

# CHAPTER IV

## CHAPTER IV

### **Moving forward: youth taking action and making a difference**

The combined acumen and involvement of all individuals, from regular citizens to scientific experts, will be needed as the world moves forward in implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and promoting sustainable development. Young people must be prepared to play a key role within this context, as they are the ones who will live to experience the long-term impact of today's crucial decisions.

The present chapter focuses on the participation of young people in addressing climate change. It begins with a review of the various mechanisms for youth involvement in environmental advocacy within the United Nations system. A framework comprising progressive levels of participation is then presented, and concrete examples are provided of youth involvement in climate change efforts around the globe at each of these levels. The role of youth organizations and obstacles to participation are also examined.

## PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations has long recognized the importance of youth participation in decision-making and global policy development. Environmental issues have been assigned priority in recent decades, and a number of mechanisms have been established within the system that enables youth representatives to contribute to climate change deliberations. A variety of youth advisory bodies and youth caucuses provide young people with opportunities to share their ideas. However, as shown later in the chapter, the existing participatory mechanisms frequently do not allow them to contribute meaningfully to the decision-making process.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that participation is a substantive right and is the means through which children and young people may take part in and influence processes, decisions, and activities in order to achieve justice, shape outcomes, expose abuses of power, and realize their rights. The intent underlying this Convention was reaffirmed in 1995, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (United Nations, 1995), and again in 2007, in the Supplement to the World Programme of Action (United Nations, 2007a). Generally considered the first global blueprint for developing effective policies for young people, the World Programme of Action for Youth<sup>2</sup> identifies full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making as one of fifteen priority areas requiring action by Governments, the international community, civil society, and the private sector (see box IV.1). As stated in the World Programme of Action, “the capacity for progress of our societies is based, among other elements, on their capacity to incorporate the contribution and responsibility of youth in the building and designing of the fu-

ture. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account” (United Nations, 1995, para. 104).

### Box IV.1

#### The World Programme of Action for Youth on the importance of participation

The World Programme of Action for Youth recognizes that the active engagement of young people is central not only to their own development but to the development of society as a whole. It acknowledges that young people are part of the solution to the difficulties facing society—not another problem to be solved.

Because the economic, social, and political participation of youth is essentially a prerequisite for the implementation of the proposals included in all the other priority areas of the Programme of Action, promoting the involvement of young people is critically important. Proposals for action relating specifically to youth participation include the following:

- (a) Improving access to information in order to enable young people to make better use of their opportunities to participate in decision-making;
- (b) Developing and/or strengthening opportunities for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, promoting their social, political, developmental and environmental participation, removing obstacles that affect their full contribution to society and respecting, inter alia, freedom of association;
- (c) Encouraging and promoting youth associations through financial, educational and technical support and promotion of their activities;
- (d) Taking into account the contribution of youth in designing, →

<sup>2</sup> In its resolution 47/1 on policies and programmes involving youth, adopted in 2009, the Commission for Social Development stated that the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (United Nations, 1995) and its Supplement (United Nations, 2007a) would henceforth be referred to as the World Programme of Action for Youth (United Nations, Commission for Social Development, 2009).

implementing and evaluating national policies and plans affecting their concerns;

- (e) Encouraging increased national, regional and international cooperation and exchange between youth organizations;
- (f) Inviting Governments to strengthen the involvement of young people in international forums, inter alia, by considering the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly.

**Source:** United Nations (1995), World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond; proposals for action are reproduced verbatim from para. 107.

The environment was identified as one of the original ten priority areas in the World Programme of Action for Youth. While climate change was not considered a high priority at the time the Programme was adopted, the deterioration of the natural environment was. Interest in the environment intensified over the years, becoming one of the principal concerns of young people worldwide. In 2008, youth delegates to the United Nations General Assembly identified climate change as one of their key priority areas for action in the lead-up to the regular Assembly sessions. During the General Assembly debate that year, youth delegates spoke about the eagerness of young people to participate in decision-making on critical issues such as climate change.

Another important avenue for youth participation in United Nations intergovernmental processes is the Youth Caucus of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD Youth Caucus). The Youth Caucus is the interface used by the major group representing the interests of children and young people around the world, as mandated by chapter 25 of Agenda 21, to communicate the perspectives of youth and coordinate their participation in the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and to increase youth visibility and involvement within this context. The Youth Caucus is an international network

of 2,000 youth leaders from more than 1,000 youth organizations, many of which are national networks that bring together young people with a desire to contribute to the creation of a more sustainable world. The Youth Caucus facilitates the introduction of youth perspectives to the Commission on Sustainable Development, which is the highest-level forum within the United Nations system for sustainable development issues. In addition, the Youth Caucus fosters communication and the sharing of information between youth organizations that share an interest in sustainability (United Nations, CSD Youth Caucus, 2008).

Young people have also played a prominent role within the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, especially at its seventh session (April 2008), whose special theme was "Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges". The Indigenous Youth Caucus brought together 145 indigenous young people from more than a dozen countries. In one of its statements to the Forum at the seventh session, the Caucus highlighted the role indigenous youth could play in the fight against climate change but also expressed its concern over the limited participation of indigenous youth in decision-making processes at the local, national, and international levels (see box IV.2).

## Box IV.2

### Mainstreaming indigenous peoples' issues in international development assistance programmes and funds dedicated to addressing climate change

Indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous youth, feel that they have been largely excluded from discussions on climate change at all levels. Indigenous youth have much to contribute and want the international community to recognize that their people offer unique perspectives and traditional knowledge that can be used in the development of mitigation and adaptation strategies. The involvement of indigenous youth as full and effective partners will be important to the suc-

cess of global climate change mitigation efforts. Prioritizing programmes aimed at increasing climate change awareness among indigenous youth through education and training would greatly enhance their capacity to participate in decision-making processes. Such efforts could also include the strengthening of networks through which indigenous youth might share their perspectives and experiences with their counterparts in other areas of the world.

Paragraph 7 of the Anchorage Declaration, issued on 24 April 2009 at the conclusion of the Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change, reads as follows: "We call for adequate and direct funding in developed and developing States ... to enable Indigenous Peoples' full and effective participation in all climate processes, including adaptation, mitigation, monitoring and transfer of appropriate technologies in order to foster our empowerment, capacity-building, and education. We strongly urge relevant United Nations bodies to facilitate and fund the participation, education, and capacity-building of Indigenous youth and women to ensure engagement in all international and national processes related to climate change."

**Source:** Anchorage Declaration (2009).

Many of the other United Nations organizations that deal with youth issues have identified climate change as a key concern and have made it the focus of various initiatives. For example, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in partnership with UNEP, has developed Unite for Climate, a social networking tool that serves as a platform for youth exchange and mobilization for action on climate change. Unite for Climate also enables UNICEF and other United Nations agencies to communicate with youth. The group's software is designed to work in areas with connectivity or bandwidth limitations and to accommodate varying skill levels among users, thereby maximizing participation.

