

# YOUNG COUNTRIES AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# FUTURE GENERATIONS AND Demographics

**Navigating the dynamics of young countries, where 50-80% of the population is under 30, presents complex challenges and opportunities.**

Africa and Asia are home to many young countries that hold the key to our future. These nations will not only host the future workforce but also help shape our planet. Their youthful demographic profile requires creative, inclusive, and long-term solutions to unleash their full potential. This informational brief explores how the youthful demographics of these countries can be leveraged to foster global economic growth and societal development.

**Demographic Potential:** In the year 2100, seven of the ten largest countries in the world are today's young countries, with

Africa expected to have the highest number of young people in the future.

This is a significant shift from today when China and India are at the top in the youth league. Nigeria is expected to have the third largest population, at 546 million, following India and China.

Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to more than double in population by 2100. This surge in countries like Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Tanzania highlights the potential of their young populations.

Moreover, certain young countries are expected to have a major increase in population. Niger, for instance, is projected to see a 491% increase, while Chad could see a 246% rise by 2100. This growth represents a young population that could be used to fuel progress and development.

## Countries with largest population, in millions:

1950		2024		2100	
China	554	India*	1,441	India*	1,530
India	357	China	1,425	China	767
USA	148	USA	342	Nigeria*	546
Russia	103	Indonesia	280	Pakistan*	487
Japan	84	Pakistan*	245	DRC*	432
Germany	71	Nigeria*	229	USA	394
Indonesia	70	Brazil	218	Ethiopia*	324
Brazil	54	Bangladesh*	175	Indonesia	297
UK	50	Russia	144	Tanzania*	245
Italy	46	Ethiopia*	130	Egypt*	205

■ Asia   
 ■ Europe   
 ■ Latin America and the Caribbean   
 ■ Africa   
 ■ Northern America

**In the year 2100, seven of the ten largest countries in the world will also be young countries.**

\* A young country – where the majority of the current population is under the age of 30.

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022, Online Edition.

However, the stark reality of these projections is twofold: the remarkable demographic potential also brings forth the global challenge of supporting young countries where most future generations will reside.

Investments in sustainable development are essential to ensure that these young countries are not just surviving but thriving. Without such investments, there is a risk of losing a generation to inadequate education, health issues, and unemployment, which would have global repercussions.

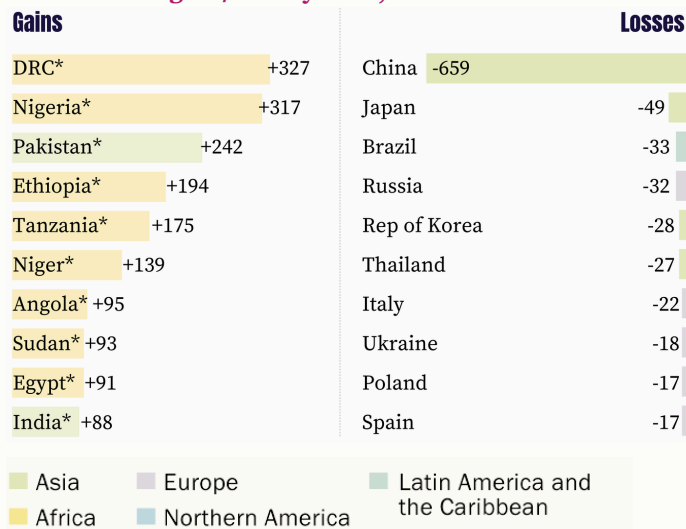
As countries like China, Japan, and many within Europe face a decrease in population, this ushers in an era when the world's demographic profile tilts towards a more aged society in these regions.

This shift carries many implications for the societies in question and future global dynamics. Economically, it could mean a higher burden on the working-age population to support the welfare and healthcare systems due to a larger retired population. There could be increased opportunities for leadership as younger individuals might need to step into roles traditionally held by older persons, which could reshape professional landscapes.

Globally, the comparative youthfulness of populations in other parts of the world, especially in African countries, could result in timebound shifts in economic and human capital growth. Nations with younger demographics could become new hubs for people power, innovation, manufacturing, and cultural influence, as their young populations drive demand and create new markets.

**Africa will have the most future generations by 2100 while Europe will have the least.**

Top 10 countries in projected population gain/loss by 2100, in millions:



\* A young country – where the majority of the current population is under the age of 30.

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022, Online Edition.

