



A YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE UNCCD



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Of the world's 7.7 billion people, about 1.2 billion are below the age of 25 years. 1 billion of these young people live in developing countries, in regions that are directly dependent on land and natural resources for sustenance. Land degradation is one of the most pressing environmental problems that this generation faces today, with 25% of global land area already degraded. Food systems are the largest employer of young people, particularly in the Global South, yet they often do not provide decent and meaningful work or adequate livelihood opportunities, nor maintain a balance between the needs and rights of different generations.

Youth engagement in land restoration is essential, both for rural and urban youth. Further, despite their collective vulnerability as a generation, young people must not be considered a homogenous group. Subsets of highly vulnerable youth- particularly indigenous youth, young women, and youth from marginalized communities- face unique challenges due to land degradation which must be addressed through targeted initiatives.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the only legally binding framework set up to address desertification and the effects of drought. This makes it key for the Convention to engage youth in its work. Young people face unique yet interconnected barriers for engaging in UNCCD's mandate for land restoration. These include:

1. **Limited Access to Land and Land Tenure:** Young people who want to engage in independent food production often have no access to land while still young, even if their parents are smallholders, and experience higher levels of land tenure insecurity.
2. **Limited Access to Finance and Financial Inclusion:** Given their limited experience with financial transactions as well as lack of collateral, youth are often considered by banks or other financial institutions as risky clients, and youth in developing countries still depend mainly on informal financial services.
3. **Limited Knowledge, Information, and Capacity:** The skill set required for successful farming- particularly in land restoration- is rapidly evolving, and youth have limited access to this information and capacity building. There is often a mismatch between the education provided by traditional school curricula and the types of practical skills required to be successful in the agribusiness sector.
4. **Limited Access to Market and Value-Chains:** Young entrepreneurs face difficulty accessing commercial channels to market their products, and linkages with other parts of the value chain (eg. processors, exporters) and usually rely on informal linkages.
5. **Limited Access to Participation in Governance and Policymaking:** Poor representation and lack of dedicated spaces for youth leaves them with little capacity (which is built over time) and motivation (which is gained through trust) to engage in local, national, and international policy processes.

UNCCD has several initiatives that support and empower youth in sustainable land management, such as the UNCCD Youth Caucus, the Land Heroes campaign, the Capacity

Building Marketplace, and supports the Decent Jobs for Youth initiative. While these initiatives are a good step forward in meaningful youth engagement, there is scope to increase their impact through alleviation of key barriers. These may include lack of a clear mandate and scarcity of resources for the Youth Caucus, and for the Land Heroes a lack of engagement with national focal points, lack of funding and fundraising capacity for projects, and lack of capacity to understand technical language used in the Convention.

In May 2022, the 15th session of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the UNCCD requested the UNCCD Secretariat to design a Youth Engagement Strategy (YES). Accordingly, this strategy has been developed through a combination of desk research of existing initiatives, and consultations with many relevant organizations and stakeholders. This strategy aims to ensure youth are invited to participate in UNCCD decision-making processes, regarded as essential stakeholders in the work of the UNCCD, and empowered to create opportunities for sustained engagement. It is envisioned to be implemented through actions at all levels, from local to global, with the support of UNCCD entities, partners, and other relevant stakeholders.

The UNCCD YES will strive to achieve for youth meaningful engagement in UNCCD processes and implementation, secure and stable livelihoods, inclusive land governance and tenure security, and communication for translating awareness into advocacy and action. These priority outcomes will be achieved through action along four focus areas, which will be enabling levers to achieve these outcomes. These are:

1. **Capacity Building and Networking:** Building young people's knowledge and skills in sustainable land management in ways that are accessible to disadvantaged and marginalized youth, and enabling youth to connect with each other to collaborate.
2. **Meaningful Participation and Partnership:** Mainstreaming spaces and avenues for youth to participate in a form that influences decision-making and partnering with young people the ground to offer support and opportunity for collaboration.
3. **Dedicated Financial and Technical Support:** Setting aside dedicated resources to support initiatives led by young people, and offering their initiatives technical support to enhance design, implementation, fundraising, monitoring, and scaling.
4. **Advancing Youth-Focused Policies:** Ensuring policies that govern land management are drafted in consultation with youth, and address their vulnerabilities particularly around access to land, markets, and representation in policymaking.

1. INTRODUCTION

Land degradation is one of the most pressing environmental problems that this generation faces today, with 25% of global land area already degraded. Rising pressure on land resources due to increasing population, levels of consumption, and unsustainable food systems is contributing drastically to climate change and decreasing our resilience to impacts of a worsening climate. Unless we change how we manage soil, 95% of the Earth's land area could become degraded by 2050- by which time the world population is projected to rise to 9.7 billion from 7.7 billion today¹.

Globally, 3.2 billion people- 40% of world's population- are affected by land degradation, especially rural communities, smallholder farmers, and the very poor. It accelerates climate change and biodiversity loss, and contributes to droughts, wildfires, forced migration and the emergence of zoonotic infectious diseases². Land degradation is happening at an alarming pace, contributing to a dramatic decline in the productivity of croplands and rangelands worldwide. The problem is particularly severe in dryland landscapes- 40% of world's area and supporting 2 billion people- which are most vulnerable to the impacts of land degradation and drought. The vast majority of people who depend on drylands live in developing countries³.

Of the world's 7.7 billion people, about 1.2 billion are below the age of 25 years⁴. 1 billion of these young people live in developing countries, in regions that are directly dependent on land and natural resources for sustenance⁵. Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America house more than half of the world's youth yet experience high levels of land degradation and desertification. The global youth population is projected to rise considerably in the coming decades, peaking at 1.4 billion in 2060. The main drivers of this growth are expected to be the least developed – and poorest – countries. Sub-Saharan African countries are forecasted to be the main source for this youth demographic bulge, with an estimated increase of 89% in their youth population taking place by 2060⁶.

Today's young generation is the largest in history. They will inherit the lasting effects of environmental degradation and climate change, due in large part to the way we manage land

¹ Global Environment Facility. 2022. "Land Degradation | GEF." [Www.thegef.org](https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/land-degradation). 2022.

<https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/land-degradation>

² UNCCD. (n.d.). High-Level dialogue on desertification, land degradation and drought.

<https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/stories/high-level-dialogue-desertification-land-degradation-and-drought>

³ Global Environment Facility. 2022. "Land Degradation | GEF." [Www.thegef.org](https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/land-degradation). 2022.