UNEP is working in countries around the world to promote youth involvement in combating climate change. In February 2003 the Programme's Governing Council adopted the Tunza Youth Strategy, a long-term approach to engaging young people in the work of UNEP and supporting their participation in environmental activities and decision-making. Through Tunza, UNEP facilitates youth participation in global and regional environmental negotiations. Initiatives and activities, including the involvement of youth in the UNEP Governing Council sessions, are preceded by a Tunza youth retreat to enable youth leaders to review the issues being discussed and agree on their contributions to these discussions. The Tunza International Youth Conference, held every two years, is one of the key platforms for cooperation and interaction between UNEP and its youth partners.

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

As noted in chapter I of the present *Report*, the annual COP sessions constitute the principal forum for Governments to discuss climate change mitigation and adaptation policies as well as national commitments to reduce GHG emissions, so youth involvement in this process is especially critical. The youth presence at COP sessions has gradually gained strength and focus. What was once a relatively loose configuration of participants—generally small numbers of college students and young professionals from developed countries—has evolved into more unified and coordinated youth contingents; hundreds attended COP 14 in Poznan, Poland, in 2008, and more than a thousand participated in COP 15 in Copenhagen.

Young people have been involved in climate change activities for some time. However, it was not until the year 2000, at COP 6 in The Hague, that a youth conference was organized and a youth declaration was prepared. Since then, each COP session has incorporated a youth event, and young people have actively sought official recognition from the Conference. In 2004, at COP 10 in Buenos Aires,

youth participants issued a formal declaration that begins as follows: “Youth participation in the COPs of the UNFCCC, as in many other international, national and local decision-making processes, is scarce and disarticulated. However, the decisions being taken significantly affect our life at present and in the future” (Youth: Protagonists, Not Spectators, 2004). The following year, more than a hundred youth from 24 countries attended the International Youth Summit at COP 11 in Canada, articulating their shared vision in a youth declaration entitled “Our Climate, Our Challenge, Our Future”. This document included a set of demands that focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation policy requirements. The Declaration also reiterated the need for a “permanent, funded youth constituency to be included in the international climate change negotiation process” by the time the COP met at its next session. Over the past several years the participation of youth, including individuals sponsored by Governments and NGOs, has continued to grow. Young people have become increasingly involved in Conference activities, participating in media events, meeting with Government delegations, and expanding the global youth climate change network while continuing to lobby for official status at the COP sessions.

Some of the more recent COP sessions drew over 500 youth delegates from more than 50 nations. In Bali in 2007 and in Poznan in 2008, the young delegates were given the opportunity to make formal statements to the Conference of the Parties on behalf of youth around the world. Because large numbers of youth were in attendance, it was possible to stage large-scale theatrical activities to drive home environmental messages and attract world media attention. The increasing size of the youth contingent prompted the development of strategies for the establishment of an internal secretariat and other governance structures to manage and coordinate the participation and activism of youth delegations (Gracey, 2008).

COP 15, held in Copenhagen in December 2009, attracted more than a thousand young people from over 100 countries. A special youth event, Young and Future Generations Day, was held to showcase different youth activities and draw the delegates’ attention to the efforts being made by young people to address climate change. The youth day encompassed more than 40 events, including a high-level side

event in the form of an intergenerational inquiry on climate change solutions, as well as other side events focusing on the role of education in relation to the climate crisis, forest protection, intergenerational equity, and agriculture. Attendees of all ages showed support for the youth day initiatives by wearing orange clothing.

The youth attending COP 15 called for fair, ambitious, and binding commitments from Governments to prevent catastrophic climate change and ensure the survival of present and future generations (see box IV.3). The young participants voiced their support for those countries that made the most progressive demands and put the most challenging targets on the table. “It’s late, but not too late!” was the message conveyed by young people (Howe, 2009). The collective demands put forward by youth in Copenhagen included the following:

- Ensure climate justice;
- Limit the global temperature increase to 1.5° C;
- Reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to 350 parts per million or less;
- Commit developed countries to allocating at least 5 per cent of their gross domestic product to finance adaptation measures by 2020;
- Reduce the emissions of developed countries to at least 45 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 (UNFCCC Youth Constituency, 2009b);
- Reduce the emissions of developed countries to at least 80 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050.

### Box IV.3

#### Youth voices at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15)

“I came as a part of the Pacific youth delegation, but here I united with the Caribbean, the Maldivian, and the International Youth Climate Movement as a whole, calling out with one united voice for only 1.5 degrees of temperature rise and 350 ppm of carbon



concentration in the atmosphere”, said Krishneil Narayan from Fiji. “If the youth can unite as one movement at COP 15, we expect the leaders deciding our future to do the same” (UNFCCC Youth Constituency, 2009b).

Prisca Randriamampihavana, a 20-year-old youth delegate from Madagascar, challenged the negotiators at COP 15: “We want to ask world leaders, how old will you be in 2050?” (UNFCCC Youth Constituency, 2009a).

COP 15 marked the first time youth were officially recognized as a formal constituency, though the group was assigned provisional status pending a final decision that would legitimize its position by COP 17 (see box IV.4). The youth constituency has already set up an internal system for democratic decision-making and information sharing and is very well-organized. It keeps the United Nations Climate Change secretariat informed of its progress and contributes to crucial discussions and decisions relating to youth participation and representation. The constituency plays an important role in capacity-building for a growing number of youth participants, with those who have been involved for some time helping newcomers understand how the process works through engagement in various advocacy activities. The youth constituency is also active on the political front, producing powerful messages for interventions at the plenary and building relationships with other stakeholders, including the chairs of negotiating bodies and regional groups as well as the other constituencies. All of this has been achieved in a remarkably short time by a group that appears to enjoy an extraordinary degree of unity, coherence, and cohesion.

#### Box IV.4

##### **The status of the youth constituency in activities carried out under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

The youth constituency, referred to as YOUNGO, was assigned provisional

status during the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties and will likely be granted permanent status at COP 17. This unprecedented coalition of participating youth organizations acts as a single entity with a unified voice during official negotiations. As a recognized constituency, young people are given a speaking slot at the high-level segment of COP sessions and can make statements during the plenary. They are also able to cooperate more closely with the United Nations Climate Change secretariat, helping to organize meeting logistics and coordinate fundraising to increase the participation of young people, especially youth from the global south. Conference support for youth involvement is already in evidence; generous funding from the Government of the Netherlands enabled 50 youth from the global south to attend COP 15 in December 2009.

The recognition and support of the youth constituency is in line with the provisions of article 6 of the Framework Convention, which calls for an increase in education, training, and public awareness on climate change issues.

