

African Youth Needs for Climate Action Report



Acknowledgments

The completion of this report is the result of collaborative efforts, and we are truly appreciative of the efforts demonstrated by African youth. We would like to acknowledge the support of Udeh Chiagozie for reviewing this report.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Official Children and Youth Constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (YOUNGO).

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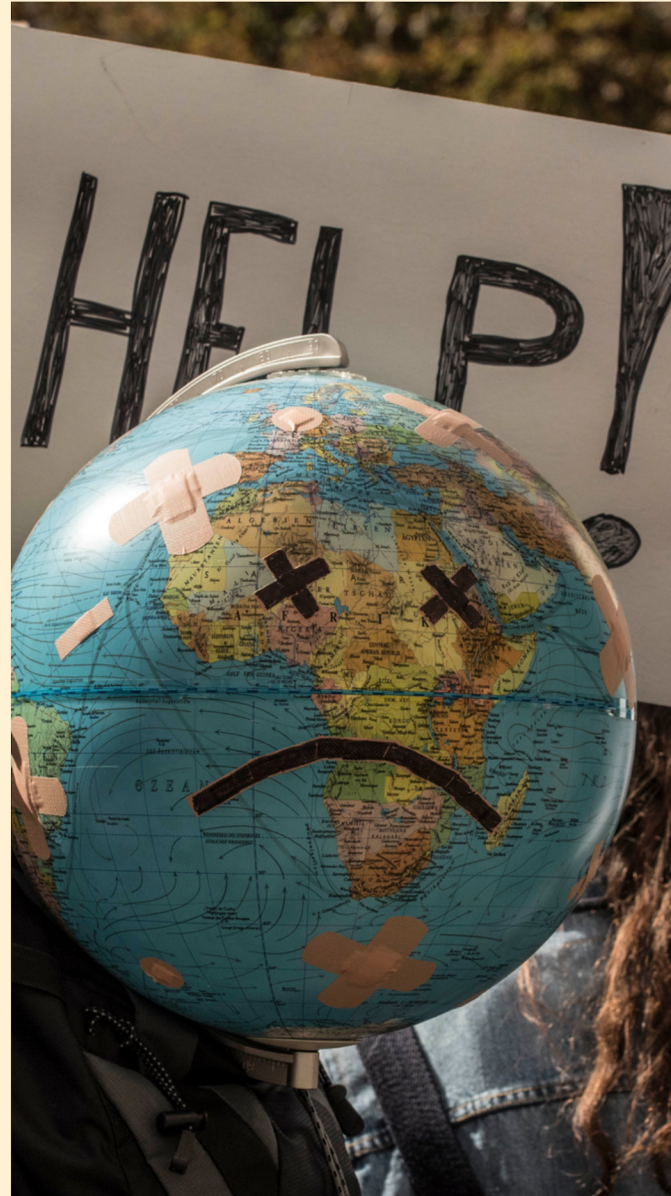


Photo Credit : Canva



Climate Change Capacity Building in Chipinge PC: African Youth Initiative on Climate Change Zimbabwe (AYICCZim)

In preparation for the Africa Climate Week 2023 YOUNGO the Children and Youth Constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) circulated a survey to have an in-depth understanding of African Youth Needs in Climate Change. The main purpose of the survey was to capture the voices and perceptions of African Youths on Climate Change which would enable us to facilitate a constructive discussion with clear action points backed by facts. Voluntary sampling was conducted and the survey was shared on YOUNGO mailing list and its social platforms. The survey was circulated for a period of 14 days and 260 young people responded to it.

The majority of young people highlighted they understand the causes and impacts of climate change and how they are deeply concerned about climate change. A fair number indicated that they are well-informed on climate-related issues. When asked about the most significant climate change-related issues that they have faced, the most selected was extreme weather events (eg, floods, droughts, storms) followed by deforestation and loss of biodiversity, the least being climate change migration, unemployment, and health related issues. The survey results highlight that the majority of youths are confident in the ability of global climate agreements to make a substantial impact. 75% of the respondents think their governments are not doing enough to combat climate change, the majority also highlighted they have been participating in climate initiatives organized by governmental organizations.

However, when asked to rate the government's efforts in involving youth in climate space, a number highlighted there is average involvement, and a number also highlighted that there is a need for great improvements from the government.

The top three obstacles according to the survey results which are hindering active youth participation in climate action efforts include 1. financial constraints, 2. lack of awareness and understanding, and 3. lack of political support. The survey results indicated that; funding for climate projects and initiatives, educational workshops and networking opportunities with like-minded people are part of the solution which should be put in place to encourage youth to take more action against climate change.

When we asked young people the role they think they can play in climate decisions their first choice was collaborating with government and organizations on climate initiatives followed by engaging in climate-related research and education, bringing fresh perspectives and innovative ideas and lastly advocating for environmental policies. The survey also asked about young people's activities in climate change, the majority highlighted they participate in environmental conservation and clean-up efforts, followed by running their youth-led climate organizations or clubs, climate-related research and education with the least being climate protests when asked about their activities

Message from African Youth



"It is important for transparency and accountability from our African leaders in the implementation of our climate promises because as our generation grows older, we will inherit the impacts of the decisions our leaders make today."

