



**#Decarbonize:
Water**

Global Youth Report

2019

WHO ARE WE

This paper is a synthesis of the work done by over 10,000 youth, from 33 different countries, over the course of four months, with the goal to inspire leaders of the world to take action on the climate emergency we face. This project has been designed and delivered by TakingITGlobal and the Centre for Global Education, in partnership with Ocean Wise and under moral patronage of UNESCO, with input from such branches as the Intergovernmental Hydrology Programme, Ecohydrology, the Biosphere Reserves, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, and the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet). Throughout the collaborative learning journey, youth involved have communicated with one another on a dedicated virtual classroom and through video conferences, to foster an understanding of climate change, colonization, youth mobilization, and the various stakeholders in the climate change movement. We have addressed these issues by creating blog posts and submitting original art pieces based on the theme of the climate crisis and specific impacts on water. The theme of water was suggested by UNESCO on the occasion of the approaching UN Decade of Oceans, but it naturally shifted over to solutions and actions that impact us specifically, as we wrote this white paper. In addition, we surveyed close to 2500 people under 19 to get the opinions and perspectives of as many youth as possible from all around the world. We, a group of global youth, are very passionate about speaking up about the climate crisis. We will keep speaking until words turn into actions.

INTRODUCTION

“Youth are the future: neglecting them would be akin to neglecting the future” ~
Decarbonize Decolonize Youth

This paper is representative of thousands of youth voices from around the world that highlights the unique and different climate-related crises we are all experiencing. While our concerns varied, our desire to focus on solutions was shared. The solutions presented in this synthesis white paper have been researched and refined by thousands of youth all with one goal in mind; to save our planet, our home. The five main areas of concern are the fate of our forests and our oceans, the importance of representation and education, and the effects of our industries. As we walk through these issues in the paper, we encourage you to think about which solutions *you* have the ability to implement. Humanity is threatened by our way of life, so our way of life must change. We are asking you to join us in combating the climate crisis.



Darina, 15, Russia

FORESTS

*If a tree falls in a forest and there's no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?
If thousands of trees fall and no one is listening, when will we notice they are gone?
When they are gone, who will remember them?*

Forests are one of the most important ecosystems on earth. Not only do they provide us with the oxygen that we need to breathe, but they also act as a carbon sink, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Deforestation is the second leading cause of the climate crisis and produces around 24% of global greenhouse gas emissions.¹ Therefore, we invite policy makers to acknowledge the importance of our forests, bush lands, and wetlands; of our jungles, woodlands, and grasslands.

In 2018, The Guardian reported that every second, a chunk of forest equivalent to the size of a soccer field is lost.² This negatively affects the Earth in many ways. First, deforestation affects how water vapor is produced over the canopy, which in turn causes a reduction in the amount of rainfall the area gets, and increases greenhouse gasses. Second, the removal of trees causes desertification and soil erosion, which in turn, leads to an inability to grow crops. Additionally, loss of trees in an area destroys river habitats, which has a huge impact on local biodiversity. It is essential to stop this destructive dynamic.



"Plant trees to save earth" Ishrat Jahan, 12 - Abdullahpur, Bangladesh

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-data>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2018/jun/27/one-football-pitch-of-forest-lost-every-second-in-2017-data-reveals>

Calls To Action

- **Create policies geared towards saving national forests and natural habitats**
- **Fund local afforestation projects**
- **Develop economical guidelines for financial support for certain communities**
- **Develop educational tools and resources that will provide students with a solid understanding of deforestation**

Youth Commitments

- **Introduce vegetarian and vegan option meal days**
- **Annual fundraising efforts within schools for reforestation**
- **Carbon neutral schools**

We, the youth of the world, urge that importance be placed in planting new forests, rehabilitating degraded ones, and enriching existing ones.

“Your whole sense of spirituality, your whole sense of who you are is connected to the forests,” Saskia, student, Australia.

Planting more trees is not enough. In order to maintain the ecosystem, it is necessary that the planted trees are of a native species to that area. Therefore, we urge government leaders to create a policy in which logging companies must plant a native tree for each one they cut down and ensure its growth. For industries that participate, planting additional trees could be awarded with an eco-friendly global award or recognition from a global organization. In order for companies to consider the forests when making decisions, they must understand the impact that their actions have.

Protecting the native trees that we currently have is vitally important. We urge governments through policy, industry, through their corporate social responsibilities (CSRs), and NGOs through mandates, to support scientists by committing a portion of their gross income to the funding of afforestation research and action projects.

