

# A Youth Lens on Global Gateway in Kenya

- Date: 8 October 2025 | Format: Zoom, 2 hours
- Participants Reached: 88 Youth and Youth-led CSO representatives from across Kenya

<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Counties</b> (Bomet, Elgeyo Marakwet, Garissa, Homabay, Isiolo, Kiambu, Kisumu, Kwale, Laikipia, Lamu, Machakos, Makueni, Mombasa, Nairobi, Nakuru, Samburu, Taita Taveta and Tana River)	18
<b>Persons with disabilities</b>	6
<b>Youth &lt;35 years</b>	75
<b>Women</b>	48
<b>Men</b>	39
<b>Non-binary</b>	1

- Convened by: EU Youth Sounding Board Kenya & META Consortium

## Why the Learning Circle Mattered

Many young people in Kenya have seen the Global Gateway logo on EU-funded projects but remain unsure what it truly represents. Few are aware that the European Union has committed over €150 billion to Africa through this strategy, one that directly shapes the continent's future in areas such as decent jobs, digitalisation, climate action, trade, transport, and governance.

Despite this scale of investment, youth participation in Global Gateway processes remains limited. The initiative's language and spaces including the Global Gateway Forum and the seventh EU-AU Summit are often *invitation-only*, creating barriers that exclude youth and Kenyan civil societies from engaging meaningfully in decisions that affect them.

To bridge this gap, the EU Youth Sounding Board Kenya (YSB) convened a youth-led learning circle on 8 October 2025, ahead of the second Global Gateway Forum in Brussels (9–10 October 2025). The session was designed to demystify the Global

Gateway, unpack its relevance to Kenya’s development agenda, and identify how young people can shape its implementation and accountability.

The learning circle created an open and inclusive space for young leaders, youth-led CSO representatives, and partners to interrogate how the EU’s flagship investment strategy connects with the lived realities of Kenyan communities. Through open discussions, participants reflected on the opportunities, risks, and structural barriers surrounding youth engagement in EU’s Global Gateway programmes.

Specifically, the learning circle sought to:

- Unpack Global Gateway for youth: what it is, how it works, and why it matters for Kenya.
- Connect Global Gateway to youth priorities i.e decent jobs, digital inclusion, climate justice and good governance.
- Create a space for open discussion gathering youth perspectives to feed into the Youth Statement to be presented at the 7th EU-AU Summit in November 2025.
- Strengthen accountability by discussing how youth can track progress and transparency in Global Gateway implementation.

#### **Expected Outcomes;**

- Clearer understanding among Kenyan youth of what Global Gateway means for their future.
- Collective youth recommendations on priority areas for Global Gateway in Kenya.
- Strengthened capacity of the EU Youth Sounding Board Kenya to act as a bridge between youth and the EU Delegation.



*This was more than a meeting; it was a moment of clarity and agency. Global Gateway, if done right, can be more than a strategy, it can be a bridge between policy and the Kenya we want.*

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#### **What We Heard**

Pauline Véron, a Policy Analyst from the *European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)*, unpacked the complexity of the EU’s Global Gateway — a strategy that combines development cooperation with European strategic and

investment interests. She noted that the initiative currently includes 264 flagship projects, with nearly half focusing on climate and energy, primarily across Africa. Of the 46 new projects identified for 2025, 25 focus on climate and energy, six on digitalisation, four on education, six on health, and five on global transport linkages.

Pauline highlighted that the EU aims to mobilize €300 billion in investments by 2027, with €150 billion dedicated to Africa under the African Investment Package. The Global Gateway, she explained, seeks to promote sustainable, inclusive, and transparent partnerships, yet this ambition raises critical questions around ownership, participation, and alignment with local priorities.

She acknowledged that while the EU envisions Global Gateway as a shift from traditional aid to investment and connectivity, many African stakeholders view it as “a new label for an old approach.” Pauline encouraged youth not to wait for invitations but to organize, build alliances, and proactively shape how the EU–Kenya partnership unfolds. She urged them to bring forward youth-led perspectives on human development, gender equality, environmental justice, and inclusive governance.