<https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/land-degradation>

⁴ Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda | United Nations For Youth. 2019.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-youth-report/wyr2020.html>

⁵ IFAD. 2019. Creating Opportunities for Rural Youth. <https://www.ifad.org/ruraldevelopmentreport/>

⁶ United Nations. 2019. World Population Prospects 2019.

https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019_Highlights.pdf

and produce food⁷. This adds a somber note to the phrase: “Youth are the future”. The future of today’s youth is shadowed with the certainty of climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and worsening inequality. The severity and scale of these impacts in their future will directly depend on the action we can take as a society today to transform these systems- in partnership with young people.

Today’s youth face dire challenges in the labor market, which brings increased vulnerabilities that can limit their participation in climate action. According to the International Labor Organization, 96.8% of all young workers in developing countries are in the informal economy. Young people are three times as likely as adults (25 years and older) to be unemployed. 1 in 5 youth are neither working, studying, nor being trained⁸. The COVID 19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, and between 2019 and 2020, global youth employment declined by 34 million⁹. Of the 429 million young workers worldwide, 13% are suffering extreme poverty (defined as living on an income below US\$1.90 per day), and 17% live in moderate poverty (an income below US\$3.20 per day). Recent estimates suggest that 600 million jobs would have to be created over the next 15 years to meet youth employment needs ¹⁰.

Food systems are the largest employer of young people, particularly in the Global South, yet they often do not provide decent and meaningful work or adequate livelihood opportunities, nor maintain a balance between the needs and rights of different generations¹¹. Rural youth in developing contexts spend 50% or more of their working time engaged in farming, with this number being the highest in Africa, at 65%¹². More and more youth are recognizing- given the simultaneous climate, health, and economic crises- that the world’s food systems today are unsustainable¹³. Youth have become disillusioned with food systems which enhance the influence of large corporations with short-term agendas for growth, rather than long-term resilience and sustainability. These power structures and economic processes can limit their

⁷ UNCCD. 2022. Action Guide 6: Engaging Youth In Nature- Positive Food Production. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-10/AG6_1_0.pdf

⁸ International Labour Organization. 2020. Technology and the Future of Jobs X Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf

⁹ International Labour Organization. 2022. Investing in Transforming Futures for Young People X Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_853321.pdf

¹⁰ International Labour Organization. 2022. Investing in Transforming Futures for Young People X Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_853321.pdf

¹¹ IFAD. 2021. Promoting Youth Engagement And Employment In Agriculture And Food Systems. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5464en/cb5464en.pdf>

¹² IFAD. 2019. Creating Opportunities for Rural Youth 2019 Rural Development Report. https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/41133075/RDR_report.pdf/7282db66-2d67-b514-d004-5ec25d9729a0

¹³ IFAD. 2021. Promoting Youth Engagement And Employment In Agriculture And Food Systems. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5464en/cb5464en.pdf>

ability to exercise agency, both as consumers and as workers¹⁴. This is one of the factors in leading young people away from land-based and agriculture-supply chain jobs, instead of engaging in land restoration initiatives. This is a huge societal loss, because most of these youth are better educated than the previous generations and better at adopting new technologies. They can be partners in creating more sustainable food systems that can reverse the trend of land degradation and support a just rural transition.

Youth engagement in land restoration is essential, both for rural and urban youth, as well as for farming and non-farming activities. In developing countries, land-based agriculture is the single largest employment in rural areas. Nearly 40% of all land is estimated to be used for farming¹⁵ and farming is a major socio-economic activity for young people in rural areas. Because rural areas are home to such large numbers of young people, it is key that rural youth are engaged in land restoration. However, youth engagement extends beyond waged, family and self-employment in activities related to food production, processing, and distribution¹⁶. Today, nearly 80% of all food produced is consumed in urban areas¹⁷. By 2050, 70% of the world's population will live in cities. The pressure to produce and distribute adequate food supplies to urban populations will create opportunities for engaging youth in sustainable practices¹⁸. Young people may be involved in urban food networks, home gardening in both rural and urban areas, food literacy and policy advocacy, movements related to food justice and climate change, and conscious consumerism- at an individual or collective level¹⁹.

Despite their collective vulnerability as a generation, young people must not be considered a homogenous group. Subsets of highly vulnerable youth- particularly indigenous youth, young women, and youth from vulnerable communities- face unique challenges due to land degradation which must be addressed through targeted initiatives. Youth is not a monolithic, uniform group, and the challenges and constraints differ between age groups, ethnicities, education levels and many other factors. It is important to understand the heterogeneity of this group. This means profiling them by age groups (e.g. 15–17, 18–24, 25–29), vulnerability (e.g. indigenous groups), disability, gender, education and skills level, social capital, access to land and finance, prevailing social norms in the community, etc²⁰. This profiling will help identify different bottlenecks for each group.

¹⁴ IFAD. 2021. Promoting Youth Engagement And Employment In Agriculture And Food Systems.
<https://www.fao.org/3/cb5464en/cb5464en.pdf>

¹⁵ FAO. 2020. Land Use in Agriculture by the Numbers.
<https://www.fao.org/sustainability/news/detail/en/c/1274219/>

¹⁶ IFAD. 2021. Promoting Youth Engagement And Employment In Agriculture And Food Systems.
<https://www.fao.org/3/cb5464en/cb5464en.pdf>

¹⁷ FAO. 2019. Tackling Food Insecurity at the Urban Level - Turning Global Commitments into Local Realities.
<https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1181196/icode/>

¹⁸ UNCCD. 2022. Action Guide 6: Engaging Youth In Nature- Positive Food Production.
https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-10/AG6_1_0.pdf

¹⁹ IFAD. 2021. Promoting Youth Engagement And Employment In Agriculture And Food Systems.
<https://www.fao.org/3/cb5464en/cb5464en.pdf>

²⁰ CGIAR. 2019. Creating Jobs for Rural Youth in Agricultural Value Chains.
https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/99347/2063_PDF.pdf

Indigenous youth are exposed to external pressures that threaten their livelihoods, cultures, identities, and rights.. Youth from Indigenous Peoples and local communities are also subject to forced displacement and abuse by large-scale extractive industries and exploitation of natural resources, with disproportionate adverse impact on young women. But they are also key stakeholders in land restoration and are leading initiatives by blending Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and practices with new technologies and resourceful networks. Indigenous youth are well-positioned to effectively reach their communities, understand their needs, and make public information more accessible for community members (for example through social media) by bridging gaps in technology²¹.

