

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE ACP MEAs 3 PROGRAMME



An operational Guide for the ACP MEAs 3 Partners

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INTRODUCTION

Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) states that “it is imperative that youth from all parts of the world participate actively in all relevant levels of decision-making processes because it affects their lives today and has implications for their future”.

Though youth have the energy, skills and interest to contribute to decision making on issues of environment, they are challenged by social, structural, financial, and political barriers among others to have an effective voice in decision making. Considering the current and emerging environmental challenges youth are among the most vulnerable to negative impacts of environmental degradation. Though they have the interest and intent to make positive changes in the way we deal with environment and participate in decision making that will impact their future lives and livelihoods, youth are not equipped with appropriate knowledge, technical capacities and skills required to address the challenges as well as turn the tide on using environment to create livelihoods and securing the development paradigm.

Participation of youth in environmental decision-making has been attempted using several approaches, ranging from building capacities to ensuring their participation in decision making. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development includes specific goals and targets that have an impact on the youth, and that require the contribution of the youth in building resilience in communities. The set of targets entails water and sanitation; access to affordable, reliable modern energy; resilient and safe cities; sustainable consumption and production patterns; biodiversity and management of forests and the use of science, technology and innovations in facilitating youth engagement, development and resilience.

THE ACP MEAS 3 PROGRAMME

The ACP MEAs programme is a joint partnership between the European Union, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), where UNEP serves as the overall coordinator. The programme aims to build capacity in 79 countries in Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) to support them in fulfilling their obligations as parties to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to address the environmental challenges they face and to reap the benefits of improved environmental management at the national and regional levels.

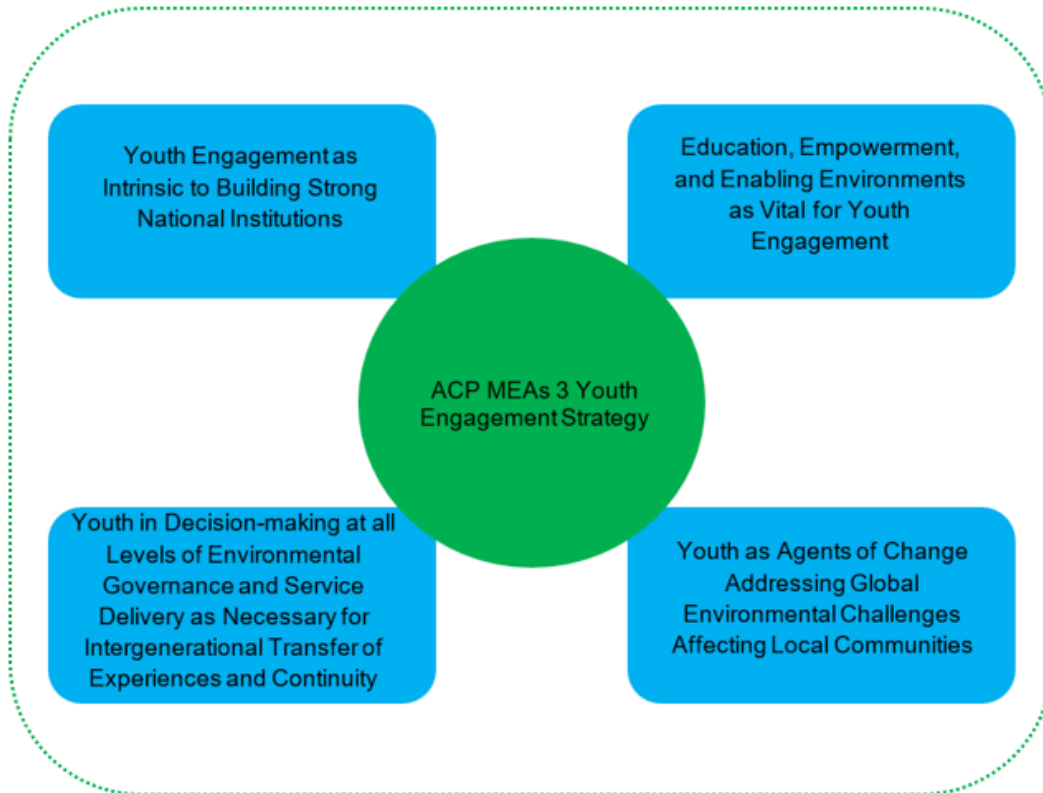
Since its initiation a decade ago, two phases of the programme have been implemented, in which environmental management issues have been mainstreamed into institutions and national development plans of the ACP countries. The Programme has further promoted an integrated and synergistic approach to effectively implement the relevant biodiversity and chemical and waste MEAs. In the current third phase (ACP MEAs 3), the programme enhances the mainstreaming and implementation of MEAs related to biodiversity and chemicals and waste, with a focus on the mainstreaming of biodiversity into agriculture and sound management of chemicals and waste, strengthening of oceans governance through the implementation of Regional Seas Conventions in ACP countries, and the enforcement of and compliance with MEAs at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels.