Alongside this action, we recognize that raising animals for meat requires using large stretches of land. So, reducing the consumption of meat is a great alternative for people who want to become more eco-friendly. Schools have a significant impact on the lives of teenagers, so the introduction of vegetarian or vegan meal programs in schools has the potential to be an enormous success and can become a habit in the life of lots of people. Currently, in Trinidad and Tobago, the government provides vegetarian meals to all schools called 'box lunches.' Further, some schools in India, and Trinidad and Tobago are strictly a 'No Meat Zone'; and they provide only vegetarian meals in their box lunches and cafeteria. This type of program has been proven to be a success that can be modelled throughout the world.

Deforestation causes loss of habitat, negatively impacts the water cycle, and destroys soil quality so crops don't grow. Youth of the world believe that **the key to preventing deforestation lies in drastic action and funding of tree planting initiatives and a more plant-based diet.** Only then will we grow closer to ending the climate crisis.

OCEANS

Oceans are essential to our life. "Nearly 2.4 billion people (~40% of the world's population) live within 100km of the coast."³ The ocean produces over half of the world's oxygen and absorbs 50 times more carbon dioxide than our atmosphere. It is necessary to take action now, if we want to save the Earth.

Calls to Action

- **Creation of a UNFCCC-affiliated Global Ocean Fund similar in nature to the Green Climate Fund**
- **Reduce taxes for producers of renewable energy products**
- **Provide aid to countries who are affected by rising sea levels**

Youth Commitments

- **Use social media to remind companies about their significant impact and responsibility on water**
- **Reduce our individual water consumption**
- **Learn about the oceans and raise further awareness about climate impact on our waterways**

The melting of the ice sheets is one of the most prominent results rising from increasing global water temperatures. It leads to a rise in worldwide sea levels, ultimately threatening low-lying countries in states like the Caribbean and Scandinavia. According to the United Nations, "Antarctica alone has the potential to contribute more than a metre of sea level rise by 2100 and more than 15 metres by 2500," and, "almost two-thirds of the world's largest cities are located in areas at risk of sea level rise."⁴ so even a small sea level rise will have a huge impact.

We call on governmental leadership to ensure that no country is left behind and struggling to find achievable solutions - through education, resources, adaptation, or

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Ocean-fact-sheet-package.pdf>

⁴ ibid

prevention - in problems related to rising sea levels. To give every country a fair chance of moving forward, specialized and/or dedicated funding is needed. We urge the participating parties to create a "Blue Climate Fund," which is similar to the current Green Climate Fund, a UNFCCC-affiliated grant, loan, and private sector instrument. The job of these funds would be to assist developing nations in fighting ocean related climate crises, oceanic research, and investigation projects.

Another consequence of polluting emissions related to oceans is acidification. This consists of a decrease in the oceans' pH as a result of CO₂ and NO₂. This is making life impossible for multiple species, especially in coral reefs. It also affects the economy, as ocean acidification is expected to cost the global economy more than \$1 trillion USD per year by 2100. With these statistics in mind, we propose to reduce GHG emissions through legislation (reduce taxes for producers of renewable energy products, limiting



"Fading" Raenar F. Sanchez, 15, Los Baños, Philippines

the production of fossil fuels, etc) and by boycotting products which are not eco-friendly. This will be supported by the branding of eco-friendly products by an international non-governmental organization.

In addition, we urge for the implementation of more protection and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems by creating protected areas. Furthermore, we need to improve human adaptation by implementing a larger number of regulated sustainable fisheries, coastal setback zones that prohibit all or certain types of development along the shoreline minimizing the damage from coastal flooding and erosion, and develop new forecast and monitoring tools.

Finally, it is extremely important to strengthen scientific research. If governments, private companies, and observers can increase their investments in ocean research and conservation, it will be possible to reach an agreement that will ensure healthier oceans and ocean species, while mitigating the impact on economic growth.

Finally, everybody needs to commit to reduce their individual carbon footprint, as well as pressure big companies to reduce theirs. Minor changes can have a huge impact on individuals, our society, and our way of life, getting us closer to a sustainable society. Everything from leaving the tap off as much as possible, to taking quicker showers, we can all make noticeable differences.

INDUSTRY

Industry is the backbone of our society, powering our economies. However, while striving for exponential economic growth, our way of life has been overcome by linear consumerism, and created an environment where ethics appears nonexistent. Because of this, many corporations see no reason to create products that are reusable or recyclable when single-use materials are much cheaper. In addition, most of the energy we use is obtained through fossil fuels. The burning of them makes up 76% of all CO₂ emissions in the USA, and heavily contributes to increasing ocean and global temperatures, ocean acidification, and rising sea levels. As well as the terrible effects of fossil fuels, these resources are finite and if these were to run out an economic collapse would be inevitable. To avoid this, we, representing youth under 18 from around the world, urge a switch to renewables. In the switch to renewables resources, many companies will inevitably experience a loss in revenue, thus leading to an increase in unemployment and a decrease of population wellbeing. To combat this economic recession, it will be vital that governments of countries with fossil fuel productions retrain as many of the workers in those businesses, so that they will be able to work in the production of renewable energies instead. Consumers also need to be educated on the importance of buying sustainably, when they have the choice.