Young women tend to face exclusion from conservation and management of land, lack access to agricultural extension services and institutional credit and encounter barriers to participation in the processes of development, planning and policymaking. They are particularly vulnerable due to unequal power relations and gender-based discrimination in many societies, weak legal and social protections for women's land rights, and less access to information²². Youth from marginalized communities tend to experience high economic insecurity and social discrimination which can affect their access to land, information, and extension services or even their participation in the labor force due to intergenerational disadvantages.

Youth engagement in land restoration isn't a 'nice to have', it's a must-have- to ensure intergenerational equity. Any youth engagement efforts should be founded on principles of meaningful participation, equal partnership, and consistent commitment. Youth participation must not be tokenistic, as is prevalent in many forums wherein youth are invited to speak but not heard. Often, there are Youth forums held before key multilateral meetings (such as UNFCCC COPs, UNDRR sessions, etc.), but there is no opportunity for integration or presentation of the outcomes to policymakers in the main negotiations. Youth participation must be made meaningful, through a combination of capacity building, resources, and increased agency. Further, youth engagement should be done with a recognition that young people are equal partners in land restoration- not helpless beneficiaries. They bring value, energy, passion, fresh perspectives, innovation, flexibility, and skills to any initiative that provides them the opportunity, capacity, and resources to engage. It is also important to consider not only how young people will add value to our work, but how we can add value to their efforts. Finally, youth engagement must not be a one-off effort, but a consistent and strategic commitment. Land restoration itself is a goal that takes long-term commitment and sustained effort from all stakeholders. Through sustained and consistent support to young

²¹ IFAD. 2021. Promoting Youth Engagement And Employment In Agriculture And Food Systems.
<https://www.fao.org/3/cb5464en/cb5464en.pdf>

²² UN Women. 2018. Towards A Gender- Responsive Implementation of The United Nations Convention To Combat Desertification.
<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2018/Towards-a-gender-responsive-implementation-of-UN-Convention-to-Combat-Desertification-en.pdf>

people, they can champion the cause and take over the mantle to create more sustainable land management systems²³.

2. A YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (YES) FOR UNCCD

In May 2022, the 15th session of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the UNCCD adopted 36 decisions, which had 26 mentions to youth engagement. Decision 5/COP15²⁴ requested the UNCCD Secretariat to design a Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) and the modalities for its implementation to ensure stronger, effective and meaningful participation of youth in the meetings and processes of the Convention. It also invited Parties to continue to raise public awareness and promote youth engagement on Convention issues.

Accordingly, this strategy has been developed through a combination of desk research of existing initiatives, and consultations with over 18 relevant organizations and stakeholders between October 2022 and March 2023. The list of stakeholders consulted as well as the standard consultation questions can be found in Annex 1. A consolidated summary of existing youth engagement initiatives reviewed and referenced can be found in Annex 2.

Youth Specific Issues Find Mention in UNCCD COP15 Decisions

COP15 Decision 5 placed emphasis on several aspects of youth engagement, including:

- confirming that young people are an important positive force leading the next generation to create more sustainable urban and rural environments, and commit to partnering with young people to create meaningful and dignified employment opportunities, especially in rural areas
- most vulnerable youth to provide inputs to the Decision-making process
- promoting, together with other partners, decent land-based jobs for youth and land-based youth entrepreneurship
- design of policy options that make ecological restoration attractive in terms of financial inclusion, social protection and adaptive safety nets and contingent finance and reserve funds to support youth land users to reduce the additional burden caused by the added cost of land degradation
- reaffirming that empowerment of vulnerable youth especially girls will make an important contribution to the effective implementation of the Convention

²³ UNCCD. 2021. Youth Engagement In Land And Ecosystem Restoration.

<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-03/UNCCD%20GLO%20WP%20youth.pdf>

²⁴ UNCCD. 2022. Decision 5/COP.15 - Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-10/5_cop15.pdf

- welcoming the organization of the Youth Forum, which took place from 8–9 May 2022 as a way to foster the involvement of future generations in the implementation of the Convention and taking note of the Declaration of the Youth Forum with appreciation.

Vision

The UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) envisions a future where each successive generation of young people is aware, capacitated, and empowered to fully engage with policies and practices that conserve, sustainably manage, and restore our finite land resources and bestow a healthy and productive legacy for the next generations.

Meaningful youth engagement and trusted partnerships are recognized as key to achieving the UNCCD vision of a land degradation-neutral world enshrined in SDG target 15.3.²⁵

Accordingly, the objective of the YES is to actively create and support an enabling environment that allows young women and men to fully take part in decision-making and management practices to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD) and restore degraded land while protecting healthy one. This participation is an important first step towards creating effective intergenerational partnerships that increase young people's influence and personal stake in their community, nation, or the world.

What is Meaningful Youth Engagement?

“Meaningful youth engagement is an inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programs, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms and organizations that affect their lives and their communities, countries, and globally.”²⁶

Meaningful youth engagement must be gender responsive, ensuring more equitable participation of young women and girls who are differently affected by the impacts of DLDD.²⁷ Cultural barriers, social norms, customary and inheritance rights, and education opportunities present greater obstacles to young females (than to males) who wish to access

²⁵ UNCCD, 2017. The future strategic framework of the Convention 7/COP.13, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewjFo9a164v5AhXh57sIHfQ3AtgQFnoECBcQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unccd.int%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fsessions%2Fdocuments%2F2017-11%2Fcop21add1_eng.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2VylZ9ab7v0hGk2WnPcwlH

²⁶ USAID. (n.d). Youth in Development Policy. <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/youth>

²⁷ UNCCD. 2022. The differentiated impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought on women and men. Summary for decision makers, Bonn https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-05/SDM_ENGLISH_webfile.pdf

and control productive land resources.²⁸ This points to a need for more targeted support and initiatives that engage and empower young women and girls, in line with the UNCCD Gender Action Plan.²⁹

Objectives

Fully recognizing that youth are central to achieving the UNCCD's strategic and implementation objectives, the YES strives to realize a future where youth and youth organizations are:

- **Invited to participate in UNCCD decision-making processes** and have a strong voice in the broader policy discussions on land use and governance issues that directly affect their lives and livelihoods.
- **Regarded as essential stakeholders in the work of the UNCCD**, specifically to assist countries and communities in combatting DLDD through the conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of their land resources.
- **Empowered to create opportunities for sustained engagement**, resulting in leadership positions and meaningful jobs and careers that generate shared prosperity from sustainable land and water management practices.

