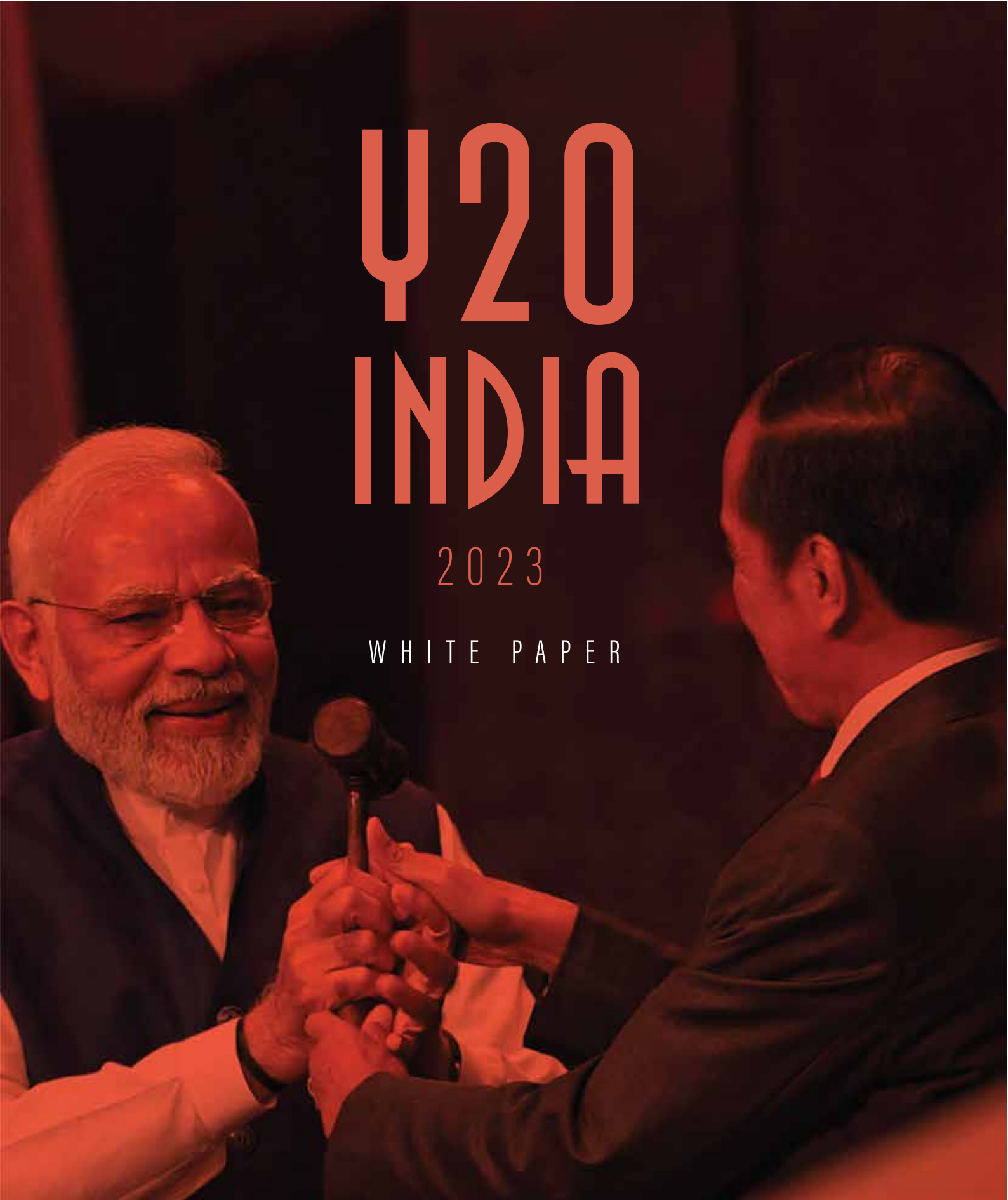




Y20 INDIA

2023

WHITE PAPER



Y20 INDIA 2023

SHARED FUTURE

YOUTH IN DEMOCRACY
AND GOVERNANCE



CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	01
Contributors	02
Executive Summary	03
Glossary	04
The Global Landscape	05
Introduction	
I. Youth in Legislature and Politics	06
A. Challenges for Youth in Active Politics	
B. Communicating the Essentials of an Effective Democracy to Young Voters	
C. Highlighting Young Politicians and Parliamentarians	
II. Youth in Policy Making and Governance	09
A. Importance of Youth in Local Administration	
B. Incentivising Roles for Youth in Policy and Governance Space	
C. Moving from Silos to Synchronicity across Global Platforms for Youth Engagement	
III. Institutionalising Leadership and Governance Training	12
A. Fostering Research and Innovation in Governance	
B. Enabling Intra-G20 Mobility for Youth Leaders	
C. Institutionalising and Converging Existing Platforms for Youth Participatory Governance	
IV. Youth in Community Governance	15
A. Encouraging Different Models of Community Engagement for the Youth	
B. Responsible Journalism and Use of Social Media	
The India Way	18
Case Study 1: Youth in Local Government	
Case Study 2: Direct Engagement in Policy Formulation	
Case Study 3: Bharatiya Chhatra Sansad and Bal Panchayats	
Case Study 4: YUVA 2.0 Programme	
Case Study 5: MyGov Initiative	
Case Study 6: National Youth Policy, 2021	
Way Forward	22
Empowering Through Education and Training	
Leveraging Digital Mediums	
Supporting Youth-led Initiatives	



