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The development and coordination of this report was led by the UN Youth Office, the Youth2030 Joint Working Group, and their Task Team on Young People with Disabilities. This task team includes representatives from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); the UN Youth Office; the World Health Organization (WHO); the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR); the International Labour Organization (ILO); the International Telecommunication Union (ITU); the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC); the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) Multi-Partner Trust Fund; the International Disability Alliance (IDA)’s Youth Committee; and the Global Network of Young Persons with Disabilities (GNYPWD).

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Acronyms

CCA	Common Country Analysis
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
JWP	Joint Work Plan
KPI	Key performance indicator
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex. The 'plus' is used to signify all of the gender identities and sexual orientations not specifically covered by the other five initials.
OPD	Organization of persons with disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Teams
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
YPS	Youth, Peace, and Security

1. Introduction

The UN Youth Strategy (Youth2030) and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) are pivotal frameworks guiding the UN's commitment to "Leave No One Behind". The Youth2030 Strategy aims to enhance youth engagement and participation across every pillar of the UN's work. At the same time, UNDIS promotes disability inclusion and the active participation of persons with disabilities throughout all the Organization's endeavours. Together with the System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP), these strategies forge robust synergies, enriching the UN's intersectional approach to addressing human rights, development, peace, and security. These synergies fortify the UN's commitment to youth empowerment, disability inclusion, and gender equality, reinforcing inclusive practices across all its activities.

Meaningful engagement of young persons with disabilities is central to the success of Youth2030 and UNDIS. It is also essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda and realizing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD mandates the close consultation and active involvement of persons with disabilities, recognizing them not as passive recipients but as key stakeholders in shaping inclusive policies. The unique insights of young persons with disabilities are crucial for creating solutions that align with real-world experiences and needs, fostering equality, and enhancing policy effectiveness.

What is the objective of this Guidance Note?

This Guidance Note seeks to assist UN Country Teams in strengthening their engagement with young persons with disabilities. It outlines strategies to create inclusive environments and ensure that the perspectives of young persons with disabilities are respected and actively considered. The goal is to facilitate their meaningful participation in shaping decisions at all levels, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Who is the Guidance Note for?

The Guidance Note aims to assist all UN staff within Country Teams – whether they are working in human rights, sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, peace and security, or operational functions – to meaningfully engage with young persons with disabilities from planning and design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

How should this Guidance Note be used?

The Guidance Note provides basic strategies and tools to meaningfully engage with young persons with disabilities. It is part of and aligned with the Youth2030 Knowledge documents and Toolkit.