**Source:** UNFCCC YOUNGO Wiki Portal (n.d.), YOUNGO constituency FAQ.

Growing numbers of young people are participating in United Nations efforts to combat climate change, seeking to influence the global policy agenda through more organized environmental activism and lobbying to promote sustainable development. More youth than ever before are attending international meetings, making their voices heard as they demand that Governments and policymakers undertake the commitments necessary to tackle climate change and ensure global sustainability. Unfortunately, while their ideas, concerns, initiatives, and calls for action are being acknowledged, youth are rarely given the consideration they deserve—or the opportunity to participate meaningfully—in the formulation of climate change policy.

The section below takes a closer look at the various levels of youth participation, provides examples of youth involvement in climate change initiatives at each of these levels, and considers what needs to be done to ensure that youth play a more active role in decision-making.

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION: CLIMBING THE LADDER TOWARDS GENUINE EMPOWERMENT

Young people across the globe have been at the forefront of efforts to respond to climate change. However, they have fought a protracted uphill battle to ensure that their voices are not just heard, but heeded. Although youth are allowed to participate in many of the higher-level policy processes, consultations, and activities, they often remain on the periphery, excluded from decision-making. Young people want to be involved and, given their stake in the future, should be involved in shaping climate change policies. Youth participation is critically important and needs to be given the recognition it deserves, as it benefits not only young people themselves, but also society as a whole (Biffi, 2008).

Significant awareness-raising efforts have been undertaken to ensure that young people are informed about the causes and consequences of climate change. Such efforts are important in that they provide a solid knowledge base and in some cases facilitate the development of targeted skills, but they essentially constitute a one-way process that contributes only minimally to building capacities for responding to climate change through meaningful engagement. When young people are empowered to collaborate in setting the agenda for change and shaping policy, they become full partners in action, strengthening the community's capacity to make a difference.

### The ladder of participation

Youth involvement in climate change initiatives may be examined in terms of levels of empowerment, represented as a “ladder of participation” (International Association for Public Participation, 2007). The lowest rungs

on the ladder sometimes constitute what may be termed pseudo-participation (Hart, 1992), where young people serve as window dressing, their involvement is essentially tokenistic, or they are manipulated into arriving at predetermined outcomes. The middle and higher rungs, however, represent a progression towards genuine empowerment and include the following:

1. Informing and educating young people;
2. Gathering information from young people;
3. Consulting with young people;
4. Involving young people;
5. Establishing collaborative partnerships with young people.

Providing young people with information and education on climate change establishes a firm foundation for environmental advocacy. On this first rung of the ladder, however, youth are offered few, if any, opportunities to influence policy decisions. Involvement at this level is usually limited to exchanging ideas and building relationships. In some instances, youth are recruited to help coordinate information sessions or to serve as peer educators.

On the second rung of the ladder, information is collected from young people who care about the environment and want to share their perspectives. At this level of participation youth are heard, but those in positions of authority make no commitment to acting in ways that give the youth voice any force.

The third rung is consulting with youth. This level constitutes a potential tipping point, as it is here that the balance may begin to shift towards meaningful involvement and genuine empowerment. Consultation entails the mutual exchange of information and allows for the possibility that the input of young people might have an impact on the direction policy takes or on the content of programmes being developed.

By the time the fourth rung is reached, the involvement of youth is being actively sought. Young people are given the opportunity to help set the agenda, contribute to deliberations, or otherwise influence the course of events.

At the fifth rung—the highest level—youth are engaged in collaborative partnerships. In such settings, young people are empowered to

share in managing the decision-making process, which includes identifying solutions and reaching agreement as to how the solutions generated will be implemented.

At each of the levels of participation represented by the rungs of the ladder, actions initiated by youth improve their prospects for exerting genuine influence. Every level constitutes a necessary step to the top but is also important in itself. Participation on the lower rungs often leads to action further up the ladder and to enhanced empowerment; however, even those young people whose involvement remains on the lower rungs may contribute to an initiative's success.

In general, the key principles of effective and authentic participation are clarity of intent (the purpose is understood by all involved); inclusiveness (participants are diverse and include those not often heard); participativeness (opportunities are available for two-way exchange, mutual learning, and relationship-building); and the scope to influence (the potential exists to bring about change in some way or to some degree).

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES AROUND THE WORLD

Youth initiatives focusing on climate change have a broad range of entry points, and there are examples from all over that show how youth have been involved in mitigation and adaptation efforts. The youth activities highlighted in the sections below constitute a representative sample of the types of advocacy in which young people are currently engaged. Most of the examples derive from contributions submitted by youth and youth-led organizations in response to a call for inputs to the present *World Youth Report*. They are not linked to specific rungs on the ladder of participation but instead reflect the gradual progression from awareness-raising to active collaboration. The examples in this chapter are illustrative and do not comprise a comprehensive catalogue of youth initiatives. The seeming predominance of developed country activities in the sections to come is a reflection of the availability of relevant informa-

tion and inputs; it is unclear at this point whether youth involvement in climate change initiatives is more prevalent in developed countries or whether youth in developed countries are simply more likely to report on their activities. It is also possible that many youth initiatives in developing countries are subsumed under another heading—such as disaster planning or relief—and are therefore not readily identifiable as relating to climate change.

## INFORMING AND EDUCATING YOUTH

Before young people can participate effectively in mitigation and adaptation activities, they must learn about both climate change and successful advocacy. Increased content knowledge is essential, but young people also need to know how to interpret data and assess risks, probabilities, and opportunities. It might appear that participation at this level is limited to one-way, top-down communication in which “experts” tell young people what they think they should know, contributing little to their empowerment. However, there are many examples (including those highlighted below) of youth actively and successfully educating each other in formal, informal, and non-formal contexts. Qualitative evaluations of peer education in other areas have shown that young people appreciate and are positively influenced by well-designed and properly supervised peer-led instruction. Youth serving as peer educators have the opportunity to improve their own knowledge and skills and generally find the experience both challenging and rewarding. In many instances peer educators have been shown to be more effective than adults in establishing norms and changing attitudes (United Nations Children's Fund, 2009).

### International

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2009a) include 186 member National Societies, many of which sponsor dynamic youth volunteer programmes. Initiatives focused on raising awareness about climate change include the following:

#### COLOMBIA

Youth-led community-based approaches to raising awareness about climate change have included the production of dramas and puppet shows and the devel-





opment of informational materials for children. Hundreds of volunteers have been trained, and thousands within the community have participated in local forums or in national conferences or meetings. Many have also benefited from micro-projects relating to climate change.

#### **GUATEMALA**

Students planted trees and put on a hand-made-puppet show to inform audiences about climate change and reducing the risk of landslides.

#### **MALAWI**

Young people participated in a video production on the effects of climate change.

#### **PAKISTAN**

Youth are educating other youth about climate change through drama.