The First UNCCD Youth Forum in 2017

The first UNCCD youth forum was held during COP13 in 2017 in China stressed the need for consultations with youth not to be limited to academia or young professionals, but include young farmers and entrepreneurs, indigenous and vulnerable groups, such as young people with disabilities. It called for a “ruralization” intervention- incentives to bring young job seekers back to rural communities, to inspire revival of rural society and give them an opportunity address the impacts of climate change and land degradation.

The declaration³⁰ adopted by first UNCCD youth forum COP13 in 2017 put forward a call for stakeholder support to help achieve the following commitments:

- investing in both formal and non-formal education for youth,

²⁸ IFAD. 2014. Youth and land tenure- Lessons learned series.

<https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196966/Land+tenure+and+youth.pdf/38e4c76f-5f9e-45e3-8ef7-7349759339d4>

²⁹ UNCCD. 2017. Gender Action Plan. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2018-01/GAP%20ENG%20%20low%20res_0.pdf

³⁰ UNCCD. 2017. Global Youth Initiative for Combating Desertification. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-02/Global%20Youth%20Initiative_Youth%20Declaration_220917-%20new%20format_final.pdf

- equipping young graduates with knowledge and practical skills which are useful to succeed in the green jobs market
- establishing apprenticeship and young innovator programs to allow young talent the chance to learn and be creative in the area of land restoration
- supporting young researchers in producing fresh insights based on local knowledge
- revival of farming and agriculture-related occupations with more modern techniques and making it appealing to youth, through incentives, developing expertise, subsidies, and secure land rights
- supporting young people to share indigenous knowledge as inputs in decision making by organizing seminars, workshops, and conferences
- facilitating online and offline spaces for dialogues among youth so they can work together and cross-learn.

Guiding Principles

The YES guiding principles below are fundamental understandings that set the standards for and help drive UNCCD stakeholder efforts to engage youth in the processes and implementation objectives of the convention.

1. Recognize youth as essential agents of change

The UNCCD recognizes the great potential of young people as the changemakers and leaders of today and tomorrow, and sees them not just as beneficiaries, but also as actors, knowledge holders, innovators, and partners that can contribute significantly to the work of the convention. This recognition calls upon stakeholders to uphold human rights, promote gender equality, and respect the diversity of youth values and experiences through systematic, sustainable, and responsible engagement.

2. Promote inclusive and meaningful youth participation

The UNCCD recognizes the need to cultivate and support enabling environments that promote inclusive and meaningful youth engagement in the processes and implementation objectives of the convention, including through structured, substantive, and effective participation in official policy processes. This recognition calls upon stakeholders to set clear priorities, implement concrete actions, and establish clear pathways whereby youth participation can have a visible impact on outcomes and decisions.

3. Build capacity for youth engagement and development

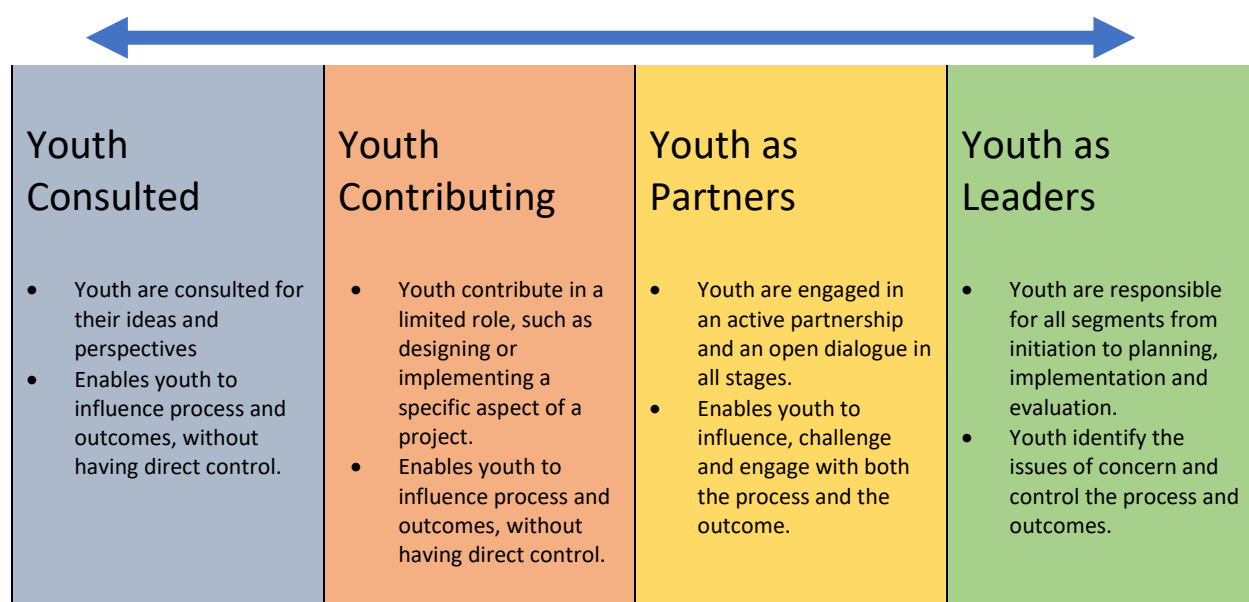
The UNCCD recognizes the need to leverage and align resources, networks, and expertise to address the diverse needs of youth and strengthen their agency in the pursuit of sustainable development. This recognition calls upon stakeholders to invest in human and social capital that builds the capacity (e.g., knowledge, skills, technologies) of young people while enhancing mutual responsiveness, trust, and collaboration needed for civic engagement and healthy

development.

4. Encourage intergenerational partnerships and multi-stakeholder approaches

The UNCCD recognizes the critical importance of intergenerational partnerships and multi-stakeholder approaches for the success of long-term and integrated development strategies to combat DLDD and scale up sustainable land management and restoration activities. This recognition calls upon stakeholders to create formal and informal mechanisms whereby young people can engage with each other, adults, and the society at large. This includes participation in volunteering, mentoring, and training schemes, multi-stakeholder platforms and initiatives, and innovative youth-adult partnerships that attract sustained funding and technical assistance.

Figure 1. Degrees of Youth Engagement³¹ (UN, 2019)



1.1 IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN UNCCD

UNCCD stakeholders offer diverse entry points for increasing youth engagement in the processes and implementation objectives of the convention. Each can leverage their unique assets, capacities, and networks to promote youth-adult partnerships at different levels in order to combat DLDD and restore degraded land and soil. Following the vision and guiding principles, the YES will be implemented through actions at all levels, from local to global, with the support of UNCCD entities, partners, and other relevant stakeholders.

