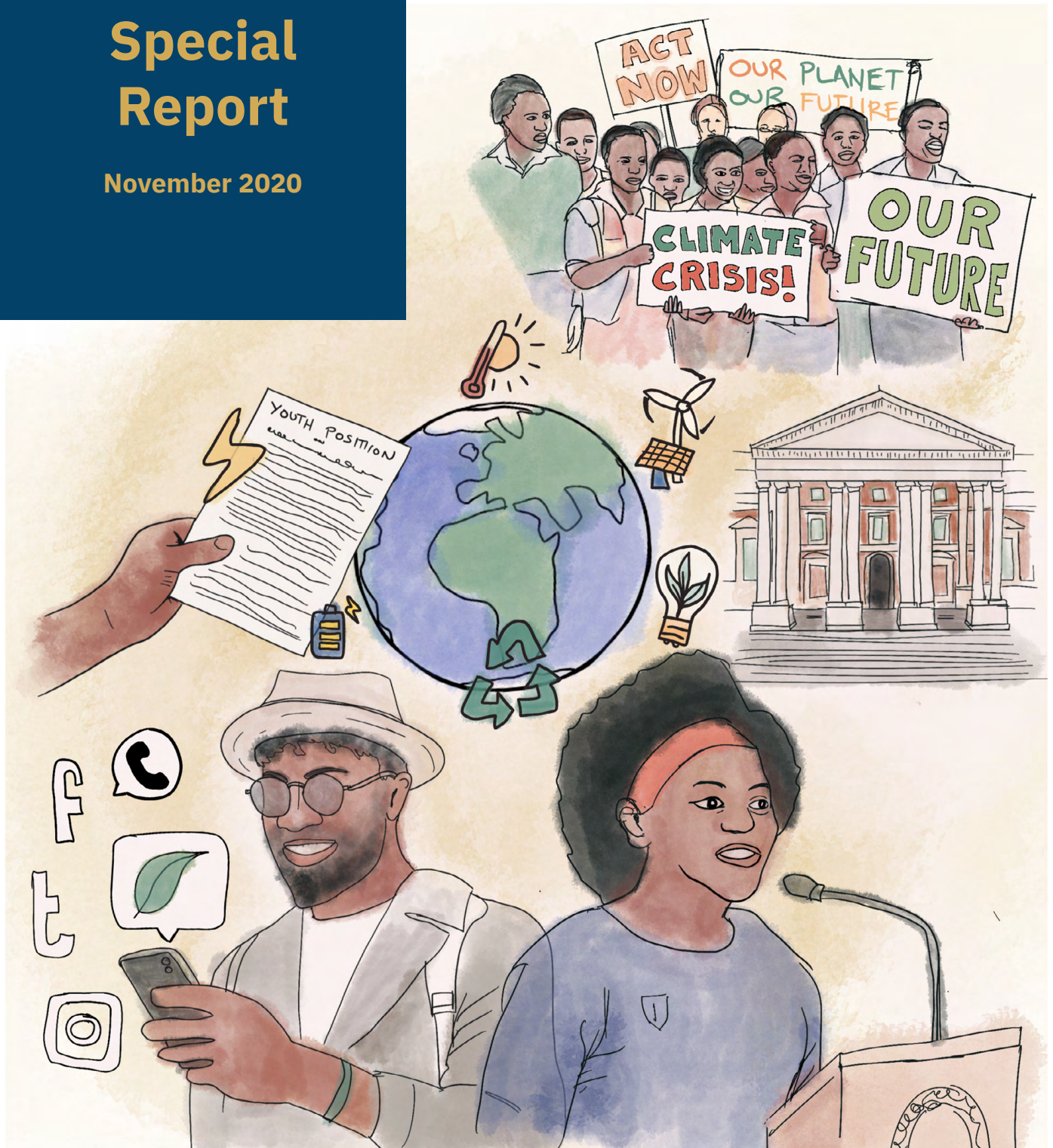


Special Report

November 2020



Youth Climate Advocacy

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Executive summary

Climate change is one of the most significant intergenerational equity challenges of our time. Young people – who currently represent over 50% of the global population – are the generation who will not only be most impacted by climate change, but who will also inherit the responsibility for addressing it. This key constituency, however, is often neglected in policy processes and the design of climate change response measures and initiatives. The question of youth agency is particularly acute in Africa, the region most vulnerable to climate impacts and also the region with the youngest population, with almost 60% of Africa's population under the age of 25.

In recent years, the voice of youth has become increasingly prominent in global responses to climate change injustice. Protest-oriented programmes, such as Fridays for Future, Earth Uprising and the Extinction Rebellion, have become part of broad social movements to enhance the voice of youth on climate change, address intergenerational climate justice and hold political leaders accountable for insufficient progress in addressing climate change. Youth voices have also become more prominent in formal climate negotiations and in national and global climate strategy formulation and implementation, while youth climate councils, advocacy networks and platforms have expanded in prominence and number. Young people are establishing networks in schools, universities and communities, taking action at local, national and international levels, and using social media, newsletters and a range of innovative communication strategies to better coordinate action and shape climate responses.

As this youth movement continues to grow, it is important to document emerging lessons, strategies and modalities of youth climate advocacy in Africa. Highlighting and sharing these lessons with policymakers, members of civil society and activists in the region can help to build an understanding of what intergenerational equity and meaningful participation look like in practice. It can also help inspire actors to adopt emerging good practice and ultimately support ever greater levels of effective youth climate advocacy. Such efforts can help to ensure that youth are recognised as powerful agents of change with a central role in achieving a climate resilient future.

'Action without vision is only passing time, vision without action is merely daydreaming, but vision with action can change the world'

Nelson Mandela

Abbreviations & acronyms

ACA	African Climate Alliance
AIMS	SIDS in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea
AU	African Union
AYICC	African Youth Initiative on Climate Change
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COP	Conference of the Parties
COY	Conference of Youth
CSO	Civil society organization
DEFF	South African Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
GHG	Greenhouse gas
HYPREP	Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project
JE	Joda's E-nfluence (Ethiopia)
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NYCC	Nigerian Youth Climate Coalition
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SAYCCC	South African Youth Centre for Climate Change
SBI	Subsidiary Body of Implementation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SeyCATT	Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SNYC	Seychelles National Youth Council
SYAH	SIDS Youth AIMS Hub
UN	United Nations
UNECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa

UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
WCPP	Western Cape Provincial Parliament (South Africa)
WESSA	Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
YNSD	Youth Network for Sustainable Development (Ethiopia)
YOUNGO	Youth NGOs
Youth@SAIIA	Youth Programmes at SAIIA
YPC	Youth Policy Committee (South Africa)

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About SAIIA

SAIIA is an independent, non-government think tank whose key strategic objectives are to make effective input into public policy, and to encourage wider and more informed debate on international affairs, with particular emphasis on African issues and concerns.

SAIIA'S special reports are fairly lengthy analytical papers, usually reflecting on and analysing the findings of field research.

Cover image

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Introduction: Youth climate leadership in Africa

Youth are drivers of change

Youth climate advocacy has been growing in momentum, both in terms of protest-oriented activities and increasing representation in policymaking and decision-making processes. Youth are becoming increasingly visible agents of change. Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg rose to global prominence in 2018 and has, for many, come to represent the more active engagement of youth on climate issues. Her protests triggered a series of climate strikes under the hashtag [#FridaysforFuture](#) and it is now estimated that more than 9.6 million people from 261 countries have participated in climate strikes. While Thunberg's celebrity paved the way for the climate strikes to scale up, her work rests on decades of climate and environmental activism by young people from all regions of the world.¹

Globally, indigenous activists such as Vanessa Gray², Nick Estes³, Hindou Ibrahim⁴ and many others have tirelessly fought to highlight issues related to environmental damage in their communities. Their campaigns have played an important role in shifting the climate movement toward the framework of climate and environmental justice, which acknowledges the intersections of colonialism, racialization, sexism, inequality, poverty and climate change.⁵ Young activists like Isra Hirsi⁶, Cricket Cheng⁷, Maya Menezes⁸ and others have continued to build justice movements and have helped politicise a new generation of climate activists, who understand that climate change has its roots in unsustainable and inequitable social, political and economic contexts.⁹ In Africa, too, youth advocacy is underpinned by the intersectionality of climate change and a range of other environmental, social and political concerns.

1 Joe Curnow and Anjali Helferty, 'A year of resistance: How youth protests shaped the discussion on climate change,' *The Conversation*, December 19, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/a-year-of-resistance-how-youth-protests-shaped-the-discussion-on-climate-change-129036>.

2 Vanessa Gray is a young Anishinaabe kwe from Aamjiwnaang First Nation, located in Canada's Chemical Valley. She has worked tirelessly with her community members to bring awareness to the health issues resulting from her reserve's toxic surroundings. In December 2015, Vanessa was arrested for shutting down Enbridge's Line 9 pipeline.

3 Nick Estes from the US led indigenous protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock.

4 Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim from the Mbororo pastoralist community in Chad, has spent a decade trying to get international policy on climate change to consider perspectives from indigenous communities like her own.

5 Curnow, "A year of resistance".

6 Isra Hirsi is a high school student from Minnesota, US. She is a climate and racial justice advocate and the Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of the US Youth Climate Strike. Driven by her identity as a black Muslim woman, Hirsi is an advocate for intersectionality and diversity within the climate justice movement.

7 Cricket Cheng, a fifth-year English and Geography student, and an organiser with Climate Justice Toronto, Canada. Cheng and colleagues have been focused on centering various intersectional struggles for the climate strike.

8 As a child of immigrants, Maya has found passion and purpose fighting for climate action and migrant justice in Toronto, Canada.

9 Curnow, "A year of resistance".

Decades of social movements, including the fight against apartheid, African liberation struggles and the Civil Rights Movement, have illustrated that when people feel marginalised they escalate the intensity of their advocacy tactics. In the coming years, it is expected that the climate movement will keep growing – it is therefore crucial that young people are integrated more effectively into decision-making and policy development processes in support of a sustainable, equitable, prosperous and climate resilient future.

‘Advocacy is about doing something to support, recommend, or implement actions linked to an idea or cause you care about. Advocacy is also about making voices heard, as often the ideas or practices we want to change affect the most vulnerable people in society. Advocacy uses this collective voice to defend and protect rights, or to support different initiatives or causes.’

[UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide]

Putting youth at the centre

There is an urgent need for the policies and decision-making processes of today to accommodate the realities of tomorrow – policy spaces and platforms need to make provision for consultative and deliberative processes that include and value the diverse views of young people. Governments need to make a conscious and concerted effort towards attaining generational equity.

Despite being disproportionately affected by climate change, young people in Africa are still largely excluded from formal policy and decision-making processes related to national, regional and global responses to climate change. Attempts to involve young people have

‘Young people and youth are at the centre of this movement because it is our future and that of our children that is at stake. The older generations have polluted our environment. But they have already lived their lives. So, it is us who will suffer the consequences unless we take action. It is us who have to say enough is enough. We need to stop repeating the mistakes the older generations committed and hold our governments accountable.’

[Hilda Nakabuye, [Ugandan youth climate advocate](#)]

often been tokenistic and have not provided youth with an opportunity to meaningfully engage as valuable stakeholders, allowing sufficient time and resources to properly prepare content, understand procedures and substantively contribute.

Young people have the right to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This principle has been affirmed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child¹⁰ and is also expressly affirmed in the [African Youth Charter](#) and [Agenda 2063](#). This principle also applies to climate change, as affirmed by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).¹¹ Climate change decision-making will shape the lives of young people far into the future and it is their right to be part of processes seeking to respond to this. Young people must be viewed as active agents and must be acknowledged for their critical role as the next generation of adults, central to shaping global responses to climate change.

'The creativity, energy and innovation of Africa's youth shall be the driving force behind the continent's political, social, cultural and economic transformation'

[African Union, [Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want](#)]

Currently, however, there is a gap. Young people often lack a deep understanding of the scientific knowledge around climate change, both in terms of general impacts and how these might play out in local contexts, and they often lack the capacity and access to engage effectively with policy and decision-making processes. In addition, there is often a disconnect between the work of scientists, researchers and technical experts, and the lived experiences of communities at a ground level. This relates to how the knowledge that researchers produce is received and utilised by the broader public, including youth, as well as the question of how research processes and research uptake can be enhanced by including youth perspectives. Decision-makers too are often distant from science and knowledge production processes.

By working with youth, researchers and decision-makers can build relevant capacity and strengthen understanding to address societal challenges. This would support young people in contributing to a climate-resilient society, while applying the democratic principles of equality and inclusiveness through their activities. Transformative leadership and youth participation play key roles in achieving national-level development targets, regional

10 UN General Assembly, Resolution 44/25, Convention on the Rights of the Child, A/RES/44/25 (Nov. 20, 1989), https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en.

11 UNFCCC, 'Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Eighteenth Session, Held in Doha from 26 November to 8 December 2012, Addendum, Part 2, Actions Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Eighteenth Session', FCCC/CP/2012/8/Add.2, 28 February 2013, <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2012/cop18/eng/08a02.pdf>.

goals as well as global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Young people are already leading

In Africa, climate activism and advocacy has been increasing and a number of young individuals are gaining global recognition for their contributions to climate change responses. Some examples of these African ecological champions are included below, although this is in no way an exhaustive list. There are many local climate champions that are not officially recognised, but that are contributing to change in their local environments.

- Elizabeth Wanjiru Wathuti, founder of the Green Generation Initiative in Kenya,¹² has been working to motivate and inspire young people in areas of climate action and environmental health through greening schools and promoting a culture of tree planting. The Green Generation Initiative has supported the planting of over 30,000 trees in Kenya. At UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 25 in 2019, Elizabeth was awarded the Green Climate Fund's Green Champion's Award for Youth activism.¹³
- South African climate activist Ayakha Melithafa joined Swedish striker Greta Thunberg and 14 other young people in the submission of a ground-breaking legal complaint about climate change with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁴ She is also calling for a moratorium on the extraction of coal, oil and gas in South Africa. Melithafa is in Grade 12 at the Centre of Science and Technology in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. She is a recruitment officer and spokesperson for the African Climate Alliance¹⁵, a youth led climate advocacy group. She is also a graduate of Project 90 by 2030's You-Lead Initiative.¹⁶
- Leah Namugerwa organised her first solitary climate action protest in Kampala, Uganda, in February 2019. She marked her 15th birthday by planting 200 trees and launching 'Birthday Trees', a project that provides saplings to people who want to celebrate their life by planting trees. To date, Namugerwa has planted more than 3,000 trees. She is currently campaigning, through an online petition, to get Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni to ban plastic bags.
- Vanessa Nakate started her own strike outside the Ugandan parliament in January 2019. She is now an organiser for Fridays For Future Uganda¹⁷, Save the Congo Rainforest

12 For more see: <https://greengenerationinitiative.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/GGI.Kenya/>, Twitter @GGI_Kenya.

13 'First-ever GCF Green Champion Awards Recognizes Efforts to Combat Climate Change,' *SDG Knowledge Hub*, December 12, 2019, <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/first-ever-gcf-green-champion-awards-recognizes-efforts-to-combat-climate-change/>.

14 UNICEF, '16 children, including Greta Thunberg, file landmark complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child', press release, 23 September 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/16-children-including-greta-thunberg-file-landmark-complaint-united-nations>.

15 For more see: <https://africanclimatealliance.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/africanclimatealliance/>, Twitter @AfrClimAlliance.

16 For more see: <https://90by2030.org.za/youth-leadership/youleadinitiative/>.

17 For more see: <https://www.facebook.com/Fridays4FutureU/>, Twitter @Fridays4FutureU.

Strikes¹⁸, and the Africa-based Rise Up Movement.¹⁹ Even in the midst of COVID-19 travel restrictions, she has been working with other activists and participating in international meetings to connect the youth movement, as well as publishing daily videos, producing a podcast and managing a YouTube channel.²⁰

- Nkosi Nyathi, a UNICEF Climate Youth Ambassador and member of the Zimbabwe Youth Council²¹, has been vocal in promoting community awareness and calling on the Zimbabwean government to implement policies that protect the environment. In February 2020, she delivered a message on behalf of young people²² to the African Regional forum on Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe.

If young people are equipped with knowledge, skills and technology, and if they are supported in collaborating through networks and are connected to meaningful opportunities to engage in policy processes, they will take the lead in holding their governments to account for national and international commitments to development pathways that are both sustainable and just. It is thus imperative to develop an enabling environment for youth-led accountability through ‘developing practical recommendations for policymakers, supporting institutions to better engage young people in government and inter-governmental accountability mechanisms, and supporting young people to advocate for participation in state-led accountability mechanisms.’²³

BOX 1 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON YOUTH IN AFRICA

Africa is one of the continents most vulnerable to climate change due to its limited adaptive capacity, high dependence on ecosystem goods and services, and exposure to climate risk. It is projected that by 2055 Africa’s child population will reach 1 billion – 40% of the global child population.

The World Health Organisation estimates that young people will suffer more than 80% of the illnesses, injuries and deaths attributable to climate change^a largely because they are physically more vulnerable to the direct effects of extreme heat, drought and natural disasters,^b and more vulnerable to health issues, such as malnutrition and disease. They are also more vulnerable to issues such as food shortages, intergroup conflict, economic dislocation and migration.^c Climate change presents long-term developmental, educational and economic consequences for young people and

18 For more see: <https://savecongorainforest.wixsite.com/congo>, Twitter @SaveCongoForest.

19 For more see: <https://www.facebook.com/TheRiseUpMovem1/>, Twitter @TheRiseUpMovem1.

20 For more see: https://twitter.com/vanessa_vash/status/1250013294158544896, <https://anchor.fm/whyclimateactivism> and <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRoOAE-x1Fp3BdfEibFxn4Q>.

21 For more see: https://www.facebook.com/zimbayouth/about/?ref=page_internal, Twitter @zimyouthcouncil.

22 Nkosilathi Nyathi, “Special Message by Representative of Young People,” (speech, African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, Victoria Falls, February 24-27, 2020), https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/ARFSD/2020/nkosi_speaking_points_final.pdf.

23 Restless Development, ‘What We Do’, <https://restlessdevelopment.org/what-we-do/>.

impacts their physical, psychological, social and cognitive capacity to invest in the future.^d

These impacts will mostly be experienced in low-to-middle-income countries, where 85% of the world's young people live^e, and this is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities.

It is also important to recognise that the heightened social, economic and health impacts of climate change will impact women and girls in unique ways.^f Evidence suggests that women experience the impacts of climate change more acutely, both in terms of mortality rates during climate-related disasters, and in experiences of human rights abuses, including sexual violence, disruptions in family planning, maternal and postnatal care, and interruptions in income-generating activities. Adolescent girls are at additional risk of being pulled out of school to help alleviate extra domestic burdens, further increasing their vulnerability. Girls are also at risk of being married off early in an attempt by households to manage financial pressure. Female safety concerns are greater due to environmental hardships, and in the aftermath of weather-related disasters.

These impacts highlight the importance of considering and including young people in the decisions being made about their future. Young people need to be capacitated to bring about radical and meaningful change and their participation in both policymaking and the implementation of development goals is essential.

- a Anthony McMichael, 'Climate change and children: Health risks of abatement inaction, health gains from action,' *Children* 1, no. 2 (2014): 99-106.
- b McMichael, "Climate change and children".
- c Richard Akresh, 'Climate change, conflict, and children,' *The Future of Children* 26, no. 1 (2016): 51-72.
- d Ann Sanson, 'Developmental science's role in responding to the climate crisis,' *ISSBD Bulletin* 1, serial no. 71 (2017): 10-15.
- e UNICEF, *The challenges of climate change: children on the front line* (Florence, Italy: UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti).
- f Christina Kwauk et al., "Girls' Education in Climate Strategies: Opportunities for Improved Policy and Enhanced Action in Nationally Determined Contributions" (Brookings Institution Working Paper 133, Global Economy and Development, Washington, DC, 2019), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Girls-ed-in-climate-strategies-working-paper-FINAL.pdf>.

Research objectives and report structure

This report has been produced by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Regional Programme on Energy Security and Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. The goal of this report is to contribute to a new understanding of African youth participation to enhance opportunities for African youth to shape national, regional and global climate responses. This goal is pursued through a set of three objectives, namely: 1) document emerging good practices from

selected African states regarding youth climate advocacy; 2) support peer learning among youth climate actors and their constituencies in Africa; and 3) inform national and regional policymakers around existing youth climate action and opportunities to support enhanced youth climate work for a more resilient future.

By documenting and interrogating existing practices within Africa, stakeholders can begin to influence institutions and decision-making processes to achieve policy, practice and institutional changes that resonate with the concerns of future generations. Sincerely reflecting on current practices can support efforts to ensure that the role of youth is transformed from being seen as mere symbolic instruments, to the recognition of their role as effective participants engaged in creating and implementing climate policy and legislation.

The findings of this report can be used to inform national and regional debates and policy formulation around innovative opportunities for enhanced youth climate advocacy. By doing so, better practices can be put in place that help to further develop the agency needed for effective climate action, supporting an engaged cohort of young change agents with the capacity to lead and engage with policymakers, and to enhance their capability for climate action going forward.

As a contribution to this process, this report highlights youth climate advocacy work in eight African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Sudan and South Africa. Each of these countries offers unique examples of youth advocacy that can support peer learning among both civil society and government. These countries were selected to reflect the regional, economic and socio-political diversity of the continent. It is not suggested that these countries are necessarily leading examples of youth climate advocacy, nor has it been possible to present a comprehensive overview of all youth-related climate initiatives and actors in each of these countries. Similarly, it is recognised that youth climate advocacy is rapidly evolving and is being expressed through a myriad of channels and modalities. For this reason, defining 'best' or 'good' practice in the context of youth climate advocacy is problematic. The approach in this report has not been to strictly define 'best' or 'good' practice, but instead to contribute to an understanding of what good practice may look like by illustrating how young people and other stakeholders (including government and civil society) are seeking ways to strengthen the voice of youth in national and international climate responses in diverse settings.

To produce this research, a country assessment was conducted for each location using desktop-based research, supplemented by email and telephonic interviews with key national and regional stakeholders. Grouped around three key issues, the assessments interrogated: the role of civil society organisations in facilitating youth advocacy; the formal governmental processes in select countries for engaging youth; and the key lessons learned and good practice emerging from national experiences. The research also included engagement with multilateral institutions such as the African Union (AU), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the SADC (Southern African Development Community) Secretariat to assess their role in supporting youth climate advocacy within the region.

In keeping with the belief that youth are capable agents of change, seven young researchers were closely involved in the development of this report. Guided through the process by a mentor from SAIIA and assisted by senior research staff, the young researchers not only conducted the country assessments, but also provided insights into African perspectives on key priorities for youth activism in climate change. This report therefore both documents youth advocacy from across the region and is itself an example of how youth can play a central role in co-designing and co-implementing activities related to tackling climate change.

It is recognised that definitions of the youth demographic differ. The UN defines 'youth' as people between the ages of 15 and 24.²⁴ The AU uses a broader definition, defining youth as people between the ages of 15 and 35.²⁵ Given that this report focuses on the Africa region, the AU's definition of youth has been adopted, however, the focus is on the younger end of this demographic. Most of the examples included in this report are of youth younger than 25, typically still in school or tertiary education. It is also recognised that children (young people below the age of 15) are actively engaged in many climate-related processes. Rather than employing the term 'children and youth' throughout, this report largely refers to 'youth' and 'young people'.

The country assessments conducted for this report will be presented in two parts. First, an overview looks at how civil society is engaging in the climate movement, highlighting some of the different networks, activities, initiatives and efforts to strengthen youth advocacy. The second part gives an overview of some of the initiatives that governments are taking to ensure they are more inclusive in their decision-making processes and reflecting the needs and aspirations of future generations.

Within each of these sections, a series of 'lessons learned' will be featured, highlighting important findings. These lessons are consolidated in the final section of the report, providing a summary that can serve as the starting point for identifying best practice examples to contribute to an understanding of what the meaningful inclusion of youth looks like in practice.

24 UN, 'Youth', <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/youth-0/#:~:text=For%20statistical%20purposes%2C%20however%2C%20the,of%2015%20and%2024%20years.&text=This%20statistically%20oriented%20definition%20of,under%20the%20age%20of%2014.>

25 African Union Commission (AUC), *African Youth Charter*, 2 July 2006 (Banjul: AUC, 2006), https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_charter_2006.pdf.

Youth, civil society organisations and academia

A knowledgeable, capacitated and active civil society, with youth at the core, is essential to achieving climate-resilience across Africa. Across the continent, youth are active in a variety of platforms and processes. In many cases, established civil society institutions such as national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academic institutions are actively seeking ways to support and amplify youth agency. Young people have also shown strong initiative in establishing their own networks, campaigns and organisations where they sense that they are not adequately served by existing structures. In this section, some of the key dimensions of youth advocacy in the context of an engaged civil society are outlined. We further highlight examples from the report's focus countries to illustrate how young people are creating opportunities for themselves to shape decision-making processes and support enhanced climate action. While recognising the significant role that local and international NGOs, and other civil society organisations (CSOs), have played in supporting youth advocacy the review process revealed that there remain significant opportunities for existing civil society institutions to play a greater role in this regard.

One of the most central components to building youth agency, and an active civil society more broadly, is advocacy. Essentially, advocacy seeks to create a collective voice, ensuring that all people have their voices heard about issues that are important to them, thereby protecting and promoting their right to contribute to the decisions made for their future. Advocacy is not formulaic – it can be done through a variety of ways depending on different contexts and issues, and there is a rich variety of advocacy taking place across the continent. Some of the advocacy taking place appears to be centred on the following core activities:



- **Creating networks**

Individuals can help draw attention to a specific issue or topic, but working collectively in groups and networks is essential to building a sustainable movement and achieving lasting change. Such networks can operate at a variety of levels – they can be local (such as through schools or community groups) or more regionally or globally oriented. Networks help to ensure that different voices are heard and can help to strengthen the participation of young people in decision-making processes.

- **Social media activism**

Social media has become an important tool for connecting people and has amplified the ability of young people to establish and maintain their own movements. Young people use social media to maintain and broaden their networks, engage and connect with each other locally, regionally and internationally, share lessons learned, collaborate on ideas and, ultimately, become more effective in their advocacy.

- **Awareness and education**

Creating awareness and building understanding about different issues is central to combatting climate change, but there is a push to move beyond just information-sharing. Increasingly, people are actively responding to the changes they see around them, and education therefore needs to incorporate practical responses that young people are engaged in.

- **Engaging with policy**

Policy formation is critical for securing a youth-oriented agenda focused on protecting future generations, but many existing policies have been developed without significant youth participation. Policy does not only need to reflect youth interests, youth themselves need to be involved in policy formulation. Young people are both interested in and capable of engaging with policy, and their inclusion in policy development is vital to ensuring the protection of their interests.

- **Holding decision-makers to account**

There has been an increase in cases of civil society using legal frameworks to hold governments to account on climate issues, using the law to uphold the protection of future generations. While this approach has long been used in other advocacy fields, it has been less common in climate change advocacy.

Each of these areas are discussed in this section, drawing on case study examples from the selected countries to highlight and share lessons learned.

Establishing networks

Many individuals are engaged in climate-related activities, but increasingly people are coming together to form climate-focused networks. These networks are important for demonstrating representation – advocacy is more effective when it represents a diverse network of people, unified under a common cause. Networks may be as localised as a group of connected learners at a single school, or as global as [Fridays For Future](https://fridaysforfuture.org/).²⁶ They could be no more formal than a WhatsApp group, or be relatively formalised, with an elected leadership structure, dedicated website and multiple communication channels. Networks, whether youth-led or youth-inclusive, can help young people to systematically engage with the different processes of decision-making, and they can help to improve coordination and advocacy, support the sharing of ideas and lessons learned, strengthen the perceived legitimacy of policy inputs, and enable more meaningful youth participation. Networks can also play an important role in providing social support for activists as they face challenges in advocating for change. Successful collaboration seems to rely heavily on

26 For more see: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/FridaysForFuture.org/>, Twitter @Fridays4future.

access to climate-focused platforms that allow youth members to get involved in projects and grow the networks necessary for engaging in policy and decision-making.

This section highlights examples of climate networks that are starting to emerge within Africa, operating at local, national, regional and international levels. These examples help to improve our understanding of what good practice may look like.

National networks

Many networks start small – a group of friends who decide to establish a climate-focused WhatsApp group or a school project that inspires someone to start a mailing list of students looking for opportunities to engage on climate-related activities. Over time, and by using powerful tools such as social media that enable young people to share information and coordinate activities, these local networks may expand or merge with other networks at the national level. National networks of youth are important for helping young people to coordinate activities, particularly as these relate to national policy processes and engagements directly with national institutions (such as parliament or an environment ministry).

In **Nigeria**, the Nigerian Youth Climate Coalition (NYCC)²⁷ works with young people across the country to mobilise a generational movement on climate change.²⁸ Since their establishment in 2014, they have mobilised over 10,000 Nigerian youth to be involved in climate-related activities and have been recognised by the Nigerian government for their efforts. By operating primarily on social media pages, including Facebook and Twitter, they work with an established network of Nigerian youth to implement various campaigns related to climate change. There are four main components to their work: media, policy formation, education and outreach programmes. For media, the NYCC uses social media to communicate and engage with young people to share information and organise meetings, as well as to engage with leaders to communicate about the needs of young people, advocating for their inclusion in decision-making. The NYCC contributes to policy by conducting projects that educate youth about policy formation and encourage young people to give input into Nigerian climate change policy. As part of the International Youth Climate Movement, the NYCC also tries to participate in policymaking globally and has previously sent delegates to UNFCCC COPs, but participation has been limited due to funding constraints. In terms of education and outreach, NYCC is involved with a variety of projects aimed at educating young people about climate change including ‘Low Carbon Youth Workshops’ and ‘Campus Climate Change Shows’ where key climate change messages have been shared with over 1,000 young people. The Campus Climate Change

27 For more see: <http://www.nigycc.net/>, <https://www.facebook.com/Nigerian-Youth-Climate-Coalition-NYCC-160028049499/>, Twitter @NigYCC.

28 Gbenga Awomodu, ‘Meet the Young Woman Passionately Spreading the Word on Climate Change in Nigeria – Environmental Sustainability Advocate, Esther Agbarakwe,’ *BellaNaija*, February 28, 2011, <https://www.bellanaija.com/2011/02/meet-the-young-woman-passionately-spreading-the-word-on-climate-change-in-nigeria-environmental-sustainability-advocate-esther-agbarakwe/>; and Tierney Smith, ‘Youth Profile #1: How Nigerian Climate Coalition are building green bridges ahead of COP18,’ *Climate Home News*, July 5, 2012, <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2012/07/05/youth-profile-1-nigerian-youth-climate-coalition/>.

Shows went on to launch a media campaign on climate change education that reached close to 6 million young people in the country through radio, television and education programmes. NYCC also participated in the 'Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change', which aimed to encourage young people to be part of the conversation and policy formation in Nigeria. Under this project, a peer education methodology was used to build capacity for youth leadership as climate actors, and climate change school clubs were established in the Imo, Delta and Ondo states. Operating primarily as a team of volunteers, one of the NYCC's major obstacles is funding. Funding contributions have been received both as individual donations and project grant funding, yet the lack of consistent funding hampers the ability of NYCC to maintain some of its activities.

In **South Africa**, there are a number of youth networks working on climate advocacy, including the African Climate Alliance (ACA)²⁹ and the South African Youth Centre for Climate Change (SAYCCC).³⁰ The ACA is a youth-led group advocating for climate, ecological and social justice. One of their founding principles is to promote an intersectional climate movement that 'aims to elevate voices of black, brown, indigenous, working-class and marginalised groups'.³¹ They co-organised the first big climate protest in Cape Town in 2019, gathering nearly 2,000 people, have an active youth blog and regularly contribute content to news articles, and run campaigns for climate justice. Their most recent social media campaign #TheFutureIs aimed at inspiring climate action by inviting young people to share their visions of the future. The campaign ran from South Africa's Youth Day, 16 June 2020, to International Youth Day, 12 August 2020, and included more than 300 active participants.

The SAYCCC is a network of young environmentalists and climate justice activists. Since their establishment in 2011, where they hosted the Conference of Youth (COY)³² in the lead up to COP17, their objective has been to mobilise, coordinate, empower and promote youth perspectives on climate change. They have several thematic working groups (adaptation, mitigation, agriculture, energy, human rights, climate finance and biodiversity) and have released numerous press statements and blogs on climate change and sustainable development issues. Additionally, they are active Fridays For Future protesters, host mentorship sessions, and they hosted a local COY in 2019. One of their approaches to climate justice advocacy is to critically engage on the national level of ambition and effectiveness in implementing nationally determined contributions (NDCs), as well as contributing to NDC implementation through technical and cooperative support. Another approach to advocacy is the facilitation of intergenerational dialogues with various stakeholders to ensure NDC implementation is effective and inclusive. SAYCCC is also active within local, national and international climate change platforms, having attended multiple stakeholder engagements at these levels, including UNFCCC COP meetings. While the ACA and SAYCCC networks are separate entities, their work does overlap and they

29 For more see: <https://africanclimatealliance.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/africanclimatealliance/>, Twitter @AfrClimAlliance.

30 For more see: <http://sayccc.org.za>, <https://www.facebook.com/SAYCCC/>, Twitter @SAYCCC1.

31 For more see: <https://africanclimatealliance.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/africanclimatealliance/>, Twitter @AfrClimAlliance.

32 More detail on the Conference of Youth is provided on page 21 of this report.

have collaborated with another network, the national Youth Policy Committee (YPC)³³ in creating youth statements to COP meetings and providing youth inputs on climate policy documents.

In **Uganda** a range of different networks have been established at a national and local level. The local chapter of Fridays for Future has broad membership across the country and is a key network for information dissemination and coordination of climate action, but other networks, such as Girls for Climate,³⁴ are also playing an important role in linking young Ugandans eager to engage on environmental issues. These networks have helped to convene multiple climate strikes, coordinate with regional and global processes, and mobilise young people to participate in policymaking processes.

Regional Networks

While networks do exist at local and country levels, many of these networks are also connected to and work with other African and global partners. This regional networking is essential not only for strengthening the overall African voice, but also for contributing to strengthening the voice of the global South. Networks can be an important source of new ideas and can help to amplify voices from across the African region. In turn, these networks can be a channel for influencing regional and national institutions. Below are some examples of how youth are networking regionally to strengthen the African voice in the climate movement.

In the **Seychelles**, efforts have been made to create a network of young people from small island developing states (SIDS) in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) region, and to do so, the SIDS Youth AIMS Hub (SYAH)³⁵ was established to set up a dynamic and government-endorsed network of young people. The Seychelles Chapter, SYAH-Seychelles³⁶, is a youth-focused organisation promoting and advancing youth-led sustainable development projects and advocating for the inclusion and participation of young people in national and international decision-making processes. SYAH-Seychelles focuses primarily on climate change, oceans and renewable energy, and works to empower and build capacities of young people to be effective sustainable development advocates and agents of change within the AIMS region. SYAH-Seychelles has helped facilitate the participation of more than 100 young people in different environment-related projects and activities. They have also facilitated internship programmes to develop capacity among young environmental advocates, and participated in the UNFCCC COP negotiations. Launched by SYAH-Seychelles in 2016, the Blue Economy Internship

33 More detail on the Youth Policy Committee is provided on pages 32-33 of this report.

34 For more see: <https://girls4climate.blogspot.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/girls4climate/>.

35 For more see: <https://www.syah.org/>, https://www.facebook.com/SYAHRegionalHQ/about/?ref=page_internal, Twitter @SYAHRegional.

