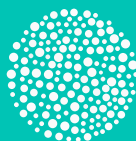


**#DECARBONIZE:#DECOLONIZE**

**GLOBAL  
YOUTH  
REPORT  
2020**

**BY UNDER 18 YOUTH LEADERS**



**CGE**

THE CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

**#DECARBONIZE:#DECOLONIZE**

**GLOBAL  
YOUTH  
REPORT**

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TakingITGlobal (TIG) is a registered charity focusing on global issues by promoting awareness and engagement among global youth. TIG uses an online social network, aimed primarily at youth, to raise awareness and discussion on a number of global issues and encourages youth to take action that affects their local and global communities. TIG's main offerings include the multilingual online classroom platform, which guides youth to a deeper awareness of social, economic, and environmental issues through collaborative learning activities and advocacy training. By building a bridge between learning and action, the platform fosters mutual understanding across continents and languages. There are a number of tools that youth participants engage through, including participating in discussion boards, writing blogs, posting art to an online global gallery, creating project maps, and developing/ managing projects through the Commit2Act app.

The Centre for Global Education (CGE) is an educational division of TakingITGlobal. CGE develops and delivers virtual, collaborative learning projects aimed at K-12 students (5-18yrs) that engage and empower youth as global citizens, through connecting them to the people, places, and issues they are learning about in their classrooms and encouraging them to take action that affects their local and global communities. Since 2008, CGE has facilitated educational programming for 100,000's of students, from over 400 schools, in more than 50 countries.

Sarah Flynn  
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*“The most impactful and significant experience for me was at the discussions moments between us about our project. It was significant for me to see children like me who really care about what I care about and see that they are not just here for fun, but to try to make a difference, was to see that I'm not alone, was to identify myself with these people.”*

*- Bruna, 15, Brazil*



# PROLOGUE

From April to December 2020, #Decarbonize: #Decolonize, a collaborative, school-based project, brought together K-12 students and educators from 43 countries to learn, challenge, and co-create climate conversations. Under a Talanoa framework - an Indigenous dialogue for building trust and advancing knowledge with empathy and understanding - students shared learning and lived-experiences via blog posts, discussion boards, a virtual art gallery, project mapping, video conferences, and other innovative and engaging virtual experiences. During #Decarbonize over 35,000 global participants (1) Increased their awareness of global impacts of climate resilience, climate justice, and climate mitigation, and (2) Enhanced their contributions to quantify the current progress of nations under the National Determined Contributions (NDCs), and (3) Improved skills and capacity-building for whole-school, local, and global climate action. #Decarbonize is developed and delivered annually by the Centre for Global Education and TakingITGlobal, under the moral patronage of CCUNESCO, and UNESCO (2019), and with the support of the Trottier Foundation, Ocean Wise, and a number of other strategic partners.

The #Decarbonize Global Youth Report is produced annually as a culminating activity. It is the world's largest youth-authored synthesis of student education, opinion, and action on climate change. The 2020 Global Youth Report, **“What is ‘Meaningful Youth Engagement’? A Call for Stakeholders to Mobilize Youth Under 18,”** was created through a month-long virtual collaborative writing process, involving 103 global lead students across six continents. Their report grapples with the complexity of current and predicted impacts of climate change and its effects on young people's lives, health, rights, and development. The youth involved set forth a call for stakeholders to ensure that young people are meaningfully engaged and participate in the development and implementation of climate policies, programs, and processes that affect them. A process that moves beyond the recognition and identification of young people solely as beneficiaries, and towards engaging them as equal and valuable partners in projects, research, programmes, and initiatives.

# 1.

## MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

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In a world where it feels like patronizing remarks are showered on us daily, we are now witnessing a brave uprising of young, bold change-makers. We, children and youth around the world, are redefining meaningful participation and action. We are claiming our right to actively and meaningfully engage in all matters that affect our lives. We are listening to different opinions and ideas. We are educating our communities about issues. We are applying our ideas and solutions to our own lives.

*“Meaningful participation will be achieved by having a seat at the real decision making table, not just as a consultative or ‘special interest’ representative at meetings.” Damaris, 14, Cuba* We are no longer on the periphery. We are central to the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs that affect us.