Calls to Action:

- **Develop a global organization that labels products with a specific certification that allows consumers to easily recognize products that are manufactured with a standard of sustainable/ "green" supply chain**
- **Governments to implement an incentive for companies to take climate responsibility, such as a carbon targets that when reached allow for opting-out of a carbon tax.**
- **Governments create a program to gradually retrain workers in fossil fuel industry so they can have jobs in renewable energy.**

Youth Commitments

- **Active selection of sustainable products over ones that are not environmentally friendly**

Many people want to reduce their carbon footprint through buying 'green' products. However, there is currently no universal way to identify product that are produced through a sustainable supply chain, and those that are not. As consumers, we know that people would like to make eco-friendly choices, and support them with their purchase choices. We urge that a process be implemented (potentially through a collaboration between non-governmental organizations) of branding products that are green/ sustainable. This label could theoretically be put on all kinds of products, from electronics, to raw materials, to food. This label would certify that a product has been made with a green supply chain, sustainable materials, operating with a certain level of energy efficiency, and is recyclable and/or reusable (of course one or more of these conditions may not apply to certain products. For instance, an apple cannot be energy efficient or recyclable). The way it would work is a company would apply for a label for one of their products by sending the labeling organization the info about their product; mode of production, material supply chain; energy efficiency of product, and whether or not it is reusable/recyclable. The labeling organization would then verify the information. An amount of money would then be paid by the company to the labeling organization to have the label granted to them.

"If everyone started taking care of the amount of carbon they produced, then the environmental problems we are facing today would decrease greatly." ~ Ana, Chile

This kind of branding already exists in many countries to some degree, but in order to make the biggest impact possible, the label must be internationally accepted and recognized. The fair-trade label on foods and beverages is a great example. By implementing such labelling, we reach the consumers directly and thereby avoid having to deal with legislation in the different countries. Purchasing more of these products would impact the kind of items markets put on their shelves. The eco-friendly label could be compared to the easily recognizable markings of the Fair-trade organization that is entirely run by NGOs.

Each year, the global temperature and the level of the oceans increases more and more due to greenhouse gas emissions. One of the most common ways to reduce the negative industry impact is to have its energy be renewable. Using renewable energy by means of power from a solar or wind power farm, or installing solar panels directly

on the building. Ultimately, over time, this would reduce overall electricity costs. Installing solar panels on schools, with meters to read the impact, also provides teachable moments in schools as youth start to understand the availability, impact, and cost/savings viability of these transitions.

It is also important that industries are environmentally friendly. A carbon tax - that could be opt-ed out of, should certain carbon targets be met over the course of a fiscal year, would provide an incentive for companies to become more eco-friendly. We can see that today the majority of the countries do not have a carbon tax. We encourage the United Nations to ensure the implementation of this policy in countries across the globe, with an end goal of worldwide carbon tax. Since carbon emissions are a global problem, the implementation should also be global. Furthermore, the carbon tax must be high enough that it is an influential factor in the decision-making of companies. The tax should be directly proportional to the amount of greenhouse gases released. The aim of the tax would be to encourage corporations to reduce their emissions and become more energy efficient. The carbon tax can be used to fund afforestation and other climate crisis factor

In our global climate survey, we asked the youth to rank the top three ways from which. As seen from the column chart above, a large majority of the youth call for regulations and enforcement of the industry as their first priority.

A common worry of switching to renewable resources is that many people in the fossil fuel industry would become unemployed. This prevents many countries from transitioning, especially when unemployment may already be an issue. In reality, however, this could become an advantage. By investing time and money into retraining fossil fuel workers for jobs in renewable energy, and perhaps by using some government funding, we would be able to make the transition into renewable energy as smooth as possible. Renewable energy can create a large amount of jobs, which could be filled by the retrained fossil fuel workers and unemployed.

"We can use sustainable amounts of oil until new technologies are developed making it possible to run solely on renewable energy in all climates and conditions." ~ Jocelyne, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Furthermore, the numbers may not be as intimidating as they seem. According to a 2017 report by the U.S. Department of Energy, in 2016, there were approximately 1.1 million workers in the traditional energy production fossil fuel industry (in the U.S.). That means that if we are to switch 5% of the U.S. fossil fuel workers to the renewable energy sector, 55,000 people have a future-focussed job. If the government was to provide funding to retrain workers over a period of time, this would be a possible task. The amount of workers in the renewable energy sector should increase with the demand for renewable energy.

