

# Building Back Better: Institution Building & Youth Engagement in Public Services Delivery in Countries Emerging from Conflicts

Side-Event to the HLPF 2022  
UN DESA, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)

12 July 2022, 1:00–2:30 pm  
Conference Room 12

This Side-Event to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) entitled *Building Back Better: Institution Building and Youth Engagement in Public Services Delivery in Countries Emerging from Conflicts* will address SDG 4 on quality education, and SDG 5 on gender equality, as well as the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, in particular the principles of leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, and intergenerational equity. The event will discuss the challenges related to institution building and public services delivery in societies emerging from conflicts, which demand different narratives and approaches to address the drivers of fragility and develop innovative strategies to achieve the SDGs.

The Side-Event will facilitate a discussion on how to empower the younger generation to engage in institution building and public services delivery in fragile communities. In this manner, it will follow up on the discussions about youth ‘taking action’ for a sustainable future in the 2022 ECOSOC Youth Forum. The Side-Event discussions will also address a key commitment in the SG’s Report “Our Common Agenda” to promote meaningful and effective youth engagement.<sup>1</sup> Young people account for more than 70 percent of the population in many developing countries. For example, the median age in Africa today is 19.7 years.<sup>2</sup> It is important to engage this large part of the population in global efforts to achieve intergenerational equity and sustainable development. Young people need to believe that they have a stake in society and a viable future. They also need to see society believe and invest in them.

There is no doubt that the pandemic placed unprecedented strain on educational systems (SDG 4), especially in developing countries. Indeed, many countries struggle to deliver quality education to young people due, not only, to the already weak educational systems, but also to the unprecedented school closings imposed by lockdowns and other confinement strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19. According to UNESCO, 500 million students around the world were deprived of distance learning during

---

<sup>1</sup> See “Our Common Agenda”, Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations. Available at: [https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common\\_Agenda\\_Report\\_English.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf) accessed on 21 April 2022.

<sup>2</sup> See Statista at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1226158/median-age-of-the-population-of-africa/> Accessed on 20 April 2022.

the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> Most developing countries were unable to develop operational digital learning. Consequently, more than 89 percent of students worldwide have dropped out of school due to closures linked to COVID-19. Indeed, less than 20 percent of people in developing countries had access to the Internet, compared to 87 percent in developed societies in 2019.<sup>4</sup> Digital inequalities directly impact the way societies may be able to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gender inequalities (SDG 5) have been exacerbated as women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. While women make up 39 percent of global employment, they account for 54 percent of overall job losses.<sup>5</sup> The pandemic has also significantly increased the burden of unpaid care, which is disproportionately carried by women. Gender-based violence remains a serious concern with the increase of domestic violence during lockdowns. Girls not going to school is a persistent issue, as they face risks of sexual exploitation, early pregnancies, forced marriages as well as burdens of domestic chores and family care. The pandemic has seriously exacerbated these already existing gender inequalities.

Despite all its disruptions to the implementation of these SDGs, the coronavirus pandemic presents a unique opportunity for change, for building back better and stronger societies. There is growing international awareness of the urgency to build sustainability through balanced ecosystems that promote social, economic, and environmental wellbeing, leaving no one behind.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HLPF

The Side-Event will contribute to enhance the discussions of the HLPF by providing a broader and in-depth conversation on institution building and public services delivery in countries emerging from conflicts. The speakers will explore innovative strategies for empowering and engaging the younger generation in rebuilding institutions and contributing to public services delivery in the aftermath of the pandemic. To achieve intergenerational equity young people must be at the forefront of promoting sustainable development, fashioning their own future as true agents of change.

More specifically, the conversation will:

1. Examine critical impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 4 and 5.
2. Examine how the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, especially the principle of intergenerational equity, can be achieved with the participation of young people in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

---

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures (2020/21). Available at: <https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/survey-education-covid-school-closures/> Accessed 17 April 2022.

<sup>4</sup> World Economic Forum (2020). Coronavirus has exposed the digital divide like never before. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-digital-divide-internet-data-broadbandmobile/> Accessed on 12 April 2022.

<sup>5</sup> COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects, by Madgavkar et al., (July 2020). Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressiveeffects> Accessed on 18 April 2022.

3. Share innovative strategies and propose key policy recommendations for youth engagement in institution building and public services delivery in countries emerging from conflicts after the pandemic.

## THE PANEL

### Opening Remarks:



#### **Mr. Liu Zhenmin, USG, Economic and Social Affairs (United Nations)**

Mr. Liu Zhenmin was Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of China. Among his various diplomatic assignments, he served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland.

### Presenters:



#### **Ms. Maria Cristina Duarte, USG, Special Adviser on Africa (United Nations)**

Ms. Maria Cristina Duarte served as Minister of Finance, Planning and Public Administration in the Republic of Cabo Verde. Prior to this position, she was the Director of a World Bank project on a private sector development and competitiveness programme. She has been a member of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration.



#### **Ms. Kaba Nialé, Minister for Planning and Development (Cote d'Ivoire) - TBC**

Ms. Kaba Nialé is Minister of Planning and Development in Côte d'Ivoire. She has been President of the Board of Governors of the African Development Bank (AFDB) since 2019, and his Governor of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). In 2012 she became the first woman to hold the position of Minister of Economy and Finance in her country.



**Dr. Cyril Obi, Director African Peacebuilding Network (SSRC, New York)**

Dr. Cyril Obi is a leading scholar and researcher on African peace, security, and development. He heads the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) and the Next Generation of Social Sciences in Africa programs at the Social Science Research Council. He is currently a research associate of the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.



**Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (United Nations) TBC**

Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake is the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth since 2017. Her work has focused on expanding the UN's youth engagement and advocacy in sustainable development, human rights, peace and security and humanitarian action. Prior to this post, Ms. Wickramanayake was instrumental in creating a movement for youth civic and political engagement in her country, Sri Lanka.

**Moderator:**



**Ms. Alcinda Honwana, Principal Inter-Regional Adviser, DESA/DPIDG (United Nations)**

Ms. Alcinda Honwana has been Centennial Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Chair in International Development at the Open University UK. She has conducted extensive research and analysis on conflict and peacebuilding, on women's empowerment and gender equity as well as on youth socio-economic transitions and political engagement.

**AGENDA**

1:00 - 1:05	Opening	Welcome and introductions	Moderator
1:05 - 1:10	Keynote	Opening Remarks	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
1:10 - 1:25	Speaker 1	Issues in Gender Equality (SDG 5)	Ms. Maria Cristina Duarte
1:25 - 1:40	Speaker 2	Issues in Quality education (SDG 4)	Dr. Cyril Obi
1:40 - 1:55	Speaker 3	Youth and the SDGs in Côte d'Ivoire	Ms. Kaba Nialé
1:55 - 2:10	Speaker 4	Issues in youth Engagement & the SDGs	Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake
2:10 - 2:25	Q&A	Open discussion	Audience + Speakers
2:25 - 2:30	Closing	Sum Up and closing	Moderator

## ORGANIZER

### Alcinda Honwana

Principal Inter-Regional Adviser

Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) | United Nations

Email: [alcinda.honwana@un.org](mailto:alcinda.honwana@un.org)

Tel: +1 646 241 6268