Throughout the learning circle, participants brought rich reflections and honest questions about what Global Gateway means for their lives and futures. One youth participant shared that, “*Global Gateway feels distant from our realities, it connects economies, but not always people.*” This sentiment captured the collective feeling that the initiative needs stronger people-to-people linkages and simpler communication in language youth can relate to. A representative from a youth-led organisation highlighted how working in consortiums on EU-funded projects has expanded networks and visibility but noted that accessing funding remains complex. They called for greater inclusion of grassroots organisations and more transparent funding pathways that reflect community needs.

Another young participant reflected on the importance of accountability, noting that they often hear about EU projects after they are already launched hence there is no opportunity to contribute or interrogate priorities. The group proposed youth-led monitoring mechanisms to track Global Gateway projects implementation in Kenya, ensuring that outcomes align with local priorities.

Others emphasised the need for youth platforms that directly engage with EU delegations and stakeholders of Global Gateway to co-create and contribute on EU priority areas in Kenya. As one speaker put it, “*engage as strategic partners vis a vis as implementing partners.*”

Together, these perspectives highlighted a powerful message: Kenyan youth want to be partners, not beneficiaries, in shaping how the Global Gateway unfolds while ensuring it remains transparent, inclusive, and transformative for our communities.

*“The gap in local-level impact metrics is clearly noted, and it’s critical that the Global Gateway begins to track what matters, where it matters. We believe that Gateway must invest in grassroots-led impact tracking. Communities already measure change in ways that are meaningful and context-specific we simply need the tools and trust to make that visibility possible.*

*To make the Global Gateway truly inclusive, we propose a \$150,000 pilot investment in grassroots metric-building, led by youth, faith groups and community innovators not just data collection, it’s a commitment to visibility, accountability and co-ownership.” Youth Participant, Global Gateway Learning Circle, 2025*

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## What We Found

- i. **Hidden in plain sight:** Many young people and CSOs in Kenya are already engaging with EU-funded initiatives, from digital transformation programmes to green trade projects. Yet few realise these efforts are part of the broader Global Gateway framework. This disconnect highlights a communication gap between high-level policy discussions and the realities of local engagement.
- ii. **Access is still by invitation:** Youth noted that information about Global Gateway spaces such as consultations, tenders, AU-EU Ministerial meeting, AU-EU Summit, or the Global Gateway Forum itself is not publicly accessible or transparent. Most engagement remains invitation-only or highly technical, making it difficult for grassroots actors to participate meaningfully or contribute insights from lived experience.
- iii. **Language is a barrier:** The policy language surrounding Global Gateway framed in terms like “infrastructure connectivity” or “strategic investment” feels distant from the everyday realities of young people in Kenya. Participants called for simpler, relatable communication that translates these concepts into what they mean for jobs, climate justice, and livelihoods.
- iv. **A call for people-centered partnerships:** Youth consistently emphasized that meaningful cooperation must go beyond infrastructure to include investment in people, their skills, innovation, creativity, and participation. They called for locally grounded, youth-led approaches that strengthen accountability, amplify marginalized voices, and ensure Global Gateway projects reflect community priorities.

- v. **Local ownership and transparency:** Participants expressed a strong desire to track and monitor Global Gateway projects implemented in Kenya. They proposed youth-led accountability mechanisms, open data portals, and collaboration with the EU Delegation to make information on project outcomes more visible and accessible.

## Our Recommendations

- i. **Make it visible:** Communicate Global Gateway in youth-friendly formats (graphics, videos, Kiswahili summaries).
- ii. **Make it local:** Establish county-level youth advisory hubs linked to EU Delegation projects.
- iii. **Make it simple:** Streamline funding and mentorship opportunities for youth-led CSOs.
- iv. **Make it accountable:** Launch a youth tracking tool for project progress and transparency.
- v. **Make it lasting:** Invest in long-term partnerships rather than one-off consultations.