Fatou Jeng (Gambia)

Founder, Clean Earth Gambia

Climate Advisor to the UN Secretary General (YAG)

African youth are now more focused on being the drivers for sustainable change. The policies and commitments that will be adopted from both the African Youth Climate Assembly and the African Climate Summit should be implemented at national, regional and global levels to meet the collective climate adaptation goals

Brian Maina

Africa Regional Director- Catalyst 2030

African Youth Climate Assembly - Overall Coordinator

"Over 200 million young people in Africa are disproportionately affected by the unprecedented impacts of climate change on their health, well-being and future. Intergenerational equity and the meaningful engagement of African youth as equal stakeholders are far from optional in climate policy and action."

Omnia El Omrani

COP 27 Youth Envoy

"With the increasing frequency of climate induced disasters, man made climate change is robbing the future of children and youth in Africa. We cannot fail them! Achieving global warming of 1.5 degrees is possible and it starts with engaging youth as equal stakeholders in climate action."

Joshua Amponsem (Ghana)

Founder- Green Africa Youth Organisation (GAYO)

We must find the balance of meeting both Africa's climate change and development imperatives and therefore I always promote green skills development and green job opportunities for young Africans, however we must create an enabling environment that allows young Africans to utilize their skills and experience in Africa, to benefit Africa.

Shamiela Reid

Indalo Inclusive South Africa NPC

"Supporting young African innovators and entrepreneurs who are developing climate-friendly technologies and solutions is crucial. Investing in research and development, as well as providing funding and mentorship opportunities, can help foster innovation and create a sustainable future for African youth."

Olumide Idowu (Nigeria)

Executive Coordinator

African Youth Initiative on Climate Change.

01 Introduction

The African continent is home to a large and diverse youth population, with unique needs and perspectives when it comes to addressing the urgent issue of climate change.

By 2030, young Africans are expected to make up 42 percent of the world's youth and account for 75 percent of those under age 35 in Africa ([Population Reference Bureau, 2021](#)). Such a high number of young people is an opportunity for the continent's growth but only if these generations are fully empowered to realize their best potential. African youths are not only heavily impacted by the effects of climate change, but they also possess immense potential to contribute to sustainable development and climate resilience. Understanding and responding to the needs of African youth in relation to climate change is crucial for harnessing their skills, knowledge, and energy in tackling this global challenge.

Their voices and perspectives need to be actively included in discussions, policies, and strategies that shape climate action at local, national, and continental levels. We can tap into African youth's creativity and enthusiasm leading to more effective and inclusive climate solutions. Africa with its vast natural resources and diverse ecosystems, is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of global warming (Bedair et al, 2023). From rising temperatures and extreme weather events to droughts and diminishing water resources, young people across the continent are witnessing the effects of climate change first-hand. As a result, there is an urgent need for Africa's youth to be empowered and equipped with the knowledge, skills, necessary and adapt to this environmental crisis.

The survey assessing African youth needs to combat climate change will highlight the importance of investing in their potential, education, engagement, and leadership in order to build a sustainable future for the continent.



Photo Credit: Climate Clock DRC & U-Report

02

Background

The inclusion of young people in decision-making has been a topic of discussion and advocacy for some time, and it remains critically important, especially in the climate change space. In Africa, over 60% of the population is under the age of 35, and young Africans are predicted to account for 42% of global youth by 2030,¹ yet youth inclusion still remains a mystery. As the effects of climate change continue to ravage the African region,² the demographic significance of youth in the region can not be overemphasized. Thus, this youthful population can be a driving force for climate action and sustainable development if effectively engaged.

To achieve meaningful youth inclusion in decision-making, it's essential to provide young people with the necessary platforms, it's not only about consulting youth or inviting them to meetings but should be about encouraging and supporting them to participate in various elements of climate change governance (CCG)³ in order to influence policy, politics and polity. This also aligns with the African Youth Charter⁴ which highlights the importance of African youth participation in designing, implementing, and evaluating of environmental policies. The African Youth Climate Action Plan emphasizes that when youth are meaningfully engaged in climate policy, the narrative is strengthened, they won't identify themselves as beneficiaries but agents of the climate crisis at the forefront of Africa's climate change and development response.

To reduce the inclusion gap the Regional Climate Weeks have had a special thematic focus on youth and climate action. However, discussing youth engagement and inclusion alone is not enough to assess regional youth participation, needs, and perceptions of climate change. Information gathered in this report will shape youth policy discussions at the ACW and beyond and help to ensure meaningful youth inclusion at the national and regional levels.

1. [Global employment trends for youth 2022: Africa \(ILO, 2022\)](#)

2. [Climate Change Impacts on Africa's Economic Growth \(African Development Bank 2019\)](#)

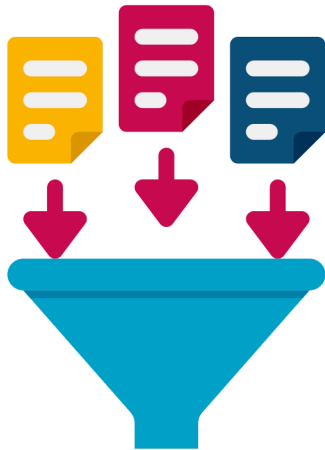
3. [Aiming higher, Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action \(UNDP 2022\)](#)

4. [African Youth Charter 2006](#)



