



# **Meaningful Engagement of Youth to Localise Global Migration and Forced Displacement Goals**

*A Guide for Local and Regional Governments*

*November 2023*

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## A Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees

- Local and regional governments (LRGs) are leading the way in welcoming and supporting migrants and refugees. The Mayors Mechanism partners, [United Cities and Local Governments](#), [Mayors Migration Council](#) and the [International Organization for Migration](#), in collaboration with the [UN Refugee Agency](#), launched a [Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees \(CTA\)](#), offering an avenue to capture this political commitment and vast practical experience of LRGs.
- By joining, LRGs get visibility to and recognition from international audiences and gain access to knowledge and capacity development activities. The CTA is framed around the [Marrakesh Mayors Declaration](#), which demonstrates the commitment of LRGs to localize the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) and [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (GCM) together, as concrete pathways to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).
- The [CTA was launched in May 2022](#) at the International Migration Review Forum where 44 LRGs mobilized 70 actions and pledges. Many of these tangible commitments included dedicated engagement with youth (see overview on page 6).
- The Mayors Mechanism and [Migration Youth and Children Platform](#) (MYCP) want to build onto this experience and **call on LRGs as well as on youth organizations** working directly with LRGs to join the CTA and **submit concrete pledges that foster meaningful youth engagement in local migration governance and forced displacement protection** as a way to bring visibility and recognition to the importance of working with LRGs and youth organisations.

## What do we mean by meaningful youth engagement, and why is it important?

- Young people are an essential part of any community. However, they are **often underrepresented** in decision-making spaces and excluded from processes that affect their lives, communities, and society as a whole. The particular rights and vulnerabilities of children on the move are identified in both the GCR and GCM, and young migrants and refugees can face additional barriers to accessing services or participating fully in local communities. This makes their inclusion in the development of migration policy and programming ever more important.
- **Engaging young people in decision-making** is crucial for ensuring that policies and programs address their specific needs and aspirations. Young people have unique perspectives that may differ from those of other age groups. By including them in the design, implementation, and monitoring of policies, local communities can ensure that the decisions made are responsive to the realities of young people. Young people are often highly invested in this work – because these issues are not only our present, but also the future. *Meaningful engagement goes beyond gathering inputs or tokenistic representation. To ensure meaningful participation and shifting the power to marginalised groups, young people should contribute to the design, implementation, and monitoring of policies.*
- Meaningful youth engagement is **particularly significant at the local level** because it allows for tailored solutions that are context specific. Local communities have a deep understanding of their own strengths, challenges, and resources. By involving young people in decision-making, local communities can tap into their creativity, innovation, knowledge, and expertise to co-shape effective solutions to complex challenges. This localised approach ensures that the voices and concerns of young people are heard and integrated into the decision-making process, leading to more sustainable and impactful outcomes.

## How can local and regional governments engage young people?

- 1 Identify and map existing structures:** Organized structures such as national and local youth councils or youth parliaments may already exist. The first step is to reach out to youth-led organizations to learn what they are already doing in their communities, noting initiatives with the potential to be scaled up, and explore how you can cooperate. You can also contact the Migration Youth and Children Platform to connect with our network of young leaders.
- 2 Establish official mechanisms to engage with youth:** Establish mechanisms for gathering feedback and ideas from young people during the policymaking process. These should be institutionally mandated, resourced, and inclusive mechanisms for participation, leveraging existing structures and youth organizations to avoid duplication of efforts.
- 3 Reach youth where they are:** Traditional mechanisms for engagement may fail to reach young people effectively. One reason for this is that townhalls or other formal participation mechanisms can feel inaccessible or unsafe for young people, especially when held in unfamiliar locations. Young people may also lack the time and resources to attend such events. Make participation more accessible by connecting with youth where they already spend time (schools, universities, community centres), or partnering with existing youth-led organisations. Present concrete opportunities for young people to get involved and listen openly to feedback. Creatively reaching beyond existing structures will allow you to engage a wide cross-section of young people with diverse backgrounds and life experiences.
- 4 Establish trust in government through accessible information:** To establish trust in government, young people need to understand both the role of local government and the channels of communication open to them. Ensure young people are aware of their rights and the role and structure of government and are empowered to exercise active citizenship.

- 5 **Ensure mutual channels of communication:** young people report a lack of spaces for dialogue between government and young people. Think about how existing channels can be made more accessible and inclusive, or new avenues created. This might look like social media pages, blogs, consultations or youth forums (online or in-person) which allow for direct communication with decision makers at the local level.
- 6 **Provide financing for young people and support youth-led initiatives:** Young people are often asked to provide inputs without compensation for their time and knowledge. Funding for youth-led initiatives and individuals through scholarships, prizes, fellowships, micro-grants or partnerships with civil society can make participation accessible to a wider population of young people and scale their capacity.
- 7 **Monitoring and evaluation:** It is important for youth to see their impact and know that their participation is meaningful and not tokenized! Regularly review if official avenues for engagement, communication channels, capacity building strategies and funding mechanisms are truly providing meaningful engagement.

