facilitating dialogue with young people (community and social centres, youth-led associations, etc.), to help equip them to inform young people about the programmes available.
2. Implementing educational and pedagogical approaches to enable young people to work together to confront situations that oppress them. Through J2R, groups of young people from three countries are able to join forces to carry out initiatives that have a direct impact on their daily lives.
3. Encouraging young people’s renewed commitment and connection to their local communities by building local and global citizenship.

Arame, who participated in the J2R programme in the context of a project carried out in partnership with her association Esprit d’Ebène and a Moroccan association, reported positively on her experience. She was able to work on her first film, secure an internship at SL in the audiovisual sector, and connect with young people abroad. In her words, the experience also *“opened my eyes to the discrimination that I face on a daily basis and that is also a reality for young people in Morocco”.*

<sup>16</sup> Coordination SUD. (2022). [Evaluation grid for young people’s inclusion in projects \(in French\)](#) – Coordination SUD. Available at: [coordinationsud.org](http://coordinationsud.org)

projects. These associations are especially developed in France's partner countries.

Their capacity for initiative and adaptation makes them a driving force in these countries. However, running a youth association remains a challenge. As in many associations, mastering all of the organizational factors as well as project methodology and management continues to represent a real difficulty. The time commitment required of leaders is harder to meet due to young people's greater social and professional mobility, which complicates the transfer of skills to new entrants. These associations are also confronted with the lack of trust shown by institutions and funding providers, as well as exacting procedures for managing public funds they receive.

During the hearings, one association leader called for funding providers "to not be afraid to give funds to young people, and to work with young people's CSOs to build relationships of trust". She proposed "providing testing and assessment spaces for project leaders to improve fund-raising processes and make the steps involved in undertaking a project less daunting".

The issue that emerges is the matter of methods, materials and vehicles to encourage the creation of such spaces and associations.

### **Our recommendations to create an environment conducive to the participation of young people in all their diversity:**

- **Reinforce the principle that youth engagement is in the general interest as intrinsically recognized by the Framework and Programming Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities (LOP-DSLIM).**
- **Help change the social norms and stereotypes affecting young people and particularly young women.**
- **Make the social and political-legal environment more conducive to young people's participation.**
- **Foster and facilitate, both in France and its partner countries, at all territorial levels from local to national, the creation of specific spaces for young people's initiatives for international solidarity and cooperation.**

To operationalize these principles, we recommend the implementation of the following actions:

- 1. Improve the system for informing young people about opportunities for participation**
  - In France, integrate the promotion of engagement in international solidarity and cooperation (CSI) into the missions of the student life councils in secondary schools (Conseils de la Vie Lycéenne) and the role of student delegates for sustainable development.
  - In France, enlist regional youth information centres (CRIJs) and their networks, and local stakeholders such as community centres and youth and culture centres (MJCs), in promoting existing programmes to young people in all their diversity, outside of schools and universities.
- 2. Undertake specific study of youth-led associations and adopt appropriate support procedures** based on a confidence pact and ongoing accompaniment. Make funding available to support young people with less access to these opportunities for collective engagement.
- 3. Promote, through dialogue** with France's cooperation partners, the **building of the capacities of young people and youth-led organizations:** facilitate hands-on opportunities for exercising and developing their leadership skills through formal, non-formal and informal education; ensure better access to the resources available; promote networking among young people and recognize inspirational young people with whom they can identify in practising active citizenship.
- 4. Building the capacities of organizations working with and for young people,** in France and its partner countries, so that they embrace a human rights-based approach to youth programmes and are able to operationalize it in their projects. This is notably achieved through training, providing tools and sharing best practices.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The "Place aux Jeunes" programme, co-funded by AFD, offers numerous resources available (in French) via the following links: [engagees-determinees.org](http://engagees-determinees.org)

**5. Conduct efforts to raise awareness among all stakeholders:**

- Decision-makers, community and religious leaders, and the media;
- Boys and young men, focusing on developing positive masculinity to rally their support;
- In schools: need for gender transformative education,<sup>18</sup> that promotes comprehensive sexuality education, citizenship education, and the development of children's self-confidence and leadership skills, especially for girls.

**6. Ensure that France's public and private international solidarity agencies are informed about the human rights-based approach to young people and provide financial support for its implementation in projects.**

<sup>18</sup> Gender transformative education has the potential to contribute to changes within existing and long-standing gender norms, to promote positive and transformative social and political change for women and girls, and address power inequalities. It strives to harness the full potential of education to transform attitudes and practices within and beyond the education system to contribute to a broader environment of gender justice for girls and boys in all their diversity. At: [plan-international.org](http://plan-international.org)



# Building the capacities of young people and youth-led organizations

Young people's participation in our country, and in the operations of cooperation and solidarity initiatives supported by France and its partner countries, is all the more meaningful and effective when they have a better understanding of the world today and the skills to participate in and influence decisions.

To better empower them to act, two closely related levers must be used simultaneously:

- Local and global citizenship education for children and young people.
- Opportunities to exercise active citizenship.

Multi-stakeholder work is needed to implement these two levers.

## 1. The need to strengthen local and global citizenship education

The term "local and global citizenship education" appeared relevant to us, as it encompasses ECIS and reflects the universalism of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The mention of "local" citizenship education also underscores that in addition to international solidarity issues, young people should also be educated in the functioning of national institutions to foster their participation in their country's public policies.

### A. The need to strengthen ECIS

At present, the implementation of ECIS and volunteering is essentially carried out by international solidarity and non-formal education stakeholders, who rely on a number of local, national and European mechanisms, supported by limited resources.

ECIS concerns a wide audience, of all ages, and can take the form of a host of diverse, multi-faceted and specific educational initiatives: workshops, meetings, debates, projects spanning several

months, etc. These initiatives are integrated into established educational spheres, from nursery school to secondary school, and sometimes into recreational centres and holiday camps. They also take the form of events organized for the general public.

Built around concrete projects, opening horizons to life experiences, and enabling unexpected encounters outside of traditional frameworks, ECIS is a means "to foster ownership by citizens of the issues of development and international solidarity. It is also a necessary tool to contribute to democratic and global challenges, citizen action and living together in harmony. In this way, by reinforcing citizens' desire and power to act, ECIS fosters and supports the increase of citizen and solidarity initiatives. ECIS intersects and complements other types of education implemented by a variety of actors with a similar philosophy such as sustainable development education and global citizenship education."<sup>19</sup>

### The three main dimensions of ECIS: excerpt from the report of the AFD's ECIS advisory group<sup>20</sup>

ECIS is a threefold approach:

#### EDUCATIONAL:

It is a long-term approach that values dialogue and collective intelligence.

#### POLITICAL:

It supports a vision of international solidarity based on respect for human rights, equality for all and protection of the planet, while taking into account the richness of cultural diversity.

#### EMPOWERING:

It prepares for and facilitates active citizenship to drive social transformation and reduce inequalities at every level, from local to global."

<sup>19</sup> MEAE (n.d.-b). [France's strategy for civil society and civic engagement](#). At: France Diplomatie, diplomatie.gouv.fr

<sup>20</sup> [Le rôle essentiel de l'éducation à la citoyenneté et à la solidarité internationale : argumentaire commun](#) (The essential role of Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity: advisory group report). (n.d.-b). Available at: afd.fr

ECIS is partially included, to varying extents, in school programmes dedicated to education for sustainable development, which are now the focus of recommendations and obligations for education teams.<sup>21</sup>

ECIS is also implemented by organizations for and led by young people and organizations for non-formal education and international solidarity, and to a lesser degree by the social welfare sector, and sometimes local governments. It is also the focus of formalized and less formal partnerships with the Ministry for National Education and Young People (MENJ), the establishments of the Ministry for Agriculture and Food Sovereignty (MASA) and other public stakeholders. It mainly benefits from the support of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the AFD, representing an average of €10 million between 2015 and 2020, according to an evaluation report entitled "Evaluation of the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) to the stakeholders of Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity (ECIS)".<sup>22</sup> Locally, local governments and other donors provide technical and financial support. For example, the Communauté d'agglomération de Sicoval, an intercommunal local government structure integrating the southeastern suburbs of Toulouse, initiated the "Globally minded young people" programme ("Pour une jeunesse ouverte sur le monde"), linked with their decentralized cooperation projects to develop ECIS activities in schools.<sup>23</sup>

The same evaluation report indicates that active awareness-raising efforts were able to reach 16,500 people in 2019, through 590 identified initiatives. The number of young people concerned remains relatively low compared to the population of children and young people aged 6 to 19 in France, which amounts to more than 6 million.<sup>24</sup>

During the "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation, when asked to prioritize the SDGs, the young people surveyed ranked Goal 4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education" first (57% of respondents), followed by Goal 13: "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" (50%).

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*"It is important to raise young people's awareness of social, environmental and political issues, and of the available opportunities for engagement. Education that emphasizes active citizenship and the values of solidarity and social responsibility can help inspire young people to get involved."*  
Young man from the Southern, Central and Eastern Africa region

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ECIS notably contributes to:

- increasing understanding of sustainable development issues and the role of international cooperation and solidarity;
- building a set of micro-skills to enhance the capacity to act in collective dynamics;
- strengthening the motivation to participate and get involved.

On this last point, the president of an association, who is also a secondary school teacher, highlighted during the hearings: "what is most relevant is for these programmes to align together to support the educational pathway towards active citizenship". She mentioned as an example the synergy between a Tandem Solidaire<sup>25</sup> partnership project with a non-profit and other tools, and the fact that certain students got involved with the non-profit afterwards.

<sup>21</sup> Eduscol – French Ministry for National Education and Young People. (n.d.). [L'éducation au développement durable dans le cadre des enseignements](https://www.eduscol.education.fr/). (Education for sustainable development in the classroom.) At: [eduscol.education.fr](https://www.eduscol.education.fr/)

<sup>22</sup> AFD, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, EY Consulting & Eval4Change. (2023). [Summary – Evaluation of the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Agence Française de Développement \(AFD\) to the stakeholders of Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity \(ECIS\)](#) At: [France Diplomatie, diplomatie.gouv.fr](https://diplomatie.gouv.fr/)

<sup>23</sup> The "Globally minded young people" programme ("Pour une jeunesse ouverte sur le monde") is an awareness-raising project aiming to foster a global outlook among young people through a participatory and fun approach. It supports the projects of local non-profit organizations and childhood and youth stakeholders, for example through lending educational resources (exhibitions, games, media tools, etc.), events involving non-profits, and networking".

Sicoval – Communauté d'agglomération du sud-est toulousain. (n.d.). [S'ouvrir aux autres](https://www.sicoval.fr/) (Engaging with others). [sicoval.fr](https://www.sicoval.fr/).

<sup>24</sup> INSEE 2022 population estimate (provisional data) – Age structure of the population on 1 January 2022.

<sup>25</sup> "Tandem Solidaire" partnerships: this programme, implemented by several multi-stakeholder regional networks (RRMAs) as part of the RECITAL programme, allows international solidarity stakeholders to carry out educational initiatives in state schools or educational establishments of the Ministry of Agriculture, partnering with a teacher and their class.

The summary of the 2023 report evaluating the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the AFD to ECIS stakeholders highlighted three observations:<sup>26</sup>

- ECIS is a recognized approach driven by multiple stakeholders, without a formalized strategy.
- ECIS is primarily supported by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the AFD, for an average of €10 million per year, but needs are unequally covered.
- The use of resources is satisfactory overall, with a definite impact on the ECIS sector, its organizations and final beneficiaries.

The question now is how to scale up ECIS, and citizenship education more broadly, both in France and in its partner countries.

It is necessary to adopt a real action plan concerning citizenship education, both formal and informal, and no longer be satisfied with implementing initiatives piecemeal in the hope that their proliferation will produce results. In doing so, conditions should be created for dialogue and collaboration between the various education stakeholders in the formal and non-formal sectors, and pedagogical requirements must be set (in terms of both methods and curriculum content).

Conducted between 2021 and 2022, the joint evaluation of the Ministry's and AFD's support for ECIS stakeholders over the 2015-2020 period emphasizes the need to "strengthen the strategic and cooperation frameworks for ECIS by breaking down silos in the current ecosystem".<sup>27</sup> In addition to the aim of developing the ECIS system, the report highlights the need for equal access to opportunities for young people, quality teaching and its professionalization, and examination of the project's educational values and intentions and the methods for jointly developing them with consideration for all stakeholders.

