



ENHANCING YOUNG PEOPLE'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN CLIMATE ACTION

ACCELERATING PROGRESS ON THE GROUND

WORKSHOP REPORT
14 DECEMBER 2020



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1. Background

On 14 December 2020, the [UNDP Youth Global Programme](#) and the [Danish Youth Council](#) convened a global workshop with young climate activists, young leaders, UNDP practitioners and selected partners. About 70 participants attended the workshop to discuss progress, strategize around how to enhance collaboration on youth meaningful participation in the field, and how to best partner in the lead up to COP26 and beyond, in particular in the context of the [Climate Promise](#).

Presentations were made by the Danish Youth Delegates; representatives of UNDP, including the Administrator's Special Advisor on Climate Change and Head of the Climate Promise, members of the Youth Global Team and the Climate Team, the Small Grants Programme with youth implementers from Morocco and Barbados, and UNDP Liberia country office with a youth partner from Liberia; the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and a representative from the Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change (YAG); the Global Focal Point of YOUNGO and a representative from the Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection of Italy.

2. Objectives, structures and expected outcomes

The main **objectives** of this workshop were to:

- Exchange promising examples of youth meaningful participation in climate action in the field;
- Present and brainstorm on methodologies for youth engagement at all levels;
- Identify entry points for collaboration and joint implementation in the context of the Climate Promise;
- Reflect on the Climate Ambition Summit held on 12 December 2020.

The workshop was organized into five main sessions:

- 1) On the road to climate ambition;
- 2) Understanding barriers to and opportunities for youth meaningful participation;
- 3) Accelerating progress through youth climate action and ambition on the ground;
- 4) Deep-dive breakout sessions;
- 5) Strengthening collaboration on the road to COP26 and beyond.



08:30-08:40	Welcoming remarks and objectives of the meeting— Denmark & UNDP Representatives
08:40-09:00	On the road to climate ambition! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remarks by the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth • UNDP Administrator's Special Advisor on Climate Change and Head of the Climate Promise
09:00-09:20	Understanding barriers to and opportunities for youth meaningful participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global youth movements and constituencies - YOUNGO (5 mins) • Representative from the Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change (5 mins) 10 min Q&A
09:20-09:50	Accelerating progress through youth climate action and ambition on the ground <p>Two presentations from the field/ in-country implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP Liberia & Youth Partner from Liberia – Supporting youth in NDC process (10 mins) • UNDP Small Grants Programme & Youth Partners from Morocco and Barbados (10 mins) 10 mins Q&A
09:50- 10:30	Deep-dive - Two parallel breakout sessions of 20 mins each, followed by a 15 min plenary: Two simultaneous breakout sessions: 1) Joining forces for youth action in NDC processes 2) Supporting young people as co-implementers of development projects on climate Short plenary
10:30-10:50	Strengthening collaboration on the road to COP26 and beyond <p>What are the big moments to plan for in 2021? How can we nurture partnerships for better results in the field? What are next steps?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Environment, Italy (5 mins) • Mock COP26 and YOUNGO on the CoY (5 mins) • What's next on NDC support & Climate Promise (5 mins)
10:50-11:00	Wrap-up UNDP and Denmark (10 mins)

The meeting enabled:

- A better understanding of barriers and opportunities to youth meaningful participation in climate action, in particular at grassroots and country level;
- A better understanding of comparative advantages and practices, and existing and forthcoming tools to support youth meaningful participation in the context of climate action and ambition;
- A discussion on enhanced collaboration between UNDP, Denmark and others in the field, and ideas for follow-up youth-inclusive and youth-led events or processes in 2021 in the lead up to COP26 and beyond.



3. Key takeaways and recommendations

Climate Ambition with youth at the center as a priority

- The [Climate Ambition Summit](#) held on 12 December 2020 marked the 5th Anniversary of the Paris Agreement. Five years after Paris, countries are still not on track to meet their goals. The United Nations Secretary General invited countries to form a Global coalition on carbon neutrality and increase ambition on countries' nationally-determined contributions (NDCs).
- Young people's concerns, solutions and readiness for change are most needed to increase ambition and young people all over the world have already taken action and mobilized resources. However, young people are often discriminated against, their voices are not taken seriously and their participation in climate talks and negotiations is frequently perceived as an example of tokenism. Some decision-makers do not understand the importance of including and actively engaging with youth. In addition, youth from the Global North are more represented in negotiations than youth from the Global South.

