



THE BIG BRAINSTORM

A PLATFORM FOR INCUBATING AND SUPPORTING ACTION

Unlock
the 
Future

MARCH 2022

‘I’M A YOUNG PERSON MYSELF, SO WHEN I LISTEN TO WHAT MY PEERS HAVE TO SAY — THE IDEAS THAT THEY HAVE, AS WELL AS THE SOLUTIONS THAT THEY HAVE FOR THE FUTURE — IT’S VERY INSPIRING.”

CHIDO MPEMBA SPECIAL ENVOY ON YOUTH TO THE AFRICAN UNION

“PEOPLE ARE, OF COURSE, LOOKING FOR ELDER MENTORS, BUT I THINK THE AUTHORITY GENERATION IS ALSO STARTING TO THINK THAT WE NEED YOUTH AS MENTORS.”

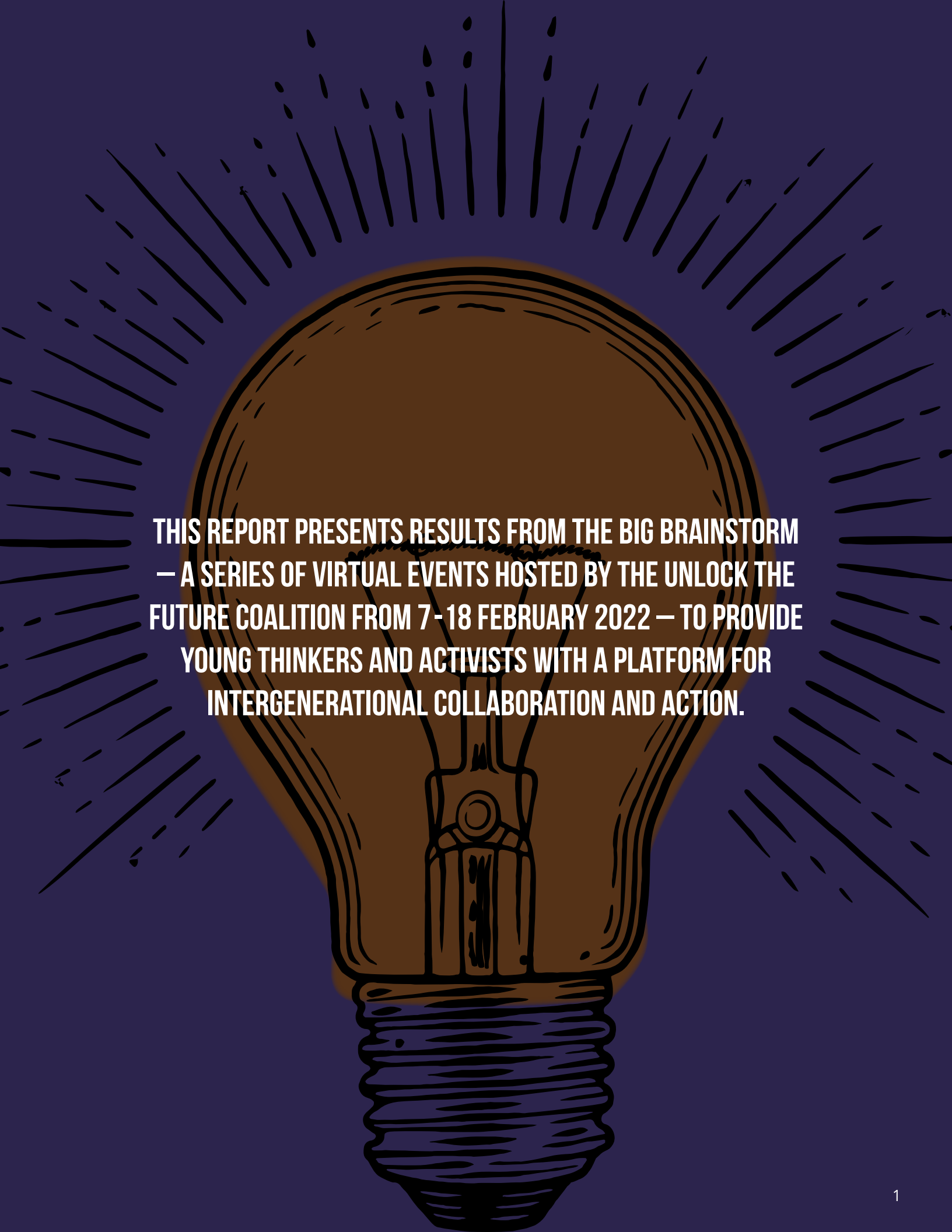
H.E. JOHANNA LISSINGER PEITZ AMBASSADOR FOR STOCKHOLM+50