Photo Credit: Sentimental Energy Company and Tanzania Women for Environment

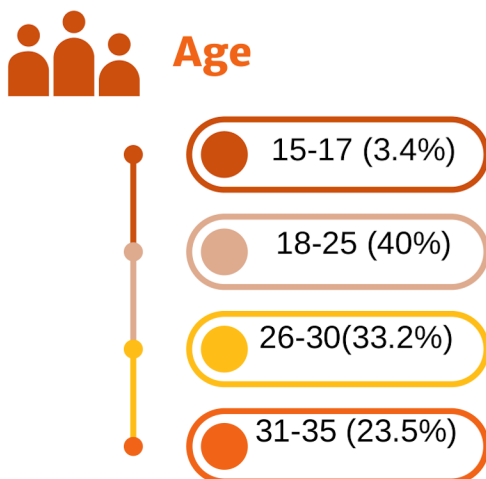
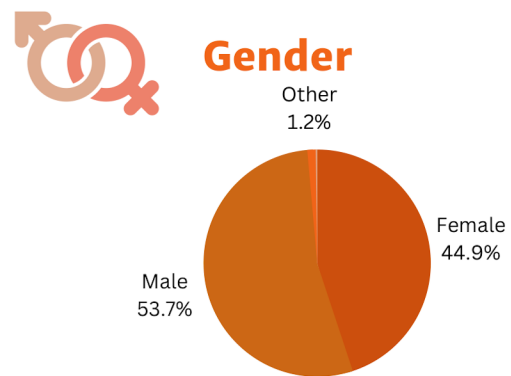
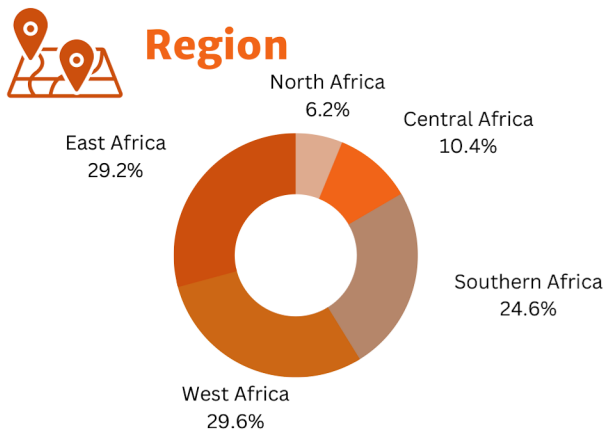
03



Data Collection

In order to capture a comprehensive understanding of African Youth needs on climate action, a meticulously designed survey was conducted, involving participants aged 15 to 35 years old from various geographical regions, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultural contexts in Africa. The survey aimed to gauge awareness, attitudes, engagement and the needs related to climate actions.

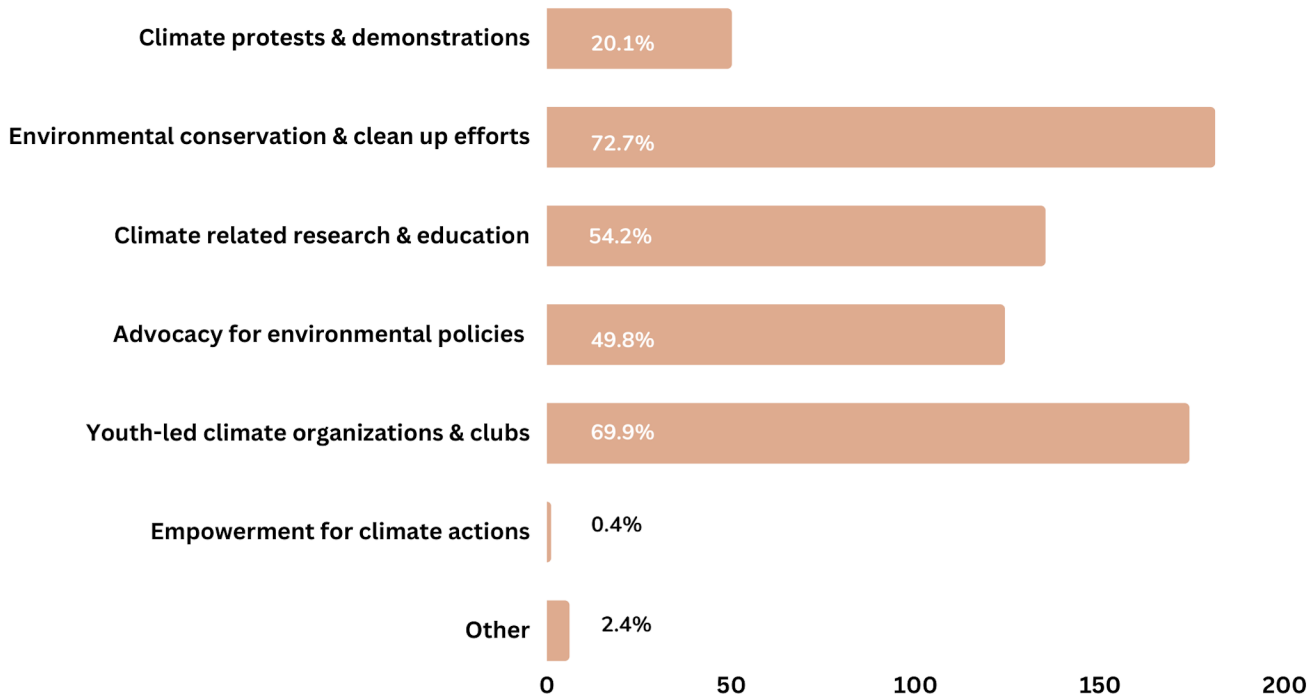
This section details the demographic information of the respondents from African Youth. Around 260 youth responded to the survey within two weeks from 1st Aug to 15th Aug 2023. The survey was disseminated in English and French on YOUNGO's mailing list and social media platforms.