Current initiatives, programmes and networks

- [UNDP's Climate Promise](#) is the world's largest global offer on NDC enhancement, currently supporting 118 countries, in collaboration with over 30 partners. It draws from UNDP's extensive portfolio of expertise across priorities such as youth, energy, forests, water, resilience, agriculture, health, finance, governance, gender equality and green jobs. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and political shifts happening in many countries, which caused delays in NDC submissions, Climate Promise countries have increased ambition. For instance, while only 40% of first generation NDCs included direct references to children or youth, **75% of Climate promise countries are now prioritizing youth** in their climate pledges. Youth engagement is promoted and encouraged primarily through consultations, awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns. Several countries are also establishing new mechanisms to ensure systematic youth engagement. In addition, the use of evidence, data and research helps drive enhanced engagement and inclusion of youth.
- [UNDP's NDC Support Programme](#) has been seeking to include youth participation in the countries where it operates. The mission of this programme is to bring about a real and positive change for living and future generations by advancing ambitious progress towards resilient, zero carbon development. In particular, it supports countries on eliminating barriers to this ambitious transition by formulating a systemic, integrated approach through governance and policy frameworks, inclusive leadership, transparency systems, blended climate finance and implementation of NDC objectives. When envisioning climate neutrality by 2050, we need to put youth at the centre of this discussion and explain the benefits of having young people actively involved in climate negotiations.



- [UNDP Youth Global Programme](#), which is the first global (multi-level and multi-thematic) programmatic offer on youth in UNDP has expanded its work on youth and climate action and ambition in the lead up to the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in 2019 and since then. It has provided policy and technical support in the context of the Climate Promise, on Youth, and has partnered since 2019 with the UNDP NDC Support Programme to develop a guidance package on Youth & NDCs and strengthen coordination on youth and climate and elevate the voices of young climate activists.
- The [COVID-19 pandemic and post-recovery plans](#) represent an opportunity to reinvent societies and invest in green jobs. This is the right time to support youth inclusion in decision-making to build more resilient, peaceful and just societies. However, COVID-19 has also slowed down some processes, including NDC revision and submissions, and disproportionately affected young people. New challenges have also arisen from the COVID-19 crisis, including holding climate meetings and conversations on digital platforms with restricted access. This has resulted in young people either being excluded from such discussions or, for those living in areas with bad quality internet connection, being prevented from actively engaging. Despite these difficulties, it is extremely important to receive youth inputs on NDCs before their submissions.
- [YOUNGO](#), the Children and Youth constituency to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, celebrates its 10 years anniversary. It provides skills, collaboration, lobby and advocacy opportunities for young people. Collaborations and networks with UN entities and beyond are important for youth engagement and YOUNGO is working towards strengthening this collaboration.
- Building on the youth climate movement, the Secretary-General launched the [Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change](#) (YAG) on 27 July 2020 to amplify youth voices and to engage young people in an open and transparent dialogue as the United Nations gears up to raise ambition and accelerate action to tackle the climate emergency. Its pool of young experts is supported by the SG's Climate Action team and the UN Youth Envoy. YAG will bring the voices of young people into high-level decision making and advise the Secretary-General on the implementation of his 2020-21 Climate Change Strategy.
- This collaboration among youth leaders and climate activists, UNDP and Denmark, YOUNGO and more broadly the [UN System](#) is an opportunity to enhance youth meaningful engagement, increase capacity for inclusive governance and foster an enabling environment for youth climate action. Young people must be engaged as professionals and be seen as agents of change.
- [The Small Grants Programme](#), a flagship initiative implemented by UNDP, has been supporting several development projects, including on youth participation and the role of women and gender in climate action, e.g. in Barbados and Morocco.



Current barriers and possible solutions

- Barriers for youth involvement include **lack of funding, as well as education, skills, and awareness**. In Liberia, UNDP supported youth involvement in NDC revision, but there is still a need for more sectorial consultations engaging young people and funding for a national strategy. In Liberia, youth participation was channeled through school clubs, which were used to engage youth in NDC discussions. Youth should not only be invited to the table of climate talks, but they should be listened to.
- For young people, it is difficult to access NDC discussions for several reasons, including **lack of information** on how to access them, **language barriers** and the difficult jargon used during these events. There is a strong need to build **climate literacy** and breakdown this jargon for young climate activists and leaders. In addition, climate change has also exacerbated current gender disparities. A bottom up approach sensitive to **gender** and inclusive of **grassroots youth-led organizations** is recommendable.
- **Consultations should not be a one-time event**, but they should be articulated with climate councils and youth councils. Young people's meaningful participation should also be envisaged at the local level, during legislative processes concerning countries' climate laws and policies. Therefore, it is important to reach out to colleagues from other countries, focal points and youth networks in order to promote and protect the civic space, raise awareness and build coalitions. Governments need support towards including young people in decision-making, taking youth inputs into consideration and being sensitive to the relationship between gender and climate.
- Youth are not an homogeneous group, **young people are diverse**: there are volunteers, leaders and activists, implementers etc. Young people's voices need to be taken into consideration while appreciating their diversity, including language, gender, culture, race, class. We need to be proactive in dismantling existing barriers, including promoting climate justice, a human rights-based approach and intergenerational equity. Young people are not only victims of climate change. They are also valuable contributors to climate action. They are agents of change, entrepreneurs and innovators. Whether through education, science or technology, young people are scaling up their efforts and using their skills to accelerate climate action. Therefore, it is extremely important to keep supporting existing youth work and youth-led initiatives, for instance by building and strengthening partnerships, making financial contributions to support their activities, allow for youth voices to be heard and taken into account.