The overall objective of the programme is to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the attainment of environmental sustainability in the ACP countries. The programme promotes the enforcement of environmental treaties and goals in ACP countries by way of influencing policies and legislative frameworks. Specifically, the programme strengthens the implementation of MEAs in the chemical and waste, marine and biodiversity clusters at the national and regional levels in ACP countries through the development of stronger compliance and enforcement measures. These actions are to support ACP countries in addressing the challenges associated with the sound management of chemicals and waste, marine issues including pollution, coastal erosion and loss of biodiversity.

Given the socio-cultural and economic contexts of how youth perceive environment and deal with related environmental challenges, it is important to take a decentralized approach to their engagement. Working with youth at local and national levels and where available through regional networks will come handy in addressing environmental challenges that need specific solutions and hands-on action. Thus, there is need for the ACP MEAs3 Programme to engage with youth at both strategic and programmatic levels in order to achieve environmental sustainability. This strategy is therefore, an attempt to provide a long-term focused support to engaging with youth to raise their 'voice' on environmental governance issues, including making them aware of their responsibilities to deliver on the decisions made at national level, for example through the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), as well as be more active in shaping the development of national environmental priorities and the related negotiations that lead to making of decisions.

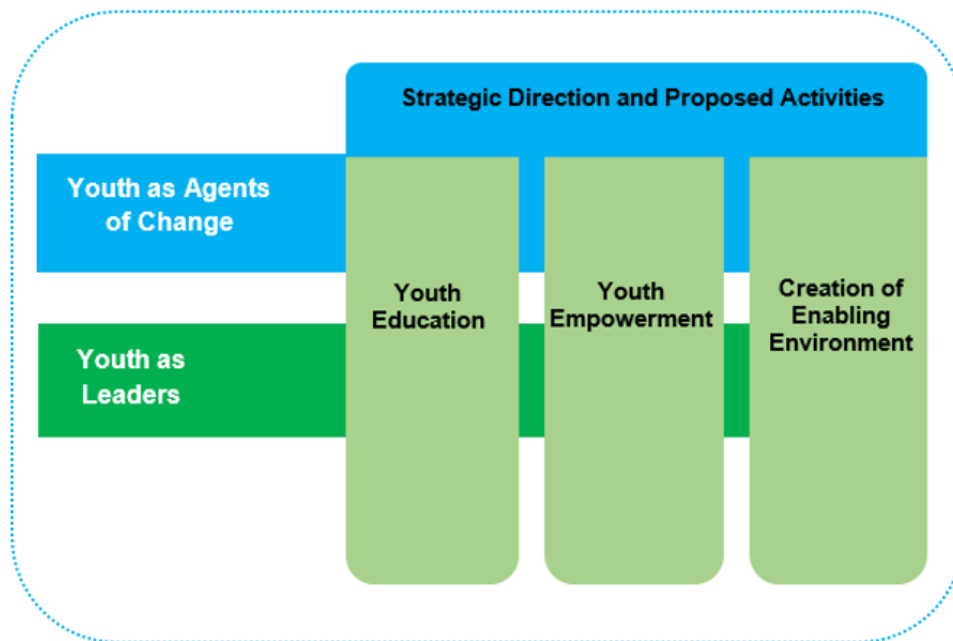


STRONG YOUTH FOR STRONG ACP COUNTRIES'
ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CAPACITY



BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE ACP MEAs 3 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Youth Engagement Strategy brings together 2 components for a meaningful youth engagement within the ACP MEAs 3 Programme which include youth as agents of change and youth as leaders which with 3 perspectives (i.e. youth education, youth empowerment, and creating enabling environments for youth) to shape the strategic direction of this Strategy.



