

Report Part Title: Youth climate action and the role of government

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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.environews-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 JODAHİ 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.