With a view toward the growth of the ECIS system, which needs to be scaled up, it appears that the shared ambition of both young people and the authors of this report is for ECIS and citizenship education to be accessible to all children and young people in France and its partner countries. In France, this could mean aiming for every young person to have the opportunity, during their time at school, to take part in a significant ECIS experience and directly participate in an international solidarity project.

## B. Local citizenship education: an essential lever for young people's participation in their countries' public policies

Efforts to support the leadership of young people, including girls and women, and their ability to engage in political and public affairs, must begin in childhood and continue throughout life through the creation of a conducive environment. A key lever in this area is education for citizenship and gender equality, as reflected in SDG 4.7:

*"By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development".*

Young people particularly expressed their need for citizenship education in a consultation involving 29,000 girls. To them, citizenship education is a means to ensure the participation of girls and young women in their countries' public policies.<sup>28</sup>

### A methodology for citizenship education: "Champions of Change"

This methodology to promote gender equality and children's rights is implemented in numerous countries by the NGO Plan International. It offers separate but interrelated awareness-raising and learning pathways for boys and girls. The pathway for girls focuses on self-esteem, awareness of their rights, collective power and economic empowerment. For boys, it includes learning how to avoid contributing to inequality and transform discriminatory attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate imbalances of power. They have the opportunity to learn how unfair expectations and negative masculinity also affect them, and how they can support girls' rights and gender equality. As part of the "Champions of Change" programme, girls and boys come together to discuss their changing points of view and find solutions to advance gender equality in their communities.

<sup>26</sup> AFD, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, EY Consulting & Eval4Change. (2023). [Summary – Evaluation of the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Agence Française de Développement \(AFD\) to the stakeholders of Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity \(ECSI\)](#). At: France Diplomatie, diplomatie.gouv.fr

<sup>27</sup> AFD, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, EY Consulting & Eval4Change. (2023). [Summary – Evaluation of the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Agence Française de Développement \(AFD\) to the stakeholders of Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity \(ECSI\)](#). At: France Diplomatie, diplomatie.gouv.fr

<sup>28</sup> Plan International (2022). [The State of the World's Girls – Equal Power Now: Girls, young women and political participation](#). At: plan-international.fr

In addition to formal and informal citizenship education, involvement in international solidarity initiatives allows young people to gain leadership, intercultural communication and problem-solving skills that prepare them to become global citizens.

## Our recommendations to step up local and global citizenship education:

- **Bolster political support by allocating greater resources to the operationalization of the LOP-DSLIM Act<sup>29</sup>**

Article 17 of the 2021 Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities (LOP-DSLIM) recognizes “the importance of international civic engagement, in particular that of young people”. [France] encourages and supports the initiatives of stakeholders in education for citizenship and international solidarity, the latter being directed not only at all young people and educators, but also adults, around a three-part approach of ‘inform, understand, and act’. France encourages the participation of all citizens, in particular groups that are traditionally the farthest removed from the political sphere of inclusive development and the fight against global inequalities. France encourages access for all, ensuring the inclusion of those living in poverty or vulnerable situations, to international volunteering programmes, including exchange and reciprocal programmes.”

- **Promote ECIS as a national education priority, as part of global citizenship and sustainable development education.**
- **Affirm the commitment to scale up ECIS both qualitatively and quantitatively.**

To operationalize these principles, we recommend the implementation of the following actions:

1. **Continue and step up the application of the five recommendations** of the evaluation report on the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the AFD for ECIS.<sup>30</sup>
- Strengthen the strategic framework for ECIS by breaking down silos in the current ecosystem;
- Adapt the MEAE and the AFD support mechanisms to better meet the needs of stakeholders and facilitate the scaling up of ECIS initiatives;

- Capitalize on positive experiences and adapt the procedures of support mechanisms to encourage the participation of groups with less access;
- Improve the monitoring, evaluation, knowledge capitalization and impact measurement of ECIS initiatives;
- Increase the visibility and legitimacy of the stakeholders of MEAE and AFD action in the field of ECIS.

## 2. Boost interministerial dialogue around ECIS:

- Encourage the Ministry for National Education and Young People and Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty to:
    - Better integrate international solidarity issues into current SDG curricula. To this end, adapt sustainable development training for teachers to align with ECIS.
    - Formalize relationships with the international solidarity and non-formal education stakeholders in each regional administrative division of the education system (*région académique*) to facilitate educational collaboration in schools.
  - Suggest that the Ministry for National Education and Young People and Ministry for Sport and the Olympic and Paralympic Games include ECIS modules in the training reference frameworks for professions related to youth activities and sports (BAFA qualification for youth activity leaders, DESJEPS high-level qualification in youth, non-formal education and sport) in addition to the modules on sustainable development.
  - Require all decentralized cooperation projects conducted by local government bodies to have an ECIS component with a dual impact, in their local region and those of their cooperation partners, similarly to the requirements laid out in the procedures of the AFD’s Funding Facility for Local Authorities (FICOL).
3. **Encourage multi-stakeholder approaches** by prioritizing support for cooperation and networking: place this issue on the agenda of RRMA to create opportunities in each region to bring ECIS stakeholders together to foster dialogue and promote ECIS as a full educational practice in its own right.

<sup>29</sup> Global Partnership Framework (CPG); I. – [Objectives et principes of action](#); C. – [Partnerships](#); [Article 17 - Programming Act no. 2021-1031 of 4 August 2021 on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities](#) (1) - Légifrance. (2021, August 4). [legifrance.gouv.fr](#)

<sup>30</sup> AFD, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, EY Consulting & Eval4Change. (2023). [Summary – Evaluation of the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Agence Française de Développement \(AFD\) to the stakeholders of Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity \(ECSI\)](#). At: France Diplomatie, [diplomatie.gouv.fr](#)

Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs & Agence Française de Développement (AFD). (2023). [Evaluation of the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Agence Française de Développement \(AFD\) to the stakeholders of Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity \(ECSI\): Responses of the Ministry and AFD to the recommendations arising from the evaluation](#) (in French). At: France Diplomatie, [diplomatie.gouv.fr](#)



#### 4. Continue and expand the multi-stakeholder work on ECIS carried out by the advisory group steered by AFD, which could incorporate the following priorities into its considerations:

- Teaching qualifications for local international solidarity stakeholders: creating a training programme for professionals and volunteers on the fundamentals of educational action and active teaching methods;
- Mobilization of large movements and local youth and non-formal education stakeholders: drawing on their education expertise and enabling them to cooperate with international solidarity stakeholders;
- Establishment of regional funds for ECIS in all regions to enable upscaling and resource pooling, in view of the ongoing trials conducted by ten RRMAAs as part of their RECITAL programme (“Reinforcing Education for International Citizenship in our Regions through a Local Approach to the SDGs”).<sup>31</sup>
- Expansion of International Solidarity Initiatives (ISI) calls for projects.<sup>32</sup>

## 2. The need to promote young people’s participation through volunteering and to recognize their experiences.

Engagement in volunteer work is one form of participation. International solidarity offers particularly fertile ground for exercising active citizenship and in certain cases contributing to the implementation of public policies.

In response to the “Young People for Global Solidarity” consultation question about ways of engaging in international solidarity, 61% of young people ranked community service and volunteer work first. A significant share (47%) also identified participation in local, national and international consultation forums for defining, monitoring and evaluating public policies as a mode of engagement in international solidarity. Other forms of engagement exist in informal and spontaneous settings, and are more difficult to assess. They are presented in Section 3 of this report.

Engagement in the field of international solidarity primarily takes place in France in the form of volunteer missions, but can also take the form of involvement in a non-profit organization,

sometimes associations that are created, led and managed by young people. The latter mode of participation is particularly present in France’s partner countries.

Volunteer work involves joining already-established collective structures that offer spaces for initiatives in which young people can carry out concrete actions. These spaces take diverse forms, and offer a variety of activities within frameworks that are most often predetermined.

The experience that young people accrue through these opportunities is considered to have a determining impact on their lives and influences their futures. It provides a pathway for building their careers and entering the workforce. Volunteering, particularly abroad, impacts their personal and career trajectories and strengthens social and citizenship skills.

During the hearings, a young man from Madagascar, who was volunteering in France through a reciprocal programme, explained:

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*“Volunteering has strengthened my psychosocial and interpersonal skills and has allowed me to re-examine non-formal education initiatives. I was able to rethink ecology from a local perspective. The mission enabled me to discover my professional calling and gave me the motivation to pursue a career in the non-profit and international solidarity sphere.”*

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In this vein, a study conducted by France Volontaires on “reciprocity in volunteering exchanges and volunteer solidarity work” highlighted the fact that 83% of survey participants considered that their volunteer mission helped improve their self-esteem.<sup>33</sup>

It is not uncommon to observe participants in volunteer programmes subsequently assuming responsibilities related to social, societal or political issues. Volunteering produces a two-fold effect: the result of the initiative for the beneficiaries, and the personal growth of the young person and their development of citizenship skills.

The system for volunteer engagement with its various programmes is currently effective. However, it also concerns a very small number of young people. For example, the evaluation

<sup>31</sup> AFD (2019). [Communication sheet – France: RECITAL programme](#). Available (in French) at [oc-cooperation.org](#).

<sup>32</sup> [Solidarité Internationale : Initiative pour la solidarité internationale \(ISI\)](#). (2023, 17 October). FONJEP - Cooperation Fund for Youth and Non-Formal Education. Available at: [fonjep.org](#)

<sup>33</sup> France Volontaires. (2023, 5 October). [Étude : la réciprocité et les mobilités croisées au cœur des échanges](#) (Study on reciprocity and mobility at the heart of exchange programmes). [france-volontaires.org](#).

report<sup>34</sup> indicates that in reciprocal practices, 849 international young people were hosted in France as citizen service volunteers under reciprocal arrangements between 2017 and 2022.<sup>35</sup> Over the same period, nearly 10,800 French young people took part in a citizen service mission abroad.<sup>36</sup> These numbers should be compared with the 8 million young people aged 16 to 25 potentially concerned. It is worth pointing out that the opportunities for international solidarity volunteering (VSI and VIE schemes in particular) are still not sufficiently widely known, and the number of young people and the diversity of profiles are limited in proportion to the population concerned.

The hearings revealed that social norms, social and regional discrimination, education levels, racism, knowledge of social codes, and young people's family circumstances and socio-economic background are all determining factors in their ability to exercise active citizenship. Access to volunteering opportunities appears to be socially selective, with inequalities arising from various causes.

One current issue is therefore that of inclusion: how can these opportunities for engagement and participation through volunteering be made accessible to all? Besides access to information, the very nature of the range of opportunities offered bears questioning: are they sufficiently diverse and varied?

All young people who wish to have an international solidarity experience should have the chance to be offered a mission appropriate to their skill level. Achieving such an aim would require rethinking the range of opportunities offered to make them more inclusive and suitable, involving young people in this process.

Another issue identified is that of recognizing the experience young people acquire and accrediting it as a valid component of their course of studies and social and career development. The hearings and the results of the consultation shine a light on the powerful experience-based impact of engagement through international solidarity volunteering and its broad contribution to the general interest of the countries concerned. Reciprocal volunteering is seen as a means of bringing young people together.

The Presidential Council on Development (CPD) held on 5 May 2023 announced the creation of 3,000 international positions for volunteers and young professionals by 2027 within international

organizations, foreign governments and civil society organizations. The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs indicated that 2,625 VSI volunteers will be mobilized as part of this target, as well as 75 Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) and national UN Volunteers, and the remainder of the 3,000 positions will be deployed by Expertise France through a new programme.

## Our recommendations to foster young people's participation through volunteering

- **Consider and affirm that young people's volunteer work for international solidarity and cooperation is a highly advanced form of youth participation.**
- **Make a volunteer experience accessible to all young people, regardless of their social situation or their initial education and vocational training.**
- **Take the experience acquired through volunteering into account in social and occupational integration programmes.**

To operationalize these principles, we recommend the implementation of the following actions:

1. **Expand, improve and diversify the range of volunteer opportunities** offered by providing more resources to organizations that send and host volunteers.
2. **Increase the funding allocated to the Cooperation and Cultural Action Sections (SCACs)** in French embassies and France Volontaires to help them better fulfil their mission of spreading information about reciprocal volunteer opportunities.
3. **Promote the international volunteering schemes**, through a major national campaign conducted by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, alongside France Volontaires and the other stakeholders involved, and particularly target young people with the least access to opportunities.
4. **Promote reciprocal volunteering in connection with the new programme to mobilize young people** around solidarity issues announced by President Emmanuel Macron at the Presidential Council on Development in May 2023. This will notably require offering greater assistance with the process of obtaining visas to young people participating in volunteer missions.