Acknowledgement

This white paper is produced by Y20 India, the official Youth Engagement Group of the 2023 G20 Summit, with the support of the G20 Secretariat, the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Dr Vijay Chauthaiwale, Mentor Y20 India, for his valuable guidance and support. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Dr Anirban Ganguly, Director, Dr Syama Prasad Mookherjee Research Foundation, for his pertinent insights and constant encouragement.

We gratefully acknowledge the interviewers, researchers, and speakers who assisted us in channelling our thoughts by supplying pertinent data and information, as well as literary contributors whose works, which have been already published or have been put up on accessible sources, have been incorporated in the present document. This paper is part of the efforts to include youths' perspectives on current issues of international importance. The white paper can be seen as a meaningful attempt to discuss the diverse perspectives of the concerned themes as well as suggestions that can be implemented.

The views contained in this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors. Any omissions, inaccuracies, or errors are our own. No endorsement is implied for any commercial entity or product mentioned in this publication.

Drishti Rawal

Secretary,
Policy and Research
Y20 India Secretariat



CONTRIBUTORS

Drishti Rawal
Secretary, Policy and Research

Contributing Authors

Cherish Rajpurohit (Research Associate)
Kunal Apastamb (Research Associate)
Palak Kohli (Research Co-ordinator)
Raj Shekhar (Policy and Research Associate)
Suyash Pande (Track Chair)

Content Supervisors

Pathikrit Payne (Co-ordination Head)
Priyank Kumar Chauhan (Special Co-ordinator)

Knowledge Partners

School of Government, MIT World Peace University, Pune, Maharashtra
United Nations in India



Executive Summary

The white paper, "Shared Future: Youth in Democracy and Governance" provides a comprehensive examination of the crucial role that young people play in shaping the future of our societies. The term "Shared Future" reflects the fact that policies and decisions made today will have a lasting impact on future generations and therefore, it is imperative that they are involved in the decision-making process. The paper delves into four key subthemes, each providing critical insight into the role of youth in governance and the ways in which they can actively participate in shaping the future.

The first subtheme, "Youth in Legislature and Politics," highlights the underrepresentation of youth in elected bodies and underscores the need for greater youth representation in decision-making processes. It is imperative that the voices of future generations are heard and their perspectives incorporated into policy development and implementation.

The second subtheme, "Youth in Policy Making and Governance," explores the ways in which young people can actively participate in policy development and implementation. It is essential that young people have the opportunity to engage in the policy-making process and contribute to the shaping of their future.

The third subtheme, "Institutionalizing Leadership and Governance Training," examines the importance of providing young people with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate effectively in governance. Investing in the development of young people's leadership and governance skills will enable them to make meaningful contributions to the decision-making process.

The fourth subtheme, "Youth in Community Governance," looks at the role of young people in local governance and the impact they can have on their communities. By empowering young people to participate in community governance, we can create sustainable and inclusive communities that are responsive to the needs and perspectives of all members.

The paper incorporates case studies from India to provide relevant and practical examples of the challenges and opportunities faced by young people in participating in governance, and concludes with a way forward that outlines practical steps for empowering young people to participate effectively in governance. These steps include investing in their skills and knowledge, leveraging digital mediums, and supporting youth-led initiatives. By prioritising youth engagement in governance, we can ensure that the perspectives of future generations are heard and integrated into decision-making processes. The white paper provides a thorough examination of the crucial role that young people play in shaping the future of our societies and provides practical recommendations for empowering them to participate effectively in governance.

Glossary

1. **MP:** Member of Parliament
2. **Sarpanch:** Head of the village local government chosen by direct elections in the territorial constituency.
3. **NITI Aayog:** National Institution for Transforming India is a state-of-the-art resource centre and think tank of the Government of India that works towards fostering cooperative federalism, monitoring and evaluation and designing policy and programme framework
4. **Bharatiya Chhatra Sansad (BCS):** Indian Student Parliament - A non-political platform to sensitise socially active & politically sensitive students from around 25000 colleges of more than 400 universities in India.
5. **NIC:** National Informatics Centre under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is the technology partner of the Government of India with the objective to provide technology-driven solutions to central and state governments.
6. **MeitY:** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of Government of India.
7. **MyGov:** Government of India's Citizen Engagement Platform which collaborates with multiple Government bodies and ministries to engage with citizens for policy formulation and seeks the opinion of people on issues of public interest and welfare and empowers them to contribute towards good governance.
8. **UNICEF:** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund works in over 190 countries and territories to save children's lives, to defend their rights, and to help them fulfil their potential, from early childhood through adolescence.
9. **Bal Panchayats:** A platform of village government where a group of child and youth representatives elect child and youth leaders
10. **Bal Sabhas:** Meetings held by the elected child or youth leaders.
11. **NCC:** National Cadet Corps; a central sector scheme of the Government of India to provide hands-on experience to young students in delivering community service.
12. **NYP:** National Youth Policy of the Government of India is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and serves to 'unlock the potential of youth to advance India'. It seeks to catalyse widespread action on youth development on five priority areas viz. education; health, fitness & sports; employment & entrepreneurship; youth leadership & development; and social justice.



THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

Introduction

As of 2021, a staggering 1.2 billion people, or 16% of the global population, belong to the age group of 15 years to 24 years. In just 7 years, by 2030, the number of youth is projected to increase by 7%, reaching 1.3 billion and making up nearly a quarter of the world's population. In India, the data shows that the age group between 15 years to 29 years consists of 34% of the population. Even as this number declines over time, around 24% of the Indian population will still be considered youth in 2030. The participation of all citizens in formal political and governance processes is the backbone of a healthy and meaningful democracy. People aged 14 years to 29 years represent the largest generation in history and it is crucial to take this significant proportion of the population into consideration and include them in the power structure for decision-making and the overall functioning of democracy. As the United Nations Youth Strategy has stated, "Young people are connected like never before, they want to and already contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress, and inspiring political change, in urban as well as rural contexts. Therefore, young people constitute a tremendous and essential asset worth investing in".

It's important to empower and involve the youth in democracy to create a strong foundation for the future. We must address the challenges faced by the youth and provide opportunities for them to contribute to the strengthening of democracy and improvement of governance. The statistics cited show the potential of the youth to have a significant impact on democratic and government systems. Swami Vivekananda, a renowned spiritual leader and social reformer from India, had a global vision for the youth. He believed that the youth of any nation have the power to shape its destiny. He once said, "A brave, frank, clean-hearted, courageous and aspiring youth is the only foundation on which the future nation can be built." By empowering the youth and incorporating them into the power structure, we can ensure a brighter future for the world.

I. Youth in Legislature and Politics

Active participation of young people in the democratic processes includes running for office, being appointed to political positions, and being engaged in advocacy and policy-making. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the important role that youth can play in shaping the future of their communities and countries. Youth bring fresh perspectives, new ideas, and a desire for change to the political arena. Additionally, they are often best placed to understand the unique challenges faced by their peers and to advocate for their needs and interests. However, despite the potential benefits, youth face several challenges in participating in politics and achieving representation in the legislature. These include: limited access to resources, discrimination and prejudice, and a lack of political experience and mentorship. To address these challenges, many organisations and governments have started initiatives aimed at empowering young people and increasing their political participation. These include: youth-led political organisations, mentorship programs, and campaigns to increase youth voter turnout.

Youth in legislature and politics are important for ensuring that the needs and perspectives of young people are represented in decision-making. To achieve this, it is crucial that the barriers to their participation are addressed and that support and opportunities for their engagement are provided. A shared future can only be realised when all members of society, including young people, are active and engaged in the democratic processes that shape their lives.



A. Challenges for Youth in Active Politics

The worldwide average age of a Member of Parliament is 53-55 years. The average age for a woman MP is 50 years. The Sub-Saharan African MPs have the lowest regional average age at 49 years while the Arab countries with the highest at 55 years. The global trends indicate that the youth is underrepresented in politics. There are structural and personal struggles that keep the youth away from the positions of power in the parliament including issues like increased costs of elections, racial equations, and, discrimination faced by women. The main structural hindrance is that of power politics, i.e., the right connections and contacts from within the dominating political parties, and financing of the elections. The age for voting and the age permitted to contest elections are different in many countries. This gives a late start to the youth in an already slow-paced political career. Another bothersome reason is the lack of a prescribed retirement age or an upper age cap for holding political offices. Consequently, when the 'experienced' leaders hold key positions, there is no room for the youth to take charge.

The personal struggle is the lack of access to knowledge about political processes and political financing. There is no career guidance and fixed pathways in politics, like it exists for other mainstream careers. There has been some improvement in the recent past. In the global scenario, the proportion of MPs aged under 30 years has increased by 2.6 per cent, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union Report on Youth Participation in National Parliaments. This shows an increase of 0.4 percentage points compared to 2019. However, this increase of 2.6% is not sufficient because, with 50 per cent of the world's population under 30 years, there is a sizable deficit in the political representation of young people worldwide.

B. Communicating the Essentials of an Effective Democracy to Young Voters

Communicating the essentials of an effective democracy to young voters is critical for the future of democratic societies. Young people are the future leaders of the world and have a crucial role to play in ensuring that democracy remains a vital and functioning system of governance. It is important to educate young voters about the core values of democracy as well as the importance of key institutions and processes such as regular elections and a robust system of checks and balances that are essential for its functioning.

