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Study Partners



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IUCN CEC is one of the seven expert commissions of IUCN that has a wide network of professionals dedicated to using creative communication and education tools and approaches to raise awareness and inspire action to conserve nature. Commission on Education & Communication (CEC) has been leading the youth engagement strategy for IUCN and has numerous programmes engaged on the same, including #NatureForAll. <https://www.iucn.org/our-union/commissions/commission-education-and-communication>



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Background

Today, every child on earth is already impacted by the planetary crisis of climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss. Inevitably, the impact of the crisis will worsen in due course of time and will impact all, including the most vulnerable populace who have contributed the least to the crisis. According to **UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI)**¹, 1 billion children – nearly half the total – are already at extremely high risk of suffering from the impacts of climate change. Children and youth – particularly those living in poor countries – are among the most vulnerable to the health, economic and social risks posed by climate change, thus making it paramount to prioritize their well-being in national climate strategies.

UNICEF's new **Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan**² marks a transformative step towards this goal. By rallying global efforts to prioritize a clean, healthy and sustainable environment by 2030, with a specific focus on enhancing the lives of vulnerable children, UNICEF aims to catalyse systemic change. Key strategies include ensuring that all national climate plans integrate children's needs and youth participation, alongside earmarking 20 per cent of climate finance for addressing these needs directly.

In India, where the climate crisis disproportionately affects its vast youth population, action is particularly urgent. With over 66 per cent of the population under 35 years old, the impact of climate change on children and youth is magnified. UNICEF's report on the '**Climate crisis is a child rights crisis**'³ indicates that children in India are among the most 'at-risk' of the impacts of climate change, which threatens their health, education and protection.

However, children and youth are still often viewed as passive bystanders rather than active catalysts for change regarding climate-related issues. Given the alarming escalation of climate threats and the increasing frequency of extreme events in a world this generation will soon inherit, delving into current perceptions of climate change among children and youth becomes imperative. A survey conducted by UNICEF on youth experiences and perceptions of climate change (CC)⁴ in their locality and surroundings found overall, 65 per cent of respondents in India reported that they "very often or often" learned about climate change in school. Interestingly, 64 per cent reported that they were able to explain climate change and global warming. Among those able to explain climate change, 36 per cent were "very or extremely worried" about climate change and its impact on the future. The study also reported that 80 per cent of respondents stated that their education or studies was affected by climate change. In addition, a majority 84 per cent said that they would like to do something to address climate change with the necessary support. Around 26 per cent of older respondents expressed they were interested in "teaching the community". The study indicates the need for more engaging, action-oriented, and contextually more relevant education around climate change and environment sustainability (CCES).

¹ UNICEF, *The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index*, 2021

² UNICEF, *The UNICEF Sustainability and Climate Action Plan 2023–2030*, November 2023

³ UNICEF, *Making Climate and Environment Policies for and with Children and Young People*, *Climate and Environment Discussion Paper*, November 2021

⁴ UNICEF, *Rising to the challenge: Youth's Perspectives on Climate Change and Education in South Asia*, 2020



Left to right: **Siddhant Sarang**, Climate Activist, Bihar; **Meghna Rathore**, Social Entrepreneur & Founder Nariksha Pads, Rajasthan; **Hina Saifi**, Climate Activist, Uttar Pradesh at the Stakeholder Consultation

Research indicates that vulnerable young population can play an effective role as communicators and mobilizers in their communities. A UNICEF evaluation reveals that community outcomes could be improved by training and deploying children as disaster risk reduction sentinels.⁵ Despite having mixed or polarized outcomes of engaging adults in climate change communication and education campaigns, climate change education among children and youth has been witnessed to promote concerns over climate change and has fostered mitigation behaviours. Adults' perceptions around climate change can often be influenced by several biases; on the contrary, adolescents' ideas and perceptions are less influenced by socioideological factors as compared to adult counterparts.⁶

It is evident that investing in children and youth is the key to mitigate climate change in India. However, there exists a paucity in research investigating youth's perception on climate change, and

⁵ Evaluation of UNICEF's Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction and School Safety Programme, Bihar, India (2011–2016), September 2017

⁶ Stevenson, K. T., Peterson, M. N., Bondell, H. D., Moore, S. E. & Carrier, S. J. Overcoming skepticism with education: interacting influences of worldview and climate change knowledge on perceived climate change risk among adolescents. *Climatic Change* 126, 293–304 (2014).

the possible ways to successfully engage youth in climate change action. While several studies have been conducted globally on youth perceptions around climate change, the literature available on Indian youth's perspectives on the subject remains limited, providing a fragmented and incomplete understanding of their attitude towards CCES.

This study conducted by UNICEF India was designed to provide a holistic insight into the perspectives of Indian youth regarding climate change. It sought to delve into their level of knowledge, sense of efficacy, and engagement with climate change issues, as well as their perceptions of viable solutions and their sense of responsibility towards implementation of the solutions. Additionally, the study aimed to gather information on existing policy and institutional mechanisms that drive behaviour change communication concerning climate change, particularly those relevant to youth, to derive actionable recommendations.

By harnessing insights from such studies and placing a strong emphasis on empowering youth in climate action initiatives, a generation of informed and motivated change-makers can be cultivated. These individuals will possess the knowledge, drive and determination necessary to guide the nation towards a more sustainable future.

Main Objectives of the Study

To recommend communication and engagement strategies for greater inclusion and empowerment of youth in taking positive actions for environment sustainability.

To understand policy and institutional-level mechanisms for driving communication for behaviour change on CCES issues, especially those relevant to youth involvement and engagement.

To understand the perceptions related to climate change and environmental sustainability (CCES) among youth and key stakeholders engaged in CCES planning and implementation, especially in rural areas.



Methodology



To achieve the objectives of this study, a mix of methodologies and approaches was employed. The inquiry aimed to understand the policies and institutional mechanisms concerning climate change and environmental sustainability through a blend of qualitative, quantitative research instruments. Employing a 360-degree approach, various levels of stakeholders were engaged, and triangulated data analysis was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding.