#### Further reading?

- UCLG Youth Caucus Policy Paper, 2022: [Time for an Intergenerational Social Contract: The Inclusion of the Youth in Urban Processes](#).
- United Nations, 2023: [Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-making Processes](#)

## Existing local pledges submitted through the CTA with a focus on youth engagement



### [The Dreamers Fellowship, Boston, USA](#)

The Dreamers Fellowship provides leadership development and professional skills attainment opportunities for Boston Dreamers (immigrant youth who entered the U.S. as minors and have limited access to programs that are essential to their economic and social inclusion. The participants are paired with local immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations to gain hands-on work experience and readiness skills and mentorship for professional growth, while earning a stipend towards their professional development in the City of Boston.

### [ODDyssée, migration makes the world go round, Anvita, France](#)

ODDyssée is an educational project on citizenship and international solidarity (ECSI), which aims to strengthen the skills of educational actors, associations and local elected representatives in terms of animation and awareness-raising on the link between migratory flows and sustainable development issues through training sessions and workshops. Moreover, through two financial support mechanisms

(the "J'M Prize" and the "OSIM Helping Hand"), it aims to support ECSI initiatives carried out by youth actors and/or those with a migration background.

#### Tú también, Famsi, Spain

The diagnostic study is part of the #TÚTAMBIÉN / #أيضا أنت project. The document seeks to understand the mobility of children, adolescents and youth by focusing on the socio-community intervention of local governments in Andalusia and northern Morocco; it is part of the project of the same name that seeks to improve inclusion, especially of unaccompanied minor migrants and young people in exile, through education for development, training, exchange of experiences, capacity building and international partnerships.

#### Embracin, Famsi, Spain

EMBRACIN is a comprehensive model for the reception of young adult migrants, with whom we have had experiences in Andalusia in the cities of Seville, Jaén and Cádiz. These three experiences of reception, for a total of 16 young nationals from third countries, are each supported by six professionals from different disciplines: medicine, law, social work, language interpretation, teaching and psychology.

#### La música nos mueve, Famsi, Spain

This project has involved the participation of forty young people from different backgrounds living in Andalusian municipalities. The aim is to improve the integration and social perception of the migrant minors, adolescents and young people groups in Andalusia.

#### Freetown Waste Micro-Enterprise Project, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Freetown commits to provide green livelihood opportunities for migrant, refugee, and marginalized youth living in informal settlements while improving waste management throughout the city. In 2021-2022, the city's Waste Management Micro-Enterprise Program expanded to 40 new entrepreneurial teams to deliver waste collection services within informal settlements and to other Freetown residents. The builds on gains made by 80 existing waste management micro-enterprises supported by the Freetown City Council. Through this expansion, the city ensures that more youth living in informal settlements, the majority of whom are rural migrants, access the opportunity to jointly improve their livelihoods.

### 'Youth Work for All', Mechelen, Belgium

Not every family finds its way easily to youth work. The youth movements of Mechelen are not yet a reflection and representation of the diversity in our city. The youth service has taken up the challenge to change this with the youth movements and their associations. The project aims at: families (children, youngsters, parents) with a migration background and/or a refugee story (aim of guiding children/youngsters to youthwork); and youth movements (strengthening these organisations (and by extension youth associations) in order to reach the above-mentioned target groups more easily and support them in setting up a diversity policy).

### Monrovia Go Green, Monrovia, Liberia

The Monrovia City Government will provide income generating opportunities to migrant and internally displaced youth of Monrovia's West point and New Kru Town neighbourhoods. The Monrovia Go Green for Inclusive City Resilience and Adaptation project will train migrant and IDP youth as tree stewards responsible for establishing green corridors by planting 20,000 mangrove and coconut trees in each neighbourhood.

## Join the Call to Action for Migrants and Refugees!

1. Does your local government welcome migrants and refugees, or are you a (youth) organization that works to achieve this?
2. Do you have existing or upcoming work you want to showcase in relation to the support of migrants and refugees?
3. Do you want to see your leadership in this area showcased to an international audience of States, UN Agencies and International Donors at upcoming international milestones, such as the Global Refugee Forum, the International Migration Review Forum and the annual Summit of the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD)?

If yes:

- Check out [our website](#) and submit a concrete action.
- Read our [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Reach out to the Mayors Mechanism ([cta@mayorsmechanism.org](mailto:cta@mayorsmechanism.org)) and/or MYCP ([migrationgfp@unmgcy.org](mailto:migrationgfp@unmgcy.org)) for further questions.

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*This guide is produced by the Migration Youth and Children Platform – in collaboration with the GFMD Mayors Mechanism - based on extensive consultation with the United Cities and Local Governments Youth Caucus and young people from different regions on their needs and priorities.*



GFMD Mayors Mechanism is co-steered by:

