

INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS FOR SOCIAL ACTIVATION OF UNORGANIZED YOUTH

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Abstract

Unorganized youth represent a significant yet underutilized social group in many societies. Lacking stable engagement in education, employment, or civic life, they remain vulnerable to social exclusion, marginalization, and risky behavior. This study explores innovative mechanisms for the social activation of unorganized youth, focusing on community-based initiatives, digital and mobile-first engagement, education and skill-building pathways, mentorship and peer-led models, and civic participation frameworks. Drawing upon international case studies and policy analyses, the paper examines how empowerment and participation-based approaches can foster youth agency, strengthen social capital, and enhance democratic engagement. The findings suggest that effective activation strategies require participatory co-design with youth communities, data-driven needs assessment, inclusive governance structures, and cross-sectoral collaboration among government, civil society, and the private sector. Digital platforms emerge as powerful tools for expanding outreach while safeguarding youth voice and autonomy. However, challenges related to equity, digital access, and impact measurement remain critical. The paper concludes that sustainable youth activation depends on integrating empowerment and participation within localized, context-sensitive frameworks that recognize unorganized youth not as passive beneficiaries but as active agents of social transformation.

Keywords: Unorganized youth; Social activation; Youth empowerment; Civic participation; Community engagement.

Introduction

Unorganized young people (ages 14 to 29) comprise a significant, globally dispersed population possessing unique, compelling needs across diverse contexts. Broad definitions encompass those isolated from formal youth activities or who benefit from participation, from any perspective—government, civil society, the private sector, or youth themselves. Government recognition of youth as a distinct social category often reflects their absence from policy frameworks or youth development strategies.

Definitions of unorganized youth are context specific. Although disadvantaged young people (especially youth experiencing poverty) do not represent every underactive young

person, the situation of young people living in fragile and conflict-affected settings illustrates typical characteristics. In South Sudan, less than 10% of young men and women engage in organized activities; the majority are classified as unorganized, defined as lacking formal or informal education, skills training, vocational apprenticeships, employment, or any form of youth engagement. In 2016, the average percentage of youth aged 15 to 24 not in education, employment, or training (NEET) globally was nearly one in five, up from one in seven a decade earlier. In 2021, the percentage enrolled in education (38%) was lower than for any other age group.

Youth inactivity inevitably leads to reduced psychosocial and vocational capabilities, diminishing the ability to deal with challenges constructively. Social activation aims to support unorganized young people in taking their first steps towards enhanced engagement and, ideally, towards organized activities, thereby stimulating broader youth engagement and reducing youth-exclusion concerns. Enhanced psychosocial competences and social networks confer opportunities to participate in processes and activities relating to local authority, community, or other organizations. The activation process focuses on reinforcing psychosocial, vocational, and other capacities by promoting community-based initiatives, digital and mobile-first engagement, education and skill-building pathways, mentorship and peer-led models, and civic participation and collective action.

Research questions center on the obstacles to and mechanisms for social activation, alongside the resources needed to encourage unorganized youth to participate. Understanding local youth trends, community perceptions, and coverage of digital platforms or channels will help guide these processes. Collaborating and co-designing activities with local youth communities and linking them to broader educational or economic opportunities possessed by other active networks can foster youth engagement. Constraints on youth participation include the lack of outreach via digital channels into which young people already enter, the absence of locally trusted figures to catalyze initial engagement, and the existence of highly stigmatized barriers to organized youth activities. Policies that fail to recognize and address these through the promotion of activities among unorganized youth inevitably reinforce the lack of focus on unorganized youth. Young people's engagement in initiatives that connect them with peers already involved in other endeavors also enables collective activation to emerge. Processes addressing the combined situation of youth inactivity and community under-activateness thus represent a helpful focus [1].

1.2. Conceptual Foundations

Social activation encompasses a dual focus. The first centres on diverse offerings that foster youth socialisation, skills development, emotional well-being, and civic involvement, thereby responding to pressing contemporary challenges. The second hones in on active outreach to disengaged youth via tailored initiatives that address their perceptions, requires, and motivations.

Activation secures a distinctive place among youth-development policies. A broad macropolicy targeted youth in general, but activation narrowed its aim to unorganised youth situated beyond the boundaries of conventional measures. Ongoing concepts similarly shape these policy mechanisms. Agency and participation fuel activation's foundational theories but remain common parlance and universal aspirations in youth policy [2]. Such language is even less ambitious than other widely adopted is performance—exemplifying what young people ought to do—yet holds a strong democratic connection within a developmental framework. By consistently framing its initiatives in partial terms, activation remains relevant to diverse development pathways.

