

Interim Evaluation of the OHCHR Youth and Human Rights Project

Evaluation Report

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An external consultant has prepared this report. The views expressed herein are those of the Consultant and therefore do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of OHCHR.

Composition of the Evaluation team

Evaluation Team

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List of Acronyms

CO – Country Office

DESIB – Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch

DEXREL – Donor and External Relations Section (OHCHR)

ECOSOC – Economic and Social Council

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization

FOTCD – Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (OHCHR)

GYPI – Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (Peacebuilding Fund)

HRE – Human Rights Education

HQ – Headquarters (OHCHR)

ILO – International Labour Organization

IOM – International Organization for Migration

IANYD – UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development

METS – Methodology, Education and Training Section (OHCHR)

OHCHR – Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

PBRB – Programme Budget and Review Board (OHCHR)

PPMES – Policy Planning Monitoring & Evaluation Section (OHCHR)

PSMS – Programme Support and Management Services (OHCHR)

RO – Regional Office

ROLS – Rule of Law and Democracy Section

RPTC – United Nations Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation

TESPRDD – Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures, and Right to Development Division (OHCHR)

UNCT – UN Country Teams

UNDP – UN Development Programme

UNEG – UN Evaluation Group

UNESCO – UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNFCCC – UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNFPA – UN Population Fund

UN HCR – UN Human Rights Council

UNICEF – UN Children’s Fund

UNITAR – UN Institute for Training and Research

UNOG – UN Office at Geneva

UNV – UN Volunteer

UNW – UN Women

UPR – Universal Periodic Review

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Project background

The global population of Youth is quickly becoming an important category of focus for promoting Human Rights at global, regional, and national levels. The OHCHR Management Plan 2018-2021 identified youth as a 'spotlight population' (along with women and people with disabilities); this has been extended until 2023. One of OHCHR's current youth initiatives is the implementation of a project funded by Norway since 2019, with a budget of approximately US\$ 700,000 per year.¹ The *Youth and Human Rights Project* works towards human rights with and for young people. The primary strategy of the project is to establish Youth Officers, currently in five Field Offices and at Headquarters in Geneva, who work closely with youth-led organizations in their country or region, as well as other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), government officials, other UN agencies. The aims of the Youth and Human Rights Project are closely aligned with the UN Youth Strategy launched in 2018, with a view to reinforcing OHCHR efforts towards implementation of the Strategy, and promoting a human rights-based approach.

The Youth Officers employ a variety of strategies to raise awareness of, and build capacity in, the human rights of youth in the identified regions and countries. These include identifying, and facilitating connections between, existing organizations and networks; providing training in human rights, particularly the rights of youth, for all stakeholders; the creation of materials; providing technical support; and support with fundraising. While the overarching focus is on youth in general, there is also a particular focus on youth facing vulnerabilities. There is thus an emphasis on inclusion of women and people with disabilities, and depending on the region, there is additional emphasis on Indigenous youth, LGBTQ+ youth, Youth of African descent, rural youth, and / or youth from other marginalized sectors of society.

Evaluation Background

The purpose of this interim evaluation is to assess the Youth and Human Rights Project and produce recommendations to inform the ongoing work of the project. The scope of the evaluation covers the implementation of the Youth and Human Rights Project since the start of the project in 2019, including its extensions until 2021. It is hoped that the project will continue to be funded for an additional term. Given the short time since the project has been implemented, it has not yet been evaluated. This evaluation is primarily *formative*, extracting lessons that can inform the Youth and Human Rights Project and possibly other programmes' work in the future. It is also *summative*, assessing the results achieved in the short time that it has been running, with a primary focus on how these can inform project orientation.

It is important to note that the Youth and Human Rights Project began in the months just before the COVID-19 global pandemic. This unexpected situation required replanning as everyone adjusted to lockdowns and travel restrictions. This evaluation takes this context into consideration – both in terms of its impact on implementation of the project, and on the ways that the human rights of youth were impacted by the pandemic.

¹ 6.2 million Norwegian kroner (NOK).

The evaluation was conducted by Dr. Jennifer Hays, Professor in Social Anthropology at UiT- the Arctic University of Norway, in collaboration with OHCHR office responsible for the programmes. The entire evaluation period was September 2021 – March 2022; interviews were conducted in November-December 2021 and January 2022; two focus group interviews were held in early April 2022.

Methodology

The UN Human Rights theory of change and results framework identifies two general targets in the overall strategy to ensure that human rights aims are achieved: *rights holders* and *duty-bearers*. Focusing on both of these, the Youth and Human Rights Project takes a Human Rights Education (HRE) approach. It employs several interconnected strategies, including: *awareness-raising*, *capacity-building*, *networking* at the individual and organizational level, the provision of key *technical support* and the development of *toolkits and other materials*. The role of the Youth Officers is to engage with and support existing national structures, and to identify key issues, strategies for synergy, and networks based on regional experience and priorities.

The Youth and Human Rights Project is playing a key role in the early stages of a long-term process. The extent to which social change can occur is highly dependent upon cultural, social, political, economic, environmental, and other structural factors. The Theory of Change utilized in this evaluation is the Human Rights Education Results Chain (see Outcome Model, page 8). The imagery with which this is described in the OHCHR (2020) guidance booklet likens the human rights activity itself to a rock tossed into a pond: the immediate outcome is the visible splash that occurs upon impact; the intermediate outcome is the ‘ripple effect’ as the effects of the initial action spread more widely; and the ultimate outcome is the ‘waves at the shoreline’ representing broader social change. While the immediate outcome of an activity may be quite visible and measurable, and intermediate affects clearly attributable, the ultimate outcomes are affected by complex and changing conditions. They also take time, and are usually the result of a long process.

This project has been in operation since June 2019, for approximately two and a half years at the time of data collection for this evaluation, so it is too early to be able to clearly measure long-term results. This evaluation concentrates primarily upon the immediate visible outcomes, and the potential for intermediate effects of the Youth and Human Rights Project. The evaluation is also seeking indications that these have contributed towards potential long-term ultimate outcomes. As emphasis is placed on responding to local and regional specificities, there are few elements to systematically count or measure across the different offices. Most of the interviewees are in specific positions in relation to the project, and these reflect different roles and regional perspectives. Qualitative data has been prioritized, with quantitative information noted where applicable and relevant. The evaluation uses the following methods:

Desk Reviews of documents and communications relevant to the programme. These include: OHCHR and external documents including plans, reports, and evaluations; documents produced from Youth and Human Rights Project activities in the field; and minutes from regular meetings convening the Youth Officers and other key stakeholders.

Interviews conducted digitally with 28 key stakeholders identified by the reference group, in a total of 23 interviews; 19 of the interviewees were women. In addition, two *focus groups interviews* were conducted with local stakeholders, including in total 13 participants, of whom six were young women and six were persons with disabilities.

Secondary analysis of existing data sets, as relevant to situation in a particular country or region.

A focus on gender and disability integration is woven throughout the evaluation, and an emphasis on young women's issues and on youth with disabilities is deeply embedded into the project. More than half of those interviewed for the evaluation were female. Indigenous and LGBTQ+ youth are a focus in some regions, and were included in the analysis.

This evaluation uses the evaluation criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability, and mainstreams the Gender, Human Rights and Disability inclusion.

Main Findings

i. Relevance (R)

The findings of this evaluation indicate that the planned results have been highly relevant to the global, regional, and country situations. *Youth* has been identified as a spotlight population by the OHCHR, thus the project is highly relevant to its global focus, and one of the strengths of the project is the adaptability that is allowed for local contexts, thus ensuring increased relevance at the regional/country level. Furthermore, the project was positioned to act quickly to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as it highlighted existing human rights challenges for youth and created new ones, making it highly relevant in a time of global crisis.

The position of a **Youth Officer at HQ** has created a space for a focus on Youth that did not previously exist at OHCHR, or in the field offices. This position greatly increases the capacity of the Office to engage with existing global and regional youth platforms, to develop tools to introduce human rights perspectives to stakeholders at all levels, and to coordinate OHCHR engagement with other UN Youth-focused bodies and mechanisms. The Youth Officer also serves as a contact point at OHCHR for other UN agencies and ensures that the mandate of the OHCHR is fulfilled in relation to Youth.

Youth Officers in all five Field Offices are also carving out spaces for Youth and increasing the capacity of their office to engage with relevant stakeholders, and to raise awareness of, and increase capacity to promote, the human rights of Youth in their national and regional contexts. The **Central Asia Office**, in Bishkek, is responsible for five countries, and has a main focus on *non-discrimination and equality*; the Youth Officer has integrated Youth into that focus. In all countries, the activities of the Youth and Human Rights Project are responding to needs identified by actors on the ground. In the **West Africa Regional Office**, in Dakar, the Youth Officer is placed within the Gender Office and a focus on young women is central to the project. A focus on youth is particularly important for Africa as a continent, and the Regional Office is sensitizing, providing technical support, and building capacity, in order to mainstream a human rights approach to issues concerning youth. The **Pacific Regional Office** serves 16 countries, and is based in Suva, Fiji. This Office has had particular success organizing Youth around climate justice and food security, at regional and global levels, while maintaining an emphasis on human rights. The **Middle East North Africa (MENA)** Youth and Human Rights Project has four UN Volunteers (UNVs) that are working together on issues involving Youth, each responsible for specific countries. They have used online platforms to create a network of youth organizations, to assess the general level of knowledge of human rights and to identify relevant activities to build capacity to advocate effectively for their rights. In the **Guatemala Country Office**, (the only CO in the project), the Youth Officer is integrated into the Civic Space Unit and the Youth and Human Rights Project includes a strong focus on youth facing vulnerable circumstances. An

important aspect of the work of the Guatemala CO includes building the capacity of organizations and networks to apply human rights approaches to youth.

Although other UN agencies focus on youth, there is no other UN agency directly responsible for issues related to the *Human Rights of Youth*. The Youth and Human Rights Project is enhancing the capacity of the OHCHR to fulfill its mandate with respect to this particular population. For example, the OHCHR has a key role to play in upholding one of the three ‘pillars’ of the UN Youth Strategy: *youth and human rights*. It also provides a base from which to promote a focus on Youth at HQ in Geneva, which did not exist before. By promoting and facilitating the participation of youth in key national, regional, and global debates around issues such as climate change, food security, and the SDGs in general, the Youth and Human Rights Project is ensuring that youth are able to engage and that human rights are kept at the center of these discussions.

The Evaluation identified several successful and relevant strategies used by the youth officers, including; mapping of organizations that address Youth; the provision of technical support to existing youth organizations; building networks, and strengthening existing ones; conducting research to determine gaps in capacity; designing training sessions for youth on specific issues identified by the studies; holding or contributing to regional and national events, raising awareness and creating networks; working with UNCT and / or governments to review or create specific policies, strategies, or institutions that address youth; the creation of education and training materials, and other tools, specifically designed to facilitate human rights work by and with Youth; working to ensure that Youth are included in projects with other general areas of focus; identifying common areas of concern as a ‘way in’ to raising awareness and building capacity to take a human rights approach to youth; and partnering with other projects, including student campaigns and media projects, that create platforms for the voice of youth on particular social issues.

ii. Effectiveness (E)

Despite the relatively short period that the project has been in operation, the Youth and Human Rights Project is clearly moving towards a number of positive results, some of which have been achieved. The evaluation found evidence for positive results that aligned with OHCHR areas of focus within the UN Youth Strategy, including: increased youth participation in political and public affairs; increased ability of Youth organizations to integrate a human rights approach, to organize, and present themselves effectively; human rights of young people are becoming mainstreamed into the work of the OHCHR and UN human rights mechanisms; and governments are integrating a human-rights based approach to the development of youth policies. Importantly, these results also match effective approaches identified by the UNFPA (2021) for ‘amplifying the rights and voices of youth’, indicating that the results of the Project are contributing to effective long-term strategies.

Enabling factors include skilled and motivated Youth Officers, and good communication with HQ including regular meetings; partnership with other UN agencies, CSOs, and Youth networks; and supportive government structures (in some places). The two main obstacles that the evaluation has identified are the COVID-19 pandemic, and budget constraints. In all the offices the Youth Officers responded creatively and appropriately to these challenges, while acknowledging the difficulties and limitations they created.

iii. Efficiency (Ef)

The use of human, financial and intellectual resources to achieve the targeted outcomes has been efficient. The primary expense of the project is the salaries of the Youth Officers, whose expertise

and mandate allow them to conduct the activities that provide advocacy, technical support, and capacity building to local stakeholders. In two of the offices (Guatemala and MENA), a budget for activities is provided by the Field Office, and in West Africa activities are integrated with the budget of the Gender unit. In the Central Asia and the Pacific Regional Offices, the Youth Officers provide capacity and technical skills to youth organizations. However, they could work more effectively if they had a budget for activities, allowing them to steer their own initiatives. In most of the offices (RO Central Asia; RO Western Africa; RO Pacific; CO Guatemala), the position of Youth Officer is a National Officer, while in the MENA office, the Youth Officers are UN Volunteers, (UNVs) at early stages of their careers. While the National Officer position is generally considered as being filled by skilled experienced professionals, the UNVs are generally Youth themselves. This signals within the OHCHR and other agencies that youth are serious and competent role players. Both of these approaches are efficient in different ways, and the evaluation recommends that both practices should be maintained. The OHCHR4Youth network and their regular meetings have facilitated communication among relevant stakeholders within the OHCHR, and cooperation with stakeholders, partners, and other UN agencies has been highly efficient and central to the achievement of results.

iv. Impact Orientation (I)

It is still early in the project, but there is evidence emerging that the project has resulted in changes for the promotion and protection of the human rights for Youth. The Youth and Human Rights Project has played an integral role in promoting the category of Youth within the OHCHR, UNCTs, and governments. The project is already making a significant contribution to broader and long-term promotion and protection of the human rights of youth, through providing technical support, awareness raising, capacity building, and facilitating networks of a generation of youth leaders. Opportunities for impact are increasing and maintaining a focus on the human rights of youth will be crucial in the coming years. At the global level, the need for human rights capacity on issues relating to youth is expanding rapidly as Youth is increasingly becoming a target of international organizations, and the demand for human rights capacity in this area is growing. Many challenges specifically affecting youth are arising in a post-pandemic era, and the growing climate crisis, along with political challenges of populism and the rise of hate speech, place youth high on policy agendas. It is thus very important to keep youth agenda close to Human Rights, to prevent these youth movements from being coopted by actors working at cross purposes with human rights aims.

v. Sustainability (S)

The data gathered for this evaluation indicates that achievements and benefits of the project are likely to be durable, provided that initiatives begun under this project are able to continue. Given the unpredictable political and environmental situations in all of the regions in which the project is operating, other situations can undermine the achievements of the project. However, by addressing issues concerning youth, and building the capacity of youth themselves, the project is contributing to broader social and environmental sustainability as youth engage in these issues by which they stand to be dramatically affected. By working with existing local youth organizations, the project also increases the likelihood of durability. The project has also begun to build capacity within the government offices in the regions where they are operating, thus reinforcing national capacity to address youth issues. Also, the project has increased awareness of Youth as an important human rights category within the OHCHR Regional and Country Offices, as well as headquarters, increasing the likelihood that a focus on youth will be mainstreamed across the relevant agencies and integrated into future work plans.

vi. Gender Equality Integration (G)

Gender integration is an important part of the planned project results in all the field offices. There is a high attention to *intersectionality*, and the way that youth and gender intersect with each other and with other issues, such as poverty, rurality, disability, and/or ethnicity; the specific focus is defined at the national or regional level depending on the social dynamics in the country/countries in focus. In some offices, the project is collaborating closely with UN Women, adding a focus on *youth* to ongoing programmes focusing on women. Although none of the offices has a direct focus on LGBTQ+ youth, this issue is clearly a focus of existing Youth groups, and a part of the general youth movement. In the regions where legal and social protection is severely lacking, or where homosexuality is criminalized, the Field Offices must carefully define their approaches in light of this situation.

vii. Human Rights Integration (Disability Inclusion)

The intersection of youth and disability has also been a very important focus of the Youth and Human Rights Project, which has been engaging with the Disability section at OHCHR HQ to support the inclusion of young people in the section, and to promote the rights of young people with disabilities within the organization. At the regional level, the approach taken and extent to which this is a part of the project varies. In most Field Offices, disability is firmly integrated into the project, and some offices have a specific focus on youth with disabilities. At the time of the interviews, a global Network for Youth with Disabilities was being established through the *Global Disability Youth Summit*, sponsored by the International Disability Alliance (IDA), UNICEF, and the Atlas Alliance (held in February 2022). The establishment of this network will allow the Project to develop a concrete proposal and a clear, long-term vision for how Youth with Disabilities can be included in the project. A *reasonable accommodation fund*, would also guarantee that people with disabilities can participate; this policy could be integrated in future negotiations.

Additional inclusion issues – Indigenous Youth

Indigenous peoples make up an important segment of the population (43.6%) in Guatemala. They are recognized as persons in vulnerable conditions, as a result of discrimination and violations of their rights, and as having needs that call for specific targeted attention. Indigenous Youth, and their organizations, have thus been an important focus of the Guatemala Country Office.