**This dichotomy between aging and young countries suggests that future generations will navigate a world where intergenerational equity, both within and between countries, will become increasingly important.**

**It highlights the imperative for sustainable development that meets the needs of both the present and the future without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, as defined in the 1987 Brundtland Report. In essence, this demographic shift calls for a global reimagining of social policies, economic strategies, and international relations to foster a world that can sustain and empower its entire population across generations and geographies.**

**Rise of Megacities:** Rapid urbanization within young countries is leading to the growth of megacities like Kinshasa, which is expected to have 22 million people by 2030. However, this also brings challenges like housing, healthcare, education, and exposure to natural disasters like floods and landslides. Recent floods affected 256,000 and 250,000 people and damaged or destroyed 41,000 and 21,000 houses in Chad and Niger respectively. This rise of future generations in cities highlights the need for comprehensive urban planning that integrates disaster risk management and sustainable development to safeguard the future well-being of increasingly young, urban populations.

**Fueling Creativity and Innovation:** Young countries across Africa and Asia bring energy, innovation, and a desire for social change. For example, Kenya's M-Pesa mobile money service has over 30 million active users in 10 countries, demonstrating the impact of fintech in young countries. Indonesia's young digital talent contributes to 16% of the country's GDP. As new technologies emerge, these young people can become job creators and position their countries as hubs for creativity and innovation.

**Climate Vulnerability:** Young countries across Asia and Africa are highly vulnerable to climate change. For instance, capping global warming at 1.5°C instead of 2°C could boost GDP per capita in African countries by 5% by 2050 and by 10-20% later in the century, underscoring the importance of investing in climate resilience for future growth and stability. The Pacific Islands face the complete extinction of all their endemic species—those found nowhere else on Earth—due to a projected 3°C increase in global temperatures, emphasizing the urgent need for aggressive climate action.

India is experiencing longer heatwaves with temperatures 8°C higher than the national average. It is important for these young countries to implement sustainable practices such as water resource management, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy adoption to secure their future sustainability, while richer countries mitigate emissions as fast as possible.

**Health Challenges:** Healthcare is a big problem in young countries like Nigeria and India. Nigeria has a high maternal mortality rate, while air pollution in New Delhi caused over 1.67 million deaths in 2019. Growing urban populations make it harder to develop healthcare infrastructure. There will be a growing need to invest in healthcare to make sure future generations have a healthy future.

**We are determined to  
protect the planet  
from degradation, including  
through sustainable consumption  
and production, sustainably  
managing its natural resources,  
and taking urgent action on  
climate change so that it can  
support the needs of the present  
and future generations.**

**2015 SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**Gender and Inclusion:** Gender inequality remains a critical and prevalent challenge, particularly for young people in Africa and Asia, and prevents countries from harnessing the full potential of young people in all their diversity. Gender inequality significantly hampers young women’s participation in essential aspects of life in their countries, as well as their ability to make fundamental decisions about their own lives, bodies, and futures. For example, every year, 12 million girls around the world are married before they reach the age of 18, which interrupts or severely limits young women’s access to educational and career opportunities. Lack of access to essential health services, including mental health and sexual and reproductive health services, serve as a barrier to young women’s full participation. Another barrier young women face is negative gender stereotypes and social norms, which remain prevalent in many countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, and undermine the potential of young women.

**SDGs and Beyond:** Integrating the SDGs into future national planning processes is crucial as young countries expand and grow in the coming years. For example, Morocco's Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex, one of the world's largest solar farms, is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 760,000 tons per year. This initiative underscores the significance of integrating SDGs into long-term strategic planning to ensure that today's growth benefits ecological stability and resource availability for future generations.

**The demographic profiles of young countries require urgent, strategic actions in policymaking, particularly in**

**education, healthcare, renewable energy, infrastructure, and technology.**

**By 2100, the decisions made today will determine the future of these young countries, significantly impacting their ability to leverage their demographic dividends for sustainable growth.**

**It is crucial for policymakers to implement youth-focused, long-term strategies that address both immediate needs and future priorities.**

**“It’s as simple as **saving our homes** — saving mine, so we can save yours. Pacific Islanders are the **canaries in the coal mine**, warning the world of this climate reality. To save the Pacific is to **save the world.**”**

**BRIANNA FRUEAN,  
SAMOAN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATE**

# FUTURE GENERATIONS AND National Actions

The following examples of national actions prioritize the needs of people and the planet to achieve the SDGs through the Wellbeing Economy Framework.

They focus on social protection, technological progress, and sustainable development, showing how governments are working towards the SDGs for the benefit of current and future generations.

**Predistribution:** Policies that fairly shift power, wealth, time, and income so that the heavy lifting is done by the economy itself.



**Cambodia, Graduation-Based Social Protection:** Combines social assistance with productivity improvements to combat poverty and vulnerability, create long-term systemic change, and increase fiscal space for social protection. It promotes economic independence and builds resilience within communities, providing sustainable livelihoods for future generations.



