



REPORT ON THE YOUTH CAFE AND THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
ON HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SESSION.

25 May 2023



ECONOMIC AND SOCIALCULTURAL RIGHTS

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ABBREVIATIONS



AU - African Union

DESIB - Development & Economic & Social Issues

Branch

ESCR - Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

ICESCR - International Covenant on Economic Social
and Cultural Rights

UN - United Nations

UNOHCHR - United Nations Office of the High
Commissioner on Human Rights

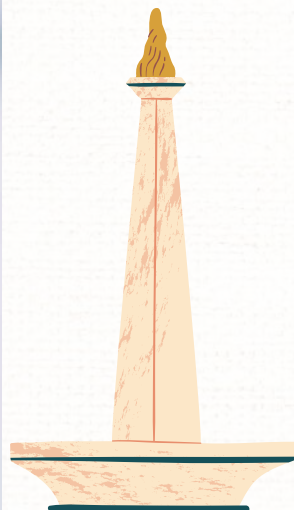
ANNEX

Appreciation letter

[Click here to preview](#)

Certificate of attendance

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. However, despite seventy-five years of aspiration, economic, social and cultural rights remain relatively neglected in poor and wealthy countries. Strengthening the protection of economic, social and cultural rights is an integral part of strengthening the protection of all the rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Including the youth is not only an asset but also a necessity. Currently, there are 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 – 24 (the largest generation of youth in history), and the number is still growing. Connected to each other like never before, young people want to and already contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress and inspiring political change. They are also agents of change, mobilizing to advance Sustainable Development Goals to improve people's lives and the planet's health. Given the necessary skills and opportunities to reach their potential, young people can be a driving force for promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights.

In this light, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch (DESIB)- whose mission is to pay equal attention to the realization of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights, including the right to development,

held Youth Engagement Sessions, a platform to encourage and empower youth-led organizations to participate in translating the 2030 Agenda into local and national and regional policy by providing them with the specific vocabulary of the economic, social and cultural rights.

On 25th May 2023, The Youth Cafe Collaborated with OHCHR DESIB in a virtual Youth Engagement Session: This 90 minutes webinar session brought together youth from different countries and backgrounds in a dialogue to identify barriers to implementing economic, social and cultural rights and approaches to operationalize these rights as a framework for addressing local and global challenges; raise awareness of the young people across the world about economic, social and cultural rights; promote initiatives and diverse implications of the youth; and to strengthen the linkages between the youth-led organizations.

OBJECTIVES

The program aims to create spaces where young people from all over the world can learn, dialogue and identify barriers to implementing economic, social and cultural rights, and approaches to operationalize these rights as a framework to address local and global challenges. Specifically, Youth Engagement Sessions aimed to:

- To raise awareness of young people across the world about economic, social and cultural rights
- To promote initiatives and diverse implications of the youth
- To strengthen the link between the youth-led organizations
- To grow visibility of the work of the DESIB Branch (especially on social media)

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Increased deeper understanding of economic, social and cultural rights, including their importance and relevance in addressing local and global issues.
- Increased youth engagement in local and global efforts to promote and protect economic, social, and cultural rights.
- Improved advocacy, communication and leadership skills that are valuable for addressing human rights issues.
- Empowered young people to advocate for economic, social, and cultural rights in their communities and a global scale.

The webinar gathered **over 150 participants from at least 11 African Countries** via the Teams platform. The Webinar speakers included:

1. Chitrlekha - Coordinator, Countering Inequalities Unit, OHCHR
2. Tracy Mwangi - Advisory Board Member The Youth Café
3. Abdu Ali - OHCHR East Africa Regional Office
4. Lynnet Onyango - Programme Officer-Africa, Thomson Reuters Foundation
5. Chitra Massey- Coordinator, Countering Inequalities Unit, OHCHR

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The **webinar kicked off** with opening remarks from **Chitrlekha** who welcomed everyone to the webinar and highlighted the vital role that the youth play in economic, cultural and social rights. Chitrlekha, noted that the Webinar especially took place on Africa Day and called on the African Youth to take the front line in issues regarding their rights and ownership of development. He continued to state that Economic, Social and cultural rights are vital and are the cornerstone of human dignity and without them our dignity is compromised. These rights are inherent into our lives ranging from right to health, right to quality standard of living and cultural rights among others. He noted that the challenge is that most of these rights are deprioritized for political motives or even for ideological reasons.

He further noted that although ESCR are also perceived as expensive and requiring more resources and capacity, it is important to note that all rights are equal and should be treated as equal and require investment. As early noted, human rights are part of our dignity; if we cannot eat food, if cannot demonstrate against government (participation in public life) have and civilian political rights then this rights have been violated. He noted that the youth are drivers of change, they bring changes to the society, they are part of the movement, this movements significantly change the narrative. In his conclusion, he stated that a lot needs to be done in safeguarding human rights especially now that we are experiencing financial difficulties across the globe.