Lessons Learned

Challenges of working with the target population: This includes tension between the need to include the target population in positions and decision-making processes relevant to the project, and the experience and expertise that is formally required and / or expected. This challenge is best met by engaging youth in positions where they become visible and their competences are recognized and promoted – as the Youth and Human Rights Project is doing and facilitating. Youth is also a very new human rights category and it is not very well understood as such. There is thus a large amount of awareness-raising required – even among the target population. Youth is also a cross-cutting issue that intersects with other vulnerabilities, and that requires inclusion in other thematic issues; it is important to identify these major thematic issues at global, regional, and country levels. The creation of national and regional networks can allow offices to better understand and respond to the needs of a broad spectrum of youth organizations.

Challenge of keeping up with a quickly changing global situation: The project has been required to continuously adapt to changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed. In addition, the global focus on youth is expanding rapidly at the UN, and among governments – while although largely positive, can have challenging effects. To address these challenges, it is critical to maintain a focus on human rights. Although the Youth and Human Rights Project is small, in collaboration with other actors, through this project the OHCHR office is contributing greatly to building capacity in this area throughout the UN system. This is an ongoing, and increasing, need.

Good Practices

Creation of a Youth Officer position at HQ. This coordinating position (first within the *Child and Youth Rights Unit*, and from 2021 within the new *Youth Rights Unit*) has greatly expanded the capacity of the OHCHR to fulfil its mandate for ensuring a human rights approach to the target group of Youth.

Establishing of individual Youth Officers at the field offices with the specific purpose of promoting the human rights of youth. This has been a highly effective strategy, and creates a dynamic where attention is given to an area that would otherwise likely be overlooked. Youth Officers in the field work across themes in the local OHCHR offices, promoting the human rights of youth and youth participation as crosscutting approaches.

Having periodic, systematic meetings with the Youth Officers in the field creates possibilities for follow up on specific global issues, questions, and strategies, allows for more effective involvement of young people in large events, and provides access to youth specialists.

Flexibility in the program to allow for regionally specific approaches. activities of each office can be tailored to the specific population needs, cultural dynamics, and social, political, and historical specificity of the regions.

Flexibility and creativity in the face of external challenges, in particular that of the COVID-19 pandemic, through the use of available online tools that and creating online alternative activities wherever possible

Building on the existing capacity of the Youth Officers, and the Office. Field Officers are able to contribute specific technical skills to youth organizations, greatly building their capacity.

Emphasis on networking, and the connection of, and support of, existing organizations and networks.

Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations builds capacity of existing youth-run organizations, and those working with them, and furthers ownership within the country

Collaboration with Government Offices builds the capacity of governments to address youth needs and the incorporation of a human rights perspective into government policies.

Conclusions

- 1) **The Norwegian funded Youth and Human Rights Project is highly relevant.**
The Project has drawn attention to *Youth* as a human rights category, separate from that of Children. It brings a *Human Rights* focus to the existing Youth movement, and promotes a focus on *Youth* within the OHCHR and Human Rights organizations. It also builds capacity of youth themselves to address their concerns. All consulted emphasized the contribution that this project is making. Furthermore, in all offices, there is an emphasis on inclusion of youth from vulnerable sections of the population, including young women, and youth with disabilities, and (in offices where it is both relevant and possible) Indigenous youth, Youth of African descent, LGBTI+ youth, and impoverished and rural youth. This recognition of the intersectional aspect of youth as a human rights category increases the relevance of the project, especially at the national and regional level.
- 2) **The strategy of establishing Youth Officer positions at HQ and in Field Offices is particularly effective, and efficient.** Having positions dedicated to coordinating and participating in activities – including networking, training, research, meetings and events – allows for the OHCHR to engage with key stakeholders and to promote a Human Rights approach. Even in offices where there is no specific budget dedicated for activities focusing on Youth, simply having the human resources available allows for engagement in a way that would not otherwise be possible. In addition, having a position in Field Offices dedicated to Youth facilitates the development of approaches tailored to national contexts and priorities. This increases both the effectiveness and the relevance of the Project, and its impact at all levels. While resources for activities are needed (see Conclusion 7), these can more readily be sourced elsewhere. Funding for the Youth Officer positions is an extremely important contribution that allows the Project to leverage other funding.
- 3) **The Youth and Human Rights Project has greatly increased the capacity of the OHCHR to fulfil its mandate of ensuring that approaches to Youth are grounded in human rights.** The COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing political events have highlighted the importance of keeping human rights at the heart of UN approaches to Youth. The youth agenda is gaining momentum, and in some cases risks being co-opted by actors with purposes and strategies that violate human rights principles. The OHCHR is playing an important role as the global organization responsible for ensuring a Human Rights approach.
- 4) **There is a need for further capacity within the OHCHR in the area of Youth and Human Rights,** at global, regional, and national levels. The contribution of the OHCHR within the current project is filling a critical gap; however there is a need for even more capacity and sustained participation. This includes involvement with the UN Interagency Youth Network at the Field and HQ level, in order to allow the mainstreaming of human rights within the youth development agenda, and other strategic directions of the UN in relation to youth. With greater capacity, in particular more human resources, the Office could more effectively coordinate work on a number of areas that are central to youth rights, including issues of accessibility, language, and diversity.
- 5) Following from the previous Conclusions, **there is a need to maintain and increase the OHCHR presence on Youth issues** in the coming years. Internal and external stakeholders indicated the specific mandate and expertise of OHCHR is crucial to ensuring a human rights approach to youth in the coming years.

- 6) **Youth Officers:** There is a tension between hiring experienced (and thus usually older) individuals to be in the position of Youth Officer, and the need to integrate youth into the OHCHR offices by hiring those in that category. There is a simultaneous need for:
- the experience and skills that the more experienced Youth Officers bring to their positions, and
 - the perspective of youth themselves, and a need to integrate this population more thoroughly within the OHCHR. (see Recommendation 3 below).
- 7) **Lack of a budget for activities is a limitation** in most of the offices. Youth Officers and their teams have responded creatively and effectively, and built alliances with other UN bodies and other stakeholders. This indicates that a relatively small amount of additional funds could be very usefully and effectively employed by the offices.

Recommendations

- 1) **The project should be continued, and if possible, expanded.** There is unanimous support for the project from those interviewed, and clear impacts after only a short period of time. The population that the project is working with is becoming increasingly important as a Human Rights concern, and in some areas as a security issue.

As the project succeeds in its goals of promoting awareness of Youth and Human Rights, and its inclusion as a human rights category, more resources will be needed to support these efforts as the necessary capacity is built – in civil society, in governments, and at the OHCHR and other UN Offices. Ultimately, the expansion of the project to other field presences should be considered (see Recommendation 6 below).

This project has the potential to make an important impact – but it is important to maintain the focus during this critical growth period, to ensure the mainstreaming of Youth as a Human Rights category, and the sustainability of the advances this far.

- 2) **Interagency engagement should be enhanced, including through the concretization of partnerships on Youth:** Interagency cooperation has been identified by this evaluation as an effective strategy at the global, regional, and country levels. There is much space to enhance the UN interagency nature of the work, and the engagement by Youth Officers (linked to UN Youth Strategy) as well as across the different areas of work of the regional offices. This would enhance the focus on human rights within other UN efforts, thus fulfilling the specific mandate of the OHCHR.

Concretizing interagency cooperation can also support long-term progress towards the realization of the Human Rights of Youth. For instance, the creation of an interagency fund for Youth could be considered within this context.

- 3) **The current practice of hiring experienced Youth Officers should be maintained, while simultaneously creating entry level positions:** The current levels of requirement for Youth Officer at HQ should be maintained, but the hiring of experienced Youth Officers should not be at the expense of integrating Youth.

The creation of entry level positions is also recommended. The use of UNVs to create or supplement a Youth Team should be expanded where possible; Youth UNVs and University UNVs should also be considered. NOA contracts, which require less experience, could be used to encourage the consideration of younger candidates at the CO and RO level.

A particular emphasis on the need for younger candidates may be necessary to combat organizational culture that often prioritizes experience (and thus age).

Given the important role that the project is playing in allowing the OHCHR to fulfil its specific mandate in the area of Youth, and the growing momentum of the Youth Movement, as well as the effective use of resources so far, it is recommended that additional resources should be sought and devoted to the Project. The following Recommendations relate to funding of the Project.

- 4) **It is recommended that all participating Field Offices should prioritize Youth in their annual budgets and plan line items for activities for youth.** The Youth Officer position has been identified as an effective strategy; this effectiveness and the impact of this position can be greatly enhanced by providing a relatively small amount of funding for activities. Some Field Offices have already begun including Youth in their budgets; this allows for even greater flexibility and efficiency in meeting the project goals.
- 5) **Given the highly intersectional nature of youth as a human rights category, particular focus should be given to ensuring funding that promotes *inclusion*. The following should be considered:**
 - a) Support for a *reasonable accommodation fund* would help a lot with disability inclusion.
 - b) The inclusion of rural and impoverished youth (including Indigenous youth) requires funding for travel and other support for participation in national, regional and global meetings: this should be considered in all activity budgeting and planning (regardless of the source).
- 6) **For larger expenses, including additional Youth Officer positions, funding should be sourced by reaching out to a wider donor base and diversifying the sources of funding.** The PBRB has already identified Youth as a priority area, and this evaluation has confirmed this. The identification of new funding sources will be necessary if the project will expand to fill gaps in other regions.

It is recommended that the Office explore options to create an awareness campaign about Youth and Human Rights targeted at potential donors, including the creation of promotional materials highlighting the main issues and needs for support.

I. Introduction

I.1 Project background

The global population of Youth is quickly becoming an important category of focus for promoting Human Rights at global, regional, and national levels. With a global youth population of 1.8 billion, there are more young people in the world than ever before, especially in the regions of Africa and Asia. OHCHR's engagement on youth dates to 2013, when it organized an expert meeting on the human rights of youth, bringing together representatives of youth-led organizations and experts from across the UN system. In 2017 the Human Rights Council adopted its first resolution on youth and human rights, followed the next year by the report *Youth and Human Rights* (OHCHR 2018), and two more resolutions in 2019 and 2021. The OHCHR Management Plan 2018-2021 identified youth as a 'spotlight population' (along with women and people with disabilities), coinciding with the UN Youth Strategy launched by the Secretary-General in 2018. With the extension of the OHCHR Management Plan until 2023, youth continues to be a spotlight population.

In this context, OHCHR works to promote and protect the rights of young people. One of OHCHR's current youth initiatives is the implementation of a project funded by Norway since 2019, with a budget of approximately US\$ 700,000 per year.¹ The *Youth and Human Rights Project* focuses on working for rights with and for young people. The primary strategy of the project is to establish Youth Officers, one at HQ and five in identified Regional and Country Offices, who individuals work closely with student associations and youth-led organizations in their country or region. The OHCHR has thus far established a network of Youth Officers in the following locations:

- Geneva, Switzerland (Headquarters)
- Beirut, Lebanon (Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa)
- Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (Regional Office for Central Asia)
- Dakar, Senegal (Western Africa Regional Office)
- Guatemala (Country Office)
- Suva, Fiji (Regional Office for the Pacific)

The project aims are closely aligned with the UN Youth Strategy, with a view to reinforcing OHCHR efforts towards implementation of the Strategy as follows:

1. Promote and protect the rights of young people, particularly marginalized youth, youth in crisis contexts and situations of insecurity and violence;
2. Promote youth participation in political and public affairs;
3. Promote human rights education and training of young people;
4. Mainstream the rights of young people into the work of UN human rights mechanisms and advocate for youth participation in human rights intergovernmental forums; and
5. Support governments in integrating a human rights-based approach to the development of youth policies.

¹ 6.2 million Norwegian kroner (NOK)

The Youth Officers employ a variety of strategies to raise awareness of, and build capacity in, the human rights of youth in the identified regions and countries. These include identifying and facilitating connections between existing organizations and networks; providing training in human rights, particularly the rights of youth; the creation of materials; providing technical support and support with fundraising (see section R3 under Main Findings on Relevance). The activities targeted both youth themselves and their organizations, and government institutions, primarily on technical assistance and training.

While the overarching focus is on youth in general, there is also a particular focus on youth as a characteristic that *intersects* with several other categories of discrimination, often narrowing options and compounding vulnerability. There is thus a strong emphasis on inclusion of young women and youth with disabilities. Depending on the region, there is additional emphasis on Indigenous youth (especially in Guatemala), LGBTQ+ youth (in some regions), Youth of African descent, rural youth (especially in Africa and Guatemala) or youth from other marginalized sectors of society.

I.2 Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders include:

- the Youth team in the Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch (DESIB)
- the Geographical branches in the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD)
- Donor and External Relations Section (DEXREL)
- Field Presences.

External stakeholders include:

- Interagency partners
- Rights holders and Duty bearers including:
 - Youth organizations and platforms, at national and regional levels
 - Student organizations
 - National youth councils
 - Government ministries
- Young human rights defenders

An important stakeholder is also the government of Norway, the donor for the project.

I.3 Evaluation Background

The purpose of this interim evaluation is to assess the Youth and Human Rights Project and produce recommendations to inform the ongoing work of the project. The scope of the evaluation covers the assessment of the implementation of the Youth and Human Rights Project since the start of the project in 2019, including its extensions until 2021. It is hoped that the project will continue to be funded for an additional term. Because of the short time since the project has been implemented, it has not yet been evaluated. This evaluation is primarily *formative*, extracting lessons that can inform the Youth and Human Rights Project and possibly other

programmes' work in the future. It is also *summative*, assessing the results achieved in the short time that it has been running, with a primary focus on how these can inform project orientation.

It is important to note that the Youth and Human Rights Project began in the months just before the COVID-19 global pandemic; many of the new positions financed by this project had just been – or were in the process of being – filled and the start-up activities were being planned. This unexpected situation required a replanning of meetings and events, as everyone adjusted to lockdowns and travel restrictions. This evaluation takes this context into consideration – both in terms of its impact on implementation of the project, and on the ways that the human rights of youth were impacted by the pandemic.

Geographically, the evaluation covers the activities of the Youth and Human Rights Project at headquarters and the field, including those countries that have benefited from the support provided by the project at the regional and country offices level.

The Youth and Human Rights Project fulfils the OHCHR criteria for evaluation, including relevance to the Office's Management Plan (OMP), strategic importance, and the potential for the generation of knowledge.

The intended audience for this evaluation includes the internal and external stakeholders listed above, as well as potential supporters and any additional partners.

The evaluation was conducted by Dr. Jennifer Hays, Professor in Social Anthropology at UiT- the Arctic University of Norway, in collaboration with OHCHR office responsible for the programmes. The entire evaluation period was September 2021 – March 2022; interviews were conducted in November-December 2021 and January 2022, and two focus group interviews were held in April 2022.

As outlined in the Terms of reference, the general objectives of the evaluation are:

- To identify areas of strength and areas of weakness in the planning and achievement of results – including in the area of gender and human rights (disability inclusion) integration;
- To produce useful lessons learned and good practices that illustrate successful and unsuccessful strategies in the achievement of results;
- To produce clear and actionable recommendations for the future of the project, identifying concrete actions and responsibilities for OHCHR to undertake towards these ends.

The recommendations produced are according to the following six evaluation criteria, as outlined in the Terms of Reference:

- Relevance – the extent to which the project is relevant to the prevalent situation of Youth at the global, regional and country levels, the mandate of OHCHR, its comparative advantage, and the needs of stakeholders (both duty bearers and right-holders);
- Efficiency – the extent to which the project is economically converting resources into results in the course of its term;
- Effectiveness – the degree to which the project's planned results and targets are being achieved, at outcome and output levels;
- Impact orientation – the extent to which the strategic orientation of the project points toward making a significant contribution to broader, long-term, sustainable changes;
- Sustainability – the degree to which changes achieved last in time;

- Gender and human rights (disability inclusion) integration – the degree to which a gender and human rights perspective has been integrated in the project, and the degree to which the results obtained have contributed to gender and human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality, with emphasis on women rights and disability inclusion.

The evaluation follows the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards² for Evaluation in the UN System, as well as the UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work³. Specific Evaluation questions have been outlined in the ToR, framed along these criteria.

I.4 Methodology

THEORY OF CHANGE

The UN Human Rights theory of change and results framework identifies two general targets in the overall strategy to ensure that human rights aims are achieved: *rights holders* (to claim their rights), and *duty-bearers* (to comply with human rights obligations). As a project aiming to promote awareness of youth as a critical human rights category in both civil society and government, the Youth and Human Rights Project is focused on both rights holders and duty bearers. The project takes a Human Rights Education (HRE) approach, with an emphasis on the placement of key individuals as *Youth Officers* at regional offices and a coordinating youth officer at the Geneva office, paid through the Norwegian-funded project.

The work of the project has included several interconnected strategies. An important one is *awareness-raising*, which entails both raising awareness among youth about human rights in general, and – importantly – promoting awareness of youth itself as an important human rights category, within government and civil society, and also within the UN system. Another important element of the project has been *capacity-building*, for both duty-bearers and rights-holders. For duty-bearers, this includes training in the application of human rights to youth, and in the methodology of working with youth. Capacity-building for rights-holders includes enabling the participation of youth in consultations (such as on climate change, food security, and policy reviews), as well as support for events sponsored by youth-led organisations. This also includes *networking* at the individual and organizational level – both connecting existing organizations, and creating interagency youth networks. The development of *toolkits and other materials* has also been a central component of this project.