We, youth of the world, representing the voice of tens of thousands of our global peers under 18, believe that a shift towards ‘Meaningful Youth Participation’ is vital to the way each nation moves forward in the climate crisis. We - all citizens - must reach and encourage everyone equally. We can all contribute our unique voices, knowledge, and experiences to make a difference in this global fight *“Meaningful participation should be more extensive than being climate literate. Meaningful participation is activities that impact your life, the attitude of your local community, and change the perspective of lawmakers for the better” Isaiah, 14, Trinidad and Tobago.*

**Meaningful participation is going further than just being informed.**

Meaningful participation is much more than basic science taught in a single class. Young people need to be provided with full, science-based, culturally-integrated, age-appropriate information, that includes engaging and deliberative discussions, addresses misconceptions, and implements project-based and

experiential learning. Climate education needs to acknowledge the diversity of our experiences and promote our ability to take real action. *"Meaningful participation means participation with action." Nomena, 13, Madagascar.* For global leaders, institutions, systems, and governments to accomplish climate action, it is important for us to call for intentional, mutually-respectful, contribution of youth voice. Meaningful engagement of children recognizes and changes the power structures that prevent us from being considered experts about our own needs and priorities.

*"Meaningful participation is not just knowing and believing in climate change. We (children) should be involved in setting up programs where we can make our voices and thoughts visible for the community. That way, by setting an example, we can create awareness and involve more people in actions to mitigate climate change effects." Raquel, 15, Costa Rica*

### **Meaningful participation doesn't have to be a large or overly extravagant act.**

Small steps lead to significant actions. Starting simple and using individual initiatives to spur larger progress is meaningful participation through action. Meaningful participation starts when young people are encouraged to initiate ideas and activities that are relevant to our lives, and to draw on our knowledge, skills, and abilities. There is a pervasive argument that children and young persons aren't experienced or knowledgeable enough to tackle such huge challenges and social issues. We, children and youth, are here to say that we NEED to be invited into programs and projects where we can make our opinions visible and our voices heard for the good of the community. We can create awareness. Meaningful participation should help students feel that our actions make a difference, stressing positive elements, and weave in the message of 'Yes, we can!'

*"Meaningful Participation is not just an opportunity for youth but for our leaders. Our country's lack of awareness on the matter can easily be resolved by education, but the ignorance and lack of awareness from our leaders makes the job much harder." Ian, 15, Kenya*

## Meaningful Participation Holds Everyone Accountable

One of the greatest threats to climate action and advocacy is not meeting our commitments and targets. Global leaders both inside and outside governments, often appear to lack the follow-through to see their social commitments through to real scientific outcomes. There is an insufficient amount of resources, poor level of policy change, and inadequate attention paid to adaptation strategies and personal responsibility. None of the G20 countries are on track to meet their targets. We must face our climate commitments. Everyone needs to be held accountable. Everyone has a duty to protect the environment. We shouldn't just do this for ourselves, or for our generation, but for the future of all.

We, children and young people under 18 have a right to participate, with other stakeholders, on matters which impact our lives. This includes all areas of climate work - development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, projects, and initiatives.



Spit Out the Plastic Now | Seoyeon Kim | 16 | Hoengsong | South Korea



## 2.

# ROLE OF GLOBAL LEADERS & INSTITUTIONS

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Global leaders and governments have the power to make meaningful change in our fight against climate change. We, youth voices from around the world, share the belief that it is the responsibility of all citizens, including children and young people, to hold them accountable. As Regan, 15, USA, said, *“People react more when something is personally affecting them.”* Our generation will be experiencing the effects of climate change; we need global leaders to come alongside us and help fulfill these rights to participate.

Young people need to be provided with full, evidence-based, accessible, age-appropriate information. This knowledge needs to reflect our diversity of experience and needs to protect our ability to express our views freely. Since it is already our responsibility to live through a dynamically changing climate, we must have the power to turn this around. Many solutions can and will start with us. We need to be appreciated for our diversity in opinions, needs, skills, and abilities, and free to act on these without age-based stigma.

Government is the driving force behind achieving commitments within global collaborations such as the Paris Agreement. However, fluctuating government parties and priorities, corrupt officials, ‘fake’ science, and civil unrest have caused countries to struggle to meet their NDCs. Without courageous leadership, our countries will not be able to lower their carbon emissions. A young person from Australia anonymously said, *“It is important to hold the government accountable and prevent politicking from interfering with progress.”* In many countries, like Australia, youth feel that the lack of dedication of their leadership to environmental issues has left the country behind in meeting its NDCs. Governments need to be willing to undergo major social, cultural, and economic changes to

fully commit to long-term and effective environmental change. We commit to holding our governments accountable by contacting government leaders and authorities, writing letters demanding action, and organizing and participating in peaceful protests and rallies. *“In my opinion, holding leaders accountable is really important because we need their help to make the biggest changes in our societies, and once they notice the importance and relevance of their power, they can do a lot to help the world with it” (Sophia, 16, Brazil).*