It can be noted that the sample is skewed for the demographic representation with more responses from West, East and Southern Africa rather than the North or Central. This could be due to the language of the survey being restricted to English and French only.

In addition, more male responded to the survey than female. This shed light on how information channels amongst gender. The age representation is more dispersed with those below 18 years old having a minority representation.

Clearly, this indicates that studies in Africa should not be restricted to a single method but should be diverse in order to incorporate voices of stakeholders.



Climate Change Activities

The figure above illustrates the engagement of African Youth in climate action. It can be deduced that most of them are involved in community actions related to environmental conservation and clean up efforts.

African Youth are also increasing their commitment to climate related research and education. There is a scaling movement of youth led climate organisations and clubs. This is also aligned to YOUNGO's membership whereby the majority of youth and network stem from Africa.



Photo Credit : Africa Youth Climate Hub

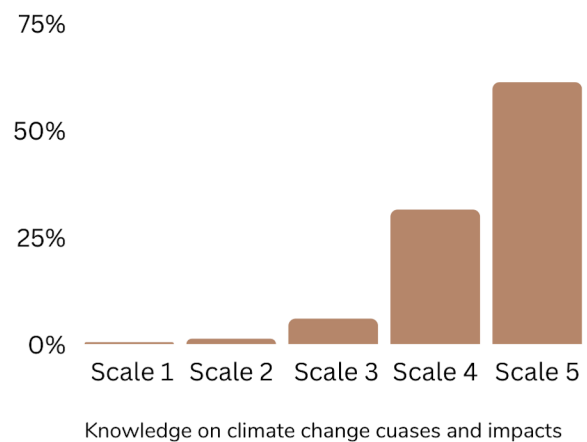
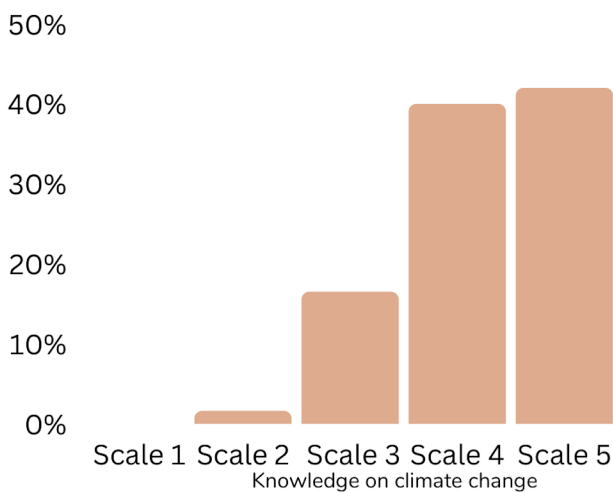
Awareness on Climate Change

04

Knowledge on Climate Change, its Causes and Impacts



Research conducted by Oyelaran-Oyeyinka et al. (2020) in several African countries indicates that a substantial proportion of youth possess a basic understanding of climate change and its causes. The findings aligns with previous studies with most youth indicating a high level of knowledge on climate change. In recent years, initiatives like youth-led workshops, online campaigns, and educational programs have emerged to enhance African youth's climate knowledge and engagement. These efforts are crucial in nurturing a generation that can drive sustainable practices and influence policy decisions. Collaborative platforms have been pivotal in fostering knowledge-sharing among youth across the continent (Ezebilo et al., 2020).

