

# Youth and Politics

- <https://youtu.be/vdDFLzyk94k>

- Politics : Aristotle: The affairs of the city
- Group of people make decisions and implement policy
- In the recent years concern has been expressed about what is perceived as young people's lack of interest in conventional politics including constitutional politics, membership of political parties and participation in elections. For example in most countries even when voting is compulsory and failure to cast a ballot incurs penalties young people are less likely than elder to bother voting (Furlong:2009)
- The reason for alimentation from politics often characterize them as free riders taking benefit of citizenship without voting because they lack or have low political literacy.
- Harris 2009 highlights how traditional political institutions are the product of adults and serves their purposes they are always therefore likely to find it difficult to engage young people.

- The National Centre of Social research ( White et al .2001) explores in detail the nature of young people aged between fourteen and twenty four from the range and backgrounds and circumstances in Britain and found issues that concerned them covered the broad political agenda. Scholars are of the opinion that young people are turning away from conventional politics and political institutions rather than politics per se.
- Young people may not be enthused by party politics and conventional forms of politics but they display high involvement in single issues of politics . (Sloam2007)

- Foucault 1969 focus on the use of power and its relation to knowledge directs attention to how politics features in everyday interactions and practices where there can be protest, struggle and resistance to dominant power holders so between the governing and the governed.
- White et al 2000 found young people consistently referred to their feelings of powerlessness and limited opportunity from them to engage in (conventional) politics
- Foucault's conceptualization of power and politics offers a way of understanding forms of political protest in which young people resist and subvert authority and economic and cultural constraints while pursuing their interests and expressing their identities

- Civil Rights Movement 1960
- Students protest 1968 against Vietnam War
- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 1957
- Apartheid in South Africa
- The context of new technologies is significantly contributing to spread ideas of social movements within national boundaries and also across them internationally. Most young people are ICT literate and because of this there is great interest in using new technologies as a mechanism of government and organizations to extend their reach to otherwise disengaged youth (Collin 2008)
- Collin has noted that new technologies may also be significant in shaping new types of youth engagement in politics.

- The internet is a unique and autonomous platform for the realization of project based political identities and it is legitimizing space for new political practices of young people.
- Today in the politics of India, only the elderly are dominated and only a few young people are in politics.
- In politics, the feeling of patriotism has been replaced by familism, casteism and sect.

- Youth can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and they have undoubtedly, throughout history, participated, contributed, and even catalyzed important changes in political systems, power-sharing dynamics and economic opportunities.
- Young men and women are traditionally active politically in universities (when allowed) but very often disillusioned with political leadership and political institutions and excluded from policy development. As a result, political activism of youth is not organized according to formal groupings.



- Participation of all citizens in formal political processes is fundamental for democracy.
- Although young people participate in political processes in multiple ways, their representation in formal political processes is limited.
- As a first step in fostering increased youth inclusion, participation, and representation in electoral processes, Electoral Management Body (EMBs) could employ young people across all levels of their organization, including in their strategic planning

- Another way of fostering youth inclusion, participation, and representation in electoral processes is for EMBs to support youth-focused and youth-led organizations, and to partner with CSOs and other electoral stakeholders that empower youth.
- Constitutional and legal frameworks remain some of the strongest tools to develop and mandate youth-friendly electoral policies and practices. Well-crafted legislation can support targeted structural interventions that foster inclusivity for young people and other groups.
- Political parties should be more inclusive of young people.

- The idea of a distinct category known as “youth” is a rather contemporary phenomenon. Youth are neither a homogenous group – being diverse in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, abilities, and identification with and membership of a minority group (such as LGBTQI) – nor a static one; there are always people joining the cohort or leaving it.
- Furthermore, a large number of young women and men are living in conflict areas and are highly represented among displaced persons.
- There is no consensus about who qualifies as youth. The UN defines youth as between the ages of 15 and 24, and the UNSC Resolution 2250 defines youth as between the ages of 18 and 29.

- Despite it being difficult to speak about “youth”, given the above, statistically they are at the highest risk of social exclusion, and many young people face barriers to accessing, enjoying or exercising their human rights, including their political rights.
- Youth is not only defined by age, it is also a socio-cultural term that is defined in some cultures as a life phase marked at the beginning and end by certain biological or socio-cultural experiences. This can play into and is contextually relevant to the political sphere in some cultures.