The following main activities were carried out to gather perspectives from varied stakeholders at different levels:

Secondary Review

- Review similar/ relevant studies, efforts, policies and programmes
- Literature and policy review on youth engagement in CCES issues

Sharing and Dissemination

- Share study findings and discuss implications
- Discuss findings and develop recommendations with relevant programme and policymakers

Consultations with GOI Officials

- Interest/experience of youth engagement in government schemes, programmes and plans
- Relevant line ministries of GOI

Online Survey with Experts

- Understand communication and conservation experts' experience of working with youth
- 38 experts/ IUCN CEC members in India

Case Studies with Youth Crusaders

- Document and understand the motivation/ challenges of youth crusaders
- 10 case studies of young crusaders in India

Consultations with Industry on CCES Programmes

- Understand industry interest/ experience of youth engagement
- Review corporate CCES programmes and consultation on youth engagement

Good Practices Analysis

- Document good experiences/ practices of youth engagement/ involvement in Indian CCES programmes/ campaigns
- Analysis of four different programmes/ strategies

Global Lessons and Good Practices (International Case Studies)

- Document good experiences/ practices of youth engagement/ involvement in global CCES programmes/ campaigns
- 13 global mechanisms with examples

Synthesis Report and Recommendations

- Overall synthesis of all findings to draw recommendations for communication and engagement strategies for youth in CCES
- Synthesis of findings and recommendations

Qualitative Study

- Understand youth interest and engagement in CCES issues
- 16 FGDs with youth; 89 IDIs with officials, teachers, vulnerable community members and community leaders in four study states – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar and Rajasthan



The guidelines for collection of data and evidence were carefully and meticulously crafted, wherein emphasis was laid on:

- Understanding knowledge and practices among young people on climate change and sustainable environment, especially in rural areas.
- Reviewing current relevant policies, schemes and institutional mechanisms on climate change and environmental sustainability that exist at national and state levels.
- Identifying communication sources and access of these schemes/programmes to youth.
- Identifying gaps, challenges and solutions to engage youth in climate actions.
- Exploring impactful practices/initiatives at the national and international levels that engage youth in climate change and environmentally sustainable practices.
- Deliberate and focused discussions on selected Mission Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) themes.

Secondary Literature Review

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding and assessment of youth engagement in climate-related initiatives, the secondary literature review focused on two distinct components – review of policy landscape and review of literature.

Policy Landscape Review: An extensive policy review was undertaken, which analysed various relevant policies and programmes related to youth or youth engagement. The review focused on analysing existing programmes of the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide a narrative of the policy frameworks existing at the national and state levels. A detailed review of various policies and researches helped identify the major challenges limiting youth engagement and the scope for future interventions for engaging youth in climate change and environmental sustainability initiatives.

The secondary review analysed all such initiatives launched between 2011 and 2021 to understand the engagement trends prevalent in the local, national and private sectors. A detailed mapping of national and state-level programmes and policies on CCES issues were undertaken to determine the national scenario. For determining the grassroots perspective, a qualitative study was undertaken in four selected states.

Some of the key documents/policies/programmes reviewed include:

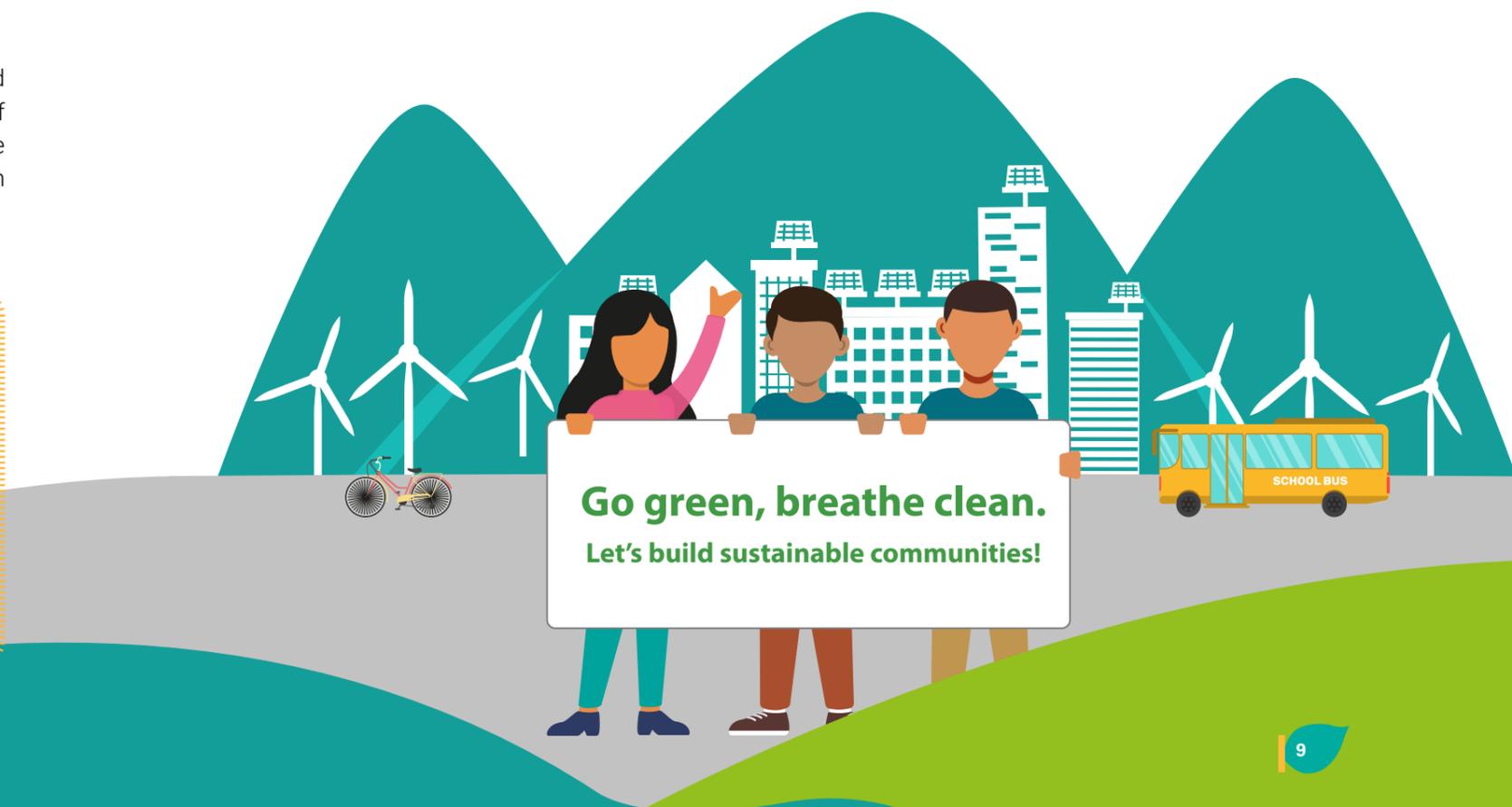
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) • National Education Policies (NEP) • National Service Scheme Manual 2006 • National Plan for Youth and Adolescent Development • Vision and Objectives of the National Youth Policy 2021 • Skill India Mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Skill Development Programme (MOEFCC) • National Green Corps, Eco Clubs Scheme (MOEFCC) • Prime Minister's Youth Career Development Scheme • Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005
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Global conventions/frameworks/programmes working on climate change and environmental sustainability for youth include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) • United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change • YOUNGO • IUCN Youth Strategy • IUCN Youth Summit • United Nations Action for Climate Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Engagement in Land and Ecosystem Restoration • Global Youth Initiative on Combating Desertification • Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework • Global Youth Biodiversity Network • RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands
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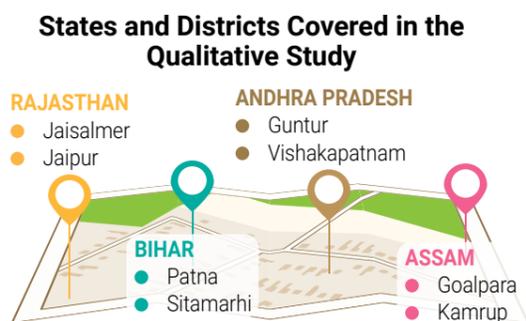
Literature Review: In order to map the various initiatives undertaken to engage youth in climate change and environmentally sustainable endeavours, various studies, reports and evaluation studies pertaining to youth engagement for climate change communication initiative were undertaken. This review focused on reviewing literature/work/programmes undertaken by prominent agencies/organizations like UNICEF, WWF, IUCN, World Bank, UNEP and UNDP.