#### **CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES**

The Kick the Carbon Habit Education Campaign was initiated by UNEP to empower and educate youth and the general public in the area of environmental responsibility. Youth leaders and ground teams are recruited to host educational events focusing on climate change issues, where participants are provided with relevant information and learn concrete ways to reduce their carbon footprint and address climate change. Twenty young people spearhead the Campaign. (Kick the Carbon Habit Youth Network, n.d.)

#### **FIJI**

The Fiji Red Cross Society is developing a youth group curriculum on disaster awareness that will include a segment on climate change (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009a).

## NEW ZEALAND

Enviroschools is a national initiative that takes a whole-school approach to education for a sustainable future. The programme encourages creative thinking and the acknowledgement of others' perspectives and seeks to bring about long-term behavioural change by helping students think critically about the long-term impact of their attitudes, values, and lifestyle choices (Enviroschools Foundation, n.d.).

## SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Honiara Youth and Climate Change Forum, held in November 2008, brought young people from the Solomon Islands together with an elder to learn about climate change through discussion and fieldwork. Participants concluded the event with the development of personal and group action plans (Jionisi and Owens, n.d.). The Solomon Islands Red Cross Society, one of the main organizers of the Forum, began engaging youth in a climate change programme in 2007. Initiatives have included school awareness programmes, village assessments, radio quizzes, advocacy activities, and the building of youth networks. Young people are involved both as participants and as volunteers (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009a).

## YOUNG PEOPLE SHARING INFORMATION AND BUILDING CAPACITY

Young people have come together in numerous forums around the world to share information and perspectives on climate change. In the process, they have strengthened their social capacity to respond to the challenges associated with this issue. The distinction between informing/educating and information-sharing/capacity-building is not always clear, but it may be argued that the latter is situated slightly higher on the ladder of participation because it entails active learning, sharing, and developing. Capacity-building involves raising awareness, but it also encompasses building analytical skills and enhancing decision-making abilities. These outcomes can be achieved through different approaches, including training, formal

education, seminars and workshops, and networking. Many of the examples of youth participation that appear elsewhere in this chapter incorporate elements of capacity-building. However, those highlighted below are mainly awareness-raising activities. Most appear to be isolated events; it has been suggested that the effectiveness of such activities might be enhanced if they were embedded in long-term programmes that integrated a number of capacity-building approaches (United Nations Environment Programme, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, Economics and Trade Branch, 2006).

## INDIA

In August 2008, the Indian Youth Summit on Climate Change brought together young people from India and abroad to share views and establish collaborative partnerships. The Summit included keynote speakers and presentations from experts and organizations working with climate change, youth presentations and the exchange of ideas among young people, an international youth panel on climate change, human art formation, and a film festival. One major outcome was a youth declaration that included individual commitments and a collective pledge to work towards a better future in India, together with a strong statement on the importance of youth engagement in policy-making on climate change at all levels (Indian Youth Summit on Climate Change, 2008).

## TUVALU

Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction programmes led by the Red Cross Society have engaged youth in workshops on disaster risk assessment and response, including the production of a drama about flooding events that have occurred. This has prompted some young people to initiate similar activities in their own communities. The two programmes have also involved youth in planting pandanus trees and cleaning up the shoreline. Youth unemployment is high in Tuvalu, and while such programmes do not provide any monetary compensation, they do offer youth an opportunity to engage in productive work that benefits their communities. Through the Red Cross Society, youth have also participated in school

programmes on climate change and in a national poster design competition focusing on this issue. (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009b)

### UNITED KINGDOM

You, Me, and the Climate, an initiative of The National Trust, provides 16- to 19-year-old “climateers” with the organizational, communication, and leadership skills they need to become community advocates and get people in their area thinking about climate change and its consequences. The emphasis is not only on youth taking action, but on young people working together to give their actions force at the national and international levels through joint activities, coordinated media campaigns, and the use of the Web and other new media. (You, Me, and the Climate [YOMAC], n.d.).

## YOUTH APPLYING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

About 1.8 billion people use the Internet on a regular basis for their work, leisure activities, and general living needs (Internet World Stats, n.d.). Ever-expanding communication networks are connecting people, organizations, and nations in ways that are unprecedented, with enormous potential for enhancing civic participation—including involvement in climate change initiatives. Global Internet usage remains very uneven, however. Although it has grown exponentially in developing countries, penetration rates are still relatively low—8.7 per cent in Africa, 20.1 per cent in Asia, and 28.8 per cent in the Middle East, compared with 76.2 per cent in North America (Internet World Stats, n.d.). Moreover, the global digital divide (the gap between those who have Internet access and those who lack access or the ability to use current technologies) is growing wider.

In the initiatives reviewed involving youth participation in climate change activities, especially in the developed world, computers and the Internet appear to be central to bringing young people together for dialogue and action. Climate change is a global challenge, and the Internet has facilitated the development of worldwide networks, collaborative partner-

ships, and youth-led discussion forums. Where Internet access is limited, other audio-visual and telecommunications technologies have been utilized to engage young people in creative new ways.

### International

Make the Link, Be the Change uses a multilingual website and videoconferencing to develop climate change awareness among students. Participants learn about local environmental consequences, contributing factors, behaviour change, and partnerships using shared lesson plans. This is complemented by out-of-school work including essay writing, drawing, photography, and sculpture representing the impact of climate change. Some of the works created have been displayed at the World Museum Liverpool and at COP 15 as part of the Children in a Changing Climate display. Eighty schools in twelve countries are involved (Plan International, 2009).

### CANADA

TakingITGlobal uses information and communication technologies to provide opportunities for learning, capacity-building, self-development, and cross-cultural awareness. One of the aims of the organization is to increase recognition of the important role youth can play in decision-making processes. The TakingITGlobal website includes a page devoted to introducing youth to climate change issues and offers a downloadable version of the Climate Change Youth Guide to Action. A Web platform is made available to users interested in starting, running, and managing their own initiatives. (TakingITGlobal, n.d.).

### INDIA

In February 2009, the Indian Youth Climate Network organized an electric car caravan that stretched from Chennai to Delhi—the longest such procession ever attempted. As the participants travelled, they reported on local innovative solutions to climate change, conducted numerous youth climate leadership training sessions, and engaged young people in brainstorming sessions. The stories they collected were written and disseminated in ways that appealed to youth, with many

appearing as short movies on YouTube. The aim of the project was to show the world that India was doing something about climate change. (Indian Youth Climate Network, n.d.).

### INDONESIA

Children from a flood-prone informal settlement in Jakarta partnered in the production of a participatory video on climate change, and youth volunteers continue to use the video (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009a).

### MALAWI

A university student intern produced a five-minute participatory video on climate change in collaboration with the Malawi Red Cross Society, engaging fifteen young people in the process (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009a).

### NIGERIA

The African Radio Drama Association's climate change project is a 26-episode radio production aimed at improving the capacity of smallholder farmers to respond to climate change. The important role of youth and women in sustainable agriculture is highlighted. (African Radio Drama Association, n.d.).