“I WOULDN’T UNDERESTIMATE HOW HUNGRY MIDDLE-AGED CHANGEMAKERS ARE FOR THE INNOVATION AND ENERGY OF THE NEXT GENERATION.”

KATE HAMPTON CEO OF CIFF

“IMPLEMENTING CHANGE COMES DOWN TO ASKING SOME SIMPLE QUESTIONS AND EXCAVATING FOR ANSWERS... YOU ALL HAVE A LOT OF AMAZING IDEAS AND A LOT OF CHARISMA, SO SWEAT THE DETAILS A LITTLE BIT AND YOU WILL GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED.”

RAHUL CHANDRAN VP OF ESG, EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA



**THIS REPORT PRESENTS RESULTS FROM THE BIG BRAINSTORM
— A SERIES OF VIRTUAL EVENTS HOSTED BY THE UNLOCK THE
FUTURE COALITION FROM 7-18 FEBRUARY 2022 — TO PROVIDE
YOUNG THINKERS AND ACTIVISTS WITH A PLATFORM FOR
INTERGENERATIONAL COLLABORATION AND ACTION.**

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INTRODUCTION

THE UNLOCK THE FUTURE COALITION

The Unlock the Future coalition brings together the world's most far-reaching, youth-focused and youth-led movements, networks, and organizations. Together, we are committed to providing the world's young thinkers, activists, and leaders with a platform to design the future.

In September 2021, the leaders of our organizations came together and agreed that at a time when children and young people are facing crises not of their making, convergence and collaboration is essential.

So, at the opening of the 76th session of the General Assembly, they announced the 'Unlock Declaration', in which they committed to "unlocking a better future for young people and for future generations". They shared their intention to develop a vision and strategy for a high-ambition coalition working with and for the world's young people.

Since then, we have been finding ways to fulfill these promises, whilst embracing our shared principles of diversity, representation, impact, and accountability. We designed the Big Brainstorm to incubate and launch a series of youth-led Action Groups that will sit at the heart of the coalition.

**Unlock
the 
Future**



CIVICUS, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, and Save the Children contributed to the Unlock Declaration; the Kofi Annan Foundation is also committed to building this coalition with and for children, young people, and future generations.

THE BIG BRAINSTORM

The Big Brainstorm is our annual [open-space](#) event. It is an inclusive opportunity for young people and partners to co-create solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing next and future generations.

For our coalition's inaugural Big Brainstorm, we invited anyone who was passionate about shaping the future to create, lead, or participate in an Action Group. The only requirement was that groups had to be led or co-led by young people.

Over the course of the Big Brainstorm, the Action Groups took part in a packed program.

THE BIG KICK-OFF — 7 FEBRUARY

Action Group leaders shared what issue they had chosen to focus on during the Big Brainstorm and what they hoped to achieve over the next couple of weeks; they then invited others to join them. Action Group leaders spoke about issues ranging from the digital gender divide to mental health in what made for an exciting first day. [Click here](#) to find out more about the Action Groups.

SPOTLIGHT SESSIONS — 14-17 FEBRUARY

Our Spotlight Sessions brought together experts of all ages for open policy discussions about education, justice, and planning for the future. It was brilliant to see people from all backgrounds sharing their experiences and finding ways to collaborate. You can see highlights from the Spotlight Sessions [here](#).

THE BIG PITCH – 18 FEBRUARY

The final event of the Big Brainstorm saw each Action Group pitch their ideas in front of an audience of other young changemakers, as well as youth-led organizations and youth champions from across the international system.

Action Groups were given five minutes to share what they had learned over the last two weeks, and plans for turning their ideas into action over the next year and beyond. They then received feedback from an Advisory Panel, who did a fantastic job as our 'keynote listeners', providing Action Groups with words of wisdom and encouragement.