Defining unorganized youth

Unorganized youth constitute a prominent segment of the youth population in many countries. In industrialized and industrializing countries, youth ages 15 to 24 account for 16% of the overall population (Global Youth Development Index, 2010). Global estimates suggest that 550 million of the world's youth aged 15-24 are unorganized (Hughes, 2014). Unorganized youth pertain to those who lack regular participation in civic, cultural, political, or recreational activities. These young people are not enrolled in school, do not attend training or educational courses, and are not engaged in vocational occupations. Studies confirm that unorganized youth are less engaged and have fewer opportunities to participate in the labour market, are more likely to lack public services on education, health, and water, are presented with limited or no learning space and time for individual creativeness and thus are more at risk to exhibit violent behaviour and to be involved with anti-civic activities (UN-Habitat, 2008).

Unorganized youth are often subjected to stereotyping and stigmatization. Prejudiced perceptions can inhibit community members from seeing the richness and diversity that unorganized youth can contribute. Educators and community leaders often ignore, overlook, or underappreciate the concealed potential of unorganized youth; they miss out on their emerging competencies and sophisticated experiences. Unfortunately, many adult-led initiatives fail to get enough youth input to comprehend or reach both general and local youth [2]. Youth-led organizing demonstrates young people's interest and desire, reflects their values, and helps them identify their own and their communities' urgent issues. The overall participation patterns of unorganized youth are variable. Although their participation tends to occur at the informal or personal level, unorganized youth exhibit a much higher degree of interest in engaging through civic and committee affairs. Such a trend indicates that unorganized youth desire to contribute to the community and develop connection to civic practices [3].

Social activation and its objectives

Unorganized youth are young people between 14 and 24 years of age who do not participate in the most widely promoted forms of civic participation. They are not members of youth

organizations, do not volunteer in their communities, and do not vote [4]. Young people aged 14 to 24 are overrepresented in social statistics on socially undesirable behaviour, including suicide, drugs, crime, violence, vandalism, and sexual offences [5]. Data from various regions indicate a gap between young people's interest in civic issues and their engagement—despite interest, young people miss opportunities to be engaged in a way that is relevant to them [6]. Social activation constitutes the provision of youth-targeted materials, benefits, and opportunities through local organizations or other stakeholders. Assumed benefits of social activation include the development of competencies; the acquisition of certificates or references advantageous for future employment; improved self-esteem from participation in community projects; and the expansion of personal networks (carry over).

Theoretical frameworks informing activation

Youth constellations are composed of individuals who have not participated in projects targeting youth, yet remain open to and eager for potential and upcoming opportunities. They are defined by the absence of, rather than the presence of, particular characteristics. The theoretical framework underlying youth constellations and the process of seeking to renew, reshape, and enhance their engagement flows from two key, interrelated domains: social activation and positive youth development. Social activation refers broadly to fostering pathways that facilitate the participation of youth within their communities across various domains, including general decision-making and the initiation of collective action. Positive youth development encompasses youth empowerment and participation, signifying how youth voice contributes meaningfully to decision-making and governance structures in ways that resonate with their aspirations and priorities.

The conceptualization of youth constellations and the activation processes that target them is framed in relation to positive youth development. From this perspective, empowerment captures the capacities and resources that youth need, while participation denotes the opportunities presented to them. The foregoing discussion on social activation likewise refers to pathways drawn from empowerment and participation. Activation occurs through these approaches whereby the voice of unorganized youth can be integrated into decision-making mechanisms. Various pathways that simultaneously strengthen both empowerment and participation are employed to activate youth constellations and other groups articulated in the Theory of Change. The mapping of these options and avenues underscores the active youth constituency in relation to enhancing the participation of specific constellations of unorganized youth [2] when eligible participants have never attended typical youth programs offered in industrialized contexts.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Unorganized youth typically lack strong connections with family, school, peers, and community. They may belong to socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, such as youth

from lower-income families, ethnic minorities, and those living in rural areas. They are at increased risk from negative life events [7]. Activation of unorganized youth is a broadly defined concept regarding informal education, for instance addressing topics young people feel are important. It brings together the passive consumption of information and the active construction of knowledge through dialogue, reflection, contribution, and relationship-building. Relevant theory frames activation in terms of empowerment and participation, suggesting that an increase in empowerment leads to higher degrees of participation, which in turn increases developmental outcomes—now commonly referred to as the empowerment theory of participation.

Community-based initiatives

Community-based programmes that invite unorganized youth to contribute actively to addressing local concerns are vital for addressing challenges of social activation. Youth co-ownership of initiatives is fostered through participatory design and implementation processes that engage diverse adolescent populations wherever they are found [8]. Stakeholders contribute support and resources while remaining committed to facilitating rather than controlling youth agency. Initiatives also embrace a variety of activity types to increase accessibility and prevent alienation. Participation in community-based initiatives helps young people to feel valued, meet new peers, develop social skills, and make progress toward educational and employment goals. Simultaneously, participant organizations reach greater numbers of youth, cultivate diverse constituencies, enhance their credibility, and generate additional benefits for communities.

Three community-based initiatives exemplify approaches to youth engagement: Youth for Youth in Cape Town, South Africa; the Adopt-a-School Programme in Johannesburg, South Africa; and the Alive & Kicking Partnership Programme in Kitgum, Uganda. Youth for Youth invites adolescents to conduct service-learning projects that respond to locally identified social issues. The initiative is co-hosted by universities and civil society organizations, and participants design and implement community service projects while receiving training on topics such as sexual debut, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy. The Adopt-a-School Programme engages youth as peer educators on matters related to schooling and social life. Participants are trained to facilitate awareness-raising workshops within and across schools, and they gain vital knowledge, skills, and certifications. The Alive & Kicking Partnership Programme provides skills training and mentoring to vulnerable youth who then train peers to construct and upcycle fabric balls for sporting activities. The model serves both as a youth entrepreneurship incentive and as a tool for peacebuilding and community cohesion amid societal fragmentation.

Digital and mobile-first engagement

Social activation programs targeting unorganized youth increasingly focus on digital-first engagement, including dedicated social media platforms, mobile apps that channel

activities to popular platforms, and social campaigns that engage participants via widely adopted apps. Platforms need clear governance structures, transparent moderation policies, and anonymous or pseudonymous access to facilitate participation while addressing privacy concerns. Key metrics for accessibility, digital literacy, engagement, and inclusion help guide design. Marketing strategies and gamification can enhance adoption, but reinforcing positive, inclusive norms is critical.

Digital considerations influence engagement even for attendance-based programs. Aligning offline activities with youth interests, preferences, and social dynamics improves participation. Young people may refrain from attending publicized meetings if they lack a network connection with the organizer. Creative, visually appealing materials can attract attention and prompt discussion. Rapid digital dissemination of promotional materials supports these strategies through wide social distribution.

Larger concerns about equity arise in fully digital formats. Combined online-offline approaches can alleviate barriers without significantly raising risk. Even where youth possess devices and connectivity, skills vary widely. Supporting all young people remains essential for reaching unorganized groups. Conversely, too broad a focus threatens designated unorganized initiatives and risks redundancy with existing programs.

Privacy is vital both to respect young people and encourage participation. Disclosures about government control, informational restrictions, and service retention histories deter compliance. Information-sensitive projects target personal situations, risks, or decisions and invite voluntary cooperation without compulsion. Where public concerns about safety and risk loom large, designing systems that mitigate pressures and probe core motivations are crucial.

A second dimension of digital consideration centers on platforms that expose content to outside scrutiny. Initiating and fortifying taboos against mass distribute materials is crucial. Young people divulging confidential elements often assume prior widespread knowledge. Designing on platforms not governed by community guidelines yet heavily utilized elsewhere can significantly broaden reach. Diffusion mechanisms also matter; some social platforms allow controls on external access, others block sharing within the host service, and additional features may limit visibility. [9]

Education and skill-building pathways

Curricula and training programs targeting unorganized youth can support smooth transitions into secondary education, vocational training, or formal employment, facilitating their integration into the labor market. Initiatives also allow youth to acquire digital and soft skills that complement their personal development [10]. Building on existing experience, programs incorporate an array of thematic modules covering topics such as entrepreneurship, financial literacy, self-awareness, leadership, health, and climate change. Up to 80% of modules are provided in informal venues and rely largely on non-

accredited certification. Adaptations can enhance scalability and transferability to new locations, vulnerabilities, or unorganized youth profiles.

Intermediary organizations also curate skill-building opportunities offered by external providers, aggregating search and optimization for unorganized youth. Government-sponsored data portals enable the alignment of existing and emerging credentialing programs and alternative paths with the evolving labor market.

Mentorship and peer-led models

Mentorship is rooted, in contemporary models, in the transference of knowledge and expertise from a mentor to an individual who is lesser experienced [11] and when contextualized for unorganised youth it draws various structures for connecting youth to positive role-models. For example, peer-led mentorships can be applied as one unorganised youth is recruited as a mentor for others on the same interaction platform or who participates in similar activities then links to a youth-led group for further development. Peer leaders can develop their own competencies by being engaged as a mentor and participating in relevant training [12]. Involvement as a peer leader also supports the development of a broader social network both for the peer leader and for the youth receiving mentorship.

Civic participation and collective action

Taxes. Macroeconomic stabilization policies are not so simple after all. Monetary and fiscal policy revolve around the relationship between the interest rate and the availability of a currency. While one can tacitly support taxes, demands to abolish them are even more disingenuous when applied to financial flows. Setting aside the question of whether some parts of the economy are "fundamentally" debt free, a more plausible perspective is to view the economy as a collection of different forms of activity with different demands for money relative to savings. In this context, currency, and also its natural alternative a fixed exchange rate, can be seen as similar to reinforcement learning that on the one hand optimally supports taxation with a government, but on the other hand can be quite neutral to its time path.

Without doubt, making a precise analysis of inflation tax is tremendously complicated and requires high level of thinking.

