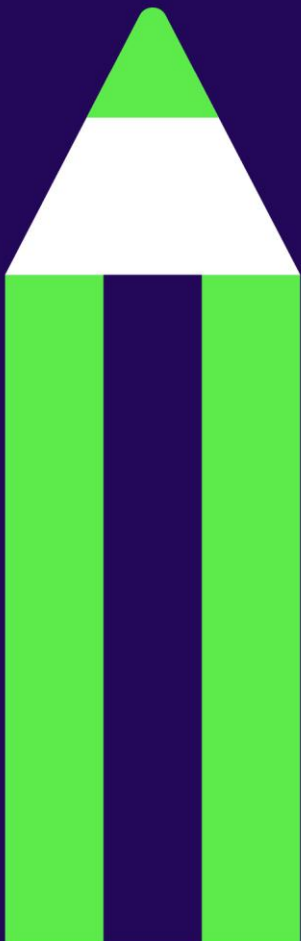


# The Climate Connection

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# The Global Youth Letter on Climate Action

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The Global Youth Letter on Climate Action is a call for action from young people globally, directly addressing the leaders attending COP26 – the 26th UN Climate Change Conference, in Glasgow, November 2021.

It is the result of a large-scale research exercise between the British Council and not for profit social enterprise Catalyst in Communities, who used a mixed methodology approach including crowdsourcing to garner the views, experiences and aspirations of 8,000 young people across 23 countries.

Aiming to be as representative as possible in terms of gender, background, location and socio-economic status, the research team worked through global COVID-19 restrictions to amplify the unheard voice of the climate debate: today's young people. Research for the report was carried out between January and March 2021.

The key messages and recommendations to come out of this research can be found in this document, after the letter itself.

The Global Youth Letter on Climate Action, and accompanying 8,000 Rising campaign, is part of the British Council's [The Climate Connection](#) programme, a global platform for dialogue, cooperation and action, connecting millions of people through shared solutions to the climate crisis.

Young people are at the centre of this collaborative approach, as we support them to raise their voices, and gain the skills and networks to participate in meaningful dialogue and bring about real change for our planet.

We hope the following letter inspires you to think about your role in tackling climate change and motivates you to take action in whatever way you can.

**Find out more about the Global Youth Letter on Climate Action research, read the report, and join in the 8,000 Rising campaign here:**

[www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/global-youth-letter](http://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/global-youth-letter)



# Dear COP26 leaders,

We come to you, as more than 8,000 young people from 23 countries across the globe, to share our aims and aspirations for the future of our planet.

We represent the unheard voices in the climate debate, yet we are the ones who will be most affected by climate change – now and in the future.

Coming from all sections of society, many of us are overlooked. We are aged 18 to 35, and include males, females and others on the gender spectrum. We are both urban and rural. We have different levels of access to education and employment. We have diverse socio-economic statuses, and some of us have disabilities.

From young women and girls in Nepali villages, to transgender youth in Bangladeshi cities, to unemployed young people in Kenya – we all want to be heard and valued at COP26.

Through surveys, focus groups, social media campaigns and meeting and messaging apps, we finally got the opportunity to raise our voice. And, now, we want to share this collective voice with you, as we set out our hopes and demands for climate action.

## How climate change is impacting us

We are deeply worried about the long-term effects of climate change. Depending on where we live, we've already witnessed the impact of the climate crisis. We've experienced coastal erosions in the United Arab Emirates, deforestation in the Amazon, air pollution in Turin, and flooding in rural Bangladesh and South Africa.

As well as destroying our natural environment, the climate crisis is also diminishing our future employment opportunities. Because economic growth is directly linked to climate change, by not addressing it, there will be no long-term economic growth – and far fewer jobs. And that affects us all.

## A message to world leaders

Carbon emissions have gone up by 60 per cent in the last 30 years. We cannot go on as normal if we want to maintain a global temperature rise of under 1.5°C. So we need our leaders to be more proactive in response to this global challenge.

Our leaders must listen to us. You should recognise that we are motivated, ready to learn and inspired and act – for now and for the future. We want to see the systemic barriers around meaningful youth engagement in climate action – and other key issues – be removed. Provide us with access to institutions, let us into decision-making spaces, provide us with resources, and work with us to address the climate crisis.