36 For more see: <http://syah-seychelles.weebly.com/about.html>, Twitter @SezSyah.

Programme³⁷ aims to promote a range of sustainable development opportunities for young people aged between 15-30, educating Seychellois youth about the blue economy, the ocean's fragility and how to protect this valuable resource, while inspiring them to pursue careers in the sector. SYAH also builds sustainable partnerships with relevant stakeholders: they have collaborated with the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network³⁸ and other stakeholders for capacity building projects such as workshops on Climate Change Advocacy and Diplomacy Training³⁹ and also on Climate Journalism Training⁴⁰. In collaboration with the Government of the Seychelles and the Youth Climate Lab⁴¹, SYAH-Seychelles also established the Seychelles Support Team⁴², a pilot initiative to meaningfully engage youth in UNFCCC processes while providing assistance to the Seychelles delegation to the UNFCCC by covering negotiations, relevant side-events and conducting research.

In Uganda, youth climate advocate Vanessa Nakate started the Rise Up Movement⁴³ as a platform to amplify the voice of young Africans engaging on climate issues. Initially a national network, this has now grown regionally to include several chapters in other African countries. The Rise Up Movement has effectively utilised Twitter as a platform to network regionally, support information dissemination and raise awareness of the role that young Africans are playing in supporting climate action.⁴⁴

'It is important to listen to the activists from the global South because they're representing different communities. [The Rise Up Movement's] main goal is to help tell the stories of these activists in Africa who are striking every Friday, who are doing different activities to demand climate action'

[Vanessa Nakate, Ugandan youth climate advocate]

37 SYAH-Seychelles, 'SYAH's Blue Economy Internship Programme Inspires Seychellois Youth to Protect the Ocean and Pursue Careers Within the Blue Economy,' <https://seyccat.org/syahs-blue-economy-internship-programme-inspires-seychellois-youth-to-protect-the-ocean-and-pursue-careers-within-the-blue-economy/>.

38 For more see: https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthYouthClimateNetwork/about/?ref=page_internal, Twitter @cycn09

39 SYAH-Seychelles, 'Commonwealth Climate Change Advocacy and Diplomacy Training #Prep4COP,' <http://syah-seychelles.weebly.com/capacity-building-climate-change.html>.

40 SYAH-Seychelles, 'Press Release: Climate Journalism in Seychelles,' <http://syah-seychelles.weebly.com/climate-journalism-training.html>.

41 The Youth Climate Lab is a global youth-for-youth organisation focused on supporting and creating innovative projects for climate action. For more information see: <https://www.youthclimatelab.org/who>.

42 Youth Climate Lab, 'Seychelles Support Team (SST): Report from COP23,' https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59ec036ef9a61ebf918040ac/t/5ae9cc688a922d1389c65ac5/1525271657272/Seychelles+Support+Team_+Report+from+COP23.pdf.

43 For more see: <https://www.facebook.com/TheRiseUpMovem1/>, Twitter @TheRiseUpMovem1.

44 Sam Liptak, 'Ugandan Climate Activist Vanessa Nakate Provides a Voice for the Global South,' *Earth Day* 2020, <https://www.earthday.org/ugandan-climate-activist-vanessa-nakate-provides-voice-for-the-global-south/>.

The **African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC)**⁴⁵ is a regional network of African-based youth organisations that seeks to develop youth capacity on climate change issues as well as influence policy dialogues related to youth and sustainable development. Established in 2006 with regional headquarters in Nairobi, AYICC has gained considerable momentum and is one of the most prominent youth movements on climate change and sustainable development in Africa. It has well over 20,000 members, representing over 200 organisations across 46 countries.⁴⁶ The organisation provides a platform to assist young people to engage in regional issues at global gatherings, such as UNFCCC COPs, the COPs of the UN Convention for Biological Diversity and AU forums, among others. Its work is recognised and supported by numerous international organisations, including the AU Commission, the African Climate Policy Centre, UNECA and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). AYICC works closely with Youth NGOs (YOUNGO) to promote the effective participation of African youth in the UNFCCC process. Through these networks, more than 300 African youth leaders have participated in annual climate change international conferences over the last five years.⁴⁷ At a national level, AYICC have effectively built relationships with policymakers in their countries of representation and work to ensure that policy stakeholders prioritise the issue of climate change to their government's policy agenda. They also seek to connect and share knowledge, ideas, experiences, skills and strategies on youth climate action around the continent. AYICC also works at a grassroots level, helping with projects that include capacity-building for local farmers and youth, and tree planting initiatives with community-based organisations.

Global Networks

African youth are becoming increasingly important actors in global climate networks and forums. Many national and regional-level networks in Africa are linked to broader international networks, which help youth to strengthen their voice at global events. One of the most important global platforms for climate change is the UNFCCC COP and many African networks engage in COP processes to ensure increasing representation from both Africa and the global South.

During the UNFCCC COP 15 in 2009, youth were recognised as an important voice within the negotiation process and a formal youth constituency was formed: **YOUNGO**.⁴⁸ YOUNGO serves as a transnational advocacy and coordinating network, providing a platform for the exchange of official information between young people and the UNFCCC secretariat. YOUNGO assists in ensuring the effective participation of youth at intergovernmental climate-related meetings, making sure the youth voice is coordinated at constituency meetings and within plenary sessions. Consisting of different youth-led organisations,

45 For more see: <http://www.ayicc.africa/>, <https://www.facebook.com/The-African-Youth-Initiative-on-Climate-Change-AYICC-161214162089/>, Twitter @AYICC.

46 Landry Ndriko Mayigane, 'How African Youth are Participating in Global Climate Change Politics,' *WMO Bulletin* 63, no. 1 (2014), <https://public.wmo.int/en/resources/bulletin/how-african-youth-are-participating-global-climate-change-politics>.

47 DevEx, 'African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC)', <https://www.devex.com/organizations/african-youth-initiative-on-climate-change-ayicc-101004>.

48 For more see: <http://www.youngo.uno/>, <https://www.facebook.com/youngoclimate/>, Twitter @IYCM.

groups, delegations, and individuals working in climate change-related fields, YOUNGO runs various working groups focused on specific aspects of climate change within the UNFCCC negotiations, working to ensure that perspectives of young and future generations are taken into account in the multilateral decision-making processes. YOUNGO also observes and reports on the climate negotiations, reflecting on the implications of their outcomes for youth. YOUNGO provides logistical support to youth during COP sessions, while preparation for COP engagement is managed online to include as wide a range of youth participation as possible.

YOUNGO hosts the **COY**, which serves as a space for capacity building and policy training. Participants are introduced to the various working groups of YOUNGO, where they develop common policy positions (lobby points) and develop strategies to advocate for the interests of youth in those policy areas. For example, in 2019 COY called on the COP25 Presidency to support the effort to design and agree upon a new framework for Action for Climate Empowerment. Parties were urged to update formal educational curricula to include capacity building for critical thinking, digital literacy and climate education. The Adaptation Fund and other funding mechanisms were requested to scale up and improve access to finance for youth initiatives.

In 2017, a process was set up within YOUNGO to endorse and empower youth to organise regional and local COYs. Convened in advance of the international COY, these regional COYs discuss climate topics of importance to their sub-region and conclude with statements that are then fed into the global youth position, and ultimately into the climate negotiations. Local COYs are similar, but feed inputs from the country-level into regional positions. Local COYs play an important role in training youth to build their capacity around climate action.

These kinds of activities demonstrate how networks can operate and function at different levels and within different policy arenas, but still work together to demonstrate a unified and collective voice, connecting the global to the local and the local to the global. Participating in these activities can strengthen impact at all levels, continuously helping to build momentum for sustained climate action.

While participating in COPs is important, both in terms of strengthening youth voices and building the capacity of young people, it is not without challenges. Many individuals and institutions do not have the financial resources to send delegates to international COPs and are limited in their capacity to engage in these events. NGOs and think tanks play an important role in overcoming this. Many NGOs sponsor young leaders from grassroots environmental initiatives around the world to attend COP and engage in climate related activities. NGOs are often at the forefront of engaging with youth in the UNFCCC process, providing funding, capacity building and exposure to media to help increase the spread of their message.

Ekai Nabenyo is from Lorengelup, a small community in Turkana County, Northern Kenya. The region is very dry and arid and as a pastoralist community, people's livelihoods depend on livestock and maintaining a clean environment to rear the animals. Ekai took an interest in climate change when studying climate law at university. Climate change was a foreign concept for many in his community and people relied on traditional beliefs about climate and weather patterns. He noticed that the indigenous community members, despite being severely impacted by the effects of climate change, were not part of the discussions around climate impacts and responses. In 2012, Ekai decided to do something about this and started the Lorengelup Community Development Initiative, with a vision 'to see an economically empowered citizenry of Lorengelup by availing them the opportunity to engage in self-sustaining income generating activities and community development projects.' The organisation focused on raising awareness about climate change and other development issues in the community.

Ekai faced many challenges along the way. He experienced opposition from politicians, was accused of 'radicalising' people and many of his events were disrupted. There was also no existing platform for young people to participate in climate policy processes and Ekai struggled to gain access to decision-making processes. Ekai commented that the 'voices of youth passionate about climate change are silenced as they have no platform to express their views.'

Despite these challenges, Ekai's community work on climate change awareness garnered international attention and he was sponsored to attend COP21 to share his story with the rest of the world. As his first time travelling, Ekai was able to engage with like-minded young people from around the world and the experience left him inspired and energised. When he returned to Kenya, he realised that he wanted to expand the organisation beyond his immediate community of Lorengelup and changed the name of the organisation to Article 43.^a The name Article 43 is derived from Article 43 of the Constitution of Kenya which stipulates that every Kenyan has a right to adequate food supply, water, affordable health care, security, education and a clean environment, among others. According to Ekai, these rights, which the law had provided for, were not realised in Turkana. Through the organisation, he therefore aims to empower the local community and youth to realise these rights through community development and capacity building.

Article 43 now operates across Kenya, with a main focus on Turkana County, and has reached more than 20,000 community members. Article 43 continues to do important work in climate change advocacy such as organising climate summits, youth empowerment seminars, tree planting in communities, advocating for community rights in oil and gas projects and promoting sustainable water resource

management. The organisation also works in other areas of development such as running high school mentorship programmes to help youth develop critical social skills and assisting villagers with essential items such as food items, face masks and sanitisers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

a For more see: <https://www.article43.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/article43/>, Twitter @Article43Kenya.

Lessons learned

- Young people need a way to connect, to work collaboratively in finding solutions to problems and to amplify their voices – establishing and maintaining networks is essential to this. It is important to recognise that networks can operate at a variety of levels. Young climate advocates are typically part of different networks at local, national, regional and international levels. Action at all these levels is necessary to tackle the complex and pressing challenges of the climate crisis. While individuals can play an important role in catalysing action, more emphasis needs to be placed on supporting the networks and groups that can maintain activities, building institutional support nationally, regionally and globally.
- Climate networks are still emerging, but there may be lessons learned from activism in other areas that could help strengthen these initiatives. Not only does a diversity of voices help to strengthen a movement, it also demonstrates the intersectionality of climate issues.
- Networks can serve as an important tool for advancing advocacy but also for implementation – local and regional networks of youth can be partners in actualising development goals.
- Working in a collaborative manner in policy formulation and implementation can build capacity for both young people and government officials. Young people can gain valuable skills and abilities to implement initiatives, while government can strengthen its inclusiveness and responsiveness to development issues.
- Financial support is needed not only to facilitate participation in international events and conferences, but also to support the operational functioning of youth organisations and networks to ensure their sustainability.

Social media advocacy

Social media has played an important role in connecting youth globally – platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Whatsapp and Instagram have become important advocacy tools, helping to expand reach, share information, coordinate action and create networks

that help to boost representation. Social media has also been effective in facilitating global campaigns and movements, where initiatives such as #FridaysForFuture have gone viral.⁴⁹

African youth, like their peers around the world, are also actively utilising social media and virtual platforms to engage in climate action, and this has increased even further during the COVID-19 pandemic. Access to internet and smart devices remains a challenge for many young Africans, but innovative approaches such as providing youth pre-paid data, Wi-Fi access and alternative options for sharing their work and views through social media are ways to mitigate these challenges.

The high-speed sharing of information across multiple digitally hosted platforms (social media, organisational websites and advocacy chatrooms), maximises youth's access to current information, connecting youth with each other and with other stakeholder groups and decision-makers, domestically and internationally. Social media can be used to broadcast and amplify youth climate advocacy campaigns, cultivate a strong internet presence, draw attention to youth position statements, expand networks and develop collaboration with other youth climate advocates. The 'digitised youth' can also learn new resilience-building techniques and access climate change-related skills by using platforms like LinkedIn, edX, Coursera, Udemy, Google, Zoom Cloud meetings, Microsoft Teams, Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter.⁵⁰

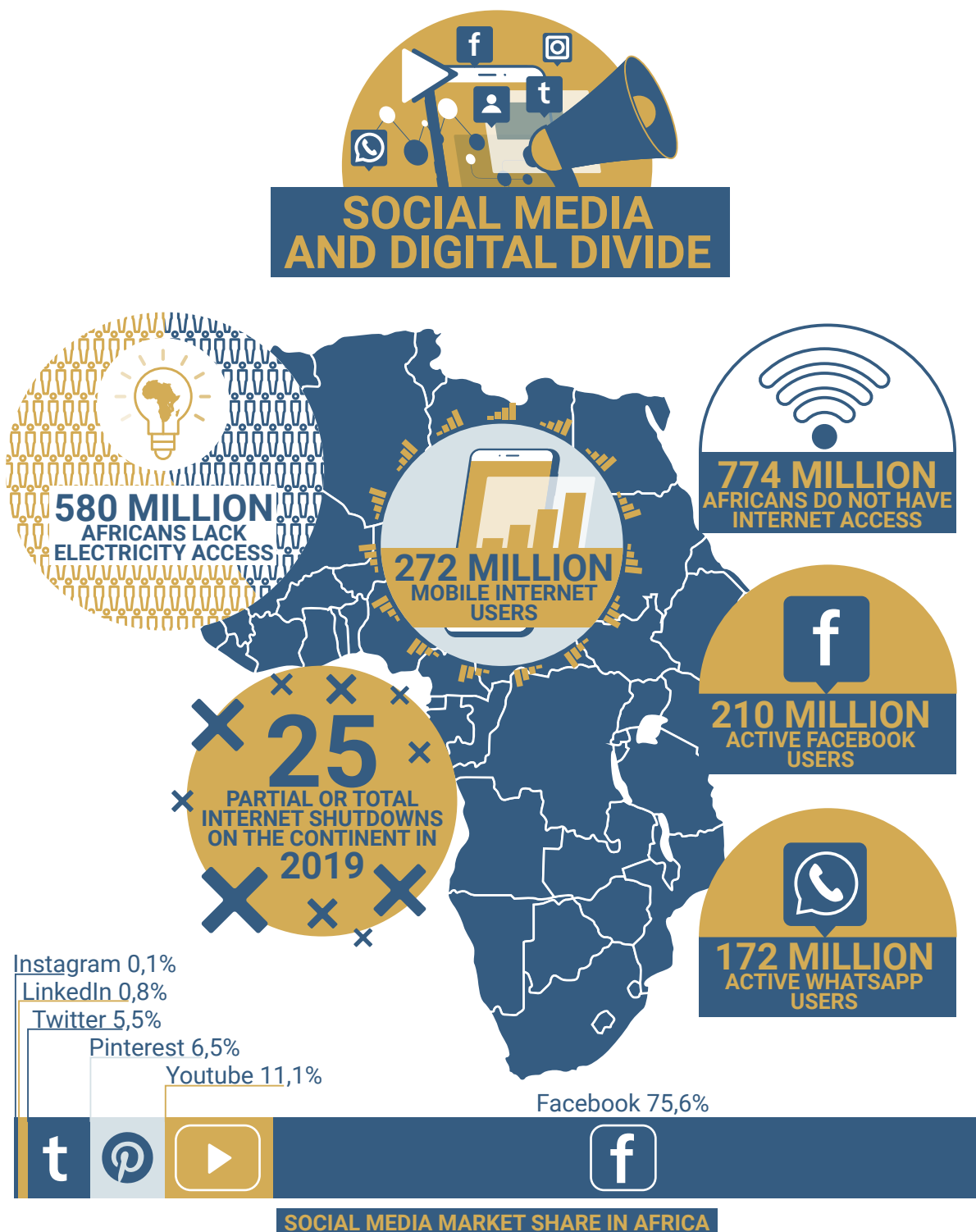
'Digital media has helped me to learn and network, but even more so it has offered me a platform and given me space to share my work with others. It is an opportunity to be able to create an ever-growing audience to share with. It makes it easier to reach people and helps to make activism work attractive as well as informative'

[Sadrach Nirere, Ugandan youth climate advocate]

In **Uganda**, youth advocates report that WhatsApp groups and Facebook have been particularly important platforms to support networking. One example is Girls for Climate, which uses a mailing list of several hundred young people as its primary communication platform, but also uses Facebook, a blog and other channels to inform young Ugandans on issues related to climate and environment and to support advocacy.

49 For more information about Fridays For Future see: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>, and for Fridays for Future Kenya see: <https://twitter.com/fridaykenya?lang=en> and <https://www.facebook.com/fffkenya/>, Twitter @fridays_kenya.

50 Louise Marsland, '#AfricaMonth: The digital life expectancy of Africa's youth,' *BizCommunity*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.bizcommunity.africa/Article/410/759/176774.html>.