The importance of indirect taxation through "supply side" measures also needs acknowledging, even though they were especially associated with the unbalanced Keynesian policies of the Paul Volcker period and related to the untargeted "supply shocks" imposed by hostile organizations. The basic tenet of these reforms is that taxing a single area, such as income, corporation profits, and wealth of the rich or young, in order that all remaining areas can be freed from tax, introduces distortions because "debt" on the average borrowing rate tends to be optimal contrary to the popular doctrine that debt is primarily supply restraining as proposed by Issing.

3. REVIEWS

Youth-led civic participation enacts a key responsibility of citizens in democratic societies, affording individuals opportunities to voice concerns and influence decision-making [2]. Young people lacking access to formal spaces, information, or incentives can nevertheless pursue collective action to serve their own interests. The platforms, events, and funds established by various structures have enabled youth to articulate demands and engage in community projects. Instances of youth-led action within established frameworks, albeit sometimes misinterpreted as professional activities, have also proliferated. Even when funded, official relationships remain informal, fostering an environment conducive to diverse interpretations and applications spanning formal collectivization to informal dissemination.

Despite the availability of centralized, formally regulated assistance, irregular projects have emerged under alternative channels. Structures for collective action during periods of crisis, competition, or emergency have remained integral. Youth co-organize and facilitate broadly accessible projects similar to conventional pilot undertakings [5]. They determine relevance and plausibility through peer-to-peer dialogues before disseminating proposals via officially monitored but responsively arranged pathways. Informal engagement by youth not yet incorporated into governmental or associated activities also retains flexibility. Ongoing opportunities for projects, albeit conducted via formal channels, continue to support flow towards external entities without reference to funding initiation [1].

3.1 Institutional and Policy Context

Societal transformations, globalization, and the information technology revolution have led to unprecedented challenges for young people, especially for unorganized youth (Alfaya & Ndung'u, 2017). Unorganized youth are defined as young individuals, especially those aged between 15 and 30 years, who are outside formal systems such as education, health, employment, religion, or training (Subrahmanian, 2002). They engage in win-lose activities, hence willfully remain unorganized, consequently compromising on health, education, productivity, income, and social behavior (Kahane & Evers, 2014). Unorganized youth constitute an important segment of society, yet their impact on development is not well understood (Chatterjee, 2014). Young people respond to self-interest and altruism differently compared to adults, consequently following unique patterns (Easterlin & O'Leary, 2007).

Governments and civil society organizations specifically design and implement social-activation mechanisms that influence unorganized youth actions and attitudes, transforming them into win-win activities (Chatterjee, 2014). Social activation is intended to empower unorganized youth to mutually pursue self-interest and the public good (Alfaya & Ndung'u, 2017). Such initiatives potentially increase the legitimacy of government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector, and are also expected to

enhance social-activation capacity and sustainability in future (Kahane & Evers, 2014). A few social-activation initiatives are employed to engage unorganized youth in Cape Town [1] , Sri Lanka [6] , Karachi (Siddiqi, 2008), and Bangladesh (Ripon & Moniruzaman, 2009). Practices and underlying concepts warrant survey to ensure effective youth interventions and additionally deliver guidelines for similar priority populations. Internationally, unorganized youth receive scant attention despite profound societal implications.

Role of government agencies

Emergence of youth as leaders and social entrepreneurs engaging in policy advocacy, activism, and art; growing support for involvement in public policy; access to community-based groups, youth councils, and commissions; shift in views on social change and roles as civic or political actors [2].

Government agencies play a vital role in promoting civic responsibility and youth development; social activism among young people linked to civic engagement and citizenship building; need to foster social responsibility and a pluralist culture within higher educational institutions to enhance democratic participation and positive youth development [6].

Role of civil society organizations

Despite the crucial importance attributed to youth in nation-building and socio-economic development, young people have been relegated to a peripheral position in Malaysian society, particularly in the area of decision-making. A significant proportion of young people in Malaysia do not participate in political life, civil society, non-governmental organizations, or community activism. In today's globalized environment, youth remain pre-occupied with economic survival, education, and social issues. A research carried out in India shows the need for youth participation in civil society and political life at school, college, and community levels [13]. The importance of youth participation is echoed in another research carried out in Canada which shows that youth change agents engage in policy advocacy and community organizing [2]. Civil society organizations enable youth to be involved in community organizing addressing local issues through youth councils and commissions. Young people easily mobilize to social causes through the support of civil society organizations. In another research, social activism is regarded as an important element of civic participation that remains stable despite the extent of technological and scientific development affecting society [6]. Social activism among youth promotes a plural culture, nurturing youth to contribute to social improvement, community development, and, education for younger children.

