

# Youth in action on climate change: inspirations from around the world



United Nations  
Joint Framework Initiative on  
Children, Youth and  
Climate Change

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Thanks go to the many youth leaders and youth organizations, who have contributed to this endeavour, as well as the members of the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change.

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# Acronyms

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<b>AMCEN</b>	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
<b>AR5</b>	Fifth Assessment Report
<b>CCADRR</b>	Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>CCDARE</b>	Climate Change Adaptation and Development Initiative
<b>CCEE</b>	Climate Change and Environmental Education
<b>CC:iNet</b>	Climate Change Information Network
<b>CMP</b>	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties
<b>COPA</b>	Community of People Aspiring-Greatness
<b>COY</b>	Conference of Youth
<b>COYTW</b>	Conference of Youth, Taiwan
<b>ECI</b>	Earth Child Institute
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GEO</b>	Global Environmental Outlook
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse Gases
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>JVE</b>	Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MEdIES</b>	Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment & Sustainability
<b>MIO-ECSDE</b>	Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>REDD</b>	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

<b>SBI</b>	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
<b>TWYCC</b>	Taiwan Youth Climate Coalition
<b>UKYCC</b>	United Kingdom Youth Climate Coalition
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN CC:Learn</b>	One UN Training Service Platform on Climate Change
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNFCU</b>	United Nations Federal Credit Union
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>UNITAR</b>	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
<b>UN-NGLS</b>	United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteers
<b>WAGGGS</b>	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WMO</b>	World Meteorological Organization
<b>WOSM</b>	World Organization of the Scout Movement
<b>WTD</b>	World Thinking Day
<b>YAFE</b>	Young Artists Fellowship for the Environment
<b>YMP</b>	Young Masters Programme on Sustainable Development
<b>YOUNGO</b>	The youth constituency under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, stands for Youth Non-Governmental Organization (Youth NGO)
<b>YUNGA</b>	Youth and United Nations Global Alliance

# Foreword

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Climate change creates elevated levels of uncertainty about our future and amid this uncertainty, one thing is certain. We will leave the Earth to our children, young people and future generations.

Young people are increasingly aware of the challenges and opportunities that the necessary transition to low carbon growth entails, and many are joining the global dialogue on solutions, getting involved and taking action. As young people work across the globe to determine their future by acting on climate change, their actions inspire us all.

These stories could not come at a better time. **Work by and for young people is a critical component of raising political ambition to reach a new, universal agreement on climate change.**

I applaud the work of the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change and thank its members for contributing to this publication. I also thank the European Union and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for their generous financial support that made this publication possible.

I hope this publication promotes cooperation between the United Nations and youth organizations and inspires us to leave a better world to our children than the world we inherited. This is our responsibility and must be our legacy.

**Christiana Figueres**

Executive Secretary  
United Nations Framework Convention  
on Climate Change



# Introduction

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## **The world is experiencing a rising youth\* population.**

This new generation has an increasingly strong social and environmental awareness, the energy and knowledge to lead our societies towards a low carbon and climate resilient future. Young people are actively engaged at local, national and global levels in raising awareness, running educational programmes, conserving our nature, promoting renewable energy, adopting environmentally-friendly practices and implementing adaptation and mitigation projects. The work undertaken with and by youth is crucial in influencing governments to come to an agreement on a new climate change regime by 2015.

This publication “Youth in Action on Climate Change: Inspirations from around the World” is a collaborative effort of the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change aiming at highlighting concrete activities young people are leading around the world. It has been produced as a tool and a source of inspiration for designing and carrying out climate change projects, initiatives and campaigns.

**The publication is divided into five chapters, namely:**

**Uncovering mitigation potential** showcasing initiatives to reduce greenhouse gases emissions;

**Gearing up for the storm** relating to adaptation and disaster risk reduction projects;

**Nurturing youth leaders** presenting activities in education, training and capacity-building;

**Spreading the message** highlighting awareness raising campaigns and materials; and

**Shaping up the future climate change regime** presenting examples of youth participation in climate change policy-making.

**A list of useful resources and materials for youth is included at the end.**

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\* For the purpose of this publication, youth refers to both children below the age of 18 years and to young people between 18 and 24 years of age.



It is hoped that this publication will be of benefit for children and youth around the world. Today's youth represent the present and their contributions are essential to advance green, low emission and climate resilient development for the future.

## It is time for change, time to act.

**Motivated young people** all over the world are doing amazing work to address climate change on the ground and push their governments to do more. It is crucial to share information and experiences about the projects, programmes and campaigns that work best so that others can learn from and replicate them without having to reinvent the wheel. The European Union is pleased to have provided financial support for this very useful publication. I hope it will inspire many more young people to take climate action and help create pressure for the ambitious international agreement we all need.