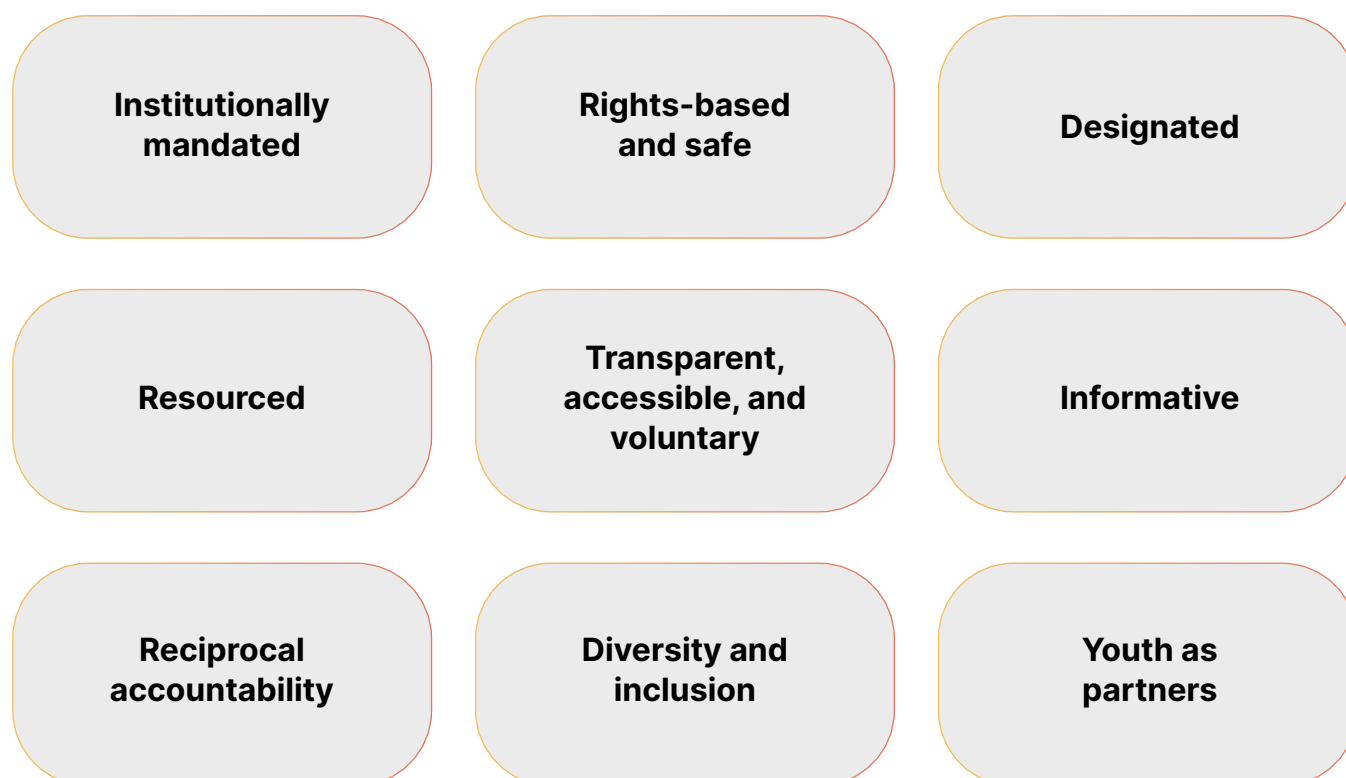
This Guidance Note should be used in conjunction with the following documents:

- ▶ [Youth2030 Action Guide for United Nations Country Teams](#)
- ▶ [UNESCO Guidance for Meaningful Youth Engagement](#)
- ▶ [UNDIS Guidelines on Consulting Persons with Disabilities](#)
- ▶ [UNICEF Guidance, Take Us Seriously! Engaging Children with Disabilities in Decisions Affecting their Lives](#)
- ▶ [UN Youth Office, UNFPA, Youth2030 Disability Task Team, Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action: Checklist to Ensure the Meaningful Engagement of Young Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#)

3. What is meaningful youth engagement?

Meaningful youth engagement means the active, genuine inclusion of young persons in decision-making processes affecting them and their communities. It is not merely about giving young persons a voice, but recognizing their leadership and valuing and integrating their ideas, experiences, and perspectives in policy, programmatic, and institutional decisions.⁹ It implies a multidimensional approach involving information sharing, dialogue, mutual respect, shared decision-making, and accountability.

Key guiding principles for meaningful youth engagement¹⁰

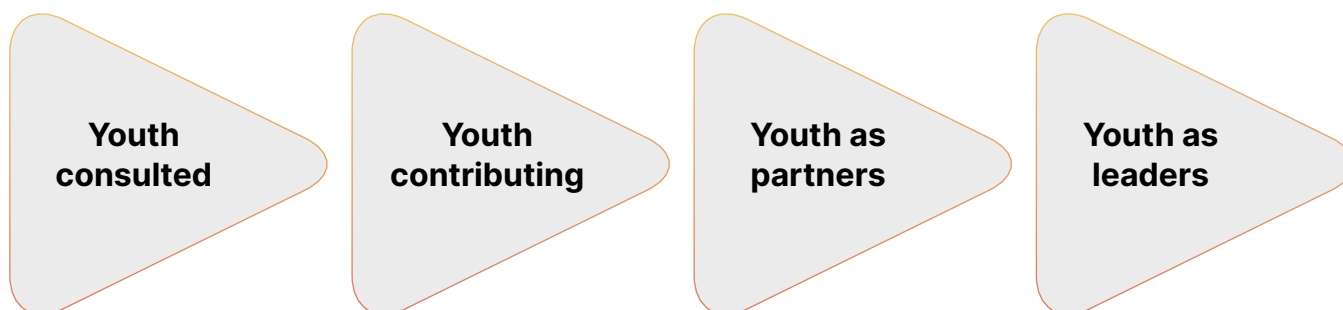


⁹ Youth Coalition, Global Network of Young Persons with Disabilities and UNFPA, Manifesto on meaningful youth engagement for young persons with disabilities, 2023.