Private sector partnerships

The youth unemployment rate in South Africa remains high, especially among school leavers of historically disadvantaged ethnic groups. However, evidence indicates a significant but previously undocumented niche of ‘unorganized youth’ who are neither enrolled in educational institutions nor actively seeking paid employment. Three distinct categories of such youth are identified, each with unique characteristics and needs. At the same time, emerging forms of social activation among youth operating in unregulated and informal spaces—including digital engagement, educational opportunities, community projects, and skills development—are reported. These initiatives are highly diverse in the objectives pursued, design, modality, and delivery, warranting a systematic and comparative analysis. How can social activation among unorganized youth who are not affiliated with any formal organisation or institution be supported? Which successful local initiatives and good practices warrant wider dissemination? In exploring these questions, the present publication aims to inform policymakers, practitioners, and relevant stakeholders engaged with unorganized youth. The goal is to identify social activation mechanisms that hold promise for wider adoption and scale. Such activation requires strengthening connections with the formal institutional system through the participation of government departments, society, and the private sector [1] ; [5].

Legal and ethical considerations

Youth engagement in civic activities fosters social change and can strengthen youth empowerment, citizenship, socio-political identity, and commitment to civil behaviour. Increased youth empowerment leads to strengthening of public deliberation, thereby reducing social isolation among youth [2]. However, youth engagement appears to be declining in many contexts.

The issue that dwellings needing research attention. Youth voice and engagement among unorganized youth is lacking in the Micro-Case study context and there is a knowledge gap on the status of youth voice and engagement that need informing the intervention and programme design. These both challenges, knowledge gap and declining youth engagement, can be bridged through the Civic Participation and Collective Action model. Models and pathways providing youth the opportunity to speak and mobilise themselves within their communities and national engagement matters to strengthen youth voice beyond their community [6]. Providing an intervention that strengthen youth voice and address the missing knowledge gap concurrently need further exploration within micro-case study context as a research proposal opportunity.

3.2 Implementation Strategies

Social activation interventions should be driven by local needs and contexts. Youth engagement is vital for effective design and successful implementation [1]. Programs may be co-designed with young people from unorganized groups, aiming for comprehensive

outreach in fine-tuning. Stakeholders include youth, state agencies, community-based organizations, non-profits, educational actors, media, businesses, and philanthropic entities. Coordination with local youth-led or focused organizations is pivotal.

The process typically follows several phases [14]. First, stakeholders agree on shared objectives and collectively analyze critical challenges. Youth concerns, expectations, and aspirations are identified, drawing from existing public surveys, participatory assessments, and insight from youth organizations. Pioneers ei7163b68d-dbo6-427e-9dde-79c4e83ofd6dr launch prototypes in low-stakes environments or develop refined proposals for presentation to peers.

Lasting engagement requires viable institutional capacity across domains. Stakeholders remain active post-pilot and contemplate dimensions for embedding social activation practice in human development.

Needs assessment and data governance

Obtaining a precise understanding of the needs of unorganized youth is necessary for relevant programs and solutions to be co-developed and implemented. This includes modules that fall under the categories of education and skill-building pathways, community-based initiatives, mentorship and peer-led structures, civic participation and collective action, and digital engagement. It is essential that data collection, management, and analytics systems abide by the proper ethical and legal principles, with an eye towards ensuring transparency, accessibility, equity, accountability, and privacy.

Mechanisms for youth social activation are at least partly shaped by local needs and conditions; thus, a data-driven participatory needs assessment will provide a constructive starting point for both program design and implementation. Youth activation programs in various contexts have employed diverse needs assessment techniques; two community-based examples are presented, drawing from 18 months of action research in Sri Lanka/Thailand [6]. Experimental foundational mapping activities and digital surveys have both proven valuable for engaging youth and co-developing initiatives in the community and beyond.

Co-design with youth communities

To achieve optimal alignment with local youth needs and aspirations, dedicated local and regional inquiries were conducted in Morocco, Belgium, and Canada [9]. All inquiries pursued a co-design approach, involving youth as active participants in the process of generating strategic responses to their respective activation challenges. In each initiative, a core group of youth activists collaborated with additional peers to identify local challenges, co-design solution strategies, and determine priority actions. The primary objective was to generate actionable, context-specific co-design recommendations to guide subsequent implementation. Given the diversity of challenges and experiences, the inquiries produced distinct results tailored to local realities. Nevertheless, several common

success factors and insights relevant to co-design with youth emerged across all three initiatives.

Guardianship structures and the nature of stakeholder involvement were critical factors for successful co-design with youth. The Moroccan initiative benefited from a project lead with extensive local experience and expertise; in Belgium, a multi-stakeholder agency framed core issues, engaging with youth on content but refraining from imposing directions; and in Canada, the lead organization addressed systemic youth disaffection and youth activism while creating a more egalitarian environment where youth actively engaged in priority-setting. These experiences suggest that providing supplemental or specialized support for youth-oriented collaboration can enhance the process.