THE ADVISORY PANEL



CHIDO MPEMBA

Special Envoy on Youth to the African Union



KATE HAMPTON

CEO of the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)



RAHUL CHANDRAN

VP of ESG, Export Development Canada



H.E. JOHANNA LISSINGER PEITZ

Ambassador for Stockholm+50



ACTION GROUPS

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

In September 2022, the Secretary-General of the United Nations will be convening a [Transforming Education Summit](#). Recently, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed made it clear that the core aims of this summit will be “averting a generational catastrophe” and “rethinking education systems.”

This Action Group believes that for these aims to be met, young people must play a key role in the lead up to, during, and after the summit. At the Big Pitch, they presented their thoughts on what young people would like to see discussed at the Transforming Education Summit *and* how they could meaningfully be given space to shape the event.

They noted that education systems must be redesigned so that they are fit for the 21st century, and able to “equip young people with essential skills for their life”, like digital literacy and empathy. They emphasized the need to “trust young people” at every stage of planning for the summit.



THAIS QUEIROZ



HANNAH GRAHAM



ALICE MUKASHYAKA



FREYA SEATH

“Think about how you can leverage the inside-outside model by identifying authority figures who can adopt and champion your manifesto within formal structures alongside your self-organized, non-formal engagement.”

KATE HAMPTON



SCOUTS
Creating a Better World

**RESTLESS
DEVELOPMENT**

GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

Across the world, there is a growing gender digital divide with disparities in girls and young women's connectivity, digital literacy, and online safety. During the pandemic there have also been increased levels of digital violence against women and girls, which can take a huge toll on their mental health.



MARIA TERZI

This Action Group aims to utilize the strength and courage of young women to bridge the digital divide, by encouraging them to leverage key moments across the year. At the Big Pitch, they explained that they would focus on internet safety, asking young women and policymakers to “reimagine the internet without gender-based violence”, and mobilizing around major events like the W20 Summit in July and the UN Internet Governance Forum in December.

“Together”, they urged “let’s work together towards the closing of the gender digital divide”, and ensure the digital revolution is inclusive, safe, and equitable.

“Every single NGO will be digitizing, so think about how you can make sure that they go digital in a gender inclusive way... And have concrete asks ready to help you translate your really powerful advocacy campaign into something [with which] you can hold people accountable.”

RAHUL CHANDRAN



**WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF GIRL GUIDES
AND GIRL SCOUTS**

JOBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

“What are you passionate about? Together, we will make it possible this year”: This is the fundamental principle that guides this Action Group. They believe that the metaverse presents an opportunity to rethink the future of jobs for young people, and are working to harness this opportunity through the World Together movement.

World Together brings together and showcases youth-led passion projects on an annual journey that runs up to World Together Day (31 December). So far, they have used augmented reality to reimagine iconic landmarks and worked with high-profile celebrities.

At the Big Pitch, they put forward their ideas for a 1-month ‘phygital’ mobilization running up to World Together Day in 2022, which will bring together people of all ages from across the globe to commemorate intergenerational partnerships for sustainable development.



LUMIN HEW



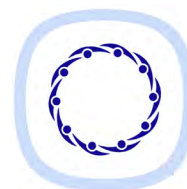
YIJIE ZHANG



DEREK CHEUNG

“I love your intergenerational angle, I think that is powerful. I believe strongly that intergenerational equity will succeed the SDGs as the global organizational framework.”

RAHUL CHANDRAN



CLIMATE, SUSTAINABILITY AND GENDER EQUALITY



*Most inspirational
presentation*

Climate change disproportionately impacts girls and women, but they remain underrepresented in the spaces where decisions about climate action are made. This Action Group is committed to reversing this trend and putting female leaders at the heart of the fight against climate change.



TANYA DEVANI

At the Big Pitch, they highlighted the fact that “by meaningfully including girls and women, we can greatly accelerate climate progress” and “just as importantly, advance gender equality”. They will produce a guide to educate young people about the impact of climate change on girls’ and women’s health, education, and livelihoods and to empower them to advocate, organize, fundraise, and raise awareness for climate action and gender equality in their communities.