### NORWAY

NUFF Global held an international youth film festival on climate change in 2007. In their productions, the enthusiastic young filmmakers share stories featuring challenges that have arisen as a result of climate change. Screened at the United Nations Climate Change conferences in Bali in 2007 and in Poznan in 2008, many of the films have garnered international attention. (NUFF Global, n.d.).

### UNITED STATES

Fired Up Media reports from the front lines of the youth climate movement and trains climate change activists through an online organizing wiki. The network is harnessing dynamic advances in digital communications and other new media, creative social entrepreneurship, and ex-

isting youth media on and off campus to build a revolutionary media network. The aim is to empower the global youth climate movement to address the challenge of climate change in the most effective way possible. Youth-produced stories and short videos are featured on the website. (Fired Up Media, n.d.).

## YOUTH GATHERING AND ANALYSING INFORMATION

The collection of local data on social indicators and the physical environment, the creation of databases, descriptions of initiatives, and benchmarking studies provide a deeper understanding of the area-specific effects of climate change and also contribute to building knowledge and skills that can increase local adaptive capacity. Young people around the world have both led and participated in data-gathering initiatives that have bolstered climate change research and strengthened local resilience to the consequences of climate change.

### International

Our Task, an international youth network involved in promoting awareness of global sustainable development issues, works with mentors in analysing, assessing, and summarizing relevant trends, models, and strategies to produce the *Youth Earth Plan*, an annual publication that “presents ... the thinking of young adults on the large-scale changes needed if youth—and all forms of life—are to reach 2100 safely”. Forty young adults from fifteen countries are involved. (Our Task, 2008).

### CHINA

The China Youth Climate Action Network comprises more than a hundred universities, providing a platform for sharing solutions and taking action to combat climate change. The Network is especially active in research and development relating to campus sustainability. Core projects include a survey on youth awareness, a green campus initiative that includes the collection of data on campus GHG emissions and their impact, the maintenance of a university energy consumption database, and the development and dissemination of learning materials to increase awareness among youth. The Network



recently produced the *China Youth Climate Change Guidebook*, which is being used on university campuses to promote student awareness and activism. One of the main goals of the Network is to reduce emissions by 20 per cent on 40 pilot campuses. (China Youth Climate Action Network, 2008).

### MONGOLIA

Dynamics of Biodiversity Loss and Permafrost Melt in Lake Hövsgöl National Park, a World Bank/Global Environment Facility project, hired 23 young graduate and post-graduate researchers to help investigate the effects of localized climate variability on permafrost. Working with national mentors and international academics, the young researchers were offered invaluable learning opportunities in areas such as biostatistics, decomposition and ecology of local plants, meteorology, and permafrost studies. (Academy of Natural Sciences, n.d.).

### NEPAL

Children in a Changing Climate is a global collaborative programme that undertakes research, advocacy, and education within an action-research framework in partnership with other research and development organizations. The programme has several areas of focus, including gathering and assembling children's perspectives, identifying "child champions" to promote the adoption of environmentally responsible policies at the national and international levels, developing and sharing learning tools, inspiring child-led action through online forums and international networks, and sharing stories about how children are taking action on climate change. (Guatam and Oswald, 2008).

## YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN CAMPAIGNING, LOBBYING, AND ADVOCACY

Youth organizations engaged in campaigning, lobbying, advocacy, and networking represent the most prevalent and possibly the strongest form of youth involvement in the climate change movement. These organizations employ a variety of strategies to achieve their

objectives. Some focus on encouraging young environmental advocates to take the first steps towards action, while others work directly with Government entities to facilitate the integration of green values at the State level. A number of youth organizations concentrate on a particular area, such as addressing legal challenges. A growing number are engaging in Internet activism together with direct action in order to maximize the impact of their efforts and to achieve the critical mass needed to make their voices heard.

### International

Established by Greenpeace International in 2003, Solar Generation is a network of young people from 15 countries engaging in climate change advocacy and activism. (Greenpeace, n.d.).

### CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Young people on high school and college campuses across Canada and the United States have joined the Campus Climate Challenge to demand 100 per cent clean energy policies at their institutions. More than 30 youth organizations and 600 campuses are involved. (Campus Climate Challenge, n.d.).

### INDIA

The Indian Youth Climate Network is a coalition of Indian youth and youth-oriented organizations concerned about climate change. The Network has launched, supported, or participated in a wide range of initiatives, including an agents-of-change programme that prepares Indian youth delegations for participation in United Nations climate change negotiations; a rural clean energy project; a campus climate challenge; a climate leaders programme that provides youth with the leadership skills they need to initiate grassroots action in their own communities; and a climate solutions project that includes a website, outreach activities, and an engagement strategy to promote existing solutions to climate change. In recent years the Network has organized a number of Indian youth summits and participated in various youth festivals. (Indian Youth Climate Network, n.d.).



## UNITED STATES

In February 2009, 12,000 young people from across the United States converged on Washington, D.C., to demand bold, comprehensive, and immediate action on climate change at the national level. The aim was to persuade the new Obama Administration to reclaim the future of youth through the implementation of ambitious climate and clean energy policies. Power Shift '09 built on the momentum generated by the Power Vote campaign, which was initiated by the Energy Action Coalition to mobilize 1 million young "climate voters" and make the global climate crisis a key issue in the 2008 election. (Power Shift, n.d.).

## YOUTH ENGAGING IN CONSULTATION

The international frameworks and initiatives described previously have created numerous opportunities for young people to have their say. Similarly, several Governments and international agencies have set up youth advisory councils and other consultative initiatives aimed at eliciting the views of youth on climate change; some of these are highlighted below. Acknowledging the need for dialogue is a step in the right direction, but the extent to which such consultations have resulted in meaningful youth participation is not yet clear. Genuine engagement requires that young people be given the space and opportunity to express their views and that organizations make a commitment to respond to their concerns.

### International

A concept and issues paper entitled "Towards a strategic framework on climate change and development for the World Bank Group" was discussed at a youth consultation event to give young people an opportunity to share their input (World Bank, 2008b).

## AFRICA AND EUROPE

In the months leading up to the 2007 Africa-Europe Youth Summit, consultations were held with young people from Africa and Europe to obtain their input on global issues, including climate change. (EuroAfrica.net, n.d.).

## UNITED KINGDOM

The Department for International Development held a Youth Consultation event on 20 March 2009, soliciting the views of youth on climate change and the economic crisis to inform policy-making by the Department. Fifty young people between the ages of 16 and 24 were involved (United Kingdom, Department for International Development, 2009).

## YOUTH TAKING THE INITIATIVE

Young individuals and youth organizations around the world are actively initiating responses to climate change. Young people are taking personal and social responsibility for protecting the world they live in, engaging in stewardship and advocacy aimed at improving the resilience of their local environment and strengthening the relationship between people and their natural surroundings.