We request those actions because, each year, the severity of the climate crisis increases more and more due to greenhouse gases emissions, mainly caused by the industries. If the temperature continues to increase, tropical storms, for example, will become more frequent, and even more destructive.



“Discovering a New Land after Apocalypse” Seoyeon Kim, 18, Hoengsong, South Korea

REPRESENTATION

There is endemic underrepresentation of certain groups of people in local and international decision making. We, the youth, demand that these groups are represented in all climate related matters - not just at special events, but embedded in the discussion tables, at decision making meetings, and within written agreements. The climate crisis affects everyone in various degrees, and no one should be left out of the solutions. The groups being addressed are as follows: youth, developing countries, and indigenous peoples.

Calls to action

- **Represent the youth: international level, political events, discussions, and decision making**
- **Creation of a free and comprehensive database for educational tools and resources pertaining to climate change**
- **Specific targets for representation of vulnerable groups including, youth developing nations, women, and Indigenous peoples**

Youth commitments

- **Increased participation in organizations that strengthen youth voice**
- **Youth-targeted information campaigns about advocacy regarding the climate crisis**

In most cases, people under 18 are not invited to engage in international campaigns or political projects. Our project, *#Decarbonize #Decolonize*, is one of the few major networks that youth under 18 have to be heard through around climate change.

However, the absence of their voice is still notable. It is a necessity that people of all ages are heard by their governments in order to create a resilient, reactive, and efficient society. It is urgent that the policy makers also listen to the ideas, concerns, viewpoints, and youth contributions. Youth organizations must also be given equal space and decision making tables to share information and views on how the climate crisis is affecting and impacting their lives.

"It's time for youth to have their say. Speak up, speak out, speak now!" ~ Elliot Gram, Australia

Representation of those living within developing nations is very important, as they will be greatly impacted by certain aspects of and solutions to the climate emergency. We believe that representation of different parties is vital when looking for solutions to issues surrounding the climate crisis. Furthermore, developed nations can help provide solutions to the problems that developing countries face by providing resources, technology, financial aid, and other outreach.

"Developing countries, places with widespread poverty, and countries with ineffective governments sometimes face the gravest risks from the changing climate, and are usually poorly equipped to find ways to prepare for and prevent environmental threats." Hanae Quazzani, student, Morocco

The knowledge and voices of Indigenous people are critically underrepresented when it comes to climate crisis, even though they are among the most affected by the issue. To increase representation of Indigenous peoples, governments should set minimum targets on the inclusion of community members in local, regional, national, and international dialogues about actions that are to be taken to address the climate crisis. Local land-based and traditional solutions need to be heard and considered alongside scientific processes and solutions. We know the strength in a diversity of voices and thoughts; we need to see hard targets on inclusion and representation to ensure it is happening.

We are committed to working towards our goals. We are committed to educating other youth about how they can make their voices heard. Youth do not currently have guaranteed representation when it comes to government affairs, and we must start by making our voices heard in every way possible. We commit to joining more organizations which promote youth voices. This will unify us so that, together, we can

be louder and open new opportunities for youth representation on far more influential levels.

We would go far towards eradicating environmental crisis if the world as a collective opened its mind to new perspectives. Many bright ideas drown because the wielders are not given enough room to flourish. Everyone needs to have the same rights and the same representation on the impacts of climate emergency. No one can be set aside nor left behind be it developing countries, youths, or indigenous peoples. The climate crisis is everyone's problem, it cannot be solved alone.



Devi, 13, Los Altos, United States of America

CONCLUSION

“A policy that requires the education of Climate Change would be a game-changer as it will awaken the minds of the youth,” Carlos, student, Colombia.

By now it should be clear to you that youth are urging you to take **immediate** climate action. In this paper, we have outlined the four areas in which we see it most vital that climate action is taken. Our planet is like our bodies, the oceans are the lifeblood that keeps it all in circulation. The forests are the lungs that allow it to breathe. The industry is the backbone that makes it stand tall and proud. Lastly, representation, like our muscles, is vital if we are to have the strength to do anything. Without any one of these components, our body would collapse. If we don't take care of any one of these vital parts of our world, we will destroy ourselves.

While we acknowledge that we are not yet educated enough to become climate scientists, we are wise enough to see that something has to change in the world's approach to this climate crisis. What we want you to take away from this white paper may not be our exact solutions to the mentioned problems, but the spirit with which those ideas were written. We want you, like us, to debate possible solutions to the problems, instead of debating commas and colons. The legacy of your generation depends on what decisions you make for our generation today. Make sure your legacy is not one of debates and disagreements, but one of agreements and action. Youth are rising. We need you to rise with us. We need your action to fight the climate crisis!



CALLS TO ACTION

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OCEANS

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PROJECT PARTNERS

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Under the moral patronage of UNESCO
Under the moral patronage of Canadian Commission for
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