- young people participate in political processes in multiple ways, their representation in formal political processes is limited.
- As a first step in fostering increased youth inclusion, participation, and representation in electoral processes, EMBs could employ young people across all levels of their organization, including in their strategic planning.
- EMBs to support youth-focused and youth-led organizations, and to partner with CSOs and other electoral stakeholders that empower youth.
- keeping reliable data on youth participation, including through youth-led data collection
- making registration processes as convenient and appealing as possible for all youth, especially for first-time voters exploring options to counter youth-specific obstacles to voting (and identifying obstacles to voting/participation as a first step to countering obstacles) and by fostering safe and inclusive spaces for youth

- Constitutional and legal frameworks remain some of the strongest tools to develop and mandate youth-friendly electoral policies and practices.
- Strong party youth wings can also provide a voice and connections for young people entering the political and electoral cycle.
- active youth players are a positive channel through which parties can reach out to a youth cohort.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The core principle for meaningful and effective youth political participation is “nothing about us without us.”

- Genuine
- Respectful and rights-based
- Transparent
- Accountable
- Youth friendly, relevant and purposeful
- Inclusive
- Flexible and open to innovation
- Capacity-developing
- Sustainable
- Voluntary and safe

# Youth as Agents for Change

- Youth are taking to the streets and using online social networks and communities to connect, express their voices, and campaign for change.
- They are protesting against authoritarian regimes, corruption, and inequalities. They are fighting for sustainable development and a better future for current and new generations.



# Young people and voting

- 900 million eligible voters, 45 million voters under the age of 25, 15 million first time voters.
- youth voter participation, as indicated by the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, suggests that the youth do vote as there was increased participation of first-time voters across the country, along with a heightened interest in political activity amongst the youth through student forums and youth networks. 2019 observed that West Bengal has recorded the highest number of first-time voters in the country. Data showed that 20.6 lakh youth voters (specifically in the group of 18 to 20 years) voted in West Bengal, followed by 20.3 lakh in Rajasthan, 16.7 lakh in Uttar Pradesh, 13.6 lakh in Madhya Pradesh, and 11.9 lakh in Maharashtra.

# Young people in political decision-making positions

- Globally, youth participation and representation in institutional political processes and policy-making is relatively low.
- People under the age of 35 are rarely found in parliaments, public administration, and decision-making bodies such as committees on peacebuilding and constitution building. In one-third of countries, eligibility for the national parliament starts at 25 years or higher (as high as 45 in some places).
- Even when the voting age is 18 years of age, eligibility to be a candidate is often higher.

# Young people in political parties

- While in the past political engagement of citizens was mainly channelled through activism in political parties (membership, voluntary work, door-door campaigning, attending meetings etc.), the last decade has shown that political parties are facing difficulties in attracting new party members, and in particular young people.
- The 2016 UN Global Youth Report shows that political party membership is less prevalent among those under the age of 30 than among older adults. Only 4.1 percent of 18–29-year-olds are active party members, compared with 5 percent of all adults.

# The importance of youth participation in formal political processes

- To make a difference in the longer term, it is essential that young people are engaged in formal political processes and have a say in formulating today's and tomorrow's politics.
- Inclusive political participation is not only a fundamental political and democratic right but also is crucial to building stable and peaceful societies and developing policies that respond to the specific needs of younger generations.
- For young people to be adequately represented in political institutions, processes, and decision-making, and in particular in elections, they must know their rights and be given the necessary knowledge and capacity to participate in a meaningful way at all levels.