It is also crucial to explain the importance of active and informed citizenship. Young voters need to understand that democracy requires the participation of all citizens and that they have a responsibility to be informed and engaged in the political process. This includes understanding the issues that impact their communities, having informed opinions, and being active in the political process, whether it is through voting, participating in public debates, or working with others to achieve collective goals. By equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to be active and engaged citizens, we can help ensure that democracy remains a vital and functioning system of governance for generations to come.

C. Highlighting Young Politicians and Parliamentarians

Highlighting and promoting the role of younger politicians and parliamentarians is a crucial step in ensuring that democracy remains relevant, diverse, and representative. The presence of young people in government and policy-making positions can bring a fresh perspective and new solutions to the table, and can help build trust and connect the government with a younger demographic of voters. Young politicians and parliamentarians are often better equipped to understand and empathise with the current realities and priorities of young people. They are more likely to relate to the issues and concerns that are important to this demographic, and to voice those concerns in a way that resonates with their peers. By highlighting the contributions and leadership of these individuals, we can help to demonstrate that governance and policy-making is accessible, innovative, relevant, and evolving.

In addition, promoting the role of younger politicians and parliamentarians can serve as a catalyst for increased youth engagement in politics. By showcasing successful young leaders, we can inspire a new generation of young people to get involved and make a difference. This is important because it helps to ensure that the voices and perspectives of young people are represented in decision-making, and that they have a say in the future direction of their communities and the world at large. Moreover, by emphasising the contributions and leadership of young politicians and parliamentarians, we can help to create a pipeline of the next generation of leaders. This is essential for ensuring the long-term viability and relevance of democracy, as it helps to foster the development of new leaders who are equipped to take on the challenges of the future.

II. Youth in Policy Making and Governance

With a large and growing proportion of the global population being youth, it is vital that their needs and perspectives are taken into consideration in governance processes to create an inclusive and equitable future. Young people bring a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and ideas to the table, which can lead to innovative and effective solutions to complex problems. Furthermore, they are often more engaged in civic issues and are more likely to participate in governance processes if given the opportunity. This can lead to a more vibrant and inclusive democracy. By involving youth in governance processes, we are not only ensuring that future generations are not left with problems created by previous generations, but we are also working towards building a more equitable future where all voices are heard and all perspectives are valued.

To achieve a shared future where youth have a meaningful role in democracy and governance, a collaborative effort between governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector is required. This could include the creation of youth councils, youth-led committees, and youth-friendly services that provide information and support. Additionally, investments in education and training programs that equip young people with the skills and knowledge needed to participate effectively in governance processes are also critical. It is time for us to recognize the value that young people bring to the table and to create opportunities for them to participate in shaping their own future. Only by creating a shared future that is inclusive and democratic can we ensure a better future for all.



A. Importance of Youth in Local Administration

Youth, being the future leaders of a country, have the potential to bring fresh ideas and perspectives to the table. They are well-equipped with technology and digital skills, which are critical in today's rapidly changing world. By including them in local administration, the youth can bring about a positive change in the way things are done, leading to better decision-making and implementation of policies.

In many developing countries, the civil service sector is considered as one of the most dignified jobs, and it provides financial stability, career growth, and an opportunity to serve the community. Merit-based recruitment in civil services has encouraged many young people to apply for these roles, making the competition fierce. The high demand for such jobs among the youth reflects their aspirations to work for society and make a positive impact. The youth in local administration can help build community leadership by engaging with the people and understanding their needs. This can lead to a more inclusive and democratic approach to policy-making, with youth providing a voice for the community. Moreover, involving the youth in administration will help to distribute the responsibility of the state, making the process of governance more efficient and effective.

B. Incentivising Roles for Youth in Policy and Governance Space

In creating engagement structures for youth participatory governance, it is important to ensure that incentives are accounting for the diverse needs for accommodation and access of varied youth cohorts. In order to make it aspirational, along with providing certificates and other recognition of youth participation, it is also essential to incorporate capacity building and technical guidance on thematic issues.¹ To enable the participation of youth from marginalised communities, an emphasis needs to be placed on providing financial resources, resources in regional languages, as well as pathways for financial independence, through mentorship, career guidance, digital access, and a robust professional network. Providing a stipend or funding in particular as an incentive, also signals to the ecosystem that the efforts and participation of youth are valued to the same degree as other stakeholders. The exercise of keeping invoices and budgeting in itself can help young people remain accountable to the project/platform through which they are engaged, and eventually develop necessary leadership skills. Furthermore, funding allows youth movements and groups to expand their efforts, reach and mobilise more youth representatives to consistently further and contribute to joint agendas for positive change. Facilitators can also explore incentives such as data packages, shadowing opportunities with industry leaders, and exposure visits for youth, to ensure their consistent and enthusiastic participation.

¹A good example of this is the Asia – Pacific Youth Advisory Group that works on engaging youth on climate issues, by building their capacity to identify challenges and opportunities for climate and environmental justice at various levels. More can be read here: ASIA PACIFIC YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP (Jan. 24, 2023, 1:07 PM), <https://www.yecap-ap.org/yag>.

