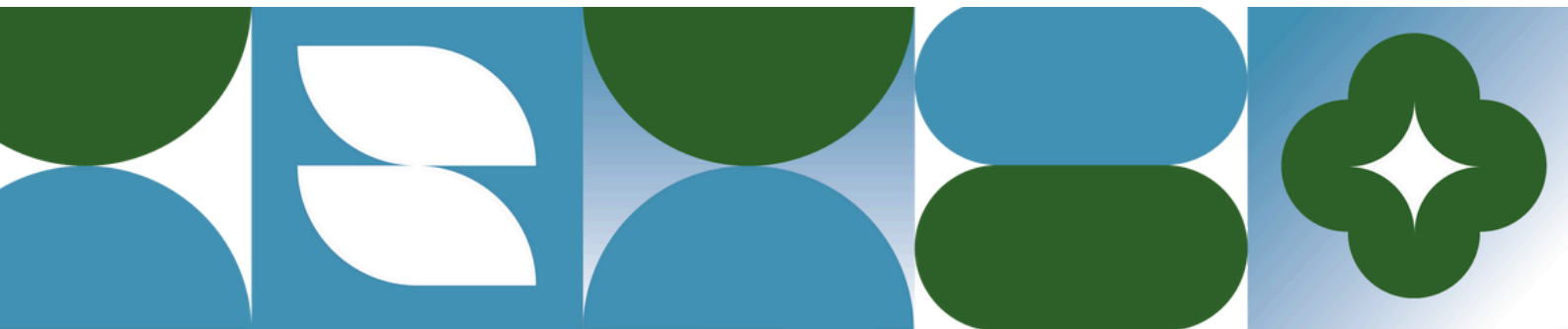


DRAFT YOUTH MANIFESTO

Global Youth Constituency on Fisheries and Aquaculture

A vision to harness the power of youth in advancing global aquatic food systems transformation.





1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The role of youth in advancing FAO's Blue Transformation

Aquatic food systems shape our health, livelihoods and ecosystems. Through its [Blue Transformation roadmap](#), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) outlines a vision for sustainable aquatic food systems that promote better nutrition, employment, economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability.

Achieving this transformation requires holistic, adaptive and ecosystem-based approaches that build resilient value chains, secure livelihoods and safeguard aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems for both present and future generations. By promoting inclusive and sustainable practices, Blue Transformation supports [FAO's four betters](#) and contributes directly to achieving the [Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

As young people, we are central to transforming aquatic food systems. We bring innovative ideas, digital skills and a deep sense of urgency to solve environmental, social and economic challenges. Investing in youth by expanding access to knowledge, training, finance and leadership opportunities fosters inclusive development, drives meaningful participation and helps tackle critical challenges in aquatic food systems. Our active engagement supports generational renewal, ensuring the sector remains dynamic, resilient and future-focused.

Empowering youth means unlocking the full potential of communities to build truly inclusive and sustainable aquatic food systems and futures for people, nature and the planet, with young people acting as knowledge connectors, linking traditional and Indigenous ecological practices with science and innovation.



1.2 Barriers and challenges faced by youth

As young people engaged in aquatic food systems, we face a variety of challenges that limit our full participation, contributions and ownership. Limited access to essential resources such as finance, land, water and technology continue to constrain our ability to start or scale initiatives. These challenges are compounded by gaps in technical and entrepreneurial skills, as well as weak linkages to markets, which restrict opportunities for innovation and growth. In many contexts, social and cultural norms further limit our participation and influence in decision-making processes that shape the future of our communities and environment. Moreover, limited policy literacy and weak institutional representation often make it difficult for youth to navigate complex governance structures at both local and global levels.

However, in the midst of these barriers, we are actively contributing through innovation, business development, research, policy-advocacy and community engagement. Young people all around the world are raising awareness about sustainable practices, collaborating on research projects and developing digital and innovative tools to address pressing social, economic and environmental challenges in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. With stronger institutional support and inclusive governance, we can move from the margins to the center of decision-making discussions, influencing changes and ensuring impact from policy to action.