Tracy Mwangi The Youth Cafe's Advisory Board Member presented the welcoming remarks on behalf of The Youth Cafe. Tracy expressed her gratitude to the young people across the continent who showed up for the dialogue. She noted that things are rapidly changing in the continent especially in the current economic crisis thus presenting challenges that are not only complex but multifaceted. Therefore, dialogues are vital in these moments as they provide platforms for learning and hopefully kick-start for action. Tracy further noted that it is fundamental to recognize that a lot of effort is required in the realization of the right to education, healthcare and social protection among others. She emphasized that it would take work, and joint efforts by the youth to be the change and to be at the fore-front of them "though the fight in the arena will be tough we shall devote ourselves to this worthy cause". Tracy called on young people to embrace the responsibility to advocate for change, to challenge the status quo and demand social, economic and cultural justice for every young person.

The session's main discussant Abdul Ali commenced by briefly introducing and breaking down the concept ESCR . To begin with, he defined cultural rights as rights that encompass the freedom to express one's culture, language, and identity without discrimination. Being able to enjoy the rich tapestry of human heritage, from traditions and beliefs to art and language.

Protecting and advancing human rights is a collective endeavor requiring actions from the grassroots initiatives, to international agreements and progress is only possible when all entities unite behind a common cause. Abdul proceeded to highlight the role of youth in ESCR, he began by advocating for the youth to apply the ESCR framework in their respective fields as appropriate. Second, youth should advocate for the centrality of ESCR in policy discussions around governance, development and security. Third, young people should contribute to the engagement of the state, CSOs/NHRs with human rights mechanisms (AU and UN). Further, Youth can raise awareness about ESCR among their peers and communities. They can use social media, educational campaigns, and community engagement. Youth can also play a watchdog role by monitoring government actions and holding them accountable for their ESCR commitments. Youth can use art and culture for advocacy through artistic expressions, such as music, visual arts, theater, and literature, which can be powerful tools for raising awareness about ESCR issues. In his final highlights of the role of youth in ESCR, he stated that youth engagement in ESCR should not just be a short-term effort; it should involve a long-term commitment to building a more just and equitable society.

Abdul proceeded to bring to light the justiciability of ESCR which broadly refers to the extent to which these rights can be legally enforced and adjudicated in a court of law. However, unlike civil and political rights, which are often considered to be immediately justiciable and can be forced through legal action, ESCR are often seen as having a more complex and progressive nature. However, some argue that courts should not determine how resources are allocated and hence ESCR are non-justiciable.



He further mentioned that CESCR have identified key two aspects of the implementation of ESCR that are always justiciable i. Minimum core obligations and ii. Retrogressive measures. Alongside these two aspects, he continued to elaborate on other aspects of the justiciability of ESCR and state obligations as under the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). i. Progressive realization where states are expected to take steps towards the full realization of these rights over time, to the maximum of their available resources. For instance, a country may enact a comprehensive healthcare policy aimed at providing access to basic healthcare services to all citizens over the course of several years. While the policy is in place, individuals may not be able to immediately access all healthcare services, but the government is progressively working toward achieving universal healthcare coverage.



The justiciability of ESCR is often influenced by resource limitations. Courts may consider whether the government has allocated sufficient resources and made reasonable efforts to fulfill these rights. Example: If a country faces economic challenges, a court may consider whether the government has taken reasonable steps to address poverty by implementing social safety nets, job training programs, and education initiatives, even if full economic and social rights realization is not immediately attainable. iii. Indirect Enforcement and Monitoring: While ESCR may not always be directly enforceable through court orders, many legal systems have established mechanisms for monitoring, reporting, and advocacy to ensure that governments are fulfilling their obligations. Example: International human rights bodies, such as the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, review state reports and engage in a dialogue with governments to assess their progress in fulfilling ESCR.” However, it’s important to note that the degree of justiciability of ESCR can vary widely depending on national legal systems, constitutional provisions, and the willingness of courts to engage with these rights”.

Abdul continued to elaborate the link between ESCR and peacebuilding. In his statement, he noted that ESCR and peacebuilding are closely linked concepts that highlight the interdependence between human rights and sustainable peace. To begin with, many conflicts and violence arise from economic disparities, social exclusion, and lack of access to essential services. These disparities often result from violations of ESCR. Addressing the root causes of conflict, which often have deep socioeconomic dimensions, is crucial for sustainable peace. Therefore, ensuring that ESCR are respected can contribute to conflict prevention.