C. Moving from Silos to Synchronicity across Global Platforms for Youth Engagement

The current state of youth participation, expertise, and experiences is fragmented, with different platforms addressing specific issues without proper communication and coordination with each other. This results in a lack of holistic and integrated approaches to addressing youth-related challenges. The siloed approach to youth engagement leads to duplicity of efforts, redundancy of resources, and incomplete discourse on critical issues that affect the youth. For example, the discussions around youth health may not be linked to their access to education, economic opportunities, and resilience to cope with climate change. This fragmented approach hinders the development of comprehensive and effective policies for the youth. Therefore, there is a need for platforms, processes, and mechanisms aimed at forging interlinkages and convergence across various global and local platforms and networks. Such an approach will enable a better understanding of the interconnections and interdependence of different issues affecting the youth. This will also help in developing integrated and comprehensive policies and programs that take into account the diverse needs and aspirations of the youth.



III. Institutionalising Leadership and Governance Training

The theme of 'Shared Future: Youth in Democracy and Governance' also highlights the importance of empowering the youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate effectively in governance and decision-making processes. One critical aspect of this is the institutionalisation of leadership and governance training for young people. Leadership and governance training is a valuable tool for building the capacity of the youth to become active and informed citizens, and to contribute to the development of their communities and nations. Such training can help young people understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and equip them with the skills to engage in the political process, participate in public discourse, and advocate for their interests and the interests of others.

Institutionalising leadership and governance training requires a commitment from governments, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders to invest in the development and implementation of programs that are accessible, relevant, and sustainable. This can be achieved through the development of national policies and programs that prioritise the integration of leadership and governance training into formal education systems, as well as through the establishment of specialised training institutions and programs. Moreover, it is important to ensure that leadership and governance training is grounded in the realities of the local context and relevant to the challenges and opportunities faced by young people in their communities. This can be achieved through the engagement of young people in the design and implementation of training programs, and through the use of locally relevant and culturally appropriate training materials and resources.

The institutionalisation of leadership and governance training for young people is essential for the development of a shared future, where the youth are empowered to participate effectively in governance and decision-making processes. Such training can help build the capacity of young people to become active and informed citizens, and contribute to the development of their communities and nations. The investment in leadership and governance training is an investment in the future of democracy and governance, and a commitment to building a better world for all.



A. Fostering Research and Innovation in Governance

Fostering research and innovation in governance is critical for ensuring the continued development and improvement of democratic institutions. By engaging the youth in research related to state capacity, administration, and development policies, we can tap into their fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and creative solutions. To achieve this, there is a need to create formal platforms and mechanisms for the youth to present their research findings and solutions to the government. This can be done through the establishment of research institutions and think-tanks within the government, or through partnerships between universities and government agencies.

Additionally, it is important to provide financial and institutional support for research and innovation in governance. This can be done through the allocation of government funds for research and development, the establishment of grants and awards for young researchers, and the provision of access to data and resources for research purposes. Moreover, interdisciplinary collaboration between different sectors and stakeholders, including government agencies, universities, civil society organisations, and the private sector needs to be encouraged. This can help to ensure that research and innovation in governance is informed by a wide range of perspectives, and that solutions are developed that are grounded in the real-world context and relevant to the needs of communities and societies.

B. Enabling Intra-G20 Mobility for Youth Leaders

As a group, the G20 can play a key role in promoting the growth and development of young leaders and entrepreneurs. One way to achieve this is by enabling intra-G20 mobility for youth leaders through the movement of young leaders and entrepreneurs from one G20 country to another for the purpose of gaining new experiences, learning from their peers, and building their networks. This can be done through programs such as internships, exchanges, and leadership training programs.

Enabling intra-G20 mobility for youth leaders is important for several reasons. First, it allows young people to gain exposure to different cultural, political, and economic environments, which can broaden their perspectives and deepen their understanding of the world. Second, it provides young leaders with opportunities to connect with their peers from other G20 countries, learn from their experiences, and build networks that can be leveraged for future collaborations. Third, it promotes the development of young leaders by providing them with access to training, mentorship, and other resources that can help them grow and mature as leaders. Finally, by enabling intra-G20 mobility for youth leaders, the G20 can help to build a pipeline of young leaders and entrepreneurs who are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to drive economic growth and development in their countries.

C. Institutionalising and Converging Existing Platforms for Youth Participatory Governance

To ensure sustained engagement of youth in decision-making, their participation must be systematised.² To lend legitimacy to platforms that facilitate youth participatory governance, high-level stakeholders must make an effort to institutionalise youth participation in governance and policy-making within their organisations and bodies. This will ensure that the inputs of youth participants are fed into every stage of the governance and policy-making of states and take the shape of youth advisory boards within institutions, regular dialogues and feedback mechanisms for youth, and quotas for youth participation in panels, conferences and other avenues that contribute to policy making and governance.

While youth participation can be foregrounded by institutionalising participatory structures, it is also important to ensure that opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making agendas are streamlined and easy to access for heterogeneous communities of youth at scale. Therefore, a concerted effort needs to be made by government functionaries, civil societies, and international organisations to converge existing programs and mechanisms, so opportunities are not scattered and duplicated, but rather streamlined for young people.