**India, Rajasthan Urban Employment Scheme:** Guarantees 100 days of employment to urban households, promoting economic stability and development. The scheme offers sustainable income sources for immediate relief and long-term security for future generations, creating a more resilient urban economy.



**Netherlands, Amsterdam Impact:** Co-created with partners to support social enterprises and businesses that prioritize societal challenges and inclusion, it aims to pre-distribute wealth and opportunities more equitably within the economy and is now a member of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. The initiative's 2019-2022 program builds on its successful 2015-2018 program, strengthening the impact of the entrepreneurship ecosystem.



**Pakistan, Ehsaas Programme:** Uses digital registration to cover 85% of the population. It consolidates 115 social protection schemes, which help empower women and create a robust social welfare system for future generations. Ehsaas is effective during crises like COVID-19.



**USA, Common Assets Trust:** Aims to protect natural resources like air and water for present and future generations by charging fees to large industries. The revenues generated will be used for environmental conservation and will also be distributed as dividends to residents, promoting equal distribution of wealth and environmental benefits.

**Purpose: Policies aimed at delivering human and ecological wellbeing.**



**Australia, Marine Protected Areas (MPA):** Covering 48% of Australia's waters, MPAs protect marine ecosystems from overfishing and pollution, thereby safeguarding the ocean environment for future generations.



**Egypt, National Water Resources Plan:** It aims to convert 2.2 million hectares of farmland to modern irrigation methods by 2037. This will recycle wastewater, and ensure water security for future generations.



**Waweru v. Republic of Kenya:** The High Court ruling on intergenerational equity stresses the value of protecting water resources for future generations.



**Sahel's Desert-to-Power:** The Sahel is one of the world's regions with the highest amounts of sunlight. The Desert to Power initiative uses solar energy to generate 10 GW of extra capacity to provide clean electricity for 250 million people by 2030. Delivery is phased, focusing on G5 Sahel countries, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.



**Singapore, 30 by 30:** Importing 90% of its food and with 1% land set for farming, this project will strengthen the future of the country's agri-food industry to produce 30% of its nutritional needs by 2030 sustainably, aligned with its Green Plan 2030 to build a more resilient food future.



**Spain, Using Technology for Wellbeing Economy Policy:** This platform allows citizens to submit, comment on, and vote on proposals to shape the economic. It has facilitated over 220,000 interactions and is driving a shift towards a well-being-focused economy.



**USA: Long-Term Grid Planning:** The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has enacted new regulations requiring grid operators to plan for electricity needs 20 years into the future.

**Prevention: Policies that stop harm from happening in the first place.**



**Bhutan, Disaster Risk Reduction:** Bhutan is reducing the risk of environmental and social crises by prioritizing preventive measures in its development strategy.



**UK, Human-Made Wetlands:** In 2006, the Wallasea Island project in England began creating a huge wetland using recycled sediments. This wetland is the biggest one in Europe and covers 514 hectares. More land will be added by 2025.



**Indonesia, Jakarta Ban Single-Use Plastic Bags:** In 2020, Jakarta implemented a citywide ban on single-use plastic bags to reduce the significant amount of plastic waste that ends up in the ocean, harming marine life and ecosystems. This initiative aims to foster a greener, more sustainable future for its rapidly growing city.



**NDC Commitments:** Aims for an 11% economy-wide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 via green hydrogen, solar, and wind projects to mitigate climate change.



**Global, Indigenous Customary Law and Practices:** The Maori concept of kaitiakitanga emphasizes guardianship and conservation, while the Iroquois Confederacy Great Binding Law requires leaders to consider the impact of their decisions on seven future generations. This holistic approach ensures that actions today do not compromise future generations' ability to meet their own needs.

**People-Powered:** Policies that are powered by the people directly involved in decision-making and agenda-setting



**Burkina Faso - Bottom-Up Energy Planning:** Ensures citizen feedback for the formulation of an energy policy targeting 26% electrification by 2030, in collaboration with development partners.



**EU Mission, Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities:** Involves people, investors, and local and national authorities to deliver 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030, ensuring that these cities act as innovation hubs to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050.



**Mexico, Poverty Reduction through PROGRESA:** After the 1995 economic crisis, PROGRESA was implemented to target investments in young people. It aims to improve the health and education of children in poor rural households. By 1999, it was aiding roughly 2.6 million families, using 0.2% of Mexico's GDP. PROGRESA improved children's well-being significantly and also laid a foundation for their future economic and social development.



**Leghari v. Pakistan:** The court's recognition of the Constitution's intergenerational equity principles was a big step towards acknowledging the impact of climate change on future generations.