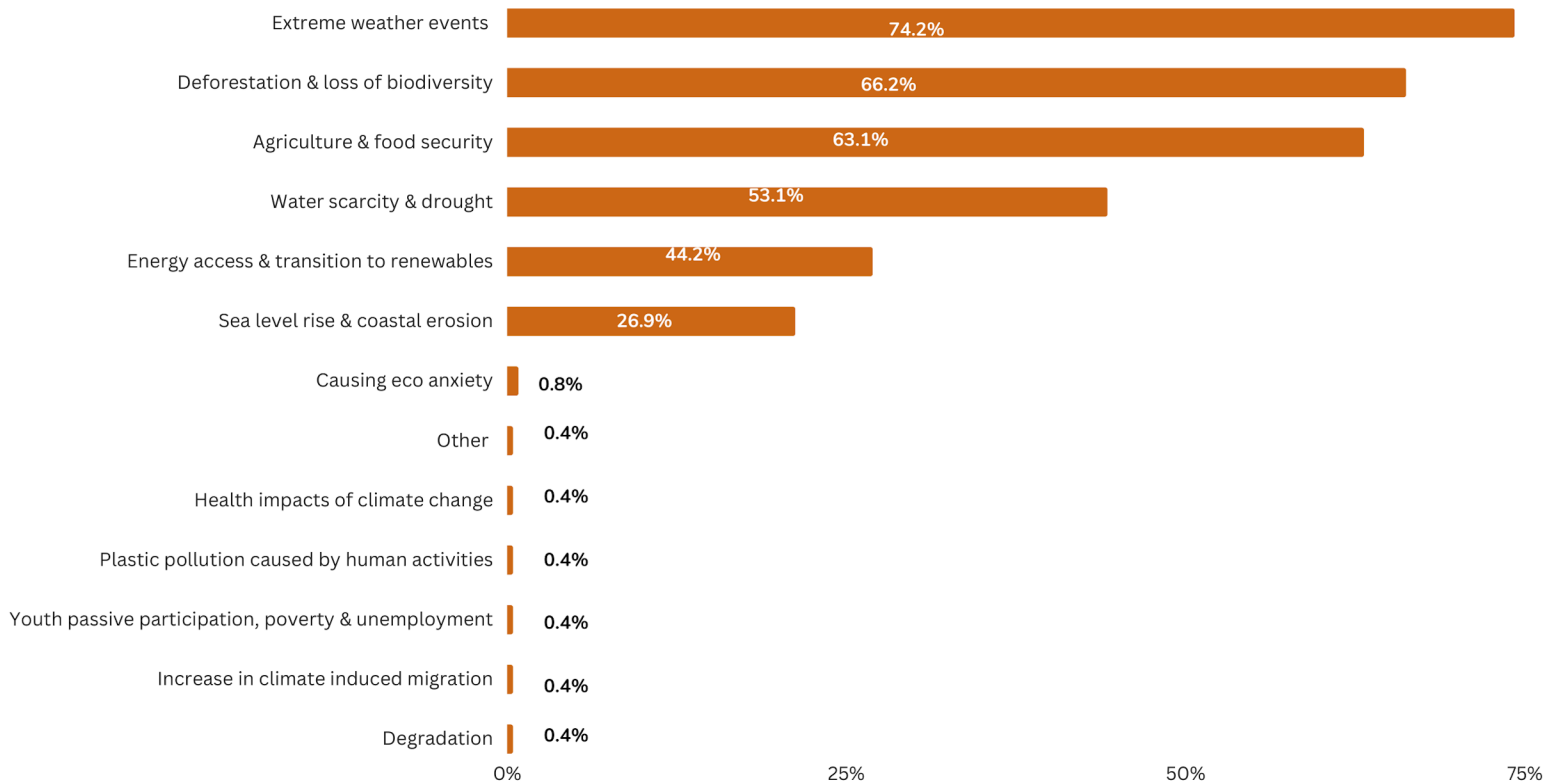


Scale 1 - not at all-Scale 5 very well

However, we cannot rely solely on their understanding. A study by Umeh (2019) showed that the African youth can possess the knowledge on generic climate change but lack specialization in mitigation or adaptation strategies. Thus, it is crucial to widen the study and breakdown on the knowledge prior to embarking on capacity building, empowerment and educational programmes. In so doing, we call for:

- **More multilingual outreach** such that climate information in local languages to bridge communication gaps and ensure that all youth, including those in remote areas, have access to accurate information.
- **Enhance education** such that the youth are more up to date on climate science and its local impacts.
- **Promote local context** during workshops to better resonate with the lived experiences of African youth.

05 Impact of Experienced Climate Change Issues



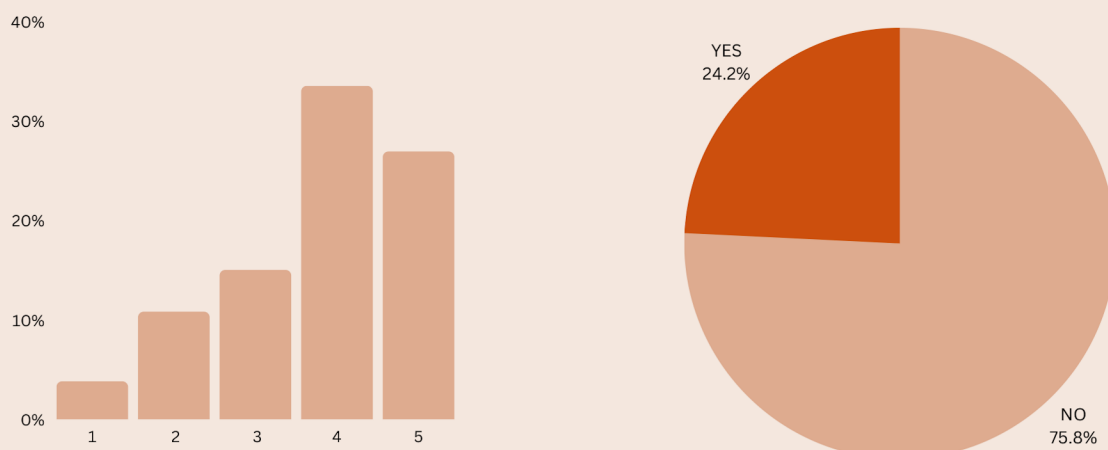
Youth are heavily impacted by extreme weather events. Extreme weather events, such as prolonged droughts, floods, and heatwaves, can disrupt access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods. The inadequate infrastructure in many African regions amplifies the consequences, leaving youth particularly susceptible.

This is followed by deforestation, biodiversity loss, agriculture and food security. The impacts of deforestation and biodiversity loss on youth are multifaceted. As natural habitats shrink, opportunities for eco-tourism, education, and recreation diminish. Additionally, as custodians of cultural heritage, youth are grappling with the erosion of their traditions as unique plant and animal species disappear.

On the other hand, it can be seen that impacts such as eco anxiety, health and migration are less reflected on. This might be due to a lack of awareness on these issues.

Addressing these challenges requires a two-pronged approach: empowering youth with education and skills to engage in sustainable land management practices, and fostering collaboration between generations to ensure the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations.

