YOUTH2030
WORKING WITH AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

What works to amplify the rights and voices of youth in education and employment?

Lessons from the meta-synthesis of United Nations evaluations to advance the United Nations Youth Strategy

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Inter-agency meta-synthesis of lessons learned

- Third exercise in a series of meta-syntheses focused on capturing lessons learned on the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy

- Identifies proven strategies, effective approaches and common challenges across United Nations youth interventions in education, skills development, and economic empowerment through decent work
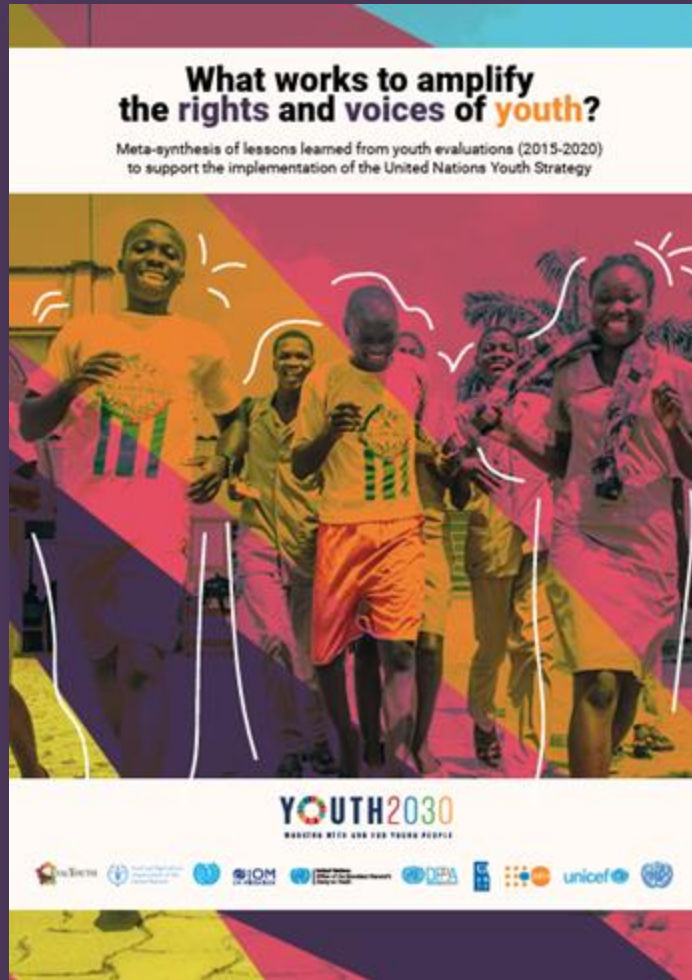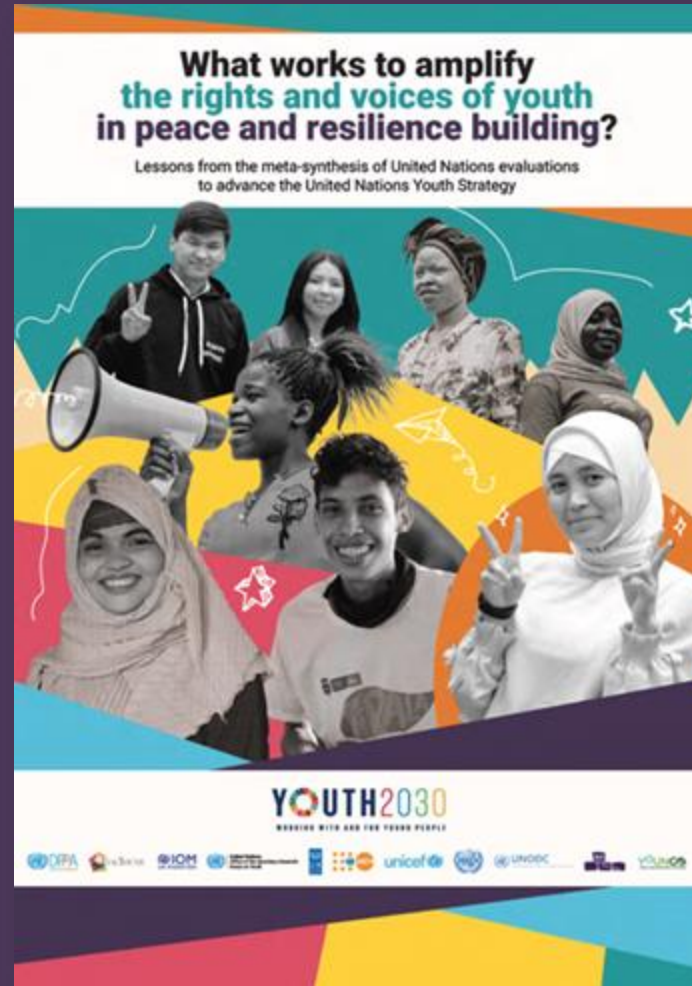
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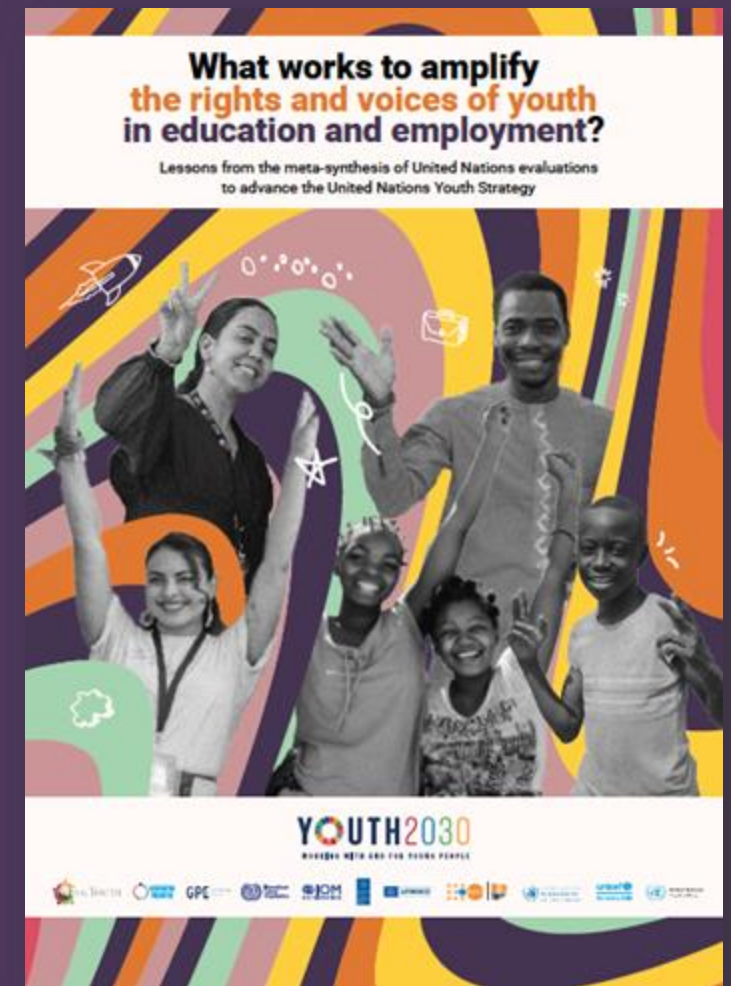
First meta-synthesis

