Global Education Cooperation Mechanism

SDG 4 Youth and Students Network

Building a Sustainable and Healthy Planet through Education

Global Youth Statement on Sustainability and Education

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

Education has the potential to redirect the direction of climate change and ensure a sustainable and prosperous planet for all. Through accessible education we can help others understand the impact of the climate crisis and equip learners with knowledge and necessary tools to address this global crisis to preserve our planet.

This SDG4Youth Statement has been prepared by the SDG4Youth Network; UNESCO's youth network which consists of over 100 young education activists who are transforming education in their communities as well as through their engagement with the multi-stakeholder SDG 4 Education 2030 High-level Steering Committee.

This document aims to highlight youth education priorities, recommendations to education stakeholders and innovative ideas centred around the mission of building a sustainable and prosperous future. The SDG4Youth Statement on Sustanability and Educaition amplifies youth and student voices in building more inclusive and resilient education policies and interventions.

Young people will be most impacted by the effects of climate change and have been at the forefront of championing climate action. Thus it is especially important that the voices and perspectives of young people are included when shaping policies and structures that influence the future of humanity and our planet.

Inclusive and Accessible Education

By raising awareness and promoting knowledge and skills-development, education is an essential component and a catalyst for responding to global climate change. Its importance has been increasingly highlighted at the international level. In particular, Article 6 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) encourages Parties to promote, develop and implement educational, training and public awareness programmes on climate change and its effects. In addition, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) 2005-2014, emphasizing that climate change is one of the key action themes of the Decade. Accessibility involves designing systems to optimize access. Wherever feasible, being inclusive means providing everyone with equal access and opportunities. In education and the context of this policy paper, it entails providing access to climate education for children in marginalized communities, especially in Africa. Majority of citizens in the global south bear the brunt of climate injustice, they ought to be provided with a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of how to care and live with the world around them.

Imbedding Climate Literacy in Conventional Learning Systems

Building a sustainable future, encouraging action, and developing influencing skills at the social and personal levels are the core goals of climate education. It is critical not only to gain a thorough understanding of climate change, but also to alter one's own behavior and activities. In this context, behavior refers to people's actions in response to climate change. Many social organizations are creating mitigation and adaptation measures in addition to engaged individuals, and climate education should give at least basic information on these agents.

It is important to establish climate change education at all education levels especially at the primary school levels as young people tend to learn and practice what they are taught in school. Today climate change education, environmental education and education for sustainable development are taught relatively widely. However, there are many strategies and networks to implement them even more extensively. So far, implementation of climate education has been a duty of non-governmental organizations. We need to galvanize more efforts by

incorporating climate education and sustainability to the school curriculum both in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions operating in the global south.

Policy Recommendations:
Imbedding Climate Literacy in Conventional Learning Systems

1. **The School Curriculum**: To ensure effective learning and deep understanding of the subject matter, climate change education should be integrated across school curricula at all levels. The complexities of climate change require it to be addressed using a holistic approach that draws upon a range of disciplines and areas of expertise, including climate science, policy, law, ethics, sociology, economics and culture, with the aim of an effective and inclusive knowledge sharing approach.
   a. Knowledge of climate change, its science, impacts and coping measures must be adapted to address and relate to specific target learning groups.
   b. Specific climate education activities must be developed and tailored according to age, school type and level as well as contexts and particular needs.

2. **Strategies and Policies**:
   a. Existing educational techniques and methods should be reviewed, particularly their ability to equip learners with the essential knowledge and training to help them respond to a varied and fast changing environment.
   b. Decision makers must design and implement the necessary policies and initiatives, as well as incorporate them into education plans and budgets, in order to enhance climate change education.
   c. Leaders must consider the effects of climate change on migration patterns and school enrollment, infrastructure maintenance and personnel, and catastrophe risk management when adapting educational planning to climate change.

3. **Training for Teachers/Learning Instructors**:
   a. Focus must be placed on developing teachers' and educators' capacities to give accurate knowledge, integrate local material, stimulate critical thinking about, and take action on climate change

mitigation and adaptation in order to promote climate change education.

    b. The Teachers' awareness of climate and sustainability issues must be prioritized, as well as assisting them in the development of critical skills and pedagogical support.

4. **Instructional Materials**:
    a. Teachers and educators must be provided with dedicated tools to support their climate change learning activities.
    b. Manuals, teachers' resource guides, lesson models, training modules and contextually relevant textbooks, cartoons, and films (to mention a few) must be made available in schools to be used as a guide to inspire, and empower students.

5. **Learning Environment:**
    a. The school environment must model sustainability from the infrastructure design, to the kind of materials used.
    b. The School must imbibe a culture of sustainability making it easy to reinforce green habits amongst learners.

Research and Scientific Knowledge Production

Health and sanitation

Covid19 pandemic has brought to light many existing gaps in the area of health and sanitation promotion and provision in schools, especially for countries in the Global South. The principles of health promotion in schools are very important not only for the pandemic period, but also as a good lifelong practice in order to improve Quality of Education. The quality of the school environment is an important factor and can easily help in assessing schools' ability to improve overall child health and well-being (WHO 2021).

The global effort to achieve sanitation and water for all by 2030 is extending beyond the household to include institutional settings, such as schools, among others. This effort has been reinforced by global education for all strategies highlighting how water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools improves access to education and learning outcomes, by providing a safe, inclusive and equitable learning environment for all (UNICEF/WHO 2018).

Areas of research on school health and sanitation provision and promotion:

1. Periodic availability of school nurses on school premises: School nurses are crucial in promoting schoolchildren';s overall health. They may help in treating and preventing injuries, infections as well as mental illnesses.
2. School environment: Scrutinizing the state of school surroundings, infrastructure, and culture in prompting infection control.
3. In school-built Sanitation structures: Assessing the availability of enough water supplies, sanitation facilities for example good and safe toilets for both boys and girls as well as the availability of changing rooms for girls/female students.
4. Solid waste management: Assessing how waste is managed in school facilities and the availability of enough waste bins/waste collectors in school/education facilities.

5. Health literacy for schoolchildren and staff through scheduled lessons that help them to boost their understanding on the premise of risk-mitigation measures and promote adherence to prevention and pro (WHO 2021).
6. Classroom size: Classroom size especially during the Covid19 pandemic period is integral to ensuring infection control and preventing transmission. There is need to research on class size and number of students that they accommodate; against the recommended class size and number of students. smaller class sizes in the school environment.

Food security

Climate change is already impacting the food security and nutrition of people, especially those who are most vulnerable and increasingly threatens the achievement of the goal of eradicating hunger. According to (FAO, 2020), climate change will affect food security and the livelihoods of those engaged in production systems and their value chains. Already, the number of people affected by hunger globally has been on the rise since 2014 despite food production doubling over the last three decades. This raises an urgency to adapt food systems that enhance food security, especially for the poor and vulnerable people to prevent future negative impacts from climate change.

Agriculture is considered one of the essential aspects of food security, and using resilient agricultural systems helps maintain and even improve economic, ecological, and social benefits in the face of dramatic climate change.

Policy Recommendations:
Research and Scientific Knowledge Production

1. **Strengthen Water Management:**

   To support increases in food production, farmers need a reliable and sufficient source of water. This often requires investments in water-smart technologies that are cost-effective and environmentally friendly to enhance water use efficiencies, such as increasing the soil's capacity to absorb and store moisture (green water), rainwater harvesting and storage, wastewater reuse, and supplementary small-scale irrigation.

2. **Soil and Nutrient Management:**

    Support farmers financially to help them adopt soil management practices that build healthier soils and deliver flood and drought resilience such as planting cover crops and deep-rooted perennials.

3. **Farmers Training:**

    Besides providing technical and financial assistance to farmers, farmers need to obtain the required knowledge and skills on how to adopt sustainable practices that will make their farms more climate-resilient.

4. **Investing in Research:**

    Agriculture research is vastly underfunded. Governments and the private sector need to invest in research to provide farmers with the tools and information they need to maximize efficiency and productivity.

    Therefore, it is recommended that
    - Governments increase funding for research that brings together ecological and socioeconomic sustainability
    - Higher education institutions expand research and education on sustainable agriculture
    - Higher education institutions exchange agricultural knowledge and research

Innovation and Development

We are in an unprecedented era of "informatization" where borderless communication, collaboration and influence are driving forces for international development. Yet this international development is not creating meaningful benefits for the learners across the globe, especially those located in the rural areas. We have to acknowledge that global citizenship culture and customized learning paths are lacking contributing to the creation of disconnected communities. In the context of this policy paper, we outline practical recommendations in order to create a meaningful ecosystem that welcomes innovation, digital communication, cities, educational institutions and economic tools. In the lens of reducing the mentioned disconnection, this section believes that innovative teaching methods are largely connected to the involvement of local stakeholders like cities, which more than ever, become cultural and civic development players. Technology is a scalable and reliable enabler to foster national and internation collaboration, communicate about climate change creatively, create more financial benefits to students, and drive the green transition that education institutions should embrace.

Civic Leadership Education Within a Climate Change Framework

Service-Learning and Project-Based Action

- School waste reduction initiatives, for instance, provide chances for service-learning. Service-learning activities extend beyond what is learnt in the classroom. Students, for example, might engage in community waste collection days or share waste reduction tips with their neighbors. Working directly with the community teaches students new skills and reinforces a sense of civic duty. Furthermore, service-learning improves students' communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities.
- Integrating into the national curriculum civic education tools and modules, understanding new technologies, habits and policies that are shaping the global climate action in the exact community of reference. Tech literacy is essential to back up young people awareness of potential solutions to apply in their own community

- Create listening dashboards where young people can propose initiatives (advocacy/concrete) to revamp the city's response to climate change. This includes: online open platform, youth-centered events, or call for ideas with public funding, ensuring access of data regarding socio-economic-environmental issues locally.

Digital Communication to raise climate Awareness

Digital communication offers the opportunity to reach billions of people around the world to learn about the importance of climate action.

Most people in the world are not aware of the environmental impact caused by our online habits and today's mass media methods. It is an opportunity to address climate change with innovative new approaches.

- Reducing the carbon footprint (We can use mobile applications that support green technologies to have an impact on our carbon footprint and sustainable living).
- Reducing paper consumption and switching to digital.
- Creating a list of social media accounts that produce content related to the climate crisis and sustainability.
- Creating content to create climate awareness (example: those who create climate crisis awareness through art, and design).

Community Engagement, Advocacy, Climate leadership

1. **Skills Development:** The young people need to be up-skilled and reskilled in climate and environmental issues in order to enable them to become effective climate policy advocates in their communities.
2. **Youth in Climate Decision Making:** More space created for young people at the table where climate related decisions are made. Effective and meaningful youth engagement, involvement and representation at all levels of leadership putting into consideration the dynamics of the youth in terms of gender, sexual orietation, those with disability to have their interets.
3. **Climate and Environmental intergenerational dialogue:** Creation of avenues and youth friendly enabling environment for intergenerational dialogue to facilitate climate related knowledge sharing and learning.

4. **Localizing Agenda 2030:** Building the capacity of the young people to be in position to lead climate related initiatives, projects and programmes in the communities as a means of localizing Agenda 2030.

Green Campuses and their Economic Benefits

Smart Campus project, similar to smart cities, is meant to be an anticipatory projection of the creation of a smart university campus, capable of independently adapting its operation and missions to confront the primary difficulties connected to climatic, ecological, and digital transitions. A low-carbon, sustainable, digital, responsible, smart, linked campus integrated into a smart city. The intellectual potential of academics and students will benefit the campus from research outcomes and serve as a validation ground for transportable experiments. The goal of constructing an excellent campus in the city is to offer value and reciprocally contribute to the territory's reputation (co-construction of civic, sporting, cultural and technical projects). The interest of building an exemplary campus in the city is to bring added value and to contribute reciprocally to the notoriety of the territory (co-construction of civic, sporting, cultural and technical projects). Possible economic benefits include:

- To provide regular and contractual financial support for organizations and companies working for a better sustainable environment with a particular emphasis in supporting start-ups and SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises).
- Provide in-kind support, tax advantages, or deep tech subsidies for students projects tackling climate change
- Students-centered policies/benefits cards to access: smart mobility, cultural museum nights, events, travel grants, and environmental-friendly products subscriptions.

Education Institutional Governance

Divestment strategies

- Campaigns for fossil fuel divestment and climate solutions must arise on college campuses, with students asking their administrations to convert endowment investments in the fossil fuel industry into investments in sustainable energy and areas most threatened by climate change.

Preventing the waste of energy and resources in schools

- Energy savings by employing recycled stuff, which requires less energy to make new products
- Climate change mitigation through reduced greenhouse gas emissions by using less energy burns fewer fossil fuels, which has an influence on greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reducing the requirement for raw resources in production of new goods.
- Reducing the amount of waste disposed of in landfills by reducing food waste, buying things with less packaging, boycotting plastic water bottles, recycling, and purchasing recycled items.

Collaboration and higher education circular economy strategies

- Create, or visualize existing circular economy initiatives dealing with second-hand academic content, technology tools, or schooling objects. Promote the initiatives at local and global level, ensuring accountability, quality and cooperation practices for further inclusion of disadvantaged individuals.
- Joint campuses collaborations for best practices sharing, leading to a national discussion event with national multi-sector Sustainability entities
- Involve companies to support the civic education programs, or extra-curricular both academically and financially. The convergence point between GenZ purchasing power and the need for greener products, processes and practices is the common ground.
- Develop open source and free to access dashboards to visualize local initiatives where young people can contribute to, connecting multiple cities as well

References

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, et al. "Tools to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
       Waste in Schools." U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2007.

Heiss, Julia, et al. "Resource Guide for Advanced Learning on Integrating
       Climate Change in Education at Primary and Secondary Level." The One
       UN Climate Change Learning Partnership, 2013.

"Smart Campus." *La Rochelle Université*, 13 May 2022,
       https://www.univ-larochelle.fr/luniversite/notre-vision/mettre-en-place-un-ca
       mpus-intelligent-durable-et-responsable/smart-campus/.

"World Health Statistics 2021 - Monitoring Health for the SDGs." World Health
       Organization, 2021.