Youth Empowerment Portfolio in Asia and the Pacific (YEP-AP)

Youth-Centered Intersectionality Assessment Guideline

Integrating an Intersectional Lens into Youth Empowerment: Programme Design, Implementation, and Evaluation

APRIL 2025

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ACRONYMS

CPA	Common Programme Analysis
GES	Gender Equality Strategy
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Project
SDGS	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNPFII	United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
YEP-AP	Youth Empowerment Portfolio in Asia-Pacific region
YOUTH2030	United Nations Youth Strategy 2030

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINE

1.1. Introduction

The Youth Centered Intersectional Assessment Guideline is developed as a practical resource for UNDP programme teams and partners working to design, implement, and monitor youth focused initiatives. It provides a framework and guidance to support the integration of youth intersectionality into all stages of programming, ensuring youth engagement is inclusive, meaningful, and impactful.

Young people are not a homogeneous group. Their lived experiences are shaped by intersecting identities including gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability, class, and sexual orientation which influence their access to opportunities, leadership, and decision-making spaces. Recognizing and addressing these intersecting forms of inequality is essential for inclusive and effective youth programming.

UNDP Programme teams and partners can use this guideline to:
- Strengthen understanding of intersectionality and its relevance to youth empowerment.
- Apply practical tools and self-assessments to identify gaps and opportunities in programme design and delivery.
- Design and implement inclusive strategies that address youth intersectional barriers.
- Foster inclusive leadership and participation across all aspects of programme implementation.
- Monitor and evaluate outcomes through a youth intersectional lens.

By using this guideline, UNDP programme teams and partners can ensure that their youth interventions are not only inclusive in design but also transformative in practice contributing to a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all young people.

This guideline was made possible with the support of Sweden, through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Sweden's contribution has enabled the scaling-up of the Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform (YECAP) across Asia and the Pacific, aligning with UNDP's Strategic Plan and global climate action goals.

1.2. Overview

In today's world, over **1.1 billion young people (aged 18 to 29)** live in the Asia-Pacific region.[1] They are digitally connected, passionate about bringing change, and increasingly driving social, political, and economic progress in their local communities and beyond.[2]

However, youth are also facing significant challenges. Young people, in particular young women and girls, young persons with disability, LGBTI young people, young people on the move, and youth in lower-income countries, are systematically, deeply and disproportionately shaped by the persistent forms of structural discrimination, affected by hunger, violence, unemployment and the impacts of disaster and climate change. Young people continue to be marginalized and may be socially and economically excluded. Youth with intersecting identities and experiences are left even further behind.

The UN's system-wide strategy for and with youth, Youth 2030 was launched in 2018 by the Secretary-General. It focuses on achieving meaningful outcomes for young people through collaborative efforts and joint action of the UN and working together with youth themselves.[3]

Applying intersectionality into youth programmatic initiatives is a necessary step to strengthen social cohesion and respect for diversity and address structural barriers and rising inequalities to ensure meaningful youth engagement. Building on existing tools such as the Youth 2030 Scorecard for United Nations Country Teams (Youth Scorecard), UN Country Team Accountability Scorecard On Disability Inclusion (Disability Scorecard), and the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard (Gender Scorecard) and the key learnings from its

implementation can be leveraged to frame a practical and action oriented youth intersectional guideline.

These frameworks highlight that intersectionality needs to be addressed more consciously throughout the work of the entire UN system in order to Leave No Youth Behind. By integrating these tools, we can create a more comprehensive approach that reflects the complex, multi-dimensional identities and experiences of young people, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of youth-focused initiatives.

The **Youth-Centered Intersectionality Assessment Guideline** is a framework built on the principles of Youth2030, offering a youth-centered intersectionality assessment matrix to address the intersectional challenges faced by diverse groups of youth.

It aims to ensure the application of an intersectional lens in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects. Additionally, it facilitates UNDP's efforts in the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment to Leave No One Behind,

1.3. How to use the Guideline

This guideline aims to strengthen UNDP programmatic staff capacity to apply a youth intersectional lens in programming, ensuring that all young people, regardless of their background or identity, are meaningfully included and supported.

The guideline is structured under three focus area:

Focus Area 1: Establishing Baselines[4]

It guides UNDP programme teams in conducting a comprehensive self-assessment to identify existing gaps and opportunities for improvement. The self-assessment supports programmatic team to establish a clear baseline.