“You need to ask yourselves: how can we incorporate the older generation, and how can we use what you’re developing to create an intergenerational dialogue platform?”

CHIDO MPEMBA

“I think you have good ambition and a very clear goal, and I actually think you can help us [leaders] to think through specifics, beyond broad feminist foreign policies.”

H.E. JOHANNA LISSINGER PEITZ



YOUNG JUSTICE LEADERS

This Action Group believes that efforts to recover and respond to the pandemic, “must prioritize more people centered justice” and to make this happen, “young people, especially young justice leaders must be central to every plan”.

Over the course of the Big Brainstorm, they worked on finding concrete ways in which young leaders who have been at the forefront of justice systems change, informally and formally, can be authentically involved in international conversations around justice. They focused specifically on the World Justice Forum, which will be held in May and will bring together justice leaders across sectors to share their solutions for advancing justice and peace.

They shared their plans to mobilize around the Pathfinders Young Justice Leaders cohort, and through the Unlock the Future coalition, as well as develop intergenerational dialogues with partners such as The Elders.



ALISA JIMENEZ

“It’s crucial that you look into how you can ensure diversity in terms of representation, and especially how you can include young people from non urban areas, from the [global] south, and with disabilities.”

CHIDO MPEMBA

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Worldwide, the prevalence of mental health conditions amongst children and young people is on the rise: the last two years have left more and more young people isolated and anxious.

Alarmed by these trends, the leaders of this Action Group set up Moner School: a youth-led organization that aims to enlighten young people about the importance of mental health care. Moner School has a network of over 50 volunteers working to develop a positive mental health literacy program based on talk and play therapy, and other novel methods.

At the Big Pitch, the Action Group shared that they are about to launch a pilot of their program in a few schools. After this, they plan to enhance their program based on their learnings, and then find opportunities to expand to other countries.

They highlighted the need to “break the chain of stigma around mental health” and emphasized that “the next generation must be equipped to take a leading role in mental health care, so they can pass their learnings on to future generations”.



FAIROOZ BEETHER



RAGIB SHAHREAR ALAM

“Mental health is the sort of thing that we all talk about, but never invest in... I love that you’ve taken something that you’ve seen as a problem and just done something about it. Now, you have to think about replicability and scale.”

RAHUL CHANDRAN



FUTURE GENERATIONS

This Action Group is motivated by one clear question: how can we be good ancestors? They believe that we are at a tipping point – across the world, the call to protect future generations has been growing stronger and young people are especially eager to embrace their responsibilities towards the future.

To equip young people to be champions for the future, this Action Group used the Big Brainstorm to develop a Future Generations Games toolkit, filled with engaging thought experiments and games designed to teach users about key concepts relating to future generations and long-term thinking.

At the Big Pitch, they presented one game they had developed based on the “Ministry for the Future” by Kim Stanley Robinson, encouraging the audience to think about the pros and cons of solar geoengineering. They now plan to develop and share their collection of Future Generations Games with key leaders, of all ages, to help them become “proactive and productive agents for the protection of future generations at Stockholm+50 (a crucial environmental meeting being held in June) and beyond”.



BIANCA GOEBEL



TAYLOR HAWKINS

“We all speak about meaningful youth engagement, but sometimes it’s difficult from the policy side to know what is actually meaningful, so the more focused your asks and priorities, the higher the likelihood of success.”

H.E. JOHANNA LISSINGER PEITZ



RESOURCING YOUTH ACTION

“Youth civil societies are not thriving and, in many cases, not even surviving and the biggest challenge they face is actually resourcing and funding”. This is the issue that brought together our final Action Group, who are determined to identify and co-create solutions to key problems in the youth funding landscape.

At the Big Pitch, this group shared that one of the biggest issues between young people and donors is a lack of trust. They also highlighted some of the changes young people would like to see, such as more youth led-funds, simplified access to information around funding opportunities, and for donors to provide more mentorship.

They finished by emphasizing the fact that “partnering with young people to design and distribute funding has been proven to deliver stronger development outcomes time and time again”, and encouraged others to join their growing coalition.



FREYA SEATH



ANNE MUTHONI



ELISA NOVOA

“Often large organizations are limited by regulatory constraints, so it’s really important that young people understand those and that they’re sufficiently resourced to handle them.”

