



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Division for Social Policy and Development



# WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY 2017

Youth in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) for achieving peace  
and positive social change for all

Friday, 14 July 2017

9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. – Conference Room 8

General Assembly Building, United Nations Headquarters, New York



## ORGANIZERS

United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development (UNDESA-DSPD)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United for All Peoples (UP)

*With the support of the*

*NGO Committee on Sustainable Development-NY*

*And the participation of*

Disabled Peoples International (DPI)

Manhattan Multicultural Counseling (MMC)

**The event is being sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of San Marino to the United Nations and the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations.**

## BACKGROUND

*“Empowering young people through skills development strengthens their capacity to help address the many challenges facing society, including poverty, injustice and violent conflict.”*

**- Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary General (2007-2016)**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to eradicate poverty and achieve shared prosperity for all, leaving no one behind. Among its 17 Goals, emphasis has been given to poverty eradication (SDG1) quality education (SDG4), gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (SDG5), reduction of all forms of inequalities (SDG10) as well as promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development (SDG16).

In 2015, the United Nations also released *The World's Women 2015*, a statistics-based publication with a chapter dedicated to gender equality in education. According to the publication, *“women and girls are clearly underrepresented in fields related to science, engineering, manufacturing and construction”*,

and are also “underrepresented in the more advanced degree programmes, especially in science-related fields, resulting in fewer women than men in research” with women accounting for 30 per cent of all researchers, a number far from parity.

According to a recent International Labour Organization (ILO) publication focusing on Global Employment Trends for Youth, 73.4 million young people were estimated to be unemployed in 2015 (13.1% youth unemployment rate), with young females being comparatively disadvantaged in most developed and developing countries. It is also widely acknowledged that one of the main reasons for increased levels of youth unemployment is the phenomenon of structural unemployment, a mismatch between the skills that workers can offer and the skills requested by employers.

In light of this, entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship led by young women and men, has shown increased potential in responding to prevalent social and economic challenges. Driven by their responsiveness to current trends and opportunities, entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs are key drivers of change for the development of peaceful and resilient communities. Enterprises and social enterprises led by young women and men not only trigger the necessary momentum for local innovation and sustainable development, but can also contribute to direct and indirect job creation, especially through the peer-to-peer support they facilitate, they can reduce the social gap of inequalities as well as contribute to economic growth and the creation of sustainable inclusive and equitable societies. By improving social and economic participation, enterprises and social enterprises led by young women and men contribute to social and economic justice, and thereby contribute to increased resilience of communities to a myriad of challenges and to strengthened peace and prosperity for all.

## SCOPE

The proposed event aims to discuss how the academic fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) can contribute to the empowerment of youth - with a special focus on young women and girls - by eliminating the gender gap in education and skill-development, and by providing equal employment opportunities, as a strategy to reduce overall inequalities, eradicate poverty and promote peace and prosperity for all. Furthermore, the event seeks to recognize the role that young women and men in STEM are playing in our society and in the achievement of the SDGs, thus functioning as drivers of peace and prosperity.

## CONCEPT

One billion people today live in poverty. The financial crisis has also hit youth unemployment in both developing and developed countries. Improving the skillsets of young people, before they enter the job market can increase their employment prospects and improve the quality of their lives and wellbeing. [What are the new skills youth need to get in the labor market?](#) In today’s job market, basic skills are not enough; soft skills, analytical skills as well as STEM skills are required. There is a growing offer in STEM-related jobs and career opportunities for youth, throughout all industries. Youth employment, therefore, represents a global economic and security issue.

STEM skills are also an ideal communication channel that enhances social engagement as well as sharing information and innovative ideas to overcome poverty and to promote peace and prosperity for all.

According to the Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute's Women in Technology and Entrepreneurship in New York Programme (WiTNY), over the past 20 years, the percentage of computer science degrees awarded to women, has declined from 37% to 18%. Data from the U.S. Department of Commerce on women in STEM also highlight the gender gap in the field of innovation. In 2011, women held less than 25% of STEM jobs. [Why is there a massive gender gap in the STEM industry?](#) Even though women in STEM earn 33% more, compared to women in non-STEM jobs, they still often make less money than men and only few are in leadership positions.

[What can be done by universities, the private sector and each of us, to eliminate outdated ideas and negative stereotypes about women's skills and abilities in the STEM world?](#)

Driven by the belief that a diversity of perspectives leads to better ideas and greater innovation, this event will aim to inspire and motivate youth, and especially young females, to become active participants and leaders in the STEM industry and encourage them to use their skills towards creating technology that promotes inclusion, reduces inequalities and leaves no one behind.

[How can we maximize the impact that \[young\] social entrepreneurs operating in STEM are having?](#)

Based on empirical evidences and personal experiences, there is a growing interest in supporting social entrepreneurs, particularly those operating in STEM sectors; what can be done to improve and scale up the impact achieved by young women and men in STEM.

Commemorating the 2017 World Youth Skills Day, successful STEM professionals, social entrepreneurs and representatives of academia and the private sector, will share their experiences and knowledge to inspire and encourage young people to develop and use their STEM skills in all industries, as well as provide them with useful information on current industry trends, ways to build necessary soft and technical skills as well as guidance on how youth skills development in the fields of innovation, science and technology can contribute to a positive social change for all.

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