³¹ UN. 2019. Meaningfully engaging with youth: Guidance and training for UN staff. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2021/05/Meaningfully-engaging-youth-Guidance-training-UN-staff.pdf>

- **Secretariat:** The successful implementation of the YES requires the strong core servicing, advocacy, agenda-setting, and representation functions of the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism, with the commensurate capacity and resources to support Parties and other stakeholders in fulfilling their respective roles and responsibilities.
- **Parties:** National governments can play an important role in the implementation of the YES. Policies and programs that promote capacity building for youth participation can be integrated into long-term development strategies at national and sub-national levels to facilitate their meaningful engagement in land and ecosystem restoration activities. Parties can explore youth inclusion in the Conference of the Parties (COP), land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets, national drought plans and action programs, in accordance with their development priorities and in a spirit of youth solidarity and partnership.
- **Subsidiary Bodies:** The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) can play a role in assisting the COP with the review of the implementation of the YES. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST), with input from the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), can provide scientific advice for the monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of the YES.
- **Youth Organizations:** Young people and youth organizations, networks, and movements are the core constituents essential for making YES implementation a success. They are not just beneficiaries, but also knowledge holders, innovators, and trusted partners who, when authentically engaged, can advance the work of the convention.
- **Civil Society Organizations:** CSOs often drive initiatives at both national and grassroots levels, including awareness raising, monitoring and evaluation, and resource mobilization. As part of their efforts to increase meaningful youth engagement in UNCCD processes and implementation objectives, CSOs can reassess their ongoing youth activities (e.g., climate action, organic agriculture, land restoration, protected areas, urban greening) to enhance the intensity and diversity of their participation for synergistic results that benefit both people and the planet.
- **Donors:** Private contributions are generally the most flexible type of funding that youth programmes receive, often filling budget gaps (due to public funding restrictions) and covering the full costs of providing engagement opportunities. Youth philanthropy can be an effective approach toward community development by encouraging young people to act locally. Private funding sources can also provide crucial resources since many public sources require matching contributions.
- **Private Sector:** The private sector can create concrete employment opportunities and initiate youth workforce development programs, through the provision of education,

skills training, mentoring, and financing, to support young people with the establishment of small- and medium-sized enterprises. There is wide scope for collaboration between youth-owned enterprises, young entrepreneurs, and youth-led start-ups to leverage peer-to-peer learning and guidance opportunities as well as pairing with companies, governments, or non-profit organizations to enable them to become sustainable independent businesses.

- **Academia:** Teachers and researchers have the capacity to engage youth in academic research projects and the development of collaborative, youth-engaged research agendas -- from the early planning and grant writing phases through to project implementation and results dissemination – which can increase the value and impact of their data and findings.
- **Local Governments:** Local governments can be significant partners for land restoration projects and play an important role towards education of local youth. Local governments also play an important role in policy formulation to govern local land practices, and lead land governance processes from the bottom up.

2.2 OUTCOMES AND FOCUS AREAS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN UNCCD

This section identifies the priority outcomes for the strategy, and the focus areas wherein efforts can be focused to strategically address barriers for achievement of the outcomes. **Annex 3 lays out a Theory of Change** for this strategy. The recommend activities under each focus area pertain to three groups of stakeholders: the UNCCD Secretariat (including Subsidiary Bodies), the UNCCD Parties, and non-state actors such as civil society, academia, local governments, donors, and private sector. It is envisioned that **many of these activities will be implemented in partnership with youth organizations**, who have a crucial role to play in the success of this strategy.

Priority Outcomes for the YES

The YES will strive to achieve the following outcomes through its activities, and these outcomes will guide the measurement and evaluation frameworks for the strategy:

Priority 1: Meaningful engagement in UNCCD processes and implementation

Ensure stronger, effective, and meaningful participation of youth in UNCCD governance processes and implementation objectives that strengthen their voice and agency in decision-making on sustainable land and water management policies and practices.

Priority 2: Secure and Stable Livelihoods

Inspire a new generation of young people and ‘ecopreneurs’ already working to build a more equitable and sustainable future based on meaningful jobs and careers that restore a healthy relationship with nature.

Priority 3: Inclusive land governance and tenure security

Land governance, related institutions and their administration, can be reformed or restructured in ways that are more inclusive and participatory, increase tenure security, and promote the human rights and dignity of all young people.

Priority 4: Communication for translating awareness into advocacy and action

Youth engagement is increased through improved communications, the use of innovative digital technology and social media, and tangible outreach to foster their participation in UNCCD processes and implementation objectives.

Focus Areas for the YES

The four focus areas outlined below must be seen as levers that need to be pulled in tandem to achieve the priority outcomes. Whereas working on any one of these levers will certainly produce incremental change, tackling them together will address structural and situational barriers to produce transformational change in youth engagement. Moreover, established mechanisms to engage young people are often fragmented, leading to duplication of efforts. The focus areas below must be implemented in collaboration and coordination with other organizations that focus on youth engagement.

Focus Areas for Youth Engagement in UNCCD

<i>Capacity Building and Networking</i> Building young people's knowledge and skills in sustainable land management in ways that are accessible to disadvantaged and marginalized youth, and enabling youth to connect with each other to collaborate.	<i>Meaningful Participation and Partnership</i> Mainstreaming spaces and avenues for youth to participate in a form that influences decision-making and partnering with young people the ground to offer support and opportunity for collaboration.
<i>Dedicated Financial and Technical Support</i> Setting aside dedicated resources to support initiatives led by young people, and offering their initiatives technical support to enhance design, implementation, fundraising, monitoring, and scaling.	<i>Advancing Youth-Focused Policies</i> Ensuring policies that govern land management are drafted in consultation with youth, and address their vulnerabilities particularly around access to land, markets, and representation in policymaking.