KATE HAMPTON



SPOTLIGHT SESSIONS

FUTURE GENERATIONS

In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was the first global event to recognize our responsibility to future generations. Fifty years later, the upcoming Stockholm+50 conference provides an opportunity to once again consider how we can meet the needs and protect the rights of future generations, starting with the 10.9 billion people who are likely to be born in the rest of this century.

At this Spotlight Session, experts of all ages explored how we can make the most of Stockholm+50 by providing young people – who have the greatest stake in the future – with a platform to reimagine our relationship with future generations and develop proposals for a “Contract with the Future”.

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

This September, the Secretary-General of the United Nations will convene a Transforming Education Summit. This will be a moment for the international system to redesign education systems for the 21st century so that “learners everywhere are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in our rapidly changing world”.

At this Spotlight Session, partners within and outside the formal, international education system gathered to discuss how they could create the conditions for the success of this summit; they especially considered how they could work together to position children and young people – as learners, young parents, young teachers, emerging experts, and campaigners – as co-designers of the summit.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND JUSTICE

Since 2015, when the United Nations launched the Sustainable Development Goals, there has been a growing movement calling for “people-centered justice”: justice centered on those affected by injustice and those fighting for change.

At this Spotlight Session, justice leaders across generations and sectors came together to discuss how they could create environments for young people – and especially young women – who are authentically engaged in closing the justice gap to share their ideas and build support for the work. They especially focused on how to put young justice leaders at the forefront of the upcoming World Justice Forum and the Sustainable Development Goals Summit due to be held in 2023.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ACCESS TO THE OUTDOORS

“Not everyone feels safe outdoors. Not everyone is equipped to succeed outdoors”.

Historical, racial, geographic, and economic factors can keep young people from enjoying nature, and taking advantage of its many positive impacts.

At this Spotlight Session, organized by the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award, experts discussed how facilitated experiences outdoors, as well as other non-formal education, can help to bridge inequalities and level the playing field for children and young people.

This session was organized as part of a series exploring how young people are contributing to the #DecadeofAction leading up to 2030: the target by which the international system hopes to achieve the SDGs. To find out about future events, follow the link [here](#).



WHAT NEXT?

OUR GOALS

The Big Brainstorm is just the beginning! We have big plans for 2022 and beyond...

“Going forward, we at the Unlock the Future coalition plan to focus on four goals that will deliver concrete results for young people:

- **We will serve as a forum** for political and strategic alignment between partners, working with and for young people.
- **We will provide a platform** for young people to take intergenerational action to design the future.
- **We will bring partners together** under one umbrella for joint advocacy communications and campaigns.
- **We will provide increased financing** that is more strategic, flexible, transparent, and sustainable for young change makers.

And behind this all, the Action Groups will be the engine room driving our work.”



HARSHANI DHARMADASA

Senior Director of Global Partnerships
and Initiatives at the UN Foundation

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Here are just some of the ways in which we can collaborate:

JOIN OR FORM AN ACTION GROUP

If any of our Action Groups caught your eye, it's not too late to join them as they turn their ideas into action. Or, if there's a topic you're passionate about which isn't already being explored, then why not start your own Action Group? We're especially keen to find young thinkers and activists interested in the future of jobs, peace, and climate action.

JOIN OUR COALITION

If you're part of a youth-led organization, movement, or network that is interested in working together to deliver transformative change for young people, then we would love to hear from you.

If you'd like to find out more about any of the above, please contact Aishwarya Machani at amachani@unfoundation.org.

We can't wait to work with you to unlock a better future for young people and future generations.



AFTERWORD

“RIGHT NOW IS THE BIGGEST EXAMPLE OF THE WORLD REBUILDING ITSELF SINCE THE END OF WWII. NOTHING IS OFF THE TABLE, AND NOTHING IS GUARANTEED.

