



Report 2023

In order to improve the lives of change-makers, strengthen their ventures and further develop the change-making ecosystem, we urge everyone to take action.

In the following pages we outline twelve actions for each set of key stakeholders within the support ecosystem.

These recommendations have been developed through qualitative interviews with 8 young changemakers from around the world as well as multiple conversations with members of The Possibilists Alliance. In addition, it also builds on the important body of work built through reports including the State of Youth Civil Society by Restless Development, the OECD report on Unlocking the Potential of Youth-led Social Enterprises, the United Nations report on meaningful youth engagement and Unlock the Future's Challenge Paper on resourcing youth-led initiatives.

For Support Organizations:

For organizations whose core purpose is to assist young changemakers, we recommend the following TWELVE actions to support them more effectively.

Focus on the Person, not just the Organization:

Look beyond the ventures they run, and look at how your programming can support them through personal growth and challenges.



Break the Heropreneur Paradigm:

Open up activities to the founders' teams, and ensure a more equal distribution of knowledge and resources.



Use 'Changemaker-centered' Design:

Whenever possible, develop individualized offerings that are tailored towards the young changemakers' diverse needs, rather than your own, or those of the programme funders.



Prioritize wellbeing:

Work to improve the wellbeing of changemakers, and include specific activities that help them prevent burnout in your programmes.



Build Acumen:

Bring 'business' expertise and commercial know-how to your programmes via mentors or connections to corporates.



Respect Their Time:

Accept that young people are often juggling various responsibilities alongside their initiatives. Don't put extra pressure on them with overloads of deadlines & surveys. Consider different time zones and availabilities when running activities.



Invest in Relationships:

Effective collaboration cannot be rushed or forced. When aiming to create opportunities for changemakers to collaborate with each other, invest time into building initial trust and human connection.



Communicate Clearly:

Effectively communicate what your programme offers, so that young changemakers can differentiate it from other existing options.



Walk the Walk!

Involve young people in key leadership positions in your networks, and try to break down hierarchies in your own organizations to avoid replicating systemic inequalities.



Become Facilitation Pros!

Gathering groups of young people and/or connecting them to key stakeholders necessitates good facilitation skills, invest in training for your team(s)!



Compensate Young People!

Whenever you invite young people to micro-engagements as speakers or advisors, ensure you compensate them for their time.



Use a DEI Lens:

Re-evaluate all of your processes from a diversity and inclusion perspective. Consider how to improve processes for those who have poor internet connection or are not fluent in English.



For Funders:

Access to funding remains one of the most existential challenges cited by young changemakers in this study. We propose the following TWELVE ACTIONS that funders can take to effectively resource youth-led social innovation everywhere.

Rebalance Power:

Really trust young people to lead and give them decision making power; avoid upholding systemic inequalities that disempower young people.



Co-create:

When designing grants designated for young changemakers, co-create your strategies with young people from the word go, then during implementation involve them in key decisions.



Give Flexibly:

As much as possible, give unrestricted funding, allow young grantees to respond and adapt to fast changing social and environmental problems.



Allow Overhead:

One of the biggest challenges faced by young entrepreneurs is often covering the fixed costs of their organizations. Ensure that budgets can cover personnel and overhead costs.



Living Stipends:

Do not overlook the fact that some changemakers, especially those that self identify as marginalized, can struggle to cover basic costs of rent, food and medical supplies. Your consideration of granting personal living stipends can make a crucial difference.



Remove Barriers:

Make applying for grants and support as easy as possible. Make reporting as easy as possible (Challenge: Can you cut it in half?).



Be Responsive & Transparent:

Communicate your decision-making process transparently. Remain responsive towards young individuals that may not have proven successful in their application (and consider compensating them for the time they spend creating their proposal).



Use a DEI Lens:

Re-evaluate your processes with a diversity and inclusion based perspective. Consider how to optimize processes for those who have poor internet connection or are not fluent in English.



Commit Long-term:

Provide support in the long run (Why end funding after three years if the job is not done yet?)



Go Local:

Do not neglect the option of directly funding local youth-led organizations, especially in areas where the biggest proportions of youth live, but access to funding is lowest.