2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

This section outlines the activities that can be undertaken by UNCCD Secretariat, UNCCD Parties, and non-state actor stakeholders in the UNCCD, under the four focus areas.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

Secretariat

- Develop **youth-friendly knowledge products**, guides, tools and other resources that could be used/adapted at country level for supporting young people to develop their skills and capacities to be able to contribute to interventions that affect them. These resources should communicate information in a manner that is less technical, beginner-friendly, and accessible to young people across a range of skill levels. For example, FAO recently launched a webinar series dedicated to youth on explaining UNFCCC processes and functions and published a pocket guide for young people and beginners on Transparency Under the Paris Agreement.
- Consider holding annual **UNCCD Intergenerational Dialogues** in collaboration with the UNCCD Youth Caucus where a diverse group of young people can present their perspectives and discuss with national governments and other key stakeholders how to collaborate on the land restoration agenda.
- Strengthen the **capacity of Parties and partners on youth engagement**, so they can work with and for young people as equal partners. This can be done by developing, adapting and rolling-out guidance and tools co-created with the UNCCD Youth Caucus on how to meaningfully engage young people.
- Build **capacity of youth at local and national level** so they can learn about UNCCD, engage at the multilateral level and play a more active role in UNCCD Youth Forums. For eg. YOUNGO hosts Local Conferences of Youth (LCOYs) through the year before the international Conference of Youth (COY) is held in the lead up to UNFCCC COP. This gives young people the opportunity to engage and co-lead at the country level, and each LCOY is expected to produce a set of national policy recommendations.
- Support learning and knowledge exchange amongst youth through peer-to-peer initiatives, **convening youth leaders- particularly indigenous youth** leaders- on a periodic basis, annual workshops to provide update on activities of the UNCCD, and **landscape storytelling initiatives**.
- Work with big groups of young people who can collaborate on large scale initiatives, with the support of national networks which have a diverse membership of civil society organizations and youth groups.
- **Work with young role models** to gain interest and build capacity of larger groups of youth on land restoration, agroecological approaches, and how to be an entrepreneur. UNCCD could use its Land Heroes to do this, as well as scale up the Land Heroes program further to capacitate more youth land champions.

Parties

- Reach and build **capacity of vulnerable youth** by working with civil society organizations and NGOs local authorities, to develop a more representative and informed youth constituency at the national level.
- Strengthen education and training systems to ensure that young people are equipped with the skills to positively contribute to land restoration, such as by creating local networks of vocational schools for agriculture in disadvantaged areas.
- Encourage **youth political participation**, through their engagement with employers' and workers' organizations in order to enhance their involvement in social dialogue processes.
- Facilitate **platforms that bring together private sector stakeholders and youth** who are already working in sustainable agriculture or interested in getting involved. Promote private sector participation in dialogue for coordination of corporate social responsibility and sustainability strategies to help enhance benefits accruing to youth agripreneurs as well as contribute to economic growth of communities.
- Raise **awareness of school students** on sustainable land management through curriculum enhancements. School students are already members of a strong community, raising awareness of school students about climate change and engaging them in restoration efforts will create adults and land champions of the future.

Non-state actors

Civil Society Organizations

- Facilitate access to relevant information and knowledge in **more accessible and simpler formats at local levels**.
- Dedicate resources and staff to work on **making intergovernmental processes more youth friendly**, while also at the same time building youth capacity on how these processes work.
- **Document young people's initiatives** for visibility and support and raise **public awareness on the role of youth** in land restoration and drought prevention, by showcasing concrete examples.
- Support **cross-convention collaboration of youth**. Think-tanks that have staff with expertise in different UN conventions (eg. UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD) can facilitate national and/or international level youth dialogues with youth that focus are interested in these conventions.
- Work with *Secretariat* and *Donors* to **connect existing youth-led organizations/networks/groups** working in environmental and land issues, including through technical and financial support, and facilitate peer-support and networking to contribute to sustainability of youth engagement.

- Work with youth-led organizations to launch **multilingual social media campaigns** in collaboration with influencers, particularly those from local communities, on the importance of land restoration.

Academia

- **Educate children and students of all levels on the key role of farmers**, elevating professions along agri-food systems, from production and value chains to consumption. Formal education as currently practiced, is often an important contributor to the construction of aspirations for non-farming futures. Rural and farming livelihoods are under-represented, at times even devalued and depicted as problematic, in educational programs.
- Work with *Parties* to ensure **land restoration is better incorporated in extension services** which are currently more focused on conventional agricultural practices. Efforts to enhance the role of digital technology in agripreneurship, such as the “Farming is Cool” initiative in Rwanda, help make agripreneurship more attractive to youth.
- Work with *Donors* to facilitate and support participation of young people in **meaningful internship and fellowship programs, youth land ambassador programs, and mentoring programs (intergenerational partnerships)** so they can gain core and technical skills, experience and networks.
- Promote teachers and trainers educating children in different settings and with diverse tools about the importance of agriculture, food security and diverse diets, to enable the engagement of new generations in food systems and the promotion of a collective critical view about current food systems.

Private sector and Donors

- **Promote youth entrepreneurship and green jobs** in land restoration for young people, and link existing initiatives with youth to include skill development for these roles. Co-create promotional fairs with youth-led clubs/groups, with the participation of the public and private sector stakeholders, to create awareness of the emerging sectors, among students, and offering employers opportunities to meet potential new employees.
- Support **collaboration between young established entrepreneurs and youth-led start-ups**, to create peer-to-peer mentoring and guidance opportunities for youth-led start-ups, as well as opportunities for pairing with companies and national governments.
- Support **training and mentorship program for restoration entrepreneurs**, targeted at building pitching, communication, financial, and supply chain management skills, as well as providing networking opportunities, mainstreaming gender and boosting youth-led companies’ investment readiness.
- Strengthen collaboration with relevant organizations working on youth engagement, through **jointly organizing and launching in-depth trainings** in collaboration with potential investors and policy makers.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Secretariat

- **Promote youth-led events**, by creating space and opportunity for youth to create their own events and lead in all aspects. This is done by providing space for youth to have conversations on topics they want to discuss and giving them the chance to discern how they want to discuss them and how they want to run the event. The Secretariat can facilitate engagement with policymakers and provide logistical support as needed.
- Provide **youth-inclusive and safe spaces for engagement**. This means ensuring that young people are protected, have access to gender- and disability-responsive safe spaces, with youth friendly methods and resources, and have their voices heard without judgement or discrimination.
- Ensure **fair and balanced representation of youth**. One of the key aspects of meaningful engagement is representativeness - having the sufficient number of and types of people at the table to ensure that those engaged can speak on behalf of the target population.
- Ensure meaningful engagement of young people working with communities at the local level. This means engaging them in decision-making and during design and implementation of policies and strategies. Provide opportunities for youth to have **meaningful dialogues with policymakers** under the UNCCD process.
- Involve **young people in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this strategy** and its action plan.
- Support the creation of **Youth Advisory Groups/chapters at national level**, integrated with the UNCCD Youth Caucus, to ensure local level inputs.
- Consider creating a forum to **showcase youth initiatives on land restoration at a high-level event of the UNCCD COPs**, with identification of these initiatives in partnership with the UNCCD Youth Caucus, and travel-paid opportunities for young persons to represent their organizations and initiatives there.
- Employ **more youth as staff in UNCCD Secretariat**. Empowered youth inspire youth, and for UNCCD to engage and empower the youth of the world, the youth working in it need to be empowered as well.
- **Map young leaders** working in land restoration, to provide better visibility to their efforts and create a network/group of champions.