Youth is not a very clearly defined category, and the age range that it covers can vary by region, country, and culture, as can acceptance of youth as a legitimate focus of human rights work. An important aspect of the project is its responsiveness to this variation. The role of the Youth Officers is to engage with and support existing national structures, including national youth organizations, student organizations and youth councils. Within the project, there is a great amount of creative freedom given to the Youth Officers, who identify key issues, strategies for synergy, and networks based on regional experience and priorities. With the UN Youth Strategy as a guiding reference, they can choose the areas of focus that make sense in their region, and develop those that are in keeping with existing projects and networks, and local priorities.

² <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>

³ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1484>

Outcome Model – Youth and Human Rights Project

Based on the Human Rights Education Results Chain, OHCHR 2020

OUTPUTS

Placement of Youth Officers in HQ, Regional and Country offices – with following activities

- Awareness raising
 - among youth about human rights
 - of youth as a human rights category
- Capacity-building activities
- Networking efforts
- Creation of toolkits and other materials

IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Awareness Raising:

- Youth leaders and activists become more aware of Human Rights in general and of their particular rights as youth
- Targeted sectors of civil society and government become more aware of Youth as a human rights category and begin to incorporate this into discourse and policy decisions

Capacity Building

- More youth participate in consultations on key issues (such as climate change)
- More events held by youth-led organizations

Networking

- Existing youth organizations nationally, regionally, and globally become more connected to each other
- Interagency Youth Networks created

Toolkits and materials

- are distributed to relevant organizations, government bodies, and elsewhere

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Within States and Regions, and according to the specific local dynamics:

- The category of Youth is recognized as an important human rights category
- The rights of Youth are included alongside the rights of other categories, such as children, women, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and other minorities
- The rights of Youth with intersecting vulnerabilities (young women, youth with disabilities, young Indigenous people, LGBTQ+ Youth, Youth of African descent) are specifically addressed in policy and practice
- Increased participation of Youth in decision-making processes on key issues affecting them, and affecting society as a whole
- Increased representation of Youth in leadership positions
- Incorporation of key issues affecting Youth into policy documents.

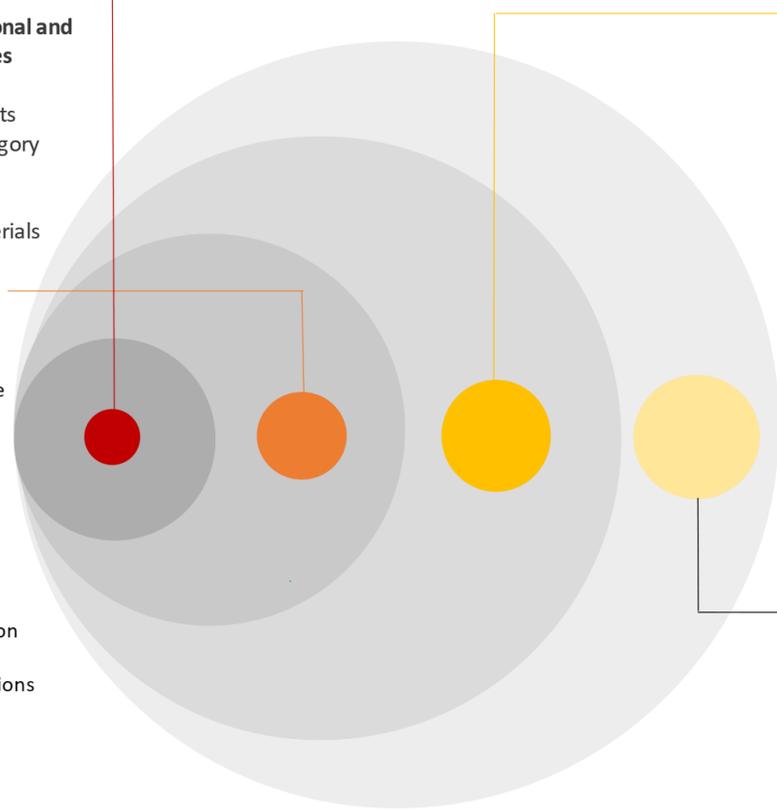
ULTIMATE OUTCOMES

States

- States fully recognize the Human Rights of Youth
- Full inclusion of Youth in decision-making processes, especially on issues affecting them
- Representation of Youth in leadership positions

Globally

- Youth everywhere move towards realization of their rights at all levels



Measuring the impact of HRE is notoriously complex, for a number of reasons. The *Youth and Human Rights Project* is playing a key role in the early stages of a long-term process. The ultimate outcome – sustainable social change – is influenced by numerous cultural, social, political, economic, environmental, and other structural factors. The extent to which social change can occur – and the necessary conditions – are highly dependent upon these contexts.

The Theory of Change utilized in this evaluation is the Human Rights Education Results Chain (see Outcome Model, page 8). The imagery with which this is described in the OHCHR (2020) guidance booklet likens the human rights activity itself to a rock tossed into a pond: the immediate outcome is the visible splash that occurs upon impact; the intermediate outcome is the ‘ripple effect’ as the effects of the initial action spread more widely; and the ultimate outcome is the ‘waves at the shoreline’ representing broader social change. While the immediate outcome of an activity may be quite visible and measurable, and intermediate affects clearly attributable, the ultimate outcomes are affected by complex and changing conditions. They also take time, and are usually the result of a long process.

This project has been in operation since June 2019, for approximately two and a half years at the time of data collection for this evaluation. Much of the project’s existence so far has coincided with a period of global disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which created enormous challenges. This evaluation therefore concentrates primarily upon the immediate visible outcomes, and the potential for intermediate effects of the Youth and Human Rights Project. The evaluation is also seeking indications that these have contributed towards the long-term ultimate outcomes.

Data Sources and collection methods

A few important characteristics of the Youth and Human Rights Project influence the methodology for the evaluation. The fact that the project is focused on one of the most recent human rights categories, and one that is not yet well-defined or understood, makes quantitative data harder to gather and less reliable. As the project itself has been running for only two and a half years, it is too early to be able to clearly measure results. Finally, as emphasis is placed on responding to local and regional specificities, there are few elements to systematically count or measure across the different offices. Most of the interviewees are in specific positions in relation to the project, and these reflect different roles and regional perspectives. For all of these reasons, qualitative data has been prioritized, with quantitative data noted where applicable and relevant. The evaluation used the following methods:

- **Desk Reviews** of documents and communications relevant to the programme. These include: OHCHR and external documents including plans, reports, and evaluations; documents produced from Youth and Human Rights Project activities in the field; and minutes from regular meetings convening the Youth Officers and other key stakeholders.
- **Interviews** conducted digitally with 28 stakeholders identified by the reference group, in a total of 23 interviews; 19 of the interviewees were women. Most of these were individual interviews, although some were in pairs and one was a group interview with the four Youth officers in the MENA RO (a list of interviewees is included as Annex 2);
- **Focus Group Interviews with local stakeholders** in Bishkek (Central Asia RO) and in Guatemala (Guatemala CO). These were organized by the Youth Officers in the two locations. The Guatemala interview included six interviewees, four of whom were

women. The interview in Bishkek included seven interviewees, two of whom were women and six of whom had disabilities (see further description on the next page).

- **Secondary analysis** of existing data sets, particularly monitoring information contained in OHCHR's systems and available in-country information regarding basic statistics such as the percentage of population made up of youth, and related education, employment, incarceration, or other statistics – as relevant to situation in a particular country or region.

Desk review

The desk review includes OHCHR and UN documents describing and promoting the Human Rights of Youth. Project documents have been provided by the Youth Team and the Reference Group; these include proposals and reports to the donor, background documents, newsletters, and meeting minutes. Youth Officers in the regional offices, and the European Youth Forum, have also provided relevant documents pertaining to their activities in their regions.

The documents reviewed are listed in Annex 4. These were read prior to or during the evaluation for background, complementary and supplementary information.

Interviews and Focus Groups

A list of interviewees is included as Annex 2, and interview guides are included as Annex 3. Scoping interviews were conducted with key stakeholders from the Youth Team, the Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch (DESIB) and the Donor and External Relations Section (DEXREL) early in the evaluation. The second phase of interviews included the Youth Officers at the regional and country offices in Beirut, Bishkek, Dakar, Guatemala City and Suva, the European Youth Forum policy and advocacy manager and the Youth Focal point in East Africa. Through these interviews, key areas of progress thus far, and challenges, were outlined. During December 2021 and January 2022, these issues were followed up in interviews with Regional Representatives (or deputies) and other Human Rights Officers in Regional Offices, relevant OHCHR representatives in Geneva Headquarters, and other relevant UN agencies. The two focus group interviews with local stakeholders from Bishkek and Guatemala were conducted in April 2022.

All interviews, including focus groups, have been collected via Microsoft Teams. Interviews were not recorded with audio or video recording. The interviewer (Hays) typed the conversations during the interviews, resulting in full transcripts of the meeting. Interviewees were informed of this method of recording. They were also informed that the data they were providing would be presented anonymously in the report. Where identifying examples, or direct quotes of interviewees, are used, they have been confirmed with the interviewee being described or quoted.

Most of the interviews were individual, with a few conducted as group interviews; as indicated in Annex 2. Most interviews have been conducted in English, and one was conducted in French.

The two focus group interviews with local stakeholders were conducted with translation. Spanish translation for the interview with stakeholders in Guatemala was provided by the Youth Officer from the country office. Professional simultaneous translation services for Russian were organized by the Youth Officer for the interview in Bishkek, and simultaneous translation to and from sign language was provided for the two deaf interviewees. The other interviewees included one blind person, and three with reduced mobility.

Interviews with individuals lasted from 30 minutes to one hour, and the group interviews and focus groups were between 1.5 and 2 hours.

All interviewees were very responsive and willing to discuss, and highly forthcoming in interviews. The online medium of interview has for the most part not interfered with data collection; there were a few cases of difficult connections but most of the interviews were smooth.

Data collected in interviews included the activities undertaken by the OHCHR Regional and Country Offices as a result of the Youth and Human Rights Project, the networks that have been established, and perceptions on social and political changes and the extent to which the Project has contributed (directly or indirectly) to these. Narratives from the interviews were cross-checked with the project documents and analysed for themes and points of emphasis. These have been categorized and associated with the identified outcomes, at different levels. These include the general social and political situation at the country level that are relevant to potential impact of the project, as well as regional specificities and common structural issues at various levels. The role of the project within the OHCHR, and more broadly within the UN, has also been an important point of focus.

Gender equality and human rights (disability) integration

A focus on gender and disability integration is woven throughout the evaluation, and, as described in section 2 of the report under *Gender Equality Integration (G)* and *Human Rights Integration (D)*, an emphasis on young women's issues and on youth with disabilities is deeply embedded into the project. As internal interviewees are identified by their role, gender and disability could not be selected for; however, more than half of those interviewed were female.

Of the six youth in the Guatemala focus group, four were young women, one of whom was Indigenous, and one of the interviewees identified as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Of the seven youth interviewed in the Bishkek focus group, six had disabilities and two were young women. Thus several of the categories highlighted in this evaluation as frequently intersecting with youth to create barriers and increase vulnerability were included in these focus group interviews.

Neither Indigenous nor gender non-conforming participants are specifically identified in the Terms of Reference as a group for inclusion; however, these groups are a focus in some regions and were included in the analysis under Main Findings. *LGBTQ+ Youth* are discussed under that heading, in section G1 under Gender Equality Integration. Indigenous Youth, an important focus in Guatemala, are discussed under *Additional inclusion issues* in section D3, under Disability Inclusion. Other categories of inclusion that came up during the evaluation include rural youth, impoverished youth, and Youth of African descent. Although there is no specific section on these, these intersecting factors are also noted where relevant in the report.

This evaluation also seeks to determine the extent to which the project integrates gender (including LGBTQ+ youth) and disability in its activities. In addition, although not specifically identified by ToR (Annex I) as a factor for inclusion, the evaluation will have a focus on indigenous peoples in countries where this is a relevant factor.

This evaluation uses the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, and mainstreams the Gender, Human Rights and Disability inclusion.

Limitations of data collection

As noted above, the pandemic situation has limited in some ways the type of data that could be collected. In a normal evaluation where travel was possible, methods would have included

a visit to Geneva to meet people at HQ and/or to an event at which the Youth representatives are gathered. In-person visits would provide the opportunity to observe events, to meet with people more efficiently, and to engage in spontaneous conversations. In online interviews it is somewhat more difficult to establish a rapport, and to read non-verbal cues. It is also more difficult to grasp the placement and organization of the Project within the Office when not able to visit physically.

However, these disadvantages were offset by some advantageous factors. Conducting interviews online allows for people around the world to be interviewed more efficiently than would have not been possible otherwise, unless they had gathered for a meeting. In addition, because people are becoming accustomed to online meetings, this format no longer feels strange, and interviewees have been easily able to adapt to it.

1.5 Analysis of data

The point of departure for the evaluation was the questions identified by the Terms of Reference. Through initial scoping interviews, key themes and sub-questions emerged, which were then incorporated into the interview questions for key stakeholder issues. Following an initial round of interviews, a first draft of the report was submitted for comment. Additional questions and comments that emerged were then pursued in the next round of interviews and in discussion with the reference group. Clear patterns and points of emphasis emerged in the data, and through several cycles of submission of drafts and further interviews and consultations, the initial analysis, conclusions, and recommendations were fine-tuned to reflect the regional specificities and the global situation, the ongoing activities of the project, the challenges that it is addressing, and good practices. All of these are then taken into account in the presentation of the final Conclusions and Recommendations, at the end of this report.

2. Main Findings

Evaluation Criteria

RELEVANCE (R)

RI: How relevant to the global and regional/country situation on Youth have the project’s planned results been in the course of the period evaluated?

The findings of this evaluation indicate that the planned results have been highly relevant to the global and the regional and country situations. Globally, youth has been identified as a spotlight population by the OHCHR. However, raising awareness of youth and human rights, and building the capacity to address violations, needs to be built from the ground up. One of the strengths of the project is the adaptability that is allowed for local contexts, thus ensuring increased relevance at the regional/country level. This section will briefly outline, and highlight the relevance of, the work of the Youth Officers, at Headquarters, and in the Regional and Country Offices.

It is important to highlight that the COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected the implementation of the project, in a few ways. As noted throughout the report, the pandemic began just months after the project started, interfering with all of the planned activities. At the same time, the pandemic highlighted existing human rights challenges for youth – and created new ones. Some of these challenges were noted across field sites, for example the lack of

possibility for gathering and demonstrating, which is often the main or only avenue that youth have for political expression. Others were specific to regional and national situations. In all offices the Youth Officers noted that determining the impact of the pandemic restrictions on youth became the focus of some of the first major activities of the project.

Some of the primary issues of young people in Guatemala include access to education, dignity at work, and structural violence. The pandemic has made all of these much more visible.
– Youth Officer, Guatemala

Youth were more affected by restrictions for Covid ... youth tend to convey messages through peaceful assembly, and this was not possible. They were restricted from moving, from coming together
– Youth Officer

At **Headquarters** in Geneva, one youth officer works together with the head of the Child and Youth Rights unit to run the project. Initially the important activities at HQ involved carving out a focus on Youth, which did not previously exist at OHCHR (this was also the case in many of the field offices). There were several fora at the UN already in place, including the Interagency Network, the Youth Strategy, and the Secretary General Envoy on Youth. Although the Child and Youth Rights unit did already engage with these prior to the Youth and Human Rights Project, the establishment of a specific position of Youth Officer in Geneva allowed the OHCHR to take on a more proactive role. As described below (section R2), this paved the way for the fulfilment of the OHCHR mandate in relation to Youth.

With the arrival of the Youth and Human Rights Project, I saw that OHCHR was able to deal more autonomously with Youth issues – before that, they had to include Children. But with this Project they managed to build a standalone Youth focus.
– Collaborating UN agency representative

Engaging with existing global and regional youth platforms was a critical initial step that the Youth Officer at HQ took in establishing a presence in Geneva – this allowed the project to identify the gaps and determine what was needed. Important activities of the Youth and Human Rights Project at HQ include the development of tools to introduce human rights perspectives to stakeholders at all levels. In 2020, HQ also produced a newsletter that spotlights colleagues working with youth, and since the start of the project has coordinated the *OHCHR4Youth Network*, which meets regularly to ensure communication between HQ and regional offices, and between units at OHCHR.

The Youth Officer also coordinates the overall engagement of the OHCHR in the UN Youth Strategy at global level, participating in the Joint Working Group (JWG) and the High Level Steering Committee (HLSC); this also includes compiling the OHCHR report on progress towards implementing the Youth Strategy, against the UN Entity Scorecard; this was completed following consultations with the Youth Officers and outreach to all field offices as well as relevant colleagues at HQ (see also section R2 below).