<sup>34</sup> AFD, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, EY Consulting & Eval4Change. (2023) [Evaluation report on the support provided by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Agence Française de Développement \(AFD\) to the stakeholders of Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity.](#)

<sup>35</sup> France Volontaires. (2023, 5 October). Etude : JVF 2023, la réciprocité et les mobilités croisées au cœur des échanges (Study: French Volunteering Day 2023, reciprocity and mobility at the heart of exchange programmes) pg 19. The international young people mentioned are restricted to young people whose habitual residence was in a country eligible for official development assistance.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs statistics, excluding countries not eligible for official development assistance.

5. **In France, explore establishing a process to accredit volunteer experience** in the form of recognized competencies in concert with the Ministry for National Education and Young People and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.
6. **Adopt a plan for developing volunteering in collaboration with all of the various stakeholders** with consideration for their current roles, prioritizing training for the staff of host organizations.
7. **Encourage the inclusion of a volunteering component in all decentralized cooperation projects** carried out by local government bodies that impact relevant regions, including systematic reciprocity arrangements, in order to strengthen initiatives such as the Territoires Volontaires programme run by France Volontaires.

### 3. The need to organize an effective multi-stakeholder ECIS and volunteering system in France

The systems for implementing ECIS and volunteering are currently operational in France and produce concrete results. However, both function on a limited scale in terms of the number of beneficiaries concerned. The ambitions for scaling up ECIS and making volunteering accessible to all require setting up a large-scale national operational system, an essential tool in a strategic plan to support youth participation, based on Article 4 of the Programming Act of 4 August 2021:

*“Non-profit organizations, companies, particularly those in the social and solidarity economy, diasporas, social partners and citizens, including representatives of the most vulnerable, all play an essential role in the policy for inclusive development and combating global inequalities. They contribute, notably through education for citizenship and international solidarity activities, to informing citizens, training them and fostering their active engagement in the area of sustainable and inclusive development. Accordingly, the French Government recognizes volunteering as a cross-cutting lever for action in solidarity development policy and commits to promoting access for everyone to international volunteering and reciprocal volunteering schemes.”*

#### A. Collaboration and complementarity between stakeholders, in a multi-stakeholder system

In recent years, multi-stakeholder approaches have proven their effectiveness by optimizing the skills and resources of the different partners involved, including public-sector stakeholders, non-profit organizations, economic actors, etc. Multi-stakeholder approaches foster cooperation and complementarity, rather than competition, between stakeholders of different types, to benefit the general interest.

In France, the fields of ECIS and volunteering bring together a multitude of stakeholders. The current system is the sum of juxtaposed initiatives, forming a more or less coordinated constellation.

Organizations’ capacity for action varies. Some have made it the focus of their work, developed their expertise, and have professional teams and the necessary tools and skills. Others have positioned these activities as secondary or peripheral to their primary activity. Still others rely essentially on the work of volunteers.

International solidarity and cooperation stakeholders tend to have knowledge of the field of action, but may not always have in-house educational and teaching skills. Conversely, non-formal education stakeholders have these skills, but can sometimes lack in-depth knowledge of the field of international solidarity. Partnerships and the pooling of skills should be developed to build an agile, effective educational system.

#### B. Scaling up

Scaling up ECIS and volunteering would entail mobilizing greater resources, and particularly strengthening technical-administrative tools and human resources in education and engineering. The question remains as to how to structure the field as a whole more efficiently.

Considering that ECIS and voluntary activities are currently mainly conducted by youth CSOs and non-profit organizations with expertise in international solidarity and cooperation or in non-formal education, the system for action can only be developed through their consolidation, in collaboration with them and with respect for their history, experience, and current role and functions. Setting up such a system will manifest the political resolve to position ECIS and volunteering as two tools to promote youth participation in defining and implementing France’s international solidarity policies.



## The Nouvelle-Aquitaine DRAJES and its initiative to facilitate networking at regional level between international solidarity stakeholders and public authorities

During the working group's hearing, the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Regional Academic Department for Youth, Engagement and Sport (DRAJES) presented a way in which public policies have been put into practice at regional level, notably through the Regional Committee for Mobility (COREMOB).

Namely, a partnership agreement was signed between the Nouvelle-Aquitaine DRAJES and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine administrative region to support European projects. This agreement with the regional government enabled National Education and the region to address shared challenges, with joint financing and budgets that complemented ministerial funding.

Two areas were particularly developed through this partnership:

- The creation of a typology of projects and organizations with the aim of making the existing programmes and initiatives more comprehensible. Four categories of organizations were identified: those responsible for projects for engagement in international solidarity, those responsible for collective projects for young people or professionals, those responsible for volunteering projects (with or without mobility), and lastly, those responsible for partnership projects (international cooperation for local government bodies).
- This mapping offered DRAJES and its partners a better understanding of existing initiatives, and helped facilitate everyone working together.
- The linking of networks working on interculturalism, in the context of a shared regional governance, enables them to meet regularly. The entities coordinate to work together to implement international projects, including ECIS, which align with one or more of the SDGs.

## Our recommendations for establishing a multi-stakeholder dynamic and system:

- **Increase recognition, through the LOP-DSLIM Programming Act upon its potential revision, of the essential role of youth organizations and organizations for international solidarity and non-formal education, and the necessary involvement of local government bodies in France and partner countries to expand youth participation.**
- **Acknowledge the French government's commitment to supporting the mobilization of all these stakeholders and to working with them to find ways to more efficiently structure the sector with respect for their history, specific characteristics and skills.**

To operationalize these principles, we recommend the implementation of the following actions:

1. **Organize a broad consultation with all stakeholders** to identify how to more efficiently structure the field of ECIS and engagement, from local to regional level, drawing on the work and report of the AFD advisory group.
2. **Increase financial support for international solidarity and non-formal education organizations working with and for young people** to strengthen and improve instructional design.
3. **Set up an ECIS and engagement observatory** to obtain data on practices and their impact.
4. **Raise non-formal education organizations' awareness** about international solidarity issues and encourage them to develop their international action with the involvement of CNAJEP and its network of regional committees (CRAJEPs).
5. **Raise awareness of a human rights-based approach among the members, governance and management** of international solidarity and non-formal education organizations, and encourage them to mainstream it in their projects, especially initiatives for young people. Encourage them to involve young people in their governance bodies.
6. **Make sure that French and partner countries' local government bodies ensure the representation of young people in the monitoring bodies** (steering committees) of decentralized cooperation initiatives.

# Young people's participation in formal and informal spaces for decision-making and consultation on France's international solidarity policy, in France and in France's partner countries

Young people's participation in formal and informal spaces for decision-making and consultation relating to France's international solidarity policies merits particular attention. Over the past few decades, young people have played an increasing role in shaping public policies of all kinds, and have driven profound social change. Among the young people taking part in the "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation, 47% identified participation in consultation fora (local, national or international) for the definition, monitoring or evaluation of one or more public policies as a way for young people to engage in international solidarity.

The results of a consultation conducted in 2022 by Plan International involving 29,000 girls and young women showed that 97% of them considered that participating in politics is important. However, they do not feel properly represented and understood, as only 11% reported that they were satisfied with their leaders' decisions on issues they care about, such as the environment, poverty, education, conflicts and health.<sup>37</sup>

These figures show that young people's participation in these fora and their inclusion in the process of developing public policy are essential to ensure the equitable representation of the needs and aspirations of young people throughout the world, as well as to carry out coherent and relevant international solidarity initiatives. More data are needed to better understand the systemic functioning of youth

participation. In particular, this would require producing knowledge and analysis on the ways young people participate and the impact they have on their countries' public policies, notably through the observations of the French National Institute for Youth and Non-Formal Education (INJEP) for data on a local to European level. On a broader scale, an international solidarity observatory could be established to include France's partner countries as well.

Young people's participation in decision-making and consultation spaces requires several guarantees: these spaces must ensure real and meaningful participation, equitable representation, and the recognition of young people's initiatives in the creation of parallel, but equally legitimate, informal spaces.

<sup>37</sup> Plan International (2022). [The State of the World's Girls – Equal Power Now: Girls, young women and political participation](#). Available at [plan-international.fr](http://plan-international.fr).

# 1. The challenges and conditions for young people's safe and meaningful participation in the face of "youthwashing"<sup>38</sup>

Young people's participation in decision-making and consultation spaces must go beyond a mere symbolic presence. It is essential to ensure their safe and meaningful participation by eliminating the practice of "youthwashing", in which young people are put on display without having real influence. To this end, it is important to create conditions conducive to their participation, such as support, training and protection mechanisms, a respectful and inclusive environment, and real opportunities to express their opinions. Young people must be involved from the beginning of the decision-making process and have an active role in policy formulation, rather than simply being consulted in a superficial manner.

## A. Effective and meaningful participation through regular opportunities for listening and dialogue between young people and decision-makers

Young people must be viewed as legitimate partners and have the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with decision-makers, at all levels from local to international, including national public authorities. It is important to recognize and value their expertise, experience and specific knowledge, while making certain resources more accessible or youth-friendly, if necessary.<sup>39</sup> Their opinions and recommendations must be taken into account seriously and concretely. Lastly, all processes or projects involving young people should include mechanisms to ensure accountability to them with regard to the results achieved and/or decisions made. It is under these conditions that dialogue can be considered to take place on an equal footing.

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*"Ensuring such participation requires: making space for young people, supporting them in developing their abilities, helping to change social norms to advance better inclusion and recognition of young people, opening up discussion/consultation/decision-making spaces to young people and ensuring their real representation in these spaces, recognizing young people's right to participation and legitimacy, listening to young people and dialogue on an equal footing between young people and public authorities, and allowing young people to participate in the development and implementation of public policy".*

Young woman, 26 years old, France

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It is important to note, however, that certain challenges must be overcome to ensure young people's effective participation. A lack of time, lack of financial resources and fear of repercussions, whether political or safety-related, are all obstacles that young people identified as barriers to their participation during the "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation. It is vital for governments and organizations to work together to overcome these challenges and create an environment conducive to young people's participation, in particular through education, as highlighted in Section 1, as well as by ensuring that measures are put in place to guarantee safe participation.

During the working group's hearings, Alexandra Theyre, deputy managing director of CNAJEP (Committee for National and International Relations of Youth and Non-formal Education Associations), underscored the four key and complementary pillars for an optimal participation process that is respectful of young people: co-leadership between the parties involved, very clear expected outcomes (detailed documentation, draft bills), appropriate timeframes and real dialogue with each person at the table taking part in the decision-making process.

<sup>38</sup> "Youthwashing refers to the act of companies and institutional bodies tokenizing young people for marketing purposes without including them in negotiations and taking meaningful action to support their demands for a more equitable and sustainable future." [Youthwashing Word Context — Climate Words](#). (n.d.). [climatewords.org](#)

<sup>39</sup> Youth-friendly materials means that the documents communicated to young participants are, if necessary, popularized and adapted to their level of knowledge about the various topics addressed.

## The European Commission's structured dialogue process on youth policy

A. They're mentioned the structured dialogue process that has been implemented by the European Union since 2011, pointing out that it is one of the rare processes to be institutionalized. The structured dialogue process has the distinctive aim, according to CNAJEP, of involving citizens in the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies. "The idea is to not just engage in consultation in the early stages, focused on what we would like to do, but to really be involved in the making of a public policy and how it is developed together over a long period. The European Commission has made the political commitment of co-developing its youth policy with young people. During 18-month work cycles, national youth councils throughout Europe – CNAJEP, in France – organize campaigns to help young people engage with elected officials, educate themselves on issues and feel a sense of legitimacy, leading up to producing a European resolution at the end of the cycle."<sup>40</sup>

## An inspiring example of youth participation in governance bodies: the Fajr fund (2015-2022) run by the French Embassy in Mauritania

The steering committee of the Fajr fund was itself composed of young people, who helped to orient the projects proposed towards issues drawing the interest of young people. In addition, during the assessment and monitoring of initiatives, the programme gave particular attention to young people's involvement in the governance of the organizations. It set up a process to support project leaders that opened up opportunities to build young people's capacities for project management (in terms of logical framework, financial reporting, monitoring indicators, etc.). This process increased the potential for post-programme impact over the long term.

## B. The necessary conditions for young people's safe participation

Young people's concern, particularly that of girls and young women, that their participation, engagement or activism will endanger their safety is a real fear. In the "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation, which offered young people the opportunity to express themselves freely via open questions, 5% of participants reported fears of the possible repercussions of their participation or engagement.