The Strategy's strategic directions with their proposed activities across the three perspective of education, youth empowerment, and creation of enabling environments for youth reflect the role of youth in shaping the direction of national, regional, and global development agenda and institutional aspirations for youth development to lead tangible actions for achieving sustainable development at all levels.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR A MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE ACP MEAS 3 PROGRAMME

This youth engagement strategy aims for the involvement, representation and participation of youth in environmental governance matters by creating an enabling environment that enhances their capacity development, resilience innovation and participation through trainings, sharing or providing access to information which will promote sharing of knowledge and learning, inter alia, the 2 strategic components for a meaningful youth engagement within the programme and the 3 perspectives shaping the strategic direction of the Strategy.

Strategic Direction Component 1: Youth as Agents of Change

Strategic direction 1.1: Enabling youth to learn about themselves, unlocks their talents and strengthen their skills and mindset to become inventors of useful ideas for the development of their society.

Proposed Activities

- Provide mechanisms that will enable the youth to be empowered, such as in policy and processes inclusion, towards sustainability in inclusivity.
- Provide linkages to training opportunities where youth can strategically position themselves; for inclusion in national governments processes, to receive support for youth activities and to promote a bottom up approach with the youth's views being articulated at policy and programme levels.
- Training on policy language and interpretation and engaging youths through mentorship, capacity building and literacy programmes;

Strategic direction 1.2: Empowering youth to take up ethical leadership roles and inspire a positive transformation of societal attitudes and behaviours for effective natural resources management and the environment.

Proposed Activities

- Support the processes of securing of commitments aimed at reducing environmental damage, through organizing joint meeting for the youth with decision makers.
- Support further development of strategic thinking skills, analytical abilities and designing appropriate interventions to take impactful actions.
- Improve their ability to see environmental management as an option for career development, develop entrepreneurial models, support local and national economies.
- Capacity building to empower youth to be environment friendly such as in shifting their activities towards promoting or engaging in blue and green economies.

Strategic direction 1.3: Creating platforms for social mobilization to build a culture of environmental stewardship among youth in a participatory, interactive process to find constructive and creative solutions to environmental problems.

Proposed Activities

- Encourage youth to utilize social media and the media to create awareness and to give the youth their voice.
- Enhance the ability to network with like-minded individuals, groups and networks and provide opportunities for youth to engage in activities in their various regions.
- Support innovative approaches in working with science-policy interface.

Strategic direction 1.4: Promoting youth participation in dialogue to create partnerships with national, regional and authorities and nurturing values such as equality, respect for diversity, and recognition of roles.

Proposed Activities

- Provide opportunities to link with experts and policy makers to learn the nuances of negotiations and prioritization of interests
- Influence national and global policy making and supporting science-policy-practice interface.
- Provide linkages to training opportunities where youth can strategically position themselves; for inclusion in national governments processes, to receive support for youth activities and to promote a bottom up approach with the youth's views being articulated at policy and programme levels.

Strategic Direction Component 2: Youth as Leaders

Strategic direction 2.1: Ensuring youth participation in decision-making at all levels of environmental management, and service delivery

Proposed Activities

- Create an environment that recognize and utilize the skills of youth.
- Support the inclusion of youth in task force and establish youth coordinators in the various youth groups as well as encouraging inclusion of the minority such as the indigenous groups, women amongst others.
- Bringing the youth networks to engage with UN networks/ entities and further supporting youth networks to be more connected through their establishing of linkages, such as linkages to UN Major Groups of Children and Youth (MGCY) and participating in Generation Restoration meetings.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure gender equality in decision-making bodies

Strategic direction 2.2: Strengthening the leading role of youth in advocating for, identifying, and tackling emerging environmental issues.

Proposed Activities

- Provide relevant educational opportunities and tools for young people so that they embrace humanitarian values, learn how to effectively advocate, and acquire inter-personal and life skills to serve diverse communities.
- Create an enabling environment that connect youth leaders to arrange of regional and global youth networks.
- Enhanced understanding of the current and emerging environmental challenges and opportunities related to biodiversity, chemicals and pollution and to build awareness and capacities of on issues of environmental governance and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Strategic direction 2.3: Prioritizing and investing in the professional development of youth for leadership roles.