Using virtual platforms to host youth-related events

Virtual platforms have become an increasingly effective tool for promoting youth engagement, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. While in-person interactions remain an important means of engagement, the ease of connecting through virtual platforms has enabled larger numbers of young people to engage nationally, regionally and internationally, without having to worry about logistics, the carbon footprint of travel

and resources needed for transport and accommodation. Virtual platforms can also help mitigate the rural-urban divide, with young advocates from across a country or region able to participate in meetings.

In June 2020, the Youth Programmes at SAIIA (Youth@SAIIA)⁵¹ convened a virtual meeting with youth from across South Africa in preparation for a dialogue with the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries. This session was hosted virtually and sought to support young people in learning about methods of effective public participation, sharing stories about their climate action work and their ideas for a green recovery at a national and provincial level. A virtual meeting was convened and a Google Doc was utilised to facilitate collaboration and capture ideas. Using this Google Doc, participants formed an official statement that was presented to the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries during the South African Youth Day Dialogue on 16 June 2020.

Funding toward pre-paid data or internet costs can assist in addressing challenges related to internet access and help young people in their advocacy journey. In the period of 28 May to 30 June 2020, Youth@SAIIA hosted ten virtual youth events and in each event 30-50% of participants were provided with data to participate in the session. Many of those needing data were also accessing the virtual platforms from their phone, it is therefore not only an issue of data access but also the devices that young people have access to.

In **Zimbabwe**, AYICC Zimbabwe⁵² hosts, among other initiatives, a Thursday Climate Talk known as #TCT (Thursday Climate Talk). Launched in June 2019, the weekly programme features experts, organisations and different stakeholders as guests to discuss a wide array of topics ranging from gender and climate, entrepreneurial ventures and climate smart agriculture, amongst others. The main goal behind the platform is to help young people understand and address the impacts of climate change, encouraging changes in their attitude and behaviour whilst helping them to adapt. AYICC Zimbabwe also hosts a Gender and Climate Action webinar series that helps to build awareness about how climate change impacts genders differently, and what action can be taken to address this.

In **Kenya**, AYICC Kenya⁵³ regularly hosts weekly Twitter chats where youth can engage on environment-related matters. In June 2020, they hosted an online youth debate titled 'Enhanced Climate Mitigation Ambition Relevance in the NDC Update Process: The case of Kenya'.⁵⁴ The debate, involving a panel of eight young experts, was focused on whether Kenya, as a developing nation, should increase its domestic action and international initiatives to cut global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The debaters argued whether Kenya needed to enhance its mitigation actions or rather focus on implementation of its current climate ambitions. The youth highlighted policy and implementation gaps in

51 For more see: <https://saiia.org.za/youth/>, <https://www.facebook.com/youth.saiia/>, Twitter @Youth_SAIIA.

52 For more see: <https://ayicczim.org.zw/>, <https://www.facebook.com/AYICCZimbabwe/>, Twitter @AYICCZimbabwe.

53 For more see: <http://ayicckkenya.blogspot.com/>, <https://www.facebook.com/ayicc.kenya/>, Twitter @ayicckkenya.

54 AYICC Kenya, 'Debate: Enhanced Climate Mitigation Ambition Relevance in the NDC update process,' Facebook, June 18, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/African-Youth-Initiative-on-Climate-Change-Kenya-107611043617/videos/ayicc-kenya-debate/279725570066137/>.

Kenya's climate change approach, including a lack of communication and coordination related to community group access to funding, a lack of sufficient inter-ministerial cooperation to support climate action and inadequate data and information sharing platforms to promote transparency and accountability.

In **Nigeria**, the NYCC embarked on an initiative to mobilise and raise awareness about climate change using Facebook and Twitter. In January 2011, in collaboration with organisations such as GreenActs Group, Earth Reformers Foundation, Global African Dialogue and other climate activists, they hosted a 'live Tweet chat' on the topic of youth and climate change in Nigeria. The initiative attracted over 70 participants from 11 countries. Using the hashtag #ccnigeria they were able to engage with a wide range of participants, including government stakeholders.

In addition to utilising virtual platforms for hosting specific events, a number of regional groups make use of innovative approaches and tools to share ideas. They share short videos of young people's perspectives and stories, host Instagram Live sessions to discuss various topics, and organise their own webinars and virtual meetings to share information and ideas.

Climate marches and online advocacy campaigns

Social media is not only effective for on-line engagement, it has also become an important mobilisation tool used to coordinate young people to take collective action. Social media platforms can be used to coordinate on-the-ground marches and campaigns and inspire youth to get involved in local activities.

In the **Seychelles**, SYAH uses a 'climate pragmatism' approach that pursues targeted, achievable objectives resulting in small incremental victories, while building confidence and capacity and encouraging collaboration among youth groups. They used this advocacy approach to successfully contribute towards securing a ban on single-use plastic bags in 2015. SYAH worked collaboratively with government, informing them of their activities and submitting policy reports and information on the use of plastics. In 2017, to protest against the government's delay in implementing the ban, the youth turned to social media to mobilise other climate advocates and express their frustration. These actions, coupled with traditional media outlets that reported on the social media campaign, and follow up conversations between government and youth activists, helped to ensure that the ban was enforced.

In March 2019, students in **Kenya** marched to the Karura Forest in Nairobi to demand action on climate change. The march was part of a global initiative that brought together young people in 123 countries from more than 2,000 cities.⁵⁵ In September of the same year, hundreds of Kenyans in Nairobi joined international protests to demand that political

⁵⁵ Africa Times Editor, 'Young Africans march in school strike to demand climate action,' *Africa Times*, March 15, 2019, <https://africa-times.com/2019/03/15/young-africans-march-in-school-strike-to-demand-climate-action/>.

leaders do more to combat climate change.⁵⁶ On 20 September 2019, more than 10,000 people marched in Nairobi, seeking to hold the Kenyan government accountable for its commitment to transform to 100% renewable energy by 2020.⁵⁷ AYICC Kenya mobilised young people by sharing information on social media platforms such as Facebook⁵⁸, and using relevant hashtags such as #ClimateStrikeKE to gather supporters on Instagram and Twitter. Activists in Nairobi also protested against the building of a \$2 billion coal plant on the island of Lamu, a UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) heritage site.⁵⁹ It has been estimated that the coal plant would increase Kenya's carbon emissions by 700%⁶⁰, and young people took to the streets carrying placards and peacefully marching to bring national attention to the issue. Kenya's National Environmental Tribunal ultimately ruled that the authorities had failed to carry out a rigorous environmental impact assessment to engage the public in consultation and to inform local people of potential impacts of the proposed coal plant, and the court therefore blocked the project.⁶¹ The protests, both on the ground and online, were essential in raising the necessary awareness and pressure to stimulate change.

Social media platforms have played an important role in facilitating the voice and messages of young people across Africa. One example is the Rise Up Movement, an online movement founded by Ugandan Climate activist Vanessa Nakate. The initiative was started after Nakate was deliberately cropped out of a photo with fellow climate activists Greta Thunberg, Loukin Tille, Luisa Neubauer and Isabelle Axelsson by the Associated Press. This incident sparked significant debate over the representation of young African climate

'As much as this incident has hurt me personally, I'm glad because it has brought more attention to activists in Africa. Maybe media will start paying attention to us not just when we're the victims of climate tragedies'

[Vanessa Nakate, Ugandan youth climate advocate referring to being cropped from a photo of youth climate advocates taken at Davos in January 2020]

56 Mohamed Yusuf, 'Kenyans Join Climate Protest' *Voa News*, September 20, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/kenyans-join-climate-change-protests>.

57 Amos Wemanya, 'Keep Your Promise Mr. President, We Need 100% Green Energy This Year,' *Greenpeace*, June 22, 2020, <https://www.greenpeace.org/africa/en/publications/11465/keep-your-promise-mr-president-we-need-100-green-energy-this-year/>.

58 AYICC, '#ClimateStrikeKE', Facebook, September 16, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/161214162089/photos/a.10153694518962090/10157673463957090/?type=3>.

59 Andrew Wasike, 'Kenyans protest plans for coal-fired power plant,' *Anadolu Agency*, June 12, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/kenyans-protest-plans-for-coal-fired-power-plant/1502688>; and Abdi Latif Dahir, 'A Chinese coal plant on a UNESCO-protected island in Kenya is facing major protests,' *Quartz Africa*, June 9, 2018, <https://qz.com/africa/1301469/photos-kenya-environmentalists-protest-china-coal-plant-in-lamu/>.

60 BBC, 'Kenya halts Lamu coal power project at World Heritage Site,' *BBC News*, June 26, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48771519>.

61 Karen McVeigh, 'Kenya's First Coal Plant Construction Paused in Climate Victory,' *The Guardian*, July 11, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/jul/11/kenya-first-coal-plant-construction-paused-climate-victory>.

activists in the media.⁶² Nakate wanted to start a platform that would share stories of other young African activists to bring awareness to the work that they do, as the media was not doing them justice. The Rise Up Movement started in **Uganda** and currently runs in seven African countries.

Lessons learned

- While digital platforms have opened up new opportunities for young people to gain access to and participate in policy processes and various forms of collective action, it is also important to recognise that many people are still excluded from the digital space due to unreliable access to the internet and phone services. To ensure that people are not marginalised through digitalisation, additional support needs to be given through the provision of data, etc., to ensure that young people can participate. In this way, the digital divide can be addressed and African youth can ensure their voices are included in discussions taking place online.
- There is opportunity for policymakers to engage more with social media to broaden their scope of participation and to be more accessible. Policymakers should seek to adopt emerging good practice in terms of using social media to strengthen inclusion, participation and engagement of young people in policy processes.

Preparing youth for a new future: Building capacity, developing skills and increasing opportunities

While advocacy plays an important role in terms of raising awareness and building a collective movement, deeper climate education is fundamental to encouraging long-term and sustained change. Education initiatives can be done in a variety of ways, from integrating climate change into school curricula, initiating school clubs, or having stand-alone workshops and awareness sessions, and can cover a wide range of themes ranging from specific climate topics to leadership and capacity building. Education initiatives can also focus on a variety of levels, such as building capacity for local action or focusing on capacity to engage within international climate negotiations. While the formal education system is fundamental to laying the foundation for a resilient and informed society, youth networks, NGOs, think tanks and academia all play an important role in building the capacity of youth to meet the needs of the future, through either providing capacity building themselves or facilitating various funding mechanisms for it.

In **Nigeria**, the NYCC Peer Education Initiative⁶³ embarked on a climate change youth communication project using peer education to build youth leadership and establish

62 Kenya Evelyn, "Like I wasn't There": Climate Activist Vanessa Nakata on Being Erased from a Movement', *The Guardian*, January 29, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/29/vanessa-nakate-interview-climate-activism-cropped-photo-davos>.

63 Smith, "Youth Profile #1".

climate change school clubs for youths. Members of NYCC were tasked with starting their own clubs at school and in total more than 10,000 learners were reached through this process. This approach to climate change education was considered highly effective as students were learning from their peers and were therefore more likely to retain this new information.

In **South Africa**, Project 90 by 2030, a social and environmental justice organisation focused on mobilising a sustainable and equitable low-carbon future in South Africa, has an active youth programme known as the You-Lead Collective. The programme focuses on leadership training for under-resourced communities in the Western Cape of South Africa, where they launched 'leadership clubs' in schools to build the climate knowledge and leadership capacity of young people so that they are empowered to take action and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Through the You-Lead initiative, many young climate leaders have become a formidable force within their communities, using their skills from the programme to implement change at a local level.

In **Uganda**, the national offices of the Climate Action Network and Oxfam International have played an important role in providing the necessary funding and training to allow young people to engage in the UNFCCC COP process, and to then use this experience to support the establishment of national youth climate activities in Uganda. Climate negotiations at national and international levels can be very technical, requiring a detailed understanding of processes, key concepts and policy dynamics to ensure effective inputs from youth advocates – training in these areas is central to building their capacity to engage effectively. To this end, youth climate advocates in Uganda are seeking to establish a 'climate change advocacy academy' that will provide such training.

In **Zimbabwe**, online mentorship programmes have been established to build knowledge about climate governance and international policies. Conducted by alumni mentors from the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), the training focuses on climate advocacy and cross-cutting issues such as food security, wildlife conservation and the oceans. The aim was to capacitate participants with knowledge that can be used in advocacy and more than 100 people participated in the training. Using these skills, one of the participants in the mentorship programme was subsequently accepted for a training programme on climate advocacy and negotiation under the African Group of Negotiators Expert Support programme.⁶⁴ The mentorship programme was organised by the Global Youth Biodiversity Network in partnership with WWF. During the period of COVID-19 restrictions, youth organisations in Zimbabwe shifted planned in-person events online and are now conducting virtual events. The AYICC in Zimbabwe also hosts a regular webinar series titled 'Youth Role in NDCs' where they work with the Zimbabwean Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality to ensure that the voices of young people are considered and incorporated in the NDC revision process. Most recently, AYICC Zimbabwe hosted a training event on Twitter in collaboration with the Ministry that focused on green

64 Cinderella Ndlovu (youth climate advocate from Zimbabwe), telephonic interview by Nkululeko Shabalala, August 2020.

procurement gaps and constraints in the context of national climate policy, NDCs and other policies. Various stakeholders participated in the training, with more than 50% being youth and CSOs. Through such activities, AYICC Zimbabwe is providing a platform for climate education, climate change policy and advocacy, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In **South Africa**, the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA)⁶⁵ has been actively involved in environmental outreach and education, with an increasing focus on young people. WESSA works with schools and teachers throughout South Africa in implementing a range of local and international programmes to support and improve school curricula with regard to environmental learning, enabling learners to achieve their full potential towards a sustainable future by taking environmental action in their own areas. They also help to establish school Eco-Clubs to engage young people in project activities.

In **Ethiopia**, the Youth Network for Sustainable Development (YNSD)⁶⁶ is building capacity by providing opportunities for young people to work on youth-friendly teams and to become young managers, fostering better programmatic engagement with young people.⁶⁷ YNSD is an umbrella organisation of 160 youth organisations that also functions as a non-profit indigenous organisation. YNSD's organisational policy requires that 70% of the staff are under the age of 29 years, with the opportunity of serving as a board member for a maximum of four years.⁶⁸ YNSD provides opportunities for emerging young leaders by providing training and mentoring, connecting them with peer educators and other volunteers. This diverse network, working on a variety of social development areas, has helped to mobilise and capacitate a diverse group of young people.

In the **Seychelles**, SYAH focuses on a practical form of education, ensuring that youth build their capacity by being active project implementers for climate and environment-related projects. In 2018, SYAH received funding to support of a cohort of young 'Climate Accountability Advocates', between the ages of 15 to 30, to be actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation of national and international climate change policy processes, as well as in the delivery of the SDGs and Seychelles' NDC. The project is focused on generating data that can be used in the creation of quarterly newsletters, annual reports, infographics, a website and a mobile app that will assist youth in monitoring and evaluating development goals. This information can be used by stakeholders for multiple purposes including collecting baseline environmental information, creating data sources for research on current policies, and determining the success of the implementation of the SDGs and the NDC. These kinds of initiatives help to build the capacity of young people to not only

65 WESSA is a South African environmental organisation which aims to initiate and support high impact environmental and conservation projects to promote participation in caring for the Earth. See <https://wessa.org.za/>.

66 For more see: <https://www.ynsdethiopia.org.et/about-ynsd/>, <https://www.facebook.com/ynsd.ethiopia/>, Twitter @YNSD_Ethiopia.

67 Arushi Singh et al., *Operations Research on Meaningful Youth Participation in Ethiopia* (Ethiopia: Rutgers, 2014), https://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational_Research_pdf/6.%20MYP_Ethiopia_final_0.pdf.

68 Singh et al., "Operations Research", 18.

effectively participate in development activities, but to also be more involved in decision-making processes, using data for evidence-based advocacy. Youth in the Seychelles also have an opportunity to engage with the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), which offers grants to Seychellois citizens for sustainable marine and climate activities. These projects encourage the involvement of civil society actors – 52% of the projects are led by women and 22% by young people.⁶⁹ The current Director of SEYCATT, Angelique Pouponneau⁷⁰, is a young woman who is inspiring young people to approach SEYCATT and similar funding organisations. While SEYCATT has designed its application process to be as straightforward as possible, it remains daunting for many young people. There is a current focus on building the capacity of young people to apply for funding through climate finance and proposal writing workshops.

Universities are increasingly taking part in raising climate change awareness among the youth and equipping them to become climate change advocates. In **Kenya**, Strathmore University in Nairobi joined a network of 7,000 other universities worldwide in declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019 as a move to prompt stakeholders to prioritise climate issues.⁷¹ The university committed to develop a plan to address the crisis through their work with students. In 2017, the university hosted simulated COP events to train the youth on processes involved in climate advocacy and policymaking.⁷² In addition, the university set up its own 600-kilowatt photovoltaic grid tie-in system and now runs on solar power. Another initiative on campus involves ‘green buildings’, which utilise natural lighting, water evaporation cooling systems and rainwater, making them much more affordable to run than conventional buildings. Students and faculty members are also working together on projects around plastic recycling and using food waste to produce natural gas. There is a growing number of Kenyan universities that are investing more in greener campuses and curricula. In collaboration with UNEP, Kenyan universities launched the Kenya Green University Network in 2016.⁷³ The aim of this network is to promote environmental and sustainability practices among Kenyan universities as well as strengthen environmental education and training. It serves as a knowledge and innovation hub and supports the sharing of best practices to support the achievement of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Karatina University aims to position itself as a driver of the global environmental agenda and is seeking to position itself as ‘The Green Entrepreneurial University’.⁷⁴ It has started the process of establishing a green entrepreneurial culture and has developed a policy on

69 ‘Young CEO empowers women, youth in climate fight,’ *The Commonwealth*, December 16, 2019, <https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/young-ceo-empowers-women-youth-climate-fight>.