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*"In certain international contexts, there can be safety concerns, in particular related to armed conflicts, humanitarian crises and health risks. These concerns can deter some young people from getting involved in international solidarity out of fear for their safety".*

Young woman, North Africa and Middle East region

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In a recent study conducted by Plan International on the barriers to activism faced by young women and girls,<sup>41</sup> 17% of those surveyed expressed having feared for their safety while undertaking activist activities, while 21% of respondents were deterred from activism, reporting fears for their safety. In the interviews, activists cited oppression by law enforcement, hostility from members of the local community, feeling unsafe on the street and online abuse.

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*"There are many barriers, such as people verbally abusing me when I was interacting with law enforcement while I was participating in a protest, they tried to arrest us but when they saw the public and media they left us."*

Young woman activist, South Asia<sup>42</sup>

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National and international policy-makers must protect the civic space, in all public spaces, to ensure that civil liberties are upheld, including the right to protest in safety. Harassment and abuse toward girls and young women, whether online or in person, must be denounced and punishable by law.

<sup>40</sup> CNAJEP (2022). [Contribution au débat : « Volonté d'engagement et participation démocratique des jeunes »](#) (Contributing to the debate: Young people's engagement and democratic participation). Available (in French) at [cnajep.asso.fr](http://cnajep.asso.fr).

<sup>41</sup> Plan International (2023). [The State of the World's Girls 2023: Turning the world around: Girl and young women activists leading the fight for equality.](#)

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*



## Online harassment of girls and young women: recommendations

In its report “Free to Be Online?”<sup>43</sup> Plan International addresses the following recommendations to national governments:

- Ensure government policies on internet access are inclusive and actively ensure gender equality in accessing online spaces. This would include creating enabling environments for mobile network operators to enable increased connectivity and mobile internet access.
- Update and reform legislative frameworks to deal with online harassment and violence against all girls and young women, bearing in mind specific intersectional characteristics, including: race, age, disability, ethnicity, LGBTIQ+.
- Enact laws addressing violence against women and girls, holding social media platforms and other third-party internet platforms to account.
- Enable the effective implementation, by all relevant government departments – such as the police, the judiciary, and the prosecution services – of laws and policies addressing online harassment of and online violence against all women and girls.

People in positions of authority – whether in schools, NGOs, the police, or government – who work with girls and young women must recognize and weigh the specific risks they face, to both their mental health and physical safety, when they engage in a campaign or project. A good way to ensure this is to conduct a risk analysis, before and throughout the project, and to put in place a strategy and procedures for risk reduction.

## Our recommendations for effective and meaningful youth participation:

- **Inscribe and define the concept of meaningful participation in a future youth strategy developed by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, to avoid “youthwashing”, and apply measures that promote young people’s meaningful participation in national and international decision-making spaces:**
  - Apply the criteria identified in the position paper of Coordination Sud’s Youth and International Solidarity Commission (CJSI): recognition of the diversity of young people, a human rights-based approach, an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach, genuine and meaningful participation from beginning to end of the project, setting up self-evaluation and accountability tools, supporting young people to build their capacities, and recognizing their role as drivers of change.
  - Ensure that young people’s priorities and obligations are taken into account and adapt to them so that their participation is as concrete as possible.
- **Develop participation within the framework of regular dialogue between young people and decision-makers at all levels, in which the young people are considered legitimate partners, their voices are listened to and their recommendations are taken into account.**<sup>44</sup>
- **Provide for young people’s basic needs before asking them for real participation.**
- **Duly recognize young people’s engagement in international solidarity work, for example through the European Youthpass instrument.**<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Plan International (2020a). [Free to Be Online? Girls’ and young women’s experiences of online harassment](#). Available at [plan-international.org](#).

<sup>44</sup> For example, the experience of the BMZ Youth Advisory Council presented in this report and that of the dialogue in October 2022 for the International Day of the Girl, the recommendations from which are also included in this report.

<sup>45</sup> [Youthpass](#) is a European instrument that allows young people participating in Erasmus+ programmes to identify, document and receive recognition for the learning outcomes acquired under these programmes. [youthpass.eu](#)

## 2. The challenges and methods for better including and representing young people in formal bodies

Young people's participation in fora for decision-making and consultation on France's international solidarity policy is part of upholding their right to participation. It provides the benefit of a unique and innovative perspective on global challenges.

It is essential to ensure that youth participation is inclusive and reflects all dimensions of young people's diversity (gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic origin, etc.). These young people must be representative of society as a whole, and not only a privileged part of it. It is important to create mechanisms to ensure genuine and equitable representation, making sure that the voices of marginalized and under-represented young people are heard.

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*"There is no room for young people – very few people under 35 manage to have a seat at the table in decision-making bodies.*

*Our institutions are not at all representative of our society and young people are relegated to the role of observers and beneficiaries of laws and programmes".*

Young woman, 26 years old, France.

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This also requires giving consideration to the basic needs and specific realities of different groups of young people and adopting intersectional approaches<sup>46</sup> in policy-making. Young people must be able to speak on their own behalf, but it is also important to ensure that they receive support in order to represent and defend their collective interests.

Formal consultation and decision-making bodies include government institutions, international organizations, NGOs and political bodies in which the international solidarity policies and public policies of partner countries are discussed and/or developed. During the "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation, when asked about the spaces or actors with which young people would be prepared to get involved for international solidarity, participants favoured NGOs (mentioned by 76%), followed by international and regional organizations (65%) and lastly local governments (50%).

Within these spaces, two types of youth participation are seen: permanent participation

via official positions, and *ad hoc* participation. Often, one or the other of these solutions is chosen. It would be advisable to enable a combination of both, however, to ensure optimal representation. For example, with better youth representation in its various groups, the CNDSI could become a permanent participation space, complemented by broader *ad hoc* consultations involving youth-led organizations from partner countries, to enrich perspectives (see recommendation in Section 4). This mix of participation in permanent spaces and through *ad hoc* consultations has been implemented in Togo, for example, in its National Youth Council (CNJ).<sup>47</sup>

France recognizes the importance of young people's participation and has set up mechanisms to facilitate their involvement in international solidarity policy.

### The COJ, France's national advisory council on youth policies: an example of an interministerial space dedicated to youth issues

The COJ originated in 2009 as a body for dialogue between young people and public authorities. The COJ is composed of representatives of youth organizations and advises the government on issues related to young people, including international solidarity.

Young people's participation in the council takes several forms: they participate as expert members of the COJ, as part of *ad hoc* feedback groups created to evaluate a specific policy, and in evaluations via the consultation of young users (questionnaire and stakeholders' consultation day, particularly as part of the Occupational Integration Commission).

### A. The issue of instituting quotas within formal bodies to ensure fair and permanent youth representation

The question of quotas is regularly discussed with spaces for consultation and decision-making. Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda have adopted youth quotas within their parliaments. It is interesting to note that they also include attention to gender diversity. In addition, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global organization of national parliaments, recommends, in its 2023 report on "Youth participation in national parliaments",

<sup>46</sup> See glossary for a definition of the term intersectionality.

<sup>47</sup> The functioning of the CNJ is presented in point B of this section in the paragraph on youth councils.

*“promoting youth quotas that ensure a parliament is truly representative of the young men and women of the country it serves, and that include a gender parity provision (50:50)”.*<sup>48</sup>

In France, the Regional Economic, Social and Environmental Councils (CESERs) formulated a request in 2023 to have youth representation in each of their groups representing different socio-professional categories (collèges). These different initiatives reflect the desire to include young people and ensure their effective representation.

The CNDSI offers a permanent institutional framework for multi-stakeholder dialogue on a countrywide scale. However, young people's presence remains very limited. In 2020, some of its members, such as Coordination SUD, called for the introduction of youth quotas in each of its groups, with a proposal to amend the CNDSI's rules of procedure as follows:

*“Representation of the segments of French society – Also in Section I: Organization of the National Council for Development and International Solidarity – Chapter 3 on the ten groups, Coordination SUD suggests the replacement of the current formulation “In each group, particular attention is paid to achieving gender balance and including representatives of young people, diasporas and the innovation sector” with: “Particular attention must be paid to achieving gender balance within each group as well as in the representation of government bodies. In addition, each group must facilitate the participation of young members (under 35 years old) accounting for at least one sixth of its seats, or at least one seat for groups composed of less than six representatives, with the same applied to representatives of diasporas and the innovation sector.”*

While this proposal, addressed to DGM/CIV in 2020, was not fully heeded, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs did increase the presence of young people in certain groups when making appointments in 2021. For example, a student union was selected for the unions group, and CNAJEP for the non-profit sector group.

To advance further, the option of including the establishment of youth quotas for each CNDSI group in the CNDSI's rules of procedure has been once again proposed in this report (see “recommendations” section).

## B. Young people's ex officio participation in formal bodies

In addition to long-term participation, young people can also participate in *ad hoc* consultation and decision-making spaces, at both national and international level. This can include online consultations,<sup>49</sup> dialogue with decision-makers at international events, informal meetings, etc. The practice of inviting and creating groups of young people who have the opportunity to participate in these spaces as members of youth organizations, NGO representatives or junior professional officers is a best practice that should be maintained. However, the question arises as to the separation between formal decision-making spaces and these groups that are often considered informal spaces. The presence of young people, who bring a fresh and relevant perspective to the issues raised, merits more attention and integration into formal spaces.

***To open up formal decision-making and consultation spaces to young people in all their diversity, several criteria may be considered:***<sup>50</sup>

- Seek to include young people in all their diversity (girls and boys, LGBTQIA+, people with less education, from isolated areas, with disabilities, from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds, etc.) by taking specific measures if needed.
- Pay particular attention to the representativeness (social, geographical, cultural, political, etc.) of the young people or groups of young people who are potential members of these spaces.

***The case of youth councils set up by government authorities and the related risks***

Two initiatives of this type were presented during the working group's work: that of Togo, with a national council bringing together youth organizations present throughout the country, and that of Germany, bringing together 16 young people in an advisory council of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

<sup>48</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (June 2023). [Youth participation in national parliaments: 2023](https://www.ipu.org/youth-participation-in-national-parliaments-2023). ipu.org.

<sup>49</sup> During the hearings, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs highlighted the consultations that have already been conducted with young people on the occasion of various events: the Conference on the Future of Europe, the specific youth consultation process following the Africa-France Summit in October 2021, and the Mediterranean Forum held in February 2022. The “Young People for Global Solidarity” consultation conducted to inform the work of the Youth working group can also be added to this list..

<sup>50</sup> Coordination SUD. (2022, December 23). [Evaluation grid for young people's inclusion in projects](#) (in French) - Coordination SUD, coordinationsud.org



### **The National Youth Council in Togo: a space bringing together 328 youth organizations from across the country**

The National Youth Council (CNJ) is a governmental body composed of a network of Togolese youth organizations operating throughout the country. It contributes to the process of public decision-making and the development and implementation of public policies. The CNJ also plays an important role in young people taking ownership of these policies and participating in their implementation.

The CNJ was created by the decree of 7 May 2008 and includes 328 youth organizations. Its members include young people aged 17-35. The CNJ has a general assembly, regional advisers (328) and an executive board elected by the member NGOs.

It contributes on a permanent or ad hoc basis, depending on the case, to other spaces for decision-making or consultation. For example, it is part of a permanent framework with the High Commission for Reconciliation and Strengthening National Unity. The Council also advises the prime minister and local elected officials on an ad hoc basis on topics such as gender, human rights and peace. The CNJ also maintains ongoing liaison with the Togolese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has supported its participation in international bodies such as the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF).

One area for progress has been identified within the CNJ: achieving gender balance, which remains complex, in view of the weighty cultural constraints and the low level of women's empowerment in Togo. Measures are being undertaken to improve in this area.

### **The BMZ youth council: an advisory group of 16 young people**

The German Youth Advisory Council was created in 2021 and is organized around a group of 16 German young people, aged 16 to 24, who are selected with the aim of ensuring diversity. The purpose of the council is to make the voices of young Germans heard, as well as that of young people in the Global South. As part of its activities, the council regularly meets with political representatives such as Svenja Schulze, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Bärbel Kofler, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. During these meetings, the council members share the observations and recommendations of young people from the Global South concerning Germany's cooperation policies. To do so, the BMZ facilitates their participation in high-level events at which young people can exchange views with their peers and formulate recommendations. For example, the council members took part in the Transforming Education Summit in New York and the Education Cannot Wait High-Level Financing Conference in Geneva. In time, the council also intends to create a transnational platform for youth participation with countries in the Global South.