Second meta-synthesis

Third meta-synthesis

Purpose, objectives and scope

Purpose

- To generate evidence-based learning on what works, what does not work in the past implementation of Priority 2 and 3 of Youth 2030, on quality education and economic empowerment through decent work

Objectives

- Identify common themes, patterns, and variances related to the implementation of priority areas

- Draw insights around implementations' effectiveness, enabling factors, and barriers, across different contexts, settings and populations

- Generate lessons to advance the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy

Scope

- Covers 2015 to 2023

Methodology

Participatory and consultative approach

11 UN agencies

Synthesis questions around priority areas of UN Youth Strategy

Youth and education
Youth and employment

Evaluation identification

298 evaluation reports: 64% employment only;
22% education only; 14% both.

Methodology

**Theory-based, AI-enabled with human-in-the-loop, aligned with
UNEG Ethical Principles for Harnessing AI in UN Evaluations**

Conceptual framework
Based on context, mechanisms, outcomes

Systematic coding
Improved efficiency and reduced biases

Iterative process
AI enabled with human-in-the loop
(thematic expert) approach

AI support
Text mining, topic modeling, LLM

Key Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Targeted interventions for specific disadvantaged groups, such as girls and young women, effectively reduce gender disparities in education and employment by addressing the specific barriers hindering their access to learning. For broader impact, similar tailored approaches should be applied to other at-risk youth groups, addressing their unique challenges and needs.

Lesson 2: Successful interventions rely on cross-sector collaboration and holistic approaches that integrate education, health, and initiatives combining life skills and vocational training with comprehensive support systems to enhance youth employability and personal development.

Lesson 3: Tailoring educational programmes to local contexts, especially in remote areas, significantly improves access, enrolment, and learning outcomes for youth, particularly girls, by aligning with cultural and geographical realities.

Lesson 4: Long-term success requires a balanced approach that combines both direct youth support and upstream strategies, including robust policy advocacy, institutional strengthening, legal protections for young people, and child labour restrictions. These elements are critical to sustain and scale interventions, particularly for eliminating child labour and promoting decent work.

Lesson 1: Targeted interventions and tailored approaches for specific disadvantaged groups

- Recognize context-specific challenges and cultural norms

- Address specific barriers faced by disadvantaged youth

- Inclusive and equitable access addressing unique needs of youth ⮕ diversity, social and economic gaps, broad societal benefits, community strengthening, resilience

Illustrative example: Joint Programme on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education (UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Women)

- The intervention focused on enhancing education for adolescent girls and young women in Afghanistan

- In conflict affected areas, establishing community-based schools increased girls' enrollment by reducing travel barriers, ensuring safer learning environments

- The intervention not only improved educational access but also empowered girls' participation in community life

Lesson 2: Cross-sector collaboration and holistic approaches to enhance youth employability and personal development

- Ensure integration of education, health, and labour sectors to enhance impact

- Holistic approach combining life skills and vocational training with health, social services, education show better employment outcomes

- Multifaceted support that bridges gap between job supply and demand, foster access to finance, and alignment with market needs

Illustrative example: UNICEF Life Skills Education

- Cross-sectoral programme in India, focusing on personal, professional, and practical skills

- Integrated reproductive health, decision-making, and communication into the curriculum

- Enriched educational experience, students equipped with the practical skills for personal and professional development

Lesson 3: **Tailoring educational programmes to local and cultural realities**

- Adaptability and flexibility in programme design for culturally relevant solutions

- Addressing unique needs of local communities improves access, enrolment, and learning outcomes for youth

- Co-design intervention with communities ▢ relevance and sustainability

Illustrative example: UNICEF community-based education model in rural Ethiopia

- Contextualizing and customizing youth interventions with community-based models for youth education, in remote rural Ethiopian areas, targeting children in pastoralist regions

- Alternative Basic Education Centres (ABECs) used a curriculum to fit the pastoralist lifestyle

- Multifaceted approach: community mobilization, awareness-raising, life skills education, vocational training, peer support networks, and collaboration with religious and community leaders

- Increased enrolment rates and improved cognitive development among youth.