For more on barriers and challenges as well as on examples and opportunities related to the role of youth in climate action and ambition, please visit the [Sparkblue e-consultation page](#) (online discussion which took place from 20 July 2020 to 14 July 2020).



4. Follow up activities

- Regional youth dialogues convened by YAG will be held in 2021. UNDP and other partners are looking forward to supporting the YAG in connecting their activities and consultations with the operationalization of the Climate Promise from the youth perspective.
- Italy is deeply engaged with youth and climate negotiations. In 2021, Italy will hold the [G20 presidency](#) and is partner with the UK in the organization of [COP26](#) in Glasgow (1 - 12 November 2021). Moreover, in the context of “Youth4Climate Driving Ambition”, almost 400 young people aged between 18 and 29 from the 197 member-countries of the UNFCCC will participate in the [Youth Summit](#), from 28 to 30 September 2021, to elaborate concrete proposals on topics that affect the negotiation process of [Pre-COP26](#) in Milan (30 September - 2 October 2021) and COP26 in Glasgow.
- Case studies and promising practices will continue to be documented and UNDP’s Youth & NDC Guidance Package will be launched and circulated in 2021.
- A follow-up meeting could be held in the first semester of 2021 to discuss planning and 2021 collaboration in greater detail. (Date to be confirmed, after the ECOSOC Youth Forum).
- YOUNGO will keep participants informed on the COYs and COP youth-related events.
- The [ECOSOC Youth Forum](#) was held on 7-8 April 2021. A formal session on: *Accelerating Action on the Planet* was co-organized by UNEP, UNCCD, UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF together with youth constituencies and other partners. An interview on *Reimagining Climate Justice*, featuring three young leaders from Colombia, Kuwait and Argentina was released on the SDG Media Zone website.
- UNDP launched an online Sparkblue consultation on the [High-Level Dialogue on Energy: Youth Perspectives](#) (12 April- 30 April 2021) for youth aged 18-30. The ideas that emerge through this process will be delivered directly to the official Technical Working Groups in the form of recommendations, consolidated by official youth representatives that have been appointed as focal points for the HLDE.
- The [People’s Climate Vote](#) (a pillar of the Mission 1.5 campaign) was released on 27 January 2021 by UNDP and the University of Oxford. Covering 50 countries with over half of the world’s population, it is the largest survey of public opinion on climate change ever conducted. The results of the vote show that people often want broad climate policies beyond the current state of play - with the most popular being conserving forests and land (54% public support), more solar, wind and renewable power (53%), adopting climate-friendly farming techniques (52%) and investing more in green businesses and jobs (50%).



5. Key resources

- Climate Promise: November Progress Report (2020)
- ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021
- ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021: Accelerating Action on the Planet (concept note and video)
- SDG Media Zone: The World We Want: Reimagining Climate Justice (2021)
- E-discussion on youth participation in NDCs and climate action on Sparkblue (2020) and report (2021)
- High-Level Dialogue on Energy: Youth Perspectives (2021)
- Inter-Agency Statement on Youth & COVID-19
- Inter-Agency guiding principles on Youth & SDGs
- Mission 1.5 website and The People's Climate Vote (2021)
- Mock COP26 (2020)
- UNCC: e-Learn website
- UNDP Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Support Programme
- UNDP Youth Global Programme
- UNDP UNFCCC (2019). The Heat is On
- UNDP (2019). Young people and Climate – Fighting for a stolen future.
- UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme: overview and presentation (2020)
- UN Youth Strategy "Youth 2030"
- UN Climate Action Summit 2019
- UN Climate Ambition Summit 2020
- UNEP (2018) Global Environment outlook 6 (Youth)
- YOUNGO International Youth Climate Movement and presentation (2020)
- Youth Envoy "Reach not Preach" initiative

For more information, please contact the UNDP Youth team:

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