¹⁰ Youth2030, Action Guide for United Nations Country Teams, p. 30-31.

The degree of youth engagement can take many forms:¹¹

- ◆ In a **consultative** approach, youth are invited to share their insights and ideas. This gives young persons the ability to influence proceedings but without holding direct control over the outcomes.
- ◆ When youth **contribute**, youth play a more defined role in certain aspects of a project or initiative, such as planning or implementation, though they do not retain complete control over outcomes.
- ◆ In a **partnership** model, youth are actively engaged in all decision-making stages, from planning to evaluation. This counters tokenism by ensuring youth's active participation, allowing them to influence and even challenge both the process and the results.
- ◆ When youth act as **leaders**, they drive the process from start to finish, determining concerns and controlling both the process and outcomes. In this model, the agency takes a backseat, acting as a facilitator, providing resources, guidance, and connections to help youth achieve their objectives.



Different stages or aspects of a programme or project may feature varying degrees of engagement. However, the UN has both an opportunity and responsibility to strive for the highest levels of meaningful youth involvement. The risk of tokenism diminishes by ensuring youth participate in every decision-making phase.

The Youth Coalition on Sexual and Reproductive Rights, the Global Network of Young Persons with Disabilities and UNFPA have produced a ► **Manifesto on meaningful youth engagement for young persons with disabilities**, which includes a series of principles and recommendations to support meaningful engagement.

¹¹ UNESCO, Meaningfully engaging with youth. Guidance and training for UN staff, 2019.

Key reference documents to be considered:

- ▶ **Youth2030 Action Guide for United Nations Country Teams:** 2.2.3 Capacities for Youth2030 implementation in UN Country Teams and 2.4.2 UNCTs, youth and knowledge exchange.
- ▶ UNDIS' UNCT Accountability Scorecard for Disability Inclusion: Indicator 13: Capacity development for UN Staff.