1.3 The opportunity: A Global Youth Constituency for Fisheries and Aquaculture

The establishment of the [Global Youth Constituency for fisheries and aquaculture](#) marks a major step in uniting young people across the sector. It provides a platform for knowledge exchange, where youth can share innovations and collaborate on sustainable solutions for aquatic food systems transformation. Most importantly, it ensures youth voices are actively included in global decision-making, empowering a new generation of leaders.

This initiative emerged from a youth-led, inclusive process. It began with a consultation in 2024 through the [World Food Forum \(WFF\) Youth Assembly](#), where young people called for a global platform to engage more effectively in fisheries and aquaculture and connect with the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). The Constituency was officially launched during a dedicated youth-led side event at COFI36 (July 2024), organized by the WFF Youth Initiative.

Momentum continued with an online consultation in May 2025, where over 300 youth engaged, sharing experiences and setting priorities. Followed by a second youth-led event at the Third United Nations Ocean Conference in June 2025, co-hosted by FAO and the Kingdom of Norway. These events led to the creation of a Steering Committee, which is shaping the Constituency's strategy and ensuring strong youth leadership towards COFI37 (2026) and beyond.





© FAO/GMB Akash

2. Constituency framework

2.1 Vision and mission

Our vision is a world where every young person, especially those from underrepresented populations, is recognized as a key actor in influencing and shaping sustainable aquatic food systems (fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic food value chains). Guided by Blue Transformation and following One Health Approach principles, their voices, knowledge and skills inform actions, inclusive policies and initiatives across all levels of governance, leaving no one behind.

Our mission is to empower youth through collaborative actions as leaders in sustainable aquatic food systems by providing a platform for inclusive dialogue, capacity development (including in research, governance, entrepreneurship, science and management), policy influence and collaborative action.

Making policy discussions accessible and transparent means engaging youth as equal partners: understanding their diverse needs, creating space for dialogue and ensuring their priorities are reflected in policies and actions.



2.2 Strategic objectives

- Ensuring the meaningful inclusion of young people in policy and decision-making processes related to fisheries and aquaculture, at local, national, regional and global levels;
- Developing the knowledge, skills and capacities of young people to influence fisheries and aquaculture governance, in partnership with institutions and bodies that share the Constituency's vision;
- Supporting the involvement of youth in FAO's technical work on fisheries and aquaculture, including COFI;
- Strengthening collaboration between youth, governments, civil society, producers, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), academia and the private sector, to foster innovation, technical cooperation and the amplification of youth-led initiatives;
- Promoting visibility and recognition of the contributions of youth in fisheries and aquaculture, in particular from underrepresented communities;
- Establishing inclusive, intergenerational, and gender-sensitive spaces on key sectoral issues for dialogue, collaboration and innovation.

2.3 Means of implementation

- **Needs assessments** - to identify areas of support for youth in fisheries and aquaculture (including through online questionnaires);
- **Policy consultations** - to gather youth input and priorities on key fisheries and aquaculture issues related to institutional framework development, such as policies, strategies, etc.;
- **Open dialogues** - to facilitate discussions with producers, consumers, associations, IPLCs, governments, academia, private sector actors, policy makers and civil society organizations;
- **Advocacy** - to ensure meaningful youth participation in relevant intergovernmental forums and decision-making bodies, such as COFI;



- **Capacity development** - offering training and information to strengthen youth policy, leadership, entrepreneurship and advocacy skills, with an emphasis on youth from underrepresented communities;
- **Knowledge sharing** - disseminating and reviewing accessible materials to build awareness and share best practices, including through intergenerational dialogues;
- **Partnership mobilization** - to engage with development partners, academic institutions, NGOs and other international/national/local organizations to support and amplify youth initiatives, including through the WFF National Youth Chapters; and
- **Develop community-level mechanisms** - where appropriate to support programme implementation, develop partnerships and engage youth in local communities.