Focus Area 2: Assessment Rating System

The self-assessment tool includes a four-level rating system that allows programme teams to reflect on their current practices and progressively strengthen the integration of an intersectional lens[5] in youth programming through targeted programming[6]. The four levels of the rating system are:

- Emerging
- Developing
- Consolidating
- Exemplary

The rating system is not intended as a compliance mechanism but as a learning and planning tool to support continuous improvement and build coherence across programme teams. UNDP programmatic teams are encouraged to use the framework as a starting point and not the endpoint for embedding intersectional approaches into youth empowerment work.

UNDP Programmatic team are encouraged to meet the standards outlined in the accountability framework, considering this as the baseline rather than the culmination of their efforts to integrate a youth-centered intersectional lens into youth empowerment initiatives. As a leading team in promoting youth engagement, the whole team is expected to go beyond the guideline's requirements, setting a higher standard of commitment and action.

Focus Area 3: Continued Assessment

Ongoing assessment is critical for tracking progress, identifying areas for improvement, and reinforcing a culture of learning and accountability. Through regular review, UNDP Programme teams can ensure that their programmatic interventions remain responsive to the evolving needs and lived experiences of diverse youth populations. Programme teams are provided with practical strategies for analyzing the key findings from the self-assessment and steps for incorporating key insights in reports.

INTRODUCING KEY TERMS: INTERSECTIONALITY AND UN SCORECARDS

2.1. Intersectionality

> Intersectionality is the recognition that people's lives are shaped by their identities, relationships and social factors. These combine to create intersecting forms of privilege and oppression depending on a person's context and existing power structures such as patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia and racism.[7]

Understanding the importance of intersectionality requires us to explore who is left behind, why and under what circumstance. It is not an 'add and stir' approach nor does it "provide definitive answers to social problems"; rather, it reframes our understanding of marginalization and "creates spaces for reflexive consideration and critical engagement."

The intersectional research method originated from discussions on race and gender, but age is often an overlooked category when discussing oppression and marginalization. The marginalization effect is intensified when age intersects with other identity markers such as class, race, gender, indigeneity, sexual orientation, and location, etc.

In this regard, **it is important to recognize that youth are not a homogeneous group**. Their lives are shaped by multiple and intersecting identities, experiences, and social realities. Understanding these differences is essential to designing targeted support that enables the meaningful, inclusive participation and leadership of young people in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

2.2. UN Scorecard

UN Scorecards are essential tools for performance measurement and accountability within the United Nations system. These scorecards are designed to provide a streamlined assessment of specific areas of strategic implementation while complementing other evaluation mechanisms such as surveys, secondary data analyses, and focused assessments. This holistic approach helps monitor contributions toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address global commitments, including those related to youth, gender equality, and persons with disabilities.

The scorecards are not intended to encapsulate all aspects of strategy execution. Instead, they serve as concise, targeted tools to ensure accountability in priority areas. Examples include the Youth Scorecard, Gender Scorecard, and the Disability Scorecard, which provide benchmarks for specific themes and audiences. These tools align with the UN's Results-Based Management principles, emphasizing outcomes, impacts, and accountability.

01

The Youth Scorecard

is a strategic planning, performance measurement and accountability tool structured to understand the performance of UN entities on the foundational and priority areas set out in Youth2030. The Scorecard captures the work of UN entities FOR and WITH youth, in line with the principles of meaningful youth engagement.[8]

02

The Gender Scorecard

is an accountability framework that promotes improved planning, coordination, programming and results for gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) at the country level, tied to support to Member States to achieve the SDGs. The UNCT-SWAP supports UNCTs in self-assessing and reporting on their standing with respect to a set of Performance Indicators drawn from inter-governmental mandates and based on review and analysis of UNCT processes.[9]

03

The Disability Scorecard

provides guidance on the 15 performance indicators of the entity accountability framework and will guide entities to implement and report on the UNDIS.[10]

Based on the content of the aforementioned scorecards and referencing other assessment tools such as the Gender Equality Seal, the framework for the Youth-Centered Intersectionality Assessment Matrix can be finalized.

3. YOUTH-CENTERED INTERSECTIONALITY ASSESSMENT MATRIX: A TOOL FOR DIVERSE, EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE PROGRAM DESIGN[11]

Scoring Method

The 'Youth' column is mandatory. At least one other identity column must be met to ensure an intersectional perspective is integrated into the project. The final score is determined based on the lowest standard achieved between the 'Youth' column and the additional identity column.