## GHANA

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA-Ghana) is engaged in a project to curb deforestation and environmental degradation, which is adversely affecting livelihoods. The project includes a tree-planting programme focusing on women farmers, who traditionally cannot own land, and a youth-run seedling nursery. (World Alliance of YMCAs, n.d.).

## INDIA

The Children International Youth Council in India secured a grant to address climate change in a rural area near Kolkata. The initiative included reforestation activities, efforts to discourage fossil fuel use, and a community awareness programme. Some 1,500 trees were planted by more than 1,000 teenagers and their families. (Children International, n.d.).

## REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Korean students from all over the country participated in the CO2 Zero Eco Campus Competitions, submitting climate-friendly initiatives they had designed. The winners were provided with funding for their projects. (HyunJin, n.d.).



## MADAGASCAR

Girl Guides attend camps where they are trained as community educators to help rural women respond to the challenges of climate change through improved agricultural practices (World Association Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, n.d.).

## MEXICO

Manos a la Tierra is a youth-led alliance that has been involved in reforestation activities since 2007. With over 6,000 volunteers, the alliance has planted more than 70,000 trees and has raised awareness about climate change and the importance of water and biodiversity in the Mexico City metropolitan area. (Manos a la Tierra, n.d.).

## SAMOA

Youth affiliated with the Samoa Red Cross Society produced a community-based drama with a climate change theme. Working together with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, they were also involved in community-based vulnerability and capacity assessments and in the implementation of action plans they had designed. (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009a).

## UNITED KINGDOM

Student Switch Off is an energy-saving initiative in which university residence halls compete to reduce their energy usage. Eleven universities are currently involved. (Student Switch Off, n.d.).

## UNITED STATES

The Climate Change Action Club was initiated by two students at Brookline High School in Massachusetts. They set up a “carbon café” where town residents could obtain information on climate change and pledge to take action to reduce their carbon footprint. (Ullman, 2009).

## UNITED STATES

The Clinton Global Initiative University, established in 2007, brings young people together to discuss urgent social and environmental problems and to undertake Commitments to Action. Since 2008, more than 3,000 commitments have been made by students, universities, and youth organizations. For example, students from

Columbia University’s Engineers without Borders Uganda Programme have pledged to install a multifunctional energy platform in one farm cooperative in Uganda using jatropha oil as a sustainable fuel source. Several other campuses in the United States have made commitments to infuse climate change awareness and sustainability into campus culture. (Clinton Global Initiative, Commitments Department, 2009).

## YOUTH PARTICIPATING IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Policy development constitutes an institutionalized form of influence that typically has a broader reach than one-time initiatives. Because policies shape budgets, decisions, and actions at the local, national, and international levels, they often have a significant public impact. Over the past few decades young people have issued repeated demands for a greater say in climate change policy development and decision-making but have largely been ignored. There are some notable exceptions, however, where young people have been empowered to help develop climate change policies at different levels. In some instances, young people have initiated these efforts, while in others, governing organizations have facilitated youth involvement. Both avenues have led to the same outcome: youth are finally beginning to break through the power barrier and collaborate in shaping the policies that will affect them in the years to come.

## EUROPE

On 15 November 2008, 470 young people participated—both virtually and in-person—in the first IDEAL-EU pan-European town meeting on climate change. The event, held simultaneously at three venues in France, Italy, and Spain, included a full day of discussion and debate focusing on the United Nations policy agenda on climate change. Key questions posed and addressed by youth at the meeting included the following: How can Europe reduce its use of fossil fuels? Why are renewable energies currently not widespread? What measures would be effective in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions? How can we reduce the consumption of energy? What could we change in our daily habits? What’s wrong

with the current model of socio-economic development? The participants were able to vote electronically on innovative proposals emanating from this brainstorming phase. (IDEAL-EU, n.d.).

### **LATIN AMERICA**

The International Student Initiative for Action on Climate Change provides young academics and professionals with the opportunity to contribute to the development of climate change mitigation policies aimed at protecting their region's tropical forests. The Initiative is built around a network of graduate students and young professionals in Latin America—with regional teams in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico—who focus on guiding and supporting the development of public policy that addresses the role of tropical forests as carbon sources and sinks. Young people are involved in multiple aspects of policy development, including conducting background research, engaging in policy dialogue, participating in seminars, and consulting with policy-makers, forest specialists, members of academia, and other students. The Initiative has had a genuine impact on policy in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. In Brazil, for example, the efforts of the regional team led to the development of new legislation making it more difficult for banks to finance illegal logging projects. (International Student Initiative for Action on Climate Change, n.d.).

### **NEPAL**

The Nepalese Youth for Climate Action coalition has opened discussions on climate change policy and has developed a draft policy document for stakeholder comment (Nepalese Youth for Climate Action, n.d.).

### **UNITED STATES**

SustainUS is a United States-based youth-led organization engaged in grassroots advocacy and education as well as policy advocacy and development relating to sustainability. In an effort to influence policy, SustainUS delegations work with Government entities, civil society groups, and other youth organizations. Since 2003, through its agents-of-change programme, SustainUS has sent youth delegations to several conferences and summits, including the COP sessions.

The organization's website includes a wiki for the development of policy positions. (SustainUS, n.d.).

## **YOUTH AS PARTNERS IN DECISION-MAKING**

Young people can make important contributions and have a significant impact on decision-making outcomes when they are given the opportunity to help frame the issues, develop alternatives, and identify solutions. Youth involvement at this level appears to be increasing but is still relatively rare. Even less frequently, final decisions are placed in the hands of young people and commitments are made to implement these decisions. In both instances, youth engage in collaborative and empowered decision-making.

### **EL SALVADOR**

In El Salvador, Plan International is actively involving children and young people in environmental resource management and disaster risk reduction. The country is highly vulnerable to disasters, and the risk is increasing with climate change. Disasters take a high toll on the population, and children and youth have traditionally been among those least able to defend themselves against the attendant threats. Plan International's work in this area has had a dual focus: raising awareness among children and youth and engaging them in the implementation of disaster risk management activities. The organization's efforts began with the establishment of school-based children's clubs in which students mapped disaster risks in their area and discussed what they could do in the event of a disaster. As the club participants have grown older, they have begun to take an active role in managing disaster risk in their areas and in lobbying the Government for change. In one project initiated by a youth club, for example, young people successfully lobbied to stop the quarrying of stone from a riverbed because it was increasing the flood risk. In this instance, youth took control of climate change adaptation in their community. (Plan International, n.d.).