70 Angelique Pouponneau was formerly the vice-chair of the Commonwealth Youth Council and the 2016 Queen’s Young Leader. She now heads the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT).

71 Cheruto Valentine, ‘Strathmore Joins Other Universities Declaring Global Climate Emergency,’ *ScienceAfrica*, July 11, 2019, <https://scienceafrica.co.ke/strathmore-joins-global-universities-to-declare-climate-emergency/>; and UNEP, ‘Kenyan universities aim to be the ‘greenest’ in the world,’ <https://www.unenvironment.org/ar/node/25170>.

72 Grace Mwaura, ‘World Climate Prepares Climate Change Ambassadors at Strathmore, Kenya,’ *Climate Interactive*, December 13, 2017, <https://www.climateinteractive.org/blog/world-climate-prepares-climate-change-ambassadors-at-strathmore-kenya/>.

73 UNESCO, ‘UNEP launches Kenya Green University Network,’ <https://en.unesco.org/news/unep-launches-kenya-green-university-network>.

74 ‘Public Lecture on Climate Change at Karatina University,’ *Karatina University*, January 2020, <https://www.karu.ac.ke/index.php/news-events/archived-news/195-public-lecture-on-climate-change-at-karatina-university>.

the Green Concept where all programmes, services, projects and products are structured towards sustainable use of natural resources.⁷⁵ In November 2019, the university hosted a green innovations competition week to stimulate and showcase entrepreneurship and innovation among students and the broader community. In January 2020, the university hosted public lectures on climate change with experts from UNEP.

Lessons learned

- Education and capacity building need to move beyond simply providing environmental or climate-related information and instead be integrated across a variety of different levels. Education needs to include leadership and skills development that focus on capacitating young people to engage effectively in different processes, demonstrating the intersectionality of climate change.
- Non-governmental entities, including youth, CSOs, academia and think-tanks, play an important role in advancing the advocacy of youth in climate change. These institutions can help to facilitate youth engagement in intergovernmental meetings, provide resources, capacity development and skills development, and they can also play a vital role in creating content about youth and climate issues, performing strategic advocacy and producing research-based policy inputs. NGOs, think tanks and academia can play an important role in sharing knowledge, creating platforms and running initiatives to bridge the gap between youth and researchers.
- Education that is engaging, relevant and participatory helps to build capacity – youth should not just be participants in programmes, but organisers, managers and coordinators. Providing work opportunities, practical experiences and project implementation experience is essential to building the capacity of young people. Providing such practical opportunities requires that realistic time and financial resources need to be allowed for in the design and implementation of projects.

Input into policy

Building on these ideas of education, it is beginning to be understood that it is not enough to simply educate young people about climate change, they need to be better equipped to use their knowledge and lived experiences to engage with policy that will affect their future. Each country in Africa is different, but policies are fundamental to decision-making at all levels and youth need to be active participants within policymaking processes.

While governments need to create an enabling environment for youth to participate in these processes, it is essential that youth have the skills and ability to engage effectively, understanding both how to make written and oral comments and contributions, as well as how to participate in negotiation processes. Building the capacity of youth to engage

⁷⁵ 'Karatina University Holds the First Green Innovations Competition,' *Karatina University*, <https://www.karu.ac.ke/index.php/news-events/archived-news/197-karatina-university-holds-the-first-green-innovations-competition>.

in policy processes is imperative for ensuring that the interests of future generations are protected.

Typically, policymaking has been a field reserved for government officials or representatives, but increasingly young people and CSOs are engaging in policy processes. Here are some examples of how young people are contributing to policymaking at different levels of society.

In **South Africa**, Youth@SAIIA and the YPC are providing a platform for youth to engage effectively with policy. In 2020, Youth@SAIIA celebrated a decade of working to increase child and youth participation in climate action in South Africa. SAIIA is an independent think-tank whose youth work is recognised by local and national government, including the Presidency, the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF), and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation. Youth@SAIIA has been participating in the national climate change stakeholder meetings since 2015 and provides a youth statement each year. In 2014, alumni of Youth@SAIIA established the YPC, which is an independent national convening platform for youth organisations and individuals between 14-24, to better understand, comment and participate in climate change and sustainable development-related policy and public participation processes at the national and international level. Over the years, the YPC has provided input into the formulation of several relevant policies, including South Africa's National Adaptation Strategy (2016), the draft South African Climate Change Bill (released for public comment in August 2018), the draft National Youth Policy 2030 (April 2020), and the South African position on the SDGs, Habitat III and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) COP 17. The YPC has contributed statements to inform South Africa's position preceding annual UNFCCC COP meetings, as well as a statement to the Partnership Action on Green Economy Conference that was hosted in January 2019. The YPC also conducts age-appropriate capacity building and training in policy participation, leadership and employability skills. Tools include simulations such as Model UN debates and Model Legislature programmes, where young people can start navigating the policy space and think about not just observing but putting themselves into the role of the decision-maker. As they build their skills and knowledge, they join the YPC to move beyond the simulation and engage directly in the decision-making processes. The demand for such training has increased over the years, with a marked rise in student and learner clubs, youth organisations, young activists and young researchers across South Africa. Demand has also increased from regional organisations. The YPC currently has 14 thematic working groups focusing on areas across the SDGs. Each group has a climate change and sustainability lens to their thematic area to contribute to a more robust and holistic understanding of the cross-cutting issues that are impacted by global change. The YPC also conducts site visits and fact-finding research and develops media and social media engagement strategies to promote awareness of their work.

In **Kenya**, the AYICC works with 20 active youth organisations and 300 youth members to contribute to policy in various ways. AYICC collaborated with the Kenyan Ministry of Forestry and Environment to give youth input into the Kenyan National Climate Change Action

Plans, both the 2013-2017 and the revised 2018-2022 versions. AYICC members engaged with the Kenyan National Youth Council and country youth organisations to review the plans, submitted views and comments to the government and captured how they wanted to engage in the implementation of the issues highlighted. AYICC also contributed to the NDC formulation process by coordinating a youth meeting to comment on the proposed NDC. Including comments and views of the previous NDC, AYICC helped to facilitate contributions to this policy, which were later submitted to the State Department for Youth Affairs.

Lessons learned

- Time, training and financing is required to effectively build the capacity of young people to participate in policy processes. While effective engagement in policy processes can be challenging, it has been demonstrated that young people thrive within these environments when they have both the skill and opportunity to do so.
- NGOs and think tanks can play an important role in facilitating youth engagement in policy processes, both in terms of making information accessible and understandable for young people. NGOs can also serve as a bridge to youth groups, specifically via schools, linking youth groups to policy processes and institutions that might otherwise be distant to them.

Using legal frameworks to promote climate justice

While climate advocacy has typically occurred through the more traditional mediums such as awareness, education and policy contributions, there has been a marked rise in the use of the legal system to hold governments to account for climate inaction. The increasing prevalence of such actions across the globe represent a new avenue for young climate advocates to promote accountability in terms of climate commitments.

In September 2019, 16 young people (aged between 8 and 17) from 12 countries around the world filed a landmark complaint to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child⁷⁶ against the lack of government action on climate change.⁷⁷ Amongst these advocates were child petitioners from **South Africa, Nigeria** and **Tunisia**.⁷⁸ The complaint claims that countries, specifically Germany, France, Brazil, Argentina and Turkey (five of the world's largest GHG emitters⁷⁹) have not done enough to prevent 'the deadly and foreseeable consequences' of the current climate crisis, thus failing to uphold their obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Greta Thunberg and the 15 others accused

76 196 countries are party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including every member of the UN except the US.

77 Grace Anderson, '5 Things to know about Greta Thunberg's Climate Lawsuit,' *UN Foundation Blog*, November 21, 2019, <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/5-things-to-know-about-greta-thunbergs-climate-lawsuit/>.

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79 The US and China are notably absent from the complaint as they have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child section that would allow complaints on potential violations of the treaty to be sent.

the countries of 'inadequate' national pledges to curb the climate crisis and argued that without this vital action the climate crisis would endanger their livelihoods. The advocates also called out the countries for not working hard enough to end the crisis, alleging that, 'each respondent has failed to use all available legal, diplomatic and economic means to protect children from the life-threatening carbon pollution of the major emitters.'⁸⁰ In the lawsuit, the young people called on governments to raise the ambition of their climate goals and cooperate with other nations to end the crisis. This new climate case is the first of its kind to be filed on behalf of a group of young people to protect the rights of youth around the globe. Beyond the legal impact of this case, the complaint serves as testament to the ever-growing role of youth in activism and advocacy.

The **Nigerian** economy relies heavily on crude oil and this has led to significant environmental degradation and GHG emissions. The water in the Niger Delta region is highly contaminated due to oil spills, which feeds into the water systems of various communities. In 2016, the Nigerian government launched a \$1 billion environmental remedial project with the assistance of UNEP and financing from international oil companies including Shell, the largest operator in the Niger Delta region. \$10 million was released to fund the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), however not much progress has been made due to on-going corruption and community members have continued to contract life threatening illnesses from consuming polluted water. In December 2018, the Ogoni Youth Federation filed a lawsuit against HYPREP demanding transparency on how the funds were being used to clean the Niger Delta Region. Facing resistance from the legal system, in July 2020 the Federal High Court in Nigeria issued a ruling on the lawsuit, stating that the plaintiffs filed the suit incorrectly and did not follow the right judicial process. Throughout the process, the Ogoni Youth were not assisted by government officials. While the legal action was unsuccessful, it indicates that environmental activists in Nigeria are exploring new avenues for accountability, including using legal frameworks to ensure environmental justice can be achieved.

Lessons learned

Using legal frameworks and lawsuits to hold governments to account for climate inaction is a broadly unexplored trend that requires further research. With the rapid rise of social media it has become easier to document and share information on the activities of governments, the private sector and other groups, and civil society is taking advantage of this in their efforts to promote social and environmental justice.

Despite being a relatively new arena for climate activism, it can be expected that more of these lawsuits will occur in the future.

⁸⁰ Anderson, "5 Things to know".

Youth climate action and the role of government

While the previous section looked at how youth organisations, CSOs, think tanks and academia have been responding to the climate emergency, this section will reflect on how governments are approaching the inclusion of young people in climate change responses. Policies, national programmes and decision-making processes are central to creating a climate resilient society and implementing commitments made through the UNFCCC and other international processes.

Youth in national climate policy

Young people have already shown that they have the motivation, creativity and passion to play a central part in climate responses. An enabling policy environment and a youth-inclusive approach to government programme development and implementation can play an important part in supporting young people's efforts towards a more climate-resilient society. Youth are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts and this should be recognised in policy instruments, yet it is important that youth are not presented merely in a passive manner as a vulnerable demographic in need of support – the role that young people can play as active change agents must be recognised. Specific consideration should also be given to gender, taking into account the climate-related social, economic and health impacts that women and girls are expected to face. The role of government in shaping education programmes also requires consideration. It is important that climate change is integrated in education systems, not only in terms of understanding geophysical processes, but also the social, political, economic and technological aspects of climate change. Education can play a key role in cultivating the involvement of engaged and informed young people in climate change responses.

In assessing the degree to which youth are recognised in national climate policies, there are a range of policy instruments that can be considered, but of particular relevance are NDCs and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). NDCs are a key mechanism of the Paris Agreement – every country that is part of the Paris Agreement is required to outline their mitigation and adaptation plans through an NDC, which is revised every five years and is expected to reflect ever higher levels of ambition. Similarly, NAPs are a UNFCCC mechanism to support country-level adaptation planning, with a particular focus on developing countries.

A review of 160 NDCs and 13 NAPs conducted in 2019 revealed that, globally, countries have a long way to go in terms of including youth (and related issues such as education and

girls) in their climate strategies.⁸¹ This means that the rights of youth, including their right to meaningfully participate in climate policymaking that affects them, is being broadly overlooked.

Only 67 of the 160 NDCs analysed (approximately 42%) include a direct reference to 'children' or 'youth', and only 8 NDCs refer to 'intergenerational injustice' or 'future generations'.⁸² The 20 largest carbon emitting countries were least focused on education and youth, and those countries that do include issues of intergenerational equity tend to be countries with a large under-15 population and those most vulnerable to climate change.

Children and the youth are described as 'vulnerable' in 32 NDCs, (including **Zimbabwe**, **Nigeria** and **Kenya**⁸³), as beneficiaries in 23 NDCs, (including **Sudan** and the **Seychelles**), and as agents of change in 12 NDCs, (including **Sudan** and **Seychelles**). Only seven NDCs positioned youth as stakeholders to be included in decision-making and climate action, with two of these being African countries, namely Mali and Algeria. 'Children and youth' were also referenced more frequently in relation to adaptation (33 NDCs) than mitigation (9 NDCs) activities. There is thus a clear distinction between NDCs that recognise the role that young people can play as active agents of change, and those that view youth merely as a vulnerable group that is disproportionately impacted by climate change.

While the Paris Agreement references gender equality, the empowerment of women, intergenerational equity and the rights of children, such issues are not adequately reflected in national climate policies. This must be addressed to ensure an enabling policy environment to support progress toward realising a just and equitable transition to a net-zero, climate-resilient future.

Research continues to highlight education and access to information as a key response in strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity, however, education and other sectors that can advance children's rights are almost non-existent in national responses to climate change.⁸⁴ Where education is referenced, it is done in general terms as a sector that needs to be mobilised or a set of abstract activities that needs to be enacted (eg, education, awareness and training). Rarely is the substance or the quality of education highlighted as an important factor in determining how education might contribute to the kind of systems-level transformation needed to increase humanity's ability to avert climate catastrophe.

Finally, examining references to girls, children and education in NDCs across countries shows that those countries that are historically responsible for anthropogenic GHG emissions are frequently the same countries that are not attending to the sociological dimensions of the impacts of climate change. Such analysis sheds light on how concepts

81 Kwauk et al., "Girls' Education in Climate Strategies".

82 Kwauk et al., "Girls' Education in Climate Strategies".

83 Youth are mentioned as part of a broader group of vulnerable individuals and minorities, not as a stand-alone group.

84 'National Climate Strategies Are Forgetting About Girls, Children and Youth,' *Brookings*, December 10, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2019/12/10/national-climate-strategies-are-forgetting-about-girls-children-and-youth/>.

like fairness, equity and climate justice are being side-lined by those with power, while countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are shouldering the burden of social change.

Parties to the Paris Agreement are required to submit revised NDCs in 2020. While some countries had submitted NDCs by the final quarter of 2020, it is evident that many countries will only be submitting their NDCs in 2021, in part due to disruptions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ambition contained within individual NDCs will collectively determine whether efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C by 2100 will be successful. It is imperative that national climate strategies include the most comprehensive, inclusive and ambitious mitigation and adaptation efforts possible. This includes focus on climate empowerment for the most marginalised (children, youth and girls specifically), the recognition of the rights of present and future generations, and positioning youth as active change agents in shaping a climate-resilient future. To ensure this happens, girls, children and youth must be included in the process of climate negotiations and in the creation and revision of NDCs.

BOX 3 SELECTED EXAMPLES OF YOUTH INCLUSION IN NDCs AND NAPs

While NDCs and NAPs overall did not include adequate representation or consideration of young people, there are some examples of policies that are oriented more positively for young people.

The **Seychelles NDC** is a notable example of NDCs taking a more ambitious, strategic and transformative child-sensitive approach to education, stating:^a

There is a need to accelerate efforts to integrate climate change education into the school curriculum at all levels, including primary, secondary and professional centres and ensure that adequate attention is given to adaptation measures. On a more fundamental level, there is a need for Seychelles to reinforce and enhance the quality of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education at all levels to develop a new generation more capable of climate change adaptation leadership.

Nigeria's NDC goes a step further to specify strategies for the education sector that could amplify the impact of its activities for greater climate action:^b

Provide evidence-based information to raise awareness and trigger climate change adaptation actions that will protect present and future generations in Nigeria.' It seeks to 'Develop skills-based curriculum in subjects like science, geography, social studies, language, arts, environmental education and technology that will empower children to better respond to the threats of climate change'. It further intends to 'Train teachers on climate change

adaptation teaching strategies and techniques at pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria.

Kenya's NAP references youth, calling special attention to their role in supporting innovative climate resiliency efforts:^c

Rising to the challenges of climate change requires innovative application of technology and science matched to local needs and risks. Kenyan universities and research institutes already possess a strong scientific foundation necessary to promote further research and development into local risks and adaptation options... In addition, small and medium sized enterprises in Kenya operated by the youth are at the forefront of innovation in technology and require adequate support to upscale and increase uptake of these innovations in order to enhance resilience.

- a Republic of Seychelles, *Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*, (2015), 6, <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Seychelles%20First/INDC%20of%20Seychelles.pdf>. [Alex, confirm you are happy with this style]
- b Government of Nigeria, *Nigeria's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution*, (2017), 22, https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Nigeria%20First/Approved%20Nigeria's%20INDC_271115.pdf.
- c Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, *Kenya National Adaptation Plan 2015-2030: Enhanced climate resilience towards the attainment of Vision 2030 and beyond*. (Republic of Kenya, 2016), 24, https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Documents%20NAP/Kenya_NAP_Final.pdf.

In addition to the NDCs and NAPs, there are many other country-level climate strategies requiring scrutiny and research. In theory, a country's NDC and NAP should be aligned with its other climate-related policy frameworks. Further analysis is needed on inclusion of youth in other climate strategies and policies, such as Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs), National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), national climate change strategies, climate bills, green economy strategy and sectoral policies and strategies. Selected examples of such policies are presented here.

