

Agenda 21 – Chapter 25

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 25.1. Youth comprise nearly 30 per cent of the world's population. The involvement of today's youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical to the long-term success of Agenda 21.

PROGRAMME AREAS

A. Advancing the role of youth and actively involving them in the protection of the environment and the promotion of economic and social development

Basis for action

- 25.2. It is imperative that youth from all parts of the world participate actively in all relevant levels of decision-making processes because it affects their lives today and has implications for their futures. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account.
- 25.3. Numerous actions and recommendations within the international community have been proposed to ensure that youth are provided a secure and healthy future, including an environment of quality, improved standards of living and access to education and employment. These issues need to be addressed in development planning.

Objectives

- 25.4. Each country should, in consultation with its youth communities, establish a process to promote dialogue between the youth community and Government at all levels and to establish mechanisms that permit youth access to information and provide them with the opportunity to present their perspectives on government decisions, including the implementation of Agenda 21.
- 25.5. Each country, by the year 2000, should ensure that more than 50 per cent of its youth, gender balanced, are enrolled in or have access to appropriate secondary education or equivalent educational or vocational training programmes by increasing participation and access rates on an annual basis.
- 25.6. Each country should undertake initiatives aimed at reducing current levels of youth unemployment, particularly where they are disproportionately high in comparison to the overall unemployment rate.
- 25.7. Each country and the United Nations should support the promotion and creation of mechanisms to involve youth representation in all United Nations processes in order to influence those processes.
- 25.8. Each country should combat human rights abuses against young people, particularly young women and girls, and should consider providing all youth with legal protection, skills, opportunities and the support necessary for them to fulfil their personal, economic and social aspirations and potentials.

Activities

- 25.9. Governments, according to their strategies, should take measures to:
- a. Establish procedures allowing for consultation and possible participation of youth of both genders, by 1993, in decision-making processes with regard to the environment, involving youth at the local, national and regional levels;
 - b. Promote dialogue with youth organizations regarding the drafting and evaluation of environment plans and programmes or questions on development;

- c. Consider for incorporation into relevant policies the recommendations of international, regional and local youth conferences and other forums that offer youth perspectives on social and economic development and resource management;
 - d. Ensure access for all youth to all types of education, wherever appropriate, providing alternative learning structures, ensure that education reflects the economic and social needs of youth and incorporates the concepts of environmental awareness and sustainable development throughout the curricula; and expand vocational training, implementing innovative methods aimed at increasing practical skills, such as environmental scouting;
 - e. In cooperation with relevant ministries and organizations, including representatives of youth, develop and implement strategies for creating alternative employment opportunities and provide required training to young men and women;
 - f. Establish task forces that include youth and youth non-governmental organizations to develop educational and awareness programmes specifically targeted to the youth population on critical issues pertaining to youth. These task forces should use formal and non-formal educational methods to reach a maximum audience. National and local media, non-governmental organizations, businesses and other organizations should assist in these task forces;
 - g. Give support to programmes, projects, networks, national organizations and youth non-governmental organizations to examine the integration of programmes in relation to their project requirements, encouraging the involvement of youth in project identification, design, implementation and follow-up;
 - h. Include youth representatives in their delegations to international meetings, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted in 1968, 1977, 1985 and 1989.
- 25.10. The United Nations and international organizations with youth programmes should take measures to:
- a. Review their youth programmes and consider how coordination between them can be enhanced;
 - b. Improve the dissemination of relevant information to governments, youth organizations and other non-governmental organizations on current youth positions and activities, and monitor and evaluate the application of Agenda 21;
 - c. Promote the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Youth Year and collaborate with youth representatives in the administration of it, focusing particularly on the needs of youth from developing countries.

Means of implementation

Financing and cost evaluation

- 25.11. The Conference secretariat has estimated the average total annual cost (1993-2000) of implementing the activities of this programme to be about \$1.5 million on grant or concessional terms. These are indicative and order-of-magnitude estimates only and have not been reviewed by Governments. Actual costs and financial terms, including any that are non-concessional, will depend upon, inter alia, the specific strategies and programmes Governments decide upon for implementation.

B. Children in sustainable development

Basis for action

25.12. Children not only will inherit the responsibility of looking after the Earth, but in many developing countries they comprise nearly half the population. Furthermore, children in both developing and industrialized countries are highly vulnerable to the effects of environmental degradation. They are also highly aware supporters of environmental thinking. The specific interests of children need to be taken fully into account in the participatory process on environment and development in order to safeguard the future sustainability of any actions taken to improve the environment.

Objectives

- 25.13. National governments, according to their policies, should take measures to:
- a. Ensure the survival, protection and development of children, in accordance with the goals endorsed by the 1990 World Summit for Children (A/45/625, annex);
 - b. Ensure that the interests of children are taken fully into account in the participatory process for sustainable development and environmental improvement.

Activities

- 25.14. Governments should take active steps to:
- a. Implement programmes for children designed to reach the child-related goals of the 1990s in the areas of environment and development, especially health, nutrition, education, literacy and poverty alleviation;
 - b. Ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, annex), at the earliest moment and implement it by addressing the basic needs of youth and children;
 - c. Promote primary environmental care activities that address the basic needs of communities, improve the environment for children at the household and community level and encourage the participation and empowerment of local populations, including women, youth, children and indigenous people, towards the objective of integrated community management of resources, especially in developing countries;
 - d. Expand educational opportunities for children and youth, including education for environmental and developmental responsibility, with overriding attention to the education of the girl child;
 - e. Mobilize communities through schools and local health centres so that children and their parents become effective focal points for sensitization of communities to environmental issues;
 - f. Establish procedures to incorporate children's concerns into all relevant policies and strategies for environment and development at the local, regional and national levels, including those concerning allocation of and entitlement to natural resources, housing and recreation needs, and control of pollution and toxicity in both rural and urban areas.
- 25.15. International and regional organizations should cooperate and coordinate in the proposed areas. UNICEF should maintain cooperation and collaboration with other organizations of the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations to develop programmes for children and programmes to mobilize children in the activities outlined above.

Means of implementation

(a) Financing and cost evaluation

25.16. Financing requirements for most of the activities are included in estimates for other programmes.

(b) Human resource development and capacity-building

25.17. . The activities should facilitate capacity-building and training activities already contained in other chapters of Agenda 21.