²Jyoti Jha Kumar Manish & Moira Dawa, *Gujarat Young People's Action Team (YPAT) Packs a Punch at Maiden Meet*, YUWAAH!, (Jan 23, 2023, 11:09AM), <https://www.yuwaah.org/blog/gujarat-young-peoples-action-team-ypat-packs-a-punch-at-maiden-meet>.





IV. Youth in Community Governance

The involvement of youth in community governance is crucial for creating a shared future in which all members of a community have a voice and a stake in decision-making processes. By engaging youth in community governance, communities can benefit from their energy, ideas, and perspectives, and ensure that the future of the community reflects the needs and aspirations of all its members. In many communities, young people face barriers to participation in decision-making processes, such as lack of information, lack of access to decision-makers, and lack of skills and knowledge. These barriers can be overcome by creating opportunities for youth to participate in community governance, such as youth councils, youth-led organisations, and youth-adult partnerships.

By participating in community governance, youth can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective leaders and change-makers. They can learn about issues that affect their communities, such as access to education, job opportunities, and environmental sustainability, and take action to address these issues. They can also develop skills in communication, collaboration, and problem-solving, which are valuable in all aspects of life. Involving youth in community governance also benefits communities by ensuring that the perspectives of all members are represented in decision-making processes. This helps to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for the community.

A. Encouraging Different Models of Community Engagement for the Youth

There are several models of community engagement for youth with governments that promote their participation in community governance. These models aim to provide opportunities for young people to interact with government officials, influence policy decisions, and contribute to the development of their communities.

One such model is Youth Councils. These are local or regional organisations that offer a platform for youth to express their opinions, ideas, and concerns to government officials. Youth councils consist of elected representatives from different schools, organisations, or neighbourhoods, serving as a liaison between the youth and government. Another model is Youth-Led Organizations. These are groups run by and for young people, providing an opportunity for them to take on leadership roles, learn about community issues, and take action to address them. By connecting with government officials, these organisations provide a direct link between youth and the government. Youth-Adult Partnerships are another form of community engagement. These collaborations between youth and adults aim to create more equitable and inclusive communities. In these partnerships, both youth and adults work together to address community issues and make decisions that impact the community. This model helps ensure that both youth and adult perspectives are considered in decision-making.

Youth Consultations are meetings or workshops where government officials engage with youth to gather their opinions and ideas on a particular issue. This model provides an opportunity for youth to express their opinions directly to government officials and for government officials to hear from the youth. Youth Policy Forums are meetings or workshops where government officials and youth come together to discuss and develop policies that impact youth. These forums provide a space for youth to contribute to the development of policies that will affect their lives and communities. Each model of community engagement has its own strengths and weaknesses, and it is important to choose the one that is best suited to the specific needs and goals of the community.

B. Responsible Journalism and Use of Social Media

Social media has become a powerful tool for young people to express their opinions and engage with politicians. Young people are more likely to see the positive impact of social media on democracy, as compared to older generations. On social media, they can express their support or dissent towards political policies and statements, and even directly address politicians through features like "tagging."

Young adults see social media's impact on democracy more positively than older adults in most countries

% who say social media has been more of a *good thing* for democracy in their country, among those ages ...

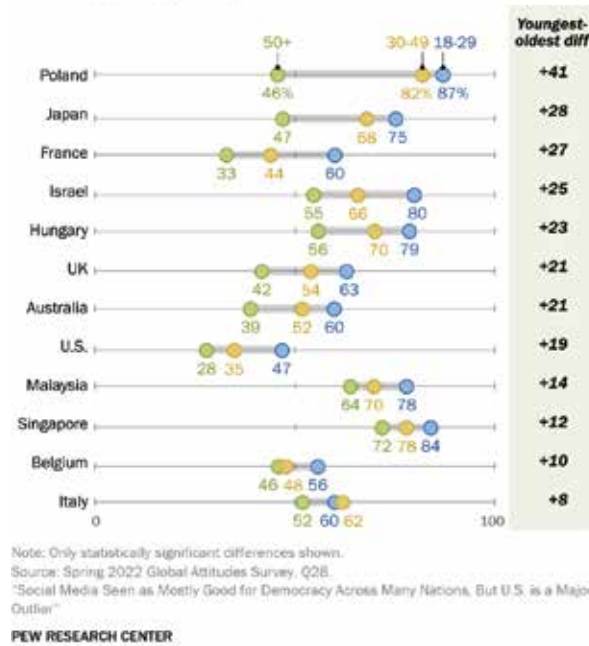


Figure 1: The infographic adopted from the Pew Research Centre³ shows how young versus older adults see the impact of social media on Democracy

With the increasing use of social media platforms, the youth are able to bring attention to issues that matter to them, creating a new avenue for civic engagement. They are also able to connect with like-minded individuals, create virtual communities and mobilise support for causes they believe in. The use of social media in community governance has also created new challenges. The spread of misinformation, hate speech and fake news is a major concern that can have a negative impact on society. It is therefore important for young people to be equipped with the skills to differentiate between credible and unreliable sources, and to use social media responsibly to promote accurate information and engage in productive discussions.