#### **Specific concerns raised:**

The head of the human rights division of the BMZ nonetheless indicated that it was impossible to set up such a council without providing appropriate human and financial resources. The necessary steps for ensuring the council's proper functioning are numerous, including the selection of young people, their supervision during trips, and preparing them to participate in national and international events. Furthermore, organizing meetings between the council members and the Parliamentary State Secretaries and the Minister takes time and requires taking each person's imperatives and schedules into account. It is important to consider the fact that the young participants must balance their role as member of the council with their personal and professional lives, which can impact project management. Lastly, working with young people must involve establishing appropriate interaction procedures. The German Ministry thus set out to produce guidelines for interacting with young people.

The creation of a “Youth Advisory Council” within the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs does not appear to be the best lever for mainstreaming a human rights-based approach to young people in France’s international solidarity policy. It represents several significant risks:

- A risk of “youthwashing”, without a clear mandate for participation in the development and monitoring of the Ministry’s policies and strategies, accompanied by real opportunities for dialogue with policy-makers and appropriate technical, financial and human support;
- The risk that its opinions are not taken into account in existing formal decision-making spaces (CNDSI for example, or meaningful and effective participation in high-level events);
- A lack of representation of young people in their diversity;
- A lack of representativeness of youth organizations if the council was exclusively composed of individuals;
- A risk of shifting focus away from CSOs working with young people in France’s partner countries and youth-led organizations in these countries who have better knowledge of the realities and needs on the ground.

Note: a national Advisory Council on Youth Policies (formerly the “National Youth Council”) already exists in France; if necessary, a distinct term should be used such as “advisory council of young people”.

### **Our recommendations for making formal discussion and consultation spaces more inclusive and representative of young people:**

- **Adopt intersectional and inclusive approaches in formulating public policies, in particular supporting the participation of girls, young women and gender minorities.**
- **Ensure the cross-cutting integration of young people within the CNDSI to guarantee their fair representation. Several options are proposed:**
  - Michelle Perrot and Tanguy Guilbert propose the introduction of a youth quota (persons under age 35) within each group: as the groups have varying numbers of representatives, they propose a minimum of one or two seats per group, with two seats preferred to ensure a more conducive environment to young people’s participation. It is not necessary to include

youth-led organizations, but simply representatives of member organizations who are under the age of 35. This proposal could be re-examined when the CNDSI’s rules of procedure are revised, and discussed on this occasion among all of the groups.

Acknowledging the potential difficulty of identifying candidates for each group who hold the position of head of their organization, one option to overcome this challenge could be to create deputy positions for all members (who are currently appointed *intuitu personae*).

- Henri Arévalo proposes that each group present a gender-balanced duo of young people (one man and one woman) under 35, which would make up a pool of young people from which members would be drawn at random to form a new group of young people, even if this means reducing the number of members per group.
- **Improve the representation of young people within national delegations participating in international events and within international organizations, with a commitment to their inclusion in formal spaces.** An inspiring example was the participation of young people in the high-level ministerial meeting on education and development issues during the French G7 Presidency in 2019. Thanks to the support of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Coalition Éducation and Plan International France, the recommendations of young leaders from West and Central Africa were able to be heard. A consultation of young people from this subregion was held and young representatives were given the opportunity to participate in the high-level meeting on education and development and advocate for their positions before French and international decision-makers.<sup>51</sup>
- **Raise awareness among the general public and decision-makers to change social norms.** The Bruits de Tambours (“Drumbeats”) project in Senegal<sup>52</sup> offers an inspiring example. This initiative is carried out by the NGO RAES<sup>53</sup> in Senegal and throughout West Africa more broadly. It is based on a national communication campaign for social change, promoting a more participatory and inclusive democracy, in particular for women and girls. The project includes the production of a television series and a radio programme, along with local community initiatives and social media campaigns. The goal is to raise questions

<sup>51</sup> Plan International France (2023, July). [Advocacy - NGO Plan International France](#). Available at [plan-international.fr](#)

<sup>52</sup> This project was supported by AFD, Canal France International, the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) and TV5Monde over the 2018-2021 period.

<sup>53</sup> Home – NGO RAES. (2023, 14 April). RAES. [ongraes.org](#)

and encourage discussions to challenge stereotypes and ingrained social behaviour that hinder the political participation of women and young people, and to develop these target groups' capacities for action.

### 3. The need for institutional recognition of informal spaces for youth participation

Young people are also very proactive in creating their own spaces for influencing public policy. They organize forums, gatherings, digital spaces, protests, awareness-raising campaigns, etc. These initiatives allow them to mobilize in support of causes they care about and lobby decision-makers to bring about real change. Examples include the climate protests in which young people have played a major role, and the "Nous Toutes" movement against gender-based and sexual violence in France. During the hearings, Léonore Moncond'huy, mayor of Poitiers and first vice-president of Cités Unies France, spoke of "the importance of helping young people organize themselves, while accepting that they do so in their own way and informally at first".

In addition to formal spaces, young people also participate in informal spaces for decision-making and consultation. Social media, online fora, demonstrations and informal gatherings all constitute platforms where young people can exchange ideas, discuss global issues and develop projects on their own initiative. These informal spaces allow young people to connect with other young people from around the world, share their experiences and collaborate on joint projects. It is important for these spaces to be inclusive and open to young people, offering them a real opportunity to express themselves and influence policies. The recommendations formulated by young people through these processes must be given serious consideration, and young people must be informed of the measures taken in response to their proposals.

#### *Greater institutional consideration of young people's voices expressed through discussions and proposals made in informal spaces*

Institutions must recognize that young people's voices have no less value because they are expressed informally, and be responsive to their initiatives and opinions and open to collaboration (see recommendations below). It is important for institutions to recognize the legitimacy and value of spaces created by young people, and to incorporate their opinions into decision-making processes. This requires political willingness on the part of decision-makers to engage with young people in an open and constructive manner.

#### **Our recommendation for the recognition of informal spaces created by young people as a means of participation and engagement:**

- **Recognize the diversification of informal spaces for participation and give greater consideration to the proposals arising from them in developing and structuring public policies.**

To this end:

- Make the effort to collect the data, ideas and proposals presented by young people outside of traditional spaces to enrich considerations with regard to policy-making. This can involve using observations from INJEP or an international solidarity observatory to monitor and assess the impact of public policies for international solidarity on young people in France and abroad, in partner countries. This option could potentially entail a collaboration with the organization Focus 2030, one of the missions of which is to produce and analyse qualitative and quantitative data on international solidarity issues.
- Set up clear, accessible and permanent channels of communication to gather young people's input.

# Mainstreaming a human rights-based approach to young people in France's international solidarity policy

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs adopted a Human Rights and Development strategy in 2019. However, this strategy does not specifically address the rights of young people, particularly the right to participation. Since 2019, France has supported feminist organizations, including youth organizations, through the Support Fund for Feminist Organizations (FSOF), with €120 million allocated over the first three years, and a budget of €250 million announced for the following five-year period. According to ongoing work in relation to France's new 2024–2027 feminist diplomacy strategy, the full, equal and meaningful political, social and economic participation of girls and young women must be an integral factor in defining French feminist foreign policy. France's new 2023–2027 humanitarian strategy stipulates that “France will continue to support and promote the participation of children and young people (including organizations working in the field of children and youth, and children and young people advocating for their rights) in humanitarian assistance and the resolution of crises and conflicts, and in programmes and projects concerning them, in accordance with the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. It will support the access and effective contribution of children and young people to all relevant spaces for dialogue, negotiation and decision-making at national, European and multilateral level.”<sup>54</sup> On the international stage, France has supported the creation of a youth office at the UN and the implementation of the Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action.

France has asserted its ambition of defending a rights-based approach encouraging the political and civic participation of young people in all their diversity, especially women and girls, in its bilateral and multilateral policies. To ensure strong political backing and the operationalization of this ambition, we recommend that the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs adopt a French international youth strategy. This strategy could notably ensure coherence between the Ministry's various sector-specific and cross-cutting strategies, and propose an accountability framework and dedicated technical and financial resources and actions.

The CNDSI working group identified several practices to inspire this future strategy: the EU's YAP; France's international strategy for gender equality, developed by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs; and diverse initiatives conducted by the AFD<sup>55</sup> and civil society actors in the field.

<sup>54</sup> [France's 2023- 2027 Humanitarian Strategy](#), page 18. At: [diplomatie.gouv.fr](http://diplomatie.gouv.fr)

<sup>55</sup> Other countries such as Germany and Denmark are currently working on operationalizing a rights-based approach applied to children and young people, including in terms of markers. The BMZ recently evaluated its 2017-2019 action plan entitled “Agents of Change: Children and youth rights in German development cooperation activities”. This evaluation contributes insight for the renewal of the BMZ's human rights strategy, in place since 2011; the rights of children and young people will be included.



# 1. Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action: an inspiring, ambitious and innovative framework to be put into operation by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs

This plan, adopted by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) on 4 October 2022,<sup>56</sup> responds to young people's legitimate demand to be involved in the process of policy development and decision-making. It was established further to the meeting of the Council of the European Union on youth in external action held in June 2020.<sup>57</sup> The plan is based on human rights and the notion of inclusion, with the objective of ensuring no one is left behind. It allows actions to be harmonized and offers a single framework for a global approach to youth engagement, which had previously been fragmented into different plans according to the sector and geographic area. It is structured around three pillars for action: engage, empower and connect young people.

## A. Engage

Improve the participation of young people, particularly girls and young women, in the domestic policies of partner States, multilateral fora and within the European Union. For example, it provides for:

- The Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative (€40 million) to increase their democratic and civic participation.
- The creation of youth advisory structures within EU Delegations, aiming for 80% of them to be in place

The "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation confirmed the relevance of this priority:

- 65% of young people identified international and regional organizations as spaces in which they were interested in participating in actions for international solidarity.

The consultation nonetheless revealed that men are more inclined to get involved in these types of organizations compared to women. It is an important challenge for international solidarity institutions and stakeholders to ensure access to young people in all their diversity, especially girls and young women.

- 47% of young people identified participation in fora for consultation (local, national or international) for the definition, monitoring or evaluation of public policies as a means to exercise their right to participation.
- 23% of participants called for young people to receive political consideration, meaning that they are involved, heard and acknowledged as having the legitimacy and right to participate in decision-making processes.

## B. Empower

Provide the necessary resources for young people to achieve their potential through quality education, easier access to economic opportunities, strengthened capacities to contribute to sustainable development and the digital and green transitions, and access to healthcare (physical and mental). The plan thus announces the launch of the Youth Empowerment Fund, a pilot initiative worth €10 million, which will support youth-led initiatives focusing on implementing the SDGs at local level.

<sup>56</sup> European Parliament & Council of the European Union. (2022). [Youth Action Plan \(YAP\) in EU external action 2022–2027: Promoting meaningful youth participation and empowerment in EU external action for sustainable development, equality and peace. International Partnerships.](#)

<sup>57</sup> Council of the European Union (2020). [Youth in external action – Council conclusions \(5 June 2020\)](#). [data.consilium.europa.eu](https://data.consilium.europa.eu) (No 8629/20).

31% of the young people consulted identified support and assistance for young people (technical and financial) as a means of boosting their involvement.

“Young people need to be supported as much as possible when they first get involved, but need to gradually learn to manage their project on their own (or mostly at least) to feel like they are making a real contribution”.  
Young woman, 17 years old, France

## C. Connect

Promote opportunities for learning and peer-to-peer exchanges for the professional and personal development of young people. For example, the action plan includes the launch of the Africa-Europe Youth Academy (€50 million) that will offer more opportunities for young leaders to improve their leadership skills and create a network of change-makers.

### Our recommendations for France within the framework of its European commitments:

- **Ensure, along with the other Member States, that the Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action is operationalized and financed.**
- **Support in particular the implementation of the youth advisory structures in the EU Delegations by 2027, with attention to the diversity and representative quality of their membership, and develop links between French agencies (such as the AFD network) and these youth councils, in order to properly take into account young people’s realities and expectations in the implementation of French and EU international solidarity policy.**
- **Respect the commitments made within the EU framework concerning accountability on the YAP, namely:**
  - The creation of a monitoring framework in 2023, involving young people, youth organizations and experts.
  - Mid-term and final analysis of the progress made, as well as an evaluation that will inform the next programming cycle.

## 2. An inspiring practice of mainstreaming an approach by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs: the example of France’s International Strategy for Gender Equality

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs’ strategy for gender equality offers a very concrete example of how France’s international solidarity policy can incorporate a cross-cutting issue. What was accomplished in terms of gender can thus be applied to the issue of the rights of young people, particularly to participation, drawing on the insight gained from this first experience.