**Connie Hedegaard**

European Union Commissioner for  
Climate Action



**The rapid environmental change humanity** is foisting on the planet demands that human beings not only think in terms of weeks, years and decades but across generations perhaps for the first time in the history of mankind - this is no more clearly underlined than in the area of climate change where the choices made today will determine the likely climate across centuries. Thus it is clear and right that the children and youth of this world have a say in their future, not just because of the expected future impacts but because their creativity, ability to define and deliver answers and downright determination could make a significant difference in avoiding the worst outcomes of climate change which currently appear to elude the existing generation of leaders across governments, cities, corporations and adult citizens.

**Achim Steiner**

United Nations Under-Secretary General and  
Executive Director of the United Nations  
Environment Programme



**Education** is the most powerful path to sustainability. Economic and technological solutions, political regulations or financial incentives are not enough. We need a fundamental change in the way we think and act. We know this is a tall order. This calls for revising curricula and learning objectives. This calls for teaching and learning about climate change, about disaster risk reduction, about biodiversity.<sup>1</sup>

**Irina Bokova**

Director-General of the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization



# United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change

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The United Nations system recognizes the key role that youth play in tackling climate change and works closely with youth-led and youth-focussed organizations around the world through the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change (Joint Framework Initiative). Since 2008, the Joint Framework Initiative has been coordinating efforts of 16 intergovernmental entities and many youth organizations to empower youth to take adaptation and mitigation actions and enhance effective participation of youth in climate change policy decision-making processes.



## Intergovernmental entities that are members of the Joint Framework Initiative include:

- ⦿ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;
- ⦿ United Nations Children’s Fund;
- ⦿ United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity;
- ⦿ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
- ⦿ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Division for Sustainable Development;
- ⦿ United Nations Development Programme;
- ⦿ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;
- ⦿ United Nations Environment Programme;
- ⦿ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- ⦿ United Nations Human Settlements Programme;
- ⦿ United Nations Institute for Training and Research;
- ⦿ United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service;
- ⦿ United Nations Population Fund;
- ⦿ United Nations Programme on Youth;
- ⦿ United Nations Volunteers; and
- ⦿ The World Bank.

Non-governmental organizations that are members of the Joint Framework Initiative include the British Council; Earth Child Institute; TakingITGlobal; SustainUS; and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. YOUNGO also participates in the Joint Framework Initiative through its two focal points.

Many members of the Joint Framework Initiative actively implement various youth-targeted programmes and activities, such as the development of national climate change educational programmes, the creation of environmental awareness campaigns, and the development of learning materials for formal and non-formal learning contexts.

The UNFCCC secretariat coordinates the work of the Joint Framework Initiative and organizes regular meetings and teleconference calls so that members can share first-hand information on their youth-related projects, events, activities, publications, educational tools, campaigns and opportunities. The meetings and teleconference calls also serve to facilitate coordinated action by youth organizations and other members of the Joint Framework Initiative.

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## Bamboo Bicycle Project, Ghana

The objective of this project is to promote a healthy, non-polluting form of alternative transport to meet growing mobility needs while addressing climate change, environmental degradation, poverty, and high unemployment among the youth. So far the project has acquired 2.44 acres of land, established a bamboo plantation and a nursery with the capacity to produce 10,000 seedlings and purchased 15,000 bamboo seedlings for start-up. Participating youth received technical guidance on planting and maintenance of bamboo.

Ten unemployed young people were trained and offered full-time jobs in manufacturing and assembling bamboo bikes at the bamboo bike factory at Achiasse, which also serves as a training centre.

The construction of bamboo bikes is much less energy intensive than the production of steel bikes. During the production of a steel frame, about 5 kg of carbon dioxide are emitted, and while bamboo can be directly recycled, steel requires additional energy inputs for recycling. Bamboo plantations absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and generate up to 35% more oxygen than an equivalent stand of trees.

In addition, the increased cultivation and use of bamboo as an alternative to wood is helping the preservation and rehabilitation of the community's dwindling forests. As a result, the District Assembly and the Newmont Mining Company in Ghana are promoting this technology. In 2012 the project won several awards, including the Samsung Generations for Peace Award.

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### Name of organization:

Bright Generation  
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## Production of Biodiesel from Used Vegetable Oil, Barbados

The Lester Vaughan Secondary School in Barbados with 1,100 students implemented a project to raise awareness among youth about the use of biodiesel as an environmentally friendly alternative fuel for diesel vehicles. The members of the school's Environmental

Club collected used vegetable oil from their homes and communities and handed it over to the Sole Proprietorship, who then produced biodiesel and glycerine from the oil and paid the Environmental Club for the PEP bottles as well as for each litre of biodiesel and glycerine sold. The income generated through the sale of biodiesel was shared with the students and their school in order to conduct other environmental and community activities.

The students learned about climate change, recycling, renewable energy and also participated in business training workshops.

To demonstrate the use of biodiesel in generators and for income-generating activities, the private sector donated a popcorn machine and a diesel generator, which are managed by the school's Environmental Club. The generator ran on the biodiesel produced and the funds from the



sale of popcorn were used to develop additional environmental activities.