06 Climate Governance and African Youth



Scale 1 not confident at all - Scale 5 extremely confident

Assessment of level of confidence in global climate agreements

Assessment of government action on climate change

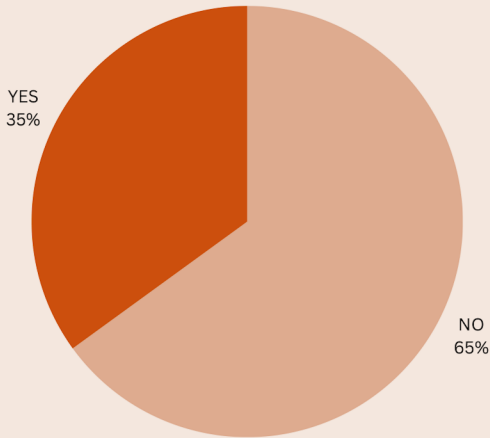
This section uncovers the nexus between climate governance and African Youth. The first part assesses the perspective of the youth on climate governance, especially policy making. While the second part evaluates the inclusion of youth in policy making processes. It also explores avenues that youth and policy makers can benefit from through inclusion. It can be deduced that the youth are increasingly confident about global climate agreements but do not believe in government led climate actions. This discrepancy could arise from the following reasons:

- **Disconnection with youth and local communities:** Policies crafted without sufficient input from youth and local communities can fail to address the specific climate challenges these groups face, leading to a disconnect between government actions and reality.
- **Lack of communication and transparency:** In decision-making processes and policy implementation undermines the trust of youth, who seek clarity on government intentions and actions.
- **Priorities and political stability :** Youth observe governments prioritizing economic growth over sustainable practices, making them skeptical about the sincerity of climate commitments. Frequent changes in government leadership can disrupt consistent climate policies, leading to uncertainty and skepticism among youth.



Photo Credit: National Agency for the Great Green Wall (Nigeria)

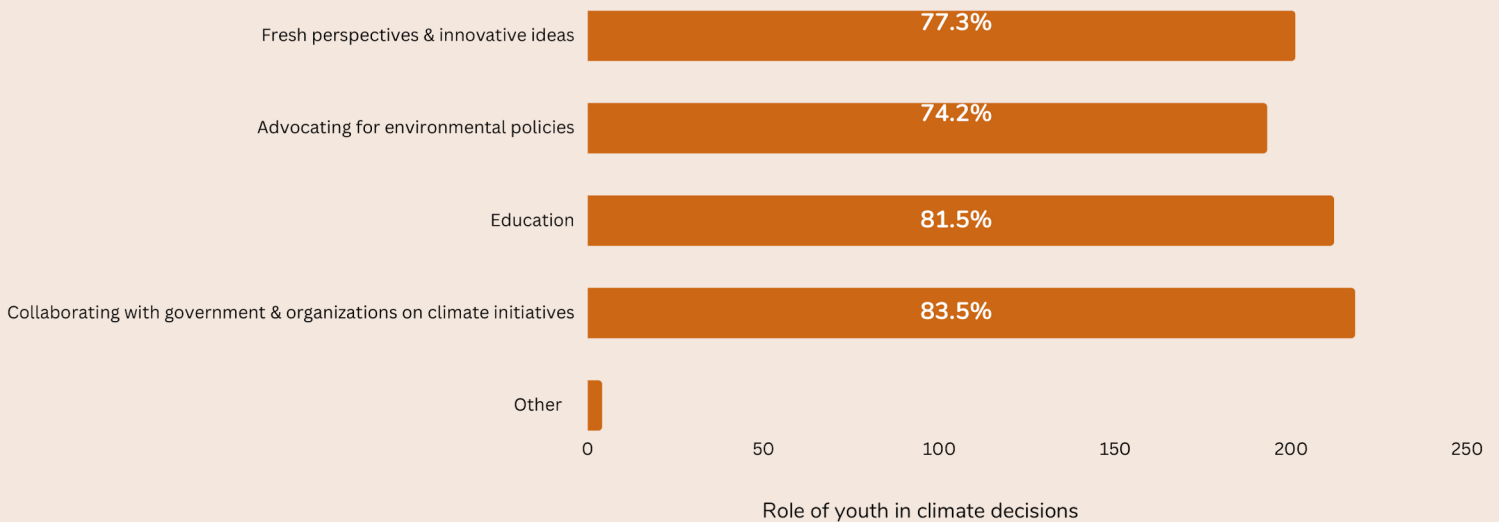
06 Climate Governance and African Youth



Participation in government organized climate initiatives

The disproportionate impact on youth is highlighted by the African Development Bank (AfDB, 2020), emphasizing the urgency of their participation in shaping climate policies.

The African Union's Youth Division emphasizes the importance of youth councils, advisory boards, and participation in international climate conferences as mechanisms for youth inclusion in governance. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2021) emphasizes that inclusive participation fosters more comprehensive climate policies. Despite this strong advocacy for youth inclusion, the findings point out to the lack of participation of youth in government led climate initiatives.



Socioeconomic disparities also marginalize many youth, making their voices less heard. Additionally, a lack of platforms for meaningful engagement often leaves youth excluded from decision-making processes. Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts to enhance education, bridge information gaps, and create inclusive spaces for youth participation. In addition, we mapped the potential benefits that youth could bring for the ecosystem. Most of the respondents are confident to put forward fresh and innovative ideas. They also wish to collaborate with policy makers and organisation as well as enhance education.