The Youth Officer also serves as a contact point at OHCHR for other UN agencies, and gives that organization the capacity to engage in collaborative projects. For example, when UNESCO implemented a youth-led project researching the impact of COVID-19 on youth, the Youth Officer at HQ facilitated the group of young researchers; this created a training opportunity for young people in conducting research. The youth were then able to develop the research questions and carry out the research, which resulted in a report and a policy brief. Additionally, the Office was able to partner with the ILO and several youth-led civil society organizations to contribute to an important global survey on the impacts of COVID-

19 on young people, providing critical input, ensuring that a human rights focus was maintained and that youth were included.

The position of Youth Officer in HQ, and the strength of the work that Office is doing was identified by several stakeholders as an effective strategy to ensure that the mandate of the OHCHR is fulfilled in relation to Youth. They are making a highly relevant contribution to other UN efforts in this field, globally and regionally.

In the **Central Asia Office**, in Bishkek, the Youth Officer position is responsible for five countries (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan). Although the countries have very different levels of political openness, the Youth and Human Rights Project has activities in all of them that address the particular situation in that country. A main focus of the Central Asia office is on *non-discrimination and equality*, and the Youth Officer identified a gap regarding Youth with Disabilities, and this has become an important focus of the project in all countries.

Much of the work thus far has been in Kyrgyzstan, where the Regional Office is based. An important activity has been the *Human Rights School*, with training sessions for youth with different forms of disability. This training has significantly raised awareness and increased the capacity among youth with disabilities in Bishkek, and its importance was emphasized by stakeholders in the focus group interview.

We learned that things that we thought were normal are not – they are human rights violations. We did not know these were problems, we thought they were normal. After we studied in the Human Rights School, we were able to identify human rights abuses. Our hearing impaired students are now getting proper education.
– Young man with a hearing impairment, Bishkek

Other activities in Kyrgyzstan include online briefings for university students, and ensuring that the voices of youth are heard in the development of a new national law on youth. Although the countries of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are somewhat more difficult to work in politically, the project has made good use of the political will and organizations that do exist, and has conducted human rights training (in Kyrgyzstan) for young Uzbek lawyers, bloggers, and journalists, and also collaborated with UNICEF to conduct training on Human Rights and *UN Youth 2030*, with the youth advisory board in that country. In Tajikistan, the office worked with a local NGO to hold a youth festival on human rights; the office provided Human Rights expertise and technical support. In Kazakhstan, the Central Asia office partnered with the UNESCO office to create a video course on nondiscrimination and equality for young people. Turkmenistan has been the most difficult country to work in, however, the Office conducted a hybrid Human Rights festival for youth ambassadors in December, scheduled around the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

In all five countries, the activities of the Youth and Human Rights Project in Central Asia are responding to needs identified by actors on the ground, including student organizations, NGOs, and the government. The existence of this project has also augmented the focus on Youth at the Central Asia RO. Youth was not previously a priority for the Central Asian office, but the Youth Officer position allowed them to develop this focus, to do more work for youth, and to integrate this work fully into the ongoing work of the office. The 2022 budget of the Central Asia RO includes a small budget to work on youth in each of the countries, indicating that the position of Youth Officer is generating a greater focus on youth (see also section II, under Impact). Although other agencies working in the region have youth activities, the Youth and Human Rights Project facilitates work on substantial *human rights* issues facing youth. Furthermore, the project actively demonstrates to their partners what a human rights

perspective can bring. An emphasis on *nondiscrimination* across the Central Asia RO has also been strengthened as a result of the Youth and Human Rights Project initiative.

In the **West Africa Regional Office**, the first Youth Officer started in April 2020 and worked to build the project at the Office in Dakar during the pandemic period. Africa is a particularly important continent for focusing on the human rights of youth. The categories of children and youth combined (people under 35) make up 70% of the population; a focus on youth is thus highly relevant in this region. Unemployment is a major problem for youth themselves, and for governments; this also becomes a political problem and in some cases can allow extremist groups to gain ground among disenfranchised youth. Gender and gender-based violence are also critical issues in Africa.

In the West African RO, the choice was to integrate the Youth Officer into the Gender Office – so both *gender* and *youth* are coordinated by the regional Gender advisor. Because of the pandemic, they have been mainly working in Senegal, but they have also connected with other organizations, including the University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, and a regional organization in Togo. As with most of the offices, during the early stages of the pandemic, in Senegal the restrictions of liberty and violations of human rights resulting from the pandemic restrictions became an entry point to human rights work with youth.

The office started with a mapping of youth organizations in the region, as well as support organizations that provide training and support services to youth. Although there are a lot of youth activists, they found that there is little understanding of human rights, and this decreases their effectiveness; building capacity in this area thus became an important focus for the Youth Officer. In addition, it was found that the youth organizations needed technical support – to organize activities, make the necessary documents, establish partnerships, raise funds, and other basic skills needed to advocate effectively. The focus of the office is on sensitizing, providing technical support, and building the capacity of youth, so that they can work from a human rights perspective. The ultimate aim is to help them bring this approach to higher levels – at the African Union, and the UN. In Africa, youth are underrepresented (or not represented) in decision making processes. This project thus highly relevant in this turbulent region, and is creating leaders through the youth movement.

We are in a region where a large percent of the population is youth, and having the capacity to focus our activities towards this population is key. There won't be any possibility of promotion and protection of HR without involving youth. We have a lot of youth activists, but there is very little understanding of Human Rights, and this lack of knowledge has an impact, they are not able to be as effective if they don't see other issues, such as climate change, as an issue of rights. This is also the best way to make governments take things seriously. We have started to build their capacity to address issues that concern them from a Human Rights approach.

– Regional Office representative and Youth Officer Supervisor

The **Pacific Regional Office** serves 16 countries, and is based in Suva, Fiji. As in Africa, across the Pacific region, 'Youth' is considered to be 15-35, and is a large percentage of the population. Climate Change is a major area of concern for youth in the Pacific region – which is disproportionately affected by this global issue – and has proved to be a uniting issue for this generation of youth, who stand to be especially impacted by climate change throughout their lives. Food was a focus of International Youth Day events held in 2020 and 2021, and also became a uniting issue. The Pacific Regional Office has particular success organizing Youth around climate justice and food security, maintaining an emphasis on human rights at the center of the effort. These specific activities in turn had a high level of impact on the other

activities of youth, as they learned how to mobilize themselves. Relevant aspects of these efforts are described in this report as examples of successful strategies, good practices, and effective collaboration.

Other key areas of concern in the Pacific include domestic and gender-based violence, including for LGBTQ+ youth, and the impact of the pandemic restrictions on freedom of assembly and the right to information. The pandemic has also highlighted other concerns of youth, including access to land and adequate housing, and increased the vulnerability of already marginalized groups – including indigenous groups, women, and LGBTQ+ groups, and people with disabilities. A collaborative project with UNICEF plans to review youth policies of the Pacific countries, and ensuring the inclusion of youth in vulnerable situations is an important focus of this effort. They started with Fiji, and have had success thus far. The Youth Officer, together with youth focal points from UNFPA, UNICEF and ILO, reactivated the *Pacific Youth Inter-Agency Working Group* which allows the agencies to have a coordinated approach to the UN youth activities, and to mobilize resources and effectively provide technical expertise for youth engagement.

The Pacific Youth and Human Rights Project is collaborating closely and actively with other UN agencies, civil society organizations, and government bodies to build the capacity of local actors to take a human rights approach to issues confronting youth in the Pacific region.

The **Middle East North Africa (MENA)** Youth and Human Rights Project is structured differently from the other four in that rather than having one Youth Officer position, there are four UN Volunteers (UNVs) that are working together on issues involving Youth; all with experience and / or advanced degrees directly relevant to the project. Two of these positions are financed by the Norwegian project. The main issues of concern in the region that these Youth officers identified include: access to employment; vulnerable youth; gender-based discrimination grounded in religion, especially for young women, who are usually more restricted; and the right to participate in public affairs.

Although limited by the lack of possibilities to assess the situation on the ground due to the pandemic restrictions, the Youth Officers used online platforms to create a network of youth organizations. Through this network they conducted a survey to assess the general level of knowledge of human rights standards and mechanisms. Based on the results, the team identified gaps in the understanding and skills of members of the network, and used that information to identify activities that they want to implement, and drafted the annual work plan based on this. The project is thus designed to meet needs identified by the stakeholders themselves.

Youth Officers in the MENA Office are assigned specific countries, in which they are working to raise awareness on the rights of youth. Their strategies are geared towards informing youth about the Human Rights system and HR law and mechanisms, and providing tools – how to raise complaints, how to know when rights are being violated, how to write reports – to young HR defenders, thus building their capacity to advocate effectively for their rights. They are also collaborating with universities and other stakeholders on activities relating to enforced disappearances during the civil war; this is described below in section R3.

In the **Guatemala Country Office**, (the only CO in the project), the Youth Officer is integrated into the Civic Space Unit within the Office, and a focus on Youth is totally integrated into the work of the Country Office. The Youth Officer collaborates on activities with the Gender Unit, Transitional Justice, Indigenous Peoples, and Communication, making youth a cross-cutting issue. The Guatemala office has a particular focus on populations facing vulnerabilities, and the Youth and Human Rights Project includes a focus on youth with

vulnerabilities, including: youngwomen, Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ youth.

When the pandemic started, a mapping process which had already started became a way keeping track of the impact of the pandemic on youth – particularly those with vulnerabilities. The Youth activities were also some of the first ones of the office to go online; through *Youth Connect* they conducted a series of online meetings that connected student and other youth organizations. The project was therefore able to adapt to a new global challenge in a way that was highly relevant to youth in Guatemala. In particular LGBTQ+ leaders, and Indigenous organizations, have been an important target of the project. These populations are recognized as especially vulnerable in Guatemala, with important, specific needs. LGBTQ+ youth do not have any laws that recognize their rights; they face discrimination especially regarding the right to health, and to work, and find it difficult to make their voices heard. Indigenous youth are particularly concerned about access to land, as well as ethnic identity and health services (including reproductive health) that recognize and support traditional medicinal practices. The Youth and Human Rights Project allows the Office to identify the ways that these particular populations experience vulnerability in Guatemala, and how to a human rights approach can best apply.

An important aspect of the work of the Guatemala CO includes building the capacity of organizations and networks, particularly concerning how to apply human rights to youth. This includes work with the National Youth Council, in particular supporting their review of a national youth policy. The project also works with the Young Human Rights Defenders Network, to enhance young HRDs capacity to promote human rights through their activities. They have also worked to connect youth leaders with participation opportunities offered by the UN System, including through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum, and participation in UN surveys. The Youth Officer also promotes human rights education in collaboration with national CSOs, through teaching guides and teaching seminars.

In addition, the Guatemala Country Office has worked together with a film project about historic memory, as related to transitional justice, ensuring that youth are involved and simultaneously increasing the capacity of the film company to work with youth (see also section R3(j) under Relevance). They have provided assistance to the government concerning the application of universal human rights to youth, in order to update the national youth policy. They have ensured the participation of youth, including those with other vulnerabilities, in interagency events marking national or international commemoration days (of “the lawyer”, “journalists”, or International Youth Day). Overall, the project has raised awareness of youth and diversity, and brought youth organizations closer to the concept of human rights, and to the OHCHR. It has also connected different existing youth networks in a way they were not before.

R2: How does the project align with the Office’s mandate, OHCHR’s Management Plan, the UN Youth Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals?

The mandate of the Office is to *promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all human rights*. Although other UN agencies focus on youth, there is no other UN agency directly responsible for issues related to Youth Rights. The Youth and Human Rights Project is allowing the OHCHR to fulfill its mandate with respect to this particular population. The OHCHR Management Plan (OMP) 2018-2021 identified Youth as one of three *spotlight populations* (the others are women and persons with disabilities); this OMP, with its focus on youth, has been extended until 2023. The section on Youth affirms that: “We must work to make human rights more relevant and more useful to them [youth] as they strive for dignity for themselves and their communities. We need to develop tools and capacity that will enable

us to attract and support young people as they promote positive human rights change.” (46) With its focus on the rights of youth within the OHCHR, this project is directly contributing to these aims.

The Youth and Human Rights project also facilitates other OHCHR units with fulfilling their mandate. For example, the *World Programme for Human Rights Education*, a global initiative proclaimed by UNGA in 2004. Is coordinated by METS at OHCHR. Now in its fourth 5-year phase (2020-2024), the current thematic focus is *Youth empowerment through human rights education*. Prior to the implementation of the Youth and Human Rights Project, the work of METS depended upon initiatives taken by other offices, and the work on this was more ad hoc. Because of the platform and network of colleagues provided by the Youth and Human Rights Project, they can take a more proactive role, engage in systematic exchanges with colleagues, and offer resources and training on youth.

Likewise, the Rule of Law and Democracy Section (ROLD) at the OHCHR has had a focus on youth participation since 2016, but with the implementation of the Youth and Human Rights Project, they have been able to more easily connect with the field presences, and to share tools and methodology that they have developed, giving the tools wider reach, and providing constructive feedback for the ROLD office. The OHCHR4Youth network meetings allow for clearer communication, and information about specific issues in specific countries and regions, and create a more nuanced view; they can provide insight into global phenomena, such as the waves of climate protests in 2019. All of these enable the office to operate more effectively.

In general, within the OHCHR, the project is creating awareness of the importance of including youth in human rights work – and within the Office itself. As several interviewees pointed out, youth are very often not taken seriously by governments and other actors, including within the UN. By engaging youth within the Office, the Youth and Human Rights Project sends a message that youth are able to work at that level, and it normalizes their inclusion as legitimate social and political actors.

During the past two and a half years, a HR approach to youth and children has really been strengthened, more than ever before. That is direct result of the Youth and Human Rights project, and would not have happened without it.
– OHCHR representative, Geneva

The **UN Youth Strategy** “acts as an umbrella framework to guide the entire UN as it steps up its work with and for young people across its three pillars – *peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development* – in all contexts.” (Youth 2030, emphasis added) As the agency responsible for human rights, the OHCHR has a key role to play in upholding that pillar of the UN Youth Strategy. The Youth and Human Rights Project is thus greatly enhancing the ability of the office to fulfill its specific mandate.

Furthermore, while the pillars of peace and security, and on sustainable development, are concentrated in agencies based in New York, the Youth and Human Rights Project at the OHCHR provides a base from which to promote youth in Geneva. This is important, as previously there was no UN institution in Geneva to formalize youth participation, or make it more visible within the organization. The Youth and Human Rights Project is thus playing a key role in the UN Youth Strategy.

The **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network** (SDSN, an initiative launched by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in 2012 to mobilize global expertise around the Sustainable Development Goals) has a Youth Initiative. **SDSN Youth** was launched in 2015

with the goal of placing young people at the forefront of the Sustainable Development movement. By promoting and facilitating the participation of youth in key national, regional, and global debates around issues such as climate change, food security, and the SDGs in general, the Youth and Human Rights Project is directly contributing to these goals – and ensuring that human rights are kept at the center of the discussion.

R3: Have the strategies used to achieve the project's results been adequate to the global and local context and stakeholders?

Several strategies were identified by the evaluation. This section briefly reviews these strategies, and the contexts in which they have been employed and comments on their relevance and effectiveness.

a) 'Mapping' of organizations that address Youth, including both those that are organized by youth, and those that provide services to youth.

Mapping of organizations was a strategy encouraged by HQ from the start of the project. To establish the Youth and Human Rights Project in Senegal, the Youth Officer first mapped organizations run by youth, and those supporting youth, in the West African region; because of the pandemic he conducted research and met with the organizations online. The Guatemala Office identified youth leaders and student and youth associations in the five regions of the country through a mapping process; initially the Youth Officer physically visited the regions, but with the pandemic the activity shifted online. The Pacific RO worked through the Interagency network on Youth Development (IANYD) to map youth programmes, projects, and activities in the region, with information provided by relevant UN agencies. The MENA and Central Asia RO's also engaged with processes to identify key stakeholders and existing organizations and networks.

Mapping allows for a broad overview of the issues affecting youth in the region, including what concerns are held in common, where differences might lie, and what actors are involved. This is critical for networking, collaboration and the establishment of joint activities, and resource mobilization, and helps to ensure the relevance of the project.

b) Provision of technical support to existing youth organizations, assisting them in ways that will improve their effectiveness and efficiency

Technical support can be central to capacity building efforts. In the Pacific Regional Office, for example, providing technical support in organizing a conference is a key element of their strategy; this allows the youth organization representatives to learn by doing, increasing their capacity to organize themselves. Following this they were able to mobilize themselves (see also section E1 on Effectiveness, under Main Findings). In West Africa, the Youth Officer identified a lack of technical competence among youth organizations, and this area as an important contribution on the part of the project. In the Central Asian region, the existing skills and competence of the Youth Officer also allow for important technical contributions on the part of that RO.

This is a strategy that works well in a context where youth organizations exist, have some resources, and are motivated to work together on common human rights issues. It is connected to the following strategy.

c) Building networks, and strengthening existing ones.

This strategy has a central focus throughout the project records, and was mentioned by stakeholders at all field offices. These network meetings took place either through digital meetings, or physically, depending on the restrictions.

An important part of the work of the Youth Officer at HQ has been developing and maintaining key networks among relevant stakeholders. In the first months of the project the OHCHR4Youth Network was established, and the Youth Officer has continued to coordinate periodic meetings establishing methods for internal communication and exchange (including a *Community of Practice* on Yammer, and a Newsletter in 2020).