Parties

- Open up opportunities for **youth to be part of the country's UNCCD delegation**. It should be easier for youth to engage in your country's policymaking compared to UN negotiations (which you can't influence unless you are part of delegation). Official country delegations should consult or hold workshops with youth to ensure their involvement at all levels .

- Engage **youth at all stages of decision-making**, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions. It is also important to create opportunities for youth to provide feedback and have access to transparent reporting of results. This could be done through the establishment of dedicated Youth Advisory Groups/working with existing groups. Developing strong and adequate accountability mechanisms, for example, by establishing youth councils, and creating direct links between them and national and local parliaments.
- **Recognize youth as land champions** and work with youth-led organizations/networks/groups to raise awareness on the topic and influence others in their communities. Give them the **opportunity to participate in policy dialogues**, and ensure youth empowerment in agricultural innovation programs.
- Increase institutional understanding on how to **utilize the connections, knowledge, skills and capacities of young** people to meet your sustainable development goals.
- Incentivize institutions to have **youth engagement as part of their mandate** and report on it.

Non-state Actors

CSOs and Local Governments

- Serve as **intermediary with the government** to ensure young people can participate safely in policy dialogues.
- Build **partnerships with youth-led organizations/networks/groups** and advocates, such as MoUs, joint campaigns, direct grants, etc. Create space and opportunity for the integration of youth voices and initiatives in your ongoing work.
- **Work collaboratively with young people in the communities** to obtain long-term and sustainable results in existing policies.

Private Sector, CSOs, Local Governments

- Increase **youth representation in staff and leadership** of your organization, including Boards of Directors, City Councils, etc. The inclusion of youth in existing rural or urban networks and the establishment of new youth organizations can significantly contribute to youth empowerment.

CSOs, Academia, Local Governments, and Donors

- **Empower youth as negotiators and push for their inclusion in official country delegations to the COP through quotas.** Develop a program that can train youth, and get commitment from Parties to have more youth as part of their country delegation to UNCCD. Increase dimension of delegations to international events by adding youth and Indigenous Peoples and setting minimum quotas for the inclusion of both groups in delegations.

- **Create youth focal points** within government, institutionalize youth engagement in negotiations, and embed them in the system.
- **Promote mechanisms at country level**, during the year where larger youth groups can interact with official country delegations. As one youth indicated, “Giving youth party badges doesn’t signify meaningful and effective participation in decision- making. What does is training youth as negotiators and giving them the space and the right to speak their mind.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF UNCCD YOUTH CAUCUS

- **Clarify the mandate of caucus**, by benchmarking it with other youth constituencies such as YOUNGO and GYBN. Even if the caucus is self-organized, it is important to have some basic guidelines as a safeguarding mechanism and to ensure better synergies with the activities of the Secretariat.
- Have a **dedicated focal point in UNCCD staff to coordinate with caucus**. There is more capacity needed within the Secretariat to support youth engagement. For eg, UNFCCC has multiple constituencies that YOUNGO learns from (environmental NGOs, gender caucus, etc), and has the capacity to coordinate with these constituencies and have a youth day at COP. This capacity is needed in UNCCD as well.
- **Support cross-convention youth constituency linkages** by co-supporting events that convene these youth constituencies.
- **Ensure engagement of the caucus in design of initiatives**, as well as partner with them in implementation and monitoring. Co-develop and collaborate with the caucus on initiatives such as capacity building marketplace and Land Heroes campaign so they can provide inputs. Promote better collaboration between caucus and capacity building team in UNCCD.
- **Support caucus with fundraising** by connecting them with various partners the Secretariat works with as well as scope for new potential fundraising sources. Provide support as fiscal host so the caucus can receive funds, and provide resources and core funding in the initial years for coordination and so caucus representatives can attend events and gain visibility.
- **Connect caucus with Parties and other stakeholders** so they can build trust and relationships to engage better at the regional and national levels.
- Consider having **all engagement of youth in UNCCD go through the caucus**. If any youth and children approach the Secretariat, they can be referred the focal points of youth caucus, to ensure a coordinated youth engagement.
- Have **youth representation on the UNCCD CSO panel**, by involving members the youth caucus in order to build their capacity and collaboration with other CSO stakeholders.

- Provide resources for the **caucus to support vulnerable youth members to attend the COP**. For eg. YOUNGO has a Global South Scholarship Program that funds youth from global south to attend UNFCCC COP.
- **Help caucus amass a network**, through development of website and social media outreach support, so it can be the go-to place for youth interested in land restoration. The Youth Caucus could partner with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network and Youth in Landscapes to adapt their social media toolkits and to capitalize on their members' social media profiles and their public reach in the restoration agenda.
- Like YOUNGO and the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, the UNCCD Youth Caucus could **consider establishing thematic working groups** relevant to land and ecosystem restoration. YOUNGO, for instance, has 28 working groups to address specific themes.
- The Youth Caucus might **consider establishing an alumni network** as part of its structure. Alumni networks inspire, motivate and educate current members on how to build on progress made in policy processes, based on the experience of previous members.

DEDICATED FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Secretariat

- **Identify and support youth-led initiatives** and provide them with adequate support, funds, technical expertise, including staff time. Consider establishing a dedicated grant program for this purpose.
- **Consider introducing scholarships, mentorships, and fellowship programs** for youth where they can work in UNCCD or be seconded to other relevant organizations with UNCCD co-supporting the stipend.
- **Mobilize resources for young people** and support youth entrepreneurs with fundraising, by engaging with philanthropy, big CSOs, and climate funds.
- Consider establishing a **special grantee fund for youth** to provide working capital to youth led businesses in land restoration at the country level, co-funded with Parties and other donors.
- **Support incubators for youth enterprises in land restoration**, which can provide both infrastructure (labs, computers, equipment, demonstration plots) and services (coaching, training and direct support to access resources) to help enterprises scale.
- Explore ways to financially **support Youth-led NGOs and entities**, which traditionally rely upon volunteer donors- particularly those in low income countries that have much restricted access to grants from developed countries, or UN agencies due to stringent requirements or other structural barriers.