Scoring Scale

- Only the "Youth" box selected: 0 point
- "Youth" box selected plus 1 additional box: 0.5 point
- "Youth" box selected plus 2 or more additional boxes: 1 point

Note: While it is important to promote inclusivity, it is not always feasible to represent all identities and backgrounds within a single programme or project. This may be due to resource constraints or the thematic scope of the initiative. As reflected in the scoring system, indiscriminately increasing the number of targeted groups is discouraged.

Rating System

Note: To enhance readability of the rating system, we continue to use "20%" as a simplified reference point for the baseline rating of "Emerging," even though 4.5 out of 22 points technically equals 20.5%.

≥ 4.5 points (≥ 20%): Emerging	≥ 9.0 points (≥ 40%): Developing	≥ 13.5 points (≥ 60%): Consolidating	≥ 18.0 points (≥ 80%): Exemplary
Practices are in early stage on several indicators and strategic areas, with basic awareness or initial steps toward integrating youth intersectionality. However, in most cases, the programme unit or staff have engaged youth from no more than two identity groups.	Some strategies and processes are in place, showing a commitment and growing capacity to address challenges through intersectional lens, but further refinement is needed. While the intersectional approach is evident in select focus areas, its application remains limited to less than half of the indicators.	Youth intersectionality inclusion is well-integrated into the team's operations, with consistent practices and demonstrable impact. The programme unit or staff apply intersectional practices broadly, demonstrating tangible progress and commitment to inclusive programming.	The team demonstrates best practices in youth intersectionality inclusion, leading by example and consistently exceeding standards.

Strategic Areas	Indicator	Assessment						Score
		Youth	**Gender**	**Persons with Disabilities**	**Indigenous People**	**LGBTI+**	**Others:** *(please specify. For example: race, ethnicity, culture, class, religion or other identities and backgrounds)*	**Avg. Score:** *[Text Here, e.g. 40.9%(9.0/22.0)] Developing*
CORE AREA 1 - Leadership Strategic Planning and Management								
1. LEADERSHIP	Team leadership champions youth intersectionality internally and publicly.							
2. STRATEGIC PLANNING	The strategic planning process includes an integrated analysis of the situation of youth through an intersectional lens.							
3. UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK	Our team explicitly commits to protecting and promoting the rights of youth through an intersectional framework within our cooperation agreements.							
4. SET-UP AND COORDINATION	A dedicated youth intersectionality inclusion mechanism is integrated into the broader coordination framework of our team.							

CORE AREA 2 - INCLUSIVENESS							
5. CONSULTATION WITH ORGANIZATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES	Our team convenes an annual consultation with youth-led and youth-focused organizations representing diverse intersecting identities to guide the implementation of youth intersectionality initiatives.						
6. ACCESSIBILITY	The team conducts a baseline assessment of accessibility and inclusivity of its physical spaces, digital platforms, communication channels, and event logistics, ensuring they are welcoming to all youth, regardless of identity or background.						
7. INCLUSIVE PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES	The team's procurement policies and practices ensure that venues, goods, and services are inclusive and accessible to all youth.						
CORE AREA 3 - PROGRAMMING							
8. JOINT PROGRAMMES	Youth intersectionality inclusion is mainstreamed in a majority of new team programmes/projects.						

	Practical measures on youth intersectionality are integrated into existing team initiatives.						
	The team implements at least one flagship project focused on youth intersectionality inclusion within the current strategic cycle.						
9. DATA	The team maps available data and identifies gaps related to youth, disaggregated by intersecting identities.						
	The team partners with at least one external stakeholder (e.g., academic institution, youth group, government body) on youth intersectionality data.						
	A majority of capacity-building activities integrate training on collecting, analyzing, and using intersectional youth data.						
10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION	Team reporting mechanisms assess progress against specific youth intersectionality inclusion goals.						

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	Staff responsible for M&E receive training on how to measure and report on youth intersectionality indicators.						
	Project evaluations and corresponding actions reflect progress on youth intersectionality inclusion.						
11. HUMANITARIAN (if applicable)	The team assesses how youth, particularly those with intersecting marginalized identities, are included in humanitarian planning and response.						
	Emergency or crisis response plans outline how the specific risks and needs of diverse youth are addressed, and data is disaggregated accordingly.						
	Youth, especially from underrepresented groups, are meaningfully engaged in humanitarian coordination and response efforts.						