## obstacles to youth political participation

### Obstacles at the structural level-

- Age requirements to vote or run for office
- Increased costs for candidate nomination and campaigning and the lack of political finance regulations make it even more difficult for youth to start a political career.
- Social and cultural traditions disadvantaged.
- Young women are in many countries subject to “double discrimination” based on their age and gender

- **Obstacles at the individual level**
- Distrust in political institutions
- Lack of access to/knowledge about political processes
- Lack of confidence and trust in EMBs. The composition of EMB leadership is in many countries a controversial issue. If stakeholders, political parties, do not agree with the composition of an EMB, there is an increased risk that they will boycott the elections and demotivate citizens from participating, which can lead to a low voter turnout.
- Social and economic exclusion/marginalization

- ## Obstacles at the organizational level

- Inadequate or ineffective youth policies of EMBs, political parties and parliaments are factors in the limited participation of young people in formal politics.
- Limited data on youth political participation
- Provisions for youth involvement are often grouped with other underrepresented groups such as minorities, indigenous peoples, women, and disabled people. As a result, EMBs do not adequately profile their initiatives targeting youth.
- youth initiatives are mostly tied to voter education initiatives, which are strengthened and supported when elections are drawing closer yet are abandoned or ignored after elections are held.
- Youth engagement projects are not always seen as a priority. As a result, already scarce funds available for the organization of elections are often diverted to other areas of work.

# Legislation that affects the environment for youth political participation

- Citizen political participation requires an enabling legal environment, one that includes social and political freedoms guaranteed in democracies.
- In autocratic, developing and/or politically fragile countries, **civic space is shrinking**; there are an increasing number of countries restricting civic engagement by enacting laws that restrict freedom of expression and movement.
- This has a serious impact on citizen participation in political and electoral processes, especially for youth, who often use non-formal methods of participation, such as activism.



- Restrictions on expression, assembly and association limit the freedom of citizens to demonstrate peacefully, to engage in political dialogue, and to criticize politicians and candidates.
- The ability to share and access information and to document human rights abuses or irregularities in governmental and election processes, is fundamental to a healthy democracy.
- Internet suspension during election

# Informal participation

- Youth are more inclined to participate in informal processes than in formal political and electoral ones. Activism, protests, and campaigns are common avenues; youth are often driving forces behind reform movements.
- In the current world and throughout history, there are many examples of powerful youth-led protest movements. Youth also tend to get involved in civic, service-oriented activities, such as volunteering for a social cause.
- Many young people are more inclined to join a tree-planting project, for example, than to join a political party talking about planting trees in the future.
- Both formal and informal engagement can be understood as political participation. Both can be beneficial for a vivid and resilient democracy. In some cases, it is important to help bridge gaps between the two.

# Participation beyond formal electoral processes

- Beyond formal political and electoral processes and structures there are a number of ways young people can be actively involved in **decision-making processes** and institutions that affect their environment and their lives within it.
- These include structures that enable youth to provide inputs and influence policy-making processes and structures that enable youth to learn about policy-making processes, such as:
  - national youth councils
  - youth parliaments (local, national, regional, international)
  - local processes that feed into policy-making processes (e.g. youth mayors)

- forums (local, national, regional, international)
- peace processes (in post-conflict contexts)
- participatory or structured social dialogues and youth observatories
- participatory planning (e.g. budgeting and budget advocacy), monitoring (e.g. social audits, community score cards, and other citizens' oversight mechanisms) and research
- youth consultations and panels
- opinion polls, online surveys/consultations, and petitions
- civil society organizations.

# Meaningful youth political participation

Effective and meaningful youth political participation has one of three attributes-

- First, it can be consultative, where young people's voices are heard in an adult-assigned consultation process, where they have capacities, a mandate and information to fully perform their roles, or through a youth-led advocacy initiative.
- Second, it can entail youth-led participation, where young people have a direct impact on decision-making within their own youth communities, such as through youth-led NGOs, student councils, and youth parliaments with competencies and budgets.
- Third, it can involve youth collaborative participation, where young people effectively take part in regular political decision-making processes, including as voters, or as members of parliament, political parties, or advocacy groups.

# Strategies to enhance meaningful and effective youth political participation

1. Be grounded in a rights-based approach to youth political participation and avoid tokenistic and pseudo-participatory activities.
2. Include direct components of consultative, youth-led, and/or collaborative participation, and emphasize learning-by doing and practice-what-you-preach approaches.
3. Meet minimum standards for youth political participation by being transparent, respectful, accountable, youth-friendly, and relevant, inclusive, voluntary, and safe.
4. Include capacity development on the individual and the organizational level, and foster enabling environments, preferably in a reciprocal fashion (such as by developing skills for a reformed structural setting).
5. Be grounded in an accurate understanding of the current state of youth in a given context.