



What engages Global South youth in policy debates?








Youth involvement in policy-making enhances **legitimacy and effectiveness**, while tapping into their **creative potential** for tackling complex global challenges.

How does information framing promote young policy engagement?

Little is known about what motivates youth to participate in policy discussions. Using an experimental design, we explored how information framing influences young Bolivians' engagement in gender equality conversations. Bolivia's case contributes to the understanding of mechanisms for sustaining youth policy engagement in the Global South, where innovative, locally-informed solutions to global challenges are urgently needed.

Findings show that:

- 1  **Information delivery** may be as important as its content, with **digital formats** potentially increasing youth participation in policy debates by up to 6.8%.
- 2  The effectiveness of information framing is influenced by academic or professional **incentives and affinity with the topic**, with higher interest in gender equality seen among political science (94%) and economics (90%) students than computer science students (56%).
- 3  Bolivian students **recognise the importance** of contributing to policy discussions and are interested in **learning more**, yet social obligations, job commitments, urban migration and institutional distrust **limit their active involvement**.
- 4  Information alone is not enough to alter young people's beliefs in relation to key policy issues and debates, such as gender equality. This is likely due to the **complexity of belief formation**, which involves personal experiences, social influences, and prior attitudes.
- 5  Engaged students excel in **originality and evidence-based reasoning**, yet struggle with language use and policy writing conventions.

To foster Global South youth engagement in policy, we must:

- **Gather local data.** Municipal governments should take the lead in conducting research on youth motivations for sustained policy engagement – an area that remains largely underexplored in the Global South. Partnerships can boost this endeavour, guiding more effective youth inclusion programs.
- **Enhance information delivery.** Educational institutions, civil society and governments can boost youth engagement and policy legitimacy through improved information delivery, using social media and audiovisuals.
- **Invest in youth leadership.** Fostering critical thinking, communication skills and civic culture empowers youth to participate in policy debates. Cross-sectoral collaboration helps to develop opportunities and career incentives that respond to their evolving needs and support ongoing engagement.
- **Promote international dialogue.** International agencies, youth organisations, governments, and NGOs can build a supportive environment for youth participation, through promoting horizontal discussions that foster a sense of community among Global South youth.

Youth engagement in policy discussions may decline over time, **potentially due to limited incentives.** This highlights the dynamic nature of youth participation and the importance of offering tangible outcomes.

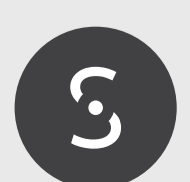


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