As a result of the project, a total of 3,943 litres of oil were collected, which would have otherwise been disposed of in sink drains or in another environmentally unfriendly manner. A total of 3,154 litres of biodiesel were produced and used to fuel diesel vehicles, resulting in the reduction of approximately 6,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

In addition, 592 litres of glycerine, another useful by-product from the conversion of used vegetable oil to biodiesel, were produced.

The students gained more awareness regarding recycling and were able to earn a significant income to expand their climate actions. The school received an award from the government for this project.

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## El Mouddaa Adaptation Initiative, Morocco

The El Mouddaa adaptation initiative in Morocco was designed and implemented through a comprehensive participatory and inclusive approach, with the objective of strengthening the resilience of the local community. The project fosters sustainable land and water management, resilient farming practices and community early warning techniques, which help the El Mouddaa

community better deal with current and future climate challenges. While the elders are the local authority, this project was managed by an organization of young people under 30, with the elders giving them legitimacy to take leadership. This community-based adaptation project aims at sustainably increasing the wellbeing of the local community through the protection of critical village infrastructure and strengthening of local food security. As part of the project young people strategically built rock dams to reduce the floodwater

flow and damages to village infrastructure and buried the main irrigation line to reduce the vulnerability of local farming by ensuring permanent irrigation water flow. Traditional subsistence to strengthen food security was also reintroduced.

In addition, through local consultation and awareness raising, this youth-led project helped the community set aside large sections of land around the village for conservation, reforestation and re-vegetation. It also outlawed grazing of herds in and around the village in an effort to protect and sustain





native shrubs and grasses. The re-vegetation improved soil and reduced erosion flash flooding risks. The project is also testing a user-friendly low-cost technology in water and sanitation to prevent hazardous chemicals from contaminating irrigation water, damaging soils and crop production. These activities contribute to environmental protection, more sustainable natural resource management and preservation of ecosystem services. Furthermore, the project installed an early flash flood alarm system in order to support community-based disaster risk management. A key achievement of this initiative is that it has managed to engage all members of the community in taking part in adaptation to climate change, in a context where participation remains one of the key field challenges. This project won the Equator Prize in 2012 for Community-Based Adaptation.

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## Cyclone Proof Schools, Madagascar

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Madagascar is in the path of weather systems in the Indian Ocean that cause severe cyclones each year. Increasingly frequent and intense cyclones due to climate change pose a serious challenge for thousands of children. In 2008, for instance, Cyclone Ivan crossed the island, destroying and damaging 2,299 classrooms and disrupting the schooling of hundreds of thousands of children. The 2009 cyclone season damaged another 247 classrooms, and in 2010 a further 309 classrooms were affected. In addition to this, the high growth in enrolment numbers over the past few years put pressure on existing classrooms and increased the demand for more schools.

The Cyclone Proof Schools project aims at building schools that can withstand adverse weather events in the Analanjirifo Region of Madagascar, one of the areas most frequently hit by cyclones. UNICEF has worked to rebuild classrooms in 20 schools to resist future cyclones and



to install water pumps and latrines to allow pupils to continue their studies in improved health despite the challenges that cyclones may bring to the water and sanitation provision. On the rebuilt school grounds, children nurture school gardens with fresh produce while simultaneously learning about biodiversity.

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## Energy Saving to Reduce Carbon Emissions, China

This project aims to minimize the power consumption in the demo community involving 10,000 households (30,000 persons), improve their awareness of climate change and further expand the influence to Beijing residents to address climate change by building up a proper energy-saving lifestyle and low carbon consumer behaviours in daily life, and conduct research on the methodology and incentives of energy conservation for communities in Beijing. The core project executor is youth. The project recruited 15 university student volunteers from 8 universities. After receiving the training organized by the Small Grants Programme, the university student volunteers' main tasks included door-to-door

interviews on household power consumption habits, energy-saving awareness and willingness to address climate change; providing hands-on education on energy-saving tips to the households; installing power utilization monitoring equipment in demonstration households; and recording and collecting data of household power consumption.

After just one year of the project's implementation, it effectively raised awareness of 30,000 people living in the Wangjing Community on energy conservation, carbon reduction and climate change. In the summer during the project cycle (May–September 2010), the average power consumption among 10,000 houses in Wangjing community dropped by 1 kWh or more, which contributed to the reduction of about 50 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Additional impacts on Beijing residents

have also been observed, as residents now spontaneously take energy-saving actions in daily life and select energy-efficient products when they purchase home appliances.

A publication entitled “The Studies on the Incentives of Energy Conservation & Carbon Reduction in Communities in Beijing” was completed and published in China Environment Daily, which has been submitted to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the National Development and Reform Commission, Beijing Municipal Government and other relevant authorities.

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The objective of this new publication by the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change is to **highlight concrete work young people do to incite their governments and the international community to scale up action on climate change and raise ambition towards a post-2020 climate change regime.** It is designed as a tool and a source of inspiration for developing and carrying out projects, initiatives and campaigns to increase awareness of the causes and impacts of climate change, promote sustainable lifestyles and advance green low-carbon development.

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For more information on this and other materials contact:

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