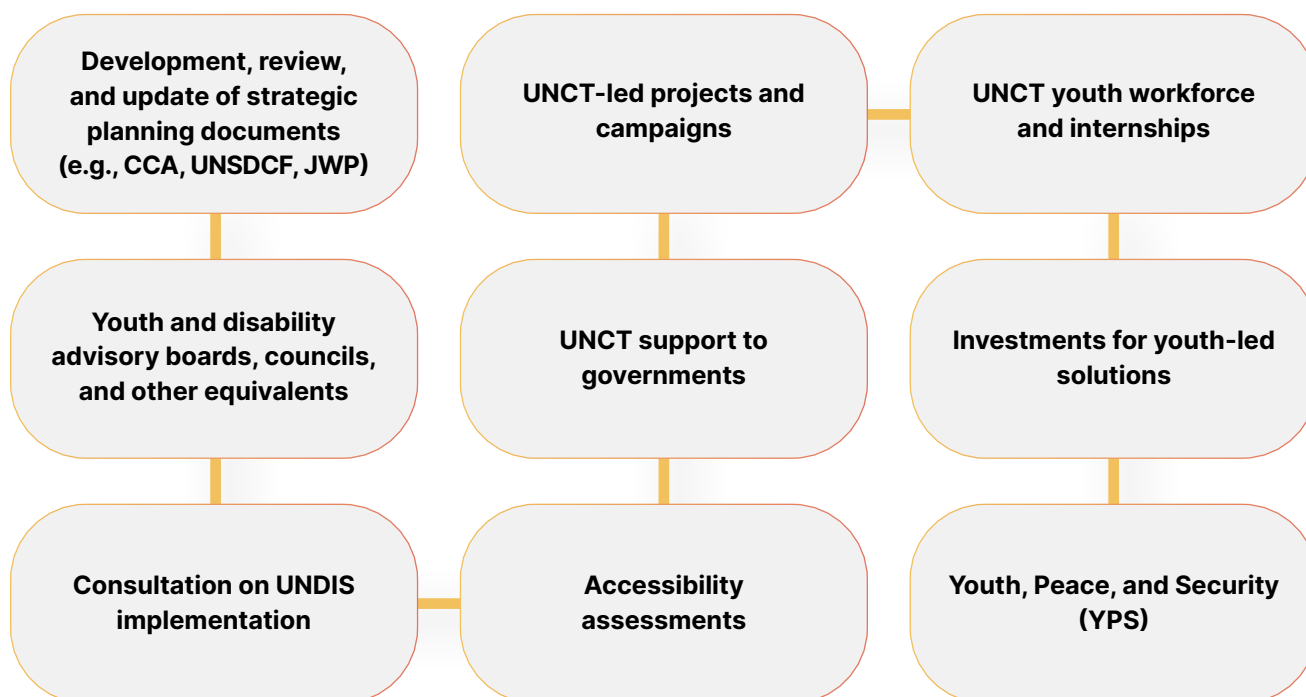
Supporting youth-led initiatives

Providing support to young persons with disabilities to take on active roles and leadership positions empowers them, ensuring that they shape the outcomes of any initiative. This support could entail platforms to voice their opinions, opportunities to engage directly with decision-makers and stakeholders, and direct funding to conduct their own initiatives. UN Country Teams should also aim to hire young persons with disabilities as part of UNDIS' commitments to inclusive employment, including through paid internships.

Key reference documents to be considered:

- ▶ **Youth2030 Action Guide for United Nations Country Teams:** 2.4.1 Investments in youth-led solutions, 2.2.4 Youth workforce in UN Country Teams, and 2.2.5 Fair and quality internships in UN Country Teams.
- ▶ UNDIS' UNCT Accountability Scorecard for Disability Inclusion: Indicator 12: Employment.

Examples of opportunities for meaningful engagement at UN Country Teams



7. Monitoring and evaluation

A final important step in effective engagement with young persons with disabilities is monitoring and evaluation, including assessments, gathering feedback, and making improvements based on the results.

Assessing the effectiveness of engagement strategies

To ensure the sustainability and success of engagement initiatives, the effectiveness of the strategies employed should be regularly assessed. This involves measuring outcomes against set objectives and understanding the impact of the engagement on young persons with disabilities.

Key reference documents to be considered:

- ▶ **Youth2030 Action Guide for United Nations Country Teams:** 2.1.1 Common Country Analysis contains a Youth Situational Analysis, and 2.1.5 Transparency of youth results in UN Country Teams.
- ▶ UNDIS' UNCT Accountability Scorecard for Disability Inclusion: Indicator 10. Monitoring and evaluation.
- ▶ UNEG's **Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations and Reporting on the UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework Evaluation Indicator.**

Gathering feedback from participants

Direct feedback from young persons with disabilities provides invaluable insights into the real-world efficacy of engagement efforts. Understanding their experiences, preferences, and challenges can help UN Country Teams fine-tune strategies to better serve the interests and needs of young persons with disabilities. Be sure feedback and evaluation methods are accessible.

Key reference documents to be considered:

- ▶ **Youth2030 Action Guide for United Nations Country Teams:** 2.4.2 UNCTs, youth and knowledge exchange.
- ▶ **UNDIS Guidelines on Consulting Persons with Disabilities:** Steps for a successful consultation.

Refining and improving engagement processes based on feedback and assessments

Continuous improvement is at the heart of effective engagement. By integrating feedback and assessment results, engagement processes can be refined, ensuring they remain relevant, inclusive, and effective over time.

Key reference documents to be considered:

- ▶ **Youth2030 Action Guide for United Nations Country Teams:** 2.4.2 UNCTs, youth and knowledge exchange.
- ▶ **UNDIS Guidelines on Consulting Persons with Disabilities:** Steps for a successful consultation.

YOUTH2030