ESCR promotes social cohesion by reducing inequality and discrimination. In societies where economic and social disparities are wide, tensions and mistrust can fester, making it difficult to build and sustain peace. Guaranteeing access to education, health care, housing, and employment opportunities fosters a sense of inclusion and unity, which is essential for peace. In general, peacebuilding often involves post-conflict reconciliation and reintegration of former combatants. ESCR can play a role in these processes by offering opportunities for education, employment, and social inclusion. When individuals have a stake in the economic and social life of their communities, it can facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants and promote reconciliation



In his concluding remarks, he noted that ESCR forms the cornerstone of our shared vision for a just and equitable world, where every individual’s dignity is respected, and every voice is heard. He continued to remark that Human rights are not mere words on paper; they are guiding principles that shape our societies and the values that underpin our collective aspirations. Therefore, while we talk about civil and political rights, today, we delve into the equally essential realm of cultural, social and economic rights.

Lynette Onyango, introduced the concept of pro bono to promote economic, social and cultural rights. She encouraged Civil Society Organizations to leverage on pro bono services offered by philanthropic and non-profit organizations to advocate for ESCR within their organizations. Lynette highlighted how Trustlaw at the Thomson Reuters Foundation, where she is based, has connected over 1,000 legal members to pro bono opportunities and has assisted over 6,000 non-profit organizations and social enterprises. She noted that many organizations spend their resources serving communities and thus have limited resources to seek legal assistance as is paramount to their advancement of their mission. At Trustlaw, pro bono services include advisory support for example, in the context of advancing ESCR, they advise on compliance, obligations and appropriate policies. Another pro bono service includes research support by conducting cross-border research to support organization's advocacy strategy, strategic litigation, capacity building initiatives among others. She concluded by stating that pro bono legal assistance comes in to plug the much needed professional support to enhance organizations impacts in issues such as; indigenous rights, cultural rights, digital rights, migrant and refugee rights, economic inequality and workers rights.



KEY TAKEAWAY



Takeaway #001

Equipping young people with advocacy skills, such as effective communication, grassroots organizing, and engaging with policy makers, to advocate for ESCR-related changes is vital to advancing ESCR at the local, regional and international levels.

Takeaway #002

Advocacy and commitment for ESCR is a long term endeavor and often takes time to be realized.



Takeaway #003 &4

ESCR defines human dignity and must be protected at all costs.

Young people have the mandate to advocate for and protect ESCR-their voices are crucial for change.



Takeaway #005

Governments should be held accountable for fulfilling ESCR in their countries- young people should actively participate in these processes.





RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth

- Advocacy and Lobbying: Young people should form or join groups focused in ESCR and engage in dialogue with policy makers and government officials to influence policy change.
- Young people should advocate for participatory budgeting processes that involve youth in decision making on resource allocation for ESCR-related programs.
- It is important to raise awareness and educate young people and the broader public on ESCR. This could be done through workshops, seminars and public awareness campaigns.
- To promote ESCR at the regional and international levels, youth should establish networks or coalitions focused on ESCR to share knowledge, resources, and best practices
- Young people should actively participate in regional policy dialogues, forums, and consultations on ESCR issues, ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and considered in regional decision-making.
- Legal literacy should be promoted among young people by conducting workshops on human rights and ESCR and providing guidance on how to seek legal remedies for violations.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments

- Governments should aim at strengthening national legal frameworks to ensure the protection of ESCR.
- It should also enact or amend legislations to explicitly recognize ESCR and align national laws with international human rights standards.
- Establish mechanisms that allow individuals and groups to seek remedies and redress for ESCR violations through courts.
- It should also ensure aid is available to marginalized and vulnerable populations to help them access justice.
- Launch public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about their ESCR emphasizing their importance in achieving social justice. Integrate human rights education into school curricula to promote a culture of respect of ESCR.



RECOMMENDATIONS

International agencies

- Promote International cooperation and assistance to support countries in fulfilling their ESCR obligations, particularly in resource-constrained environments.
- Develop partnerships and provide technical assistance to facilitate ESCR realization.
- Encourage all countries to ratify and implement international human rights treaties related to ESCR, such as the international human rights treaties related to ESCR such as the ICESCR..
- Strengthen mechanisms to monitor and assess states' compliance with their treaty obligations.
- Support civil society organizations and human rights defenders working on ESCR issues at the international level.
- Provide platforms for civil society to engage with international organizations and monitor
- Develop global targets and indicators to measure progress toward ESCR realization.
- Encourage countries to include ESCR-related data and achievements in their international reporting.