Piloting, scaling, and sustainability

Community activation initiatives for unorganized youth comprise a diverse array of services and programs offered by public bodies and civil-society organizations (CSOs) to facilitate social integration and interaction to promote participatory civic engagement among youth aged 15 to 29. The aim is to provide opportunities for youth to share their ideas, needs, and expectations in their own neighbourhoods, to take part in their communities through civic engagement, and to access educational and training opportunities for their employability. Starting with a needs assessment and strategic planning through extensive youth consultations, youth activation plans are designed collaboratively with youth, focusing on the six drivers and 36 concrete activation options of the National Youth Strategy. Piloting proofs of concept are selected from this framework, corresponding to youth priorities and proving policy solutions that can be implemented quickly [15].

The implementation of youth activation programs based on community engagement relies on government policy levers, participatory approaches, strategic partnerships, and collaborative co-design with youth communities. Essential aspects include addressing youth needs, expectations, and aspirations within existing frameworks; ensuring youth ownership and voice in the development process; raising awareness of youth activation initiatives; effective collaboration with civil society networks; and monitoring, evaluation, and learning to share best practices and enhance widespread uptake. Depending on the regional approach, youth activation programs based on digital platforms are now emerging across other jurisdictions.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

A focus on youth empowerment, agency, and transformational change shaped many designs and implementation strategies. Beside livelihood strategies, youth participants aspired to build agency, delay childbearing, and participate in community affairs. Although these themes arose while the broader approach targeted social empowerment and job creation, similar broad discussions on youth aims remained largely unnoticed.

Promoting active citizenship included approaches to collective voice, representation, and outreach. Safe and inclusive political platforms offered limited access to broader policy and public goods discussions or local information about entitlements and services. When fully operational, frameworks aimed to foster access to collective action around issues of common interest, representation in community governance structures, and recognition of youth contributions to community peace and security.

Prioritizing youth, encouraging free expression, and embracing both demands and grievances enhanced accountability and legitimacy. Youth-led, peer-to-peer, and youth-friendly mechanisms then filtered incoming requests and articulated more complex messages to local councils and community-wide audiences. When political, civic, and religious leaders subsequently participated in national-level discussions or engagement plans, youth-driven outreach supplied underlying local narratives and served as precursors for further analysis. [16]

4. DISCUSSION

Examples of unorganized youth activation in cities across South Asia, including community-based initiatives, digital platforms, and education pathways, illustrate emerging innovative frameworks for social activation and civic engagement. Unorganized youth constitute a distinct group that continues to expand rapidly in metropolitan areas. City dwellers aged 15 to 24 form a substantial demographic, even as youth ages 15 to 29 in general— the recognized working-age population in much of the region— experience slower growth. Unorganized youth thus represent a vibrant, untapped social resource, constituting an appropriate target group for action. Activation frameworks that guide urban youth initiatives emphasize three objectives. First, programs should develop the capacities of young community members, address noneducation-related learning needs, and respond to identity-related preferences. Second, they should use participatory approaches to enhance social networks, improve platforms for governance and collaboration, and strengthen access to resources across community groups. Finally, activation should enable young people to enhance governance legitimacy and exert collective influence over public goods; support the establishment of youth-centric community spaces, services, and resources; and enable art, culture, and knowledge-sharing initiatives that facilitate their ability to voice issues of concern [6] ; [2].

4.1 Case Studies

Community-based social activation programs in urban settings have expanded across several countries and cities. In the Philippines, the Youth-Links program employed an empowerment-based, participation-focused approach supporting young people's involvement in community life to address the growing concerns of unorganized youth. Implemented by the youth-led civil society organisation Aflatoun Philippines in collaboration with Unicef, Youth-Links involved a systematic three-step community needs

assessment followed by the co-design of four local initiatives: Youth and Services Mapping, Habitat Team, Young Reporters, and Local Child-Friendly Index. Although primarily targeting youth aged 15-24, the program attracted young people from earlier transitions such as 10-14 years. These community-driven initiatives increased young people's participation by linking them with local governance structures and developing their agency to co-create, lead, and implement their projects. The Youth-Links programme addressed issues such as child early and forced marriage, which had led to school dropouts for adolescents in some areas, and provided psychosocial support and safe spaces for out-of-school youth in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the program, participants reported increased self-esteem, self-advocacy, motivation to participate in local governance, and interactions with local officials [3].

Involving young people as co-designers and implementers is particularly relevant in rural and peri-urban contexts where participation-enhancing technology may be less developed. By placing young people in the driver's seat, the capacities of underprivileged, unorganized youth can be further built up, enhancing longer-term activation pathways. Several rural and peri-urban initiatives have explored this approach. In Grand-Lahou, Côte d'Ivoire, Phase 2 of Plan International's "Youth Voices: A GenderQual Project" is co-designing activities with youth participants and local authorities using a hybrid of face-to-face and mobile-based tools. The programme aims to facilitate and amplify youth-led dialogues and identify youth priorities followed by collective actions regarding local governance and well-being. In the Republic of Guinea, Resilience and Youth is a programme co-designed by local youth leaders and underprivileged young people aged 13-24. It encompasses ten activities on skill development, self-employment, information dissemination, community engagement, and culture. Responding to a rising wave of violence and juvenile delinquency, youth leaders had noted an increased socio-political participation by several accompanying members of the group, spanning forums to economic initiatives and other participatory channels. Setting the objective of "young people driving change in their communities and developing civic-mindedness," cyan and the Undugu Society are exploring additional activations to blend in and streamline youth interests with participatory approaches [5].