In addition, traditional media such as newspapers, television and radio also play a crucial role in promoting youth engagement in community governance. It is important for media outlets to provide a platform for young voices, to give them a chance to share their perspectives and experiences, and to be part of the public discourse. Young journalists can play a vital role in bringing attention to important issues and bringing the youth's perspectives to the forefront.

³Richard Wike Laura Silver Janell Fetterolf Christine Huang Sarah Austin Laura Clancy Sneha Gubbala, *Social media seen as mostly good for democracy across many nations, but U.S. is a major outlier*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Jan 23, 2023, 9:33 PM), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/12/06/social-media-seen-as-mostly-good-for-democracy-across-many-nations-but-u-s-is-a-major-outlier>.



Case Study 1: Youth in Local Government

The case of Bhakti Sharma serves as an inspiring example of youth leadership and community governance. At the young age of 25, Bhakti won the elections for the position of Sarpanch in the village of Barkhedi Abdullah in Madhya Pradesh. Her leadership has been instrumental in the development and progress of the village through the efficient utilisation of government funds and filling gaps in administration. Her victory has also served to raise awareness among the villagers about the importance of an educated and competent political leader.

Contesting elections at the local level presents fewer financial barriers, providing a more accessible entry point for young people into the political arena. By prioritising young candidates for certain seats in local government, structural hindrances can be overcome and the implementation of development and welfare schemes can be improved to reach those in need. It is crucial for young individuals to start their political careers at the grassroots level, gaining valuable experience and building community leadership. By doing so, they can progress through their careers based on their performance and competence, eventually bringing good governance to the forefront. The case of Bhakti Sharma highlights the importance of youth in local government and their potential to bring positive change to their communities.



Case Study 2: Direct Engagement in Policy Formulation

The Government of India offers internship programmes for young minds interested in policy formulation and implementation. For instance, the Ministry of External Affairs offers an internship programme for young Indian researchers. It is an excellent opportunity for budding policy enthusiasts to become familiar with the process of developing and implementing foreign policy. Interns are assigned specific topics of work and are expected to conduct research, write reports, and analyse evolving developments. They submit a thorough report as well as give a presentation on their work at the conclusion of their internship.⁴ The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog recruits young researchers through its Young Professionals programme. They are engaged in identifying key performance metrics for government schemes and policies, collaborating with ministries and conducting evaluation studies.

⁴MEA, *Internship with us*, MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (Jan. 21, 2023, 5:03 PM) <https://mea.gov.in/internship-in-mea.htm>.

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) offers a 'Digital India Internship' for Indian students. The interns have the opportunity to learn about the operations of the Indian government and the issues with its developmental policies. They also get to participate in the policy-making process by producing policy inputs such as empirical analysis, policy papers and briefing reports.

Such initiatives provide hands-on training in the domains of blockchain technology, artificial intelligence and machine learning, e-service delivery, cloud automation, text analytics, ontology, software documentation, data analytics and software development to young interns⁵. The Indian initiatives of creating opportunities to involve the youth in the policy making and implementation process is demonstrative of its belief in the heightened ability and analytical outlook of today's younger generation. It is an attempt to harness the youth energy through hands-on training and experience. It is a depiction of their farsightedness, and ability to make informed decisions which would affect their generation.



Case Study 3: **Bharatiya Chhatra Sansad and Bal Panchayats**

Bharatiya Chhatra Sansad, also known as the Indian Student Parliament, is a non-political forum that primarily works with 25000 colleges and more than 400 universities in India to mobilise and empower young people. The BCS is a classroom where over 10,000 students between the ages of 18 years and 25 years receive political coaching. It teaches young people about the workings of a democracy and motivates them to assist society by joining politics and assuming leadership positions. It attempts to improve the roles and relevance of youth in democratic institutions. Similarly, Bal Panchayat's initiative was rolled out at the gram sabha level in villages in Maharashtra. It was a collaborative project between the administrative training department of the government, the state government, and UNICEF. It involves a group of youth representatives electing child and youth leaders to voice their needs and realities at the Bal Panchayat and Gram Panchayat levels. The Bal Sabhas are supported by CSOs and UNICEF focals in formulating their tasks, and drafting notes and briefings for the Gram Panchayat. Inputs from the Bal Panchayat were included in the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations and regularly fed into the budget and planning for Maharashtra's Gram Panchayat plans. The success of the pilot project led to buy-in from other state governments, with plans to roll out Bal Panchayats across the country.

These pilot initiatives at the state level are crucial in developing young people's political acumen and instilling a sense of civic responsibility. By exposing them to the issues faced by fellow citizens, students are made more politically aware and knowledgeable. These initiatives strive to create an environment where passionate, committed, and educated youth can participate in the democratic process and contribute to society.