## Highlights:

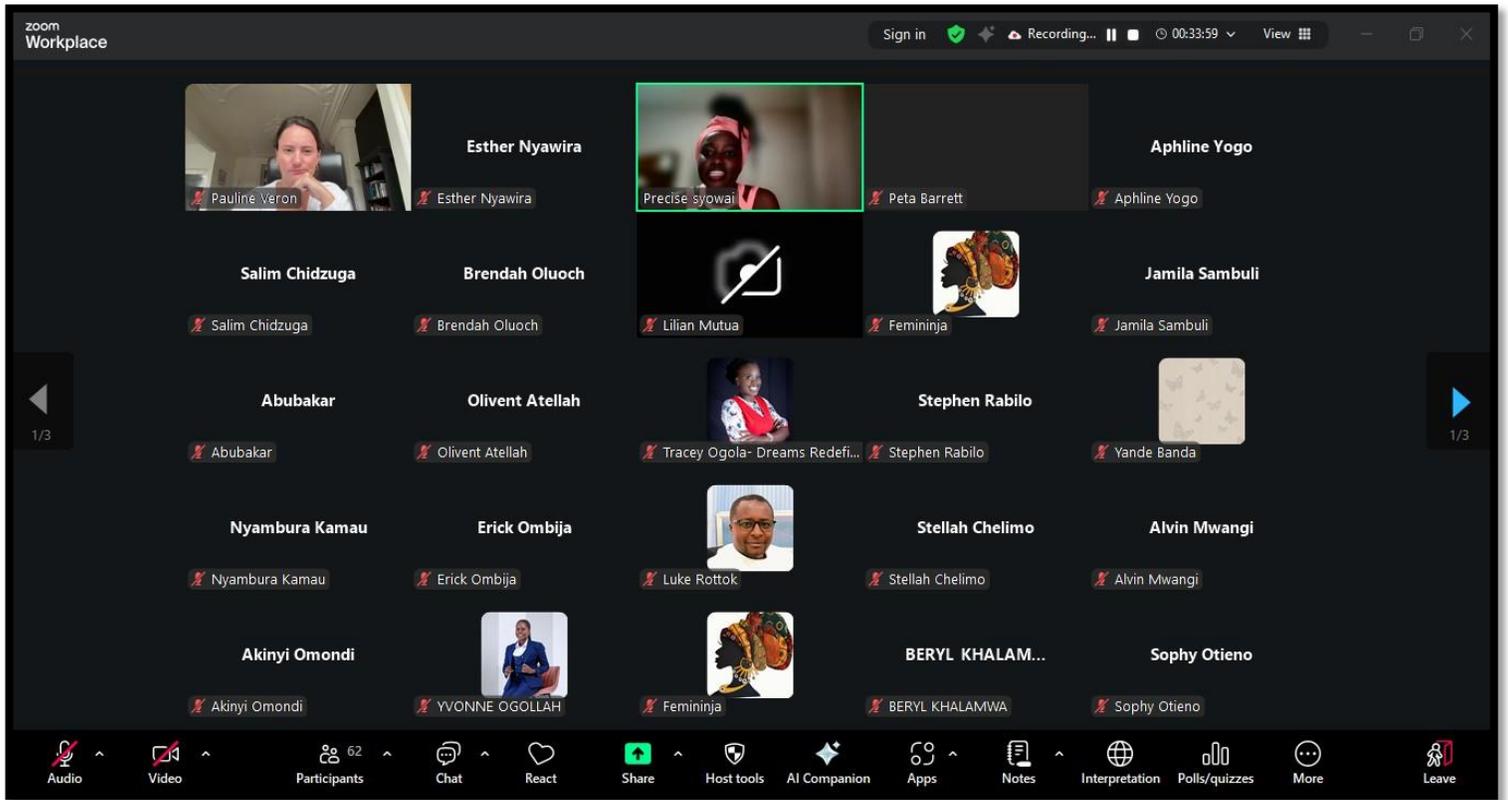


Figure 1. Participants at the Global Gateway Learning Circle