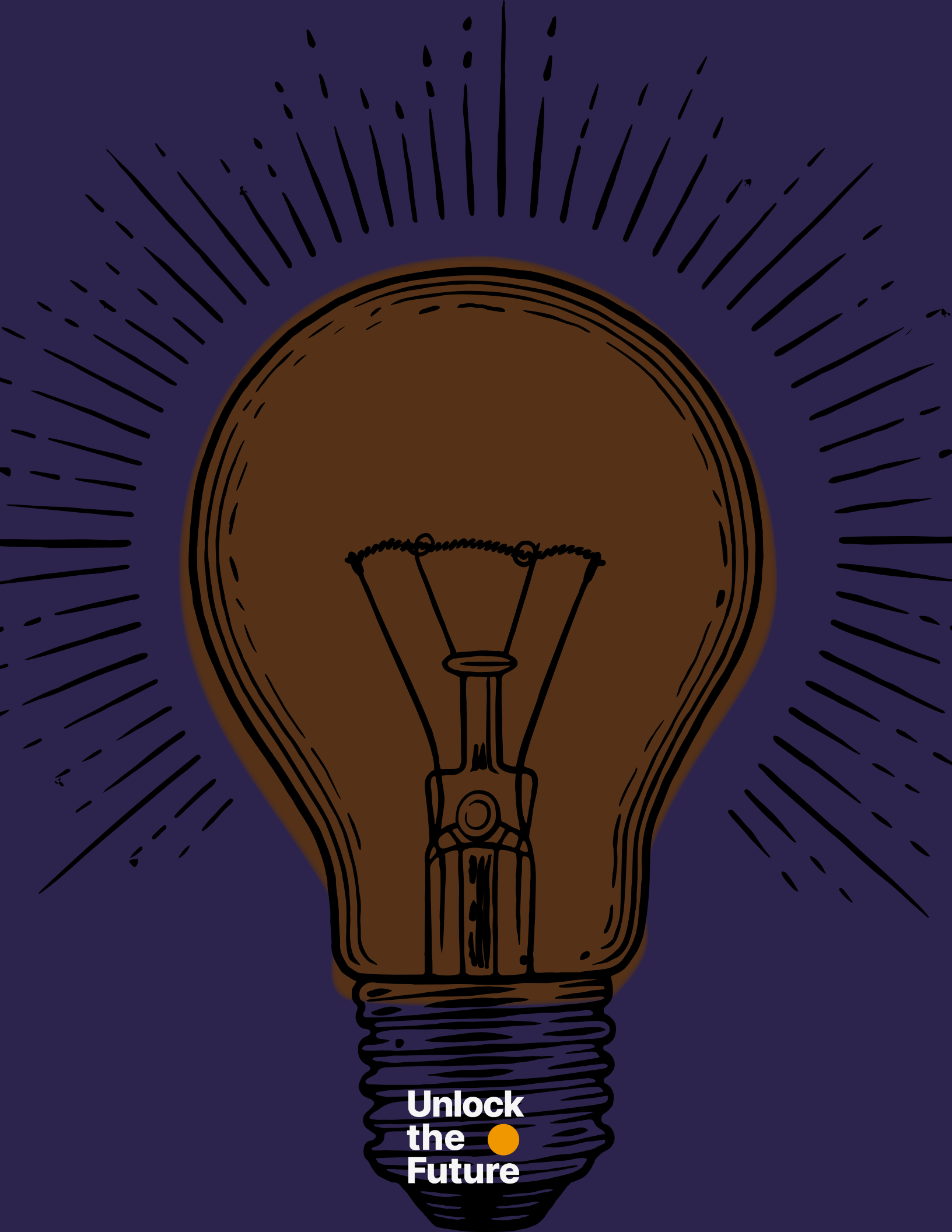
TWO SEEMINGLY OPPOSED TRUTHS: NOTHING IS OFF THE TABLE, SO THIS IS A CHANCE FOR US TO BE AS CREATIVE, AS BOLD, AS PROGRESSIVE — BUT AT THE SAME TIME, JUST BECAUSE WE HAVE AN INTENTION, IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT WILL NECESSARILY COME THROUGH.

THIS IS WHY THE UNLOCK THE FUTURE COALITION IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT... WE WANT TO BRING TOGETHER THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LITERALLY THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHANGE AND MAKE SURE THAT THEY HAVE ALL THAT THEY NEED TO TAKE THINGS TO THE NEXT LEVEL AND TO PASS THE BATON ON.”



ABDULLAHI ALIM

Community Manager of the Global Shapers Community
and the leader of the Davos Lab initiative



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Future