### **UNITED STATES**

The New York University (NYU) Sustainability Initiative, launched in 2006, is a col-



laborative endeavour that brings together students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and neighbours of NYU to promote better environmental performance and a green culture on campus. The Initiative's advisory body is the Sustainability Task Force, whose 60 members represent key university constituencies and are involved in various working groups, outreach activities, and the administration of a "green grants" fund used to support projects led by NYU students, faculty, and staff. The various stakeholders have worked together to assess current practices and have created a prioritized green action plan for NYU. Overall, there is a balanced mixture of student-led and staff-led initiatives. Young people are running and participating in programmes and activities in areas as diverse as bicycle recycling, gardening, cooking, project management, and research. (New York University, n.d.).

## YOUTH MOBILIZING THEMSELVES: YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS

Although there is some general concern about youth disengagement, the commitment of young people to civic engagement remains strong. Young activists are effectively combining new advocacy approaches with the more traditional participatory structures of previous generations. They are increasingly developing informal, non-hierarchical ways to communicate and organize, using the Internet, mobile telephones, and other high-technology communication tools; however, membership in formal organizations remains critically important.

Young people are more likely to participate if their peers are involved as well. Youth-led organizations can provide a framework for young people to take action. Youth-led organizations around the world are having an impact on the climate change agenda and will continue to do so. Young people are proving that they constitute a formidable force when they come together under one banner for a specific cause—in this case, climate change.

Youth-led organizations may start out as isolated entities with a limited focus. Eventually they may form coalitions with similar groups,

broadening their reach. In recent years a number of youth coalitions have banded together under the umbrella of regional and global youth movements. The International Youth Climate Movement, for example, is a worldwide coalition of youth organizations working to inspire, empower, and mobilize members of the younger generation to take action on climate change. Regional networks that have joined the Movement include the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (see box IV.5), itself a coalition of more than two dozen youth organizations from across the country; the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, made up of 48 youth organizations; the China Youth Climate Action Network, which includes seven youth environmental organizations; the French Youth Coalition for Climate and Social Justice, a collective of 13 youth movements; the Indian Youth Climate Network; the Japan Youth Ecology League; the Malaysian Youth Climate Justice Network; South Asia Youth for Environment Education; and the UK Youth Climate Coalition. Other national, regional, and global coalitions and movements have been established that have the same goal as the International Youth Climate Movement. (International Youth Climate Movement, n.d.).

### Box IV.5

#### Youth climate campaigning "down under"

The 50,000-member Australian Youth Climate Coalition develops, supports, and oversees a number of initiatives. Recent activities in which the Coalition has been involved include Power Shift, an Australian youth climate conference held in July 2009; an ongoing Youth Climate Leadership Skills programme; a petition for the establishment of strong emissions targets; a green jobs programme; and a school-based programme to support advocacy. The Coalition has also sent youth delegations to the most recent sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (Australian Youth Climate Coalition, n.d.).

Between 14 and 21 September 2009 more than 37,000 young people →



participated in Youth Decide, Australia's first national youth climate vote and one of the world's largest-ever per capita mobilizations of young people on climate change. Youth Decide was organized by the Australian Youth Climate Coalition in partnership with World Vision Australia, bringing young people together to speak with a united voice to compel the Government of Australia to demonstrate the leadership required to secure an ambitious, fair, and binding global climate agreement at COP 15. A total of 330 youth-led voting events were set up to mobilize youth support. The overall results indicated that more than 90 per cent of voters wanted to see a commitment in Copenhagen to reduce emissions by at least 40 per cent, and an overwhelming 97.5 per cent of young people voted for emissions targets stronger than those currently proposed by the Government. (Youth Decide, n.d.).

International youth NGOs and regional youth platforms participating in the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO) have also been active in climate change initiatives around the globe. ICMYO is held at least once a year to strengthen regional and international cooperation among youth organizations and to coordinate political inputs to global youth policy processes. Between the meetings, the participating organizations maintain contact with one another and operate as an informal network. In order to ensure that the coalition is as representative and inclusive as possible, a special effort is made to solicit the participation of youth organizations in countries and regions that typically receive less attention. The goal is to ensure that the perspectives of all young people are integrated into global processes. (International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations, n.d.).

The European Youth Forum, or Youth Forum Jeunesse (YFJ), is one of the organizations participating in ICMYO. It is made up of about a hundred national youth councils and international youth NGOs that are federations of youth organizations in themselves. YFJ brings together tens of millions of young people from

all over Europe and is set up to represent their common interests and concerns. The Forum recently adopted a comprehensive position paper on climate change that calls for decisive action, focusing on adaptation, mitigation, financing, and governance. The paper also emphasizes the importance of supporting youth advocacy and of involving young people in decision-making and policy development processes. (European Youth Forum, 2008; Youth Forum Jeunesse, 2009).

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, another ICMYO participant, has worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNICEF in developing tools and resources for climate change education. Available materials include a guide for teachers and youth leaders on how to undertake climate change activities and initiatives, an educational booklet, a challenge badge, resource packs, and information on organizing drawing competitions. In addition, the Association is a partner organization in the Unite for Climate Web portal, an entry point for global youth action on climate change (see above). (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, n.d.).

As shown throughout this chapter, small NGOs around the world are playing a crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Unfortunately, their work is often not as well documented as that of the larger, better-funded NGOs. Greater attention must be focused on the successful initiatives undertaken by all types of organizations, regardless of their size or complexity, so that good practices can be identified and replicated.

## THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PROMOTING AND EFFECTING CHANGE

Young people can combat climate change not only as members of youth organizations, but also as individuals. Each of the world's 1.2 billion young women and men has an impact on the environment. Through the choices they make in their everyday lives, they contribute to the preservation or degradation of their natural surroundings.



Historically, the younger generation has promoted change and embraced innovative values. In many cases, youth have been the initiators of social movements that have given rise to cultural and social transformations (Maggi and others, 2001). While the young people of today constitute a major consumer group, many of them are dissatisfied with the consumer societies in which they live and are seeking alternative lifestyles. This could mean a drive for change.

The main constraints young people face in taking action include doubts about how and where to begin, limited confidence in their ability to make a difference, inadequate monetary resources, competing demands on their time, insufficient encouragement from peers, and a lack of political and community support. These are valid concerns, but they should not be perceived as insurmountable obstacles. The fact is that young people all over the world can realize their aspirations for a better world by introducing small changes in their daily lives, strengthening their commitment to action one step at a time. Although everyday measures to reduce

carbon emissions and protect the environment may seem insignificant, they can add up and make a real difference—especially when entire youth communities take part and young people are able not only to alter their own consumer behaviour but also to influence the consumption patterns of their peers and families.

Young people around the world are increasingly making small but important changes that represent essential steps in their transition to a more sustainable lifestyle. Youth can start right where they are, and many actually prefer this approach to organized action, promoting and implementing changes in their homes, social networks, and local communities. As noted in chapter III, consumption choices constitute a key area in which young people can exert a positive influence and make a real impact. As figure IV.1 shows, there are many different areas in which young individuals can take action to make their lifestyles greener and more sustainable. The suggestions included in the figure tend to be somewhat broad, but many of them can easily be adapted to local contexts.