Nigeria's National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action (2012) supports the provision of training on climate change adaptation to youth advocates (amongst other stakeholders) in basic methods of community-based vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning and implementation.⁸⁵ It also includes reference to 'gender mainstreaming for female youth and male youth to ensure that the groups have the opportunity to participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes to benefit equally from climate change adaptation policies and programmes.' The Nigerian

85 Government of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Environment, Special Climate Change Unity, *National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change for Nigeria (NASPA-CCN)*, (Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change (BNRCC), 2011), <http://csdev.net.org/wp-content/uploads/NATIONAL-ADAPTATION-STRATEGY-AND-PLAN-OF-ACTION.pdf>.

federal government also mentions supporting initiatives such as the Agriculture Extension Service for Climate Change Adaptation programme, as well as other programmes focused on 'Training of Trainers in priority adaptation areas, and involvement/engagement of the National Youth Service.'⁸⁶

Kenya's Climate Change Act (2016) includes references to 'intergenerational equity', defined as 'equity among present and future generations and equity in the present generation.'⁸⁷ It states that the country should 'mainstream intergenerational and gender equity in all aspects of climate change responses'⁸⁸ and calls for a 'national gender and intergenerational responsive public education awareness strategy and implementation programme.' The Act also calls for the establishment of a 'Climate Change Fund that shall set out procedures to ensure gender and intergenerational equity in access to monies from the Fund.'⁸⁹ **Kenya's National Climate Change Framework Policy** highlights the importance of reinforcing 'intra- and inter-generational equity by supporting the youth.'⁹⁰ It states that 'the youth represent a crossover between the present and future generations, and therefore play a critical role in socio-economic development, including addressing climate change. It is necessary to carve out specific roles and opportunities for youth participation in decision-making in climate change governance, and to pursue opportunities that arise through climate change actions.'⁹¹ **Kenya's National Climate Change Action Plan (2018-2022)** also describes youth as 'agents of change [who] have influence on the broader community through their parents, relatives, and families. They will be engaged through climate change actions, and the development and implementation of the gender and intergenerational plan.'⁹²

Lessons learned

- Policymakers need to consider young people as important stakeholders, beneficiaries, agents of change and communicators of good practice, ensuring that their needs, vulnerabilities, rights and agency are reflected in policies. This should be reflected not only in the policies themselves, but in the policymaking process, through supporting meaningful engagement of youth in policymaking processes.
- Intergenerational equity must be included in climate policy and NDCs must recognise the rights of present and future generations of young people. Gaps must be filled

86 Nigeria, "National Adaptation Strategy", 53.

87 Republic of Kenya, *The Climate Change Act*, (Nairobi: Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 68 (Acts No. 11), 2016), 185, http://www.environment.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/The_Kenya_Climate_Change_Act_2016.pdf.

88 Kenya, "Climate Change Act 2016", 191.

89 Kenya, "Climate Change Act 2016", 199.

90 Kenya, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, State Department of Environment, *National Climate Change Framework Policy*, Sessional Paper No. 5 of 2016, 29, <http://www.environment.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Climate-Change-Framework-PolicyMay2017.pdf>.

91 Kenya, "National Climate Change Framework Policy", 30.

92 Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, *National Climate Change Action Plan (2018-2022), Volume 1*, (Nairobi: Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2018), 120, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/8737.pdf>.

in climate policy in terms of its attention to social protection and the inclusion and empowerment of marginalised groups as agents of change.

- National policies must take gender into consideration through greater attention to quality, empowering and transformative education for girls. Climate action that is gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and gender-transformative can bring about the systems-level change needed, not only to eliminate gender inequality, but also to achieve a sustainable, just, equitable and fair society.

Including youth in policy development

While it is important that climate policy recognises youth, it is equally as important to ensure that youth are included in the policy development process itself. Young people should contribute inputs and opinions, participate in drafting policy text and engage with the negotiation process, ensuring that their rights are secured throughout the policy development process.

'Every person has a responsibility to be part of the journey towards a sustainable future. It doesn't matter how small your contribution is, because it is those small acts multiplied by millions of people that eventually make a great difference in the world!'

[Elizabeth Wanjiru Wathuti, [Kenyan youth climate advocate](#)]

Contributing to policy

In **South Africa**, climate change negotiators from DEFF recognise there is a great demand and need for focused consultative sessions with organisations that advocate for gender and climate change, and youth in climate change. DEFF has recognised that, as a primary stakeholder group, youth inclusion in the revised NDC process needs to be emphasised. Youth, along with other stakeholder groups, have been invited to the National Climate Change Committee meetings and annual COP preparation meetings that have included discussion on NDCs.⁹³ Together with other groups like women, labour and business, youth have also been given opportunities to present official statements at these meetings.

⁹³ Maesela Kekana (Chief Director, International Climate Change Relations and Negotiations, DEFF, South Africa), interview by Desiree Kosciulek, June 2020. Also see the South African Youth Statement to UNFCCC COP24: https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/southafrican_youthstatementtoCOP24.pdf.

DEFF has historically worked with groups like the YPC, Project 90 by 2030 and SAYCCC to coordinate national youth voices, and utilised their networks to nominate youth representatives to deliver these presentations. While this kind of collaboration with youth and civil society demonstrates good practice for integrating and coordinating activities, challenges still remain. A key issue is limited reach; there is a need for more broad-based and intra-generational youth consultations in the future. Other constraints include issues around access and participation, including the time and location of consultations – consultations are often scheduled in the morning during a weekday, making it difficult for students and learners to attend unless they have support from a participating NGO or school. The meetings also usually take place in Pretoria, South Africa’s administrative capital, which can limit the participation of young people due to transport or travel constraints and costs.

‘Things have changed since 2015. There’s a greater demand to have focused consultation sessions particularly with organisations that advocate for gender and climate change and youth in climate change’

[Maesela Kekana, Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, South Africa]

In **Kenya**, there is an inclusive, multi-stakeholder process for input into climate change policies, including the Climate Change National Policy and the NDC. In this process, the government employs an independent consultant to engage various stakeholder groupings, including youth. The Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender calls a youth meeting for input into a draft policy instruments (such as the NDC or national climate policies). The consultant reviews the policy statement and is responsible for ensuring that the new draft policy document reflects the inclusion of all stakeholder perspectives. If the due process is followed by the consultant and the document is deemed satisfactory to all the stakeholders, a final meeting is called for by the government to validate the document in the presence of all stakeholders.

In **Uganda**, young people are engaging in public consultation processes to raise perspectives and concerns in the development of a national climate change bill. Networks established by youth climate advocates at a national level, relying on social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, have been crucial in coordinating engagement in these formal policy processes.

In the **Seychelles**, national policymaking processes have a strong consultative component that include multiple stakeholders, including youth advocates. A consultative approach is used where policymakers engage with existing networks in the public, private and civil society sectors, including young people, to collect written submissions as part of an

inter-sectoral engagement in the policymaking process. These views are then collated into a single document and presented to the government. The formulation of the recent Seychelles' National Climate Change Policy (2019/2020)⁹⁴ is a prime example of effective cross-sectoral engagement and inter-ministerial collaboration that is central for the effective financing and facilitation of pro-environment youth activities. The Seychelles' National Climate Change Committee is also required to have a seat exclusively reserved for one youth member.⁹⁵ In addition, the Seychelles National Youth Policy Forum is funded and coordinated by government with the primary role of strengthening youth priorities in policy development and implementation. As a multi-sectoral working group made up of leaders from various youth-related sectors (including education, entrepreneurship, health, etc.), the Forum convenes monthly to discuss issues relating to education and training, economic participation, health and well-being, social ills, promotion of youth empowerment and moral values.

In **Nigeria**, prior to 2019 there was limited opportunity to participate in climate change policy formulation – efforts to engage with youth were not inclusive and youth input into policy was not prioritised. A major shift took place in 2019 when the Nigerian Department of Climate Change started engaging substantively with youth. The Department organised Youth Climate Innovation Hubs as a platform to engage with youth and hosted the Youth Climate Change Roundtable in collaboration with the Climate and Sustainable Development Network. It should be noted that currently there is no official platform for youth to engage with government on climate change policy and youth have embarked on creating an umbrella platform which will act as the national organisation for youth advocates in the policy development space. This umbrella platform is still in the development stages. The Department also hosted a youth roundtable discussion in June 2019⁹⁶ in anticipation of the UN's Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in September 2019 and to inform the country position ahead of UNFCCC COP25 later that year. In September 2020, the Department of Climate Change hosted a national youth climate consultation on NDC enhancement. The aim of this virtual event was to bring meaningful youth engagement into Nigeria's NDC revision process and in tracking NDC implementation. Contributions were made by the youth through this process and the Department, in collaboration with the youth and other stakeholders, established eight NDC youth working groups focused on agriculture, energy, oil and gas, industry, transport, water and cross-cutting issues (finance and investment, gender and youth). Each working group will be coordinated by a youth volunteer who will liaise with the Department for continued engagement with the NDC revision and implementation process. All youth volunteers within the working groups will further be invited to relevant capacity building training and will be invited to make contributions to studies and analyses where necessary. Nigeria has

94 Government of Seychelles, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, *Seychelles' National Climate Change Policy: Making Seychelles Resilient* (Seychelles: Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, 2020), <http://www.meecc.gov.sc/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/seychelles-national-climate-change-policy-may-2020.pdf>.

95 Angelique Pouponneau, (CEO of Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation trust), interview by Matthew Wannenburg and Aaliyah Vayez, June 2020.

96 Nigerian Department of Climate Change (@fmeclimateng), 'Roundtable on Climate Action,' Twitter post, June 8, 2019, <https://twitter.com/fmeclimateng/status/1137260013104222208>.

also established a National Youth Coalition on Education. While the platform is not specific to climate change, it is widely known, and many youth activists are part of its network. The Coalition has a strong social media presence and engages with government regularly. Youth are trained annually and are exposed to global, regional and national best practises on engagement initiatives around education advocacy. The Coalition serves as a platform to amplify youth perspectives on how to promote accountability and transparency in the implementation of education policies.

Lessons learned

- There is need to redefine what meaningful youth engagement looks like within policymaking processes and to move away from tokenistic initiatives. While government has a responsibility to provide more open and inclusive processes for youth participation, they additionally need to support capacity building initiatives to ensure youth can engage within those processes more effectively.
- Government institutions can create a more enabling environment by recognising young people as important stakeholders, and working with networks, institutions, organisations, schools and other stakeholders to facilitate active youth participation in policy development.
- While there is often a focus on 'older' youth (25-35), greater attention could be placed on engaging with younger demographics, specifically high school aged students who are willing and keen to engage in policy development.
- While it is important for youth to be included within policy processes specifically related to climate change, it is also important for other policy processes to be accessible to youth as well, recognising the intersectionality of climate change and youth-related interests alike.
- Including youth in policy development should be seen as mutually beneficial. Not only will it help to strengthen the capacity of young people, but it will also strengthen the capacity of policymakers to engage more effectively with their constituencies. This provides an opportunity for policymakers to be more inclusive and representative in their decision-making.

Increased access to decision-makers

Public participation processes such as stakeholder consultations with government officials or parliamentary forums can be an important way for civil society, academia and the private sector to engage in policy processes. Unfortunately, many young people are either not aware of such engagement opportunities or face significant barriers to participation. Youth climate advocacy groups that have been able to develop relationships with decision-makers within government, can find an avenue to gain access to meetings, understand processes and even develop allies. These government officials can alert the youth to opportunities for engagement and champion youth climate advocacy agendas within

institutional and policy processes. This is not always motivated purely by benevolence, however, and can serve a political purpose for electoral candidates and government officials in need of a vocal youth support-base. Such dynamics should be taken into consideration by young people seeking to engage in policy processes. Increased access to policymakers and government representatives is an important component of ensuring youth have access to policy processes and can contribute more effectively to climate policy.

In Nigeria, the Department of Climate Change recently started using Twitter as a way of engaging with youth climate advocates. This is done through daily active tweeting, open engagement on policy development and open invitations to various dialogues, such as the Youth Roundtable on Climate Change and the Youth Climate Innovation Hubs. The Innovation Hubs were mainly advertised on the Department's Twitter account, where youth were able to pose questions and engage policymakers. The account currently has 3,741 followers. Through Twitter, the Department shares extensive information on its plans and activities, as well as creating opportunities for engagement – these vary from webinars, to notifications of public activities and engagements around the Department's involvement in UNFCCC processes.

In South Africa, youth-focused climate dialogue sessions convened in February and June 2020 have provided a unique platform for young people to engage directly with the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries and other government officials. These meetings have served as a basis for greater youth engagement and signal a greater openness to positioning youth as a valuable stakeholder group that should be consulted in policy processes. Future meetings have been proposed and it is hoped that more youth groups and organisations will continue to be included.

'To the world leaders I say: it's now time to act. Include the youth in your policymaking because those are the people on the ground, the people who are feeling the effects of climate change'

[Nkosilathi (Nkosi) Nyathi, Zimbabwean youth climate advocate]

Lessons learned

Access to policymakers and influencers helps to create an enabling environment for youth participation. Policymakers can use a range of social media and other tools to both engage with young people and to stimulate discussions and foster dialogue, as well as gather input for policy contributions.

While government institutions need to ensure that policy and decision-making processes are accessible, the youth equally have a responsibility to be informed about engagement opportunities. Youth inclusion is a shared responsibility, where different parties actively engage with each other to ensure the rights of youth are respected in policy processes.

While access to policy processes and engagement with key figures is important, government also needs to demonstrate how the views of young people have been considered and reflected in the decisions made. Demonstrating how youth voices have been incorporated into either policies or initiatives not only helps to increase more meaningful engagement with young people, it also helps to demonstrate governments' commitment to transparency and inclusiveness.

Government programmes for education, capacity building and job opportunities

It is well understood that tackling the climate crisis requires climate science and information to be mainstreamed into formal education programmes, implemented at national levels and integrated into various cross-cutting subjects. Mainstreaming climate science into education not only helps to develop a more engaged and better-informed society, but also fosters engaged, climate-conscious citizens. Education, however, goes far beyond the traditional learning environment and needs to include capacity building, skills development and experiential, on-site learning.

Basic and tertiary education

In the **Seychelles**, people are extremely proud of the pristine natural environment, a large proportion of which remains designated as nature reserves and protected areas. Environmental education and climate literacy are inculcated in the Seychellois youth from an early age, with a competitive model prioritising climate justice and climate awareness. The Seychelles Eco-School Programme, established in 1976 under which all state schools are registered, is coordinated by the Environmental Education Unit within the Ministry of Education, and supported strongly by the Ministry of Environment and Energy.⁹⁷ The programme brings state and non-state actors together to promote environmental learning and environmental management practices in the daily operation of schools. Schools respond through participating in decision-making, holistic approaches to curriculum development, student-centred teaching, creating links between school communities, and innovative management of resources and the beautification of school grounds. The numerous Eco-School partners perform different roles and set up varied activities to promote youth environmentalism and climate advocacy. For example, the Ministry of Environment and Energy provides financial support for educational trips, whereas Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles funds school-based environment clubs, coordinated by teachers

⁹⁷ Republic of Seychelles, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, 'Eco-School,' <http://www.meecc.gov.sc/index.php/eco-school/>.

working alongside youth environment leaders in each Eco-School. Eco-schools are awarded points for their efforts and certificates, cash prizes and flags are examples of rewards given to schools for their participation. There are also several incentivised activities, such as annual writing competitions and beach clean ups, as well as the Seychelles Islands Fund's prize of a two-week trip to a remote atoll Aldabra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site not visited by many Seychellois, where youth are able to interact with conservation entities.

In **Kenya**, the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Forestry stated that climate change was set to be a core subject in the national education curricula, as stipulated in Kenya's National Climate Change Framework Policy and the Climate Change Act, 2016.⁹⁸ In 2017, Kenya's Ministry of Education launched the Competency-based Curriculum that emphasises the development of skills and knowledge and applying them to real life situations. This includes promoting positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection through agricultural and environmental activities. In pursuit of its efforts to include climate change in national education curricula, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry released a draft document in May 2020 titled 'Guidelines for Mainstreaming Climate Change in Curricula at all Levels of Education and Training'.⁹⁹

Ethiopia is taking concrete steps to integrate climate change into school curricula through a curriculum reform processes that was initiated in 2019.¹⁰⁰ The government highlighted the importance of education in addressing climate change, as well as the role climate change learning can play in achieving Ethiopia's Climate Change Education Strategy 2017-2030.¹⁰¹ The vision for the new curricula is to create environmentally conscious citizens that can enhance Ethiopia's climate resilience and green economic development. This document is still in the process of being finalised. The government encourages greater awareness by involving all sectors of society in national tree planting campaigns and more broadly in natural resource rehabilitation. The National Tree Planting Day in 2019 saw 4 billion seedlings being planted by 23 million people, with seedlings sponsored by the government,¹⁰² with an aim of planting 5 billion trees in 2020.

Capacity building initiatives

Zimbabwe hosted its inaugural African Youth Science Technology and Innovation boot camp in February 2020 with the aim of equipping young people with skills and encouraging the uptake of science and technology. Primarily focused on robotics, artificial intelligence and 3D printing, the boot camp is an interactive experience focused on building robots and understanding how robots can be used to solve problems in local

98 Kenya, "Climate Change Act 2016".

99 Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, *Guidelines for Mainstreaming Climate Change in curricula at all Levels of Education and Training - Draft* (Nairobi: Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020) <http://www.environment.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Climate-change-curriculum-guidelines-31st-May-2020.pdf>.

100 Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Ministry of Education, *Climate Change Education Strategy of Ethiopia, 2017-2030* (Addis Ababa: 2017), https://www.efccc.gov.et/images/Polices/Ethiopia_CCE_Strategy.pdf.

