

Youth Rising Framework: Combating Rising Disillusionment and Polarization Among Gen Z

The **Youth Rising Framework** provides actionable guidance for the social impact sector to address global trends of disillusionment and polarization among younger generations. Rooted in comprehensive research from Glocalities and the collective insights of 100+ sector leaders in the 2024 Resource Alliance Leadership Programme, this framework is organized around five key pillars. It serves as a robust foundation for empowering young people, rekindling their sense of purpose, and strengthening the global movement for social and environmental justice.

Young people under 30 will soon represent half of the world's population, with the majority living in the Global South. They are central to building a more equitable and sustainable future, yet face profound challenges—rising despair, alienation, and polarization, alongside systemic crises like climate change, economic inequality, and human rights violations.

Engaging with young people authentically is not just an opportunity; it's an urgent necessity. To succeed, we must step out of our own bubbles, address blind spots, and truly understand their values, concerns, and realities. Trust must be built through transparent actions and empowering narratives that meet them where they are.

The **Youth Rising Framework** offers a roadmap for this transformative journey. It equips organizations with the tools to reimagine youth engagement, counter disillusionment, foster collaboration, create genuine connection, and inspire a generation of changemakers. Now is the time to rise—and to help young people rise with us.

Pillar 1: Empathy-Driven & Action-Orientated Narratives

Objective: Develop authentic, empowering narratives that resonate with young people's lived experiences, validate their concerns, and offer actionable solutions to inspire hope and drive meaningful change.

1. Acknowledge and Reflect Realities & Anxieties

- Develop campaigns that correlate with young people's current lived experiences.
- Address head-on challenges that are major concerns for this demographic, like climate anxiety, economic uncertainty, and mental health struggles.

2. **Empower Through Actionable Solutions**
 - Break down complex issues into clear, tangible actions that individuals and communities can take, emphasizing the power of collective impact.
 - Highlight achievable goals and provide accessible resources to support meaningful engagement and direct calls to action in areas like climate, social justice, and digital literacy.
 3. **Frame Youth as Leaders of Change**
 - Showcase young leaders and grassroots movements driving solutions, particularly from marginalized communities.
 - Shift the narrative from crisis to empowerment, emphasizing agency and resilience.
 4. **Foster Empathy and Shared Humanity**
 - Build campaigns and content that bridge divides by focusing on shared human values like justice, equality, and hope.
 - Encourage storytelling and dialogue that promote understanding across cultural, generational, and ideological lines.
 - Showcase diverse youth voices, representing their communities authentically. Highlight personal stories and grassroots examples to foster solidarity.
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Pillar 2: Data-Driven, Psychographic Insights

Objective: Use data to inform campaign strategies, ensuring messages resonate with specific youth values and beliefs.

1. **Conduct Psychographic Analysis for Targeted Campaigns**
 - Invest in data-driven insights, focusing on values, concerns, and motivations specific to Gen Z segments.
 - Tailor content to resonate with diverse psychographic profiles, including Gen Z's distinct values around climate action, social justice, and privacy.
 - Use tools like Glocalities to understand the different anxieties & motivations of youth globally, adjusting campaign messaging to address these.
2. **Monitor and Adjust Based on Youth Sentiment**
 - Regularly analyze campaign effectiveness through feedback loops and youth sentiment data. Use this information to adapt messages in real-time, ensuring campaigns stay relevant and impactful.
 - Segment audiences not just by age but also by psychographic traits (e.g., "Socializers," "Challengers," "Creatives") to make campaigns relatable across diverse audiences.
3. **Analyze Polarization Trends:**
 - Monitor social media trends to understand the specific issues polarizing

young audiences. By identifying these patterns, organizations can develop content that bridges divides and reinforces common ground.

4. **Collaborate with Young People to Interpret Data**

- Involve Gen Z leaders in interpreting data insights and developing campaign content. Their input will ensure that messaging aligns with what resonates with their peers and avoid unintended misrepresentations or alienation.
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Pillar 3: Create Trust and Transparency in Emerging AI Technologies

Objective: The emerging AI-driven ecosystem creates great concern in terms of creating more misinformation and polarisation, but we can foster trust with young people through transparent, privacy-respecting, and authentic engagement and utilisation of AI tools.

1. **Disclose AI and Data Usage Transparently**

- Given Gen Z's heightened awareness of privacy, organizations should be explicit about how AI and data are used in their operations.
- Make data use policies accessible, clear, and aligned with ethical standards.
- Ensure that campaign content involving AI (e.g., chatbots, data analytics) respects privacy and offers opt-in choices.