To stay up to date on planned activities in the Constituency, view the 2025–2026 roadmap [here](#).

2.4 Guiding principles

- **Human rights and dignity** – recognize, respect, promote and protect human rights principles for those participating in aquatic food systems;
- **Economic, social, and environmental sustainability and viability** – policies, strategies, plans, initiatives, projects and actions of the Constituency are socially, economically and environmentally sound, reflect local or regional realities, balance socioeconomic, gender and environmental outcomes through appropriate decision-making processes and are climate-smart;
- **Rule of law** – transformative actions apply, follow and reflect rules and regulations that are consistent with existing obligations under international law;
- **Accountability and transparency** – actions, programmes and initiatives are clearly defined and widely published so that they are accessible to all stakeholders and are followed by commitment to hold individuals, agencies and actors responsible for decisions according to the rule of law and best practices;
- **Consultation and participation** – active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation from stakeholders involved in the Constituency should be ensured without exception, with particular attention to vulnerable, marginalized, socially excluded and under-represented groups as well as Indigenous peoples and local communities;





- **Knowledge-driven** – the formulation of transformative initiatives or interventions is based on the best available scientific/research, data, technical, traditional and local knowledge;
- **Equity and justice** – promote justice and fair treatment of all people and communities, and implement measures to accelerate the achievement of equitable outcomes, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- **Gender equity** – recognize the vital role of women and vulnerable groups in aquatic food systems, promoting gender and socially inclusive responses and transformative interventions that enhance equal rights, opportunities and benefits;
- **Non-discrimination and respect for cultures** – recognize and respect all forms of organization, including traditional and local knowledge and practices, including indigenous peoples, local communities and ethnic minorities;
- **Regional diversity** - to reflect regional perspectives and representation, drawing on existing knowledge and values. This approach ensures that actions and recommendations are contextually relevant, inclusive and sustainable across global, regional and local levels; and
- **Continuous improvement** – continue to improve the knowledge base for the Constituency.





3. CALL TO ACTION

3.1 Call for youth mobilization

We call on young people from all backgrounds to actively engage with the Constituency and seize the opportunity to shape the future of fisheries and aquaculture. Your voices, ideas and experiences are essential to driving innovation, sustainability and equity in aquatic food systems. By joining us in this process, you will gain access to policy processes, capacity development, and a global network of passionate young people, empowering you to influence policies and practices at local, national and international levels. Together, we will ensure that the next generation leads with knowledge, creativity and determination, building resilient, inclusive and sustainable aquatic food systems for all.

3.2 Call for multi-stakeholder collaboration

We invite governments, NGOs, research institutions, private sector partners and community organizations to support and collaborate with the Constituency. By working together, we can pool resources, share expertise and co-develop inclusive policies that enhance sustainable fisheries, aquaculture and value chains. This collaborative effort will strengthen impact, enable innovative solutions and foster resilient, science-based management practices benefiting current and future generations.



ANNEX

Governance structure

The Constituency operates under the umbrella of the WFF Youth Assembly that follows a youth-led approach, ensuring that young people have a key role in leading, organising, decision-making and contributing to the objectives and outcomes of the Constituency.

The structure of the Constituency includes:

- **A Steering Committee**, responsible for guiding and supporting activities of the Constituency, under the facilitation of the Youth Assembly Secretariat;
- A broader network of **general members** who participate in meetings and events to share opinions, ideas and solutions.

Participation in both groups is voluntary; therefore, all members serve as volunteers.

The Constituency Steering Committee is in charge of organizing meetings for the general members, supporting events and advocacy initiatives, supporting the development of youth-informed policy materials and ensuring that youth voices are represented in key policy discussions related to fisheries and aquaculture. It is composed of young representatives from all regions, nominated on an annual basis.

The initial Steering Committee consists of youth representatives who participated in the consultative process leading up to the launch of the Constituency. Subsequent Steering Committees will be selected annually through an open and transparent process facilitated by the Youth Assembly secretariat.