In an absence of leadership, other industries (private, educational systems, environmental organizations, etc.) need to step up and amplify voices and actions for change. For example, looking at regulations, policies, and programs specifically pertaining to youth: targeting the reduction of plastic consumption in education infrastructure would reduce plastic consumption and waste; initiating innovative programs such as environmental summer camps (e.g. Ocean Heroes, Australia) and grants (e.g. #RisingYouth, Canada) would inspire and grow youth action; and implementing communication on matters of climate concerns, bolstering transparency with its citizens would lead to educated public discussions regarding climate change and ensure more participation of the citizens in their countries efforts to achieve NDC targets. We need courageous industries that set aside the bottom line, and instead look to the future of our planet and humanity.

### **Leaders Supporting Youth**

While we don't expect the leaders and governments of our nations to have all the solutions, they must understand that we look to them for assurance. There is strength in numbers, we must capitalize on how people with larger, more affluent platforms can influence others. The leaders of today must inspire the people of tomorrow, leading by example. Leading by example means not just recognizing the climate crisis, we are far past the question of its credibility. We have solutions, we need to start providing them. Acting upon this issue is what will pave the way for us.

It sometimes feels like the weight of the future is on our shoulders, but actually, the weight of our future is on the leaders of our planet today. If we, as the youth, unite to advocate for change,

the leaders of our world must rally behind us not just in words, but in actual change.

### **Local Action - Global Impact**

*“One of the main challenges to participating in this is going to be the government. As seen in Australia and many other countries, the government focuses mainly on its economy and job-stability, forgetting environmentally friendly actions which should go with it. Trying to convince the government that damaging both land and sea is not worth the profit it creates, will be difficult” Max, 16, Australia.*

We, representing voices of youth around the world, believe that local change is a key to fighting the climate crisis. Youth can gain momentum and attention from their local authorities by taking a leadership role and speaking out. We feel that our local authorities, industries, and leaders know and talk about climate issues, but they do not take initiative to develop and implement solutions. Youth interests are often supported in ways that feel tokenized and patronizing, and make our action look inconsequential. This neglect from our local leaders limits our abilities and discourages our young people from undertaking meaningful change. *“Local authorities need to commit to fully realizing that it is necessary to engage young people, value their expertise, work, and input, and nurture their talent to maximize their potential in climate action” Mary, 17, Philippines.*

Change is difficult. Leadership is not easy at any age. If our society does not adapt, we will not meet the required and inescapable targets. We need our global leaders and governments to be brave, be vulnerable, make tough choices, and stick to them. Showing their cooperation in developing and planning climate action locally gives us the ability to trust governments to do it globally.

### **Focus on Immediate Impacts and Solutions**

As Tara, 16, from Australia said, *“When many global and national leaders speak of climate change, it all sounds theoretical. Where is the step-by-step plan to put in place? Where are the penalties to make sure it is stuck to?”* The Paris Agreement was a considerable step, but as many experts stated, the vague and

distant targets set by over 195 countries often weren't backed up with adequate plans. If the global goals are to be met, the NDCs need to be significantly strengthened, starting with the current round of updates and then decisively implemented actions. Concrete and full implementation of already agreed commitments is the essential action needed to be taken for climate salvation.

Our governments need to focus on immediate impacts and solutions. The current speeches and promises are no longer enough. Global leaders and national governments hold the power of taking action on a global scale. Since international action can be supported locally by people engaged on this topic, youth action can be involved as well.

Governments can show genuine interest in taking action against climate change, thus motivating youth to do the same. Mariana, 14, Costa Rica, said, *"I would be tremendously inspired if they showed authentic interest in the topic. On many occasions, many politicians adopt this green narrative just to maintain a certain image."* Oftentimes, it feels like politicians don't actually care about the situation and may even have corrupt ulterior motives of selfishly benefiting. They adopt a 'green narrative' to satisfy the public, push a 'we'll do it tomorrow' mentality, and then no action is ever taken. How can we feel inclined to take action against climate change when those we look up to are procrastinating this urgent work? Supporting climate change isn't an accessory for someone's election campaign. It's something that needs to be taken seriously and acted upon.

When a community starts developing climate change solutions through campaigns, projects, and social media, they should be supported by those in power who can supply funding so that effective solutions can be reached. For example, the government could reduce the financial impacts of green changes by providing grants, tax breaks, or cost-sharing plans that would inspire more people to become sustainable. Governments can give grants and awards to individuals or organizations that are promoting climate activities to save the environment. They should fund projects and policies that sustain a clean environment. They should organize funfairs, competitions, workshops, and campaigns to create excitement around combating climate change. *"The best way to*

*learn is to participate. If governments created competitions or projects, challenging communities to discover and solve an issue, more involvement from the citizens would be existent and they would over time develop a broader understanding of the Earth's climate" Lara, 13, Argentina.* If the government starts taking action, people will mimic them.

