

YOUTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE



HIGHLIGHTS

- In response to the growing number of engaged youth organizations in the intergovernmental climate change process, in 2009, the UNFCCC extended a constituency status to admitted youth NGOs allowing them to receive official information, participate in meetings, request speaking slots and receive logistical support at UNFCCC conferences.
- Over 10,000 youth have already completed the Climate Change Challenge badge developed by FAO, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance¹.
- Since 2004 over 4,500 children and young people participated in annual UNEP Tunza International Conferences, representing over 100 countries, and covering a number of issues ranging from climate change to the green economy and green jobs. The Tunza website receives over 1 million visits per year.

Human activities, such as the use of fossil fuels, deforestation and unsustainable agriculture contribute to climate change, which decreases the availability of nutritious food and clean water, and destroys ecosystems and secure living environments. This leads to malnutrition, ill health and migration, rendering youth particularly vulnerable. At the same time, youth constitute the majority of the population in many countries and have an increasingly strong social and environmental awareness, which has the power to transform our societies towards a low-carbon and climate resilient future.

The United Nations, Youth and Climate Change

The United Nations System recognizes the key role that youth play in tackling climate change and works closely with youth-led and youth-focussed organizations around the world through

the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change (Joint Framework Initiative). Since 2008 the Joint Framework Initiative has been coordinating efforts by sixteen intergovernmental entities² and many youth organizations to empower youth to take adaptation and mitigation actions and enhance effective participation of youth in climate change policy decision-making processes.

¹ <http://www.waggs.org/en/cop17/blogs/videos/megan>

² Convention on Biological Diversity; Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Division for Sustainable Development; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Institute for Training and Research; United Nations Non-governmental Liaison Service; United Nations Organizations for Education, Science and Culture; United Nations Population Fund; United Nations Programme on Youth; United Nations Volunteers; World Bank.





- The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supports the development of food security and climate change educational programmes and resources for rural farmer field and life schools.
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) implements the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme, which provides funding for projects on mitigation or adaptation to climate change proposed by youth organizations or non-governmental organizations that work with youth.
- Through its Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supports the development of national climate change education programmes, policies and resources.
- With the YouthXchange initiative UNESCO and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) support youth projects on sustainable lifestyles in 45 countries around the world.
- UNEP adopted a long-term Tunza Youth Strategy for engaging youth in environmental activities in the areas of capacity-building, environmental awareness and information exchange, with a vision to foster a generation of environmentally conscious citizens, capable of positive action.
- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) supports youth-led groups through its Urban Youth Fund and 'One Stop Youth Resource Centres' to develop programmes to mitigate the effects of climate change in urban areas.
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction teams have greatly contributed to the introduction of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for the past eight years through the Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD 2005-2014). As 2013 IAC Chair, UNICEF is prioritizing programmes that support adolescence and girls/youth empowerment.
- The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) supports, through UN CC:Learn³, a long-term and strategic approach to climate change education which includes designing national strategies, developing learning materials for both formal and non-formal learning contexts, and raising international awareness of the need to integrate of climate change fundamentals into national curriculums.
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat coordinates the work of the Joint Framework Initiative. It also works closely with the rapidly expanding UNFCCC observer constituency of youth non-governmental organizations (YOUNGO) to support the substantive engagement of youth in the intergovernmental climate change process through the organization of high-level briefings with decision-makers, capacity-building events for youth organizations, the facilitation of youth

³ UN CC:Learn is a partnership of 33 multilateral organizations which supports Member States in designing and implementing results-oriented and sustainable learning to address climate change. The Secretariat for UN CC:Learn is provided by UNITAR.





participation from developing countries and virtual participation of youth around the world who cannot attend UNFCCC conferences.

Progress

In response to the growing number of engaged youth organizations in the intergovernmental climate change process, in 2009, the UNFCCC extended a constituency status to admitted youth NGOs allowing them to receive official information, participate in meetings, request speaking slots and receive logistical support at UNFCCC conferences. In only four years YOUNGO has developed into a vibrant network of youth activists, through which youth make their voices heard and actively contribute to shaping the intergovernmental climate change policies. At UNFCCC conferences YOUNGO makes official statements, provides technical and policy inputs to negotiation groups, engages with decision-makers through high-level meetings and in informal settings and raises awareness through various advocacy activities. Youth participation has brought moral, intergenerational and equity-based values as well as constructive technical and policy inputs to the negotiations.

Back in their home countries and communities, youth are taking action on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Diverse initiatives include educational, awareness-raising and behavioural change campaigns. Youth also engage in climate change projects within different national and international organizations. Over 10,000 youth have already completed the Climate Change Challenge badge developed by FAO, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance. Since 2004 over 4,500 children and young people participated in annual UNEP Tunza International Conferences, representing over 100 countries, and covering a number of issues ranging from climate change to the green economy and green jobs. The Tunza website receives over 1 million visits per year. Between 1991 and 2012 more than 3 million entries were received in the Tunza International Painting Competition from over 100 countries. UNEP will continue to engage children and youth through, for example, regional conferences, the Tunza Advisory Council and online networking. A new focus on work experience/green employment is being developed alongside existing initiatives incorporating formal and non-formal education, and campaigning on issues ranging from food waste to climate change.

The way forward

The work undertaken with and by youth is crucial to raise ambition of governments to come to an agreement on a new climate change regime by 2015. Tackling climate change requires concerted coordinated government action as well as conscious and informed efforts by individuals. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen both formal and informal education on climate change and viable lifestyles. In addition, sustainable production and consumption patterns must be promoted and youth supported as environmental champions in their local communities. Partnerships should be developed between governments, intergovernmental, non-governmental and youth organizations for joint environmental initiatives aimed at building the capacity of youth as future leaders and driving forces behind a new climate change regime. Considerable efforts are also needed in strengthening the adaptive capability and resilience of youth in rural communities in developing countries.





More efforts must be made to ensure that youth are ready to take advantage of new environment-oriented employment opportunities. Growing attention to climate change and sustainable development offers a chance for green economic growth around the world. Green jobs not only provide much-needed employment opportunities for youth, they also give youth an outlet to contribute directly to the fight against climate change by adopting green behaviors in the workplace as well as in their private lives.

For further information

- <http://www.fao.org/climatechange/youth>
- <http://yunga-youth.weebly.com/>
- UNICEF and Climate Change and Environmental Education:
http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_61668.html
- www.undp.org/sgp
- Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development at UNESCO:
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/climate-change-education/>
- YouthXchange Climate Change and Lifestyles Guidebook:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002128/212876E.pdf>
- YouthXChange Training Kit on Responsible Consumption:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001587/158700e.pdf>
- TUNZA <http://www.unep.org/tunza>
- UNFCCC Youth Portal: http://unfccc.int/cc_inet/cc_inet/youth_portal/items/6578.php
- UN Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change:
http://unfccc.int/cc_inet/cc_inet/youth_portal/items/6519.php
- Growing Together in a Changing Climate, the United Nations, Young People, and Climate Change
http://unfccc.int/files/cc_inet/information_pool/application/pdf/growingtogether.pdf
- Youth Participation in the UNFCCC Negotiation Process: The United Nations, Young People and Climate Change
http://unfccc.int/files/cc_inet/information_pool/application/pdf/unfccc_youthparticipation.pdf
- Youth in Action on Climate Change: Inspirations from Around the World:
http://unfccc.int/cc_inet/cc_inet/information_pool/simple_search/items/3522.php?displayPool=1584&lang=6
- <http://uniteforclimate.org/>

This fact sheet was prepared by the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change. It is part of a collaborative effort of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development to provide an overview on how the United Nations system works with young people on different issues.