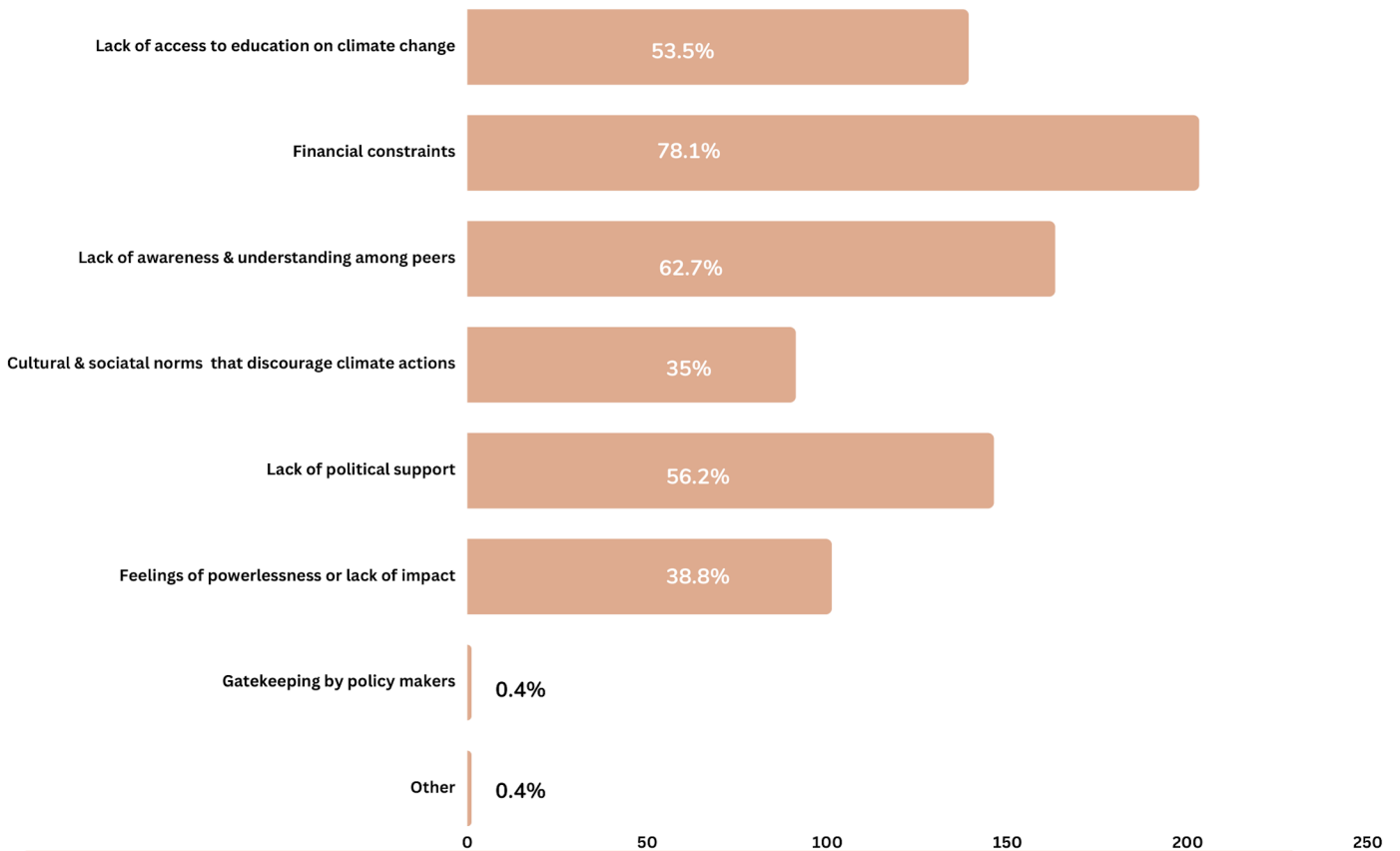
Further, inclusion of youth can bring the following opportunities:

- **Amplify climate actions:** African Youth can mobilize communities for grassroots climate projects, multiplying the impact of government initiatives.
- **Cross-Generational Collaboration:** Bridging generations fosters intergenerational equity, leading to more comprehensive climate policies.
- **Leadership Development:** African Youth engagement can cultivate leadership skills, nurturing a generation of capable future policymakers.
- **Global Connectivity:** African Youth networks can facilitate international collaboration, allowing shared knowledge and resources for climate action.