101 Ethiopia, "Climate Change Education Strategy 2017-2030".

102 'Deforestation: Did Ethiopia plant 350 million trees in a day?' *BBC News*, August 10, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49266983>.

communities. Exploring robotics and artificial intelligence can inspire youth to use science, engineering and technology to overcome socio-economic challenges at a community level and to help attain the SDGs. The training helps to encourage innovative thinking, while simultaneously equipping participants with practical skills. The boot camp also specifically focused on building a green economy in a post-COVID-19 world, and while not specifically focused on climate-related response measures, there was an overall focus on green technologies and how these can be used in different sectors. Young people in Zimbabwe are also being engaged at high school and university levels through innovation hubs that seek to close the gap between education and industry. Elevate Trust is a youth leadership and capacity building foundation that facilitates youth development in innovation, entrepreneurship and career development through its projects (including the Innovators Hub Club¹⁰³ and Incubator Lab). These projects focus on developing a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship through leadership training courses, industry visits, job shadowing opportunities, innovation challenges, boot camps, career days and club meetings.

In **Nigeria**, Youth Climate Innovation Hubs¹⁰⁴ have been established to catalyse engagement between government and youth climate advocates around climate change. As an initiative spearheaded by the Climate and Sustainable Development Network in collaboration with the Department of Climate Change under the Ministry of Environment, hubs were hosted throughout 2019 in the six regions of Nigeria. Participants were provided with entrepreneurship and skills development training to help them develop ideas that could turn into implementable opportunities. Youth were also provided with mentorship, where feedback was given on their climate innovation ideas to help convert these ideas into viable businesses. In addition, the youth had an opportunity to engage with climate specialists, including the founder of Environmental Rights Action, a Nigerian advocacy NGO. The Director of the Department of Climate Change expressed his intention for the hubs to be hosted annually and established a mailing list with all the youth participants in an effort to inform them of the outcomes of the programme, as well as notify them about subsequent programmes relating to climate change in Nigeria.

Recognising the importance of social media to advancing the green movement, in **Kenya** the Ministry of Environment and Forestry embarked on a youth training initiative to enhance participation in green growth and sustainable development employment programmes.¹⁰⁵ More than 150 young people in Nairobi made use of this training to learn how to use social media to communicate on environmental issues and share effective messaging amongst peers.

The new climate economy, and the transition towards it, will create many employment opportunities for young people. Climate mitigation and adaptation requires many sectors

103 Innovators Hub Club, 'About Us,' <https://www.innovatorshubclub.org/aboutus/>.

104 'Youths highlight practical climate actions in North Central Nigeria,' *Enviro News Nigeria*, August 28, 2019, <https://www.environmentnews-nigeria.com/youths-highlight-practical-climate-actions-in-north-central-nigeria/>.

105 Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya, 'Ministry to train youth on social media to create environmental awareness', <http://www.environment.go.ke/?p=4623>.

of the economy to transition into more green practices, fostering a climate economy that embraces the pillars of sustainable development. As states and industries transition, green skills will be required in this new job market. While the private sector plays an important role in job creation, governments also play a central role in incentivising, structuring and promoting the green transition.

'Youth are the solution. Through our keen knowledge of technology, our ability to innovate and our connectedness to both local and international knowledge, we can work together to come up with solutions. By directing our energy and efforts towards driving policies, creating strategies that allow us to adapt, and raising our voices in the climate negotiations, we can make a difference'

[Nisreen Elsaim, [Sudanese young climate advocate](#)]

Job opportunities and skills

The Government of **Seychelles** promotes capacity-building and youth participation in climate activities by providing job shadowing and internship opportunities. These opportunities are designed to equip the youth with formal work experience in different dimensions of climate change, including policymaking, research and data collection, and practical project implementation. Focusing on the sustainable development of ocean-based economic enterprises, SYAH, in collaboration with the Government of Seychelles, began the Blue Economy Incubator Programme, instituting a blue economy internship aimed at mobilising young people to explore possibilities of career development within the blue economy and maritime sector. The programme began in 2016 and currently constitutes a team of five young Seychellois who form part of the Department of the Blue Economy's youth advocacy group.¹⁰⁶ Over a period of 2-3 years, this team is expected to provide logistical and technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of the Blue Economy Framework and Roadmap, and promote the principles of the blue economy in different media formats and amongst their youth peers. Direct engagement with state officials on policy matters is very valuable, both from a knowledge and capacity building perspective, as well as in supporting access to networks beyond community or NGO stakeholders. By cultivating interest and climate awareness, it is envisioned that these interns will use their experience to promote and support ocean sustainability in the future. According to the Vice-President of the Seychelles, Vincent Meriton, 'We are committed to

106 Elsie Pointe, 'Blue economy advocates meet Vice-President Meriton,' *Seychelles Nation*, May 26, 2020, <http://www.nation.sc/articles/4776/blue-economy-advocates-meet-vice-president-meriton>.

supporting the aspirations of all the youth to be our ocean ambassadors, and to empower them to take over from us in leading our country and the next generation into a sustainable ocean future.’¹⁰⁷

Similarly, in **Ethiopia**, the Ministry of Environment has initiated an internship programme that trains young people in the Ministry’s activities, including on national, regional and global environmental policy processes. Run as a partnership between the Ministry of Environment and the University of Addis Ababa, the programme exposes young people to diplomacy broadly, seeking to foster active engagement by youth in negotiation processes. The Government of Ethiopia also has a strong ‘green jobs’ focus, seeking to engage youth in supporting the country’s green economy.

In **South Africa**, job creation and skills development are an important focus. South Africa’s National Climate Change Response White Paper refers to ‘expanding existing poverty alleviation job creation programmes, such as the Expanded Public Works Programme and the National Youth Service’.¹⁰⁸ It also speaks of promoting job creation incentives in new, green industries, especially targeting youth. In this regard, a Green Youth Indaba organised by the Green Youth Network is hosted annually to focus on youth employment in areas of the green economy such as sustainable waste management, water conservation, renewable energy, the fourth industrial revolution and technology advancement, as well as green opportunities for youth within government, the private sector and cities in South Africa. DEFF also recently announced a new fund called the “Driving Force for Change” pilot youth support initiative’ that will provide funding to 10 different youth projects. The initiative came about after pressure from youth participants and organisations. More support by the government to local projects means that organisations, especially small youth-led groups, could have a greater chance of accessing resources – particularly since it can be difficult for small organizations to access funding through large donor or social investment funds.

BOX 4 BECOMING AN ‘E-NFLUENCER’ FOR CHANGE: THE STORY OF JODAH PETROS

Jodahi Petros is an Ethiopian youth and environmental activist who believes that the problems of the world are interrelated, and so too should be the solutions. With this belief, Jodahi founded ‘Joda’s E-nfluence (JE)’, a space for young people to work on environmental issues and become environmental influencers, or ‘e-nfluencers’. JE uses social media to host online conversations on topics of interest and uses various forms of art and media to create and share information. The conversations often include people from diverse backgrounds, including medical, business, technology and environmental sectors, offering a creative learning space for young people where they can contribute to knowledge sharing and environmental action.

107 Pointe, ‘Department of the Blue Economy creates youth group,’ *Seychelles Nation*, May 20, 2020, <http://www.nation.sc/articles/4703/department-of-the-blue-economy-creates-youth-group>.

108 South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), ‘National Climate Change Response White Paper’, 2012, <https://www.sanbi.org/documents/national-climate-change-response-white-paper/>.

Many of the skills that Jodahi uses to run JE were developed when he worked as an intern for the Ethiopian Ministry of Environment. Not only did he learn about valuable tools that helped him to coordinate and launch his online platform, he also attended UNFCCC COP23 as an official youth representative for Ethiopia. With his interest in environmental issues sparked, he launched JE when he returned home, and continues to apply his skills at a community level.

Jodahi also served as a chair of the Green Rotaract Concept for Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan and Eritrea, aimed at increasing public awareness about environmental issues and conducting grassroots-level work for environmental protection. Additionally, during his time at the University of Addis Ababa, he served as Executive Director of Youth Negotiation on Climate Change Convention.

Lessons learned

- Curriculum reform is necessary to mainstream climate change in national education strategies and to encourage climate-conscious citizens. The climate crisis needs to be integrated into all relevant subjects and at all levels of education, recognising the intersectionality of climate change.
- Teachers need to be equipped to manage these changes to the education curricula and need to be participate in capacity building and training activities to improve their ability to teach climate change and its related integration into all elements of education.
- National initiatives, consistent activities and appreciation for the natural environment help to create a national culture of environmental protection and awareness, which can be further integrated into the education system.
- There is a need to consider and undertake further research on non-formal education and the role governments can play in increasing awareness and fostering an environment that encourages environmental activism at all levels of society.
- Internships and job shadowing opportunities help to boost the capacity of youth and give them practical experience to become effective change agents. Young people will often apply new skills acquired through such opportunities in community level initiatives, thereby helping to sustain environmental protection initiatives.
- Sustainable work and a just transition need to be mainstreamed into all sectors.
- There needs to be a greater push to develop a circular economy and to increase the capacity of young people to engage more creatively and effectively within this space.

Other processes for participation

There are other formal platforms and institutions where youth can be engaged in democratic processes to promote climate policy discussions and formulation, as well as building the capacity of young people to become effective citizens. This includes policy and decision-making processes at municipal and provincial/district levels, youth climate councils at national or municipal levels, parliamentary and sub-national youth portfolios, and national and regional advocacy networks.

In **South Africa**, high school learner-led junior councils for municipalities, as well as children and youth parliaments at the provincial and national level, have been established throughout the country, but these forums tackle many issues and do not necessarily include engagement on climate issues. There is a greater push by organisations to open participation more widely and to encourage additional forums and processes for youth to formally engage on the climate crisis. Public participation is enshrined in the South African Constitution and while there is a mandate to undertake public participation in policy development and governance processes, it is implemented in different ways in each municipality and province. In 2019 the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature worked with Youth@SAIIA to host a sustainability-themed Model Legislature that was open to young people aged 14-26 from across the province. While the province does host a youth parliament, this can be a partisan event that typically requires participation through political parties. The Western Cape Provincial Parliament has demonstrated an openness to engaging with youth groups and has worked with Youth@SAIIA on the Model Legislature and more generally to increase youth participation in sittings and submissions. A representative from the Western Cape Provincial Parliament served as an opening speaker at a virtual Model Legislature session hosted in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown. Throughout the country, environmental education centres governed by municipalities (including the City of Cape Town, eThekweni and Polokwane, etc.) play a vital role in climate and environmental awareness, but policy participation and formulation are not traditionally considered key parts of the outreach to young people. Municipalities across South Africa have been working on Climate Action Plans, and municipalities like the City of Joburg, City of Cape Town and eThekweni Municipality have expressed interest in involving youth in the roll-out and implementation of their climate-related activities.

Children's parliaments have been established in several African countries, including **Ethiopia, Nigeria** and **Uganda**. These institutions aim to strengthen youth engagement in governance processes and can serve as a mechanism to highlight concerns related to climate change impacts on young people.

The **Seychelles National Youth Council (SNYC)** has operational responsibility for youth and focuses on youth services, a youth festival, the Young Citizen Movement and the formulation and revision of national youth policies. It is a non-political forum, funded and facilitated by the Seychellois government. Many notable Seychellois climate advocates have emerged from this Council. The Seychelles National Youth Assembly is a youth platform

provided and facilitated by the SNYC. In 2019, the SNYC hosted a workshop focusing on climate change awareness, as part of the Seychelles Youth Festival.

Lessons learned

- Youth advocacy is often targeted at national or multilateral policy processes and negotiations, yet there is a broader range of opportunities for youth to engage in governance processes related to climate change. Government institutions at all levels should explore innovative mechanisms for youth engagement on climate change, and seek to integrate the climate change agenda within existing structures (youth parliaments, youth councils, etc.).
- Young people should engage sub-national government institutions such as municipalities or provincial/district government departments and legislatures to explore ways in which youth engagement on climate issues can be strengthened in governance processes at these levels.

Youth inclusion in official COP delegations

There is an increasing international trend where youth participants have been invited to join their national climate delegations and negotiating teams to COP negotiations. In the past, youth involvement at UNFCCC meetings was limited, focusing more on administrative or networking activities to support official government delegations, or forming alliances outside of their country delegations. Increasingly, young people are taking a more active role on official delegations. Youth delegates are being invited to negotiation training and are representing their countries. They are starting to be considered as important diplomatic envoys and strategic partners. Despite these positive developments, most young climate advocates are provided financial, training and accreditation support to engage with COP processes by international NGOs and funders outside of formal national COP delegation processes. While this does allow a greater number of young people to access and engage with the COP process, ideally there should be greater support provided by governments themselves to support such youth involvement. Greater efforts are also required to support coordination between all nationals from a specific country participating in COP meetings, both in the run-up to the COP and during the COP itself. Some young climate advocates

‘Often young people can be seen as photo opportunities and talking points for politicians, media and bureaucrats, thus having a seat at the table but also becoming the silent “furniture” in large public events’

[Jeremy Raguain, [Seychellois youth climate advocate](#)]

note that, having secured access to a COP meeting through support by an international NGO, they found little opportunity to engage with their national delegation at the COP.

To participate in COPs, youth need to acquire official accreditation, which can be done in two ways. First, youth can be accredited as an 'observer' where they can participate in the negotiations as a member of civil society. While this allows entry into the COP, observer delegates are restricted in their movements and participation, as some processes are reserved for country negotiators alone. Alternatively, youth can also obtain 'Party' badges if they are officially members of their national delegation, and this allows them full access to the negotiations and the opportunity to comment from a youth perspective in negotiation processes. Some countries have moved to include a larger number of youth delegates or have given them 'delegation overflow' badges so that more young people can get into access-restricted meetings.

All of the focus countries reviewed in this report (South Africa, Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, the Seychelles, Nigeria and Uganda) are currently sending youth delegates to COP in an official capacity. Engagement and preparation training vary according to the country, as does the number and involvement of the youth representatives.

'My advocacy experience has been filled with responsibility and humility. It has been that of learning and sharing local experiences, actions and initiatives with others. I have had to lobby during high-level meetings. I used our local actions as examples that can be supported around the world'

[Esther Kelechi Agbarakwe, [Nigerian young climate advocate](#)]

BOX 5 RENEWING HOPE WITH IDEAS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY: THE STORY OF NISREEN ELSAIM

Nisreen Elsaim is an environmental and climate activist from Sudan. After completing a Bachelor's in Physics and a Masters in Renewable Energy from the University of Khartoum, she became increasingly passionate about environmental issues, particularly how these were related to social issues such as gender, youth and politics. She started volunteering as a project officer at the Sudanese Environment Conservation Society, where she became increasingly aware and concerned about the issue of climate change. Soon Nisreen was recognised for her hard work and dedication towards tackling environmental issues and she became a coordinator for the Youth and Environment Committee.

During her time with the Sudanese Environment Conservation Society, Nisreen was exposed to many academic and practical experiences that helped to develop her own capacity and understanding. Her work with the Sudanese Environment Conservation Society took her across Sudan and this helped her to understand the impact that climate change was having at a community level.

Nisreen knew that young people needed to be part of working towards a solution to climate change, but one of the challenges was that there was no platform for interested young people in Sudan to network and engage. Nisreen decided to establish the Youth and Environment - Sudan platform to help young people across Sudan connect and share ideas. At the same time, Nisreen became the Chair of the Sudan Youth Organisation on Climate Change, a youth-led organisation with 1,348 members working on climate change awareness and youth capacity building for climate change adaptation.

Nisreen always believed that it was important to be of service to her community and despite her numerous activities, she has organised and facilitated over 823 forums and workshops since 2013. In this way, she has helped to educate and build the capacity of local communities.

In addition to local communities, Nisreen also started engaging with the Government of Sudan, working to ensure that young people were recognised at various policy levels. She has attended all UNFCCC COPs as an official youth delegate since COP22 and continues to promote youth engagement at international levels. Nisreen was also the Chair of the first African COY in the build-up to COP and helped to coordinate and facilitate a conference with 351 youth participants.

Currently, Nisreen is a junior negotiator with the African Group of Negotiators for climate change and has a specific focus on technology transfer and how renewable energies and climate change issues are incorporated into national policy.

Nisreen has consistently shown her determination and dedication to tackling climate change and is a powerful example of how young people can become leaders and change-makers within their own communities. Nisreen was recently chosen as the UN Secretary-General's Youth Adviser on climate change along with six other young climate activists, and as the chair of the youth advisory group, she will be representing them at the High-level Advisory Group of the UN Secretary-General on climate change

Navigating and engaging in the official COP process is challenging and to ensure youth are effectively participating at COPs, consultative workshops hosted in advance help to provide background for participants and support meaningful engagement at the COP itself. This preparation helps delegates to achieve their policy goals for the negotiations.

In the Seychelles, national and regional level diplomacy and advocacy training programmes are critical. SYAH-Seychelles works with government through the #Prep4COP programme and the Youth Negotiator Exchange and Training Programme¹⁰⁹ to equip youth members of COP delegations with procedural and non-procedural assistance, preparing them with negotiating tactics and skills. The #Prep4COP programme has trained more than 75 young people and advocated for the further inclusion of young people in official delegations. By working with experienced government negotiators, youth delegates are able to improve their thematic knowledge on key negotiating topics while also improving their skills related to note-taking and reporting of issues during negotiations and side events. In December 2018, the training included 18 young people from SIDS countries, including a Seychellois contingent. At COP24, the Seychelles delegation benefited from over 618 hours of research and synthesis that the Seychelles Support Team provided. Four Seychellois youth members reported daily to the Seychelles government delegation on agenda items relevant to them. Each youth delegate was paired with an expert in a negotiating issue. In the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) negotiations on Action for Climate Empowerment, the Seychelles Support Team worked with the Government of the Seychelles to provide timely reporting and policy proposals that led to an in-session workshop at the 48th session of the SBI in May 2018.¹¹⁰ This is a mutually beneficial relationship as youth members gain access to the full extent of the negotiations as Party delegates, have contact with thought leaders in climate policy, and form valuable connections from youth movements around the world, while government negotiators receive up-to-date research and information that helps with their negotiation strategies.¹¹¹ The Youth Negotiator Exchange and Training Programme designed and coordinated the programme in collaboration with the Government of the Seychelles and SYAH-Seychelles, providing logistical support before, during and after the negotiations, and advising team members throughout.