Online portals and websites were the primary sources of mapping relevant documents. Documents from 2011 to 2021 on youth involvement in climate change at the national and some state levels were reviewed. Recommendations on strengthening climate actions were identified. Based on this review, relevant inputs were culled out for questionnaires for government and private sector initiatives. All the information collected through secondary data was coded and analysed using a parametric matrix for further analysis and interpretation.



Qualitative Study

A qualitative study⁷ was undertaken to collect empirical evidence from the field. Its objective was to provide insights on 'barriers' and 'enablers' to youth engagement. The qualitative study also provided first-hand account of the communication needs and support required for active youth engagement for positive climate-related actions. The qualitative study was undertaken in two districts each from four states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar and Rajasthan.



Focused group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) were undertaken to collect data. The guidelines for FGDs and IDIs were developed, following which a two-day field training for the moderators, field team managers and researchers was undertaken. The two-day field training aimed at orienting the entire staff about the key objectives, processes and tools of the study.

For each state, a separate team was formed, comprising one moderator/researcher and a co-moderator. The researcher conducted the IDIs at the state and district levels, while the co-moderator assisted the moderator in conducting FGDs and IDIs with students, teachers and community members. A list of government officials was developed in consultation with UNICEF state offices for conducting interviews.

Overall, in 4 states, 170 youth were approached in two sets of age group (15–18 years and 19–24 years) through 16 FGDs, in both urban and rural locations.

The IDIs were conducted with teachers, vulnerable community members, community leaders/activists and government officials. To get the perspective of teachers, vulnerable community members and community activists, 64 IDIs were conducted, and 25 IDIs with senior state, district and block-level officials from environment and allied departments.

Selected Mission LiFE themes for the Study

LIFE actions targeted	Actions under each theme
Energy saved 2, 5, 7, 8, 11	Actions to reduce energy consumption, use of public transport, bicycle for short distances, carpooling, CNG/electric vehicles and switching-off of appliances from plug points when not in use
Water saved 24, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33	Actions taken to reuse water (water from washed vegetable, AC/RO), reduced water waste (water-efficient fixtures) and recharge water (rainwater harvesting)
Sustainable food system adopted and healthy lifestyles adopted 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 63, 64, 66	Adopting sustainable food system (millets in diets, compost food waste, kitchen gardens, indigenous herbs and medicinal plants, e.g., neem, tulsi, giloi, mint, curry leaves and more)
Waste reduced (swachhata actions) and single-use plastic reduced 35, 36, 37, 39, 43	Actions taken to reduce waste (compost, segregation of waste at source and e-recycling), reuse and recycle single-use plastics (carry own water bottle)

⁷This study is qualitative in nature and provides directions/insights for further strategies of communication/engagement with youth. It includes viewpoints from several stakeholders involved in undertaking planning, designing and implementing policies and communication programmes on CCES with youth. However, it does not claim to be comprehensive and should not be considered representative of the whole of India.

Consultation with Select Government of India Ministries

Selected interviews with relevant ministry officials were conducted to provide an understanding of the various policies and programmes that existed where youth could be engaged. A list was prepared for identified government departments and relevant ministries, identifying key officials for interviews. The tools used for this activity primarily included key informant interviews (KIIs) through open-ended questionnaires and virtual meetings. The focus was to understand the government's ongoing initiatives on climate change and those engaging youth in CCES activities. Discussions centred on the initiatives already in place and their outcomes. This also provided a better understanding of how youth were perceived and involved in decision-making and policy framing related to CCES issues in the country and the identifiable gaps within policies and schemes for future recommendations and action plans. Overall, senior officials from eight key ministries were contacted and interviewed.

Online Survey Among IUCN CEC Members in India

Approximately 150 IUCN CEC members from various regions of the country participated in an online survey that aimed at sharing their experiences and provided insights into youth engagement, education and communication strategies related to CCES. The objective was to collect feedback based on their past work experiences, providing valuable lessons learned from involving youth in CCES initiatives and programmes, including both successful approaches and challenges encountered.

The survey was conducted using a scheduled questionnaire with pre-coded options, distributed through the Kobo Collect app. The questionnaire was designed around the study's thematic areas, concentrating on key concerns such as the implementation of climate change policies, strategies for mitigation, adaptation, resilience and the active involvement of youth in promoting public awareness for climate action.

Case Studies with Young Crusaders

Ten case studies were compiled, spotlighting young crusaders in India. These activists or leaders were selected based on their exemplary work in the field of the environment, their influence on social media, engagement with environmental organizations or grassroots initiatives, and their proactive contributions, even if not widely recognized, particularly in creating awareness about climate change. The primary aim of this activity was to gain deeper insights into the drivers and motivators behind their leadership roles, with the goal of identifying strategies to inspire more young individuals to lead CCES initiatives.