Very early in the project this network collaborated with the European Youth Forum and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations (ICMYO) to host an international workshop in November 2019 that brought together representatives of global youth networks and OHCHR Youth Officers and Focal Points for networking and establishing partnerships. Through the creation of these global networks, the goal was to provide a space for youth organizations to become more engaged in global youth rights advocacy and debates, to help them to cooperate to create a global movement for youth rights, and to build connections between youth organizations and the UN. This event also served to introduce youth officers to different youth networks, the key challenges they face and priorities, and to consider how they can work together with them, providing an important platform. Although follow up meetings were planned physical meetings were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the existence of the networks allowed for the sharing of information about, and strategies to address, the impact of the pandemic on Youth, which became an important focal point of the project.

The Youth Officers in Guatemala and West Africa used Youth Connect to create online platforms for youth organizations, including student organizations, organizations representing groups with specific identities and/or vulnerabilities, arts- and theater-based groups, and others – to connect with each other. The Youth and Human Rights Project allowed them to connect existing youth organizations in a way that they had not been. In the MENA Office, the Youth Officers have created an online network for youth in the region, which has allowed them to both survey human rights knowledge and to conduct necessary training (see also section RI). The Central Asia Youth Officer has been primarily working in countries independently, but identified the development of a regional youth network as an important focus for future work. The Pacific office used already-established networks, including the *Pacific Human Rights Defenders Network* and *Environmental Human Rights Defenders* to promote a youth and human rights agenda, and to encourage a community of practice and information sharing.

Networks allow the Youth Officers greater possibilities to gauge the awareness and competence of the youth in their regions, to identify key issues they are concerned with, to provide information and training, to inform about opportunities (for funding, jobs, or other possibilities) and to facilitate online and in-person events, among other things. They also allow the offices to better understand and respond to the needs of a broad spectrum of youth organizations. The support and creation of networks thus strengthens – and in turn is facilitated by – other strategies, including several of those listed below.

The monthly youth network meetings are really great. We can circulate information, for example opportunities for funding that youth-led organizations can apply for; this helps to build capacity
– Youth focal point

d) Conducting research to determine gaps in capacity, and designing training sessions for youth on specific issues identified.

All of the offices reported some kind of training (much of which has been online thus far).

This includes on Human Rights advocacy for youth with disabilities and online training sessions for university students in Kyrgyzstan; online training on human rights mechanisms and processes in MENA; online workshops on topics including internet security, entrepreneurship, and human rights in Guatemala; also in Guatemala the Youth project collaborated with National Youth Council to produce and implement a short technical course about how to apply human rights standards to youth. HQ staff participated in facilitating relevant sessions. The technical support identified above, and specifically described by the West African and Pacific offices is also a form of hands-on training.

Although different methods were used to identify them, all of these training programmes and approaches were designed to fill gaps. Youth Officers in MENA and Senegal both specifically identified use of survey research to identify gaps in capacity, or knowledge about human rights standards and mechanisms – and to design programmes to fill them. Other Officers described observing processes and / or implementing collaborative processes with youth networks to identify areas where competence was desired.

At HQ, the Youth Officer analyzed work with and for youth – in the context of youth as a *spotlight population* – across OHCHR, to provide a better understanding of how OHCHR is engaging with and for youth globally, and to assist with developing recommendations & further considerations moving forward (conducted as a quantitative & qualitative analysis for the Programme Budget and Review Board, PBRB)

Training to build capacity where gaps have been identified is a strategy that makes the work of the Youth and Human Rights Project immediately relevant to the needs of the local, national and regional organizations it is working with, makes the project highly responsive, and increases its effectiveness.

e) Holding or contributing to regional and national events, including conferences and festivals, to both raise awareness and create networks

Supporting, facilitating, and hosting events has also been an important strategy in many of the offices. Most offices had in person events planned that had to be moved online, but some were able to still conduct events in person. For example, the Central Asia Youth Officer has worked closely with the *Office of Civic Freedoms*, an NGO in Tajikistan made up of 400 youth in offices throughout the country, to conduct a 4-day youth festival on human rights, and in Turkmenistan they conducted a hybrid Human Rights festival for youth ambassadors. In contexts where such events are sponsored by other UN agencies or CSOs, Youth Officers can provide human rights expertise and training, as well as technical skills. Furthermore, the support of the UN for such events can provide a kind of legitimization, and protection, for such festivals.

Marking specific days, such as International Youth Day, and days dedicated to particular professions or sections of the population, with events that highlight the participation of youth, including youth with vulnerabilities, has been a strategy identified by several of the offices. This increases the visibility of youth and draws attention to their role in society.

f) Working with UNCT and / or governments to review or create specific policies, strategies, or institutions that address youth

In Kyrgyzstan, the government is developing a new law on youth, and the Youth and Human Rights Project is ensuring that the voices of youth are heard in this process. The Youth Officer in West Africa is facilitating the participation of youth in the Senegal Youth Strategy, as well as advising the ministry of Education on youth and human rights. In Guatemala, other UN agencies are supporting the National Youth Council's engagement with the government

on the renewing of the youth policy, and the Youth Officer is able to provide technical assistance in implementing a universal human rights framework. In Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, and Senegal, Youth Officers have worked directly with governments to provide input into State policies and institutions involving youth, and to facilitate the participation of youth in these processes.

The Youth Officer at the Geneva office worked closely with the national and regional Youth Officers on many of these processes, in particular in Fiji and Kyrgyzstan. They have also provided input to draft Constitutions in Haiti, and Kyrgyzstan.

This strategy has successfully promoted a human rights-based approach to youth, as well as the inclusion of vulnerable youth, into state policies and approaches – thus contributing directly to one of the project's five main goals.

g) The creation of education and training materials, and other tools, specifically designed to facilitate human rights work by and with Youth

The Youth Office at HQ in Geneva has focused on producing materials to support the development of resources under the UN Youth Strategy, for example the Youth2030 toolkit which compiles tools on working with and for youth, aimed at UNCTs, governments, and youth networks among others. The office is also developing resources for internal use to build knowledge and understanding about youth and human rights.

h) Ensuring that Youth are included in projects with other general areas of focus.

In all of the countries, facilitating the inclusion of youth in ongoing projects and processes is an important entry point for ensuring broad inclusion of youth, and, importantly, adds value to these other efforts. In Africa, Youth Officer is within the Gender Unit, ensuring that young women are clearly in focus. In the Pacific, helping youth to amplify their voices within the climate movement has been critical for the movement itself, and for increasing the visibility of youth on national, regional and world stages. In Guatemala and MENA, the inclusion of youth in transitional justice efforts has led to new and important perspectives, and also raised the profile of youth within those countries.

i) Identifying common areas of concern as a 'way in' to raising awareness and building capacity to take a human rights approach to youth.

In some cases, these broader issues can also serve as unifying areas of common concern. Support for youth inclusion in the climate movement is a good example of this strategy. The use of the global focus on *right to food* as a platform to engage with youth across broad sectors of society, to promote their human rights, to provide technical assistance, and to build capacity was successful in MENA and in the Pacific. In such cases, the identification of a common cause brought together youth groups representing various sectors of society.

j) Partnering with other projects, including student campaigns and media projects, that create platforms for the voice of youth on particular social issues.

The Guatemala Office sponsored and cohosted training in film production, focusing on transitional justice and targeted for youth. The existence of the youth network (noted above) greatly facilitated the participation of youth; this also provided the film company with experience working with youth, and expertise on transitional justice. The Guatemala Office also support the local organization Young Artists for Social Justice by hiring them to do illustrations for large events that the office hosts, in turn they incorporate key messages on human rights standards with the illustrations – serving several purposes at once.

Together with the UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund, the MENA Youth Officers are implementing activities with university students, in relation to enforced disappearances from the Lebanese civil war. This has not been addressed yet in the country, and one of the biggest problems hindering progress is lack of knowledge about what happened. The project resulted in the establishment of a human rights club at each university (9 in total), to encourage learning about the past – including regarding relatives that have disappeared – and about peacebuilding, and to reflect on how to move forward.

In the Pacific, Youth voices were amplified on social media, through an OHCHR global web story about a youth group from the Solomon Islands who campaigned for climate change and human rights to the International Court of Justice. The campaign highlighted the need to bridge the divide between international climate law, and international human rights law.

In Kazakhstan, the Central Asia office partnered with the UNESCO office to create a video course on nondiscrimination and equality for young people, which can be shared on the UNESCO online platform. This consists of five short video lessons that can be used widely.

These kinds of collaborative projects have a synergistic effect.

EFFECTIVENESS (E)

E1: What evidence of positive results obtained by the project can be found? To what extent have been planned results actually achieved?

Despite the relatively short period that the project has been in operation, the Youth and Human Rights Project is clearly moving towards a number of positive results, some of which have been achieved. Evidence of positive results includes specific changes that the evaluation has identified evidence for through interviews and document review.

Evidence that the project is moving towards these results is also reflected in the use of strategies that have been identified as effective. The UNFPA (2021) has identified effective strategies for 'amplifying the rights and voices of youth'. These include those related to *enabling key actors* (duty bearers within the government and the UN, as well as youth actors); *accountability* (engaging youth in data collection); *engaging Youth in multiple capacities* (as beneficiaries, advisors, partners and leaders, and as strategic or implementing partners); and *representation and inclusion* (including youth consultations that allow for more meaningful and diverse participation of youth, including those from marginalized and vulnerable groups, and targeted strategies with local youth networks).

The evaluation found evidence for the following positive results, which are aligned with OHCHR areas of focus within the UN Youth Strategy as well as reflecting the effective strategies identified by the UNFPA:

- a) Increased youth participation – including of marginalized and vulnerable youth – in political and public affairs:** as a result of the Youth and Human Rights Project young people are being heard in spaces where they traditionally were not present, for example:
- Youth are included in processes of reviewing and creating policies and laws on Youth (All regions; see also point about governments below)
 - Youth and their organizations are consulted in processes involving transitional justice and research about historical injustices (Guatemala, MENA)

- Increased representation of youth, especially young women, and marginalized and vulnerable youth, in events promoted both by CSOs and by governments (Central Asia, Guatemala, the Pacific)

The office has created opportunities for Indigenous youth to participate in different areas of the public sphere; these opportunities allow Indigenous youth to empower themselves, and to express their human rights needs.
 – Youth Stakeholder, Guatemala

b) Human Rights education and training (including technical skills) leads to increased ability of Youth organizations to integrate a human rights approach, to organize, and present themselves effectively.

- Following technical support from the Youth Officer(s), local youth networks are able to build upon the experience and organize themselves effectively (MENA, the Pacific – see case study below)

c) The human rights of young people are becoming mainstreamed into the work of the OHCHR and UN human rights mechanisms

- A focus on Youth has been mainstreamed across some of the participating field offices, facilitated by the existence of the Youth Officer (Guatemala, West Africa);
- Funding for Youth activities has been included in the main budget of some field offices, indicating increased integration of a focus on youth into the office (Central Asia, MENA, Guatemala)
- Offices that are not specifically targeted by the Youth and Human Rights Project are seeking technical support from participating Offices (e.g. the Honduras CO; other field presences)
- Key UN mechanisms and bodies, including the SG Envoy on Youth, and other UN Agencies, specifically identify the work of the Youth and Human Rights project as central to their ability to integrate a human rights approach into their work with youth.
- Youth are being employed in key positions at UN offices, including OHCHR

d) Governments are integrating a human-rights based approach to the development of youth policies

- Governments have requested the support of the Youth and Human Rights Project in ongoing review of existing policies on youth, and/or the creation of new youth policies or strategies in partnership with UNCT and national governments (all regions)

Illustration: case study: One specific example of a cluster of positive results is from the Pacific. The OHCHR Youth and Human Rights Project partnered with an existing youth organization, *Alliance for Future Generations*, to host a workshop on Human Rights and Climate Change. The regional office provided technical support in the areas of focus, as well as funding possibilities, and put human rights at the center of the climate change discussions. Through this process, the youth organization was able to organize, source funding and other support, and be part of youth-led climate action events, including the *Pacific Climate Action Summit* and the Pacific Pre-COP 26 youth gathering, in partnership with other youth organizations. This also paved the way for the participation of Pacific youth at the COP 26 in Glasgow, where Alliance for Future Generations had the largest delegation.

In addition, following the initial workshop, the OHCHR Youth and Human Rights Project was able to partner with UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Fiji, and the youth

organization, to consult with Youth on new climate change legislation. This is one example of how initial input by the OHCHR Youth Officer has clearly produced clear results and positive change at the global and national level within the first two years of the project.

E2: Where positive results of the project have been found, what have been the enabling factors and processes? What lessons have been learned?

Some enabling factors include

- Highly motivated and skilled Youth Officers, at HQ and Regional and Country Offices (despite varying levels of experience, all individual Youth Officers are bringing important competence to their jobs).
- Support and advice from, and very good communication with, HQ in Geneva
- Regular meetings among Youth Officers from different regions, and HQ, to exchange experiences with each other, and with HQ
- The ability to partner with other UN agencies, and CSOs, and to offer technical skills and human rights competence to these collaborations
- The existence of youth organizations that the project could provide support and training to, and establish networks with.
- In some regions, supportive government structures that recognize the benefits and advantages of a Human Rights approach to Youth, for purposes of peace and security.

E3: In case some planned results haven't been accomplished, what has prevented the project from achieving them? What lessons can be drawn?

There are two main limitations that the evaluation has identified: the pandemic, and budget constraints.

COVID-19 pandemic: A major challenge faced by stakeholders in all regions was starting a new project during the COVID-19 pandemic. In most offices there was not a pre-existing focus on youth as a target population, nor activities in this regard. The position of Youth Officer was a new position that had to be developed, the networks had to be created, and the activities defined. In most offices, the plan was to arrange conferences, workshops, and other events in order to promote networking – but none of these could be held due to lockdowns and it was necessary to shift to online meetings. Although the online activities did allow some of the plans to go forward, there were several disadvantages. For Regional Offices that cover several countries, this has limited what the Youth Officers were able to do. In some cases, the focus has remained primarily upon the country in which the office is located (Senegal). In others, even with online activities in many countries, not being able to travel to other places means the Youth Officers are not really able to assess the situation on the ground (MENA).

The Youth Officers responded creatively and appropriately to this challenge. Attention was turned to the situation of Covid and the potential for human rights abuses as a result of this situation. In many countries Youth were particularly affected by lockdowns; in others the lockdowns created a situation in which human rights violations increased. In many places Youth lack access to platforms to make their voices heard, and they communicate often through peaceful assembly – which was not allowed during the pandemic. Unable to carry on with some of the planned activities, the Youth Officers focused on identifying the specific issues faced by youth during the pandemic, and making youth more visible, and also on monitoring and addressing violations related to COVID-19 measures, where they occurred.

Nonetheless, this situation has presented a considerable challenge to this project.

Budget constraints: In all of the field offices, the budget from the Youth and Human Rights Project is allocated almost entirely to the salary of the Youth Officer (see Ef1, under Efficiency,

below). Their expertise, and the mandate of the position, allows them to advocate for youth in various arenas, to provide technical support, and to coordinate activities that build capacity among local stakeholders – this has been identified by the evaluation as an effective strategy (see Conclusion 2). However, in some regions there is little or no budget for activities. This has been noted as a problem since the beginning of the project; in the minutes from regular phone calls among youth officers and HQ in January 2020, participating Regional and Country Offices highlighted a lack of budget for implementing planned activities, resulting in their cancellation.

The issue also arose frequently in interviews for the evaluation. In the Central Asia Regional Office, the lack of a specific budget for activities was identified as a serious limitation by the current Youth Officer. In West Africa, the Youth Officer described the lack of a budget for the projects as one of the main challenges they are facing; in a region where not everyone is connected to the internet, there is a need to be able to travel and to connect with people in order to build networks. Likewise, the Pacific Youth Officer also noted that one of their biggest limitations is funding for projects, so that they can determine their own programme. The Youth Officers in these offices indicated that the lack of a budget constrained their activities. With funding dedicated to activities, they said that they would be able to engage more effectively with local partners and to define areas of focus for themselves.

There are two important . First, in some offices (Guatemala, MENA, and more recently Central Asia), funding not specifically dedicated to the Youth and Human Rights Project is allocated to activities focused on youth; this has made it possible to plan activities. Secondly, in all of the cases where they do not have funding, the Youth Officers have approached this limitation creatively and strategically, relying upon their own skills and training, and partnerships with UN and other partners, to carry out activities – and much has been accomplished nonetheless.

A final important note here is that as the project makes progress towards its goal of raising awareness about youth and human rights within OHCHR, and more broadly, other field presences are also seeking support in order to engage more effectively and systematically with youth in their areas. It will be important to consider potential sources of funding for such efforts, especially considering the that young people generally lack of resources. They also face enormous difficulties in accessing UN processes; youth from marginalized groups or other populations that face discrimination especially need targeted, or increased, support. This is an important opportunity for the OHCHR to promote the effective integration of human rights approaches, and it will be important to find creative and innovative ways to fund and support these processes as the project goes forward.