2. **Promote Digital Literacy and Critical Thinking**

- Support young people in becoming more media literate, enabling them to critically analyze news and media content. Develop educational materials on recognizing misinformation and promote responsible social media usage.
- Partner with local schools, universities, and community organizations to embed these educational tools into their curriculum, making media literacy a foundational part of education.
- Encourage critical thinking workshops or online tools that help participants question and verify information, especially in areas like climate change and social justice.

3. **Lead by Example on Ethical AI Practices**

- Form alliances with AI companies that prioritize ethics, creating joint initiatives that focus on truth and accountability and assist young people in accessing accurate, fact-checked information.
- Publicize these partnerships to reassure audiences of the social impact sector's commitment to transparency and trust.

4. **AI for Content Moderation and Fact-Checking**

- Utilise pre-existing or build new AI tools that identify and moderate

divisive content, reducing the spread of harmful misinformation, and supporting critical thinking by presenting varied perspectives.

Pillar 4: Community-Led Campaigns for Collective Empowerment

Objective: Facilitate campaigns that go beyond individual actions to promote collective youth engagement and systemic change.

- 1. Involve Youth in Campaign Development and Decision-Making**
 - Ensure young people are actively engaged in campaign planning and execution, treating them as co-creators rather than passive recipients.
 - Invite Gen Z representatives to be part of strategic discussions, campaign design, and feedback sessions.
 - Utilize participatory governance models where young people can directly influence decision-making.
 - 2. Create Toolkits and Resources for Localized Action**
 - Provide toolkits that highlight successful, community-driven projects focused on climate justice, social equality, and activism. This supports replication of effective approaches.
 - Offer examples of positive grassroots initiatives (e.g., climate adaptation projects, social advocacy in underserved areas) that can be adopted and adapted to their own communities.
 - 3. Build Long-Term Engagement Programs for Sustained Impact**
 - Focus on cultivating long-term relationships rather than one-off engagements.
 - Develop programs that allow younger people to grow within your organization, fostering continued involvement and ownership over time.
 - Align with local climate justice movements, youth-led initiatives, and social justice campaigns that provide ongoing opportunities to contribute.
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Pillar 5: Empower Young People as Change Agents and Active Contributors

- 1. Engaging Youth as Content Creators:**
 - Identify positive Gen Z influencers and role models linked to your cause area.
 - Engage and upskill them to spread messages countering relevant trends in disillusionment and polarisation.
 - This content, created by youth for youth, fosters a culture of trust and truth.

2. **Youth-Led Misinformation Initiatives:**
 - Create programs where young people lead efforts to identify and debunk misinformation in their communities.
 - Equip them with fact-checking tools and training to reduce the spread of misinformation at the grassroots level.
 - Promote the active seeking of multiple viewpoints to reduce the power of misinformation.
 3. **Dialogue Platforms Across Divides:**
 - Facilitate online and in-person forums where young people from diverse backgrounds can discuss pressing issues. Structured spaces for open dialogue reduce polarization and encourage understanding.
 - Use storytelling and moderated discussions to challenge insular thinking. Promoting exposure to diverse perspectives can help reduce the isolation and misinformed beliefs that arise from echo chambers.
 4. **Provide Resources and Tools for Youth Engagement**
 - Use digital platforms to provide tools and information needed to engage effectively in civic and social activities.
 - Offer resources such as fact-checking guides, mental health support apps, and community engagement tools to support meaningful participation.
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Conclusion

The Youth Rising Framework empowers the social impact sector to address the roots of youth disillusionment and polarization through empathy-driven, action-oriented, and collaborative strategies. By engaging young people authentically and transparently, providing meaningful avenues for participation, and supporting community-driven actions, we can re-build trust and inspire hope. This framework is a call to action, urging leaders to bridge generational divides and harness the latent collective energy to foster a more resilient, inclusive, and optimistic future.

Next Steps for Implementation:

1. Disseminate the framework across social impact sector networks, inviting leaders to share feedback and adapt the framework to their specific contexts.
2. Create partnerships with AI and tech companies to support ethical campaigns focused on youth engagement.
3. Develop resources, toolkits, and training for the social impact sector to implement the framework's strategies effectively, ensuring practical steps are made toward combating youth disillusionment and polarization.