We believe that by giving climate change the importance it deserves—forums to talk about concerns, supporting strategies to tackle, sharing inspiring stories, and making policy changes—governments can truly inspire and encourage youth.

### 3.



Morning Breach | Devi Shah | 13 | Los Altos | United States

# EDUCATION

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Education systems have the power to tackle our lack of awareness regarding climate change. Sharing our opinions and spreading knowledge can break down the anxiety and denial built around this topic. *“The greatest barrier is lack of knowledge, which often leads to fear. Taking actions, sharing opinions and spreading knowledge is what we, people who overcame the fear, can do to help others to understand what is happening and feel the urge to not stand passively and watch the environmental catastrophes” Maja, 15, Poland.* Expanding environmental knowledge amongst children and adults results in citizens developing a deeper understanding of environmental issues and having the skills to make wiser and more sustainable decisions. As an anonymous youth from Nigeria said, *“We think that the school curriculum should give more importance to the protection of the environment so that the students have a benevolent attitude towards it. So they are free to express themselves and take immediate measures, such as: sensitizing those around them to take care of the environment and fight against climate change.”*

Who needs to be Educated?

Children & Youth

Business people

Politicians

Citizens

Teachers

Labor unions

Faith leaders

*“We still depend on older generations which are necessary to make a big change - they have a climate impact as much as we do. We need to educate the entire society on this matter” Camila, 15, Brazil.* We rely on adults to make decisions. If the people responsible for the wellbeing of our earth are making uneducated decisions, what does that tell the young people who look up to them? All of the above-mentioned roles are powerful community stakeholders in our fight against climate change. Governments are not the only ones responsible for meeting nationally determined contributions (NDCs). This power rests in all of us, so we all need to be educated. Adults should be just as aware of our impacts on earth as the youth. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each

country's government to educate its people on the environmental crisis.

### **How > Online and Offline Campaigns**

*“People tend to live in familiar social bubbles, surrounded by like-minded people...Social circles that believe in the fight against climate change are likely to reach out to others such as themselves and empower this fight. On the other hand, people living in denial of climate change continue to preach the belief in their own communities. So the only way we can truly be united in our fight against climate change is to break out of our respective bubbles and raise awareness by starting conversations that bridge these divides” Anisa, 15, Bangladesh.*

The best way to initiate a discussion in the general population is through social media. It is an effective and simple way to get citizens involved in politics and climate change. Most people have their own account on at least one platform.

These are ways you can use social media to influence the population:

- 1. Going viral:** We see many promotions and causes that go ‘viral’ in order to inspire, inform and invite others to take action. Even if teens are not actively seeking out information, it is very likely they will come across it if it is heavily shared or goes ‘viral’ on a social media platform.
- 2. Accessibility:** Attention of leaders and politicians is a simple click away and can make youth voices more prevalent and immediate to those in decision-making positions.
- 3. Engagement:** Social media is an instant form of communication, with a near-simultaneous global reach. As of 2017, 53% of people in developing countries communicated in some way through social media, proving that it is something that connects many countries.<sup>1</sup>
- 4. Targeted campaigns:** Governments need to start targeting and translating the information into something engaging for their communities, since social media platforms, television, newspapers, books, and other types of media influence people to start caring.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/06/19/social-media-use-continues-to-rise-in-developing-countries-but-plateaus-across-developed-ones/>

Social media is also the most engaging platform for youth communication. *“Creating educational and entertaining advertisements that promote eco-awareness would enable youth today to learn more about the global effects and solutions to climate change” Sragvi, 14, India.*

### **How > Traditional Communication**

In regions with low internet access, it will be important to supplement information with traditional methods of communication such as radio, local television, newspaper, etc. Government Institutions like the National Orientation Agency (Nigeria) and the Ministry of Environment (Canada) should engage citizens by sensitization through media outreach like posters on the streets, jingles on the radio and television, creating Funfairs and Workshops that address Climate Change Issues. Campaigns that are offline can unite people in interpersonal connections and community-building ways.

