



UN Major Group for
Children and Youth
the space for children and youth in the United Nations

*Plenary Statement on Youth Engagement and Participation
World Humanitarian Summit
23-24 of May*

I am speaking on behalf of the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, and the youth constituency. We have engaged in a global offline and online consultation process for the World Humanitarian Summit to gather the inputs of young people, and we would like to share their views.

During times of crises, children and youth are not just passive bystanders affected by disasters; they are often strong agents of change within their communities, contributing to short and long-term humanitarian responses in a multitude of ways.

Worldwide, young people are active in volunteering and sharing their skills, time and money, acting as frontline responders during crisis. We facilitate peer-to-peer education about preparedness and non-violence; we help rebuild communities; we quickly coordinate and connect individuals and organizations; we contribute to policy and advocacy initiatives; we even bring reconciliation to divided communities in times of conflict.

It is essential for governments, NGOs and all humanitarian actors to recognise the potential and reality of youth as capable and important actors in humanitarian settings. Their meaningful engagement in humanitarian policy design, implementation, monitoring and review is a prerequisite to fully reap the benefits of a revitalized humanitarian agenda.

We call for an institutionalised Youth Engagement Platform within UN OCHA, to support the systematic inclusion of, engagement of and partnership with youth, in all phases of humanitarian action. Such a platform should institutionalise youth engagement by incorporating young people into all aspects of humanitarian action: from strategy, planning, and policy building to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

In order to enable children and youth to fulfil their potential, they should be educated on disaster risk reduction, humanitarian preparedness, and conflict resolution from an early age. Conscious efforts should be made to build the capacity of children and youth and efforts must be made to empower and support local youth-led initiatives and organizations in humanitarian response.

Specific attention should be given to youth from marginalised populations, such as young refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons living in urban informal settlements and slums. To ensure that youth engagement reflects the wide diversity of young people, an intersectional approach towards stakeholder engagement that allows full access to decision-making spaces is essential.

Stakeholder groups, including youth, also have an important role to play in strengthening the accountability of member states and international humanitarian actors. Clear accountability mechanisms that feeds into the High Level Political Forum for member states and other humanitarian actors must be established, including civil society and youth-led monitoring and shadow reporting.

Young people have the potential to bring change to local and international communities, when given the knowledge, skills and resources to do so. To not utilise this potential would be a waste not only for youth themselves, but for society at large.

Thank you.