**Mongolia, Senior Professional Advisory Services Development Programme:** Created to involve older generations in shaping policies for sustainable development. This is done by sharing their knowledge and experience to ensure future policies are wise and forward-thinking. People are directly involved in creating a sustainable future.



**Tonga, Resilient Development and Financing Division:** Helps ensure that community needs and risks are considered in financial planning for development projects, aiming to safeguard the well-being and opportunities of future generations through strategic and resilient planning.



**USA, How We Grow Matters:** Designed in Utah and launched in 1997, the program involves locals in creating a plan for growth that reflects their values and quality of life for present and future generations. With strong community participation, Utah has created policies that balance preservation of its distinctive features with sustainable development.

**We are the generation that can make peace with nature. It's time to redefine what progress means. It's time to build climate resilience.**

**WANJIRA MATHAI,  
KENYAN ENVIRONMENTALIST  
AND ACTIVIST**



# FUTURE GENERATIONS AND National Champions

Many countries have created positions and organizations to champion young people and future generations.

A recent public opinion survey from multiple countries reveals that such institutions are seen as vital tools for enhancing the sustainability and foresight of governance structures.

They make sure that the government is responsible, open, and thinks about how their decisions will affect the future.

## FUTURE GENERATIONS LEADERS



### Finland, Committee for the Future

Advises the Parliament to ensure policies consider long-term considerations in governance to protect the interests of future generations.



### Hungary, Deputy Commissioner for Future Generations

Assesses laws and actions to ensure they consider the long-term environmental and social impacts on future generations.



### Israel, Commission for Future Generations

A former legislative body that influenced Israeli policy by ensuring long-term impacts on future generations were considered in lawmaking.



### Malta, Guardian of Future Generations

Oversees the integration of sustainable development in national policies, advocating for the rights and interests of future citizens in Malta.



### Norway, Ombudsman for Children and Future Generations

Advocates for children's rights and focuses on issues affecting their future well-being, ensuring policies consider long-term impacts.



### Scotland, Futures Forum

As the Scottish Parliament's think tank, the Forum engages in debates on long-term challenges and opportunities to shape future policies.



**United Kingdom, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Future Generations**

Encourages conversations between political parties to create laws that are fair and sustainable for future generations.



**Wales, Future Generations Commissioner**

Ensures that Welsh public bodies consider the long-term impacts of their decisions, promoting sustainable development through the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

**SPECIALIZED AGENCIES**



**Barbados, FutureBarbados**

A platform for innovation and inspiration, seeking to harness and incubate impactful enterprises that can improve the quality of life in Barbados.



**Brazil, Ministério Público**

Independent public agency defending collective rights, including environmental protection, promoting intergenerational justice and equity.



**Nigeria, Presidential Council on SDGs**

Coordinates the SDG implementation to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth that benefits both current and future generations.



**Singapore, Centre for Strategic Futures**

Prepares Singapore for future challenges by integrating strategic foresight into government planning and decision-making.

**GLOBAL OVERSIGHT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY**



**Canada, Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development**

Checks how well the government takes care of the environment and is accountable for all actions with future consequences.



**Chile, Commission on Environment and National Resources**

Guides legislative approach to balance economic development with environmental protection to ensure sustainable resource use to benefit all generations.



**Germany, Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development**

Ensures sustainability is integrated into legislative processes, reviewing impact assessments to promote long-term impact and well-being.



**New Zealand, Parliamentary  
Commissioner for the  
Environment**

As an independent watchdog  
assesses environmental policies and  
advocates to protect natural  
resources for future generations.

**ADVISORS AND REPRESENTATIVES**



**China, Special Advisors for  
Energy Policy**

Help balance China's economic  
growth with sustainability,  
focusing on transitioning to  
renewable energy sources.



**Egypt, Presidential  
Environmental Advisors**  
Help shape Egypt's strategies  
for environmental protection  
and SDGs amid challenges like  
water scarcity.



**Ethiopia, Special Energy  
Advisors**  
Guide Ethiopia's investments  
in renewable energy to  
position it as a renewable  
energy hub in Africa.



**Ghana, Presidential Advisor  
Youth Affairs**

Focuses on integrating youth  
views in national policies to  
environmental and SDGs.



**United States, Special Envoy  
for Climate Change**  
Leads climate diplomacy,  
promoting environmental  
stewardship in global agreements.

**May 2024**

This document has been prepared by the Our Future Agenda team at United Nations Foundation to provide information, insights, and data based on current research and analysis.

It reflects the Foundation's commitment to diversity of ideas and open dialogue and discussion. Readers are encouraged to consider multiple perspectives and sources when evaluating the content.