⁵Digital India Internship Scheme 2022, MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (Jan 24, 2023, 7:46 PM), <https://www.meity.gov.in/digital-india-internship-scheme-of-2022> Mentoring Yuva 2.0, My Gov, (Jan 24, 2023, 8:42 PM), <https://innovateindia.mygov.in/yuva/>.



Case Study 4: **YUVA 2.0 Programme**

India is regarded as a 'young country' since 66% of its entire population is under the age of 35 years. In this regard, a national programme for guiding future generations of authors has proven to be a significant stepping stone for nurturing future leaders. The YUVA 2.0 programme (Young, Upcoming, and Versatile Authors 2.0) will assist in creating a pool of authors who can explore the history, present, and future facets of Indian democracy through their writing. Additionally, the programme would open up a space for aspiring youth to express themselves and offer a thorough understanding of Indian democratic values on both national and international forums.⁶

The essence of launching a second edition of this programme is to promote creative engagement for youth in democracy. As the mother of democracy, encouraging youth to be a part of such initiatives would inspire the youth to understand and appreciate India's democracy, preserving India's heritage, culture and knowledge system. By providing a space for creative expression, the program aims to lay the foundation for the country's young people to become leaders in the creative world.



Case Study 5: **MyGov Initiative**

MyGov is a platform for citizen engagement initiated by the Government of India that aims to involve citizens, including youth, in the policy-making process. With over 28 million users, MyGov is used by government departments to solicit public opinions, inform citizens about government schemes, and engage with the younger generation through events and competitions. By inviting youth to participate in logo designing, slogan and tagline creation, and awareness-raising activities, the platform fosters their engagement in democracy and active politics. The Prime Minister of India also interacts with students, addressing their queries and building their confidence, contributing to the development of future leaders.

The vision of MyGov is to create a technologically empowered youth engagement with democracy and active politics. This citizen-centric platform represents India's efforts towards youth empowerment and technological transformation, making the country a revolutionary example for other developing nations. The MyGov initiative is an important step towards creating a shared future where youth are equipped to play a key role in shaping the democratic and governance processes in India.

⁶Mentoring Yuva 2.0, My Gov, (Jan 24, 2023, 8:42 PM), <https://innovateindia.mygov.in/yuva/>.



Case Study 6: **National Youth Policy, 2021**

The National Youth Policy 2021, presented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, is a comprehensive framework that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and aims to catalyse youth development in five priority areas over the next decade. The policy recognizes the importance of nurturing the potential of young people and developing their leadership skills to ensure their successful transition into adulthood.

The main objective of the National Youth Policy 2021 is to unlock the youth's potential, expand opportunities for leadership development, and use technology to create a vibrant youth enablement platform. The policy outlines various action agendas, including strengthening the youth volunteering ecosystem, investing in youth leadership development, and mobilising a one-stop youth platform, to achieve its goal. The policy is also designed to ensure an inclusive and holistic development of the youth, including their education and health and wellbeing. As a national-level framework, it provides a model for states to formulate their own youth policies based on regional needs. This highlights the importance of supporting and strengthening such efforts to ensure that the future leaders of India are developed from today's young generation.

The National Youth Policy 2021 recognizes the central role that youth play in shaping the future of their country and aims to equip them with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities necessary to become active and engaged citizens. The policy aims to provide a comprehensive approach to youth development, taking into account the diverse needs and challenges faced by the youth. By promoting youth development and leadership, the policy supports the creation of a shared future where young people are empowered to contribute to the democratic and governance processes of India.

WAY FORWARD

Empowering Through Education and Training

In order for youth to effectively participate in governance processes, they need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. This includes training in civic education, public speaking, advocacy and negotiation, leadership, and financial management. Governments, educational institutions and civil society organisations should work together to provide training and mentorship opportunities to young people, including internships and apprenticeships, to help them develop the skills they need to become active and effective participants in governance. Additionally, providing access to resources, such as online training modules and informational materials, can help young people to deepen their understanding of governance and the role they can play. By developing the skills and knowledge of youth, they will be better positioned to drive change and contribute to a more inclusive and democratic future.

Leveraging Digital Mediums

In the digital age, it is increasingly important to leverage technology and digital mediums to increase youth engagement in democracy and governance. This can include using social media platforms to promote youth-led campaigns and initiatives, developing online forums and discussion spaces for youth to share their ideas and perspectives, and providing access to digital tools that enable young people to participate in decision-making processes. Governments and civil society organisations should work to ensure that all young people, regardless of their socio-economic status, have access to these digital mediums. By leveraging technology, young people can amplify their voices, connect with like-minded individuals, and drive change in their communities and beyond.

Supporting Youth-led Initiatives

Youth-led development has the potential to drive sustainable and transformative change in communities and nations. Governments and civil society organisations should provide resources, funding and technical support to youth-led initiatives and organisations that are working towards promoting democracy, governance, and development. This can include incubating and scaling up successful initiatives, providing training and mentorship opportunities, and offering support for advocacy and campaigning efforts. By supporting youth-led development, young people can take the lead in addressing the issues that are important to them, and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable future.





Y20 INDIA

2023

WHITE PAPER