CORE AREA 4 - ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

12. EMPLOYMENT	The team adopts and implements a non-discrimination employment policy that explicitly references youth inclusion and intersectionality, ensuring equitable recruitment, retention, and professional development.							
13. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR UN STAFF	Training and learning resources on youth intersectionality (including self-paced, workshops, or peer learning) are available to all team members and integrated into onboarding or continuous professional development.							
14. COMMUNICATION	The team's communications—internal and external—reflect and amplify the diverse identities and lived experiences of youth, using inclusive, representative language and imagery.							

Example Calculation

Assess the Team

When staff use the Youth-Centered Intersectionality Scorecard to assess **the whole team or a certain pillar of the team**, they are expected to reference relevant evidence to support their responses. For example, after completing the self-assessment and selecting the appropriate checkboxes, a team—let's call it Team X—achieves a score of 61.4% (13.5/22.0), which falls within the "Consolidating" category.

The scorecard not only provides an overall rating but also helps identify specific areas for improvement. For instance, under the strategic focus area of Accessibility, Team X scores 0 points, signaling a clear opportunity to enhance efforts in this area.

Assess the Programme Unit

However, if the intention is to **evaluate a specific programme—or even a single event**—only Core Area 2 and Core Area 3 of the scorecard need to be used. In this case, the maximum overall score is 14 points while the scoring system and the rating system remains the same.

Strategic Areas	Indicator	Assessment						Score
		Youth	**Gender**	**Persons with Disabilities**	**Indigenous People**	**LGBTI+**	**Others:** *(please specify. For example: race, ethnicity, culture, class, religion or other identities and backgrounds)*	**Avg. Score:** *[Text Here, e.g. 40.9%(9.0/22.0)] Developing*
CORE AREA 1 - Leadership Strategic Planning and Management								
1. LEADERSHIP	Team leadership champions youth intersectionality internally and publicly.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		1
2. STRATEGIC PLANNING	The strategic planning process includes an integrated analysis of the situation of youth through an intersectional lens.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		1
3. UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK	Our team explicitly commits to protecting and promoting the rights of youth through an intersectional framework within our cooperation agreements.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		1
4. SET-UP AND COORDINATION	A dedicated youth intersectionality inclusion mechanism is integrated into the broader coordination framework of our team.	✓						0.5

CORE AREA 2 - INCLUSIVENESS

5. CONSULTATION WITH ORGANIZATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES	Our team convenes an annual consultation with youth-led and youth-focused organizations representing diverse intersecting identities to guide the implementation of youth intersectionality initiatives.	✓	✓	✓				1
6. ACCESSIBILITY	The team conducts a baseline assessment of accessibility and inclusivity of its physical spaces, digital platforms, communication channels, and event logistics, ensuring they are welcoming to all youth, regardless of identity or background.	✓						0
7. INCLUSIVE PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES	The team's procurement policies and practices ensure that venues, goods, and services are inclusive and accessible to all youth.	✓						0

CORE AREA 3 - PROGRAMMING

8. JOINT PROGRAMMES	Youth intersectionality inclusion is mainstreamed in a majority of new team programmes/projects.	✓	✓	✓				1

Category	Statement								Score
	Practical measures on youth intersectionality are integrated into existing team initiatives.	✓			✓				0.5
	The team implements at least one flagship project focused on youth intersectionality inclusion within the current strategic cycle.	✓	✓	✓					1
9. DATA	The team maps available data and identifies gaps related to youth, disaggregated by intersecting identities.	✓		✓					
	The team partners with at least one external stakeholder (e.g., academic institution, youth group, government body) on youth intersectionality data.	✓							0
	A majority of capacity-building activities integrate training on collecting, analyzing, and using intersectional youth data.	✓		✓					0.5
10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION	Team reporting mechanisms assess progress against specific youth intersectionality inclusion goals.	✓	✓						0.5