Seek Out Unusual Suspects:

Those who self identify as marginalized face even bigger hurdles to funding. Actively seek out grantees from under-represented groups and look beyond those who are most adept at proposal writing.



Compensate Young People!

Whenever you invite young people to micro-engagements as speakers or advisors, ensure financial compensation for their time.



For Policy Makers:

We believe policy is one of the key systemic levers for improving the lot of young changemakers, yet it remains a space they feel far removed from.

Meaningfully Engage:

There is a huge difference between meaningful and tokenistic engagement, ensure all your teams are well versed in this differentiation. (Example toolkit here).



Rethink Formats:

Most gatherings which are focused on developing policy (e.g. WEF, COP) are not facilitated or set up in a conducive way for young people to meaningfully contribute. Think about new innovative and participatory event formats.



Use a DEI Lens:

Re-evaluate all of your processes from a diversity and inclusion perspective. Consider how to improve processes for those who have poor internet connection or are not fluent in English.



Respect Young Changemakers:

Acknowledge young changemakers as contributors, innovators and knowledge-holders on the basis of their perspectives and experiences and give them a seat at the table which reflects this.



Aim High for Participation:

Empowering youth with full autonomy over decisions is a challenging form of participation in policy-making but should be aimed for when possible.



Seek Out Unusual Suspects:

Those who self identify as marginalized face even bigger hurdles concerning having their voices heard in places of power and privilege. Actively seek out participation from under-represented groups.



Engage at Each Stage of the Policy Cycle:

Try to involve young people at each stage of the policy cycle (design, planning, analysis, implementation and evaluation)



Give Clear Legal Frameworks:

Many young social entrepreneurs have to use alternative legal structures which don't reflect their hybrid business & impact models.



Improve the Evidence Base:

Improve the evidence base on youth-led initiatives. Incomplete data collection on youth driven impact is a barrier for both policy makers and the public to fully assess their challenges and impact.



Connect Young People & Governments:

Local municipalities are often critical 'replication partners' for social innovations but connections between them and young changemakers are rare.



Better Integrate Changemaking into the Education System:

Research shows the importance of starting out early in one's changemaking journey. Current education policy and curricula however, do little to cultivate the skills necessary to effect social change.



Visibility:

Give visibility and recognition to young changemakers via awards and communication campaigns.



For Young Changemakers:

We finally have twelve recommended actions for all the young changemakers out there who are striving for the wellbeing of people and planet.

Ask to Be Paid!

Many funders and ecosystem organizations are not used to the idea of compensating young people for micro-engagements. Help us to change their mindset on this by raising awareness!



Break the Heropreneur Paradigm:

Share spotlight and opportunities with your teams and ensure knowledge and resources are more equally spread.



Prioritize Self-care!

Wellbeing inspires well-doing, you will ultimately not be able to sustain your impact if you cannot do so for yourself, and may burn-out.



Fall in Love with the Problem:

We believe that this mantra from the world of entrepreneurship is even more pertinent to social change. Try not to become too attached to your own solution, but instead focus on the problem you are trying to tackle.



Apprentice with the Problem:

Social change is not about 'innovating' in a vacuum, it's about fully understanding the problem and the people affected by it.



Aim for the Root:

Beware of the temptation of the quick fix and look deeper at the roots of the problem you are trying to solve. Understand the system in which it is embedded.



Think Collaboratively:

Because of this systemic complexity, transformative impact simply cannot happen in isolation. Collaboration is the only way.



Find Your Tribe:

Don't underestimate the power of finding a community of people who share your challenges and support each other.



Practice Saying No to a Base:

Starting out, we are often trying to wear many hats and looking to gain experience quickly. Be mindful about what you agree to. Saying no is about prioritization, reducing opportunity costs and being more self-aware.



Seek Out Support:

There is an abundance of existing support for young changemakers. From corporate mentoring to legal advice; seek it out and grab it!



Have a Life-long Learning Mindset:

The social and environmental problems we are facing are complex and fast-changing. The mindset with which we can tackle them is one which is always open to new ideas and approaches.



Be Coachable!:

This is one of the most crucial traits of effective changemakers. This means being open to learning from others, self-reflecting, and confronting uncomfortable truths.