If we do not have funding, we will start at zero – I think that the project is so important, and the problem is so urgent that it is important to continue with what we have started. But if we could also have a budget for the activities, we would be able to be even more strategic
– Youth Officer

EFFICIENCY (Ef)

Ef1: How efficient has the project been in using the human, financial and intellectual resources at its disposal to achieve its targeted outcomes? To what degree do the results achieved justify the resources invested in them?

Data gathered indicate that the use of resources to achieve the targeted outcomes has been efficient. As described below the approaches to the use of resources vary by region, and thus

different forms of efficiency can be highlighted for each one. In each case, human, financial and intellectual resources are linked. The position of the Youth Officers themselves is a specific question related to efficiency; this is discussed separately in the latter part of this section.

In all of the regional and country offices, the project budget is in principle used almost entirely for the salary of (a) Youth Officer(s). As noted throughout this report, the creation of these positions provided increased opportunity and capacity for the OHCHR to engage with youth organizations, to create and strengthen networks, to incorporate a focus on youth into the Office, and to promote a human rights perspective within the youth-focused activities of other UN offices, governments, and civil society. The expertise that the Youth Officers bring to their positions allows them to provide technical support for local stakeholders, and to build capacity. The funding of these positions is thus an effective strategy, and an efficient use of resources.

There is very limited funding dedicated to project activities. In 2019, 10 000 USD was allocated per field presence for travel (it could also be used for other activities). In 2020 this was reduced to 5 000 (which as noted in section Ef3 above, reduced possibilities for activities that were planned), but as travel was not possible for most of that year the budget was diverted to other activities. The Youth Officer in Geneva provides information and encourages OHCHR field presences to apply for funding under the Peacebuilding Fund's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI), a potential source of additional funding to support activities with youth at the national level, in eligible countries. Both Guatemala and the Pacific have participated in successful interagency applications to this fund.

In two of the offices, a budget for activities is provided by the Office. In Guatemala, because of the existence of the Youth Officer, the Country Office has included youth activities within the annual work plan, and provided budget for youth activities. In MENA, the office provides a budget for activities and UNVs are in the position of planning, organizing, and coordinating these. Youth Officers in both these offices did not express serious limitations with the budget in interviews.

In West Africa, activities are integrated with the Gender office, which does have a budget, and they work together with other projects to get resources. This arrangement allows for a strong focus on gender, as a vulnerability intersecting with youth, thus adding value to the project. Furthermore, they are developing a fundraising program to put in place financed activities for youth: to document violations of the rights of youth, and to raise the capacity of youth to work with issues like climate change.

In the Central Asia Regional Office, there was a several-month gap before the current Youth Officer was hired, in which the position was not filled. The current Youth Officer was able to use the money budgeted for the salary for other activities, including a Human Rights School with a focus on nondiscrimination and equality. These activities laid the groundwork for future work with a group of youth that has been identified and trained. The Central Asia office has also made good use of the human resources, positioning themselves as experts and offering training and expertise as a resource, contributing that to events that are organized and sponsored by other UN agencies, by Governments, or by NGOs – thus ensuring the visibility of the Youth and Human Rights Project with little or no financial investment. These are good examples of ways in which creative solutions have been found to engage effectively with a small budget.

The Officer in the Pacific likewise highlights the resource of *capacity* and *technical skills* that the Youth and Human Right Project can provide. The Youth Officer in the Pacific Regional Office was able to lead the successful fundraising to support the COVID-19 community outreach and advocacy, in connection with the Universal Periodic Review [UPR] for the

Federal State of Micronesia, Nauru and Palau, through the Human Security Trust Fund. The joint programme with UNDP is planned to be implemented in 2022, strategically timed to follow the opening of the new Multi-Country office for Micronesia in late 2021.

The Youth Officers in these offices all indicated that they could work more *effectively* if they had a budget for activities, allowing them to steer their own initiatives, and to be more responsive to needs that they identified. However, in the absence of such funding, the Youth Officers have made efficient use of other resources available: sourcing other funding, developing collaboration with new partners, and finding ways to work on minimal finances.

Position of Youth Officer in National and Regional Offices

In most of the offices (RO Central Asia; RO Western Africa; RO Pacific; CO Guatemala), the position of Youth Officer is a National Officer, filled by a professional who brings specific sets of skills and experiences to the office. In the MENA office, the Youth Officers are UN Volunteers, (UNVs) at early stages of their careers. Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages; both also highlight the tension inherent in the inclusion of this particular target group, as described in Section 3.

Advantages to hiring a National Officer are that an experienced and skilled professional can fill this role and operate efficiently in terms of project design, coordinating activities, networking, and other technical skills important to running the project. The National Officer is also hired for a specific, long-term (at least 2 years) position providing more stability than shorter-term UNV contracts. There are some drawbacks to this approach, however. The recruitment of National Officers can be a lengthy process, at times requiring approval from Headquarters in Geneva; thus there can be gaps in the position. The project budget covers only one such position; there is no dedicated funding for project activities. Although the Youth Officers have, as described above, approached this situation positively, most mentioned it as an important limitation. An additional drawback to this approach is that the Youth Officer is usually themselves no longer in the category of *youth*, by the time they have accumulated the training and experience to qualify for this position.

One way to engage early-career youth is by assigning this work to UNVs and other volunteers, who go through a different hiring process and who work for a stipend, while they simultaneously gain skills. This is efficient in that it provides youth with the opportunity to gain valuable experience that they can build upon as they develop careers in Human Rights and related fields. In addition, the funding can then be used for other purposes, and more human resources can be dedicated towards achieving the project goals. Finally, and importantly, engaging youth to undertake this important regional and global work sends the signal within the OHCHR, and to other agencies that it works with, that youth are serious and competent role players. One concern about UNV positions is that they are usually short and thus have a high turnover. However, this evaluation found that in practice, the Youth Officers hired as National Officers have stayed on for longer periods, providing continuity in their work and in building relationships and trust with partners on the ground.

Another concern is that these short-term contracts should not become exploitative. One possibility is to create more entry-level positions, as a way of bringing young staff on board. OHCHR's recently updated Organizational Effectiveness Action Plan on Diversity and Inclusion identifies the scarcity of entry-level positions for youth to enter and gain experience with OHCHR as a barrier to young people. This could include trying to attract younger candidates through NOA positions, instead of NOB (see the Conclusions and Recommendations).

Ef2: Have the organizational and management arrangements used in the project to achieve results been adequate to the strategies, priorities, context and stakeholders?

The organizational and management arrangements to achieve results have been adequate. The practice of hiring dedicated Youth Officers is extremely effective, greatly enhancing the capacity of HQ and participating field offices to address the human rights of youth, and allowing for responsiveness to local, national, and regional situations.

Ef3: How has the communication and coordination been among the Youth team, the country/regional offices, and other units within OHCHR headquarters in terms of programmatic, financial and administrative issues?

According to the minutes and other documents reporting meetings since the start of the project, effective communication and coordination among the Youth team, the CO and RO's, and other OHCHR units has been a strength of this project since the beginning. In particular the OHCHR4Youth network and their regular meetings have facilitated communication among relevant stakeholders within the OHCHR.

All of the country/regional offices reported effective communication and coordination with the OHCHR headquarters; in some cases, this was specifically identified as a facilitating factor.

Ef4: What have been the roles of stakeholders, partners or other UN agencies in the achievement of results? What has been the strategy and methodology used to work together, communicate and disseminate results among them?

The roles of stakeholders, partners, and other UN agencies have been central to the achievement of results, and this cooperation has been highly efficient. Representatives of other UN Agencies have clearly indicated that cooperation with OHCHR on Youth issues has provided them with capacity in Human Rights, as it relates to Youth, that they did not have previously, and that the collaboration with them has been highly effective. Youth Officers themselves also report very effective collaboration, with other UN Agencies and with local stakeholders.

At Headquarters:

The Youth office at HQ has effectively collaborated with other UN Agencies to their mutual benefit:

- Through their engagement in the UN Youth Strategy, including Task Teams under the Joint Working Group, the Youth Officer at HQ supported the creation of the Youth2030 toolkit, which compiles tools on working with and for youth, aimed at UNCTs, governments, and youth networks.
- In a project led by UNESCO, with the support of OHCHR and UNDP, Youth worked as researchers to explore the impact that the pandemic has on youth in key areas. The OHCHR Youth and Human Rights Project is also providing inputs along with the Interagency Network on Youth, on training tools designed by UNESCO; their input contributes to the enhancement of the tools, which are also used to conduct meaningful engagement trainings for OHCHR staff.
- The Project at HQ also partnered with the ILO and youth civil society partners to conduct a joint, global survey on the impacts of COVID-19 on young people, reaching 12,605 young people across 112 countries.
- The Youth Officer at HQ has also worked in partnership with the HQ Civic Space Unit to create greater synergies with the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security

(GCYPS, a UN–Civil Society Partnership), and specifically its Protection Working Group, to promote protection of young human rights defenders and youth peacebuilders.

- In addition, although it is a Regional and not a UN organization, the European Youth Forum has been a particularly effective partner and played an important role, particularly at the start of the project with the organization (see section R3(c) under Relevance)

In the Regional and Country Offices:

Partners: In all the regions Youth Officers and teams have effectively partnered with local, national, and regional organizations, including Youth-led groups and organizations; Regional and national youth councils; student groups; youth-service organizations; and universities.

Other UN Agencies: All of the offices described active work with the UNCT(s), including: the UN Interagency Group on Youth, UNFPA, IOM, UNW, FAO, UNFPA, FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNV.

Activities taken jointly with UN agencies in the Regional and Country Offices include:

- The Guatemala Office is leading a collaborative project with the National Youth Council and UNFPA on a short and clear information booklet about how to apply human rights standards to youth. The UNFPA contributes the statistical analysis that they conducted, and the OHCHR brings in human rights standards, and these are examined together with youth policy in Guatemala
- The Guatemala Office also partnered with the UNFPA and IOM to apply to the Peace Building Fund (PBF), for a project to increase Youth participation in the civic space; it was been selected for a 2022-2023 period project
- The Central Asia Regional Office worked with UNESCO to produce a video course for non-discrimination and equality for young people
- The West African Regional Office, the Youth Officer is working together with UNW to incorporate a focus on young women, thus bringing a focus on *youth* to that target group
- The West African Youth Officer is also working with the UNCT on the development the youth strategy for Senegal, ensuring the inclusion of a human rights approach as well as the mainstreaming of gender and youth.
- In the MENA office, some UNVs on the youth team were recruited under a UNDP project; they are also members of a Human Rights working group within the UNCT Task Force on Youth, in Lebanon
- In both the Pacific and the MENA regions the Youth Officers have worked with the UNCT to promote the role of youth in transforming food systems.
- The Pacific Regional Office is collaborating with UNICEF on a review of Pacific countries' youth policies (Fiji; other countries in the Pacific)
- The Pacific Regional Office has also partnered with UNFPA to conduct joint surveys on the impacts of COVID-19 on young people
- For the 2021 International Youth Day, the Pacific Regional Office held a joint activity with UNFPA and UNICEF and partnered with the Federal State of Micronesia [FSM] government and CSOs, to host an event with the theme 'Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health'. The outcomes of the event were part of FSM reporting and recommendations to the World Food Summit.

IMPACT ORIENTATION (I)

II: What, if any, evidence is there that the project has resulted in changes for the promotion and protection of human rights for Youth? What has been the contribution of the project to the achievement of these results?

It is still early in the project, but there is evidence emerging that the project has resulted in changes for the promotion and protection of the human rights for Youth. For all of the points listed below, the Youth and Human Rights Project played an integral role – it seems unlikely that any of these things would have happened without the instigation, support, and/or facilitation of the project.

- In West Africa, the project has been able to mainstream youth across the other offices of the UNCT in Senegal, and also within the government. The project is also contributing to the development of a new Youth strategy for the government of Senegal.
- In Central Asia, youth has been prioritized in the OHCHR office, and included in the budget; this is directly as a result of the project. In addition, human rights training sessions provided for youth with disabilities have raised awareness among this group about their human rights and built capacity to work towards securing them.
- In the Pacific and Central Asia, the Youth and Human Rights Project has been involved in the review of laws and policies on Youth – and has ensured the consultation of youth in these review sessions.
- In the Pacific, awareness-raising and training has resulted in youth organizations' ability to organize themselves effectively, to obtain funding, and to express themselves clearly at regional and global meetings – in particular around issues of Climate Change (see section E I, under Effectiveness).
- In Guatemala the project has established a network of youth organizations that brings together youth from diverse contexts – although this has so far been online it has created a forum through which they can see themselves as Human Rights defenders and begin to understand the UN standards and Mechanisms.
- In MENA the project has established a youth network of around 200 individuals from across the region. Again, although this has so far been online, it has served an important networking and awareness-raising function. The MENA Youth Offices recently disseminated a survey to assess the network's knowledge on Human Right Mechanisms and UN standards in order to identify gaps and inform a 2-year programme that would build the capacities of this network.

Now I know my rights, and how to protect them better. I can stand up for myself without anyone's help. I know how to do this, I learned this. I believe that the Human Rights School should be continued.
– Young man with disabilities, Bishkek

I2: To what extent is the project making a significant contribution to broader and long-term promotion and protection of human rights of Youth? Or, how likely is it that it will eventually make this contribution?

The project is already making a significant contribution to broader and long-term promotion and protection of the human rights of youth, through providing technical support, and through awareness raising, capacity building, and facilitating networks of a generation of youth leaders.

Technical support: The project provides the technical contributions that the youth groups are lacking, including organizational support, writing formal documents, the creation of publicity and information materials, fundraising advice and support, and networking. All of these create more stable and effective youth organizations that will in turn contribute to long term goals.

Networks: These networks among these young human rights defenders allow for the exchange of information and experiences, within countries and across borders, providing a platform for discussion, exchange, and brainstorming. These experiences build capacity and establish and strengthen these youth as future leaders.

Awareness-raising and capacity building in Human Rights: In all the regions, an important part of the strategy has been raising the awareness among youth about human rights, and about their role as rights holders. In some regions, they are building capacity to engage with human rights mechanisms – how to raise complaints, and to write reports – is also allowing youth to engage with human rights in a more effective way.

This project has been doing very high quality work. Previously we had not considered the OHCHR so highly for interventions on youth, but since the project started, they have positioned the OHCHR very strongly in the UN with work on Youth and we increasingly reach out to them for collaboration. The added value is both substantive content and exploration of how Human Rights apply to youth, and also a lot of intersectional experience. Exploring how youth understand their rights, and how they go about claiming them, is a huge field, that deserves to be further explored. OHCHR is in an excellent position.

– Collaborating UN agency representative

I3: Is the project's strategy and management steering towards impact?

Given the budget and the goals of the project, the strategy is already steering towards impact – see section II above.

This is happening in different ways in different regions, and examples are noted throughout this report. In Guatemala, for example, the existence of the project has had a catalytic effect; the Country Office has included youth activities within the annual work plan, and provided budget for youth activities; OHCHR-Guatemala has also provided technical support to OHCHR-Honduras for specific activities on youth, and the Office in Honduras has requested input from Guatemala on addressing the human rights of youth.

Opportunities for impact are increasing and maintaining a focus on the human rights of youth will be crucial in coming years. At the global level, the need for human rights capacity on issues relating to youth is expanding rapidly, for a number of reasons. Youth is increasingly becoming a target of international organizations, and the demand for human rights capacity in this area is growing. Furthermore, many challenges specifically affecting youth are arising in a post-pandemic era. These include problematic areas that were highlighted or exacerbated by the pandemic, such as freedom of assembly, and employment. The growing climate crisis, along with political challenges of populism and the rise of hate speech, also place youth high on policy agendas. As a social group strongly oriented towards the future, the category of *youth* represents change. Authoritarian governments try to keep youth groups close to them (youth alliances, councils, youth groups). It is thus very important to keep youth agenda close to Human Rights, to prevent these government youth movements from being coopted by actors working at cross purposes with human rights aims.

In addition to the UN Youth Strategy, launched in 2018 as a system-wide framework, both the Secretary-General's *Call to Action for Human Rights* (2020) and *Our Common Agenda* (2021) place

an emphasis on youth and future generations. *Our Common Agenda* sets out clear commitments in this regard, including the possible development of a ‘Youth in politics’ index, to measure progress towards enhanced youth participation.

In order to be able to engage effectively with these global issues and to support system-wide efforts, OHCHR’s focus on youth should also remain and expand in line with such developments. (See Conclusions and Recommendations).

SUSTAINABILITY (S)

S1: Are the results, achievements and benefits of the project likely to be durable?

The data gathered for this evaluation indicates that achievements and benefits of the project are likely to be durable, provided that initiatives begun under this project are able to continue. Given the unpredictable political and environmental situations in all of the regions in which the project is operating, other situations can undermine the achievements of the project. However, by addressing issues concerning youth, and building the capacity of youth themselves, the project is contributing to broader social and environmental sustainability as youth engage in these issues by which they stand to be dramatically affected.

By working with existing local youth organizations, the project also increases the likelihood of durability; this is described in the next section (S2).

In addition, the project has begun to build capacity within the government offices in the regions where they are operating, thus reinforcing national capacity to address youth issues.

Finally, the project has increased awareness of Youth as an important human rights category within the OHCHR Regional and Country Offices, as well as headquarters, increasing the likelihood that a focus on youth will be mainstreamed across the relevant agencies and integrated into future work plans.