Figure IV.1

## YOUTH ACTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

### AT HOME:

- Turning the lights off when leaving a room
- Installing compact fluorescent lighting (CFL)
- Unplugging idle electronic items
- Having several members of a household share televisions, computers, and other electronic items
- Wearing an extra layer of clothing to reduce the need for heating
- Reducing the temperature of the thermostat by a few degrees
- Opening windows to create a draft and reducing air conditioner (AC) use
- Using a ceiling fan to help circulate cool air
- Cleaning/replacing dirty AC filters to increase the efficiency of AC units
- Using more energy-efficient electronics and appliances
- Taking showers instead of baths to reduce water use
- Setting the water heater to 50° C (122° F) or lower
- Using eco-friendly cleaning products
- Reducing energy use by sharing a residence (not living alone)
- Installing water-saving taps and shower heads
- Using cold water when possible
- Line-drying clothes
- Running the dishwasher and washing machine only when they are full
- Taking the stairs rather than the elevator

### SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR:

- Saving rather than spending
- Buying long-lasting products
- Refraining from buying the newest version of a product if the current version is still functioning well
- Purchasing environmentally friendly products, including recycled goods and items that are easily recyclable and biodegradable
- Buying used or “vintage” clothing and furniture
- Learning more about the products one buys, including their carbon footprint
- Choosing eco-labelled and ethical-labelled goods and services
- Choosing goods made/distributed by manufacturers and dealers with clear environmental and ethical policies and related codes of conduct
- Not making any purchases for an entire day

### CIVIL ACTION:

- Sharing information on sustainable lifestyles with family and friends
- Planting a tree
- Conducting research on which products and lifestyle choices are eco-friendly
- Joining campaigns to improve manufacturing and employment practices

### TRANSPORTATION:

- Using public transportation, biking, skating, or walking
- Combining errands to avoid extra car trips
- Carpooling
- Renting a car from time to time rather than owning one
- Avoiding unnecessary drives
- Driving in a more fuel-efficient manner (for example, avoiding quick starts and stops and driving slowly)
- Driving a more fuel-efficient car
- Inflating a car's tires
- Turning a car off rather than idling
- Regularly changing a car's air filter

### TRAVEL:

- Travelling less to faraway places
- Engaging in local leisure activities
- If flying cannot be avoided, taking direct flights
- Avoiding overpacking: extra weight means more fuel burned and increased emissions
- Buying certified carbon offsets
- Exploring agro-tourism or eco-tourism
- Staying longer in one location
- Lodging with friends and relatives

## BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND THE WAY FORWARD

For young people to be successful in driving change they require a strong support system that includes parents, teachers, community and religious leaders, the Government, the private sector, the media, and civil society. Various studies have also found that for behaviour change to occur, the willingness or need to address environmental problems must be complemented by both opportunity (the availability of means) and ability (access to means) (Tukker and others, 2008).

Existing infrastructure and social systems are not always supportive of positive change. Many countries have still not introduced policies that are specifically designed to promote environmentally friendly lifestyles. Such supportive policies, together with forward-looking urban policies and development planning, can be effective in helping youth to take action. For example, improving access to communal services used by young people—including public transport, libraries, swimming pools, and community gardens or parks—is one important means of reducing the multiplication of goods and services associated with highly individualized consumption patterns.

Political and other systemic barriers may also exist that effectively preclude meaningful civic engagement among youth. Although youth involvement is widespread and the value of youth participation is internationally acknowledged, the idea that giving young people a role in society can lead to better policy outcomes is far from being universally accepted. The rights and decision-making capacities of young people often remain unrecognized, and their potential as a valuable resource is seldom realized. Even in countries that acknowledge the need to provide young people with opportunities to participate in the policy-making process, youth involvement tends to be highly circumscribed; the views of young people are sought, but they are not allowed to influence decision-making and therefore remain on the fringes of democratic processes. Such restrictions can undermine the potential of young people as agents of social change.

The gap between intent and reality in youth empowerment is not surprising because decision-making mechanisms are rarely set up to allow ordinary adult citizens, let alone young people, to participate in decision-making processes. Institutionalized collaborative decision-making is difficult to find at any level of governance. Consequently, young people—who are typically at a relative disadvantage in terms of power and influence—may find it impossible to secure a formal place at the decision-making table. Institutionalizing collaboration would require the establishment of a formal relationship in which mutual rights and responsibilities are legally defined and societal sanctions are imposed if such engagement fails to occur. Official recognition is essential, but true institutionalization will occur only when youth participation in decision-making becomes embedded within the system and is viewed as the norm. Unfortunately, young people are nowhere near achieving this level of empowerment.

## CONCLUSION

The world's 1.2 billion young people have made it abundantly clear that they want to be involved in the decisions impacting society and addressing climate change is no exception. Throughout the world, youth have developed creative ways to raise awareness, share information, build capacities, and work together on climate change mitigation and adaptation practices – often achieving impressive results through their own initiatives.

In recent years, young people are increasingly attending global gatherings on climate change to express their concerns and press Governments for action. However, they are often denied participation in decision-making processes where their unique perspectives and innovative ideas could be integrated toward more effective policies.

Overall, political progress on the climate change agenda has been stagnant as significant policy adjustments towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption have not been agreed upon. Delaying action imposes greater sacrificing on the part of youth populations and further strains socio-economic development. Circumstances such as these reverse progress and threaten the very base from which all societies prosper.

By and large, traditional economic growth patterns are environmentally unsustainable due, in part, to their heavy reliance upon the use of natural resources. Within the international community, consensus is emerging for a departure from current models. Enhancing development frameworks by integrating a Green Growth focus offers a pathway toward the transition to green economies including by addressing policy barriers.

In the residuum of the global financial and economic crisis arises an opportunity to bridge the gap from rhetoric to action. As policy-makers and economic managers, Governments are called upon to develop a global vision for a more equitable and greener future. Climate change poses a global threat and requires an inter-governmental response as a matter of urgency. However, commitments made at the international level should bear in mind varying national contexts. In order to provide the widest possible opportunity for universal implementation, national leadership must be able to translate global models into national strategies.

Broad-based partnerships – including Governments, the United Nations, the private sector, civil society and the scientific community – provide stakeholders with a platform to share knowledge and good practices. Partnerships can also diminish the marginalization of relevant points of view, including those of youth. Collective action of this nature is key to developing sound policies for thriving green economies.

While halting climate change and reversing its negative effects require steady political will and the implementation of a robust plan of action over the course of many decades, much can be done in the meantime to lay the groundwork for significant progress. With this knowledge and in the spirit of recognizing their positive contributions to society, young people should be encouraged and supported to take part in the universal endeavour to address climate change, including through meaningful participation in decision-making processes.



