

Key intervention: Empowering youth for social justice

Thematic Area of the Coalition	<p><i>Expanding access to and capabilities for productive and freely chosen employment and sustainable enterprises</i></p> <p>This area of work centres on the promotion of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, decent work and productivity growth. The aim of partners contributing to this thematic area is to empower businesses, particularly SMEs, and workers with the skills, technologies and resources necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing world, while ensuring fairness, equity and access to opportunities, particularly for youth and women and to accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG targets 8.5 and 8.6. Key actions include promoting access to lifelong learning and skills development, harnessing the power of digitalization and AI for the common good and sustainable development, and developing formalization strategies along with other active labour market policies.</p>
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1. Background and context

Empowering Youth for social justice is a key intervention that aims to enhance opportunities for young people, including through decent work, skills development and entrepreneurship. By consolidating existing initiatives focusing on youth empowerment, it seeks to foster collective engagement, policy coherence and impact.

The intervention aims to boost youth engagement and participation in global, regional and national debate, particularly within the UN Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, a multi-stakeholder alliance of over 90 organizations committed to scaling up impact and expanding country-level action on youth employment (including in the areas of decent work creation, skills development and entrepreneurship) through partnerships, evidence-based policies and effective interventions.

The Coalition will provide the opportunity to scale up youth engagement through the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. To be able to do so, the intervention will facilitate the role of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth as knowledge, thought leadership, and implementation arm of the Coalition on youth-related issues to bring the voices of young people to the Coalition and support youth-related evidence and knowledge, in alignment with the priorities of the Coalition.

2. Collective ambition and rationale

Despite improvements in youth unemployment and levels of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET's), trends have not been universal, and disparities persists across regions and genders. With uncertain times ahead, the well-being of youth is a growing concern.¹ Today, evidence-based advocacy and action around the [2012 Call for Action](#), the [Youth Employment Action Plan 2020-30](#), and the growing impact of the [Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#) have led to improved knowledge about what works in youth employment. Yet, more work is required to

¹ ILO, [Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024](#).

guarantee the scale, depth and innovation needed to boost labour market outcomes of young people in a sustained manner.

In this context and in alignment with the Coalition's priority of expanding access to and capabilities for productive and freely chosen employment and sustainable enterprises, this intervention will leverage the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth's alliance and thematic expertise to achieve the following objective:

Young people are empowered to contribute to social justice by actively participating in and influencing social, economic and political systems connected to the world of work in ways that promote fairness, equality and the well-being of all.

With regard to the 2030 Agenda, the intervention will expand advocacy around youth employment, inviting decisive action for more and better jobs for youth, with young people, connecting directly to SDG indicators 8.5.1, 8.6.1, and 8.b.1.

By strengthening the connection between the Coalition and the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, the intervention will ensure coordination and alignment of youth employment initiatives with a social justice lens through giving young people a voice and power.² Furthermore, the Coalition will enhance the visibility and value proposition of Decent Jobs for Youth, leading to greater political and financial support for youth employment policies and programmes, including through the mobilization of resources and expertise from a wide range of partners and as a result of meaningfully engaging young people.

3. Actions and expected results

Overarching objective: Young people actively participate in and influence social, economic and political systems connected to the world of work in ways that promote fairness, equality and the well-being of all.

Outcomes:

1. Young people, especially those from marginalized communities, integrate their perspectives on advancing the goals of the Global Coalition for Social Justice.
2. Governments and social partners are informed on latest youth employment trends and research, including evidence on young people's work aspirations and perceptions.
3. Inter- and intra-generational exchange of experiences and knowledge on innovations and actions supporting productive employment and decent work for youth are fostered along with gender equality, rights, standards, and voice and representation.
4. Concrete commitments for impactful action and partnerships to promote decent jobs for youth globally are generated.

Outputs:

² The Coalition's holistic approach to social justice, which includes economic, social and environmental dimensions, ensures that youth employment strategies are comprehensive and sustainable.

1. The ILO Global Youth Employment Forum is delivered in 2025 with and for young people under the overarching theme of “Youth Employment for Social Justice”.
2. The Forum, third of its kind, will bring together over 100 young people, aged 18-29, from across the globe, representing different regions, gender, ethnicities and backgrounds. Participants will include representatives from governments, social partners, UN and other multilateral organizations, private sector and foundations, civil society, academia and regional institutions. It will serve as an opportunity for youth-led and intergenerational dialogues on strategies for decent work for youth and prompt youth-led recommendations addressed to the ILO Director-General. The Forum will mobilize (young) journalists and bloggers to report on the youth-led solutions and invite further investments in youth employment.
3. The Youth Empowered for Social Justice webinar series is launched in 2025 as part of the YouthForesight Knowledge Facility to engage young changemakers, youth-led organizations and Coalition partners in thematic discussions for the promotion of decent jobs for youth.
4. The webinar series will feature latest research by the ILO and Decent Jobs for Youth partners on the promotion of youth employment. It will also shed light and prompt intergenerational discussions about career paths and labour market outcomes for youth based on the Youth Employment Barometer, an initiative set in [Our Common Agenda](#), in support of Member States’ efforts and under the aegis of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. The webinar series will also open up an opportunity for young people to provide ideas to advance the goals of the Coalition, including by mobilizing other young changemakers and youth-led organizations.
5. Youth Networks for Social Justice are nurtured or established over the next three years, building on the lessons learned from the ILO’s Africa Youth Network for Social Justice and the *“Ideatón por la justicia social”* conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2024.
6. The network will allow in-depth conversations with young people about the nexus between social justice and decent work and invite innovative ideas and solutions to ensure a meaningful engagement of young people in the promotion of social justice. The ILO will draw strategic opportunities to bring the youth voices on social justice in key platforms, such as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum and the World Summit for Social Development.

4. Partners’ contributions

Partners of the Coalition can contribute in a variety of impactful ways to empower youth for social justice, including by:

1. Integrating youth perspectives and the meaningful engagement of young people in social dialogue and policy debates. This ensures that the unique challenges and aspirations of young people are considered in decision-making processes connected to the world of work.
2. Actively promoting the Global Youth Employment Forum, webinar series and other events, including through the participation of their youth representatives, which ultimately will empower youth and enrich the discussions with diverse viewpoints and experiences.
3. Financially sponsoring young people to attend the Forum, therefore ensuring that a wide range of voices are heard, including those from under-represented or marginalized communities.

4. Sharing their expertise, tools and data, which can be added as knowledge resources in the YouthForesight Knowledge Facility and lead to further discussions at the Forum and Webinar series. This in-kind support helps build a robust knowledge base that can inform future initiatives and policies.
5. Disseminating youth-led recommendations emerging from the Forum, including through reports, publications, and digital platforms, ensuring that the learnings reach a broader audience and have a lasting impact.
6. Joining forces to create and support advocacy campaigns that highlight the importance of youth employment and social justice. These campaigns can leverage the momentum generated by the Forum to drive policy changes and public awareness.
7. Collaborating on the development of policy recommendations, therefore ensuring that the outcomes of the Forum are translated into actionable strategies that influence national and international policies.
8. Contributing financially to support various aspects of the Forum, from logistical arrangements to funding research and publications. This financial backing is essential to the sustainability and success of the Forum.