‘At COPs, youth participation is often limited to civil society spaces rather than official negotiations or interactions with other delegations. This is a result of general incapacity – the knowledge/skills gap, insincere youth engagement that is optics-orientated and a lack of initiative on the part of government officials to genuinely engage with youth and voice their concerns vicariously’

[Elissa Lalande, Department of Energy and Climate Change, Seychelles]

109 This programme engages young people from SIDS delegations and other small country delegations in climate policy processes.

110 Youth Climate Lab, “SST Report from COP23”, 1.

111 ‘Y-Next Climate Diplomacy’, Youth Climate Lab, <https://www.youthclimatelab.org/ynext>.

In **South Africa**, the COP delegation has sought to incorporate an inclusive and consultative approach to the negotiations. All South Africans that attend COP meetings, regardless of their status, are invited to regular 'Team South Africa' meetings that include report backs from civil society, youth, business, local government and the negotiators. This provides young people, whether official country delegates or not, a way to engage with their negotiators. This process enables South African negotiators to be more open and accessible, supporting inclusive consultations during COP negotiations.

Lessons learned

- It is important for youth to be included in COP delegations, but this needs to be done in a meaningful way, recognising that youth can make valuable contributions to the negotiating process.
- Youth need to participate in preparation and capacity building exercises to be more effective in international processes, and governments need to be open and inclusive in both the training they provide and the accessibility they have while participating in international processes (such as COPs).
- Mentorship programmes can be an effective mechanism for transferring skills from more senior negotiators, particularly when embedded within official government processes.

Lessons learned and ideas for change



LESSONS LEARNED AND IDEAS FOR CHANGE

NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

- o Connection and collaboration are vital
- o Speak with a collective voice
- o Maximise the advocacy space

EDUCATION, CAPACITY BUILDING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- o Integrate climate change into national education strategies
- o Informal education plays an important role
- o Social media is important, but the digital divide continues to pose challenges
- o Focus on building skills for the future

POLICY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- o Including intergenerational equity and gender in policy
- o Including young people in policy processes
- o Building capacity to engage in decision-making processes
- o Including young people as decision-makers

CONCEPTUAL CHANGES

- o Climate change in the context of other developmental challenges
- o Recognise young people as effective participants
- o Realistic time, training and finance is essential



Drawing from the examples highlighted in the country assessments, it is possible to identify some key lessons learned and emerging good practice from civil society and governments alike. These lessons contribute to understanding what an active and youth-inclusive society should look like, offering an opportunity to shape the institutions and systems that help to create this.

The findings from this research can be grouped broadly into four key areas: networking and collaboration; education, capacity building and skills development; policy and policy development; and conceptual changes.

Networking and collaboration

Connection and collaboration are vital

Young people need a way to connect, to work collaboratively on finding solutions to problems, and to share their voices across different platforms. Multi-level civil society networks are important for connecting young people to each other, but also for connecting them to different issues and experiences and to different platforms and processes that can strengthen their participation. Young people use different forms of agency to undertake climate action and these multiple forms of action are necessary to tackle the climate crisis – strengthening and supporting networks helps to solidify these different actions and to catalyse them into a broader movement. To this end, it is important to establish and strengthen local and national youth networks and councils, where young people have the opportunity to both build a collective voice and to be independent and self-reliant, working without the influence of specific public or private sector interests.

Youth-focused networks are increasingly prominent in global climate policy processes, yet there are also many broader climate action networks that address themes such as adaptation, climate finance and other issues. Such networks should assess the degree to which they can facilitate youth engagement within their activities and seek ways in which ways this can be strengthened. This may involve, for example, incorporating young people into the network's leadership, ensuring that youth voices are heard during network strategy development and programme implementation, or creating a youth-focused and youth-led subcommittee.

Speak with a collective voice

Individuals can play an important role in stimulating action and while individual or celebrity figures may help to popularise movements, more emphasis needs to be placed on supporting networks and groups that can sustain activities. Building institutional support nationally, regionally and globally is vital to sustain the collective action of young people and this needs to be a priority focus area. While it may be difficult to find a unified voice amongst the diversity of opinions, working in unity to overcome challenges is essential. To help facilitate this, it is important to create an enabling environment for youth networks and NGOs, ensuring they are not hindered by bureaucratic practices and legislation and

receive the necessary support to sustain their internal activities. Many young climate advocates have either started their own youth-focused NGOs or networks, or play leadership roles in existing organisations – they have also shown great initiative in sharing insights they gain through individual access to climate policy processes with their peers. While young climate advocates often seek ways to ensure that their peers also benefit from individual support they have received, governments, funders, NGOs and other actors that do provide individualised support (eg, internships, capacity building programmes, funding for individuals to participate in climate negotiations) should seek to encourage, monitor and support such activities.

Maximise the advocacy space

To be effective, networks themselves need to build their own internal capacity and constantly take advantage of opportunities to boost their own advocacy. Creative and innovative tools exist through social media and more conventional methods of engagement that can be used to strengthen youth voices, and networks should use existing sources and materials to explore how they can improve their own advocacy.

Education, capacity building and skills development

Integrate climate change into national education strategies

The climate crisis needs to be integrated into all relevant subjects and at all levels of education, recognising the cross-cutting nature of climate change. Educators need to be equipped to manage these changes to formal and informal curricula and need to participate in capacity building and training activities to improve their ability to teach climate change and support its integration into all elements of education. Education that is engaging, relevant and participatory is necessary in national education strategies, and to encourage climate-conscious citizens.

Informal education plays an important role

While integrating climate change into national education strategies is vital, education does not only happen in the classroom and greater recognition needs to be paid to the institutions, programmes and initiatives that support non-formal learning. Programmes that support peer-to-peer learning, focus on leadership development, and engage young people in pragmatic, hands-on activities such as through school clubs or activities, can play a critical role in developing capacity and raising awareness. This also includes training on effective climate advocacy and policy engagement. More support needs to be provided to these non-formal education and capacity building initiatives. NGOs, think tanks and other civil society organisations engaged in climate and environment issues can play an important role in this regard.

Social media is important, but the digital divide continues to pose challenges

Digital platforms have opened up new opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes. There are a variety of ways that social media can support policy engagement and climate action, for example by allowing for the hosting of virtual events, using social media platforms to stimulate debate and discussion, and increasing access to decision-makers. The use of social media tools can help to increase inclusion, participation and engagement of young people, and can be an effective platform through which government stakeholders can engage with youth. However, it is also important to recognise that many people are still excluded from the digital space due to unreliable internet access, poor phone services and a lack of access to smart devices. Due to this, many people also lack the digital proficiency needed to engage effectively on these platforms. To ensure that people are not marginalised through digitalisation, additional support needs to be given through the provision of data, technology, training and technical support to ensure that young people can participate and that they have the skills and ability to engage effectively. In this way, the digital divide can be addressed and African youth can ensure their voices are included in the discussions taking place online, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focus on building skills for the future

Sustainable work and a just transition need to be mainstreamed into all sectors and all jobs need to be more sustainably oriented. In addition, young people need to be equipped to manage this green future and more emphasis needs to be placed on providing young people with the opportunity to develop practical skills. Internships and job shadowing opportunities are useful approaches to developing this capacity, but so too is the inclusion of young people in development implementation. When young people are actively involved in actual development implementation, such as through SDG or NDC initiatives, not only do young people develop their own capacity, but they strengthen the overall implementation itself. Further effort needs to be made to include young people in such initiatives and to ensure they have the necessary capacity to carry this forward.

Policy and policy development

Include intergenerational equity and gender in policy

National policy documents are critical for determining how young people are viewed and included in a country's development ambitions. To this end, it is important that intergenerational equity must be included in climate policy, including NDCs. Gaps must be filled in climate policy in terms of its attention to social protection and the inclusion and empowerment of youth as active agents of change, rather than positioning youth as merely a vulnerable group in need of support. National policies must also take gender into consideration, for example through greater attention to quality, empowering and transformative education for girls. Climate action that is gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and gender-transformative can bring about the systems-level change needed, not only to eliminate gender inequality, but also to achieve a sustainable, just, equitable and fair society.

Include young people in policy processes

When given the opportunity, young people can meaningfully contribute to policy development. This process not only strengthens policy itself, but helps to build a more inclusive and representative society. Government institutions can create a more enabling environment for including young people in decision-making processes by recognising them as important stakeholders and working with networks, institutions, organisations, schools and other informal groups to facilitate active youth participation. There is a need to redefine what youth engagement and participation looks like within these processes to move away from tokenistic representation and instead foster true participation. Accountability is an important issue in this regard – it should be made clear how youth position statements, outcome statements from youth-focused policy events and other forms of youth policy inputs will be incorporated into policy processes and this should be actively monitored by government and civil society stakeholders. It is also important to note that weak governance structures, weak democratic institutions and corruption compromises the ability of young people to engage within these processes and that good governance overall helps to facilitate and promote the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes.

Build capacity to engage in decision-making processes

While creating opportunities for youth participation is essential, there is also a need to support capacity building initiatives to ensure youth can engage within those decision-making processes more effectively. Greater effort needs to be made to host climate-related simulations, panels, workshops and debates to build capacity and ensure young people have the skills to effectively participate. Government institutions and civil society networks, institutions and organisations can work together to foster this skills development, both by facilitating and coordinating capacity building at local, national and international levels.

Include young people as decision-makers

While it is important to build the capacity of young people to participate in decision-making processes, and to make those processes accessible, it is equally as important to recognise that young people themselves should be considered as decision-makers. Increasingly young people are demonstrating that when they are placed in leadership positions, whether it is being in charge of a school project, being a project manager or heading a major NGO or institution, young people have the capacity to be good decision-makers. Young people need to be placed in leadership positions more frequently, included as the actual decision-makers and not merely in the process, and further efforts need to be made to continuously develop leadership schools through different programmes, opportunities and initiatives.

Conceptual changes

Consider climate change in the context of other developmental challenges

Often times, and particularly in an African context, people have immediate concerns, such as social, economic or health factors that may be prioritised over climate change activities. This demonstrates both the intersectionality of climate change and how it is deeply integrated into socio-economic realities. Education can be used to build an understanding of what localised climate impacts will be, which in turn will help to impart the urgency for climate action. If coupled with capacity building, such as thematic workshops and general skills development, non-mobilised young people will be better equipped to navigate this new space, allowing them to make an informed decision on what kind of climate advocacy they want to champion.

Recognising young people as effective participants

One of the key challenges that young people continue to face is that they are still viewed in a particular way – often young people are seen as uninformed or even unable to understand scientific or technical information. In addition, youth are often underestimated in terms of their potential to contribute meaningfully, particularly within policymaking and implementation processes. Recognising that young people are competent, able members of society who can contribute to policy development and implementation as full and active citizens is an important conceptual shift that needs to occur. Until this shift is made, youth participation and inclusion will remain tokenistic.

Realistic time, training and finance is essential

Time, training and financing is required to effectively build youth advocacy across all levels. It has been demonstrated that young people thrive across all platforms when they have both the skill and opportunity to do so. Financial support is needed to support education and capacity building initiatives, to support the operational functioning of youth organisations and networks to ensure their sustainability, and to ensure the inclusion of young people in international processes. The innovative use of funding can help to boost youth advocacy and support climate action projects, while simultaneously building capacity. Cross-sectoral and inter-institutional collaboration can support the streamlining and mainstreaming of youth climate advocacy, and pool monetary and non-monetary resources.

Conclusion

The impacts of climate change are already being experienced and the need for more climate action has never been more pressing. Young people across the world are taking action – they are taking concrete steps to inform themselves and their peers, to network at local, regional and international levels, to hold governments and other decision-makers to account, and strive towards intergenerational climate justice. African youth are part of this global movement, despite barriers to participation that may result from the digital divide, development challenges or, in certain cases, political restrictions to civil action.

This report has highlighted some of the climate action that is taking place across the African continent, focusing on examples from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Sudan and South Africa. These examples help to build an understanding of what emerging good practice looks like and how advocacy for climate action can be strengthened. As noted in the introduction to this report, it is not suggested that these focus countries are necessarily the leading examples of youth climate advocacy on the continent, or that the examples presented here are necessarily 'best' practice. Rather, the report seeks to contribute to an understanding of what good practice may look like by illustrating how young people and other stakeholders (including government and civil society) are seeking ways to strengthen the voice of youth in national and international climate responses in diverse settings.

One of the key messages of this report is that there is a pressing need for further research to be done, for example in defining what effective 'youth participation' and 'best practice' mean in youth climate advocacy, especially in an African context. The term 'youth participation' is used frequently, but currently there is limited understanding of what meaningful participation looks like, what actions and activities enable youth to participate as active and engaged citizens within decision-making processes, rather than being included in a superficial, tokenistic manner. In much the same way, the definition of 'best practice' needs to be explored. Setting parameters for how to define best practice will help both civil society and government representatives alike to more effectively support youth climate advocacy in meaningful ways.

Annex

CLIMATE-FOCUSED YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS REFERENCED IN THE REPORT				
Name	Country	Website	Facebook	Twitter
Youngo / International Youth Climate Movement	International	http://www.youngo.uno/	https://www.facebook.com/youngoclimate/	@IYCM
Green Generation Initiative	Kenya	https://greengenerationinitiative.org/	https://www.facebook.com/GGI.Kenya/	@GGI_Kenya
Article 43	Kenya	https://www.article43.org/	https://www.facebook.com/article43/	@Article43Kenya
Eco Clean Active Initiative	Nigeria	N/A	https://www.facebook.com/ECOMOVESUSTAINABILITY/?ref=page_internal	N/A
The Rise Up Movement	Nigeria	N/A	https://www.facebook.com/TheRiseUpMovem1/	@TheRiseUp Movem1
Nigerian Youth Climate Coalition	Nigeria	http://www.nigycc.net/	https://www.facebook.com/Nigerian-Youth-Climate-Coalition-NYCC-160028049499/	@NigYCC
Save Congo Rainforest	Regional	https://savecongorainforest.com/ ; https://savecongorainforest.wixsite.com/congo	N/A	@SaveCongo Forest
SYAH / Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Youth AIMS (Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and South China Sea) Hub	Regional	https://www.syah.org/	https://www.facebook.com/SYAHRegionalHQ/about/?ref=page_internal	@SYAHRegional
Commonwealth Youth Climate Network	Regional	https://thecommonwealth.org/commonwealth-youth-climate-change-network	https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthYouthClimateNetwork/about/?ref=page_internal	@cycn09
SYAH-Seychelles / Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Youth AIMS (Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and South China Sea) Hub-Seychelles	Seychelles	http://syah-seychelles.weebly.com/about.html	https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/SYAH-Seychelles-459259131207717/	@SezSyah

Name	Country	Website	Facebook	Twitter
African Climate Alliance	South Africa	https://africanclimatealliance.org/	https://www.facebook.com/africanclimatealliance/	@AfrClim Alliance
South African Youth Centre for Climate Change	South Africa		https://www.facebook.com/SAYCCC/	@SAYCCC1
South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) Youth	South Africa	https://saiaa.org.za/youth/	https://www.facebook.com/youth.saiaa/	@Youth_SAIIA
Girls for Climate Change	Uganda	https://girls4climate.blogspot.com/	https://www.facebook.com/girls4climate/	N/A
Zimbabwe Youth Council	Zimbabwe		https://www.facebook.com/pg/zimbayouth/about/?ref=page_internal	@zimyouth council
Fridays for Future	Global	https://fridaysforfuture.org/	https://www.facebook.com/FridaysForFuture.org/	@Fridays4future
	South Africa	https://fridaysforfuture.org.za/ ; https://fridaysforfuture.org/country/south-africa/	https://www.facebook.com/fridaysforfuturesa/	@climate_pta
	Kenya	https://fridaysforfuture.org/country/kenya/	https://www.facebook.com/fffkenya/	@fridays_kenya
	Nigeria	https://fridaysforfuture.org/country/nigeria/	https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Fridays-For-Future-Nigeria-2476543872365961/	@FridaysNigeria
	Sudan	N/A	https://www.facebook.com/fffsudan/	N/A
	Seychelles	N/A	https://www.latest.facebook.com/pages/Friday-for-Future-Seychelles/116600846403702	N/A
	Zimbabwe	https://fridaysforfuture.org/country/zimbabwe/	https://www.facebook.com/fridaysforfuturezim	
	Uganda	https://fridaysforfuture.org/fff-uganda/	https://www.facebook.com/Fridays4FutureU/	@Fridays4 FutureU
	Ethiopia	N/A	N/A	N/A
African Youth Initiative on Climate Change	Regional	www.ayicc.africa	https://www.facebook.com/The-African-Youth-Initiative-on-Climate-Change-AYICC-161214162089/	@AYICC
	South Africa	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Kenya	http://ayicckenya.blogspot.com/	https://www.facebook.com/ayicc.kenya	@ayicckenya
	Nigeria	https://ayiccnigeria.wordpress.com/	https://www.facebook.com/ayicc.nigeria	@AYICCNigeria
	Sudan	N/A	N/A	N/A

Name	Country	Website	Facebook	Twitter
African Youth Initiative on Climate Change	Seychelles	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Zimbabwe	https://ayicczim.org.zw/	https://www.facebook.com/AYICCZimbabwe/	@AyiccZim
	Uganda	N/A	N/A	@AYICC_Uganda
	Ethiopia	N/A	N/A	N/A



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