### **How > Mandatory Environmental Studies in Schools**

Besides social media campaigns, it is essential that governments introduce mandatory environmental studies in schools. This curriculum needs to include not only science knowledge, but also skills, values, and actions to care for the environment. Curriculum needs to be adapted to include hands-on activities and projects, both inside and outside of school buildings, such as shoreline clean-ups, water testing, and tree planting. *“It is never too early to aid in the betterment of the world. Teaching it is not enough; there should be activities and practices that will be implemented so that the students may put into action what they have learned.” Basa, 17, Philippines.* Our education must also include experiences with others outside our community and country. Projects like #Decarbonize encourage learning from other people and places. For students of all ages, these experiential learning activities need to be implemented.

*“We must educate young people to have a vision for the future and design projects for sustainable development while preserving the environment. For example, projects on the use of renewable energy to combat deforestation, which is the main source of*



*climate issues. A reforestation project by planting thousands of trees” Nomena, 13, Madagascar.*

Through these three methods - online/social media, in schools, and traditional means - we can learn how individual action can benefit the world. We will discover that our voice matters and we can make a change. Once we've learned all of those through means of efficient curriculums and outreach, we could then implement them and help the world become a better place.



Usamos el agua para beber en la escuela | Stalyn Diaz Saavedra | 4 | Huánuco | Peru

# 4.

## ROLE OF YOUTH

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*“Everybody has a different experience with climate change; therefore, amplifying the voices of youth across the globe is vital. We do not define what the climate crisis is in another person’s shoes. Instead, we need to create a network... in which each person has their reality acknowledged.” Mariana, 15, Costa Rica.*

### Youth Networks

Despite many challenges, youth around the world choose to raise their voices and provide an action plan. We know, however, that a plan in one country will not meet the needs of another. As youth, we need to come together and support each other in our efforts to impact climate targets. We need global platforms and networks to celebrate the work we are doing, so that other students can read, learn, ask questions, and be inspired to make change in their own homes, schools, and cities. We, as youth, do not have the financial or structural means to make these networks and platforms happen. We need other stakeholders to come beside us and provide tangible methods to reach these goals and pave the way for us to express our views. We can support our fellow youth innovators and we can spread awareness. The global youth project #Decarbonize is an example of using education and youth action to form a network of like-minded and passionate youth. Through these school-based projects, we can share our community’s unique issues and ideate solutions to common problems in order to support each other.

### Youth Role Models

*“Being a role model is being open, having integrity and empathy—showing other youth that they are not alone in this climate change fight, that there are many of us acting in every corner of the world.” Sneha, 15, Canada.* Being a role model is acknowledging and championing the work that other youth are doing in their country. Young people should grow up seeing that their voices matter, that they can make change NOW. They don’t need to wait until they are older. One student, Alexis, 15, from New

Zealand stated that at the beginning of 2020, her entire family gave up eating beef, and after sharing that change in a student council meeting, they decided to pressure the school administration to start a 'Meatless-Monday' model in their cafeteria.

### Youth Actions

Getting involved in as many ways as possible can help youth speak our voices globally through climate strikes and protests. Schools can independently host their own strikes, or communities could organize safe and peaceful protesting. Also, youth should have a place in the government. Whether it's petitioning, proposing, or supporting policies, we need to be involved in the policy-making process. Similarly to the actions we have taken and can take in the future to be role models, lifestyle changes are extremely important. Once many people switch to reusable and sustainable appliances and objects, change diets, use green transportation, or implement other habitual changes, we will see a difference in the mindset and environment.



Blue whale, Warm climate | Darina Zakharova | 11 | Adino | Russia

# 5.

## CONCLUSION

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*“The amazing thing about youth is we have imagination, creativity beyond our years—but while it is beyond our years, it is also specific to our generation” Nyla, 14, UK.*

Children and young people have been fighting for change across the globe, fighting for a better tomorrow. Although policy-making relies heavily on governments, youth will always be essential to this process, and we are asking to be considered as vital stakeholders. The meaningful participation of youth around the world can create change to rival what we see in our climate. Our own assets could be used to benefit our environment and the generations to come. Support from governments and institutions has been invaluable in what we have already done, and we want to continue creating change together.

We all have different outlooks on how to tackle this issue—what brings us together is our advocacy for this crisis. Advocacy capitalizes on everything we youth can do. It focuses on how we can hold the government accountable, our responsibility to create the better world we all wish for, and spread our message worldwide. The active participation of youth in all aspects of policy-making is essential to let adults know that even when we are youth, we can make a change in our society. By educating more global citizens, we can ensure that all youth have the ability to spark conversations and ignite change. We deeply believe that with passion for long-term transformation in legislation, strong power to fight for our environment, and the active leadership to move forward, making the Earth a better place will no longer be just a slogan, but a truth that we live every day.



Wasted beauty | Nijhoom Rahman | 17 | Dhaka | Bangladesh