## Our commitments

We want to realise our true potential, but most of us have never participated in climate mitigation actions. We are willing to become politically active – not just by joining demonstrations, but by



spreading information about climate change and by becoming role models for our peers. That way, we can begin to influence those around us and collaborate for change.

We believe that young people can influence climate change action. We are quick to react and to adjust our lifestyles, so we can be an example for older generations. We are more connected now than we've ever been, and we are open to collaborating with and listening to the views of others.

We can use our role as digital citizens to share our knowledge and experience with our peers, particularly those who are marginalised and vulnerable, by using online and digital tools. We are prepared to make lifestyle changes. We are ready to consume less and waste less, and to reduce our carbon footprint. We are the last generation who can stop climate change, and we are willing to do what is necessary to achieve our goal – together as one world.

## Our global voices

*'The youth of today will be the decision makers of tomorrow. Hence, it is essential that young people across the world are aware of environmental and climate issues, so they can contribute to address these global challenges.'* Rural Indian voice

*'We want to be active and constantly participate in a long-term process by and for young people, in which they can develop not only a discourse, but actions that involve the whole of society as well their local communities.'* Brazilian voice

*'If young people act on climate change and work together as one, their voices will be heard, and it will encourage the whole world to also take action.'* Rural, female, unemployed Kenyan voice

*'Our youths need education, skills and empowerment. All the things to enhance their ability on how to tackle climate change in our community.'* Unemployed Indonesian voice

*'We are the future, and if we want to see the future, we need to keep the environment safe, also for the next generations.'*  
Unemployed South African voice

*'Youths should be educated more on climate change and see its effects ... they should be supported by leaders through employment opportunities.'* Unemployed Philippines voice

*'The government and the people should work together to find solutions to this global issue.'*  
Female Turkish voice

*'Build energy-efficient cities using green building techniques, wind power and bio-energy. We should reduce pollution and emissions from cars and factories and create a new system to monitor and evaluate the weather and sea level to help people be safe.'* Rural, female United Arab Emirates voice

## What we demand from our leaders

We want governments to draw upon our knowledge and creativity, to strengthen our education and training opportunities, and to invest in green technology that reduces environmental impact and creates new jobs for current and future generations. We want education that inspires us, that promotes employment and gives us the tools to take climate action. We want guarantees and commitments to curbing carbon emissions, and, just as important, we want you to provide better responses to social issues within our societies, like unemployment and access to education.



Alongside this global letter, our thoughts have been captured and shared in national letters, from each of our 23 countries. These will help policy makers, civil society actors and young people to identify individual and collective lived experiences, challenges and opportunities to build climate change resilience. We have a chance to mobilise the largest population group in every region – young people – to act as anchors for collective climate stewardship across the world, and to build upon the agency, ideas, innovation and youth-led change fostered through global, national and community-level connections.

Our final message is that, as young people, we are extremely positive about the potential future of our planet – but only if we are listened to by world leaders and policy makers and have opportunities to engage and make a difference. And we are ready to work with you to create those opportunities.

## Further reading

The Global Youth Letter on Climate Action was created using qualitative and quantitative data gathered during a large-scale research project commissioned by the British Council, in 23 countries\*<sup>i</sup> globally.

The following key messages and recommendations are taken from the findings of that research, and provide good further reading for leaders and policy makers – and anyone else concerned about climate change – on how the aims and aspirations of young people can be translated into real action.

### Key messages

The strongest and most prominent message to come from the research exercise is that there is a strong, unanimous voice of young people in relation to climate change, across all 23 countries.

Young people consider climate change to be one of the largest and most unprecedented threats to the world. And while they believe they can play a key role in addressing the issue, most young people surveyed say they have never participated in climate mitigation actions.

Still, many are willing to become politically active – not just by participating in demonstrations, but by disseminating climate change information via social media and becoming climate role models for their peers. In so doing, they believe they can influence those around them, counter disinformation and collaborate for positive change. In short, young people are calling for opportunities to make a valuable contribution to the climate challenge.

One of the main criticisms made by young people is the perception of ‘a lot of talk and no action’. Yet they are prepared to lead by example and act. They believe they understand the issues (for example, skills development, a need for action) and recognise that, although we are all interconnected, different approaches are required in different parts of the world. In addition, while most young people are willing to act and engage in global initiatives such as COP26, they lack information about these initiatives, which hinders their participation and engagement.

Policy makers need to recognise that many young people feel their leaders and decision-makers are not doing enough to address climate change. They also need to value the importance and potential of social media in young people’s lives. Civil society organisations and the third sector





should explore the use of digital channels to share relevant climate change education and knowledge amongst young people. Who can then act as vehicles to amplify the collective youth voice, to ensure it is heard and reflected on a wider scale.

Future generations need to be involved in developing climate action plans, with measurable outcomes, and realistic, meaningful targets – whether it's tackling deforestation, pollution or carbon emissions. We all have a responsibility to engage and value the young people of today, and to involve them in the planning and implementation of climate change solutions.

While young people are willing and able to act – and, in many cases, believe they have the skills to do so – there is still a need for relevant education, training, public awareness and access to information, as these are all critical for building the skills for effective climate action. They are aware that the climate challenge is too big for them to tackle alone, yet they not only lack avenues for active participation, but also the climate literacy, language and leadership skills to initiate climate action amongst their peers and within their communities.

They should, therefore, be provided with easy access to local and global literature and resources around climate science, climate action and resilience building. Communication, creative problem-solving and active citizenship skills should also be key learning priorities, so that young people can effectively relay their concerns and propose actions to their peers, families, communities and leaders.

## Recommendations

1. Develop suitable forums for young people to express their views and sentiments towards the future of our planet and their place in it.
2. Encourage more young people to come to the forefront of these conversations, recognising that most are more open to listening to their peers.
3. Create diverse consultation structures to ensure young people are heard.
4. Establish communication channels for hard-to-reach young people and remote communities; a consultation app would be effective in many remote contexts.
5. Raise awareness about climate change in rural areas that have limited or no access to digital facilities in other ways, such as printed materials, civil society organisations and educational settings.
6. Support the unemployed and young people to become trainers, to enhance their knowledge and skills about climate change and support sustainable development in rural areas.
7. Host mini or micro-COP summits quarterly or bi-annually in rural and remote areas, to ensure young people are well equipped with the skills to adapt to climate change effectively.
8. Integrate climate change into school curricula.
9. Use school and community events to raise awareness.
10. Support the development of collective youth action plans, in collaboration with civil society and other organisations.
11. Build practical and effective social media infrastructures to promote inclusive, positive engagement and support the development of relevant action plans.
12. Develop clear, understandable measures to tackle climate change, so young people can see progress and gain confidence in solutions.
13. Strengthen efforts to raise awareness and build capacity to deal with the impact of climate change on young people's health.



**The following recommendations reflect how young people feel youth participation can be improved.**

1. Policymakers and leaders must develop clear and simple action plans, tailored to each country and its unique challenges, so young people can make contributions via:
  - a. communication campaigns to ensure their voices are heard
  - b. adjusting personal behaviours (for example, committing to conserving water or tackling pollution)
  - c. raising awareness via social media and other avenues
  - d. leading and/or participating in social campaigns (for example recycling and tree planting initiatives)
  - e. volunteering with local organisations to improve the resilience of vulnerable groups and communities in relation to climate change and disasters.
2. Strengthen multi-level governance on the issue of climate change and youth engagement to ensure there is coherence at the local, national and regional levels.
3. Mobilise young people to support the development of awareness-raising materials for vulnerable groups, such as women and girls, people with disabilities, other minority groups and children, as well as those living in rural areas who may otherwise have no access to such material.
4. Create global and national support programmes for young people, through which they can develop or further hone critical skills for climate action, such as social media, language and leadership and communication.
5. Place young people at the forefront of climate action and related risk mitigation.

These recommendations are not exhaustive, and further engagement with young people through focus group discussions will generate further data to signpost a way forward.

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<sup>i</sup> \*Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the UK, the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

