



**INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF  
YOUTH**  
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OUR YEAR OUR VOICE

## *Dialogue and Mutual Understanding*

### **Fact Sheet: Youth and Climate Change**

- Young people are actively engaged at national and global levels in awareness-raising, running educational programmes, planting trees, promoting renewable energy and adopting energy-saving practices.
- The United Nations supports youth in combating climate change through educational programmes, adaptation initiatives and participative involvement.
- Through coordinative efforts of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, youth have a provisional constituency status giving them a voice in international climate change negotiations.

Human activities, such as deforestation and fossil fuels use, contribute to climate change, which decreases the availability of nutritious food and clean water. This leads to malnutrition and ill health, rendering children and young people particularly vulnerable. Encouraging sustainable lifestyles, promoting the use of renewable energy sources and building adaptive capacity and resilience are some examples of actions that youth have undertaken to combat climate change. Strong social and environmental awareness further unite young people to negotiate with a single voice on a global level.

#### **The United Nations, Climate Change and Youth**

Young people are considered an important stakeholder group in the United Nations system. They actively participate in advocacy, national adaptation and mitigation actions, along with international negotiations. For this reason, many UN system entities have dedicated climate change youth programmes and activities.

A number of agencies have also developed youth-related initiatives linked to their mandates and areas of work. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been assisting in environmental climate change educational policy. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has been supporting the development of food security and climate change educational programmes and resources for rural farmer field and life schools. UNICEF has a Youth Climate Change Ambassador Programme and has developed the "Unite for Climate" online community for youth climate change action.

#### **Progress**

Prior to the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15), which took place in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat extended a provisional constituency status to young people allowing them to receive official information, participate in meetings, request speaking slots and receive logistical support. About 1,500 young people participated in the COP 15, where they organized side events, a youth arcade, a Young and Future Generations Day, submitted technical documents, analysed policy developments, staged creative awareness-raising events, and actively participated in the negotiation process. Youth participation has brought moral and equity-based values as well as constructive technical and policy inputs to the negotiations.





Young people, youth organizations, schools and related groups have been working locally on a spectrum of adaptation and mitigation projects. Diverse initiatives include awareness-raising, educational programmes, planting trees, promoting the use of renewable energy, adopting energy saving appliances and practices and community capacity building. Young people are also engaging in a number of climate change projects within different national and international organizations. Over 3,000 young people have already completed the Climate Change Challenge badge developed by FAO, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance.

### The way forward

An ambitious global climate agreement needs to be reached before 2012, when the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol expires. The UNFCCC 16th Conference of the Parties in Cancun, Mexico at the end of 2010 is, therefore, a fundamental venue to reach this agreement. A strengthened youth constituency with a greater number of official youth Government delegates at UNFCCC meetings are essential for improved communication between Government negotiators and civil society actors.

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

Tackling climate change requires concerted coordinated Government action as well as efforts by individuals. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen both formal and informal education on climate change and viable lifestyles. In addition, new sustainable production and consumption patterns must be promoted and young people supported as environmental champions in their local communities. Partnerships should be developed between Governments, international agencies and youth organizations for joint environmental initiatives aimed at building the capacity of young people. Considerable efforts are also needed in strengthening the capability and resilience of young people in rural communities in developing countries to adapt to climate change.

### For further information

- [www.fao.org/climatechange/youth](http://www.fao.org/climatechange/youth)
- <http://uniteforclimate.org/>
- [www.unfccc.org](http://www.unfccc.org)
- *Growing Together in a Changing Climate, the United Nations, Young People, and Climate Change* [http://unfccc.int/files/cc\\_inet/information\\_pool/application/pdf/growingtogether.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/cc_inet/information_pool/application/pdf/growingtogether.pdf)
- *Youth Participation in the UNFCCC Negotiation Process: The United Nations, Young People and Climate Change* [http://unfccc.int/files/cc\\_inet/information\\_pool/application/pdf/unfccc\\_youthparticipation.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/cc_inet/information_pool/application/pdf/unfccc_youthparticipation.pdf)

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