Such seeds take a number of years to take root, however, and this evaluation would like to emphasize that sustainability will be greatly enhanced with focused support for the project for at least another funding period or two, in order to carry the project into a post-COVID-19 period of (hopefully) increased effectiveness, to further train leaders, and to solidify the networks that have begun to be established.

In addition, as summarized at the end of section I3 above, as the focus on youth expands, there will be increased need for competence in this area – especially in human rights.

Two years is not enough, we need more time. We are planning a new line of work, and a focus on Youth is included, but we need to budget to cover the position. We can continue working with this, we have projects where the budget is integrated. We need the position. – Youth Officer Supervisor

S2: Are the stakeholders willing and committed to continue working on the human rights of Youth issues addressed by the project? How effectively has the project built ownership?

This evaluation found that there is a very high degree of commitment among stakeholders to continue working on human rights and Youth issues addressed by the Youth and Human Rights Project, from their different capacities and relationships with the project

The Youth Officers themselves are clearly committed to continue working on the human rights of Youth. They are all personally invested in the projects that they have been involved

with starting. The supervisors at each of the regional offices have also expressed strong commitment to mainstreaming a focus on youth into the office activities. A sense of ownership has been clearly expressed in the ways in which the Regional and Country Offices have committed to integrating the Youth work into their activities and creatively developed partnerships in order to develop synergistic projects.

The project raises awareness and builds the capacity of local, national, and regional youth organizations, and organizations working with and for youth, in ways that strengthen their effectiveness as human rights defenders. Working with organizations that have been formed independently of the project ensures that the project is working with an existing momentum and on issues that are of primary concern to the target population – this is an effective way to build ownership. For example, in Guatemala the project is working with existing youth-led organizations that focus on the rights of LGBTQ+ youth, on Indigenous Youth (see section G1, below)

A clear indication that this is happening is provided by the participation of Youth from the Pacific region in the COP 26, following training and workshops by the Youth and Human Rights Project in Suva (see section E1 under Effectiveness). Other efforts are at earlier stages in the process, all of the Youth Officers discussed extensive training of specific sections of society – for example, lawyers, bloggers, and journalists in Central Asia, or students, in the MENA region, thus contributing to local ownership.

S3: Are the stakeholders able to continue working on the issues addressed by the project? How effectively is the project building necessary capacity?

Capacity building is a central strategy of the project. One of the major areas of focus is the building of capacity of local, national, and regional organizations. As described elsewhere in the report, Youth Officers are working with youth organizations and providing:

- training in human rights mechanisms and procedures
- training on how to apply human rights standards to youth
- relevant information
- support with bureaucratic procedures
- strategy advice
- support seeking funding
- technical support and capacity building for organizing events
- technical support and capacity building on specific issues of concern (e.g. climate change)
- support with the creation of informational materials

This capacity building is multi-pronged and responsive, greatly enhancing the ability of local and national stakeholders to continue working on the issues addressed by the project.

Furthermore, the project is building the capacity of governments, by working closely with them where possible, to ensure the inclusion of human rights approaches in policy development and revision. Building human rights capacity within government is also central to the sustainability of the project.

The Youth and Human Rights Project is also building the capacity of the OHCHR itself to include Youth in its work, by developing methodologies for working with Youth, by working to mainstream youth across the office activities, and by placing youth in key positions.

GENDER EQUALITY INTEGRATION (G)

GI: Has the Project planned results that contribute to gender equality?

Gender is an important part of the planned project results in all the field offices, however the way and extent to which this is done varies among the different offices. In all of the offices, there is a high attention to *intersectionality*, and the way that youth combines with other categories of discrimination – in particular gender (including LGBTQ+ communities). The ways in which youth and gender intersect with other issues, such as poverty, rurality, and/or ethnicity is also a main focus, and something that is defined at the national or regional level depending on the social dynamics in the country/countries in focus. The Country Office in Guatemala and the West African Regional Office both include a focus on Indigenous peoples as a vulnerable group in general, and in particular have projects that target Indigenous women.

Through the Youth and Human Rights Project, I have found the tools and received training to start incorporating sexual reproductive health Rights into my work. I have learned about the correct use of a gender perspective, and how to identify needs of particular populations. I have been able to gain knowledge and understanding about human rights, and bring to them to my organization – I have demanded that a human rights perspective be included in my work with Indigenous communities and reproductive health.

– Young woman, Guatemala

In some offices, the project is collaborating closely with UN Women, adding a focus on youth to ongoing programmes focusing on women; in the West African Regional Office, a focus on young women is incorporated into the Gender budget. Young women are thus at the center of the focus of the youth office there – the Youth Officer identified them having increased vulnerability in the areas of violence, and reproductive rights.

The OHCHR Pacific Office has soft launched the Report for Human Rights Defenders in the Pacific with emphasis on Women Human Rights Defenders where almost half of those interviewed were young women. This office also supports LGBTQ+ activities – but noted a need for more focus on protection strategies for this group. The office has also participated and co-organized gender-focused events such as the *Asia Pacific Generational Equality Forum* which brought together women and gender actors from the region.

At the MENA office, where three of the four current trainers are women, all activities are addressed at both women and men. They incorporate focus on gender into activities, including activities targeting HR defenders.

LGBTQ+ Youth

Although none of the offices has a direct focus on LGBTQ+ youth, interviews and review of documents indicate that this issue is clearly a focus of existing Youth groups, and a part of the general youth movement. In Guatemala and the Pacific this is the clearly the case and the project works closely with groups that have this as a focus. In Guatemala, networks created by the Youth and Human Rights Project allow for LGBTQ+ organizations to link with other youth-led organizations, to address intersectional issues of Youth, Indigeneity, gender, and rurality.

For our organization that focuses on LGBTQ+ youth, it is really important to be part of this network. We are an urban organization, and we want to be an ally for other organizations in other regions of the country, in rural and Indigenous areas. This project provides the initiative to expand our organization, it is a big opportunity for us.

– LGBTQ+ Youth-led organization representative, Guatemala

In the Pacific region, the project works with youth-led organizations focusing on LGBTQ+ issues, as well as with young activists working on other issues, but that identify within this category. In both of these regions, these groups are discriminated against and vulnerable; for example, LGBTQ+ youth generally do not have laws recognizing their rights and find it difficult to make their voices heard. However, they are not criminalized, making it possible to work with them.

In the other regions, legal and social protection is severely lacking, and the offices must carefully define their approaches in light of this situation. In West Africa, LGBTQ+ issues are high on the agenda for many African youth, and the office has supported the documentation of human rights violations of LGBTQ+ persons. However, the situation needs to be approached cautiously, as there is a lot of violence against LGBTQ+ people. Also in the Central Asian region, LGBTQ+ people are among the most marginalized, and issues of security need to be considered, especially in the countries that criminalize same sex relations. Similarly, in the MENA Regional Office, the Youth officers noted that LGBTQ+ issues are considered sensitive in some countries covered by the office, both because of social norms, and laws that criminalize homosexuality. In this sense and in respect of the “Do No Harm” principle, the office avoids raising LGBTQ+ related cases to Government Officials in sensitive countries without the consent of that community. Nonetheless, the MENA Youth officers reported that sometimes youth in this category make contact with them, as they consider the Youth and Human Rights Project as a safe space.

As noted above, in Guatemala Indigenous peoples have also been an important focus, including the way it intersects with gender and with youth; this is discussed further under the section *Additional inclusion issues*, below (D3).

G2: Have the choices made as to results and strategies been relevant to the integration of a gender perspective? Have women and other vulnerable groups been consulted during the planning?

A recognition of the ways that qualities like youth and gender can combine to create particular forms of discrimination is central to the project and was a guiding focus for the work plans, and efforts to ensure equal representation at national and regional events, meetings, and in online platforms is a standard practice for all offices.

In some regions, a specific focus on women has been central to the project from the start. In at least one region (West Africa) a focus on youth grew out of the focus on women, and a recognition that young women faced particular challenges (especially access to reproductive health), and were especially vulnerable to domestic violence. In both West Africa and Guatemala, a strong focus on gender is integrated into the project.

G3: Have results in the areas of gender equality and women’s rights been achieved?

It is not yet clear whether results have been achieved specifically as a result of this project, but clearly young women are an important target group in all regions, and are among the most vulnerable groups in some regions.

HUMAN RIGHTS INTEGRATION (DISABILITY INCLUSION (D))

D1: Has the project planned/achieved results that contribute to disability inclusion

As noted above in G1, the project takes an intersectional approach to youth – and the intersection of youth and disability has been an important focus. The Youth and Human Rights

Project has been engaging with the Disability section at OHCHR HQ in two ways: to support the inclusion of young people in the organization, and to promote the rights of young people with disabilities within the organization. Thus far, there has not been a focused integration of disability into the Youth and Human Rights Project at the global level, and there are no individuals with disabilities hired yet within the project. This evaluation did not find that this lack of inclusion thus far is specifically problematic. However, there are opportunities to increase this inclusion, which are noted in section D3.

At the regional level, as with Gender, the approach taken and extent to which this is a part of the project varies across the regions. In most regional/country offices, disability is firmly integrated into the project, in compliance with the OHCHR requirement for, and practice of, Human Rights Integration. The Regional Office with the most specific focus on disability inclusion is Central Asia, where the office has organized a Human Rights School, a series of training sessions, in Kyrgyzstan for training and advocacy of young people with disabilities and those that work with them; this has resulted in the implementation of several advocacy projects and the majority of those trained continue to be actively engaged with human rights work and civil society organizations.

At the Human Rights School, for the first time in my life, I was surrounded by people with disabilities – before that I didn't know any other people with disabilities. I learned how to advocate for our rights ... Now I want to become a human rights activist, I want to be able to protect the rights of people with disabilities – but not only them; I want to promote human rights for everyone. I am a human rights intern now, and I want to continue my activities in that area. I realized what I want to do with my life. I found my future while attending this school.

– Young man with disabilities, Bishkek

As a result of this Human Rights School and/or with support from the Youth and Human Rights Project, several Youth with Disabilities have been able to complete projects or training that either advance the rights of Youth with Disabilities in Kyrgyzstan, or that have furthered their own training and advocacy. Participants in the school have raised awareness by creating public service announcements that promote the rights of people with disabilities, children's literature where people with disabilities are represented, and pamphlets and other materials promoting the human rights of Youth with Disabilities. Others have been able to continue their secondary education or to study to become lawyers.

In Guatemala, there is a clear focus on *youth in vulnerable situations*, and one of the categories is youth with disabilities. One activity of the office has been ensuring that youth with disabilities were included in recent public events celebrating “women and girls in science” and “lawyers”, diversifying the representation of these fields. In the MENA region, people with disabilities are included in all of their activities; in some countries of that region they have worked to ensure that data collected in common country assessments is disaggregated to show statistics of people with disabilities. In the Pacific Regional Office the Youth Officer provided significant input into the review of the youth policy of Fiji, and was able to ensure vulnerable youth, including youth with disabilities, were included. In the West African office, disability is also integrated into the approach, and they practice inclusion in all activities. The Youth Officer works with a UNV subprogram on disabilities, and they have initiated a desk study on what has been done so far, in terms of youth, gender, and disability.

D2: What project results could be planned to contribute to disability inclusion?

At the time of the interviews, a global Network for Youth with Disabilities was being established through the *Global Disability Youth Summit*, sponsored by the International Disability

Alliance (IDA), UNICEF, and the Atlas Alliance (held in February 2022). The establishment of this network will allow the Project to develop a concrete proposal and a clear, long-term vision for how Youth with Disabilities can be included in the project. This opportunity should be explored.

D3: What strategies relevant to the integration of disability inclusion should be adopted by the project?

There should be a *reasonable accommodation fund*, in order to guarantee that people with disabilities can participate. Without this, there is a disincentive, because of extra costs associated with providing necessary services like transport, interpreters, or personal assistants. This was a policy developed after the Project was initiated, but it could be integrated in future negotiations (see Recommendation 5)

Another strategy is to expand the work on youth in general, so that people with disabilities can be better included. More funding is needed to ensure that they can participate.

Additional inclusion issues – Indigenous Youth

Indigenous peoples make up an important segment of the population (43.6%) in Guatemala. They are recognized as persons in vulnerable conditions, as a result of discrimination and violations of their rights, and as having needs that call for specific targeted attention. Indigenous Youth, and their organizations, have thus been an important focus of the Guatemala Country Office. Indigenous youth are particularly concerned about access to land and on issues having to do with identity, migration, and the environment. They also face restricted health care access, and a lack of recognition of their culture, values, and traditional approaches to health, in particular reproductive health.

In addition, the multiple issues encountered by young indigenous women is also an area of focus. The office tries to ensure the participation of indigenous youth (as well as youth with disabilities) in public events. For example, in a recent event promoting ‘girls in science’, the Youth and Human Rights Project ensured that the young female representatives included an indigenous woman and a woman with disabilities – thus promoting inclusion of these sectors of the youth population.

3. Lessons Learned

Challenges of working with the target population

There are specific challenges in working with any vulnerable population. Several challenges specific to working with *youth* have been identified thus far by the interviewees. These include:

Tension between the need to include the target population in positions and decision-making processes relevant to the project, and the experience and expertise that is formally required and / or expected. For example, the position of Youth Officer at the OHCHR requires a level of education and experience that makes it more difficult for people in the category of *youth* from being competitive for the position. This has been addressed differently in different offices. In some cases involving collaboration with other partners, a tendency to choose ‘highly qualified’ applicants for a project has been noticed. If unattended, this would continue the exclusion of vulnerable youth and the representation of primarily advantaged groups. In the cases reported, this situation was turned into an opportunity, and a lesson in how, to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable youth. This issue could be

addressed through the creation of entry-level positions specifically designed for youth, with attention to intersectionality and vulnerable youth (see Recommendations, below).

This problem is exacerbated by a *strong bias against youth* in many cultures. Most decision-making positions are held by much older members of society, and youth thus face a difficulty in making their voices heard. In many places there is resistance to the concept of human rights for youth, for reasons ranging from security concerns, to ageism. Even where there is not a bias against youth, for many governments, the category is not considered to be important – precisely because of their general lack of participation in electoral and other decision-making processes. Even within civil society and human rights organizations, where some actors are already well established, they may not be very welcoming to the idea of youth or new actors coming in, and they can question the legitimacy of youth actors. This challenge is best met by engaging youth in positions where they become visible and their competences are recognized and promoted – as the Youth and Human Rights Project is doing and facilitating.

Youth is a very new human rights category and it is not very well understood as such. There is thus a large amount of awareness-raising required – even among the target population.

Youth is a cross-cutting issue – it has a wide reach and it can be hard to narrow the focus to concentrate on specific areas. It is important to identify the major thematic issues at global, regional, and country levels. The creation of national and regional networks can allow offices to better understand and respond to the needs of a broad spectrum of youth organizations.

Challenge of keeping up with quickly changing global situation

As noted throughout the report, the project has needed to continuously adapt to changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed. In addition, the global focus on youth is expanding rapidly at the UN, and among governments. This increased focus is positive in many ways, but also challenging in terms of maintaining a human rights perspective on the issue. In part this is because more is happening and thus more input is needed. In addition, authoritarian governments can make use of this focus on youth to create support groups, and it becomes necessary to distinguish between groups that should be supported, and others (for example militarized groups, or those in support of causes that contradict the goals of the OHCHR, and the UN). To address these challenges, it is critical to maintain the focus on human rights. Although the Youth and Human Rights Project is small, in collaboration with other actors, through this project the OHCHR office is contributing greatly to building capacity in this area throughout the UN system. This is an ongoing, and increasing, need.

4. Good practices

A number of good practices have been identified by the Evaluation.

Creation of a Youth Office at HQ. This coordinating position, first within the *Child and Youth Rights Unit*, and from 2021 within the new *Youth Rights Unit* has greatly expanded the capacity of the OHCHR to fulfil its mandate for ensuring a human rights approach to the target group of Youth. It has allowed for the creation of a global Youth network with regular meetings (see point below), and provided a point of contact at HQ, for other OHCHR units seeking to engage with youth, and for other UN agencies seeking to collaborate on projects related to youth. It has also allowed for coordination of the production of tools, training, and network meetings.

Establishing of individual Youth Officers at the field offices with the specific purpose of promoting the human rights of youth. This has been a highly effective strategy, and creates a dynamic where attention is given to an area that would otherwise likely be overlooked. Furthermore, it allows for other OHCHR units at HQ to have a line of communication with youth on the ground. For example, some offices reported that they previously did not have the capacity to fully consult with youth in the field, or to make strategic plans. Having dedicated Youth Officers whose priority is on working with youth makes it more clear for management, and helps the office to think more clearly about youth strategy as a long-term focus.

Another important aspect of the presence of Youth Officers in the field is that they work across themes in the local OHCHR offices, promoting the human rights of youth and youth participation as crosscutting approaches.

Having periodic, systematic meetings with the Youth Officers in the field has several positive effects. It creates possibilities for follow up on specific global issues, questions, and strategies. It allows for more effective involvement of young people in large events, and multilateral issues that HQ addresses, and provides access to youth specialists. In addition it provides an opportunity for Youth Officers to voice their concerns to HQ, and reminds them that there are people at HQ taking their needs into consideration.