France’s International Strategy for Gender Equality (2018-2022),<sup>58</sup> following two initial strategic guidance papers, coupled with the feminist foreign policy adopted in 2019, created a new impetus that has allowed significant progress to be achieved. This is especially true since from 2018 on, the strategy has applied to all external action, ministries and agencies, and includes both an external and internal component.

### A. Governance, monitoring and evaluation

High-level internal support facilitates cross-cutting application and engages personnel at all levels. The steering committee is chaired by the Ministry’s Secretary-General and prepared by a technical committee chaired by the Senior Official for Equality and Americas and Caribbean Director, whose rank in the administrative hierarchy underscores the level of political support and attention dedicated to its successful implementation. Governance and monitoring are overseen by the Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Culture, Education and International Development (DGM)<sup>59</sup> for the implementation of the external component, while the internal component is overseen by the Senior Official and their policy officer and the Office for statutory policies and human resources management, in particular its unit responsible for equal opportunities. The multi-department steering approach is essential.

<sup>58</sup> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (n.d.). France’s International Strategy for Gender Equality (2018-2022). France Diplomatie – French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/diplomatie-feministe/strategie-internationale-de-la-france-pour-l-egalite-entre-les-femmes-et-les/>

<sup>59</sup> Within the DGM, the Sustainable Development Department (DDD) and its sub-division, the Human Development Department (HUMA).

This strategy is accompanied by an accountability framework to monitor its implementation and evaluate the strategy. The framework notably includes mandatory monitoring of the funding allocated, using the gender marker of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which enables accountability to be ensured for the quantified target set out in the Programming Act of 4 August 2021 (LOP-DSLIM).

The High Council for Gender Equality, an independent body under the authority of the Prime Minister and mandated to evaluate the strategy, also plays an important role by regularly publishing reports and recommendations for the Ministry.<sup>60</sup>

### The DAC gender marker<sup>61</sup>

"The DAC gender equality policy marker is a key monitoring and accountability tool in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

It is the only common tool available to DAC members to track bilateral aid in support of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commitments on gender equality. It can contribute to identifying gaps between policy and financial commitments, and incentivise efforts to close them. The data generated by the marker provides an estimate of DAC members' aid in support of gender equality rather than an exact quantification."

- Support of a network of gender equality liaison officers: 239 in total, these liaison officers cover all central government directorates, all agencies and 93% of embassies. The liaison officers implement and coordinate France's feminist diplomacy within their sphere of responsibility, both externally and internally, from Paris or in the field. They also have the opportunity to come together to share information and practices at an annual seminar. This network was built up gradually, but there remains a significant need for training to enable stakeholders to identify best practices for putting the principles into operation.
- Organization of awareness-raising workshops and more advanced training by the Human Resources Directorate and its teams to facilitate officers' assimilation. A Gender and Development MOOC created by the Ministry, the AFD and Expertise France has been made available to all personnel and the general public on the platform Campus AFD.<sup>64</sup> The progress made has also been facilitated by dialogue with civil society. CSOs have played an important role in bringing attention to gender equality and its prioritization by government authorities.

## B. Dedicated funding

While the strategy itself did not provide for dedicated funding, its implementation has relied on political and financial initiatives and commitments, both bilateral and multilateral, such as the Generation Equality Forum and the Support Fund for Feminist Organizations (FSOF).

## Methods for mainstreaming the approach

- Integration of gender equality in the strategy frameworks (CICID,<sup>62</sup> COM<sup>63</sup>) of agencies and the Ministry's other strategies.
- Systematic consideration of the subject in internal preparation exercises, such as travel files, discussion notes, instructions for ambassadors, embassy action plans, bilateral cooperation plans, and inspection missions of the Inspectorate-General of Foreign Affairs (IGAE).

<sup>60</sup> On 3 July 2023, it published an evaluation report indicating the areas for improvement with a view to fully achieving France's feminist foreign policy. <https://www.haut-conseil-egalite.gouv.fr/enjeux-europeens-et-internationaux/actualites/article/rapport-diplomatie-feministe-passer-aux-actes>

<sup>61</sup> OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (Gendernet), (2016). [Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker](#). Available at [oecd.org](https://oecd.org).

<sup>62</sup> "The Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID) is a French governmental body, presided over by the Prime Minister, who is responsible for defining French development assistance policy and how France's official development assistance is implemented." Directorate of Legal and Administrative Information. (2020). [Qu'est-ce que le CICID ? \(What is the CICID?\)](#) [vie-publique.fr](https://www.vie-publique.fr).

<sup>63</sup> COM: objectives and means contract (contrat d'objectifs et de moyens).

<sup>64</sup> AFD. (2021, 3 December). [MOOC Genre](#) (Gender MOOC). Campus AFD.



## Our recommendations to the Ministry for the effective integration of a human rights-based approach to young people within France’s international solidarity policy:

- In the event of a revision of the LOP-DSLIM Programming Act, strengthen the legal framework by indicating that France recognizes all young people, including girls and young women, as drivers of social transformation in their own right, not considering them merely as beneficiaries of assistance, and promotes their effective participation in the development, implementation and monitoring of public programmes and policies.<sup>65</sup>
- Adopt a strategic framework within the Ministry, coordinated with its 2019-2023 Human Rights and Development strategy and developed in conjunction with CSOs, including the following specific objectives and priorities:
  - Improve and structure the uptake and effective integration of the human rights-based approach to young people within the Ministry and its agencies:
    - > Develop an institutional culture, raise awareness, equip and train personnel,<sup>66</sup> identify focal points, systematically incorporate this approach into all strategies of the Ministry and its agencies (in particular the next AFD Group Strategy,<sup>67</sup> and the Ministry’s Human Rights and Development strategy that will be renewed in 2024), by including specific objectives, actions, human and financial resources and indicators.
    - > Incorporate the issue of young people into the sector-specific and cross-cutting strategic frameworks of the Ministry and its agencies.
  - > Systematically take the issue into account in the Ministry’s internal communications and planning (instructions to ambassadors, embassy action plans, discussion notes, bilateral cooperation plans, inspection missions of the IGAE, etc.).
- **Develop France’s bilateral and multilateral diplomacy in support of the rights of young people:** France champions this approach in its dialogue with its cooperation partners and in international fora. It notably supports the implementation and funding of the UN’s Youth, Peace and Security agenda as part of its humanitarian action.
- **Increase and improve the consideration given to the human rights-based approach to young people in all funding instruments** for development and humanitarian action, both bilateral and multilateral:<sup>68</sup> develop a marker tool and process for projects funded by ODA (drawing on practices already used by the AFD’s DPA/OSC<sup>69</sup>) and set multi-year objectives with incremental targets. Operationalize achieving the target set for 2025 by the AFD’s 100% Social Link Strategy and extend it to all of French ODA: 50% (by volume) of projects in foreign states with a component enabling young people to play an active role in the activities planned; developing a tool to measure the incorporation of the human rights-based approach to young people in projects supported by France, and training Ministry and AFD personnel in its use.
- **Invest in building the capacities of young people** in all their diversity, especially girls and young women, in partner countries, through funding education including the development of citizenship skills, as indicated in the Youth Action Plan in EU external action.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> The LOP-DSLIM Programming Act adopted in 2021 limits this recognition to girls and young women, instead of extending it to young people as a whole. Furthermore, it mentions their participation in public policies “that concern them”, while we are calling for recognition of their legitimate right to participate in the development of all public policies, on any subject.

<sup>66</sup> Notably via the MOOC that the AFD is currently developing.

<sup>67</sup> The AFD publishes a strategy renewed every five years that constitutes the framework guiding the group’s actions. AFD – Agence Française de Développement. (2022, March 9). [Public Consultation on AFD Group’s 2023-2027 Strategy](#), afd.fr.

<sup>68</sup> Integration of the approach into funding programmes 209 and 110 and increased funding for projects with the primary objective of upholding the rights of young people (inclusion and non-discrimination, participation, creation/strengthening of a conducive political-legal environment, training stakeholders in the human rights-based approach, protection and safeguarding of young people and particularly human rights defenders, etc.).

<sup>69</sup> Partnerships Department/Civil Society Division (DPA/OSC), (2022). [Dispositif Initiatives OSC : Financement des initiatives des organisations françaises de la société civile](#) (CSO Initiatives Facility: Financing the initiatives of French civil society organizations). AFD.

<sup>70</sup> See YAP recommendations.

- **Offer dedicated additional funding for youth-led organizations that is accessible and adapted to their needs and expectations;** improve the targeting of youth-led organizations via existing funding channels such as the FSOF, and reserve additional lines of funding for the initiatives of youth-led organizations in partner countries, at the level of the SCACs and/or AFD offices.
- **Build the capacities of and support for organizations for and led by young people** to better take into account the rights-based approach to young people<sup>71</sup> and encourage the capitalization and promotion of their initiatives.
- **Develop the exchange of practices, the capitalization of successful practices, and research,** through a multi-stakeholder approach (other French ministries, ministries and cooperation agencies of other countries, CSOs, academia, etc.) to improve quality and impact measurement. In particular, more research is needed on how young people's participation in the development and monitoring of public policies impacts their relevance.
- **Identify the primary French CSOs with proven expertise in the "Jeunesses actrices" approach supporting active youth participation, and include them in the development, monitoring and evaluation of France's international youth strategy.**
- **Set up an advisory panel of youth-led organizations from the main partner countries,** in particular existing youth councils and/or national networks: this panel could inform the development and monitoring of France's international solidarity policy and its various sector-specific and cross-cutting strategies.

### 3. Concrete AFD initiatives to be scaled up

Several AFD strategies and initiatives show the agency's commitment to better incorporate a human rights-based approach applied to young people into its projects. These initiatives should be used as a model and extended more widely through a strategy and adequate resources within the Ministry and its various agencies.

The AFD's 100% Social Link Strategy for 2021-2025<sup>72</sup> includes an operational target of 50% (by volume) of projects in foreign states having a component enabling young people to play an active role in the activities planned. This strategy also mentions the AFD Group's desire to develop projects that provide technical and financial support to feminist organizations, in particular those led by adolescent girls and young women, to enable them to fully exercise their role as agents of change, including in the processes of developing, managing, monitoring and evaluating projects.

Since 2019, AFD has also supported efforts to structure the French voluntary sector with regard to young people's active participation through the "Place aux Jeunes !" project<sup>73</sup> run by Engagé-e-s et Déterminé-e-s, which fits into the work carried out in conjunction with the Youth and International Solidarity Commission (CJSI) of Coordination SUD, a French platform for NGOs. This project brings together a consortium of 13 civil society organizations in the fields of international solidarity and/or youth and non-formal education.<sup>74</sup> It offers tools and training and facilitates the exchange of best practices and support between peers, to strengthen the role of young people and mainstream consideration for youth issues in the projects, structures and governance of CSOs. It also advocates for the cross-cutting consideration of young people's right to participation in the context of public policies and projects supported by France as part of its international solidarity and development policy.

<sup>71</sup> The Ministry's civil society strategy for the 2023-2027 period already recommends, under Objective 2.2.1, supporting the capacity building of civil society organizations (cross-cutting integration of youth and gender, human rights-based approach, carbon and climate neutrality, etc.). Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. (n.d.-b). [France's strategy for civil society and civic engagement](#). France Diplomatie – Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

<sup>72</sup> [100% Social Link Strategy 2021-2025](#) (2021). AFD – Agence Française de Développement. Available at: [afd.fr](http://afd.fr)

<sup>73</sup> Engagé-e-s & Déterminé-e-s. (n.d.). « [Place aux jeunes !](#) ». Available at: [engagees-determinees.org](http://engagees-determinees.org)

<sup>74</sup> Consortium members include: Engagé-e-s et Déterminé-e-s (E&D), CNAJEP, Plan International France, Solidarité Laïque, FORIM, Scouts et Guides de France, Réseau Euromed France, Migrations & Développement, France Volontaires, ESSOR, IRAM, GRET, and Grdr Migration-Citoyenneté-Développement.

In addition, the AFD's DPA/OSC has included a section in its guide for NGOs on taking account of issues related to young people in their role as agents of social, economic, political and environmental change. In 2021, DPA/OSC identified over 63% of the projects funded through the CSO Initiatives facility as targeting "young people", in whole or in part, either as beneficiaries of the projects, or for nearly 40% of them, as full participants in the projects' implementation.

