

OPPORTUNITY #31

What if the people of the world voted for action on global challenges?

WHOLE-PLANET VOTING

Global voting systems enable whole-planet decision-making around global challenges, building a sense of solidarity and empowerment among people living around the world.



MEGATREND

Future Humanity

TRENDS

Advanced Connectivity
Artificial Intelligence
Community-based Solutions
Digital Communities

SECTORS AFFECTED

Agriculture & Food
Communication Technologies & Systems
Consumer Goods, Services & Retail
Cyber & Information Security
Data Science, AI & Machine Learning
Education
Financial Services & Investment
Immersive Technologies
Insurance & Reinsurance
Logistics, Shipping & Freight
Manufacturing
Media & Entertainment
Real Estate
Travel & Tourism
Utilities
Government Services
Professional Services



WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

From poverty, water scarcity and health epidemics, to climate change and food shortages, there are many social challenges that directly and indirectly affect communities around the world and across borders.

COVID-19 has erased much of the progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, four years of progress on alleviating poverty was erased as 93 million people were forced into extreme poverty in 2020.⁵⁶⁷ Rising inequality, climate change and the impacts of COVID-19 also led to the worsening of food security, with 1 in 10 people found to be suffering from hunger in the same year. Additionally, about 22.7 million children missed basic vaccines and 147 million children missed more than half of their in-person classes and instruction.⁵⁶⁸

While some countries are more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change than others,⁵⁶⁹ climate change affects us all. Context-specific, the impact of climate change depends on the extent to which countries already face water shortages, shifts in biome distribution, loss of coral reefs, reduced crop production and livestock and higher rates of disease, malnutrition and migration.⁵⁷⁰ It is estimated that by 2030, climate change will have driven up to 135 million people into poverty⁵⁷¹ particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia – the regions where poorer populations are concentrated.⁵⁷²

Access to water is a global issue as well as only 3% of all the water on earth is freshwater and, with growing populations, the need for freshwater has continued to increase and only 1% is accessible.⁵⁷³ Some two billion people around the world do not have access to adequate water supplies and as much as two-thirds of the world's population experience water scarcity at least one month of the year.⁵⁷⁴ Enhancing access to water for drinking and agriculture will require significant investments in infrastructure and technology even in countries with adequate water supplies.⁵⁷⁵ For example, desalination, the process of removing salt and other particles from seawater, is an option used for increasing supplies of freshwater. New technologies – such as nano-membranes, which desalinate water more quickly – could further improve capacity and tap into new sources of freshwater.⁵⁷⁶

THE OPPORTUNITY

The share of individuals using the internet increased – from 54% in 2019 to 63.5% in 2021.⁵⁷⁷ The number of social media users grew from 4.2 billion in January 2021 to 4.6 billion in January 2022, with a 10% year-on-year growth.⁵⁷⁸ In a connected world, choices made about key global challenges in one region can have profound effects on other regions. Technology could enable real-time access to AI-powered analysis and modelling, allowing people to understand how their choices will affect others.

Votes could be held on global challenges requiring a response or strategy that went beyond the capacity or power of any one nation or region. Voters could be presented with a full view of the impacts of their choices for their country, for the world and for their personal circumstances. Depending on the topic, the options would not necessarily be binary and could consist of sets of possible responses. The results could guide national and regional action plans and investment.

A system of voting on global challenges could build a sense of solidarity and empowerment among people living around the world. It could reduce the influence of party politics and vested interest groups, as everyone would have equal access to unbiased information and clearly explained implications.

BENEFITS

Greater global collaboration and solidarity around global challenges. Reducing duplicated efforts and enabling more effective funding. Smaller countries have a stronger voice as they feel empowered from being part of a bigger group of countries.

RISKS

Greater influence for countries with larger populations if the system used the ‘one person, one vote’ principle. Social or geopolitical tensions stemming from close-run votes. Low voter turnout. Misuse of the voting platform to shift public opinion.



4
YEARS

of **progress on alleviating poverty**
was erased as

93
MILLION
PEOPLE

were forced into extreme poverty
in 2020 due to COVID-19