Lesson 4: Balanced approach combining direct youth support and upstream strategies for long-term success

- Upstream efforts to support policy advocacy, legal protections, and institutional strengthening can also address root causes like child labour and creates lasting change

- Partnerships with government bodies and the private sector strengthen value chains and market systems foster enabling environments for youth and sustainable outcomes

Illustrative example: Promoting Decent Youth Employment in Cambodia (ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNIDO)

- Advocacy for comprehensive skills and decent employment, and institutional engagement beyond demand-driven skills

- Include soft skills, green, and digital skills; advocacy for community-based enterprise development as a standard entrepreneurship curriculum (TVET system); and education on working conditions, employment contracts, social protection benefits, and employer obligations

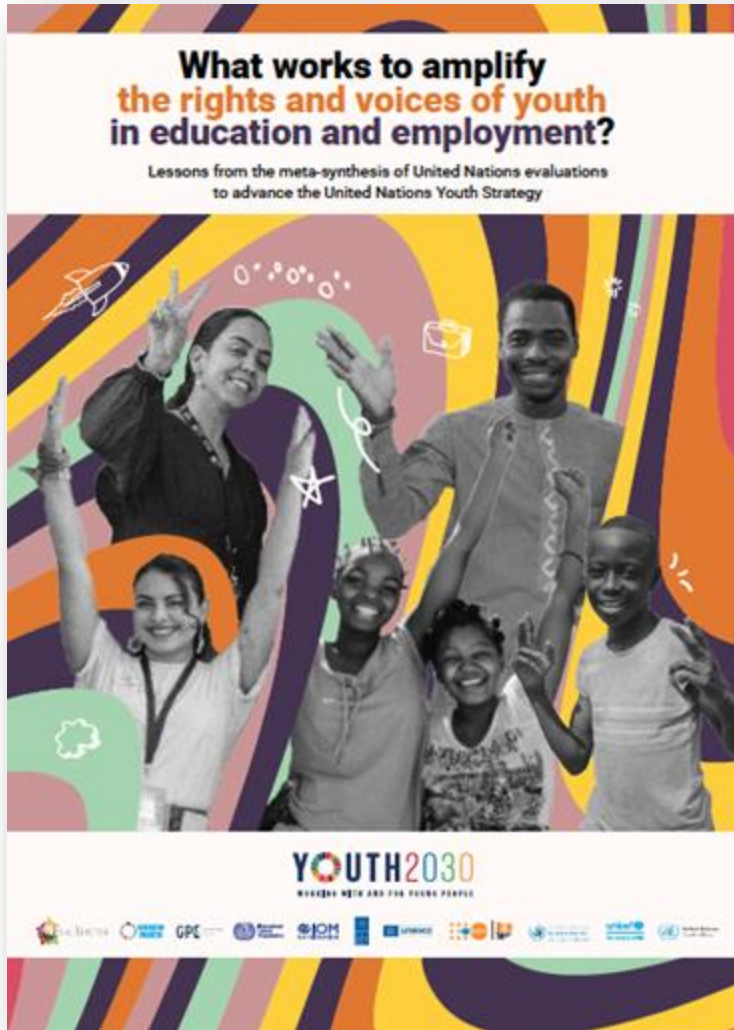- Holistic approach to youth employment that was able to sustain and scale positive outcomes

The road ahead

Ensure contextual flexibility: Adaptable to specific needs, challenges, and opportunities of diverse groups of young people; understand realities (social, economic, cultural, and environmental); customize interventions to fit specific cultural and geographical context

Youth leaders must be meaningfully engaged in the design and implementation of programmes: Intentionally include diverse insights, expectations, and experiences of youth, systemically addressing unique factors of exclusion and discrimination

Develop holistic and multi-sectoral interventions with strategic partnerships: Collaboration and cooperation with governments, the private sector, civil society, and youth organizations

Youth development must be youth-led: active participation in programme design and implementation to improve relevance, inclusion, impact, and reduce uncertainty and future challenges.

#Eval4Youth

Access the meta-synthesis

- Report
- Lessons summary (EN, FR, SP)
- Brief video
- Annexes, including AI-enabled methodology

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