Urban youth activation programs

Youth account for a large share of the population in urban areas of developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, where there are many unorganized youth. Urban youth represent many social and economic risks due to high unemployment rates (50% for women and 30% for men in Senegal). The young generation remains largely excluded from decision-making processes and from the socio-economic benefits of national growth due to lack of access to political space. Urban youth are also not benefiting from political or social initiatives. Urban activation programs link youths to civic engagement spaces and encourage participation in local challenges and community

initiatives. They awaken their curiosity about local needs and motivate them to define and choose problems relevant to them [3]. Urban programs invite youth to express opinions on quality of life and on series of activities and events proposed by local customer segments. Youth are given the chance to participate in local governance, community projects, and direct decisions on local topics, play roles in collecting and transmitting local grievances, and provide voice and legitimacy to local formal governance.

Civic activation programs, linked to youth community groups, encourage collective action through co-creation of urban festival programs, organization of public community debates and exchanges with elected officials and administrative authorities on local development challenges, recycling of local culture via honorary citizen titles, compilation and publication of community support initiative catalogues, and initiation of citizen journalism workshops and multimedia broadcasting of local challenges. Collective action facilitates acquisition of new contacts, social cohesion with other groups, and reinforcement of personal legitimacy with public authorities. The mention, promotion, and broad access to group and collective opportunities increase rediscovery of community networks, and the dialogue and trust between individual youth initiatives and the overall community progress in several urban countries [17].

Rural and peri-urban initiatives

A large percentage of the world's youth, especially in rural areas, face a precarious transition to adulthood. Their lives are characterized by a lack of access to essential resources and socio-economic underdevelopment, which often compel youth to migrate to metropolitan cities or engage in illegal activities [18]. In these contexts, they are seldom approached by informal networks associated with governance, economy, or social fabric during their formative years, therefore a wide-range initiative known as Jóvenes Emprendedores Rurales has been undertaken in order to reach out to young people and activate their social role by introducing youth entrepreneurship and incubators in rural agricultural zones and informal urban settlements. Different approaches to engaging the youth applied in six developing country contexts is described by Malakar (2015), focusing on information and technological literacy relating to labour market readiness and basic education [19].

Digital platforms for youth engagement

With digital and mobile-first engagement strategies, young people have numerous digital touchpoints to explore issues and initiatives they care about. Broad awareness campaigns via social media enable youth to connect with peer-led initiatives while minimizing the risk of exposure to adult-dominated gatekeeping. Young participants retain control over their engagement and exposure through platforms such as TikTok or Instagram. Feedback loops with mature accounts allow dissemination of individual viewpoints while preserving anonymity.

Readily available mobile devices, along with local and national initiatives, enhance the mobilization of youth communities around programming that aligns with the interests of unorganized young people. Access to nationwide movements through mobile devices plays a pivotal role in drawing previously detached youth into participation. Within collective action situations, most young people prefer non-identifiable participation channels, often consulting general information from international sources. Unorganized youth therefore benefit from the social support and stimulation of social media without entrapment into adult-led agendas and content.

At the individual level, high mobile device ownership and internet accessibility means most young people are able to join peer-led initiatives. Youth-targeted promotional activity can tackle remaining knowledge barriers, while packages, such as the G20 Youth Engagement Handbook, developed for the G20 and distributed in educational settings, further advance young people's access to multilayered, peer-led information on locally relevant international issues. Although some dedicated platforms have been established, there is a lack of knowledge on existing such user-friendly options, and unorganized young people seldom take the initiative to seek out guidance on open-source platforms.

4.2 Challenges and Risks

Social activation efforts directed at unorganized youth involve distinctive challenges and risks, particularly regarding inclusion, equity, digital capability, and measurement of impact. Youth who are fully engaged or who demonstrate a keen interest in public engagement initiatives, whether in person or online, are less likely to benefit from such undertakings. Young people who are more vulnerable to marginalization still require interventions designed to stimulate interest in engagement. The demand for these services is not met in a systematic manner, rendering the challenges of access and inclusion even more pronounced [1].

Despite the increasing diffusion of digital culture and technology, sizable segments of unorganized youth remain excluded from the digital world. Physical, social, and cultural constraints, channelize youth engagement into traditional ways of participation that fail to meet the emerging needs of unorganized youth. Moreover, many of the unorganized become concerned that the defining traits—franked communication, balanced reciprocity, shared exposition, poise, openness, sentiment, friendship, and play—characterized the design of youth-centered platforms. Many unorganized youth remain reluctant to risk participating in the dialogue [6].