Consultations with Industry on CCES Programmes

A comprehensive review of corporate CCES programmes was undertaken, followed by consultations to gauge industry interest and experiences regarding youth engagement on CCES issues. A mapping exercise was conducted to assess private sector engagement in India, focusing on youth involvement and CCES activities. In total, 29 companies were shortlisted for review, including 16 companies from the IUCN Business and Biodiversity Engagement Unit and IUCN Leaders for Nature Network, all under the theme of "youth engagement". A roundtable discussion, held online on 14 July 2023, saw active participation from over 36 personnel representing corporate sustainability and site teams of the top 10 private sector players in India.

Global Lessons and Good Practices

Global lessons and best practices in CCES programmes that effectively involved youth were examined to enhance the study's recommendations. Impactful initiatives were identified through an online call within the IUCN network, chosen for their innovative departure from conventional practices and their potential to address limitations or barriers faced by conventional methods. Each case study adhered to the suggested structure, highlighting the core problem or challenge addressed by conventional practices and outlining how these practices evolved to overcome limitations or barriers.

Indian Best Practices

Effective strategies and scalable interventions for enhancing youth engagement in CCES planning and implementation from India were documented. These initiatives actively involved young people in promoting climate change and environment sustainability. To identify such practices/initiatives for documentation, criteria such as innovativeness, capacity to lead tangible change, impact on the policy environment, and potential for replication and sustainability, including self-supporting capabilities, were considered.

Stakeholder Sharing Meeting

A strategic workshop was organized on 25 August 2023 to discuss the study findings and develop recommendations with relevant programme and policymakers. The discussions focused on 'Policies and Programmes Engaging Youth in CCES Issues' and 'Strategies on Encouraging Youth Voice and Agency in CCES Action'.

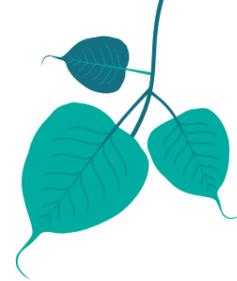
Distinguished speakers included Mr. Yugal Kishore Joshi, Mission Director LiFE, NITI Aayog; Mr. C. Senthil Rajan, Joint Secretary (Broadcasting-II), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, GOI; Ms. Mamta Varma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GOI; Mr. Paulos Workneh, Chief WASH/CCES, UNICEF; Dr. Ashish Chaturvedi, Head-Action for Climate & Environment, UNDP India; Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, CEO, Aaranyak; Dr. Livleen K Kahlon, Director, Environment Education & Awareness, TERI; Ms. Radhika Suri, Senior Program Director, Global Networking, CEE; Ms. Vaishnavi Prabhakaran, Group Head, Communications & Sustainability, TATA Power; and three youth crusaders, Ms. Hina Saifi, Ms. Meghna Rathore, and Mr. Siddhant Sarang.

The workshop was attended by key stakeholders from various sectors. Representation from UN agencies, government officials, private sector players, NGOs and CSOs was reported. The discussions and recommendations from the workshop were included in the overall study recommendations.



(From left to right): **Ashish Chaturvedi**, Head, Action for Climate & Environment, UNDP India; **Paulos Workneh**, Chief WASH/CCES, UNICEF India; **Yugal Kishore Joshi**, Mission Director LiFE, NITI Aayog; **C. Senthil Rajan**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting; **Mamta Varma**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj

Key Findings



To comprehensively understand the perceptions and engagement of youth in CCES and to achieve its core objectives, the study employed a variety of methodologies and activities. Embracing a multi-pronged approach, the study aimed to gather evidence from both primary and secondary data sources. Numerous steps were taken in data collection and analysis to achieve a holistic view of youth involvement in CCES initiatives across different levels and platforms. Both primary and secondary sources of data collection were utilized, while the latter offered insights from global, national and local perspectives on youth engagement in CCES.

The qualitative approach to data collection provided valuable insights into the grassroots realities of youth involvement in CCES initiatives. Subsequently, triangulation techniques were employed to validate the findings derived from both primary and secondary data sources. The qualitative study yielded evidence and insights from four states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar and Rajasthan). This involved conducting focused group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with various stakeholders including teachers, state officials, youths and community leaders to collect primary data.

In addition to primary data collection, secondary data collection techniques focused on reviewing global and national policy frameworks and best practices related to CCES. To complement the data gathered from primary and secondary sources, various consultations were conducted with key government officials and sector experts, both in-person and online. This collaborative approach facilitated the integration of diverse perspectives and enriched the analysis, leading to a comprehensive understanding of youth engagement in CCES initiatives.

Key Findings

Key findings of the study highlight the pivotal role of youth in CCES. The study emphasizes and recognizes youth as significant stakeholders within the CCES discourse, with various sources underscoring their importance. However, despite this acknowledgment, a concrete strategy or action plan to effectively engage youth in CCES appears to be lacking. At both international and national levels, there have been extensive discussions regarding youth engagement in CCES. Nevertheless, the study reveals a gap between these discussions and the formulation of tangible roles for youth. While there is a clear indication of youth interest and willingness to participate in CCES initiatives, the absence of clear guidance and mentorship hampers their effective engagement.

The study highlights a divide between rural and urban youth engagement in CCES. Factors such as lack of awareness, access to content, and limited knowledge and opportunities contribute to this gap. To gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, the study delves into detailed findings that shed light on the scope of youth engagement, their knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding CCES.

In the global context, the study identifies a highly conducive environment for youth engagement. Youth are recognized as 'agents of change', with global policy frameworks acknowledging their critical role in CCES initiatives. There is a growing demand for their involvement in advocacy and policymaking processes, reflecting a global consensus on the importance of youth participation in addressing climate change and sustainability challenges.

Policy Environment for Youth Engagement

Youth are viewed as important stakeholders in the CCES discourse; however, their role has been limited to creating awareness. Even though 'youth' has been mentioned in various national and international policies, their role and engagement in such interventions have not been clearly defined and addressed.

- Policies like the National Biodiversity Action Plan (2014), National Youth Policy (2021), and Environment Education Awareness Programme, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (EEAP, MOEFCC) have specifically mentioned youth.
- State Action Plans for Climate Change provide space for youth engagement and scope to involve youth as it is being revised.

Civil Society Organizations and Youth Engagement

- Numerous CCES initiatives, programmes and campaigns are undertaken by national, state and local-level organizations, including government organizations, communities and individuals.
- The primary focus of youth engagement is directed towards raising awareness, engagement and participation through cleanliness drives, plantation drives and events.
- Limited platforms providing spaces for youth to voice their concerns exist.
- There is limited focus on behaviour/practice transformation at the individual/household and community levels.

Private Sector (Corporates) and Youth Engagement

- Significant interest in engaging youth with corporates emerged from the study. The scope of engagement was not only limited to awareness generation but also extended to education and skill-related initiatives for youth.
- Corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts also indicate high interest and investment in youth through education and skill development.



Beyond compliance, several corporates were committed to environmental sustainability issues. Numerous networks and associations on CCES exist. For instance, the Indian Business and Biodiversity Initiative (IBBI), FICCI Centre for Sustainability Leadership and IUCN Leaders for Nature programme are few such platforms.

Youth's Attitudes and Perceptions

- The empirical evidence from the field depicts that youth from rural and urban areas possess significant knowledge and information about climate change.
- The 'intent to act' to mitigate climate change is high in youth.
- Climate-related incidents within their ecosystem have shaped the youth's perception and understanding of climate change and its impact, particularly on education.
- Awareness and knowledge about the adverse effects of deforestation and pollution, and the positive impact of waste management and cleanliness are high among youth, who are willing to take action.

Information Sources

- Television news channels, digital platforms like social media (WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram) and mobile apps are the most favoured sources for accessing information on climate change.
- Educational institutions, particularly schools, teachers and textbooks, are also cited as the sources of information for youth.



Youth Participation and Engagement in Government Programmes

- Consultation with key government officials indicated that youth were involved in some government programmes as audience or participants.
- Many officials shared that youth were important stakeholders and catalysts in CCES initiatives, and it was essential to aptly guide and mentor them.
- High youth participation was reported in plantation, cleanliness drive, reducing single use of plastic, and water harvesting across the states. Some of the key programmes reported were Jal Jeevan Hariyali (Bihar); Eco Clubs (Andhra Pradesh); Clean and Green India (Bihar); and Nal Jal Yojana (Rajasthan).
- Swachh Bharat reported high levels of youth participation through cleanliness drives within communities.
- Outdoor activities, such as Clean and Green India (Bihar), Van Utsav (Forest Fair), Vigyan Mela (Science Fair), also served as platforms for youth engagement in CCES initiatives.



Barriers to Youth Engagement and Action in CCES

Shifting Societal Trends and Consumerism

Shifting mindsets, societal norms, convenience and a fast-paced lifestyle have an impact on youth's adoption of environmentally friendly behaviours and actions.

Limited Advocacy and Policy Influence

Influencing public policy and advocacy measures can be highly difficult due to complexities and resources. Limited platforms for youth engagement and the rural-urban divide in accessing resources, information and engagement hinder their ability to influence policymaking.

Misinformation and Limited Attention Span

Information available on various popular digital modes of communication, like social media, can be inaccurate and misleading. Clubbed with the issue of the limited attention span among youth, a declining youth engagement in CCES issues is evident. Also, CCES engagements with youth are short-term and within a limited scope; for instance, awareness campaigns, etc., are short-lived, thereby impacting the interest and engagement of youth.

Lack of Mentorship and Guidance

Research indicated that youth were highly motivated to take action to address CCES concerns. However, a lack of guidance and mentorship resulted in declining motivation to take it forward.

Educational Priorities and Time Management

Academic commitment and pressure pose hindrances to engaging in CCES initiatives, wherein the students are unable to dedicate time to such activities.

Lack of Interest and Motivation

The gap between 'intent to act' and 'taking action' for addressing CCES issues is very wide, thus resulting in declining interest and motivation to engage in any CCES initiatives.

Limited Exposure and Networking Opportunities

Limited knowledge and awareness about various platforms and exposure to young people, due to their age and experience, hinders fostering their interest in action and sustainable engagement in CCES initiatives.

Limited Resources, Information and Institutional Involvement

The paucity of programmes, initiatives and information has adversely affected youth engagement in CCES initiatives. Insufficient institutional involvement, permissions and funding for supporting CCES projects pose barriers to youth engagement.

Youth and Climate Change: Action and Beyond

Youth are important agents for mitigating climate change, and their role for fostering environmental sustainability is highly crucial. They embody the driving force behind future societal, economic and environmental transformations. By actively involving young individuals in decision-making processes, programme design, educational initiatives and advocacy efforts, organizations can tap into their unique perspectives, innovative ideas and voices to shape inclusive and forward-looking strategies.

Youth engagement not only empowers them but also instills a sense of ownership, nurturing responsible and environmentally conscious citizens. This engagement encourages active participation in sustainable development and the preservation of planetary health, while simultaneously addressing urgent environmental issues.

Effectively engaging youth in environmental action requires inclusive and innovative approaches. These approaches should facilitate meaningful involvement, establish inclusive platforms and genuinely incorporate youth perspectives into policy and programme development. Embracing these strategies ensures that the voices of the youth are not just heard but also valued and acted upon, thereby driving impactful change for a sustainable future. However, effectively involving young people in policy processes, programmes and direct environmental action is not without its challenges due to limited representation, diverse needs and inherent complexities in climate-related issues.

The intent of the study was to gain a better understanding of scalable mechanisms, interventions, models and strategies that have the potential to be applied by key stakeholders in the CCES policy and programme landscape in India. The study yielded several key recommendations, summarized as follows.



Opportunities for youth engagement

Global and National Commitments to Engage Youth on Climate Change

Global and national commitments to engage youth in addressing climate change have evolved significantly over the past decade. In 2009, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat and member states officially recognized youth as an observer constituency, setting the stage for their active involvement in global frameworks. Since then, the commitment to engage youth has grown stronger, with increasing opportunities emerging to amplify youth voices.

"UNICEF's objective is to empower youth as catalysts for positive change, equipping them with the tools and opportunities to address climate change and build climate-resilient communities."

– Paulos Workneh, Chief WASH/CCES, UNICEF

The establishment of the UN Secretary General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change in 2020 exemplifies this commitment, reaffirming the importance of young voices in climate mitigation efforts. Similarly, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of 2022 identifies youth as pivotal decision-makers, emphasizing the need for their inclusion in biodiversity conversations for equitable and inclusive participation.⁸

"With more youth councils, we'll have the power to create policies that can make a positive difference."

– Vinisha Umashankar, Innovator of solar ironing cart, Winner Global Child Prodigy Award 2022, Rising Star 2021 Award

Youth are now recognized as critical agents of change, and there has been a notable shift in global and national perceptions toward engaging them in climate action. Policies such as the National Biodiversity Action Plan (2014), National Youth Policy (2021) and Environment Education Awareness Programme (EEAP) reflect this shift by dedicating specific sections to engaging youth in CCES initiatives.

The secondary literature review, qualitative study and interviews with key stakeholders conducted during this study indicate that multiple policies of the Government of India include youth engagement and participation for climate change. An intensive review of 11 key interventions undertaken by the government (national policies and schemes) such as National Youth Policy (2021), National Plan for Youth and Adolescent Development (2014), National Service Scheme (2006), Skill India Mission (2015), National Biodiversity Action Plan (2014), Environment, Education, Awareness and Training (2022) and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2019) reveals extensive youth engagement mapped within the structure in areas of climate awareness, environment education, skill development, capacity building and gender inclusivity.

These global and national commitments offer opportunities to integrate youth-related strategies and plans into state action plans on climate change. Numerous platforms such as Conference of the Parties (COP), Mission LiFE and youth networks have been established to facilitate youth engagement, providing them with valuable opportunities to share platforms and voice their concerns in inclusive settings.

Leveraging National Flagship Programmes for Youth Engagement and Participation

Evidence suggests that children and youth-led engagements in key flagship programmes rendered positive behaviour change and outcomes. The success of the Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-G) is often attributed to the role of children and youth as change agents. It is here that children and youth emerged as champions in popularizing and adopting safe sanitation and hygiene habits. The triggered⁹ children and youth served as critical community mobilizers and foot soldiers in promoting safe sanitation. Educational institutions served as critical platforms where children were encouraged to adopt safe sanitation practices and nudges such as being asked about toilets during attendance, which served as important drivers of change and were later used for mobilizing communities.¹⁰ Designating a place for children and youth in the morning vigilance committees (nigrani samiti) proved highly beneficial in curbing open defecation.¹¹ Engaging young crusaders through fellowship programmes like Zila Swachh Bharat Preraks (ZSBP) and Swachh Bharat Summer Internship programmes supplemented the efforts to attain the desired goal of making India Open Defecation Free (ODF).¹² Learning from the implementation of SBM-G suggested that youth can be effective mobilizers and gatekeepers for promoting positive behaviours.

In 2022, Mission Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)¹³ was launched by the Government of India, a mission which aims at mobilizing Indians and global citizens to take individual and collective action for protecting and conserving the environment. The Mission, announced at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP26), focused on bringing individual behaviours to the forefront of the global climate action narrative. The Mission recommends actions and behaviours towards adopting an eco-friendly lifestyle. It has listed 75 actions that were related to a sustainable environment and lifestyle for environment. The Mission aims to create and nurture a global network of individuals, namely 'Pro-Planet People' (P3), where the role of youth in climate change initiatives has been duly acknowledged. 'Youth for LiFE' was also identified as a key theme for the Model G20 event, which deliberated on the critical role of youth as agents of change. To get their perspective on Mission LiFE actions, this study delved into five major themes that included saving energy, saving water, sustainable food system, reducing waste and single-use plastics. Participatory activities used in the study highlighted that the youth are aware about these five LiFE themes, and several of them are involved in

"Governments, educational institutions and NGOs should collaborate to integrate sustainable practices into curricula and provide platforms for students to engage in sustainability-focused initiatives."

– Medha Priya, Architect and Climate Warrior, Represented India at COP26

⁸Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: Draft decision submitted by the President, 2022. Accessed from <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/e6d3/cd1d/daf663719a03902a9b116c34/cop-15-l-25-en.pdf>

⁹MoJS and UNICEF, The Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen: communication strategies for behaviour change at scale, 2022

¹⁰ibid

¹¹BMGF, An open Mind, 2015.

¹²MoJS 2021, The Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen: Communication Strategies for Behaviour Change at scale

¹³<https://missionlife-moefcc.nic.in/>

awareness generation activities besides actually practising a few of the actions. To accelerate action on ground, more information on these issues is required so that youth are inspired to take action not only at the individual level but also at the family/household and community level. Strategies are required to enable this 'knowledge' and 'intention to take action' into actual 'practice' – both consistently and at scale.

Educational institutions, particularly schools, teachers and textbooks, emerged as the most important source for attaining knowledge and information on CCES. Qualitative data revealed that celebrating environmental days that involved activities like plantation drives, cleanliness drives, rallies and workshops served as effective communication strategies for fostering learning on CCES. Hands-on activities, creative mediums, field visits and interactive discussions are more effective and can be replicated and incorporated into such programmes for youth engagement. Small incentives like kits, awards and recognition for participation in awareness campaigns can be major drivers of mobilization and engagement. Eco-clubs are a critical medium for promoting enthusiastic young crusaders in environmental issues to make a significant contribution to society.¹⁴ Various actions and initiatives are undertaken by young crusaders to make their schools green. Such interventions have the potential to manifest small steps such as waste segregation at school, water conservation, plantation, etc. into a concrete institutional effort, thus resonating with the vision of Mission LiFE and other key flagship programmes like Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)

“Swachh Bharat Mission provided creative platforms for young people to express and act on their ideas. A culture of change and responsibility can be fostered among the youth through such initiatives.”

– Yugal Kishore Joshi, Mission Director, Mission LiFE, NITI Aayog

Providing structured knowledge and information on environment, climate change and related issues will ensure that every student receives comprehensive education on the topic. It was also suggested by educators for making climate change education compulsory subject in all the level of schools and colleges.

The data collected from interviews with key government officials, relevant ministries and experts from the sector indicated that there is a keen interest in harnessing the demographic dividend of youth, and youth engagement is evident in some programmes to a limited extent. Mission LiFE and other key flagship programmes do have a huge potential to engage youth in a more systematic and concrete manner. To increase the engagement and involvement of youth at a larger level, more specific schemes and initiatives targeting youth need to be designed from the village to district to state level.

Strengthening Children and Youth Dialogue and Participation in Local Governance

To take forward the localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has adopted a thematic approach wherein the 17 SDGs have been condensed into 9 thematic areas, which include themes of child-friendly villages, water-sufficient villages and clean and green villages.¹⁵ Acknowledging the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in creating a

conducive environment for the healthy growth and development of children, steps have been taken at the national and state levels for staging children and youth in the decision-making process, which has resulted in providing spaces for effective child and youth engagement.

The scope of engaging youth in local rural governance has expanded, with the inclusion of certain themes, such as water-sufficient panchayats and green panchayats in Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs).

The vision of water-sufficient panchayats embarks on the aspiration that villages should have 100 per cent functional tap connections providing safe drinking water and good water management to ensure water for all activities and conserve the water ecosystem. Green village panchayats focus on a green and clean village, which harnesses renewable energy and protects their environment by focusing on climate-resilient practices.¹⁶ There is scope for engaging youth to support and provide technological solutions and innovative deliberations for achieving these themes. Consultations with government officials reveal that young startups initiated by youth have been deployed in some gram panchayats to facilitate water conservation. These are small instances of engaging youth, which have the potential to be amplified across the country.

“Child panchayats, clean and green panchayat and water-sufficient panchayats are pertinent local governance institutions that can engage youth to create awareness and promote sustainable development.”

– Mamta Varma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI

Intergenerational Dialogue and Mentoring

A pertinent takeaway emerging from the consultations with key stakeholders, such as teachers, climate change experts and government officials, was the importance of guidance and mentoring for effectively engaging youth. Empirical evidence from the field suggests that there is a lot of expectation from youth, and many stakeholders raised concerns about building their knowledge and capacities to effectively engage youth in CCES initiatives.

Getting youth involved in intergenerational dialogues emerged as one of the key approaches to building their capacities and potential to support increasing the society's capacity to cope with climate change. Providing platforms and opportunities for both peer-to-peer and intergenerational dialogues is very critical to localize, sustain and take forward the youth's interest in environmental conservation actions. Intergenerational dialogues, traditional knowledge systems, and creation and expansion of learning spaces for youth have the potential to encourage their engagement.

“Getting youth involved in intergenerational dialogue is crucial for adapting and increasing society's capacity to cope with changes in the climate.”

– Dr. Livleen K. Kahlon, Director, Environment Education & Awareness, TERI

Intergenerational responsibility is viewed as a critical cornerstone for ensuring sound policymaking and action. The consultation with various sectoral experts during this study also reiterated the need for intergenerational dialogue for adapting and increasing society's

¹⁴https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/Manuals/Ecoclub.pdf

¹⁵MoPR 2023, People's Plan Campaign - 2022 (PPC-2022) for preparation of thematic GPDP for 2023-24,

¹⁶MoPR, Localization of Sustainable Development Goals in Panchayat Raj Institutions: Report of the Expert Groups Vol. 2, 2021.

<https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s316026d60ff9b54410b3435b403afd226/uploads/2023/02/2023021741.pdf>

capacity to cope with climate change. It was suggested that intergenerational interventions have the potential to create novel pathways for transformation, as key stakeholders and decision-makers across sectors can work together to accelerate equitable climate actions. Collaborative learning and workspaces can lead to a feeling among youth that their voices are respected, thereby gaining confidence in their capacity to make change, fostering relationships and taking collective actions. Experts were of the view that generating meaningful dialogue between generations can develop more creative responses to the climate crisis and ensure that sustainability efforts more appropriately respond to varied needs within and across generations. It was suggested that more research should be conducted on how intergenerational approaches can be implemented in ways that minimize engagement barriers within generations.

Green Skills Development

Developing green skills in youth is crucial for addressing environmental challenges by driving demand for sustainable solutions and responsible practices. Fostering these green skills can empower young people to become environmental champions and agents of change, propelling India's sustainable development agenda forward.

The consultations highlighted several programmes in India that focus on the development of green skills among youth. The Skill India Mission, for instance, aims to provide vocational training to youth across various sectors, including green industries. It offers skill development programmes in renewable energy technologies, waste management, sustainable agriculture and other eco-friendly fields. By equipping young individuals with green skills, the programme enhances their employability while contributing to environmental sustainability. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) runs the Green Jobs Programme in India, which focuses on building green skills and creating green employment opportunities. During the consultation, an official from UNDP stated that the programme targets vulnerable and marginalized youth, providing them with training in eco-friendly sectors such as sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation. Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and UNDP is promoting SDGs through youth innovation labs called Youth Co:Labs. The study brought forth several other examples of technical and innovative support being provided by youth, making them critical enablers for taking and facilitating CCES initiatives.

Orientation and training of youth can be designed in a manner wherein their green skills become part of their professional aspirations. It is pertinent that patient engagement for youth be adopted through fellowships for sustained engagement. To continuously motivate youth, their efforts must be duly recognized and appreciated. Dovetailing their interest in CCES issues and providing a formal platform for building their skills and validating their skills through certification will increase motivation. For instance, activities under the NITI Aayog's Aspirational Block Programme include youth training and career counselling, further ensuring employment opportunities through certified training. This helps harness their interest and passion into professional goals, bridging a gap between their personal pursuits and professional endeavours.

"Green solutions is a brilliant programme that is engaging youth in environmental solutions."

- Vaishnavi Prabhakaran, Group Head, Communication & Sustainability, TATA Power

Environmental Stewardship

Inspiring stories of youth-led environmental stewardship extensively documented through this study showed that youth can actively contribute to preserving the planet for future generations by adopting sustainable practices and promoting them within their communities. By fostering a supportive ecosystem, empowering them with the right tools and resources, and collaborating across sectors, the boundless potential of children and youth can be unleashed, which will become the driving force of environmental stewardship and build a thriving, sustainable future for all.

Candid conversations with the youth crusaders – Hina Saifi, Meghna Rathore and Siddhant Sarang – at the national-level stakeholder consultation revealed how passionate youth are about addressing environmental concerns. Hina Saifi, a 23-year-old environmental crusader, is raising awareness about the impact of air pollution, plastic and stubble burning by organizing events such as rallies, marches and public gatherings, and promoting awareness through door-to-door campaigns. Meghna Rathore is providing technological solutions for promoting CCES interventions. Meghna, a young entrepreneur, is engaged in producing biodegradable sanitary pads made from stubble, thereby providing solutions to combat air pollution. Siddhant is a climate activist and documentary filmmaker who is raising awareness about climate change.

"I am among 16 women climate activists in the country who have come together to form the Women's Climate Collective (WCC) with the aim of raising their voices for women-inclusive climate action in India."

- Hina Saifi, Climate Activist, Women Climate Collective Group, UP

Green Pledge

Key findings from the deliberations with the young crusaders are that there is a need for:

- Adopting an organized approach for engaging youth in CCES initiatives.
- Building capacities of youth through proper guidance, mentorship and providing appropriate resources.
- Providing (more) platforms and networks to facilitate cross-learning and interaction among the young minds. Such platforms would be essential for garnering peer support.
- Decentralized media engagement, which also focuses on rural areas and recognizes the initiatives undertaken in rural areas. This is critical for ensuring inclusiveness and creating awareness.

Advocacy and Accountability

The study also drew attention to the advocacy and accountability role that youth can play. It highlighted the importance of youth advocating for change and holding government, companies and individuals accountable for their contributions to climate change. Some experts felt that youth can play a crucial role in raising awareness, influencing policies and demanding action from those responsible for the causes of climate change. Their voices can be more effective in raising issues, specially related to justice and governance.

"There is a need for transformative, meaningful, long-term and sustained engagement with the youth."

– Dr. Ashish Chaturvedi, Head, Action for Climate & Environment, UNDP

Information Sharing with Youth on Climate Change

Evidence from both primary and secondary data indicated that youth were highly interested in attaining information on climate change and environmental issues. Youths have been accessing a lot of information from various mediums and sources, using a combination of digital and electronic mediums to access information on CCES issues. A key challenge highlighted by the young climate crusader, Siddhant Sarang, was that information on climate change is mostly available in English, which limits its accessibility for those who cannot understand the language.

The technical and scientific nature of the information is also a barrier, especially among rural communities.

Online resources, mobile apps and social media (including WhatsApp) are popular sources of information for youth on CCES. Communication campaigns utilizing these modes are recommended, along with media literacy lessons to eliminate misinformation. Learnings from the consultations indicate that although digital platforms like social media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) served as favourites for accessing information on climate change, youth

"Effective communication on climate change is essential for enlightening and engaging youth, fostering awareness and understanding."

– C. Senthil Rajan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, GoI

would verify the gathered information through news channels. Government officials and experts highlighted the importance of verification and authenticity of the information, as the ease with which information can be posted on social media or WhatsApp indicates the criticality of sharing correct information. Efforts are being made to make information on climate change accessible to many. For example, Siddhant Sarang shared that he is collaborating with developers to build an AI-based app that can intelligently and technically translate climate information into 22 languages spoken in India.

"Youth innovations to combat climate change should be supported through grants/resources or zero interest loans to scale up solutions."

– Meghna Rathore, Social Entrepreneur & Nariksha Pads, Rajasthan

Strengthening an Enabling Environment for Youth Engagement in CCES

Youth have the potential to significantly contribute to climate change mitigation and response. Therefore, investing in harnessing youth potential and capabilities is critical. A multisectoral ecosystem, which provides partnerships and platforms for encouraging knowledge, abilities and attitudes required to contribute effectively to environmental conservation, needs to be fostered. In line with global commitments, steps taken by national governments to create spaces for engaging youth can be strengthened. Ensuring an enabling environment for promoting education, encouraging innovations and providing reliable and linguistically inclusive information will ascertain a strong foundation for engaging youth in CCES issues.

"Meaningful youth engagement is enabled by systematic empowerment of youth, which involves building their knowledge and agency for climate action."

– Shalini Prasad, SBC specialist, UNICEF



Enablers for Youth Engagement and Action in CCES

Enablers for Youth Engagement and Action in CCES (contd.)

Percolating Youth-level Engagement and Strategies at Various Levels (Global–National–Local)

There is a global and national commitment to involving youth in CCES initiatives. Integrating youth-focused strategies into state action plans on climate change offers promising opportunities.

Advocacy and Policy Influence

Building the capacity of youth with the necessary tools and skills empowers them to become advocates for stronger environmental regulation and hold decision-makers accountable. Youth parliaments, model UNs and environmental platforms are critical platforms for providing spaces for voicing their concerns.

Strengthening and Institutionalizing Grassroots Engagement and Action

Encouraging youth participation in on-the-ground initiatives – from afforestation drives and waste management projects to biodiversity conservation efforts – allows them to witness the tangible impact of their actions. Strengthening and institutionalizing child and youth participation through panchayats in rural governance is critical.

Making Information Easy and Accessible

Ensuring information is easy to understand, in local language and from reliable and verified sources can motivate youth to raise awareness and unite communities.

Bridging the Divide by Promoting Diversity and Inclusiveness

Ensuring equal opportunities for all young people, regardless of background, gender, or socio-economic status, promotes inclusivity in environmental stewardship efforts.

Fostering Intergenerational Dialogue

Mentoring youth and providing localized solutions for CCES issues through intergenerational dialogue is essential. Innovative intergenerational approaches can be initiated and implemented in ways that minimize engagement barriers within generations.

Reorienting the Education System and Promoting Hands-on Learning

Integrating environmental education with a focus on hands-on learning, ecological values and critical thinking is crucial. Initiatives like the Young Eco-Club programme by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change are steps in this direction that can be strengthened.

Nurturing Leadership Skills

Giving young leaders leadership skills through workshops, training programmes and mentorship opportunities can help them take ownership of environmental activities, mobilize their peers and drive change in their communities.

Leveraging Technology and Innovation

Engaging youth in developing technological solutions for climate change mitigation and promoting research and development in different areas of sustainable technology fosters innovation. The digital revolution also provides an effective tool for environmental action.

Utilizing Gamification and Storytelling

Incorporating gamification and storytelling into environmental education can enhance environmental literacy and inspire responsible climate action among youth.

Supporting Youth-led Social Enterprises and Start-ups

Supporting youth-led social enterprises and start-ups focused on different areas like renewable energy, sustainable agriculture or eco-friendly products not only benefits the environment but also creates economic opportunities for young innovators.

Green Skilling

Green Skills development in youth is paramount for dealing with environmental challenges by demanding sustainable solutions and responsible practices. Fostering green skills can empower young individuals to become environmental champions and agents of change, driving India's sustainable development agenda.

Reward and Recognition

Incentivizing participation and providing support, like some reward and recognition for their effort, would act as catalysts to encourage youth participation in CCES initiatives. Acknowledging and celebrating the achievements of individuals through media coverage, awards and recognition helps inspire others and amplify their impact.

Environmental Stewardship

Youth can act as catalysts for undertaking numerous macro- and micro-level interventions to act as custodians of the environment.

Youth Crusaders



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