Flexibility in the program to allow for regionally specific approaches. This makes the programme more effective because the activities of each office can be tailored to the specific population needs, cultural dynamics, and social, political, and historical specificity of the regions. It also allows the programmes to build upon existing local, national, and/or regional momentum.

Flexibility and creativity in the face of external challenges – in particular that of the **COVID-19 pandemic**. As described in the report – the pandemic has represented an ongoing challenge and has interfered greatly with plans since the beginning of the project. Nonetheless, Youth Officers have responded creatively by employing the online tools that are available and creating online alternative activities wherever possible, and by engaging directly with the issue and focusing on new human rights concerns and violations facing youth as a result of the pandemic, and in the lockdown context.

Building on the existing capacity of the Youth Officers, and the Office. Field Officers in most countries specifically noted that they were able to contribute specific technical skills to youth organizations, thus greatly building their capacity. Providing the methodology for working with youth, both within the Office, and for CSOs and governments, has also been an effective strategy.

Emphasis on networking, and the connection of, and support of, existing organizations and networks.

Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations builds capacity of existing youth-run organizations, and those working with them, and furthers ownership within the country.

Collaboration with Government Offices builds the capacity of governments to address youth needs and the incorporation of a human rights perspective into government policies.

OHCHR engagement with youth on the global scale is extremely important and needed. They are also mandated to implement the youth strategy of the UN and to report at country level. It is clear that there is a need for sustained funding – the opportunity is there to make a difference.

– Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

5. Conclusions

1) **The Norwegian funded Youth and Human Rights Project is highly relevant.**

The Project has drawn attention to *Youth* as a human rights category, separate from that of Children. It brings a *Human Rights* focus to the existing Youth movement, and promotes a focus on *Youth* within the OHCHR and Human Rights organizations. It also builds capacity of youth themselves to address their concerns. All consulted emphasized the contribution that this project is making.

Furthermore, in all offices, there is an emphasis on inclusion of youth from vulnerable sections of the population, including youngwomen, and youth with disabilities, and (in offices where it is both relevant and possible) Indigenous youth, Youth of African descent, LGBTI+ youth, and impoverished and rural youth. This recognition of the intersectional aspect of youth as a human rights category increases the relevance of the project, especially at the national and regional level.

2) **The strategy of establishing Youth Officer positions at HQ and in Field Offices is particularly effective, and efficient.**

Having positions dedicated to coordinating and participating in activities – including networking, training, research, meetings and events – allows for the OHCHR to engage with key stakeholders and to promote a Human Rights approach. Even in offices where there is no specific budget dedicated for activities focusing on Youth, simply having the human resources available allows for engagement in a way that would not otherwise be possible.

In addition, having a position in Field Offices dedicated to Youth facilitates the development of approaches tailored to national contexts and priorities. This increases both the effectiveness and the relevance of the Project, and its impact at all levels.

While resources for activities are needed (see Conclusion 7), these can more readily be sourced elsewhere. Funding for the Youth Officer positions is an extremely important contribution that allows the Project to leverage other funding.

3) **The Youth and Human Rights Project has greatly increased the capacity of the OHCHR to fulfil its mandate of ensuring that approaches to Youth are grounded in human rights.**

The COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing political events have highlighted the importance of keeping human rights at the heart of UN approaches to Youth. The youth agenda is gaining momentum, and in some cases risks being co-opted by actors with purposes and strategies that violate human rights principles. The OHCHR is playing an important role as the global organization responsible for ensuring a Human Rights approach.

4) **There is a need for further capacity within the OHCHR in the area of Youth and Human Rights,** at global, regional, and national levels. The contribution of the OHCHR within the current project is filling a critical gap; however there is a need for even more capacity and sustained participation. This includes involvement with the UN Interagency Youth Network at the Field and HQ level, in order to allow the mainstreaming of human rights within the youth development agenda, and other strategic directions of the UN in relation to youth. With greater capacity, in particular more human resources, the Office

could more effectively coordinate work on a number of areas that are central to youth rights, including issues of accessibility, language, and diversity.

- 5) Following from the previous Conclusions, **there is a need to maintain and increase the OHCHR presence on Youth issues** in the coming years. Internal and external stakeholders indicated the specific mandate and expertise of OHCHR is crucial to ensuring a human rights approach to youth in the coming years.
- 6) **Youth Officers:** There is a tension between hiring experienced (and thus usually older) individuals to be in the position of Youth Officer, and the need to integrate youth into the OHCHR offices by hiring those in that category. There is a simultaneous need for:
 - the experience and skills (including professional skills as lawyers and social scientists, and technical skills built from experience working within the UN and other international fora) that the more experienced Youth Officers bring to their positions; this expertise is effectively drawn upon within the project.
 - the perspective of youth themselves, including the skills and experience that they have to offer, as well as a need to integrate this population more thoroughly within the OHCHR. The use of UNVs and/or entry level positions to create or supplement a Youth Team seems to be highly effective, and has advantages of building capacity in the area of Youth and Human Rights (see Recommendation 3 below).
- 7) **Lack of a budget for activities is a limitation** in most of the offices. Youth Officers and their teams have responded creatively and effectively, and built alliances with other UN bodies and other stakeholders. This indicates that a relatively small amount of additional funds could be very usefully and effectively employed by the offices.

6. Recommendations

- 1) **The project should be continued, and if possible, expanded.** There is unanimous support for the project from those interviewed, and clear impacts after only a short period of time. The population that the project is working with is becoming increasingly important as a Human Rights concern, and in some areas as a security issue.

As the project succeeds in its goals of promoting awareness of Youth and Human Rights, and its inclusion as a human rights category, more resources will be needed to support these efforts as the necessary capacity is built – in civil society, in governments, and at the OHCHR and other UN Offices. Ultimately, the expansion of the project to other field presences should be considered (see Recommendation 6 below).

This project has the potential to make an important impact – but it is important to maintain the focus during this critical growth period, to ensure the mainstreaming of Youth as a Human Rights category, and the sustainability of the advances this far.

- 2) **Interagency engagement should be enhanced, including through the concretization of partnerships on Youth:** Interagency cooperation has been identified by this evaluation as an effective strategy at the global, regional, and country levels. There is much space to enhance the UN interagency nature of the work, and the engagement by Youth Officers (linked to UN Youth Strategy) as well as across the different areas of work

of the regional offices. This would enhance the focus on human rights within other UN efforts, thus fulfilling the specific mandate of the OHCHR.

Concretizing interagency cooperation can also support long-term progress towards the realization of the Human Rights of Youth. For instance, the creation of an interagency fund for Youth could be considered within this context.

- 3) The current practice of hiring experienced Youth Officers should be maintained, while simultaneously creating entry level positions:** The current levels of requirement for Youth Officer at HQ should be maintained, but the hiring of experienced Youth Officers should not be at the expense of integrating Youth.

The creation of entry level positions is also recommended. The use of UNVs to create or supplement a Youth Team should be expanded where possible; Youth UNVs and University UNVs should also be considered. NOA contracts, which require less experience, could be used to encourage the consideration of younger candidates at the CO and RO level.

A particular emphasis on the need for younger candidates may be necessary to combat organizational culture that often prioritizes experience (and thus age).

Considering the important role that the project is playing in allowing the OHCHR to fulfil its specific mandate in the area of Youth, and the growing momentum of the Youth Movement, as well as the effective use of resources so far, it is recommended that additional resources should be sought and devoted to the Project. The following Recommendations relate to funding of the Project.

- 4) It is recommended that all participating Field Offices should prioritize Youth in their annual budgets and plan line items for activities for youth.** The Youth Officer position has been identified as an effective strategy; this effectiveness and the impact of this position can be greatly enhanced by providing a relatively small amount of funding for activities. Some Field Offices have already begun including Youth in their budgets; this allows for even greater flexibility and efficiency in meeting the project goals.
- 5) Given the highly intersectional nature of youth as a human rights category, particular focus should be given to ensuring funding that promotes inclusion. The following should be considered:**
- a) Support for a *reasonable accommodation fund* would help a lot with disability inclusion.
 - b) The inclusion of rural and impoverished youth (including Indigenous youth) requires funding for travel and other support for participation in national, regional and global meetings: this should be considered in all activity budgeting and planning (regardless of the source).
- 6) For larger expenses, including additional Youth Officer positions, funding should be sourced by reaching out to a wider donor base and diversifying the sources of funding.** The PBRB has already identified Youth as a priority area, and this evaluation has confirmed this. The identification of new funding sources will be necessary if the project will expand to fill gaps in other regions.

It is recommended that the Office explore options to create an awareness campaign about Youth and Human Rights targeted at potential donors, including the creation of promotional materials highlighting the main issues and needs for support.

Management response		
Interim Evaluation of the OHCHR Youth and Human Rights Project		
<p>Recommendation 1: The project should be continued, and if possible, expanded. There is unanimous support for the project from those interviewed, and clear impacts after only a short period of time. The population that the project is working with is becoming increasingly important as a Human Rights concern, and in some areas as a security issue.</p> <p>As the project succeeds in its goals of promoting awareness of Youth and Human Rights, and its inclusion as a human rights category, more resources will be needed to support these efforts as the necessary capacity is built – in civil society, in governments, and at the OHCHR and other UN Offices. Ultimately, the expansion of the project to other field presences should be considered (see Recommendation 6 below).</p> <p>This project has the potential to make an important impact – but it is important to maintain the focus during this critical growth period, to ensure the mainstreaming of Youth as a Human Rights category, and the sustainability of the advances this far.</p>		
Management position on recommendation: Accepted		
<p>Management comment: The inclusion of youth officers under minimum requirements in the cost-plan for 2022, testifies to the progress made in OHCHR towards the strengthening of the youth portfolio, in consonance with the OMP, the UN Youth Strategy and Our Common Agenda. The Office will endeavor to continue and expand the Youth and Human Rights Project, but cannot financially commit to do so until the 2023 planning process is taking place and there is clarity on the financial situation of the office for the coming year. Additional funds/posts could be included under minimum requirements dependent on the results of outreach to a wider donor base. The Office agrees that the extension of the project to more field presences would allow to further develop approaches tailored to national contexts and priorities, thus increasing both the effectiveness and the relevance of the project, and its impact at all levels.</p>		
Key Actions	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. Endeavor to support the continuation of the project, including by considering maintaining the youth officers' positions under the minimum requirements for 2023-2024, depending on the financial situation of the office.	CYRU/PBRB	Q4 2022
2. Consider expanding the UUNV programme, including to cover the field, to create positions for youth officers, and exploring new funding sources to allow for the establishment of national officers in more field presences.	CYRU/field presences ⁵ / DEXREL	Q1 2023

⁵ Wherever field presences are mentioned, we will work to identify relevant/interested field presences for implementation.

Recommendation 2:

Interagency engagement should be enhanced, including through the concretization of partnerships on Youth: Interagency cooperation has been identified by this evaluation as an effective strategy at the global, regional, and country levels. There is much space to enhance the UN interagency nature of the work, and the engagement by Youth Officers (linked to UN Youth Strategy) as well as across the different areas of work of the regional offices. This would enhance the focus on human rights within other UN efforts, thus fulfilling the specific mandate of the OHCHR.

Concretizing interagency cooperation can also support long-term progress towards the realization of the Human Rights of Youth. For instance, the creation of an interagency fund for Youth could be considered within this context.

Management position on recommendation: Accepted

Management comment: Interagency cooperation should be advanced further, as the OHCHR scorecard assessing progress towards the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy for 2021 revealed a lack of progress against the “Regional inter-agency coordination on youth” key performance indicator (KPI) and the need to accelerate progress against the “Country level inter-agency coordination on youth” KPI. The implementation of joint activities with other UN agencies can provide OHCHR with more opportunities for diversifying donor base and obtaining funds through pooled financing mechanisms, such as the Peacebuilding Fund.

Key Actions	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. Continue to engage with other UN agencies, including FAO and its World Food Forum, to advance the implementation of joint activities at the global and regional level	CYRU	Q1 2023
2. Identify areas for possible coordination with UN agencies in the field to advance in the implementation of the Youth Strategy KPIs	CYRU/field presences	Q1 2023

Recommendation 3:

The current practice of hiring experienced Youth Officers should be maintained, while simultaneously creating entry level positions: The current levels of requirement for Youth Officer at HQ should be maintained, but the hiring of experienced Youth Officers should not be at the expense of integrating Youth.

The creation of entry level positions is also recommended. The use of UNVs to create or supplement a Youth Team should be expanded where possible; Youth UNVs and University UNVs should also be considered. NOA contracts, which require less experience, could be used to encourage the consideration of younger candidates at the CO and RO level.

A particular emphasis on the need for younger candidates may be necessary to combat organizational culture that often prioritizes experience (and thus age).

Management position on recommendation: Accepted

Management comment: Youth officers in field offices are mostly NO-As and NO-Bs. The practice of hiring UNVs as youth officers is already in place in the MENA RO. Expanding this practice would help OHCHR to better integrate youth in the implementation of the project and to achieve more progress in the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy against the “Youth workforce in UN entities” KPI (UN entity scorecard).

Key Actions	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. Support PSMS efforts to attract young and diverse talent through expanding the University UNV and Youth UNV placements at OHCHR Headquarters and in the field, in addition to the Young Professionals Programme (YPP)	PSMS/CYRU	Q4 2023
2. To the extent the financial situation of the office allows, establish meaningful, diverse and effective youth engagement to include the establishment of junior and entry level positions (PI/P2) in OHCHR to increase employment opportunities for young people. [This is inkeeping with the OEAP on Managing our Talent]	PSMS/CYRU/field presences	Q4 2023

Recommendation 4:

It is recommended that all participating Field Offices* should prioritize Youth in their annual budgets and plan line items for activities for youth. The Youth Officer position has been identified as an effective strategy; this effectiveness and the impact of this position can be greatly enhanced by providing a relatively small amount of funding for activities. Some Field Offices have already begun including Youth in their budgets; this allows for even greater flexibility and efficiency in meeting the project goals.
*(*field offices participating in the youth project)*

Management position on recommendation: Accepted

Management comment: According to the OMP, youth is a spotlight population for OHCHR, therefore inclusion of youth-focused activities by field presences in their annual workplans/costplans is highly encouraged. Further efforts should be made to mainstream youth through all activities of the office.

Key Actions	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. Encourage field presences to include activities on youth in their annual work plans/cost plans, for instance, through the meeting of heads of field presences and/or informational sessions for field and HQ colleagues (ex. coffee briefings)	CYRU/field presences	Q4 2022
<p>Recommendation 5:</p> <p>Given the highly intersectional nature of youth as a human rights category, particular focus should be given to ensuring funding that promotes inclusion. The following should be considered:</p> <p>a) Support for a reasonable accommodation fund would help a lot with disability inclusion.</p> <p>b) The inclusion of rural and impoverished youth (including Indigenous youth) requires funding for travel and other support for participation in national, regional and global meetings: this should be considered in all activity budgeting and planning (regardless of the source).</p>		
<p>Management position on recommendation: Accepted</p>		
<p>Management comment: The involvement of different categories of young people, including youth with disabilities, indigenous youth, rural and impoverished youth, is highly encouraged. To cover travel costs of participants, the CYRU budget dedicated to travel for youth activities could be used, and for travel of youth with disabilities, the reasonable accommodation system developed in OHCHR will apply. The creation of reasonable accommodation fund within the project for non-travel needs can also be considered.</p>		
Key Actions	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. In partnership with the Human Rights and Disability Team and the Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section (IPMS), ensure that youth with disabilities and indigenous youth are included in the project and OHCHR activities on youth.	Human Rights and Disability Team/ CYRU/IPMS/field presences	Q4 2022
2. Examine the possibility of creating a reasonable accommodation fund for the participation of youth with disabilities in the project and promote the use of the reasonable accommodation system developed in OHCHR	CYRU with the support by Human Rights and Disability Team	Q2 2023
3. Encourage field presences to involve vulnerable youth in the project activities.	CYRU/field presences	Q4 2022

Recommendation 6

For larger expenses, including additional Youth Officer positions, funding should be sourced by reaching out to a wider donor base and diversifying the sources of funding. The PBRB has already identified Youth as a priority area, and this evaluation has confirmed this. The identification of new funding sources will be necessary if the project will expand to fill gaps in other regions.

It is recommended that the Office explore options to create an awareness campaign about Youth and Human Rights targeted at potential donors, including the creation of promotional materials highlighting the main issues and needs for support.

Management position on recommendation: Accepted

Management comment: Efforts of DEXREL and CYRU to reach out to donors will be needed for obtaining additional funding for the programme. Besides, effective communication and awareness-raising activities can also increase chances to raise funds for the programme. Field presences can also do fundraising by submitting their initiatives to the pooled financing mechanisms, such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

Key Actions	Responsibility	Time-frame
1. Continue efforts to increase funding through targeted member States and private sector	CYRU and DEXREL	Q4 2023
2. Encourage and support field offices to apply for funding through the pooled financing mechanisms, such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI), in partnership with the Civic Space Unit	CYRU/CSU/field presences eligible for PBF GYPI	Q1-Q4 2023
3. Develop communication materials on Youth and Human Rights highlighting the work of OHCHR on youth for diverse purposes	CYRU and COMMS	Q4 2023