Inclusion and equity

Exploitation of unorganized youth as agents of social activation leads to perverse phenomena of marginalization and disengagement. Unorganized youth from small towns, villages, and rural areas often experience intense pressure to migrate to large cities, thereby aggravating existing demographic and urban-rural gaps. Unprepared for independent

living in big cities, these youth end up isolated in their parent's flats, subject to online propaganda, and at increasing risk of radicalization. Active involvement in under-resourced community initiatives gives them a legitimate justification for returning to their rural origins, mitigates social isolation, and channels energies toward pro-social endeavors [3].

Social activation initiatives exploit youth desire to aggregate, network, and navigate ongoing life changes. Participation in civic engagement—co-creation of space, budgeting, local events, policy feedback, and elections—gives agency to youth otherwise considered “disengaged” [2]. Unorganized youth report lack of relevant and meaningful offers as obstacles to civic engagement. Proxy indicators for activation success include involvement in public or community activities, local cultural events, policy discussions, local elections and voting, and distribution of budgets.

Digital divide and access

Participation in social activities remains considerably lower among youth from rural and remote regions. Those engaged in formal work make up approximately half (40%) of employed individuals and 84% of youth from urban areas, compared to only 20% of rural youth [6]. Access to digital technologies, necessary both for engagement and for teaching the skills to join social activities, remains constrained for rural youth. Gaps in internet access, fees, motivation, and knowledge of where to look for information create obstacles to participation by youth scrutinized more closely when connected [20].

Measuring impact in unorganized contexts

Problems and practices surrounding the socialactivation of unorganized youth remain under-researched in many contexts. Measurement frameworks for active citizenship and local democracy begin to address some gaps, but assessing the impact of formal initiatives remains unfinished. Motivated urgency to address these challenges calls for new approaches. Only a few studies have developed frameworks for assessing the impact of unorganized youth interventions; none have analyzed the implications of action-oriented frameworks. Unorganized youth are often disengaged from formal structures, suggesting that inclusion through engagement rather than participation may improve both involvement and access to opportunities. Tensions between engagement, participation, and empowerment require further clarity, and broader knowledge gaps exist within relevant literatures.

Formal youth participation provides young people with influence over decisions and policies that affect their lives. Several theoretical frameworks conceptualize participation as limited to those interventions, whereby empowerment is considered less tangible than participation itself, and still other studies focus solely on empowerment as a condition that precedes entry into active participation. Other action-oriented frameworks —often under the ideas of social activation, activation, or wellbeing—argue that unorganized youth within

vulnerable groups frequently lack social, civic, and cultural components that enhance their skills, broaden their networks, and strengthen their social ties. A wider lens will help strategists in unorganized youth initiatives to avoid tensions and situate their efforts appropriately. [21]

5. CONCLUSION

Social activation seeks to stimulate youth's participation in social processes through educational, civic, and community engagement avenues. This effort is acutely important for unorganized youth, who lack a stable educational or employment foundation and commonly exhibit risky behavior. With the knowledge economy placing high value on education, unorganized youth are increasingly cut off from productive employment and enter the ranks of the "assembly line" or "supermarket" economy. The situation is exacerbated by reliance on traditional activation mechanisms—youth clubs and community service projects—which are terminating due to emerging decentralization trends and the shift from compulsory service to volunteerism.

Community-based initiatives, both exclusively for youths and inclusive of adults, encourage youth-centered projects supplanting diminished centralization approaches. Efforts are made to limit potential political and social risks by establishing projects that enhance community fabric, such as elevating local governance, bolstering participation in local community planning, and offering educational capacity development. Digital and mobile-first opportunities, including social media-based movements and platforms, have gained traction during the pandemic and remain viable in post-pandemic conditions. These mechanisms enhance accessibility for youths bereft of schooling parties or parental coverage and facilitate tighter administrative oversight in risky adolescent environments. Education and skill-building pathways offer formal and non-formal training with no initial conditions imposed. These courses, including entrepreneurial training, foundational skills, and vocational education, all supply recognized qualifications or syllabi documentation for credentialing. Available both fully online and hybrid with basic skill training, these pathways invite engagement from youths resistant to other channels. Mentorship and peer-led models also remain relevant for unorganized youth, provided central governance and strategic planning are employed to lessen interpersonal risks. The aim is to build lifelong learning support networks through the instillation of capacities—setting psychological schemata towards learning objectives and equipping social capital for identifying growth sources.

Civic participation and collective-action platforms advance participation without social conditions while improving governance and community frameworks. Arrangements exist for youth engagement in local agenda-setting and regional-planning monitoring along with administration feedback on matters submitted. Participation assures compliance with academic responsibilities while enhancing youth awareness of local governance and agent modeling necessary for democratic system understanding. Community initiatives are

cultivated through management frameworks and resources for mutual involvement. Grassroots projects requesting input undergo data collection on response patterns with prompt facilitation to lower organizational thresholds and promote broader engagement.

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