07

Challenges and Needs for Climate Action

Challenges against youth climate actions

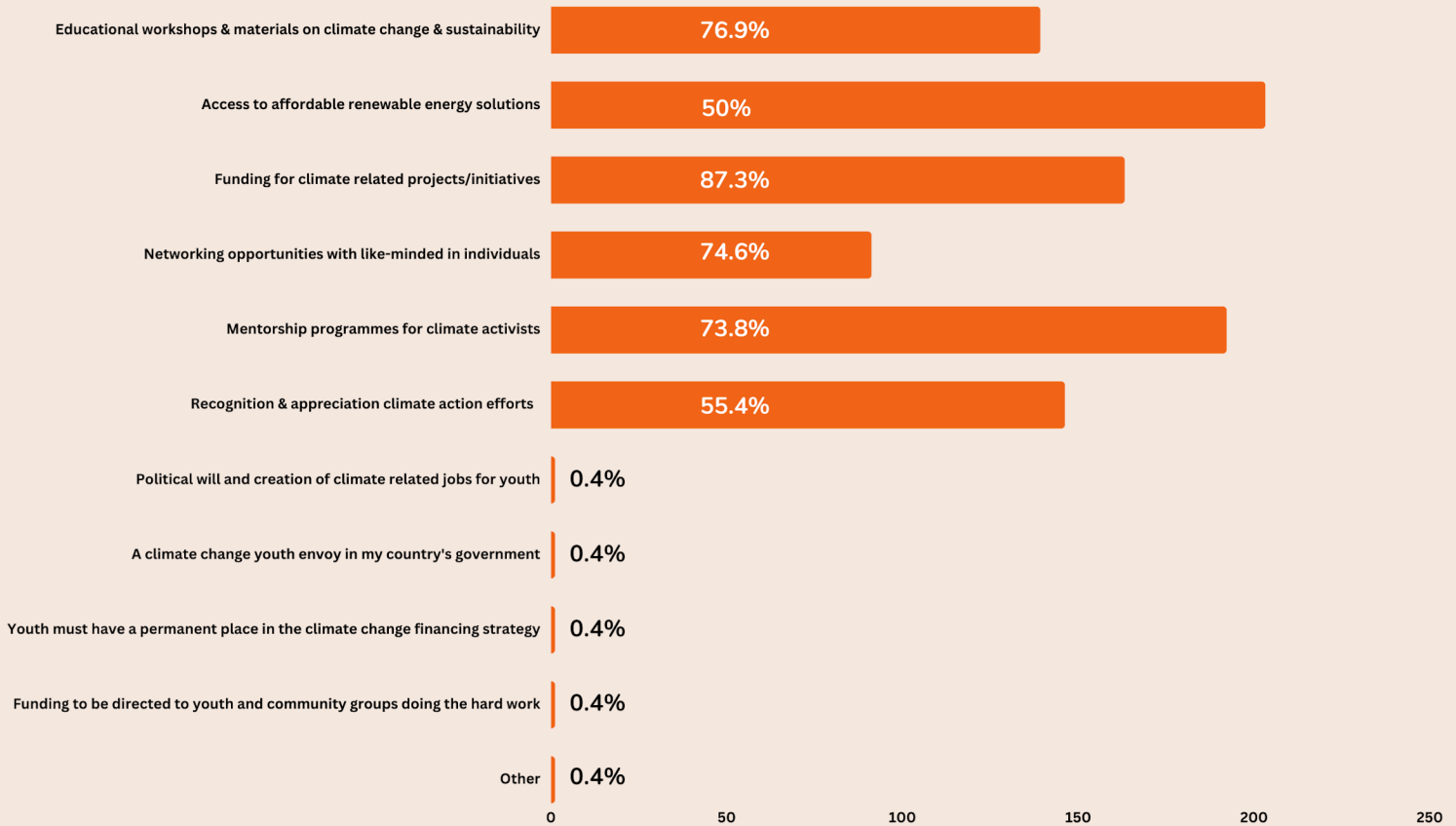


This section puts forward the main challenges and needs that African Youth encompasses. Financial constraints prevails amongst the list followed by a lack of understanding among peers. The barriers to access financing have been listed in YOUNGO's Finance & Market (2021) previous report. These entails the lack of finance resources and instruments for climate action in Africa. The risk appetite of investors and organisations are very low and thus the financial flows are constrained. Limited financial literacy among youth hampers their ability to secure funding or manage resources effectively for climate action. Moreover, the size of the funding matters, capital-intensive industries like renewable energy may require substantial investments that are beyond the reach of many youth.

Africa's vast geographical diversity can make coordination difficult, especially across countries with varying challenges and cultures. This is reflected in the lack of collaboration and understanding among peers. Some youth groups might be hesitant to collaborate due to concerns about trust, resource sharing, or the fear of losing their individual identity. Limited capacity in terms of organizational structures, skills, and knowledge can impede effective collaboration.

07

Challenges and Needs for Climate Action



Needs and support for action against climate change

The figure above depicts the key needs and asks from African Youth for climate actions. African Youth are call for scaling access and availability of funding for climate actions. This could be enhanced by reducing the bureaucracy of application requirements, reducing language barriers, descaling the amount of funding and also providing capacity building.

Further, there is a direct need for education and mentorship. As mentioned previously, though African Youth have a general understanding on climate change, they lack specialisation in key thematic areas. Educational programmes at all levels (primary to tertiary) should be introduced to prepare them for the green job market.

This should be coupled with the creating opportunities and platforms for African Youth to network. This could also address the barrier for lack of collaboration mentioned in previous figure. There is a need for cross border partnership which can be unlocked through facilitation support from policy makers and international organisations. Mechanisms for sharing funding opportunities, technical resources, and best practices among youth groups can also be established.

Another factor that is often side-line is the appreciation for climate actions by youth. Different forms of climate action, whether it's advocacy, community projects, or innovation, are equally valuable and deserve appreciation. Recognizing youth's efforts amplifies their voices and the urgency of climate action, increasing the impact of their advocacy and activism.

08 Conclusion

This report attempts to provide a snapshot of the youth needs in Africa to combat climate change. We strongly recommend deep diving into the specific topics and call for more support for researchers to expand study on the gaps.



Youth Inclusion

We call for

- increase in political support
- participation of youth in decision making
- provide tailor made capacity building for African youth



Youth as Enablers

We believe that

- youth should be provided with platforms for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- finance for youth led initiatives should be enhanced and scaled.



Intergenerational Equity

We advocate for :

- a stocktake related to youth engagement in climate change space.
- Implement policies that prioritize the protection of natural resources to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on future generations.

Ultimately, the urgency of African Youth's climate call demands a collective response. Governments, institutions, and citizens must collaborate to ensure that the demands of youth are translated into actionable policies, investments in renewable energy, and global cooperation to limit temperature rise and to increase resilience.

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Elizabeth Gulugulu Machache is a passionate environmentalist with a Bsc in Environmental Science and an Msc candidate in Biodiversity Conservation. She was YOUNGO Focal point 2022 and has worked with various organisations on youth and climate change programming. She believes the solution to African problems is its young people, equipped with the right tools mentioned in this report.

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