In 2022, AFD's Strategy division, alongside Coordination SUD's Youth and International Solidarity Commission (CJSI), developed an online awareness-raising resource, as part of a series of documents aiming to promote development stakeholders' ownership of the human rights-based approach.<sup>75</sup> These partners continued to collaborate in 2023 to jointly develop a training module on the rights of children and young people, as part of a MOOC on human rights. The AFD has also been working with the Danish Institute for Human Rights on the development of a human rights indicator by the end of 2023, for which it has involved the CSO coalitions Groupe Enfance and the CJSI in discussions on taking the rights of children and young people into account.

### **An example of an AFD-funded programme: the "Graine de citoyenneté" PCPA**

AFD supports a Concerted Multi-stakeholder Programme (PCPA) in Mauritania: the programme "Graine de citoyenneté" ("Seeds of Citizenship") run by the NGO GRDR and a consortium of Mauritanian CSOs. This PCPA dedicated to the multi-dimensional integration of Mauritanian young people, both in Mauritania and in France, is the result of an impetus launched in 2015 by the French Embassy in Mauritania, with the Fajr programme designed to support the growth of civil society organizations. The PCPA provided funding for CSOs, particularly youth organizations, for the creation of spaces dedicated to young people, receiving up to 280 applications annually and funding 11-18 projects per year.

#### **The fund has had multiple impacts:**

- Organizations developed new skills, applied for new funding sources, and became better established thanks to more professional management.
- The number of recognized organizations increased, and they can benefit from a legal status allowing them to access rights that they would not have while remaining unofficial.
- The organizations are active within their communities, on a political and decision-making level, and contribute to changing social norms and legislation.

<sup>75</sup> AFD (2022, October). [Human rights and development: the rights of youth](https://afd.fr/). afd.fr.

## 4. Inspiring civil society initiatives in the field and expectations expressed

### A. The “Girls Lead” project in Togo

“Girls Lead”, which Plan International presented before the working group, is a five-year programme that was implemented with the participation of seven associations of youth partners. The “Girls Lead” project was carried out by youth-led associations in Togo and in five other countries (Egypt, Cambodia, Laos, Peru and Guatemala). It targeted organizations of girls and young women to mobilize and encourage them to make their voices heard and participate in implementing projects, in particular to combat sexual violence. These initiatives targeted decision-makers and government representatives. For example, they involved the participation of young people in frameworks for dialogue for stakeholders in the protection of children and young people at prefecture level.

The results observed centred around three aspects:

- The development of girls’ and young women’s skills thanks to training through clubs and organizations, such as “Champions of Change”,<sup>76</sup> notably allowing them to play a greater role in government decision-making spaces and in the development of CSO programmes to fight sexual violence.
- The creation of a support system (made up of families, community representatives, religious leaders and opinion leaders) for the girls and young women as they pursue their civic engagement initiative. This awareness of the right to participation contributes to changing social norms and creating intergenerational dialogue.
- The effort to open up spaces and create supportive conditions for young people’s participation on the part of administrative and political authorities at national and local level.

Several recommendations were presented by Mélanie Gnandi of Plan International Togo:

- Develop a national policy to encourage youth participation.
- Create a strategy to identify young people interested in getting involved and assist them in their efforts.

- Mobilize resources for supporting private and public youth initiatives, including those led by young people.
- Continue to mobilize the public and raise awareness through the media to inform the population and demystify the political process and engagement.
- For technical and financial partners, make the political participation of young people a central priority in dialogue with States.
- Believe in young people, support them, and make funding opportunities accessible, rather than reserved for formal structures, as is often the case. The final goal is to help youth-led organizations become autonomous and sustainable, and to help young people manage them under optimal conditions.

### B. “Club des Jeunes filles leaders de Guinée”: an example of partnership with public authorities

Kadiatou Konate, director of the Club des Jeunes filles leaders de Guinée, or Young Female Leaders of Guinea Club, shared her experience of collaborating with her country’s government. Created in 2016, the club has gradually developed ties with Guinean public authorities. In 2022, Konate was notably appointed as a member of the Board of Directors of the Office for the Protection of Gender, Children, and Morals (OPROGEM) within the Guinean Ministry of Security. This position allows her to influence the work of classifying acts of gender-based violence, which is a major factor in recognizing and penalizing such acts. As OPROGEM personnel are not trained in listening to victims and identifying acts of gender-based violence (GBV), the club contributes its experience and carries out work to promote information and raise awareness. It is also involved in other strategic committees in the fight against GBV, taking part in strategy development and planning workshops. Through its presence in various spaces for discussion and decision-making, the club can voice its opposing opinions and share its expertise on the realities in the field. The various reports issued by the organization are taken into account by the government in a national report. In parallel, the club works with the Children’s Parliament of Guinea and contributes to training the young people who make up its members.

<sup>76</sup> See inset on this programme in Section 3.

The club's director offered the following recommendations to public authorities and partners:

- **View young people as allies and partners**, capable of relaying the realities on the ground to public authorities;
- **Create a database of youth organizations**, listed by subject area, to be able to call on their specific expertise as needed;
- **Ensure technical and financial partners' inclusion of youth-led organizations in their initiatives**, in particular through partnership agreements, and support the development of their capacities, including financial management.

## 5. Joint responsibility of international solidarity stakeholders for taking ownership of and operationalizing a "youth" strategy developed by the Ministry

DGM/CIV underscored the collective responsibility of stakeholders, not limited to public authorities, to take ownership of a potential future youth strategy presented by the Ministry. During the working group's discussions, the various stakeholders agreed on the need to improve practices in terms of citizen participation and youth policy in the context of international solidarity action. This ambition, to be laid out in the Ministry's strategic framework, requires multi-stakeholder cooperation, driven by the Ministry's political and financial support.

## Our recommendation to promote multi-stakeholder ownership and operationalization of a potential future youth strategy:

**To achieve this aim, we recommend that the Ministry organize the dialogue around and monitoring of a potential strategy with all stakeholders, including organizations for and led by young people, in France and its partner countries, providing for spaces and mechanisms to ensure accountability on the commitments made.**

International solidarity stakeholders such as elected officials and representatives of organizations, local government officials and associations must continue/carry out, in conjunction with and with the support of the Ministry and its agencies, the following activities:

- **Raising awareness** among and training their members and partner youth organizations to better incorporate the approach based on young people's human rights into projects.
- **Contributing to the development of tools for awareness-raising and training.**
- **Contributing to the development of marker tools** for projects supported through French ODA.
- **Ensuring knowledge capitalization** and sharing of experience with the Ministry and its operators.
- **Conducting research**, provided that funding is available.



# Annexes

**Annex 1:** Working group terms of reference

**Annex 2:** List of speakers in the working group's hearings

**Annex 3:** Summary of the results of the "Young People for Global Solidarity" consultation

# Working group terms of reference

## CNDSI WORKING GROUP

### Youth participation in the development and implementation of France's development and international solidarity policy: challenges, outlooks and methods

Co-chaired by: Henri Arévalo (Occitanie Coopération/CIRRMA), Tanguy Guibert (FAGE), Michelle Perrot (Plan International France)

## Context

The cross-cutting integration of youth participation in the development and implementation of France's development and international solidarity policy is part of the process to renew development policy driven by the **Programming Act of 4 August 2021 on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities**. This Act reinforces the partnership-based dimension of France's action, reasserts the human rights-based approach as a guiding principle (of which participation is a pillar), and affirms the importance of involving representatives of civil society, including young people, in public policies and programmes, in France and its partner countries. This inclusion is reflected, for example, in the *"jeunesses actrices"* approach based on young people's rights and active participation developed by Coordination SUD's Youth and International Solidarity Commission (CJSI).

**The notion of "young people"** includes a socio-cultural and economic dimension, and varies over time and according to geographic area. The term "young people" should be understood in its plurality, recognizing their diversity, and rather than focusing on a fixed age bracket, should more appropriately refer to a **process of transition between childhood and adulthood, leading to socio-economic, civic and political empowerment**. The increasing acknowledgement of young people and their role as agents of change is now a priority fully shared by CSOs, public authorities and the international community.

The working group has endeavoured to present the analysis, initiatives and recommendations adopted by various stakeholders. It has mobilized all of the Ministry's departments and agencies, as well as the diverse range of development stakeholders such as the members of CNDSI, in a cross-cutting manner to take the operationalization of this approach further.

## Objectives of the working group

The working group's primary objective is to **propose recommendations to increase the participation of young people in the development and implementation of the policy and programmes of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and its agencies**. This aim could notably be embodied by the Ministry's development of a strategy for youth participation. The recommendations formulated can also serve to strengthen the action of the Ministry's partners and international solidarity stakeholders as a whole.

## Areas of work

1. Analysis of young people's participation in France's development and international solidarity policy and the challenges involved.
2. Means of strengthening the participation of young people from France's partner countries in the development and monitoring of cooperation programmes and their country's public policies.
3. Means of strengthening the engagement of young people in France around international solidarity issues (ECIS, volunteering, career plans, etc.).
4. Means of increasing the cross-cutting integration of youth participation in the development and implementation of France's cooperation policy.

# List of speakers in the working group's hearings

## CSOs and leading figures from countries eligible for ODA

### Mélanie Gnandi

Coordinator of the Girls Lead project of Plan International Togo

### Arame Gueye Sène

Executive Director of Social Change Factory

### Kadiatou Konate

Director of Club des Jeunes Filles Leaders de Guinée

### Dieynaba N'diom

Monitoring and evaluation consultant for the SCAC-supported Fajr programme in Mauritania

### Régis Batchassi

President of the National Youth Council of Togo

## French CSOs and leading figures

### Arthur Beauté

Coordinator of the Place aux Jeunes project and leader of Coordination SUD's Youth and International Solidarity Commission

### Denise Bousquet

Director of the association APPUIS (Saône-et-Loire, France)

### Bastien Degardins

International Officer at FAGE

### Arame Diop

Participant in the "Jeunes des 2 rives" (J2R) programme of Solidarité Laïque

### Jérémie Morfoisse

Coordinator of the J2R programme, Solidarité Laïque

### William Feys

Former coordinator of the Erasmus+ project on youth issues at Engagé-e-s et Déterminé-e-s (E&D)

### Tanguy Guibert

Secretary-general responsible for international affairs at FAGE

### Viviana Marques Fiusa

Young volunteer with Plan des Jeunes, the youth advisory council of the NGO Plan International France

### Nadjima Saïdou

Chair of E&D and member of the association Act'ici

### Alexandra Thieyre

Deputy managing director of CNAJEP

### Agathe Procar

Head of the Global Citizenship Education unit at Bourgogne-Franche-Comté International

### Marie Caillaud

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## Academia

### Valérie Becquet

Professor of education sciences at INSPE Versailles

## Volunteers in citizen service/VSI missions

### Flora Ben Chekroun

Former volunteer at ASOC through CARI and former VSI volunteer in Tunisia

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## **French local government**

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### **Agnieszka Skuratowicz**

Head of Unit, Youth, Education and Culture, Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission

# Summary of the results of the consultation



**MINISTÈRE  
DE L'EUROPE  
ET DES AFFAIRES  
ÉTRANGÈRES**

*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*



**CONSEIL NATIONAL  
DU DÉVELOPPEMENT  
ET DE LA SOLIDARITÉ INTERNATIONALE**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Results of the “Young People for Global Solidarity” consultation

#### Context of the consultation:

In relation to the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI) working group focusing on “Youth participation in the development and implementation of France’s development and international solidarity policy”, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) launched a digital consultation entitled “**Young People for Global Solidarity**” to gather the opinions, ideas, expectations and proposals of young people aged 15 to 35, in France and in countries eligible for official development assistance. This consultation contributed insight and ideas to explore regarding the need expressed during this work to include young people in the development of cooperation programmes and public policies, and complements the reflections of the working group.

#### Participation figures:

A total of 2,296 participants from 89 countries (of which 47% were from France), with an average age of 25, expressed their views in the consultation, which collected 15,500 verbatim responses. Among the respondents, 55% were women, 43% were men, 1% were non-binary, and 2% chose not to answer. The average age of respondents was 25, with a majority coming from major urban areas (53%). A large proportion held higher education qualifications (73%): 43% had earned a master’s level degree, and 30% a degree at undergraduate level. Beyond these characteristics, the “Young People for Global Solidarity” consultation also made it possible to hear the voices of individuals from mid-sized cities and even rural areas, a figure that moreover grew throughout the process.