Parties

- **Invest in the infrastructure** that can support youth farmers and entrepreneurs to access markets and storage for their produce. **Invest in extension services** for them to learn about agroecological approaches and expand extension services to enable better access for more vulnerable youth. **Rural areas must be made more attractive for young people** through investments to improve employment options, education, technology, infrastructure, electricity, water, markets, as well as better supports for agriculture.
- Invest in **development of peri-urban food systems activities and jobs as part of a rural-urban continuum**, supporting youth mobility between food manufacturing and retailing, agripreneurship, and primary production in or close to urban areas. Jobs in critical food infrastructure can include **investments in building regional food hubs, food processing facilities and farmers markets**.
- **Secure dedicated technical and financial resources** for meaningful youth engagement in institutions, including for interventions such as developing and rolling-out capacity building activities, undertaking research, implementing projects, supporting youth-led initiatives, facilitating young people's participation; etc. Ensure that young people and youth- organizations/networks/groups who are traditionally underserved and underrepresented – due to lack of resources – are not left behind.
- **Incentivize youth-focused NGOs** to consider more contextual nature-based solutions to land management problems through initiatives like the farmer school program.
- **Incentivize more university programs** and executive courses on sustainable agriculture with university credits, with more credits for working on the field. Young prospective farmers can also be offered **tuition-free training at agricultural schools, interest-free loans and stipends** for their first few years of farming.
- Work with local banks and financial institutions to increase young people's financial inclusion and **devise simpler processes and dedicated programs to provide loans** to youth for sustainable land management. Governments can consider providing credit lines and low-interest loan programs to enable better access to finance for youth.

Non-state Actors

Private Sector and Donors

- **Invest in youth-led projects** and provide technical and financial support to innovative youth-led initiatives.
- **Establish a youth fund** supporting young farmers, showcasing best-practices and kick-starting collective action.
- Support community-based initiatives through business models which promote engagement of youth. Collect data on youth employment and dedicate funds to promote development of communities where the business is located.
- **Support youth agripreneurs with access to market**, by raising awareness on agroecological approaches and the specific products in the local context so consumers

can gain interest. Support them with access to finance by connecting them with savings groups, and dedicated programs in financial institutions.

- **Enhance diaspora contribution** to rural development by fostering diaspora investments to agricultural enterprises.

Private Sector and CSOs

- Work with existing cooperatives to assess their level of youth engagement and support them to engage more youth in their governance and membership. Access to finance is a challenge for youth, and cooperatives can support them with this. **Cooperatives can also help youth with access to market.**
- Support **youth engagement down the agriculture value chain**. Provide marketing trainings like digital marketing, basics of selling their produce, etc. Support youth in value chains like horticulture, where the returns may be relatively quicker and link youth with SMEs that do processing and export.

ADVANCING YOUTH-FOCUSED POLICIES

Secretariat

- Develop a **systematic framework to ensure meaningful participation** of young people in interventions led by the Secretariat, and design feedback mechanisms.
- Support youth to be part of official policy development processes, and establish an **accountability framework to understand the performance of Parties** and partners on meaningful youth engagement.
- Ensure that International Policies **recognize the role of land rights**, support traditional knowledge and practices, and provide targeted support to indigenous and marginalized youth.
- **Consult more youth, particularly from indigenous communities**, on the ground for publications and knowledge products, through extensive surveys and questionnaires, to ensure research considers their needs and perspectives, responding to the needs of the most affected.

Parties

- Support **youth-led research to inform policy at national level**. Support youth-inclusive and youth-led data collection, analysis and research to generate evidence about what is

and is not working when it comes to promote meaningful youth engagement in environmental and land issues.

- Develop national policies that ensure youth participation and support youth efforts in decision making processes. These policies should **enshrine youth engagement in long-term national development strategies** to avoid fragmentation and promote synergy.
- Adopt policies and programs that **increase young people's access to land and land tenure**, particularly for young women. Moreover, devise strategies to **support young people's access to water, seeds, livestock**, and other inputs.
- **Establish representative youth advisory councils** at the national level, with members selected through a fair and transparent process, for youth to regularly engage with national-level policy and programs.
- National and local authorities can institute innovative programs that integrate basic education curricula with the restoration agenda. Local governments that have the technical know-how could be incentivized to train the youth in environmental beautification, urban agriculture and urban landscaping.

Non-state Actors

CSOs and Local Governments

- **Reduce barriers between decision makers and youth** through dissemination at the local level of international and national debates in a participatory manner.
- Support youth to be part of official policy development processes, and **empower youth led organizations** in civic engagement.
- **Support indigenous youth in reclaiming of Indigenous land** to revitalize traditional food systems and sustainable indigenous food traditions.
- Local governments can devise alternative sustainable methodologies through which the youth could gain access to land, such as “matchmaking” services to place young farmers in communities with available land, housing and agricultural advisors; or platforms that link elderly farmers who have no successors with young prospective farmers. A good example can be found in Ethiopia, where youth are awarded public lands for development by local governments based on their innovativeness and commitment to conservation and restoration activities. Such initiatives could **inspire local authorities to formulate action plans to provide land tenure for youth** who implement sustainable land and ecosystem restoration activities.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED AND CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

The following stakeholders were consulted in the development of this strategy:

1. ***Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA), hosted by FAO***
2. ***UNFCCC YOUNGO***
3. ***UNCBD Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN)***
4. ***UNCCD Land Heroes***
5. ***UNCCD Youth Caucus***
6. ***World Bank Youth to Youth (Y2Y) and Global Youth Climate Network (GYCN)***
7. ***AFR100***
8. ***Netherlands Food Partnership***
9. ***Stockholm Environment Institute's SIANI (Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative)***
10. ***GLF- Youth in Landscapes***
11. ***Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth***
12. ***UN SG Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change***
13. ***Agriterra***
14. ***FAO OCB Youth Group***
15. ***UNFCCC ACE***
16. ***International Land Coalition***
17. ***Decent Jobs for Youth Initiative (hosted at ILO)***
18. ***Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD)***

The following was the list of consultation questions:

1. *What are the key barriers for young people to engage in land restoration, preventing desertification and land degradation, and minimizing the effect of drought?*
2. *What activities and initiatives your organization has undertaken to promote youth engagement in the above issues?*
3. *What have been your lessons learned from engaging youth in these issues? What has worked well and what has not worked well?*
4. *Based on the barriers you indicated, what should be the key focus areas for UNCCD to support youth engagement in its mission towards land restoration, preventing desertification and land degradation, and minimizing the effect of drought?*
5. *What strategic activities do you recommend for the **UNCCD Secretariat** to better engage youth?*

6. *What strategic activities do you recommend for the **UNCCD Parties (countries)** to better engage youth?*

7. *What strategic activities do you recommend for **civil society and private sector stakeholders** in the space to better engage youth?*