Proposed Activities

- Capacity building to empower youth to be environment friendly such as in shifting their activities towards promoting or engaging in blue and green economies.

- Provide mechanisms that will enable the youth to be empowered, such as in policy and processes inclusion, towards sustainability in inclusivity.
- Provide opportunities to link with experts and policy makers to learn the nuances of negotiations and prioritization of interests
- Provide relevant educational opportunities to prepare young people to assume and advance in leadership roles and responsibilities.

Strategic direction 2.4: Strengthening the leading role of youth in developing institutional partnerships for environmental management

Proposed Activities

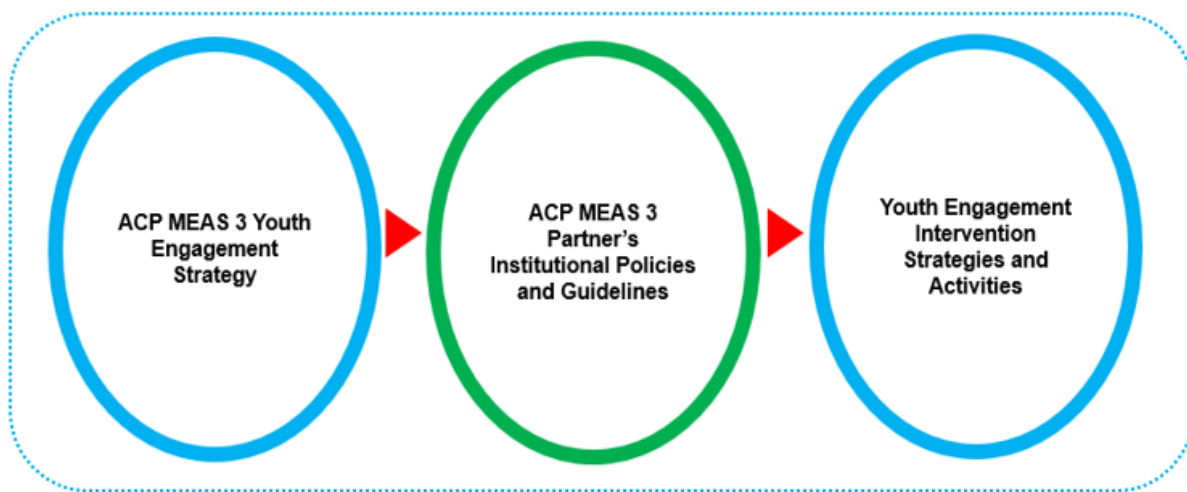
- Improving opportunities to network and learn from experts and policy makers on key issues that warrant attention.
- Provide support and offer expertise for youth events and webinars such as providing speakers to key youth events as well as organizing webinars to help youth to understand the current discussions on environmental governance.
- Provide mechanisms that will enable the youth to be empowered, such as in policy and processes inclusion, towards sustainability in inclusivity.



THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACP MEAs 3 YOUTH STRATEGY

During the implementation of this Strategy, the ACP MEAs 3 partners will be encouraged to refer to this strategy's building blocks and the strategic directions in the development/review of their institutional policies, strategies, and implementation guidelines to increase youth engagement in the sustainable management of their environment and natural resources.

For a better and meaningful engagement of youth in the implementation of the ACP MEAs 3 programme, partners are encouraged to develop specific actions by selecting from this strategy's strategic directions and proposed activities based on the regional and national priorities, interests and capacities of the youth groups, networks and individuals, for an increased youth engagement, which reflect their roles and institutional aspiration.



The strategic directions of the ACP MEAs 3 Youth Engagement Strategy will then be reflected in the partners' operational and institutional frameworks for the implementation of national and regional specific youth intervention strategies/activities across the African, Caribbean, and the Pacific region.



CONCLUSIONS

There is need for the voice of the youth on processes at different levels to secure our environment, that include biodiversity, ocean governance systems, climate change adaptation and mitigation. In order for us to have the future that we need, we need to have an inclusive action approach to involve the young people, to utilize their vibrance and commitment towards a sustainable and equitable society. Young people can also change their lifestyle towards positive impact on the environment.

Specific actions in support of the key elements of the strategic directions identified here, will be developed in consultation with specific youth groups, networks and partners.

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