1	Staff responsible for M&E receive training on how to measure and report on youth intersectionality indicators.	✓	✓	✓		✓		1
0.5	Project evaluations and corresponding actions reflect progress on youth intersectionality inclusion.	✓	✓					0.5
11. HUMANITARIAN (if applicable)	The team assesses how youth, particularly those with intersecting marginalized identities, are included in humanitarian planning and response.	✓	✓	✓				1
0	Emergency or crisis response plans outline how the specific risks and needs of diverse youth are addressed, and data is disaggregated accordingly.	✓						0
0	Youth, especially from underrepresented groups, are meaningfully engaged in humanitarian coordination and response efforts.	✓						0

CORE AREA 4 - ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

12. EMPLOYMENT 1	The team adopts and implements a non-discrimination employment policy that explicitly references youth inclusion and intersectionality, ensuring equitable recruitment, retention, and professional development.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1
13. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR UN STAFF 0.5	Training and learning resources on youth intersectionality (including self-paced, workshops, or peer learning) are available to all team members and integrated into onboarding or continuous professional development.	✓	✓				0.5
14. COMMUNICATION 1	The team's communications—internal and external—reflect and amplify the diverse identities and lived experiences of youth, using inclusive, representative language and imagery.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1

4. REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The findings of the assessement can be incorporated into annual report and donor reporting to provide a comprehensive update on progress and outcomes.

4.1. How to Write a Summary Report Based on Assessment Results

The following steps can act as a guide for developing key insights on projects efforts to integrate youth intersectional perspective and results:

Step 1: Define Objectives and Results

Begin by clearly stating the project's goals and how they align with broader frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), national strategies, or donor priorities. Compare expected results versus actual results, using specific indicators to illustrate progress.

Step 2: Present Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Integrate into the report measurable outcomes, including the number of beneficiaries reached or percentage increases in key indicators disaggregated by data. Complement these figures with contextual narratives, testimonials, and case studies that illustrate the real impact of the intervention.

Step 3: Highlight Challenges and Adaptive Measures

Incorporate direct quotes and testimonials from marginalized or underrepresented groups. By giving space to these voices, the report ensures that the experiences of all beneficiaries are reflected, making the findings more authentic and impactful.

Step 4: Use Storytelling

Make the report engaging by incorporating personal anecdotes and community testimonials that illustrate the project's impact through a youth intersectional lens. Incorporate direct quotes and testimonials from marginalized or underrepresented groups. Enhance the narrative with visuals, direct quotes, and disaggregated data to provide a compelling, evidence-based account of progress.

Step 5: Analyze Policy and Structural Impact

Go beyond individual success stories by highlighting how the project contributed to broader systemic change. Discuss any shifts in policies, institutional practices, or funding allocations that resulted from the project's interventions.

Step 6: Align with Donor Priorities

Explicitly connect intersectional outcomes with the donor's commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). By demonstrating how the project aligns with these priorities, the report strengthens its strategic value and reinforces its relevance for continued funding.

5. CONCLUSION

The development of this Youth-Centered Intersectional Assessment Guideline emerges from a critical gap identified in existing frameworks: the absence of dedicated tools to address the unique and layered challenges faced by young people navigating intersecting identities.

Intersectionality in the 2030 Agenda is not merely a checklist or technical exercise—it is a mindset that demands continuous reflection, humility, and adaptation. While this toolkit provides structured prompts to assess inclusivity across program design, implementation, and evaluation, its ultimate purpose is to provoke critical inquiry:

*Have we truly considered the voices, barriers, and aspirations of youth **at the intersections of marginalization**?*

This guideline is a starting point, not an endpoint. It calls on practitioners to:

1. **Listen actively** to youth with intersecting identities, recognizing that their realities defy homogenization.
2. **Iterate boldly**, using feedback to refine approaches and address unintended exclusion.
3. **Center power-sharing**, ensuring marginalized youth shape decisions that affect their lives.

This toolkit is intended to serve as a catalyst for ongoing reflection and dialogue in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. Progress should not be measured solely by adherence to frameworks, but by the continuous effort to ask:

Whose voice is missing?

and to take meaningful steps to amplify those voices. Applying intersectionality as both a guiding principle and a practical approach creates pathways toward a world where all young people regardless of gender, race, disability, migration status, or other intersecting identities can thrive **with dignity and equality.**

Credits

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6. ANNEXES

Reading Materials & References

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11. This matrix is adapted from the Youth Scorecard, Gender Scorecard, and Disability Scorecard, with insights drawn from the Gender Equality Seal and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

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