#### Major takeaways from the consultation:

1. Young people spoke of their concern about the international situation, with numerous topics drawing their attention such as climate change, various forms of inequality, humanitarian emergencies, the rise of extremism and increased gender-based discrimination. They also mentioned their feeling of lacking the legitimacy to act, despite high expectations for international solidarity actors. Lastly, while young people applaud cultural and intellectual openness and discussion events as a driver of their engagement and participation, the consultation nonetheless brought to light contributions lamenting young people’s individualism and lack of desire to get involved.



2. The consultation underlined the important role played by political and institutional ecosystems, perceived as barriers to engagement. Young people expressed their dissatisfaction with having little involvement in spaces for consultation and decision-making and felt that their engagement was not highly valued. This alienation forms a source of political distrust, which was expressed very strongly (in over a third of responses concerning obstacles to engagement): young people lack confidence in the political ecosystem, and sometimes fear that their engagement will lead to political and symbolic repercussions. Some participants also criticized the “Western” concept of international solidarity, the lack of impact of initiatives, and deplored the phenomena of voluntourism.
3. The solidarity sphere continues to be perceived as inaccessible and difficult to understand. Young people stated their need to receive better guidance and support to embark upon an engagement or participation effort, as well as to be better informed and receive targeted, coherent information embodied by young people. In addition, young people regretted the obligation of having a strong social network and stable financial situation.
4. Young people outlined structural obstacles to getting involved. Many of them highlighted a lack of time, or of knowledge and key skills, needed to get involved. In this respect, they expressed the need to be better informed, but many also stated that they were held back by unstable financial situations that effectively limited possibilities to get involved. Women cited these barriers more than men (31% versus 22%).

### Expectations expressed by young people during the consultation:

- **Improve information and communication:** Communicate about the stakeholders with which young people can get involved and on the different ways to get involved, and promote communications embodied by young people, highlighting the concrete impact of their projects, and disseminated in all spaces likely to reach young people in all their diversity.
- **Demonstrate and promote the impact of international solidarity:** Prove that international solidarity actions make a useful and relevant contribution to address major challenges, whether global or local, to respond to young people’s aspiration of making an impact while motivating them to get involved.
- **Ensure that actions carried out in the field appropriately correspond to the reality of needs:** Going beyond communications, concretely monitor inappropriate solidarity actions without real impact and seek at the same time to involve local communities and work closely with them in implementing international solidarity programmes.
- **Concretely recognize engagement and participation, in particular in the professional world:** In response to young people’s feeling of being undervalued, concretely recognize the acquisition of practical vocational skills that will be useful in their future lives, in any professional environment.
- **Acknowledge the right of young people, in all their diversity, to participate and foster this participation:** At a time when the feeling of political mistrust has intensified, encourage young people, in all their diversity, and offer them a prominent place within decision-making bodies, both on a political level (international, national and local) and within organizations working in the international solidarity sector.
- **Establish links between education, volunteer engagement and participation:** Considering that engagement is not easy and requires leaving one’s comfort zone, structure greater education in this area, in particular at the level of school curricula, in order to raise awareness more widely and encourage everyone to get involved.
- **Free up time for engagement and participation:** As young people have indicated a lack of time as a major barrier to their engagement, freeing up time, in particular during school sessions and working hours, to enable them to get involved is a strong idea that has been proposed.
- **Ensure the accessibility of international solidarity:** To democratize engagement and offer opportunities to all, ensure the accessibility of the sector, in its various aspects, to all young people and fight to overcome potential glass ceilings, notably those related to education levels and place of residence (for example, in Overseas France).
- **Create an environment conducive to young people’s engagement and participation, in particular that of girls and young women:** Provide financial support, through a legal and political framework, and specific support tailored to young people, particularly those subject to various forms of discrimination and/or experiencing precarious socio-economic circumstances.

# Acronyms

<b>AFD</b>	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
<b>HRBA</b>	Human rights-based approach
<b>AJEP</b>	Youth and Non-formal Education Association
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>BMZ</b>	<i>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung</i> – German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
<b>CESER</b>	Regional Economic, Social and Environmental Council
<b>CICID</b>	Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development
<b>CIRRMA</b>	Interregional Conference of Multi-stakeholder Regional Networks
<b>CNAJEP</b>	Committee for National and International Relations of Youth and Non-formal Education Associations
<b>CNCDH</b>	French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights
<b>CNDSI</b>	National Council for Development and International Solidarity
<b>CNJ</b>	National Youth Council of Togo
<b>COJ</b>	National Advisory Council on Youth Policies
<b>CPD</b>	Presidential Council on Development
<b>COM</b>	Objectives and means contract ( <i>Contrat d'Objectifs et de Moyens</i> )
<b>CRIJ</b>	Regional youth information centre
<b>CSI</b>	International Solidarity and Cooperation
<b>DGM</b>	Directorate-General for Global Affairs (MEAE)
<b>DGM/DCTCIV</b>	Local Government and Civil Society Department (MEAE)
<b>DGM DDD</b>	Sustainable Development Department (MEAE)
<b>DGM HUMA</b>	Human Development Department (MEAE)
<b>DJEPVA</b>	Directorate for Youth, Non-Formal Education and the Voluntary Sector (MENJ)
<b>DPA/OSC</b>	Partnerships Department/Civil Society Division of the AFD
<b>DRAJES</b>	Regional Academic Department for Youth, Engagement and Sport
<b>ECIS</b>	Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity
<b>E&amp;D</b>	Engagé·e·s et Déterminé·e·s
<b>EDUCASOL</b>	French platform for education for development and international solidarity
<b>FAGE</b>	National Federation of Students' Associations
<b>FICOL</b>	Funding Facility for Local Authorities
<b>FSOF</b>	Support Fund for Feminist Organizations
<b>GIZ</b>	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i> – German Agency for International Cooperation
<b>HCE</b>	High Council for Gender Equality
<b>HFE</b>	Senior Official for Equality (MEAE)
<b>HLPF</b>	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
<b>IGAE</b>	Inspectorate-General of Foreign Affairs
<b>INJEP</b>	Cooperation Fund for Youth and Non-Formal Education

<b>YPFO</b>	Young people with fewer opportunities
<b>JPO</b>	Junior Professional Officers (UN)
<b>IDG</b>	International Day of the Girl
<b>J2R</b>	Jeunes des 2 Rives programme (“Young people from both shores”) of Solidarité Laïque
<b>LOP-DSLIM</b>	Framework and Programming Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities
<b>MASA</b>	French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty
<b>MEAE</b>	French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs
<b>MENJ</b>	Ministry for National Education and Young People
<b>MJC</b>	Youth and culture centres ( <i>Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture</i> )
<b>MOOC</b>	Massive Open Online Course
<b>PAJ</b>	Place aux Jeunes programme
<b>PCPA</b>	Concerted Multi-stakeholder Programme
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>RRMA</b>	Multi-stakeholder regional network
<b>SCAC</b>	Cooperation and Cultural Action Section
<b>EEAS</b>	European External Action Service
<b>IS</b>	International solidarity
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>VIA</b>	International Internship in the Civil Service
<b>VIE</b>	International Internship Programme
<b>VSI</b>	International Solidarity Volunteering
<b>YAP</b>	Youth Action Plan (EU)

# Glossary

## Human Rights-Based Approach – HRBA

*“The rights-based approach, formalized in 2003 by the United Nations, is a conceptual framework based on this interdependence between the fulfilment of human rights and sustainable development which is used to shape development programs and projects. This framework defines interactions between states and individuals in terms of duty bearers and rights holders in the context of international human rights law. Human rights are placed at the core of government action and the state is held accountable for their fulfilment. The rights-based approach aims to make beneficiaries of development cooperation agents of their own development so as to ensure that it is truly sustainable. Target 16.7 of the SDGs thus aims “to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels”. Moving from an approach based on a population’s needs, this conceptual framework calls for people to be recognized as rights holders and for each citizen to be considered free to participate in the economic and social development of their country.”<sup>77</sup>*

## Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity

*“ECIS emerges as an indispensable means of promoting civic engagement in issues of development and international solidarity. It is also a necessary tool to contribute to democratic and global challenges, citizen action and living together in harmony. By strengthening citizens’ desire and ability to act, ECIS fosters and supports the proliferation of citizen engagement and solidarity initiatives. ECIS intersects and complements other types of education implemented by a variety of actors with a similar philosophy such as sustainable development education and global citizenship education.”<sup>78</sup>*

## Engagement

The concepts of participation and engagement are not used interchangeably. The concept of participation relates to the legal framework of human rights, while engagement is used to refer to individual or collective volunteer work. This form of engagement is one of the foundations of the voluntary sector.<sup>79</sup>

## Young people<sup>80</sup>

*“The notion of ‘young people’ is closely tied to social and cultural practices that vary over time and from one context to another, particularly when it comes to the gender and social class of those concerned. There is no universally accepted definition of ‘youth’ or ‘young people’. The definitions depend on the country, the context and the different organizations. The term ‘youth’ is used to encompass the whole spectrum of definitions rather than referring to a single age group; it thus recognises this broad diversity and denotes a period of transition from childhood to adulthood – i.e. when a person attains full socioeconomic, environmental, civil and political independence.”<sup>81</sup>*

## Young people and intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality was introduced in 1989 by afro-feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. It provides a framework for theorizing how different forms of oppression interconnect. Age is notably an element of social power dynamics, in the same way as other factors such as gender,

<sup>77</sup> This definition has been adopted by AFD, which references it in its documents on “Human Rights and Development”. Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Culture, Education and International Development, MEAE. (2019). [Human Rights and Development: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation](#). diplomatie.gouv.fr.

<sup>78</sup> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. (n.d.-b). [France’s strategy for civil society and civic engagement \(2023-2027\)](#). France Diplomatie – Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

<sup>79</sup> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. (n.d.). [Volontariats](#) (Volunteering). diplomatie.gouv.fr

<sup>80</sup> While subscribing to the UN’s definition, Coordination SUD also uses the concept of “Jeunesses actrices” (“young people as active participants”) to emphasize young people’s role as “agents of social, political and economic change, and no longer merely beneficiaries of the policies and programmes that concern them”.

<sup>81</sup> AFD – Agence Française de Développement. (2022, October). [Human Rights and Development: The rights of youth](#).

disability, minority ethnicity, sexual orientation, education level, socio-economic background, etc. Intersectionality offers a tool to better understand the complexity of social inequalities and combat them more effectively.

### **Youth-led organization/association**

An organization led by young people, who are responsible for its governance and management.

### **Youth organization/association**

An organization that works with and for young people.

### **Participation**

*“Participation is a fundamental right. It is one of the guiding principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that has been reiterated in many other Conventions and Declarations. Through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life-skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship and to promote positive civic action. To participate effectively, young people must be given the proper tools, such as information, education about and access to their civil rights.”<sup>82</sup>*

### **Youthwashing**

*“Youthwashing refers to the act of companies and institutional bodies tokenizing young people for marketing purposes without including them in negotiations and taking meaningful action to support their demands for a more equitable and sustainable future.”<sup>83</sup>*

In international solidarity, youthwashing manifests as young people’s superficial participation in the development and implementation of projects, without real consideration given to their needs, desires and ideas.

<sup>82</sup> [UN-Habitat & the Focal Point on Youth, UN DESA. \(2013\). Youth Participation.](#) Available at un.org.

<sup>83</sup> [Youthwashing Word Context — Climate Words.](#) (n.d.). Available at climatewords.org.



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The cross-cutting integration of young people's participation in the development and implementation of France's development and international solidarity policy is part of the drive to renew development policy under the French Programming Act of 4 August 2021 on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities. This Act reinforces the partnership-based dimension of France's action, reasserts the human rights-based approach as a guiding principle (of which participation is a pillar), and affirms the importance of involving representatives of civil society, including young people, in public policies and programmes, in France and its partner countries.

To support the operationalization of this ambition, a working group on the participation of young people was formed within the National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI), with the support of the Local Government and Civil Society Department of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. It was co-chaired by Henri Arévalo (Occitanie Coopération/CIRRMA), Tanguy Guibert (FAGE) et Michelle Perrot (Plan International France).

Its work culminated in a series of key recommendations, supported by inspiring examples of successful experiences, with the aim of improving the practices of all stakeholders. The primary objective of the working group is to encourage the adoption, by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, of a strategy promoting youth participation in public programmes and policies, both in France and in its partner countries. To meet the challenges involved, this strategy must receive strong political support and be accompanied by multi-year objectives, an accountability framework, and specific human and financial resources dedicated to its implementation.

The CNDSI is France's forum for high-level dialogue between non-state actors and the French government on issues related to France's development and international cooperation policy. It contributes to discussion on the development and implementation of the objectives, guidelines and means of French development policy.

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