“ — PARTICIPANTS FEEDBACK

Ombaba Silas

“During the Youth Engagement Session in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), my experience as a youth was incredibly empowering. The dialogue brought together young people like me, allowing us to identify barriers to implementing economic, social, and cultural rights and explore approaches to operationalize these rights as a framework for addressing local and global challenges. It was a fulfilling learning process, and I feel honored to have been part of this impactful initiative. I look forward to future engagements with Youth Cafe and the UNOHCHR to continue advocating for youth empowerment and human rights”.

Patrick Kiarie

“I was reminded that I am to play a pivotal role to foster change as a youth in my society, this involved socio-economic and cultural aspects which I appreciate. Rights; in a number of times we need to be reminded about our rights from all conventions and international bodies and I was not an exception, I appreciated the webinar for that. Virtual connection with other youth of Africa who shared their experiences, challenges and proposals which I keenly paid attention to was also very valuable to me among others”.

Saadiq Hurre Dirie

“The webinar provided me with a deeper understanding of human rights issues around the world. I gained insights into various human rights violations and challenges faced by different communities and marginalized groups. Importance of Youth Engagement: One of the key takeaways was the emphasis on the crucial role that young people can play in advocating for human rights. The webinar highlighted the power of youth in driving positive change and promoting social justice. Intersectionality of Human Rights: I learned that human rights are interconnected and should be viewed holistically. Addressing one human right often has implications for others, and a comprehensive approach is necessary to ensure the protection and promotion of all human rights. Empowerment to Take Action: The webinar empowered me with knowledge and resources to take meaningful action in my community. It encouraged me to engage in human rights initiatives, whether through advocacy, education, or direct support for affected individuals and groups”.

Francis Mwakina

“The elaboration on the Human Rights aspects of the Economic, Social and Cultural rights is what intrigued me, now I am knowledgeable on the topic”.

Kailanga Jeffson Mulangwa

“I will stand to protect my rights for the betterment and Development of the community as a whole”.

Naftoli Tesfaye Bulbula

“I did learn rights in cultural and social issues and how to address different issues on policy making.”

Linnet Nyagwondo

“I loved the whole presentation on breaking those barriers and the approaches on operationalization of the rights framework, it was adequately covered and I personally look forward to better days ahead”.

Mayuya Kausa

“The key international instruments such as the CEDAW, the universal declarations of human rights are important in shaping the understanding of Human Rights. Human rights protection is also the responsibility of the state hence human rights violations can be reported to relevant authorities.”

ANNEX

June 05, 2023.

Mr. Willice Onyango
Executive Director
The Youth Café
Nairobi, Kenya.

Dear Mr. Onyango:

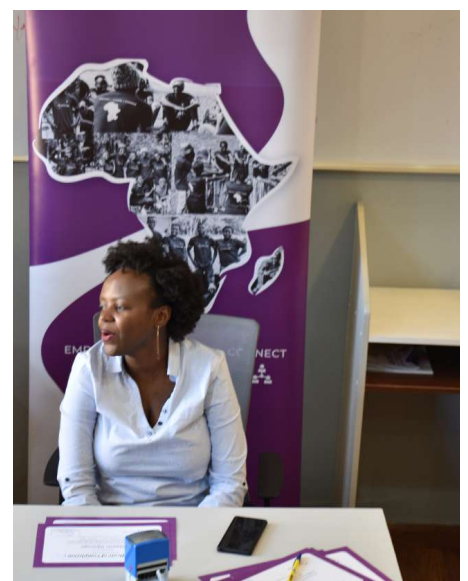
RE: Youth Engagement Session on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) extends its appreciation to you and your team at The Youth Café for co-hosting with us the May 25, 2023, Youth Engagement Session on 'Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Africa'. We appreciate your efforts and outreach resulting in an impressive turn out of participants and vibrant Q&A session during the webinar.

Kindly extend our appreciation to the Thomson Reuters Foundation team for their presentation on Trust Law, as well as to the participants for their active and insightful engagements. Going forward, we will be interested in getting feedback from your organisation and some of the participants on programmes and actions undertaken to promote the ESCRs in your constituencies.

Sincerely,

Chitrlekha Massey
Coordinator, Countering Inequalities Unit





KEY INFORMATION

There are more than 845 million youth in Africa today. We have 845 million reasons to work with them! The Youth Café works with young men and women in Kenya and around Africa to foster community resilience, propose innovative solutions, drive social progress, influence youth empowerment and inspire transformative change. Young people are a tremendous and essential asset worth investing in. We hope to open the door to an unparalleled multiplier effect as our message spreads.

MORE ABOUT US

Africa's largest and most diverse convening community of professionals harnessing youth advocacy, policy, and research for socio-economic impact. We amplify the voices of young people worldwide. Never miss a post.



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